

Prabhupāda Meditations III

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Prabhupāda Meditations

Volume III

PRABHUPĀDA MEDITATIONS

VOLUME III

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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On another occasion, Rāmānuja observed Śrī Goṣṭhīpūrṇa meditating for many hours in a room with closed doors. At the end of the day he inquired, "O Master, on which form of the Lord have you been fixing your mind, and what is the mantra by which you worship Him?"

"I worship only the two lotus feet of Śrī Yamunācārya, my *guru-mahārāja*," replied Goṣṭhīpūrṇa, "and his holy name is the only mantra I chant, for it brings relief from all suffering." From this statement, Rāmānuja could understand the importance of worshiping the devotees of the Lord.

—*The Life of Rāmānujācārya*, pp. 178-79
compiled by Naimiśāraṇya dāsa

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Note to the Reader

In this volume of *Prabhupāda Meditations,* I have introduced a new feature called "Try This . . . " Scattered throughout the book will be little suggestions on how to increase your own meditation and remembrance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. You may choose to try these suggestions as you read, or perhaps you would prefer to return to them after you have finished the entire book. Perhaps you will find that they are not for you and just leave them aside. But it is my hope that you will like to occasionally browse through these "Try This . . . " sections and that these will enhance your own Prabhupāda meditations.

PART ONE

Śrīla Prabhupāda is here: Gītā-nāgarī
1.1

Prabhupāda has a presence in this cabin and on the Gītā-nāgarī acres. (He saw Rādhā-Dāmodara a number of times and also gave Them Their names.) This is a good place to think of him. He drank water from the spring outside my door. He thought of Gītā-nāgarī in his last days and wanted to come here to teach *varṇāśrama-dharma.* For years he also resided in this cabin in his *mūrti* form, and, while our team compiled the volumes of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta,* Prabhupāda appeared here in his *vāṇī* and empowered the writing.

Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke against expecting to perceive Kṛṣṇa's presence in miraculous ways. For example, in his last days in Vṛndāvana, he said that he should not expect to give up eating and still continue living in his body. "If I want to survive," he said, "of course I will have to take something. It is not possible to survive without taking food."

Śrīla Prabhupāda always expected Kṛṣṇa's mercy, and he knew that Kṛṣṇa decides all events. He did not recommend that his devotees defy nature or expect Kṛṣṇa to defy nature for them. Rather, he recommended we work for the Lord, just as Arjuna worked for the Lord. It is certainly miraculous that Kṛṣṇa created countless universes out of Himself and that He effortlessly maintains them. Only when we forget Kṛṣṇa do the workings of the material world appear ordinary or commonplace. Under the influence of Māyā, we look for a "miracle" to revive our lagging faith.

Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—*then* we will see the miracles that have already occurred. Śrīla Prabhupāda is

present in this cabin at Gītā-nāgarī, and he appears in what I write. I can take this for granted. If I approach him sincerely, he will reciprocate more.

Prabhupāda meditation means being with him right now and always. Yesterday he helped us—and today and tomorrow—especially when we read his books and serve his mission. I am rereading his letters to encounter Śrīla Prabhupāda "as-he-is." I heard him yesterday on tape, calling us to understand Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Truth.

I eat as he ate: the same diet, sitting as he sat, using the right hand as he showed, and wearing the dress and *tilaka* he recommended. Now I am up at the hour he used for writing. So don't speak of frustration in wanting to be with him. If you wish it, you are never away from his friendship, his protection, and his inspiration.

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Alone in Swamijī's room
1.2

The best way to be with Prabhupāda on 26 Second Avenue is to go back in memory, in feelings, in body and mind—go and be with him. I can go to his room as I used to. I used to go there sometimes when Swamijī was out of town, for instance, in San Francisco from January to March of 1967. I would go to his room alone and write him a letter.

Dear Swamiji,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to your lotus feet. It seems a long time since I've seen you. It's nice to be here in your

room, and to work in your storefront with the devotees. I am doing my service, but sometimes it's hard to think of you. This probably is because Maya doesn't want me to surrender. I would like to express some things to you that are on my mind, to help me get free of Maya. Probably, if I would read the Bhagavad-gita properly, then I wouldn't be in maya.

I am pausing in this letter to Swamijī because I really can't *write* everything that is on my mind to the spiritual master. One has to render service to him for it to become clear. It sure is nice to be here in his room looking at his desk, his gray trunk where he writes his books, the picture of Kṛṣṇa on the wall. Kṛṣṇa is so nice. I can think of Kṛṣṇa during the day, and then I won't be harassed by the sexual innuendos of the women in the office, or by the boss' demands. I won't even feel sorry for myself if I just look at Kṛṣṇa; He is so happy.

I want to follow the Swami's teachings and pray to Kṛṣṇa to give realization from the heart. What is it that I want to say to Swamijī in my letter? I don't only want to tell him that I have doubts. If I am going to write something, I should write about service. Tell him that I like the tapes he is dictating, such as the *Nārada-bhakti Sūtra* and *Teachings of Lord Caitanya,* and that I am willing to work for him and the devotees.

Dear Swamiji,

Sometimes you seem far away. Why is that? How can I be closer to you when you are not here? How can I become a true disciple?

I am pausing again. I should not be afraid of the Swami and think he does not understand me. He *does* understand me. I just have to speak clearly: no mumbled jargon, no confused speech, no nonsense. One has to be coherent when he communicates with the Swami. Think it over first and say it nicely. Raise transcendental questions, not just meanderings or mutterings or doubts.

> Dear Swamiji,
>
> I think you have already given me so much mercy by my connection to you. Despite my faults, I will be fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and able to repeat your teachings with conviction. I really like to hear your lectures, especially in the morning. I still remember when you lectured in December on Caitanya-caritamrta about the lila-avataras and other teachings of Lord Caitanya. When you speak about Kṛṣṇa, He is a real person. The avataras are real. You give such good arguments that they vanquish all doubts. For example, you said, "What is the problem that Kṛṣṇa can lift a hill—He is already lifting all the planets, why He cannot lift a hill?" Another time you asked, "Why He cannot come as a fish; He is not ordinary fish. Kṛṣṇa can do all these things, although people think it is only a story." When you say these things, Swamiji, it is very real. I want to stay with you where it is always real.

I am glad I was able to say that. I wish I could praise Swamijī more in his presence. Some of the devotees are able to say, "You are so great,

Swamijī," but I am not able to say those things. Anyway, it is really nice to be here for a while, in this room where he stays when he is here. I see his sitting place and I can almost see him in my mind, how he talks with the devotees, or sometimes he laughs with them. I see Raphael coming in and saying crazy things. There is a lot of fooling around here sometimes, but anyway, I have to do my bit—go to work, make money, type. In fact, I had better go home now and do some typing of his tapes.

Let me take a last look at his room. It is a small room, and yet, when he is here, people pack in tightly together. They line up along the side of the wall to his right, but most of us are in double rows in front of him. We will line up like that again when he comes and ask him questions. He can reveal to us the knowledge that we cannot know on our own.

Try This . . .

Many devotees regularly wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda while he was with us, and some continued the practice after his departure as a form of remembrance and meditation. Sit before his *mūrti* or picture or in one of his rooms, and write him a letter. He can receive your letter. Try to write as honestly as you can.

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Religious teachers may talk about God or meditation, but Prabhupāda chants, he actually sings—a guru who sings the Lord's holy names. Within the first moments of my meeting him, I saw and heard him chant. He walked into the storefront where we were waiting, sat down on the same level as us, and spoke a few words. He handed out the *karatālas* and told us the rhythm, "One, two, *three;* one, two, *three.*" Then he began to sing, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa . . . "

So, as soon as you came into his presence, you were hearing a singing Swami. Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda also talked of Kṛṣṇa, but he gave equal attention to singing the Lord's holy names. It is not that he was mainly a philosopher who sang on a rare occasion. He was a minstrel on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, always singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare . . .

You would ask him, "Swamijī, is there some system of meditation you teach?" He would reply, "Chanting. We chant the holy names."

"But aside from the chanting?"

"Just the chanting," he said, "that's all. You cannot do any other meditation. You are not capable of yoga or anything like *Vedānta.* Just chant."

He even said that studying philosophy was not necessary. One could make full advancement in love of God simply by chanting the transcendental vibration.

Prabhupāda said that our *kīrtanas* with him were special, even in comparison to others' *kīrtanas.* One time he invited us to accompany him to a *yogī's*

āśrama in upstate New York. He told us that they also chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa sometimes, "But ours is heart and soul."

Prabhupāda gave his disciples credit for chanting *kīrtanas* with heart and soul as he did. One evening we had a small, informal *kīrtana* in Prabhupāda's hotel room in Hawaii. Since there was no official program at the temple, Prabhupāda was spending a quiet evening working, and his servants were also busy with their tasks. However, Prabhupāda called us together and asked us to chant. I came from my editorial desk, Pradyumna came from his Sanskrit work, and Bali Mardana and Sudāmā also came. Prabhupāda asked Sudāmā to lead the singing. As Sudāmā began to sing a particular tune, he became self-conscious and stopped. He said, "That's not the right tune." He meant that it was not the tune that Prabhupāda usually sang. Prabhupāda encouraged him, "That is all right. That is your ecstasy." It enlivened us to think that Prabhupāda said we had ecstasy within us, and that even a neophyte devotee's choosing of a particular tune could be called "his ecstasy."

Prabhupāda's followers always liked to perform *kīrtana*, especially in his presence. Prabhupāda was in weak health when he met with guests during his visit to Hṛṣīkeśa in 1977. He spoke for almost an hour and then said, "So now we can have *kīrtana*." There were a few Indian men present and they began to discuss Prabhupāda's invitation to hold *kīrtana*.

One of the men said, "Prabhupāda, tomorrow if you will be willing to come just a hundred feet away from here, there is big hall nearby that can hold many more people who want to hear you."

"Yes," Prabhupāda said. "I can do that tomorrow night. And now we can have *kīrtana*. If you like, you can go to that hall and do *kīrtana*."

Two of the Indian men began speaking to each other about Prabhupāda's proposal. One said, "Prabhupāda is saying that tomorrow night we can have *kīrtana* in the hall."

The other man said, "No, *right now we should have it.*"

Tamal Krishna Mahārāja began to laugh at this conversation, because the men were like little children trying to work up their courage to go on *harināma*. One of them wanted to put off the *kīrtana* until tomorrow night, but the other was trying to be brave and convince his friend that "Prabhupāda says we should do it right now."

The talk went on about whether to do *kīrtana* or not. Suddenly, Trivikrāma Swami began clapping his hands in a loud rhythm and singing, *"nama oṁ viṣṇu-padāya . . . "* Trivikrāma Swami's voice cut through the speculation and he seemed to say, "I may not be the world's best singer, but here goes, right now."

One time, during the annual Gaura-Purṇimā festival in Māyāpura, Prabhupāda called his GBC men to his room to tell them that he was hearing and take pleasure in the *kīrtana*. With his leaders gathered before him in the room, Prabhupāda stated that all the devotees in the world should come to Māyāpura and constantly have *kīrtana*. He was very blissful as he told them of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's statement that he had searched the fourteen worlds but found nothing of value except the chanting of the holy names. Prabhupāda said that this was Māyāpura's purpose, to come and

chant. We may have problems in different parts of the world, but they will go away if we simply come together and chant. Lord Caitanya always chanted and we could do it also. We now had a big building in Māyāpura, so everyone could come and live there and simply chant.

On one level, we all enjoyed this blissful talk by Prabhupāda, but since the GBC men had so much managerial responsibility, they were also bewildered as to how this could be carried out. Finally Rāmeśvara spoke, "Prabhupāda, if we were actually to do what you said, it would very much reduce the . . . I mean, how could the programs go on in the different temples around the world?"

"Oh yes," Prabhupāda agreed. Then the talk became managerial. Suggestions were made how we could increase the practice of *kīrtana* in the various ISKCON temples. Prabhupāda agreed that some temples were too small to hold constant *kīrtana,* but a few of the bigger temples could attempt to hold twenty-four-hour *kīrtana,* as long as it was not done to the detriment of other work. Prabhupāda didn't mean it literally, he said. All the devotees could not come and live always in Māyāpura. So it became a relative discussion about the possibilities of increasing the chanting, although Prabhupāda had originally called us together to share his own bliss and to ask that we should all stay in Māyāpura to chant.

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Promises to read
1.4

Gradually, I will enter the meaning of your
books.
But I shouldn't seek something in return.
Hear from the sages, and keep on hearing.
Let go all opposing thoughts.
With strong logic also,
become a *Bhāgavatam* listener.

Make a promise as the year ends:
All of us may read his books
and give them to the world.

Find furtive moments in the rush of each day
to be with him by reading
and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.
These two things
and your service to others,
faithful in his movement.
Pray for time,
and read with care.
It doesn't matter how much,
but give yourself.

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Early kīrtanas
1.5

All *kīrtanas* are wonderful, but when Prabhupāda was leading us, it had a special musical form. He didn't usually speed up the *kīrtanas* to a frenetic pitch, and then stop and start again. He gradually

built up to a steady, medium-slow rhythm. This gave us a chance to enter into the *kīrtana* and meditate on the chanting. The melody was simple, and he didn't change it. We stayed on the same melody, following Prabhupāda's lead, and savoring each phrase: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa . . . In this way the group moved as a chorus into a congregational meditation. One can hear it even now in the recordings from over twenty years ago—Prabhupāda leading the *kīrtanas* playing his one-headed drum.

Prabhupāda continued to lead us in public *kīrtanas* for a few more years, although sometimes he would ask one of his disciples to lead. When Prabhupāda was with us in the *kīrtana,* it became a real prayer. His presence lifted us up into the sacredness of the chanting. He was the person who brought the chanting to the West. It was he who had such great faith; he who praised the holy name in his books. He was the *yuga-dharma* personified, the *śaktyāveśa-avatāra.* His *kīrtanas* cannot be measured against mere musical sensibilities or compared to other *kīrtana* singers.

When Prabhupāda sings and you sing with him, it is very sweet. It is an intimate sharing with him. Everyone wants to have a relationship with Prabhupāda, and this is one of the best ways: to hear him chant, and then to chant along with him. This is the spiritual exchange we are all hankering for. People desire to pray together, to have their relationship with God as intimacy with friends. All this is achieved wonderfully in the *kīrtana.*

If now we recall *kīrtana* with Prabhupāda, it should not make anyone feel that they were left out just because they were not present fifteen years ago.

We should not think regretfully, "It must have been wonderful back then." Recalling the times with Prabhupāda in *kīrtana* can inspire us to chant like that now; it can help us realize the value of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Any lacking in our present *kīrtanas* is only due to mechanical chanting or uncontrolled minds. Prabhupāda can be fully present with us whenever we chant and hear nicely.

Every preacher knows that when you chant in public, with an audience of new participators, you feel very close to Prabhupāda in that *kīrtana*. You feel your service link. You know that you are chanting because of Prabhupāda and you pray to him to give you shelter in the holy name. You feel yourself distributing the *kīrtana* with faith. That is what brings you into contact with Prabhupāda. One might even say that this kind of contact is even more powerful than the personal memories of being with Prabhupāda. As precious as the memories are, it would seem to be even more pleasing to Prabhupāda to put ourselves in the midst of non-devotees and carry the lead of the chanting. If they also chant with us, we can realize that the power convincing them to sing is coming from Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda.

I can recall the bliss of the preacher's *kīrtana* even in a very small setting. One time a small group of traveling *brahmacārīs* stayed for about a week in an apartment in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We advertised a meeting and about four or five guests attended. We could not use our instruments in the apartment, but we clapped our hands in *kīrtana* ecstasy.

Sometimes, instead of ecstasy, we become bored in *kīrtana*. We should not let that overwhelm us. We can inform our minds, "Be patient. You can't expect everything to happen immediately. Just stick with this chanting and surrender." If we can get past the dryness and restlessness, we will surrender to the holy name. Prabhupāda and the *ācāryas* have assured us, based on their own experience, that the chanting is the panacea, the nectar, the divine dispensation.

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Kīrtana kaleidoscope
1.6

Prabhupāda chanting . . . the sound of his voice ... him playing the *karatālas,* releasing his finger on the third beat so it produces the "sizzle". . . lively movements of his hand and fingers with the *karatālas.* Prabhupāda sits very straight moving his neck slightly back and forth. His eyes are sometimes closed, sometimes open . . . singing gravely, inwardly absorbed . . . looking at the people who are chanting to encourage them.

Prabhupāda *kīrtanas* are blessing us still. We hear them on car radios, in temple rooms, kitchens. They may not be as popular as the *kīrtanas* performed by his followers and other singers, but we should remember it is all coming from Prabhupāda. If we want to be with him, we can sing with him.

When Prabhupāda walked into the temple, *kīrtana* was his first business. He did not give any talk beforehand. He just sat down and picked up the

karatālas. It was the sacred activity. Prabhupāda sang for half an hour, not less. He was not afraid to keep an audience singing the *mahā-mantra*. Some walked out, but many surrendered to it. By the time the *kīrtana* was over, they had a good experience of Kṛṣṇa conscious "mysticism." When Prabhupāda began to speak, they understood the seriousness of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda wanted us to bring the chanting into the street. He wanted people to hear the holy names. In his lectures you can hear him encouraging the *harināma* parties. He was pleased they went out, even though they were sometimes harassed by police.

In the beginning he himself went to Tompkins Square Park. We never would have gone out otherwise. After *he* went, there was regular chanting of *harināma* in the streets of New York, San Francisco, Boston, and everywhere.

When we perform *kīrtana*, we should take the time to remember that this is a Prabhupāda activity. Thoughtfully and prayerfully, chant, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Try This . . .

A kaleidoscope is like catching leaves as they drift from the trees in the autumn. Try being sensitive to thoughts of Prabhupāda as they come. "Catch" them in any order as they "drift" through your consciousness. Try remembering Prabhupāda in this way, simply allowing your memories to drift from impression to impression, and then speaking them or writing them down.

Approved by him
1.7

We all wanted to see Prabhupāda when he came to a nearby city like New York or Boston, but we knew that the most important way to advance in Prabhupāda's service was by carrying out his orders. That often meant sticking to one's particular location. For example, after Prabhupāda visited Boston in May 1968, he went on to Montreal. I wanted to go to Montreal with him, but it was more important to stay in Boston, both because of my work at the welfare office and my duties in the temple. I knew I could realize Prabhupāda by service, and not by whimsically traveling where he was. If I had gone to Montreal over that summer to visit Prabhupāda, I would now be able to tell first-hand some of those Montreal pastimes. I stayed back, however, hoping that by sticking to my place, I would make spiritual progress in separation. It is still true that we serve Prabhupāda in separation by carrying out his orders.

If you could be in the same place with Prabhupāda, then your reward was to see his actual *līlā*. On the other hand, if you served him anywhere in the world, you had the advantage of actually attracting the pure devotee. By that attraction he would come to you. Prabhupāda said that we should not try to see Kṛṣṇa, but act in such a way that Kṛṣṇa sees us. He gave the example of an office worker in a big company who does his job very nicely. One day the president of the company examines his file and is impressed at the man's work. Then the president comes to that man's desk and congratulates him. We attract Prabhupāda by carrying out his orders.

Let us make our hearts pure and enthusiastic to receive him. Then when he comes to see us, we will have something to say to him. His coming will not occur just by hanging out as a guest, with no particular service, in the temple where Prabhupāda is visiting.

Sometimes the happy combination occurred when we could please Prabhupāda by rendering him service while in his personal presence. This happened the day that I was walking to work up Second Avenue in New York. I met Swamijī walking south toward the storefront. In those days, he didn't usually take morning walks, but he had started this habit after his stroke.

I saw him coming around the corner and walking my way. It was a great relief to see him because I was feeling anxious. I was anticipating the difficulty of going to work that day. The caseworkers were on strike, and in order to enter the building, I would have to go through their picket line. I had not joined their strike because I was working for Swamijī. I was not interested in losing weeks of pay in the name of trying to get a higher salary. I knew they would all hoot and holler and threaten to hit me when I walked through their double file.

Swamijī knew about the welfare strike, and he had already passed the picket lines from the other side of the street that morning. The workers had yelled at him because they knew he was sending me to work.

Swamijī was accompanied by Kīrtanānanda, and, just before I reached them, I bowed down to Prabhupāda, touching my forehead on the sidewalk. As I rose, I saw Swamijī smiling very beautifully. He reached out and touched me

slightly. We exchanged only a few words at that time, and I went off to my task filled with his blessings. That was certainly a moment to treasure: service in Prabhupāda's shelter, approved by him.

Try This . . .

While going about your daily activities, try remembering that what you are doing is service to Prabhupāda. Imagine that Prabhupāda is suddenly "coming around the corner" and offer him your obeisances. What would he say to you? What would you say to him? How would you feel after he continued his walk?

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Prabhupāda's books
1.8

One Indian man in Toronto said to Prabhupāda,
"I like your company so much, but we don't
have so much time to talk with you.
You have so much mercy . . . "
Prabhupāda replied, "So in my absence you read the books.
What I talk, I have written in the books. That's all."
But the man said, "Personally, we think more greater."
Prabhupāda replied, "That's all right. But still,
you can associate with me by reading my books."

Then the man began to praise:
"I am reading your books, Prabhupāda.
They are very good and most blissful to us.

It is the biggest good will for the whole universe.
By that knowledge, I have come from a dog . . .
I feel I have valuable property in my home,
because your books are there.
I was misled, misguided in this country . . ."

I too am reading your books, Prabhupāda.
I think I am blessed and the universe is blessed.

I sit in my chair with a lamp overhead
and open your book.
I am going to get it together.
I am going to be with you every day,
you and the Supreme Person, Lord Nārāyaṇa
and Govinda in His original form
with cowherd friends and Rādhā and *gopīs*,
that inconceivable Person.
You'll be pleased if I do it rightly.
Only then can I speak on your behalf.

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Back to Bombay
1.9

One of our best times for telling Prabhupāda stories was just after I had been with him as his servant for seven months. I then joined the library party and traveled around the United States quickly, visiting many universities and libraries in all parts of the country. We were always traveling, but usually we wound up in a motel at night. The devotees—Mahābuddhi, Ghanaśyāma, Mahādyuti, Kālakanta, Śeṣa, and others—gathered as I read

from the manuscript of the not-yet-published *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Then I remembered Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I had fresh stories to tell since I had just been with him. They were such a nice audience, always delighting in hearing about our spiritual master. In their company I felt free to admit my foolishness with Prabhupāda, and they inspired me to remember many details. Let me recall again being with them, in a motel just north of Little Rock, Arkansas, after a good day in which the university took full sets of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. In the company of the *brahmacārīs*, I remember . . . days with Prabhupāda in Bombay.

He was in his bed under the mosquito net, and I was out on the veranda. I took rest shortly after he did, listening to the mosquitoes buzzing outside my net. Sometimes I awoke around 1 A.M. when Prabhupāda got up to dictate. It was not my duty to rise then, so I drifted in and out of sleep while hearing him click the button on the dictation machine. Then around 3 A.M., while he was still dictating, I got up, and in a sleepy, unclean state, walked past Prabhupāda. He sat in his big mosquito net "'tent" at his writing desk. I made obeisances, but did not say anything, so as not to disturb his writing mood. I went outside and bathed in a nearby shack, pouring water on myself from a can. I returned and tried not to interrupt Prabhupāda, who was still under his tent.

After Prabhupāda finished dictation, he began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I folded up both my own net and his net and fixed his bed. After cleaning my area, I went to the kitchen to chant my *japa* silently. When

Prabhupāda chanted, I mostly heard, "Rām, Rām." It seemed that the volume of his *japa* would rise a little and become more distinct—at least to my ears in the other room—with the words, "Rām, Rām." I had to chant silently in the kitchen and it was very difficult. I fought to stay awake and also had little duties to perform such as getting Prabhupāda's medicine ready. I had to crush a particular type of nut with a black mortar and pestle, and then his red medicine would be mixed in, mashed together, and served to him. These little rituals were my life and soul and I did them as best I could.

It was nice to be able to base the whole day's routine around Prabhupāda. At dawn (around 5 A.M.) I came out of the kitchen and indicated that it was time for Prabhupāda's walk. I had the tape recorder ready over my shoulder; then through the dark streets to the beach as the sun rose. A full walk with Prabhupāda in his most glorious aspect of preaching the philosophy to the devotees! We felt protected and loved by him! As the morning sunlight brightened the sky, we walked back along Juhu Beach to the temple and attended *guru-pūja,* then went back to the apartment for his breakfast of fruits and ginger.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not have many engagements until late morning, and sometimes he rested and slept a little while sitting in his seat. I liked it when people did not come to see him—I particularly enjoyed seeing Prabhupāda quiet and alone.

Then around 11 A.M., if there were no meetings in progress, I put on my *gamchā* and went out to the shack to take a noon bath. I talked briefly with

Tamāla Krishna Mahārāja when he was in there, but then returned to give Prabhupāda his massage.

Prabhupāda sitting down on the veranda . . . me massaging his body . . . feeling happy to do so . . . warm in the sunlight . . . feeling my own youthful strength . . . wanting to serve Prabhupāda by massaging his scalp the way he had instructed . . . little movements of the fingers drawing together the skin of his scalp . . . hoping to give him some relief . . . knowing that Prabhupāda is a pure devotee . . . trying to think as I touch him, "How would *I* want this to feel? How would it feel relaxing to *me?*" . . . Trying to impart that pleasure to Prabhupāda . . .

In those days, Pālikā dāsī was cooking. She cooked in his little kitchen while I moved out to the veranda and typed letters. When all the preparations were done, I brought them in to Prabhupāda on the *thālīs.* Of course, there was always rice, and *sabjī,* and simple *capātīs,* and there were always enough remnants for me and all the others.

After lunch Prabhupāda rested. In the afternoon he met guests while I wrote letters or spaced out or tried reading his books or finishing my rounds. Then, in the evening, he either went over to the temple to lecture or went to the roof. These were some of the events in the daily routine, and they occurred day after day no matter what was going on with my own worries about what I wanted to do. I was at least absorbed enough in the routine that I was safely protected. My life was simply to serve him and write letters on his behalf. There was no time for my own activities. I had more security because I served Kṛṣṇa through His pure devotee. That pushed me into a humbler position. There

was such an incredible contrast between me and Prabhupāda.

When I told of these Bombay days to the library party, they were so eager to hear more that I opened up and told things that required confessions on my part in order to give more detail about Prabhupāda. Confessions of my inabilities usually helped to break through to new memories of Prabhupāda that had been hidden under the covering.

So I told the devotees about my "sins" of stealing sweets before they were offered to Prabhupāda. Mahābuddhi dāsa laughed to hear it and said, "If that's all you have to worry about, it is not so bad." However, it seemed a big thing to me at the time. Guests used to give Prabhupāda sweets which they had bought in the sweet shops. I kept them in cardboard boxes in the kitchen and would give Prabhupāda one or two with his lunch. He would ask for those that he preferred. There were so many of them that some went stale after a while, and I would give them out to the other devotees. Everything had to be done under his direction, though.

It certainly was not proper for a servant to eat sweets before they had been offered to the spiritual master. It meant eating *bhoga* instead of *prasādam.* Sometimes, devotees say that everything in India is automatically *prasādam;* but I was an American, a trained ISKCON man, and we never did anything like that, and what to speak of taking something meant for my own spiritual master who was in the next room.

There were fudge-like sweets—*burfi or laḍḍhu*—that were really good. I had tasted them from the remnants on Prabhupāda's plate, so I knew how

good they were. I used to look at them in their boxes while I chanted *japa.* I began to think, "Let me just take one." Finally, I succumbed and ate one, and, although for a minute it was delicious, I immediately regretted it. I did it a few times and then stopped. It didn't develop into a voracious habit, but it epitomized my lack of sense control. How petty I was to eat sweets, and then to worry about eating the sweets! How petty to be having that kind of mental dialogue rather than something sublime from *Nectar of Devotion!* How petty that I was not absorbed in the simple purity of serving Prabhupāda so that he would be happy and satisfied! Why couldn't I just be simple and bring in his medicine, or his twig-toothbrush, or do anything he wanted?

I told the library party men (and I will probably always be telling someone) about my foolishness in asking Prabhupāda if I could leave his service in order to go preach in the West. It played on my mind for quite a few days. Finally I took an opportunity to directly ask Prabhupāda while he sat at his desk. I knew that Prabhupāda wasn't a pushover. He was always willing to hear, but, at the same time, he reserved the right to speak directly.

I said to Prabhupāda that I would like to travel and preach. He immediately said that it was whimsical. He said not to jump around. He wanted me to do the service that I was doing as his servant. He was very decisive. He knew just what he wanted to say and he said it. It wasn't as if he was so concerned for my tender feelings or that he immediately wanted to give in and gratify my wishes. He was in charge and he said no. He was like a father. I was the young boy who had asked to borrow the car. He

simply said no. He trusted that we had enough of a relationship that, as guru, he could tell me as disciple what was right.

I accepted Prabhupāda's decision. I felt very foolish afterwards, but I was glad I had spoken to him. It was a relief that the whole thing had come out and my foolishness had been exposed. Then, however, I began to worry that now Prabhupāda would kick me out and I would lose the precious opportunity I had. I felt a new rush of appreciation for the chance to serve him, to type his letters and live next to him. Just to be able to massage him was worth all the other so-called difficulties I had to endure. So what if I had to suffer because I could not chant out loud and I fell asleep? That was *my* nonsense. If I would simply study Prabhupāda's books better, such as *Nectar of Devotion,* and simply pay attention when he lectured and on walks, then all my problems would be solved. I tried to preach to myself like that. That same day, I wrote Prabhupāda a letter and put it on top of the typed letters. The letter said that I was sorry that I had been so foolish before him. I was ashamed and I was very happy to serve him. Prabhupāda wrote back, "Thank you very much . . ." Then he wrote, "May Krishna protect you from all calamities. You are very pure."

Unfortunately, it didn't take too much longer before I again began feeling restless. By Prabhupāda's grace, though, I was able to transfer to the service of distributing his books with the library party.

I usually ended our library party sessions of reminiscence by recalling, at least to myself, the solace of being able to serve Prabhupāda's mission.

Dear Srila Prabhupad, Thank you very much
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 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, 31

Even if I failed to be a success as his domestic servant, at least he was allowing me the chance to be a success as his disciple, in a suitable service.

Try This . . .

Try setting aside one night a month (or a week) to sit down and discuss Prabhupāda-*kathā* with other devotees. Hear tapes, watch videos, or read about his pastimes in the *Līlāmṛta*—but do it in the company of other devotees. Then churn the nectar ocean by discussing how you are experiencing Prabhupāda's presence in your life.

❀❀❀❀❀❀

I come from reading
1.10

I read some letters, one to Nehru;
it was very pleasing hearing Prabhupāda say
that in the ideal past, everyone followed
brāhmaṇas who lived in cottages.
Cāṇakya Paṇḍita said a wise man sees other
women
as mothers, other's property as pebbles,
and he treats everyone as he wants to be treated.
Prabhupāda said sages of all religions,
like Christ, Buddha and Mohammed taught
not to be materialists.
And so he preached to Nehru,
"Let us be true to one another"—
become real *brāhmaṇas*, revive the proper use of
temples in India,
teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Then I looked at *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta:*
Prabhupāda in Māyāpura in the early 70s,
as the *mahant* of the building,
in the lamp-lit evening,
the room filled with frankincense smoke.
Prabhupāda said that the insects
are better than jet planes.
"Don't waste, build Māyāpura."
I loved going there and hearing.

And then I read morning walks in Vṛndāvana.
He said the *Māyāvādīs* are worse than the
Buddhists.
Brahmānanda spoke on behalf of "them,"
"The *Kṛṣṇa* book is just a story."
Bhūrijana was saying he disliked
cheating methods on book distribution.
Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa and Hari-śauri preached to him
and Prabhupāda said that his order
is to distribute books and so
if there's something wrong, then do it
the right way yourself, but don't stop it.

That was about 45 minutes,
the most peaceful part of the day.
If I didn't do it,
I'd be sad and incomplete.

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Spiritual father
1.11

. . . I am very glad to know you have become more affectionate for your Spiritual Father than for your

natural father, and this is quite to the standard of spiritual advancement.

—Letter, July 11, 1969

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he was the spiritual father of his disciples, and this is also supported by śāstric references.

I once inquired from Śrīla Prabhupāda if he was my real father—as I felt he was—and he replied, "Yes."

> You have accepted me as father, so I have also accepted you as my dear and real son. The relationship of father and son on the spiritual platform is real and eternal. On the material platform such a relationship is ephemeral and temporary. Although I cannot give you anything as father, still I pray to Kṛṣṇa for your more and more advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
>
> —Letter, January 22, 1968

On a morning walk while living at John Lennon's estate, Śrīla Prabhupāda assured his disciples in a similar way about fatherhood.

Vibhāvatī dāsī asked, "What is the meaning of spiritual master?"

"Actually, I am not your spiritual master," Prabhupāda replied. "That title is simply a formality. You should think of me as your spiritual father, your eternal father."

One time a devotee asked Prabhupāda if the "*rasa*" between the disciple and the spiritual master could advance from servant-master, to friend, or to the conjugal *rasa?* Prabhupāda answered that the eternal relationship with the spiritual master is as servant and master or son and spiritual father. He quoted the line from the Vaiṣṇava song praising

the spiritual master, "*janme janme prabhu sei* . . . he is my lord birth after birth." On another occasion, Prabhupāda quoted that same line, but altered the Sanskrit, *janme janme pīta sei* . . . "he is my father birth after birth."

In 1966, Acyutānanda dāsa's mother wrote a paper for a New York University psychology course describing the relationship of Prabhupāda and his disciples. Her theory was that the young boys who had joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement were all from broken families, and that is why they were taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and seeing Prabhupāda as their spiritual father. When Acyutānanda told this to the devotees we saw it as a joke. His mother hadn't done any interviewing, but based it all on knowledge of her own son. Perhaps it was a fact that some devotees came from broken homes, yet others came from strong family units, as I did. This was the first time I heard anyone theorizing that the relationship a devotee has with his material father has implications in his relationship with his spiritual father.

Atheist psychologists say that a belief in God is based on a person's insecurity in his relationship with his seminal father. This theory can also be used to explain why one is attracted to a spiritual father.

However, according to Vedic *śāstra*, God is the Father and the spiritual master is also the father. As stated in the *Vedas*, "In every species of life one is born with a mother and father, but only in the human life can one obtain a relationship with guru and Kṛṣṇa."

The theory put forward by Acyutānanda's mother, or by Freud and company, has nothing to

do with the fact of God's existence. The Supreme Lord is independent. He rules all creatures, regardless of our family situations. If some persons seek God partly because of the unhappiness they find in family life, that unhappiness may turn out to be their good fortune. Conversely, if one thinks that because he has a good family life he does not need to seek God, then he is in illusion.

God consciousness is the goal of human life. If a person is born of a mother and father who can give the child love, as well as a God conscious education, then he is very blessed. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, if one is born into a family of transcendentalists, that is the result of good karma.

> It is certainly very fortunate to take birth in such families. Fortunately, both our spiritual master Oṁ Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and our humble self had the opportunity to take birth in such families by the grace of the Lord, and both of us were trained in the devotional service of the Lord from the very beginning of our lives. Later on, we met by the order of the transcendental system.
>
> —*Bg.* 6.43, purport

In gratitude to the father who raised him, Śrīla Prabhupāda dedicated the *Kṛṣṇa* book to his father, Gour Mohan De. Prabhupāda described him as "a pure devotee who raised me as a Kṛṣṇa conscious child from the beginning of my life. In my boyhood ages, he instructed me how to play the *mṛdaṅga*. He gave me Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *vigrahā* to worship and he gave me Jagannātha Ratha to duly observe the festival as my childhood play. He was kind to me,

and I imbibed from him the ideas later on solidified by my spiritual master, the eternal father."

Even one who has a pure devotee as a father still must approach a spiritual master for initiation. It is not true that only someone who has an unhappy relationship with his material father seeks out God or guru.

In my case, I was very much under the domination of my father until about my eighteenth year, and then I gradually began to resent him. I thought he misunderstood me and stifled my individual spirit. I had already broken from my father's influence as much as was possible, and was living alone when I met Śrīla Prabhupāda. I can recall a specific incident in which I transferred myself as the son of Stephen Guarino, Sr. to become the son of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I had informed my father and mother by phone calls and by sending them an ISKCON "Prospectus" of my interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the Swami. To my surprise, my parents strongly rejected it. My father said, "If you keep going to the Swami, we won't have anything to do with you." After that phone call, I went and told Prabhupāda what had happened, and that is when the feeling of transfer occurred. Prabhupāda saw my dilemma and assured me that he was my father. Through him, I could connect myself with Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Our relationship with our material father lies deep in the psyche and often leaves us with negative impressions. This may sometimes be projected onto our relationship with our spiritual father. If this happens, it can be very dangerous to spiritual life. After some years of following the orders of the spiritual master, a disciple may feel restless and

even rebellious. Thus the spiritual master becomes the focus for dissatisfaction and doubt. If we find this happening, we should be aware that we may be influenced by our old relationship with our material father.

In my case, I didn't show rebellion towards my material father until I was almost twenty years old, because he had me so much under his control. Perhaps after a similar amount of years in a spiritual movement, a spiritual son may feel symptoms of rebelliousness. In an unconscious way, the disciple may think that his spiritual father is acting in the same way or with the same motivations as his material father used to. A rebellious son might think, "He is heavy and I don't like this. I have different interests than he does and he will squelch me. He will make me do things I don't want to do in the name of authority." If this happens, one has to see clearly that these are old reactions and are not properly applied to the spiritual father.

Māyā may dictate to us, "It is not your fault. Maybe it is your spiritual master's fault that you are unhappy." Unless we are able to defeat this voice of skepticism, we will not be able to survive in spiritual life. Neither will it suffice just to give a dogmatic reply to the skeptical doubt. We have to go deeper and understand the perfection of the spiritual master. As Prabhupāda described, his perfection is not the same as the perfection of God. He is perfect because he is always fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service and always preaching the Lord's glories. He is a pure devotee and very dear to Kṛṣṇa. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "The saints are always in my heart, and I am always in their hearts. I think only of them and they think only of Me." By delving deeply into

the scriptures and understanding both the position of the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master and one's own position, one can avoid *guru-aparādha.*

As the disciple grows older, his appreciations should increase for how much his spiritual master has sacrificed to raise all his spiritual sons and daughters. Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples should learn to appreciate more how their spiritual master created the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and how he dealt with thousands of disciples from fallen backgrounds. How successful he was!

If there were times when you felt ill at ease in the presence of your spiritual master or thought that you were forced to obey, you should accept these incidents in a submissive way and realize that it was all for your benefit. For example, sometimes the *gopīs* complained about Kṛṣṇa, but that was out of their deep affection for Him. Ultimately, they knew that He was their worshipable Lord, no matter what He did. We should also come to these conclusions about Śrīla Prabhupāda by deepening our relationship with him in a human-like way, and basing it on the imperatives of spiritual life. We must surrender to the guru with love and understanding.

The spiritual master is not only father, but he is mother, friend, and guide in our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The feeling of fatherhood toward guru, though, is perhaps strongest. He raised us as spiritual infants and we are eternally indebted to him. Although we may feel that we are going through changes and experiencing growing pains, we pray to remain always as the surrendered and foolish sons of our kind spiritual master.

He is not an ordinary father. As we need our life airs to circulate in our bodies to live, so we need to follow the order of the spiritual master, life after life.

❀❀❀❀❀❀

Reading his conversations
1.12

On a morning walk, he said
a bubble comes up suddenly
from the middle of the pond, we don't know
why.
Because you contacted something,
it comes up later.
At death what comes
will determine the next life.

He challenged his disciples,
"Why should you want to please Kṛṣṇa?"
They replied, "Because guru says so,
because scripture says so."
Prabhupāda said no.
He said, "You cannot non-cooperate with Kṛṣṇa.
Just as the hands must cooperate
to feed the belly."

The next morning in Nairobi he challenged,
"Give me an example how matter comes from Kṛṣṇa."
They said, "Scripture says so,"
but he didn't want to hear that.
He gave an example:
"If my body produces a little gas,
I know that the Supreme Lord produces all the gas in the universe."
"But verbal analogies don't prove
scientific fact," said Harikeśa.
Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Then you are rascal.
Verbal analogy is proof."
"That's assuming . . . there's even a God," said Harikeśa.
Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Those who are not qualified
cannot know the body of God."
Harikeśa said—but Prabhupāda interrupted,
"We are blind, we need to go to the guru."

His aged body was no bar
to his vigorous speaking.
At eighty he didn't "mellow out";
he kept at bay the dogs of doubt,
chastised them with his cane.

Let's carefully consider
what he said as he walked.
Let us seek
the instructions of enlightenment.

Try This . . .

By publishing the complete, unedited volumes of Prabhupāda's room conversations, the BBT has

opened up to everyone a rich vein of association with Prabhupāda "as-he-is." I regularly carry one of these volumes and savor a little at a time. You might be inspired to write poems after reading these, or consider taking notes or sharing a special passage with a friend.

Just a glance
1.13

According to the Vedic *śāstras,* a pure devotee can impart Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others through his words, his good wishes, and by his glance. "Simply by seeing such empowered individuals, people from different villages would become like them by the mercy of their glance" *(Cc. Madhya,* 7.104).

In the confidential exchanges between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, much is accomplished by the lover's glances. The *gopīs* are thrilled to receive the direct or side-long glance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Kṛṣṇa is especially anxious to receive the glance of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. One time while Kṛṣṇa was searching for Rādhārāṇī in the groves of Vṛndāvana, He spoke in this way to a female deer: "O doe, the walking young vine that is the beautiful girl Rādhā must have passed through this forest because, O friend, I see you have accepted Me as your guru and taken initiation from Her in the art of playful, sweet, restless glances" *(Lalitā-Mādhava,* Act 9.62).

In the loving exchanges between spiritual master and disciple, Śrīla Prabhupāda's glances were certainly treasured by his devotees.

I remember receiving a glance from Śrīla Prabhupāda in the back seat of his car in Toronto. Our BBT library party had been with Śrīla Prabhupāda in

Detroit; however, when Prabhupāda traveled on to Toronto, we were a day late because we stopped to sell books at a college. Arriving during Śrīla Prabhupāda's second morning in Toronto, I was allowed to go into the car with him for his morning walk. As I entered and sat beside him, he glanced and said, "Where were you?" I replied that we had been selling his books at a university. Prabhupāda then asked me our results and I was able to tell him some good news. Hearing the words of my spiritual master was certainly important, but his glance was very wonderful.

I doubt that we fully understand how much those glances went into us and how they stayed with us. The Kṛṣṇa conscious *siddhānta* asserts that words are able to convey the Absolute Truth, yet we also think that there are certain things which cannot be conveyed fully in words: for example, what it feels like to receive Prabhupāda's glance.

Sometimes the glances were loving, and sometimes they reprimanded. If King Mucukunda could reduce a person to fiery ashes just by his gaze, Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee could "knock over" a misbehaving disciple. Once when I was performing a *yajña* in Boston, I whimsically omitted reciting the first few verses of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* prayers. Prabhupāda gave me one of those looks. He seemed hurt that one who was supposed to be a disciple could act so whimsically. Mixed in with the hurt was the stern reprimand of the teacher. He said, "Why have you done this?" With a language of their own, his eyes also said, "*Why?*"

Śrīla Prabhupāda's looks clued us in on his emotions. His eyes sparkled with humor. Tears came to his eyes while talking about the cruelty of

cow-slaughter. Sometimes, though, his glance excluded us. In a memoir by a Zen student about her guru, she said that when you looked into his eyes you saw "total zero for 10,000 miles." Prabhupāda never conveyed blank to us, but his gaze did convince us that he was experiencing something we could not. Prabhupāda would glance at an ISKCON painting or Indian print in his room and say, "Here is Kṛṣṇa." Yet when we looked at that picture of Lord Kṛṣṇa, so many relative thoughts and impressions registered in our hearts and minds. We knew that Prabhupāda saw Him differently. *We saw the difference when we looked into his eyes.*

In Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *Śrī Stavāvali,* one of the poems ends with the refrain, "When will Śacī's son again walk on the pathway of my eyes?" We pray to know when we may be able to see Prabhupāda—and when he will again bestow his glance upon us.

❁❁❁❁❁❁

Prabhupāda's books
1.14

So the battle has recommenced between me and
sleep.
Prabhupāda prepared these books for us,
and I have some time,
a very small amount,
which Kṛṣṇa has allowed . . .

This morning I saw through
the mist of dim consciousness—
to the importance of learning that
I am a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Much can be achieved by this simple act,
reading the book
if you do it like the sages
at Naimiśāraṇya: with rapt attention.

Let all day be a hunt for time,
to pay attention, submission to the word.
Do you remember anything?

Yes—the soul comes here,
mistaking who he is.
He is spirit, but comes under the marginal
energy.
Kṛṣṇa wants to take us back.
If you keep on reading,
you'll learn:
bhakti is the only way.

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Part Two

The Prabhupāda Museum
2.1

Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance is important for all the people of the world. Therefore, his museum is important. New York City is the right place for it. The museum in New York has been created mostly by Prabhupāda's disciple, Puru dāsa. It is Puru Prabhu's meditation, but everyone can benefit.

When we were in Assisi, we saw many tour groups. We overheard one of the monks describing the paintings of Giotto depicting the life of Saint Francis: "This picture showed that in the 13th century, the Church was somewhat corrupt, but Francis came to give it new life. . . . " Similarly, ISKCON devotees can guide visitors throughout his museum. Although we do not have art masterpieces like those by Giotto, the humble Prabhupāda artifacts evoke the appearance of the pure devotee. It is one of the functions of a Prabhupādānuga to explain the history of Prabhupāda and his movement.

Everything is here, right down to the handprints on the page, preserved under museum glass. Although you cannot see the pure devotee unless you have a spiritual eye, you get the general idea when you visit the museum. No one can walk out of here and say, "I don't think Prabhupāda existed," or, "Prabhupāda probably came here as a rich man with patronage." No one can make up such speculations, because the history of his poverty and aloneness is here.

There is a museum for Elvis Presley which has his motorcycle in a glass case, but preserving the artifacts of an ordinary man does not make him

glorious. People cry when they remember Elvis, but how does that help them achieve the purpose of a human life? In the Prabhupāda museum, the same techniques are used, but with a different effect.

Take for example, this picture of Kṛṣṇa and Yaśodā, painted in 1966 under Prabhupāda's direction. It is crude, and yet I can worship Kṛṣṇa by looking at the picture. Here is a picture of Lord Caitanya dancing in *saṅkīrtana*. It is the painting that Prabhupāda put in the window of his first temple. He mentioned it in his lectures. It produces a kind of trance.

You look at the documents—memos signed by Prabhupāda, photos from that time. His spoon, eyeglasses and dictaphone are placed in a case with an official label under it. Prabhupāda wore these clothes. That canvas sign with Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra written on it was done under Prabhupāda's direction. We brought it onto the streets when we performed *harināma*. Here in Prabhupāda's handwriting is the list of rules and regulations for initiated devotees.

Here is Prabhupāda using his dictaphone while staying at the Brooklyn temple. Here is Prabhupāda patting a devotee on the back as he enters the temple in Los Angeles. The museum tells us the story of Prabhupāda's kindness in coming here. (Vaiṣṇavas say the only reason that one should ever leave Vṛndāvana is to preach. Prabhupāda preached. All his activities were a sacrifice for preaching, and that is what is pictured in the museum.)

See the newspaper headlines—"Swami How They Love You"—"Swami Invites The Hippies"—"New Indian Religion Sends You Higher Than

LSD"—"Save Earth Now"—"The Secrets of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness"—"The Swami's Flock Chants In Park To Find Ecstasy"—"Fifty Followers Clap and Sway to Hypnotic Music of East Side Ceremony."

Prabhupāda's work continues. The museum exists within a living temple. Devotees reside here and worship Rādhā-Govinda. They go out from here to distribute Prabhupāda's books.

Try This . . .

Puru Prabhu opens the Prabhupāda museum in Brooklyn on Sunday from 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. He will also occasionally open it on special request if someone is passing through New York on a different day. I highly recommend sharing in his meditation on Prabhupāda. There are other wonderful collections of Prabhupāda's remnants displayed around the world in places like Dallas, Los Angeles, Bombay, Māyāpura, Bhaktivedanta Manor, and Vṛndāvana. Take advantage if you can.

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Prabhupāda's relationship with New York City
2.2

After staying a few days in the Brooklyn temple and visiting the Prabhupāda Museum, I decided to speak about Prabhupāda to the audience at the Sunday feast. I knew they would like to hear about Prabhupāda in their city.

> Yes, from the very beginning I went to New York because I thought that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the most

important idea in the world, so let me go to that place, New York, which is the most important city in the world, and if I am able to do anything for Kṛṣṇa and my spiritual master, even I am at the fag-end of my life, at least let me try for it there.

—Letter, December 23, 1972

New York City was the only city in America where Prabhupāda walked the streets alone. It is hard for us to conceive of now. We see pictures of Prabhupāda sitting on a large vyāsāsana and speaking to hundreds of devotees, but in Manhattan in 1965-66, no one was his follower. He walked the streets and thought, "How can I spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness here?"

In a 1965 lecture, Prabhupāda gave an analogy to explain that Kṛṣṇa is not alone. He said, "All day I am in this room alone, but when you come in the evening, I become more enlivened." He was like a hermit in the city. He typed *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and chanted alone, even when the lights went out.

When I was alone in your New York, I was thinking, who will listen to me in this horrible, sinful place? All right, I shall stay a little longer, at least I can distribute a few of my books, that is something. But Krishna was all along preparing something I could not see, and He brought you to me one by one, sincere American boys and girls, to be trained-up for doing the work of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Now I can see that it is a miracle. Otherwise, your city of New York, one single old man, with only a few books to sell for barely getting eatables, how he can survive, what to speak of introducing God consciousness movement for saving humankind? That is Krishna's miracle. Now I can see it.

—Letter, December 23, 1972

Śrīla Prabhupāda had no romantic notions about Manhattan. He commiserated with the human suffering that he saw here. He spoke about the heavy snowfall, and compared the dirt on the streets to the dirt in the heart. He saw the city as big *māyā*, and he wanted to give us shelter.

I encouraged the Sunday guests in Brooklyn to take part in Prabhupāda's preaching in New York even today. For example, they may associate with devotees and attend the Rādhā-Govinda Mandir.

When Prabhupāda revisited Manhattan in 1976, he reminisced about the old days. He said, "When I came here no one cared for me, but now I have so many sons; it is Kṛṣṇa's mercy." He also wrote in one letter, "New York is very special to me because I started there without anything except faith in my spiritual master and Lord Krishna. I am very glad to see that things are developing there nicely" (Letter, October 17, 1975).

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Don't interrupt the reader
2.3

Sleepy while reading.
What do you expect
in such a soft chair after porridge?
Why don't you live more athletically?
Be simple and sparse and when you
notice you've conked out,
rise as you do during japa in the temple.

Remember? As soon as your mind bleared over,
you stood and walked toward that painting
of Kṛṣṇa and His friends, and then walked to the
other side
facing the painting of Kṛṣṇa
with His eight principle *gopīs*.
Don't stay comfortable,
as if it is all right, nodding.
Speak aloud the poetry of Vyāsa,
the purport of Prabhupāda—
save yourself.
Finally it cleared,
and I joined him for a walk,
in Ahmedabad, arguing again—
An *ārya-samājī* said, "God is formless."
Prabhupāda argued and I followed.
When Prabhupāda gave an example,
the man said, "But that's material experience."
Prabhupāda replied,
"Unless I speak from experience how can we
talk?"
He had him coming or going:
either evidence from *śāstra* or
evidence from this world, by analogy.
In any case, Kṛṣṇa says they are *mūḍhās*
and this man finally admitted, "Yes, I am a
mūḍhā."

Obeisances to the book-reading.
Obeisances to segments of alertness
while nuthatches and other little birds
flew right up to the window,
pecked against it and made noises—
and mice in the attic,
and my brother threatening to interrupt
by opening the door. I bury myself
deep into the book, so they'll go away.
I am doing something
which should be protected.
Since it is only going to last another 10-20
minutes,
why not leave him alone, the reader
of Prabhupāda's books?
Don't think,
"He is only reading, I can interrupt him."
You are busy with many things,
but he has taken the best part
and it shall not be denied him.

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Prabhupāda's departure
2.4

Death is the ultimate physical disease and is usually accompanied by great discomfort. King Kulaśekhara prays, "Let me die while I am healthy and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, because, at the time of death, it will be hard to think of You." From the medical point of view, Prabhupāda did not have an easy departure. In the foreword to Śrīla Prabhupāda's last volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the

publishers state, "In these last days Śrīla Prabhupāda was gravely ill. Unable to eat for weeks, his health had deteriorated, making even the slightest movement excruciatingly painful . . . The physician attending His Divine Grace confided that an ordinary man in such critical condition would have been crying out from the intense pain. Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples were awestruck as they watched their spiritual master work quietly, undisturbed."

We may say that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not feel pain from the diseases that racked his body because he was all-spiritual. We who were with Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, sometimes heard him moan, saw that he could not sit up and needed help to walk to the bathroom. We knew that he was a liberated devotee and that he was guided at every step by Kṛṣṇa, but it was also our duty to perform our bedside services seriously.

He lost his sight. Devotees gathered around him singing Hare Kṛṣṇa with small *karatālas,* through long afternoons. Although Prabhupāda was in a difficult position, his devotees continued to demand from him. They asked questions and sometimes begged him to favor their own viewpoint in a dispute. We continued to expect him to reciprocate, but in the final days he no longer gave much outward reciprocation. It was a test of our devotion whether we could tolerate being quiet and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with no other activity for long periods of time. This is what he offered us.

As long as Prabhupāda could speak, he expressed concern for those around him. He wanted to know if the devotees enjoyed the feast for Govardhana-*pūjā,* and he asked to hear the menu. Some of us found it difficult to tolerate our own bodily incon-

veniences: backaches and headaches and the mental strain of his imminent departure. We felt rivalries and did not know what the future would hold. It was heavy in Vṛndāvana, and very hot. Yet we were the healthy ones; we were not facing the ultimate test as Prabhupāda was.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave instructions until the last breath, especially for preaching in various parts of the world. Go on developing the preaching in Africa. Take a theatrical group to Russia. Thank you for this blanket made from the sheeps' wool at Gītā-nāgarī; go on developing that farm. Distribute books to all the professors; print books in all the languages; go to Bangladesh with the courage of a British soldier and the heart of a Bengali mother.

In his last moments, Prabhupāda began moving on the bed. Some devotees later referred to it as his "dancing." I saw it as a struggle by Prabhupāda's body. Who can understand these things? I did not think it was something that I should be happy about. Our spiritual master was leaving his body, and, although theoretically we all knew that this was a glorious event, it seemed to us a terrible calamity. Those last moments by Prabhupāda on his bed were like a swimming stroke, the Australian crawl. His arms and legs moved for a few moments, and then he left. You could tell the exact moment by the movement in his face. We did not need a last minute show. He did everything with dignity. He had taught us that the spirit is important and not the bones. We should preach in this world as long as we have life.

When we go back to his Vṛndāvana room with its black floor and dark atmosphere, we think of Prabhupāda's departure. We look at the articles

which are preserved from that day. The calendar is stopped at November 14, 1977. We lament that we do not feel strong emotions, just as in 1977 we lamented that we did not feel them. Yet any favorable attempt to think of Prabhupāda is better than not thinking about him at all. Trying to rededicate ourselves is never futile, even if the next moment we become forgetful. Prabhupāda is the mainstay of our lives.

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Thoughts during a Prabhupāda Marathon
2.5

Prabhupāda is everything to me.

I am writing this while sitting in the temple room of the preaching center on South Street, Philadelphia. On the altar are Gaura-Nitāi Deities, Jagannātha deities, and a *tulasī* plant, but all of it comes from Prabhupāda.

I just spoke with Haryāśva dāsa who runs this preaching center. He is my disciple, but we are both trying to please Prabhupāda. The nourishing, transcendental goal is Prabhupāda's pleasure. Otherwise, why assume it is possible to do something on South Street by opening a spiritual center? Why assume to be a spiritual master of another person and claim to help him? We sometimes think that our Prabhupāda connections are shaky due to our lack of sincerity and realization—but we are dependent on Prabhupāda's leniency and mercy.

Prabhupāda came and set the example for preaching in this city. We have to follow. When he first

arrived, no one was interested in Kṛṣṇa. If it seems difficult *now* to impress Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just imagine how much more difficult it was when there was no precedent for accepting "the foreign God."

Today is December 20th, and ISKCON is in the midst of the Prabhupāda book distribution marathon. Devotees are going out, but are they deeply motivated? Are they running mainly on competitive spirit? Whatever the motivation, their *saṅkīrtana* is glorious. There may be flaws in their presentation due to youthfulness or the desire to acquire *lakṣmi* on behalf of their temples that desperately need money. Their faults are like pockmarks on the moon. How brave they are, how determined and surrendered. They stop one person after another and ask them, "Please take a book." Although I don't go out with them, I do not feel ashamed of myself, or resentful of what they are doing. I think of my own little service to speak on behalf of Prabhupāda. I too am part of this movement. As they are distributing books with high energy and courageous inspiration, I am also directing my service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I know he will accept it.

Try This . . .

During the next Prabhupāda Marathon, or at any time, think about how pleased Prabhupāda was by the distribution of his books. Then think kindly about the austerities, past and present, that devotees have gone through to please Prabhupāda in this way. Think how your own service is pleasing to Prabhupāda and how ultimately, we are all con-

nected in some small way to his preaching and book distribution mission.

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There is no end
2.6

On the walk in Ahmedabad, a man challenged,
"God is formless, that is the principle."
"That is *your* principle," said Prabhupāda.
"No," the man said, "it is the philosophy."
Prabhupāda replied, "You say formless and I say
He has form. Philosophy means we shall discuss.
So why shall God not have form?"
Our strong leader; impartially arguing.
In the park, you are with him.

During the time you've saved for reading,
don't be part of this world.
Don't come back to the room
and its distraction; hold on
in the world of his books,
immersed in Kṛṣṇa thought,
with Prabhupāda as guide.

When you "finish" all his books,
you can begin again;
you never really knew the First Canto.
You may always thrill to *Bhagavad-gītā,*
and you still haven't gotten rid of *anārthas,*
those memories are chasing you . . .

Besides that, there's no end
because you don't die.
One who understands *bhakti*
attains eternal, blissful service to the Lord.
Maybe in Kṛṣṇaloka they don't need books
there speaking is song,
they dance and sing
with *Vedānta* Himself.

But we need books to preach.
To fight off those who say God is formless,
and voidists with theories
of no God and no soul, no nothing.
Prabhupāda, we need your books.
To fight and to relish.
It would have been nice if you had written more,
Padma Purāṇa, more Tenth Canto,
The six Gosvāmī's literature, *Mahābharata*,
but you saved some for your followers.
Now everyone can read and proclaim the truth—
and write it too,
what you have said.
Let's make Prabhupāda literature
for your satisfaction.
As you used to say, "They are all going to hell.
Let us try to save at least a few."

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"If you are not ashamed"
2.7

Before I became a devotee of Prabhupāda, my friends and I often expressed our determination not to "sell out." Selling out meant giving up our free

spirit and surrendering to the demands of American society. When I moved to the Lower East Side, the expression was, "Don't cop-out." Don't give up the hip life and become an ordinary American shmo.

Swamijī's disciples didn't think of themselves as cop-outs, but one day a visitor to the storefront told Gargamuni dāsa, "I think Hare Kṛṣṇa is a cop-out."

"What?" Gargamuni defended our position. "You call this a cop-out? We're not afraid to shave our heads and wear a *dhotī* and walk around the city like this, but here you are with your black denims and your shirt looking like everybody else. You think you're so cool, but you're just another anonymous person on the street."

What our visitor meant was that we had given up the "responsibilities" of hippie life—no more marijuana or LSD—and we lived in our temple in a different reality with aspirations to return to the spiritual world. It sounded to him like a cop-out. We had our comeback remarks, but if some of the hippies didn't accept us, then that was a price we had to pay.

One time, when I was sitting inside the storefront, I overheard two guys who stopped to read Swamijī's sign in the window. One of them read aloud: "Classes in *Bhagavad-gītā*—Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Chant this transcendental sound vibration, Hare Krishna mantra. Learn the science of Krishna from a bona fide spiritual master." Then he said to his friend, "What kind of word is that to use for a guru—*bona fide?* It sounds like a legal term." They laughed at the use of the word "bona fide." I knew what they meant because I also used to laugh cynically at anything that was a little strange.

Their attitude was typical of middle-class Americans who had become hip and were ready to take apart anything that didn't seem to be hip. By laughing at Prabhupāda's use of "bona fide," they were mocking our whole scene. In hippie life, the worst mistake was to do anything "square." So by detecting this one phrase that didn't seem to fit in with hip consciousness—"bona fide spiritual master"—they laughed and walked on, dismissing the seriousness of our movement.

From inside the storefront I thought, "You don't understand. Just because the Swami uses a few words differently than you doesn't mean you have a reason to reject him." As Prabhupāda writes in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* he is more interested in the techniques of *bhakti* than in the language. By "bona fide" he meant that a spiritual master cannot be concocted, cannot be an upstart. He has to be genuine. There is nothing wrong with the meaning of the words "bona fide" to define a spiritual master, but with the hippie movement, style was worth more than content.

Another time, I was standing just outside the storefront, and I met my old friend Murray Mednick. Murray was my soul-friend, a writer, a person I admired as a deep thinker. He knew that I was attending the Swami's lectures, but we hadn't met in many weeks.

"What are you writing?" he asked.

"I am with the Swami now." I said. "He is writing and I am typing for him."

"Oh, you're with the Swami, huh?" Murray smiled. His meaning was clear: you're not your own man anymore. I absorbed the put-down without saying anything to defend myself. I knew that

what I was doing was the best thing. Murray didn't understand the *ātmā* and I couldn't explain it; I knew he wouldn't accept it anyway.

Only among the devotees could we fully express our feelings. "Just think—we have been taking one life after another for millions and millions of years. We've been up and we've been down, and now we're at the highest point we've ever been in millions of births. We're associating with the pure devotee and making progress for going back to Godhead. Let's not blow it!"

Prabhupāda had a habit of using initials to express meanings in code form. One of his favorites was S.R. S.R. meant "simply rascal." He said that we could make a button with the letters S.R. on it and give it out to people who were rascals. He said that even the President of India was "an S.R. man."

Swamijī was aware of what we were going through in our conversion from "hippy to happy." He said, "You can wear your chanting beads around your neck when you go outside the temple—if you are not ashamed."

"What does that mean Swamijī? S.M.?"

"Not S.M.," said Swamijī, "I said ashamed. If you are not ashamed." Prabhupāda meant, "If you are not ashamed of being a devotee."

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Reading with Lord Caitanya
2.8

You don't want to read,
but you sit down and try.
Gradually you hear—
Lord Caitanya is explaining
svayaṁ prakāśa and *vaibhava* forms.
The essence is—God has many forms.
His original is *gopa-mūrti* . . .
Pray as you read.
"Please let this be true for me;
let it not go by like scenery;
let me be with Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana."

You read more and think,
"Maybe I should stop now and
see if today's mail has come."
But you go back and hold on for ten more
minutes.
Why quit when it is going so well?
Under this blessed light,
hear what Lord Caitanya is teaching.
You have nothing else to do;
there are no notes you have to take;
no one is going to ask you,
"What is *svayaṁ prakāśa?*"
Just read, gentle soul,
and pray to know Goloka Vṛndāvana
"Which is divided into 3 parts,
Mathurā, Dvārakā, and Vṛndāvana. . ."

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Tīrtha-yātrā
2.9

During a recent visit to the Boston temple, I wanted to see the original two ISKCON temples in the city. Prabhupāda had visited them on four different occasions. Baladeva drove me there on a cold, gray afternoon, a few days after Christmas.

Prabhupāda visited the tiny Glenville Avenue storefront on two occasions. The first time he had come in 1968, he stayed in Boston for a full month in a house on Chester Street. He visited the temple three times a week for lectures. The second time he visited was in 1969, and he stayed for about a week and a half in a room in the student apartment buildings across the street from the storefront. Prabhupāda's presence does not permeate the Glenville Avenue temple as it does in some of the other Prabhupāda *tīrthas*, but he did give lectures there.

I started going back in time even before reaching the Glenville Avenue temple. As soon as I saw Boston University, I recalled Prabhupāda's talk at Marsh Chapel. After passing B.U., we looked for Harvard Street, and then turned right onto Glenville. The neighborhood was never friendly. The four-story apartment buildings are still there on both sides of the streets, the cars parked tightly. The gray sky reminded me that Boston had been cold toward us, but Prabhupāda had given us warmth.

As we came nearer the temple, the buildings seemed more ugly. Finally we passed the grocery store, and there it was—95 Glenville Avenue. In 1967, teenagers had broken our windows and we had replaced them with boards painted brown. Twenty-three years later, the same boards were still

there. The new owners had sealed up the front entrance with a steel door that pulled down at night. I thought, "We could have used that in the old days."

Baladeva pulled the car up in front of the temple and we sat in silence. It was hard to relate to this place because it wasn't being maintained as a museum or shrine. Even a place like Prabhupāda's "office" in Chippiwada, New Delhi, has strong vibrations of his presence. You can sit there and conjure up memories. However, Glenville Avenue was like it used to be, filled with grungy students. Prabhupāda called them "niggardly looking." The new residents used the place for band practice. Baladeva asked me if I wanted to go in. "No," I said.

I remembered how the glass from the window hit me on the head. I pictured coming home from work, seeing Jadurāṇī sitting on the floor painting her canvases, Pradyumna coming in the door and sitting on the floor beside me, eating warmed-over *prasādam*. I could not remember Prabhupāda, except to feel grateful that he came here.

As we sat waiting on Glenville Avenue, I remembered a novel by James Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*. It is a modern day version of Romeo and Juliet. The suggestion of the title is that if the street could talk, it would tell about the love affair and the pain and sweetness. Similarly, if Glenville Avenue could speak, it would tell us how Prabhupāda walked the nine blocks from Chester Street. It would tell how a dumpy garage-sized storefront was transformed into a Kṛṣṇa temple. Glenville Avenue would say that those were extraordinary days, better than anything that has

occurred before or after. It all started with Prabhupāda's aerogram from India, placed in the mail slot here: "I am glad that you have a storefront in Boston to preach to the students."

If Glenville Avenue could speak, it would say that a few devotees of Prabhupāda moved here and painted the insides and tried to make it into a temple room. By their chanting, it became the spiritual world for a while. It was opened as a temple, but later closed. If the storefront could speak, it would remember Śrīla Prabhupāda coming here for a month of evening lectures and chanting. It was here that Prabhupāda gave the first *brāhmaṇa* initiations in ISKCON. It took place on the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

When he first entered the storefront wearing his swami-cap, he looked rough and ready, like a pilot of those open cockpit planes. On the first night, the room was full of people, but, after a few illusion-blasting lectures (which included Prabhupāda's blasting of "Transcendental Meditation"), the attendance dropped off.

One night after his lecture, he asked me, "Do you want to show me the building?"

"Yes Swamijī!" I was twenty-eight years old, but I had never been a home owner or bought an oil burner. So I happily showed him what we had done.

"See Swamijī, this is how we heat the building. And here is where we take a bath."

"Oh, there is no hot water?"

"No, Swamijī."

The storefront was chock full of paintings of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* and he certainly liked that. After his tour of the building, we were glowing with happiness.

In the winter, we served him in separation. There was two feet of snow on the ground; more snow was coming down and long icicles were hanging from the eaves. On Sunday, the storefront filled with students, and we chanted, danced, and feasted. At other times, hardly anyone came to our program. We wrote to Prabhupāda, and he wrote back. He said that we were "noble" and "prophets." By the second time Prabhupāda visited, the neighborhood vandals had increased their attacks. Prabhupāda told us that if it wasn't a nice place, we ought to move.

During that second visit, he married three couples in one ceremony. This is another indication of how the place was full of life. Devotees were so happy to be with Prabhupāda that they hardly noticed the stupidity of the neighborhood. They were effusive young devotees who told anyone they met, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, come see our spiritual master." Devotees like Devānanda, Vaikuṇṭhanātha, Pradyumna, Rukmiṇī, Śarādiyā, Jahnavī—many of them had been followers of Indian gurus before they met Prabhupāda, or wanderers of one kind or another. Now they were becoming bright-faced and beautiful, but the dirty hearts of the Boston students did not respond. At least we distributed lots of *prasādam*.

After half an hour, the evening started to get dark, so I asked Baladeva to drive over to the second Boston temple. I recalled how we moved from the storefront to the second building. We had been on Glenville Avenue for two years and the landlord was increasing the rent and pressing us for a new two year lease. I was naive and couldn't

think of how we could find another place. However, Girirāja, who had recently joined, insisted that we should look for a better building. Just before the old lease ran out, we found it, a Victorian style 'mansion'. It was located on North Beacon Street, and, for a short time, it was the biggest temple in the world of ISKCON. It cost seventy thousand dollars and we dared to take the mortgage by increasing our sales of *Back to Godhead* magazines. Prabhupāda was proud of our daring and advised other temples to "do as they are doing in Boston."

As you approach the building, the first thing you see is the peak of the Victorian tower. The same Twin Doughnut store is on the corner. When we lived there, we were attacked one night by a gang who broke windows and entered the building. Now the building has a new, bright gray paint job. The new tenants look like they have maintained the place, adding a white fence and fixing the porch.

The North Beacon Street temple was populated with sixty rambunctious devotees from the basement up to the third floor. Many devotees were recruited here, including Mathureśa, Sureśvara, Suhotra, Ādi-keśava, Ananga-mañjarī, just to mention a few. Prabhupāda visited here on his triumphant return from London in 1969, just after opening the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple with the assistance of George Harrison and the Beatles. The Boston temple received Prabhupāda with a house full of devotees and ISKCON Press machines. Prabhupāda saw his books being put together here by his own spiritual children and he was pleased.

Now this place has merged back into the material world with no sign of what once went on at 40 North Beacon Street. There are new businesses next

to the old temple: an association for the blind, an ambulance service, an elevator corporation, insurance and rentals. In the days of Lord Caitanya, King Pratāparudra said that wherever Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited, there should be a column erected. In a proper culture, there would be recognition of a place like 40 North Beacon Street. People could come here and see where the Swami stayed. Why can't people visit that historic site where something actually happened? It is more important than visiting the ambulance service or even the association for the blind. It could be kept as a museum with items and pictures of Prabhupāda. Maybe our going out to see the two Boston temples was a futile gesture, but at least we may remind others that these buildings do exist. Perhaps in the future some rich patrons can buy these places and turn them into memorials as we are describing.

Although these two locations are not preserved as temples, Prabhupāda's movement in Boston has flourished. They now have a much better location, one we never dreamed of attaining in the old days—at 72 Commonwealth Avenue. Prabhupāda didn't get a chance to visit the present building but it is his success story. He is pleased to know that the devotees have gone on to better things.

Anything in connection with the pure devotee enables us to think of him. So *tīrtha*-visiting is another kind of Prabhupāda meditation. You wish that everything could be more related to Prabhupāda instead of the way it is—the Prudential Building, the liquor stores, the forgetfulness of God. Visiting the *tīrtha* of Prabhupāda helps you become more mindful of him. Then you want to go on to

the more direct connections available, such as reading his books about Kṛṣṇa.

Try This . . .

We could try to be in the mood of Pratāparudra, who wanted to erect monuments along the pathways traversed by his beloved Caitanya Mahāprabhu so that future pilgrims would remember His pastimes and presence there. Short of that, I know that some devotees relish the place of Śrīla Prabhupāda's pastimes, as described in the *Līlāmṛta* or by local devotees, and try to follow his "paths" in different areas of the world. Why not visit 26 Second Avenue, walk on Juhu Beach, or visit Chippiwada temple if you have a chance? Try to put it on your schedule in this lifetime. Become a transcendental tourist if you like.

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To the mind
2.10

Before the glow goes, write down here
that you've been reading precious verses
and Prabhupāda is your guide.
Mundane news and literature is killing
to the soul of devotion.
There is no substitute for *Bhāgavatam,*
Bhagavad-gītā and Six Gosvāmīs' literature.
And Prabhupāda is our guide.

O poor mind, you are
so easily impressed and molded.
Therefore, I say, avoid the nondevotee writing
and turn to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
He is the way out of the sufferings of Kali.

You won't convince your old college friend
who prefers Gurdjieff and Walt Whitman
and who blasphemes the Deity.
Can't you see by now you won't convince him?
And don't you see that they have the power
to hurt you?
Inner self, I take hold of your feet,
I beg you,
stay in the deep, eternal lake
of the nectar instructions and pastimes of the
Lord,
with Prabhupāda as your guide.

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Boston kaleidoscope
2.11

When I was leaving Boston this year, it was snowing. Caitanya-Nitāi dāsa saw us off at our car. He said, "I heard you went to visit the old temples. Is it true that when devotees used to live there, there was no heating, and snow used to come right in the window?"

"Yes, we would go into the bathroom in the morning, and snow would be piled on the floor, and it would pile on our sleeping bags overnight."

That reminds me of Prabhupāda. When he visited in 1971, it was springtime, but it was cold. We had only one bathroom and Prabhupāda had to share it. He came out of his room, walking over the bare floor of the old house. His servant, Aravinda, carried his *loṭa.*

Prabhupāda was at the height of his international travel. He had recently been to Moscow, Paris, Los Angeles. Boston was no longer a very important temple in ISKCON, but we had written Prabhupāda several letters asking him to please come and install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. He visited us out of his kindness, but all we had to offer him was a cold building with old floors and a shared bathroom.

When I saw Prabhupāda walking in the bathroom, I felt embarrassed. I wrote him a letter of apology after his visit, but Prabhupāda never complained.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was a world traveler, but he was always a humble Vaiṣṇava. His secretary, Śyāmasundara, was a bit condescending toward us in Boston. Śyāmasundara and Aravinda told us about all the fabulous places Prabhupāda had visited, about all the famous persons he had met, and so on. They presented it in a glamorous, high-flying way. Prabhupāda mentioned Moscow in his lectures, but he paid full attention to what we were doing, our new Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, and the twenty devotees who were ready to be initiated by him.

During this time, Gaurī dāsī was the head *pūjārī.* She sat beside Prabhupāda during the installation of Rādhā-Gopīvallabha. As usual, there were tense moments. The clothes for the Deity didn't fit and Gaurī had to cut open their seams and do last minute sewing. This was done while the audience

was watching. Somehow she pulled through, and Prabhupāda was patient.

Karāṇdhara Prabhu from Los Angeles performed the fire sacrifice. Karāṇdhara looked like a US Army sergeant. In case there was any doubt in the minds of the Indians attending, Prabhupāda told them, "According to Jīva Gosvāmī, this boy can do the *yajña* because he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa."

I was an assisting priest, pouring the liquids and chanting the *maṅgalācaraṇa* prayers. However, in my excitement, I skipped three prayers on the written sheet. Now, when I think about it, I ask myself, "Who told you to skip those prayers? What was your reason?" I started off with the prayer *vande 'ham śrī guroḥ*. Prabhupāda looked at the sheet and then looked at me. He said, "Why you are starting there? Why have you skipped these prayers?"

I didn't know why. I didn't have anything to say. He looked at me disappointed and displeased. Even his eyes said, *"Why did you do that?"* Suddenly it became a deep moment of wrong instead of a little thing. I was sorry and started back at the top of the sheet. This took place with Prabhupāda and I sitting on the same level. Although he had a *vyāsāsana*, he preferred to sit on the floor.

Gaurī finally made the clothing fit the Deities. Prabhupāda said that I should now place Kṛṣṇa on the altar. I reached over and took Kṛṣṇa in my hands. He was heavy. I picked Him up and wavered for a moment. "Maybe He is too heavy for me. What if something happens?" However, then I became firm and headed for the altar. I placed Him down, and then Rādhārāṇī joined Him.

The night after the installation, Prabhupāda walked down the dilapidated hallway, through the

curtain, into the temple, and sat down for the initiation ceremony. I was sitting by his side. He turned to me and said, "What are they saying about the Deity?" His question was surprising and sweet.

I said, "Prabhupāda, everyone likes Him very much."

In many ways, we were overshadowed by the devotees in the New York temple with their dynamic leadership, their *halavā* for breakfast, the fancy decorative paint work in their temple, their tons of money, and the preference of the ISKCON Press men to live in New York rather than Boston. I had even lost my wife to the New York temple. There was nothing much left in Boston but broken windows and a few book distributors, but Prabhupāda had come to us—now we had Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and twenty newly initiated devotees.

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Wouldn't you read?
2.12

The flavor I seek all day
is faithful reading of his books;
a mixture of subdued obedience,
familiar hope and—dare I say it?—
attraction to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Where am I? Is this a friend's house?
Am I on the second floor? Have I just awakened?
All that matters is *now I have time to read.*
If this were the last day of your life,
wouldn't you read? Read now
as evening darkens.
Don't waste time.

Ordinary words (Swami in Boston, 1968)
2.13

Prabhupāda was lecturing in the storefront when the phone rang. His *vyāsāsana* was in the back of the room and the phone was about twenty feet away, near the front entrance. I should have picked up the phone and said, "I'll call you back later. The spiritual master is speaking." I didn't, though, because it was the people from whom we had rented the apartment. The man wanted to know, "When are you going to pay?" Swamijī was planning to stay a few extra days into the month of June, so I had to work that out with the landlord. I said, "We're definitely going to be out of the apartment by June 3rd. We just want to stay there three more days." I was distracted from Prabhupāda's lecture, and I also distracted the audience, although I tried to speak in a low voice. As fast as I could, I hung up the phone and went back to hearing Prabhupāda.

Later, Swamijī asked, "Who was on the phone? Was that Montreal?" (Montreal was the next place he was going to.)

I said, "No, it was the people who rented the building where you are staying. They wanted to know when I am going to pay. I am sorry I caused a distraction during your lecture."

I have told this incident before, but now as I tell it again, I hear Prabhupāda saying in a fresh way within myself, "Was that Montreal on the phone?" It is as if I just took that phone call five minutes ago and Prabhupāda said, "Was that Montreal?" And that is what we all want—to serve him and to talk with him, no matter what the subject.

When Prabhupāda was staying in his Chester Street apartment, I didn't have much time to see him there. I had to be in the welfare office every morning. I did go one morning, though, to tell him that my editing of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* manuscripts was going slowly because of my other work. Prabhupāda said, "It is all right. Just go slowly but surely. Like when you put one foot on the street, you do not put the next one down until you are sure. Go ahead like that."

Whether you spoke with him and told someone else about it, or if someone else spoke with Prabhupāda and told you what had happened, it was all valid. Śrīla Prabhupāda could say anything he liked. He could say, "Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead," or "Was that Montreal on the phone?" The words did not seem as important as the connection with him.

People remember their father or mother after they have passed away. They come back in dreams, and this can be deeply felt even when seemingly ordinary words are spoken. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh wrote a poem recalling his mother. He tells how he met her on a Sunday. She was walking back from church and they met in their village. She said, "Don't forget to feed the cows." There is also a haiku poem where two people are talking, and suddenly a servant enters the room and says, "It is time to light the lamps." In these examples, ordinary words create a whole characterization of time and meaning. Similarly, I like to dream of Prabhupāda doing ordinary things. Usually we think of him coming in a dream and saying, "Go to Vṛndāvana," or "You've forgotten your vow"—

something heavy. However, he may also come in a dream and say, "Was that Montreal on the phone?"

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"I am the best devotee of Prabhupāda"
2.15

Sometimes a disciple of Prabhupāda meets a God-brother who appears to be somewhat fallen and he thinks, "I am a better devotee of Prabhupāda than he is."

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura warns about the dangers of pride.

> If the *svanistha-sadhaka* mentioned in the previous verse still harbors some material desire in his heart, his yearning for honor manifests itself in the hope for being regarded as a highly religious person, as a generous person, or even as a sinless devotee. The *parinishita-sadhaka* desires a claim as a great devotee of the Lord, or a claim as a devotee with a clear spiritual understanding, or as one who is completely detached from all materiality. The *nirapeksa-sadhaka,* or renunciate, thinks that his honor lies in being considered pure and renounced, as having understood all the esoteric conclusions of the scriptures, or as having mastered the science of devotion. However, one is actually able to root out such deceits only in proportion to his having eradicated any desire for honor and distinction. If one cannot purge his heart of deceit, there is no question of ever attaining unalloyed love of God, as it is understood by the Lord's pure devotees.
>
> —purport to *Manaḥ-śikṣa,* verse 7

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes a pure devotee as one who possesses "guileless humility," and who is "without the slightest desire for self-aggrandizement."

Recently while visiting a Godbrother, I thought that he did not stimulate me much to talk about Śrīla Prabhupāda. I began to pride myself as being more inclined to think of Prabhupāda. Later, though, I remembered that as soon as I had entered my Godbrother's room, I saw a Deity of Śrīla Prabhupāda dressed in saffron and with a miniature *daṇḍa* behind his *vyāsāsana*. My Godbrother asked me if I was also worshiping a *mūrti* of Prabhupāda. I said, "No, I travel too much. He is too large; it is inconvenient." We then discussed other topics, and I began to think that my Godbrother was not talking enough about Prabhupāda. Yet there in the heart of his room was a Prabhupāda *mūrti*. One could tell that he was attentive to this *mūrti* by its dress and soft effulgence. He also told me of a Godsister who also has a Prabhupāda *mūrti*, and he showed me a photo.

As I continued to reflect upon my visit, I remembered more references to Prabhupāda that my Godbrother made, but that I tended to overlook. So how shall we decide who is the best devotee of Prabhupāda? We should not claim that we are the best or try to create a list of the "best 100 devotees."

Then is there no way to judge? Surely all of Prabhupāda's followers are not on an equal status. Aren't some fallen? Aren't some better because they are giving their whole life to Prabhupāda by working in his temples? There is a difference among devotees, and some are doing more pleasing service than others. However, the "Who's Who"

list is known only to Prabhupāda and to Kṛṣṇa. Those who may not be doing well now can revive, and those who seem to be doing well may fall down.

Pride is one of the causes of falldown. Therefore, it is not wrong or artificial to see all of Prabhupāda's followers as servitors of the pure devotee. Their lives were touched by him, and they have the potential to serve him eternally.

There is no "all is one," but when we meet a Prabhupādānuga, we should encourage him in his devotion to Prabhupāda. I want to honor those who are shouldering responsibility in ISKCON temples. Such devotees are following Prabhupāda's mandate to keep his movement alive. Those who have moved outside the temples should be encouraged that they are not lesser persons, and that they have a responsibility to set a good example. Prabhupāda said, "Your love for me will be tested by how you cooperate with one another," and this has to be applied in many ways. A power to enforce this cooperation does not come automatically with a formal position of leadership in ISKCON. It has to be elicited in each devotee's heart by love and trust. We may remind each other of our obligations, but humbly, and not by assuming "I am fulfilling Prabhupāda's will, and, therefore, you should cooperate with me."

Try this . . .

Think of a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda whom you met recently and whom you possibly underestimated. Try to recall ways in which he or she is favorably inclined to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Admit, if it

is true, that you overlooked the devotee's good qualities and were unfairly judgmental.

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On a kuśa mat
2.16

When reading, I only touch the surface because
of my faults
and this distracting world.
But even on the surface
Mahārāja Parīkṣit asks the sages,
"What is the duty of one about to die?"

Prabhupāda invites us to sit
on a kuśa mat alongside Atri, Cyavana,
Paraśara, Maitreya, Nārada.
As sixteen-year-old Śukadeva appears,
I bite my thumbnail, look at my watch;
I keep limiting myself—why?
Go for the nectar. You are about to die.

Take this chair as the Ganges bank,
sit erect with the book,
now take it easy, just read
and be prepared to go on reading...
Looking up to Prabhupāda,
"Please tell me what more to do.
Let me hear."

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Mission unfulfilled
2.17

In the many attempts to remember Prabhupāda by "recall sessions," reminiscences, daydreams and night dreams, poems and prayers—I never seem to attain his direct association. Or rarely. When I close my eyes, listen to a 1966 *kīrtana*, or think of being with him in his room, I never quite see or attain him. However, the anxiety of trying to get to Prabhupāda produces many good things.

Although my separation from Prabhupāda is on a small scale, it is the authorized way for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. As the great devotees think of Kṛṣṇa, this little devotee is trying to think of his spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Śrīnivāsa Ācārya said that the Gosvāmīs were always absorbed in the ocean of transcendental feelings in the mood of the gopīs . . . They never said, 'We have now seen Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and, therefore, our mission is fulfilled.' Their mission remained always unfulfilled; they never met Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 2 pg. 73, 1974 edition). Also, when Uddhava saw the *gopīs* in separation from Kṛṣṇa, he congratulated them. The *gopīs* then realized that "they were actually experiencing the supernatural method of Kṛṣṇa worship and they were much relieved and happy to understand it." Uddhava advised the *gopīs* that they could be saved from the fire of separation "by closing their eyes and meditating on the activities of Kṛṣṇa from the very beginning of their association with Him."

Can we apply, however, the exalted feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa to our separation from the spiritual master? Apparently, yes. Śrīla Prabhupāda

writes, "It is recommended in authoritative scriptures that the spiritual master should be worshiped on the level of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of his being His very confidential servitor, and it is accepted by great authorities that the spiritual master is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa" (*"Śrī-gurvāṣṭakaṁ"*). If my failure to attain Śrīla Prabhupāda by service and meditation seems to be a source of unhappiness, I may note that this was also described by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura in his song, "Lamentation due to separation from the Lord and His associates."

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This is Prabhupāda
2.18

Prabhupāda's routine was to go to bed at about 10 or 11 P.M. and then get up around 1 A.M. At that time, he worked on his *Bhāgavatam* translation and purport. Whatever time he took for the *Bhāgavatam* is now available for everyone as the best way to meditate on Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

Let me give an example. This is from the Seventh Canto, where Prahlāda Mahārāja is introduced for the first time.

From his earliest youth, Prahlāda was a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda states that Prahlāda was the *vātsalya-rasa* with the Lord. Usually when we say *vātsalya,* we think of a devotee who wants to be the father or mother of Kṛṣṇa, but Prahlāda thought of himself as the child of Kṛṣṇa. We sometimes deride religionists who think of God as the Father

when they beg from their Father for material enjoyment. Prahlāda's situation was different, though:

> As a father and mother care for their child, Govinda cared for Prahlāda Mahārāja, who remained always absorbed in thoughts of Govinda . . . The feelings of Prahlāda Mahārāja were in the mellow of *vātsalya*, filial love and affection. When Prahlāda Mahārāja felt that the Lord was away from him he began to cry. A devotee like Prahlāda sometimes sees that the Lord is coming from a long distance to pacify him, like a mother responding to a child, saying, "My dear child, do not cry. I am coming." Then a devotee, without being ashamed due to his surroundings and circumstances, begins to dance, thinking, "Here is my Lord! My Lord is coming!"
>
> —*Bhāg.* 7.4.38, 40, purport

Prabhupāda makes it appealing: one can approach God the Father with complete surrender. Prahlāda Mahārāja's hairs stood on end and he was always laughing or crying, thinking of Govinda.

When I re-read these passages recently I thought, "That's Prabhupāda." One may say, "That's not Prabhupāda. That's Prahlāda Mahārāja. It is Vyāsadeva's description." Yet it is also a description in the Bhaktivedanta purport. Prabhupāda has given his personal appreciation of Prahlāda. When I read it, I appreciate Prahlāda Mahārāja *and* Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Prabhupāda, you felt this; it is so nice."

Try This . . .

Choose a favorite purport to read again. Read it, and try to hear Prabhupāda's voice speaking into the dictaphone. Listen to the inflection in his voice.

Imagine that he is directly addressing your own concerns in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and then expand that awareness to include the concerns of the whole world. Write down or discuss with a friend how you experience Prabhupāda's vision through the purport you have chosen.

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Part Three

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The historical Prabhupāda
3.1

When Christian theologians use the term "the historical Christ," they mean that person whose life story is told in the gospel. This is only one level of thinking about Christ for them. They also think of him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord, and so on. Some speculate about Christ in an impersonal way. Thus they speak of "the logos" and "the Christ within everyone." Sometimes when you hear this talk, you say, "Wait a minute. What about the *person?"* The scholars reply, "We're not so interested in the historical person."

The first time I heard one of Prabhupāda's followers say this I was shocked.

"We don't want to become a cult of Prabhupāda worshipers," he said. "Prabhupāda is a link in the *parampara*. The important thing is the message coming down. Prabhupāda never said that *he* was important."

"But Prabhupāda is the person who saved me," I said. The message did not come to save me by itself; the person saved me. I want to worship and think of that person.

If we minimize the historical Prabhupāda, then we open the possibility that one of us can take his place. "Now I am the next person in the link. I am important now." Therefore, when remembering the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is important to do it in a personal way. When I think of Prahlāda Mahārāja and his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, I think, "Prabhupāda is sweet to write it in these words." If I don't think of Prabhupāda in a personal way, then I am missing out.

Prabhupāda is mysterious and we cannot fully understand him. We know him the way an affectionate child knows his father. We think, "This was my father's cup and these were his shoes. This is what he says." We know him in a familiar way, yet we also know that he is inconceivable. We should never minimize the strength that we get by thinking of ourselves as followers of that person, Prabhupāda.

If I study a God consciousness or Vaiṣṇava philosophy with someone who does not have a tight connection with guru—or if I myself do not feel my connection to Śrīla Prabhupāda—then spiritual life becomes vague. There is a hollow feeling. Someone may talk of "experience of God," but you want to ask him, "Do you know what you are talking about? Do you have experience of this?" No matter what he may say, he cannot convince or touch me the way Prabhupāda did. That which is most solid for me in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is based on my relationship with Prabhupāda. It comes to this: God is known by our relationship to the guru. If all you know is guru, you are doing all right. Vaiṣṇava philosophy does not approve of strong aspirations for connection with God while maintaining weak connections to guru.

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At the start of the Persian Gulf War
3.2

In time of war, a bewildered devotee
turns to *Kṛṣṇa* book. Śrīla Prabhupāda says,
"They are not ordinary stories . . .
Those who are reading *Kṛṣṇa* book
become delivered from the clutches
of birth and death."

Lord Balarāma told Rukmiṇī,
"Don't be sorry that the *kṣatriyas* fight.
They are typical emblems
of the materialistic way of life;
they become puffed-up,
and try to put one another
into the most abominable condition."
Then Balarāma turned to Lord Kṛṣṇa and said,
"You should forgive, even though
he deserves to be killed."

Balarāma saw everyone as spirit-soul,
the same in every body;
regardless of nation or race,
the soul is eternal.

"Sweet, smiling Rukmiṇī, do not be aggrieved.
Only by false notions does one become unhappy.
Remove this unhappiness
by discussing the philosophy of actual life.
Be happy on that platform only."

No one else can tell me
what I need to hear tonight.

Refraining from playing the demon
3.3

This morning in the Baltimore temple during the *japa* period, I was upstairs in a small room. I was taking fifteen minutes for yoga exercises while listening to a tape of Prabhupāda. The tape I found was titled, "People Want to Banish God," a morning walk in Germany, 1974.

I recognized it right away by the discussion about transmigration. I was on that walk with Prabhupāda, along with many other devotees, and you could hear the sound of many feet walking and people chanting *japa*. We were walking on a path through the wheat fields nearby the Schloss, the temple of ISKCON Germany.

Prabhupāda asserted that anyone who does not accept the transmigration of the soul is a rascal. He said that Lord Kṛṣṇa explains it clearly in the second chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Just as we change from boyhood to youth to old age in this body, so the soul at the end of life accepts another body. Prabhupāda asked several times, "What is a possible objection?"

I had raised some objections on that morning walk, and sure enough I heard it again on the tape. I said Kṛṣṇa's analogy does not apply to the next life. He tells us that we change bodies in this life from youth to old age, but this cannot be used as a proof for the next life. Prabhupāda said, "What is wrong with this as proof?" I replied that we do not perceive ourselves changing bodies.

Prabhupāda replied that we do perceive it. He gave the example of dreams. If we dream of something fearful, we actually become afraid in our dream. He said if a man dreams of a woman he

loves, he may even have a seminal discharge during the dream. By the example of dreams, Prabhupāda said, we have proof that we do perceive the subtle body. Therefore, there is a subtle body which is different than the gross body, and that subtle body transmigrates at the time of death.

After explaining it this far, Prabhupāda asked if there were any further objections. No one said anything. I could have continued to play the demon, but I remembered back to that morning walk in 1974, how I chose to be quiet and hear. I wanted to understand and be impressed by Prabhupāda's examples. I knew that his examples were good debating replies, and they contained a way for us to realize the truth. Kṛṣṇa's analogy is perfect evidence, but if you want to go on arguing, there will be no end to the discussion. In that case, we will never understand transmigration, and transmigration is only the first step in knowledge.

It was an odd sensation to hear in 1990 what happened in 1974, and to think of my mentality from that time. I knew that my silence on that 1974 tape—my refraining from playing the demon—was because I really wanted to hear what Prabhupāda was saying. Now in 1990 I still want to hear. (This may be taken as another proof for the subtle body—the fact that I was present in 1974 and can remember twenty years later the mental state I was in during that walk, although my body has changed considerably.)

On that same morning walk, Prabhupāda said that our past lives, within this body or in previous bodies, are full of suffering. He said that if we remember the sufferings that we have endured within this very lifetime, we will shudder and

think, "Oh, I was in this state of life. Kṛṣṇa has saved me."

The last thing I heard on the tape were Prabhupāda's words, "Do not be misled by this illusion as others are being misled. Stick to Kṛṣṇa and be saved. That is the only way."

Try This . . .

Prabhupāda would regularly engage his devotees in debates like this to sharpen their preaching skills and remembrance of the philosophy. His stories and logical examples made spiritual life pertinent and alive. As a way of meditating on his teaching methods and on the substance of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy to which his answers and analogies lead us, perhaps we could "play the demon" with each other in conversational or class situations.

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Placemarks
3.4

For tonight's lecture
I have put three bookmarks in the *Gītā*.
In one place, Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks as all-pervading,
"And yet I am not there—behold
My mystic opulence!"
In the second place, He is Arjuna's friend,
better than awe and reverence.
In the third place, Prabhupāda tells us
that the demons think Kṛṣṇa is strange
but the devotees heartily welcome
when He speaks for Himself.

He is God as well as
a human-like friend to His friends.
It will be a gathering based on his books
in the home of the Sankhla's on Ekādaśī night;
lecture, *kīrtana,* and *prasāda.*
They are looking up to me,
and I won't fail them—because
I have got my placemarks.

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I walk in the world as your man
3.5

Prabhupāda never forced his followers to shave their heads or wear *dhotīs* in public. Yet he liked it. So it produces a Prabhupāda meditation when we appear as Vaiṣṇavas and remind people of Kṛṣṇa. The reason we wear these clothes and shave our heads is because we are his followers. I cannot attain the advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I cannot surrender completely, but there are some things I can do right away. When I do them for Prabhupāda, they count in my favor.

With this in mind, I need not be embarrassed when people see that I am a devotee. When I feel embarrassed, I can pray: "Prabhupāda, please give me the strength to walk in the world identified as your man. And let me not make fun or be ashamed of the other devotees who are representing you."

I want Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda to recognize me. Therefore, I will wear the *kaṇṭī-māla* and Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* even if it astonishes a bank clerk or the man at the airlines desk. Let me not give it up so easily. Let it be a little sacrifice I make on your behalf, a

way to remember you. Let them think, "Look! There's a Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Let me think, "I am serving Prabhupāda in this way."

When we walked with Prabhupāda, we were proud to be with him. We stayed close beside him on the street, trying to protect him. We did not care what people thought. We wanted to appear presentable as his servants, yet we had no concern for other's opinions. The person we wanted to please was right there with us. He gave us courage to assist him. To walk beside him and represent him was prestigious. They could see the elderly, saintly Indian guru with his assistant alongside. Now we have to assist him without being physically with him, but we can meditate, "He is here and I am walking beside him. Let the people see it and think what they like."

When we walked with Prabhupāda, we tried to make everything go nicely for him. There should be no broken branches on the path and no overhanging branches to brush his face. There should be no delay in looking for the car to take him where he has to go. There should be no inimical person to harm him. Everything should go smoothly. We should be attentive to whatever he wants and get it. The world was full of excitement and possible danger. We were alert with all our senses, absorbed in assisting him as he mildly and humbly walked through the world. Sometimes we were awkward and fumbling; it was good for defeating the false ego.

As the servant Daruka said in Vaikuṇṭha, "When I fan the Lord, if I feel too much ecstasy, it becomes an interference. I simply want to fan Him

nicely." Let us continue in that way, walking beside Prabhupāda, while following his *vāṇī*.

Try This . . .

Should I say it? Go ahead, try wearing devotional clothes in public more often and think how Prabhupāda would be pleased.

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Signs of improvement
3.6

I notice the grammar of Prabhupāda's English and how it is different than modern American grammar. Lately, however, this has not bothered me as much as it used to.

I try not to analyze and judge; I just hear from him. Outsiders cannot understand this, but I know it is true. If I think my spiritual master just said something wrong, or what he said is outdated, that will make me fall down.

Let me give an example. Today while I was eating lunch, I heard Prabhupāda saying (on a tape from 1973) that Kṛṣṇa gives opulence to His devotees. "In Los Angeles the neighbors say, 'You have such nice buildings and nice food and cars, but you don't go to work. How is that?'" Prabhupāda said that they do not know that Kṛṣṇa takes care of His devotees. When I heard this today, I thought, "Oh, Prabhupāda, this isn't true anymore. That was part of the old ISKCON. We got money by begging, but it has been proved that you cannot sustain the movement in that way."

Then I checked my criticism. I thought, "Don't make those judgements according to time. Things may seem different now, but whatever was wrong or right in the devotees' behavior, that doesn't make Prabhupāda's words wrong. He is not to be judged by the changes of history. What he says is based on *śāstra*. His examples may be relative in time, but his point is always correct. And even specifically it is correct."

While thinking this I was eating lunch in Jaya Gaurasundara's house. They had prepared a wonderful *prasādam* lunch for me with *sabjīs, capātīs,* and rice. It occurred to me that I am receiving so much care and protection by Kṛṣṇa. Why am I so ungrateful? Even while hearing these words by Prabhupāda it is being proven true in my case. I saw it in that way and understood that the attempt to argue against Prabhupāda is false. These are tricks of Māyā.

Sometimes I have to go beyond intellectual reasoning and just hang on with faith. Eventually I will also get the intellectual reasons. Doubts come into my mind, but I pray: "Please bless me, Prabhupāda. This dirty-minded boy is trying to be true to you. He knows that you are the only way out of this material world. I love you and your instructions and I want to keep hearing them as much as possible. Please let me do it."

The same thing is true for looking at his photos. I find reasons why I cannot be comfortable with the pictures, but I am improving lately and breaking through these obstacles. A significant part of me is no longer intimidated by criticisms that his tooth is missing, the lighting isn't good in this picture, look who is present, that person blooped, etc. I don't

want to listen to those voices of doubt. Like a wrestler, I am picking up the demons and throwing them aside. I am going to worship Prabhupāda. Never mind all these things which may or may not be true.

Try This . . .

Think of some of your own doubts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and pray to Prabhupāda for faith. Think of resolved doubts and thank Prabhupāda for his mercy in helping you to improve.

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I want to be in his presence
3.7

Swamijī is behind the tin trunk. Over his head is the calendar picture of Kṛṣṇa playing the flute, standing on the earth. We are lounged and bunched around the wall, asking questions.

"What happens after death?"

"What kind of person does Kṛṣṇa want me to be?"

"When we see a picture of Kṛṣṇa, is that the artist's conception of how He looks?"

"Is cosmic consciousness the same as Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

"Is this the same thing that Christ and Buddha taught?"

Swamijī was happy after a lonely year uptown. He took his time and answered our questions.

He taught that Kṛṣṇa is a person and He will love you; He will give you an intimate relationship in

eternity. Prabhupāda promised this and said it was something we could all attain. We still have not attained it, but he taught it: Your beloved is the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. "It is such a nice thing."

Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us of the importance of the spiritual master. No one can understand Kṛṣṇa except through the spiritual master. However, he never said, "I am that pure devotee. I am the spiritual master." If somebody asked him bluntly, he replied, "That you can judge for yourself." Yet he preached that we must surrender to the spiritual master. When Allen Ginsberg met Prabhupāda, he suspected that they were both exchanging false egos. He thought, "Oh, he is trying to sell himself as the guru. He wants me to submit to him," so Ginsberg resisted it. Some of us did not resist. We wanted the guru and we accepted him. We wanted a loving exchange with Kṛṣṇa. We kept coming back night after night, morning after morning. "Why are they after me?" Prabhupāda asked later. "I am just an Indian, I have no money. I never bribed them."

One night, it was time to leave, but none of us wanted to go. He laughed and said, "All right, you can go home now. The store will be open at six in the morning." *He* was the store, the storehouse of nectar. His hours were from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. He saw that we were after him—and he was after us, to bring us to Kṛṣṇa.

I want to remember the sensory things, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* , the *prasādam,* the room, his body, his eyes, the boys, the apartment. Even if I cannot feel them, I can say the words. Smelling the *prasādam*. The boys cooking in the kitchen and bringing the *prasādam* into the room. Swamijī sitting in his place eating, us sitting around eating

with him . . . the two rooms . . . looking through the glass window and seeing him sitting there . . . sometimes he slept on his mat . . . his turtleneck jerseys with the stretched necks . . . bare feet . . . Swamijī smiling . . . strong teeth and so virile you are embarrassed in his presence.

I am saying these words just to feel his presence. *Kīrtana.* Money in the basket. Cutting up the apple in a bowl. He calls your name, looks at you. Time goes by in the evening. You feel that he is as good as God.

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"Reading is easy, but we take it as hard"
3.8

Prabhupāda jibes his audience of disciples:
"We are for selling books, not for reading them.
This is not good. You should read, 2, 3 hours . . . "
I can't claim much, but started again
the Second Canto, *oṁ namo bhagavate . . .*
Underlining in pencil—
"Mahārāja Parīkṣit wanted to absorb his mind
completely in Kṛṣṇa,
and this can be effected simply by hearing
about the uncommon activities of Kṛṣṇa."

So many things go wrong in life,
so many people with problems I can't solve.
Shall I tell them, "Just read
and your problems will go away?"
At least do it myself, this cold rainy day.

A news reporter in South Africa spoke of LSD gurus. He mentioned Jay Alpert, who went to India and then became guru.

Prabhupāda said, "That is bogus."

The reporter said, "But he started the experimentation with LSD. He and another fellow."

Prabhupāda said, "Timothy?"

"Yes, Timothy Leary."

Prabhupāda pulled the word "Timothy" out of his memory. Timothy Leary is not in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, nor had anyone heard of him in Calcutta. Prabhupāda picked his name up on the Lower East Side. Nowadays, many young Americans have never heard of Timothy Leary, but if you were around in the 1960s, he was well known. Prabhupāda knew of Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, President Johnson, Vietnam, hippies, LSD, marijuana, *The Village Voice*, Second Avenue, Bowery bums, Empire State Building, bus routes, subways . . . Although he was in transcendental consciousness, he knew of Chambers Street, lawyers' fees, New York State religious corporation rules, "green card" . . . and when he went back to India, he talked about these things to the *sādhus* and his old friends.

"In America they have no problem for money. One of my students was absent one morning, so I asked where were you? He said, 'Oh, I needed some money, so I went working on the docks and I got ten dollars.' Without any appointment he can go and get ten dollars. Ten dollars in our exchange is ninety rupees, but he can get that in a day without

any problem. And they have freeways with four lanes in one direction and four in the other. The roads are like velvet. There is no comparison to our roads in India. Now we have five centers in the U.S. and one in Canada. I have my green card and can come and go as I like."

When Prabhupāda was in New York, he never said, "I am very impressed by America," or "It is amazing that you can make so much money in one day." However, when he returned to India, he impressed them with the strangeness and opulence of foreign lands. Prabhupāda noticed everything and often kept it to himself. Later, whatever impressed him (or whatever he could use) came out in his speech or writing.

On a morning walk in Beverly Hills, Prabhupāda noticed a young man coming out of a wealthy house. The boy lived in that house, but he was dressed like a poor hippie. Prabhupāda did not say anything at the time, but later he told an Indian audience that in America, even though they have nice homes, the young people are morose. He retold, with details, what he had seen that morning in Beverly Hills.

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Approaching the Swami on his own terms
3.10

Most of us were contaminated with drugs and illicit sex. Prabhupāda restrained us. He controlled the activities in his apartment and storefront, and we soon got into line. There were unspoken boundaries. No one ever smoked in his apartment. He sat

on one side of the silver trunk and we sat on the other. Sometimes we stood close beside him in the kitchenette or other places, but we did not get too familiar. We maintained politeness and formality out of respect. Even those who were not his disciples respected him as an elderly *sādhu*.

If anyone talked jive to the Swami, they didn't get far with it. He remained who he was. He did not want to waste time, but spoke in a meaningful way about God. He insisted on that. He did not mind a challenging question, as long as it was put in a coherent way and he could direct the conversation toward God consciousness.

"What is this chanting? Is it some mumbo jumbo? Is it hypnotism?" Prabhupāda accepted a question like that because at least it was moving in the direction of an inquiry about God.

"As far as I am concerned, there is no next life. The scientists have proven it." That too would be acceptable for Swamijī because it led to important subjects. As long as they were willing to hear, he would talk. When things got out of hand, Prabhupāda turned to Raymond or Howard and said, "His is a general question. Can you answer it?" But that did not happen often.

Prabhupāda did not ask people much about their family background or education or hobbies. He wanted to speak to them about the Absolute Truth.

"I am living with my mother. She has arthritis. I don't have enough money, so I am working two jobs." Prabhupāda would hear it with concern, but then turn the situation to ultimate matters. He was not living in the world for talking about relative situations. As a *sannyāsī*, he had left all that behind. It was often Prabhupāda who was the challenger.

Those who wished to stay with him had to come up to his level.

Often someone mentioned a Western thinker whom Prabhupāda had not heard of. It was a simple thing to adjust. He asked, "What is their philosophy?"—and then put it into the context of Māyāvāda, pantheist, or mental speculation.

Those who became his disciples required more intimate treatment. We wanted him to at least hear what was on our minds . . . Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre. The important thing was to talk about Kṛṣṇa, but first you had to be released from your attachments.

I asked Prabhupāda, "What about the spiritual culture of China? Is it advanced?" He simply shook his head, no. I was willing to accept that. Even to this day, I am attracted to recluses and poets of ancient China. Prabhupāda did not say they were all useless, but he told me in no uncertain terms that they were not important. In the absolute sense, for going back to Godhead, it is not important. That exchange about China took place in only a moment. If we were academic scholars, I would have insisted on developing a comparison of Confucianism and Taoism and how they came from India. I would demand that he explain *why* it is inferior to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Perhaps I would debate with him and say that the Indian mentality is different but not necessarily better than the Chinese mentality. However, all these considerations were dispensed with in a meaningful way, just by a shake of the head. They were also dealt with in informal talks while taking *prasādam* or sitting together. We heard from him submissively and accepted the *Vedas* from his lips.

When the bombs go off
3.11

Sometimes when I was in Swamiji's presence, an obscene word would come to mind. It would bubble up from my days in the Navy, where there was so much obscene talk. It would explode like a bomb into the pure relationship of guru and *śiṣya*. I don't know if Swamiji always saw it exactly when it happened, but he saw my general rotten nature. Sometimes when I didn't have anything bad on my mind, he looked at me and saw that too.

At times like that, what did I do? I kept going, bowed my head and reeled with the blow. I re-adjusted and told myself, "I am not in the Navy anymore; I don't have to respond to this." The reality with the Swami was more substantial than the past.

Obscene images were like those bombs and abominable things that poured down on Dhruva Mahārāja when he was fighting the Yakṣās. Blood, pus, and bones poured from the sky and oceans, and lions and snakes closed in around him. They were all illusions, though. My obscene thoughts were like that. I didn't have to succumb.

My father used to say of himself, "My mind is in the gutter." That was a favorite expression of his. So I was brought up to think that everyone's mind was in the gutter. When I met the pure devotee, he was a challenge to my entire upbringing. My mind wanted to revolt against him: "This guy is just another bozo like everyone else. After all, this is a world of 'f__you' and he is part of it." So the bombs went off within me, but because the relationship with Prabhupāda was true and substantial, and

because I was in the safety of his room, it all passed. Eventually, it didn't occur anymore, like the many other insanities and bad habits that go away as you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

You didn't have to say, "Swamijī, sometimes when I am with you I think bad things." He addressed it anyway, "These are the workings of the mind. Just chant and it will go away."

Altered states of consciousness from old LSD trips also came up. We had to face some of it in the *kīrtanas*—fears, hallucinations, uncharitable feelings, hatred, envy, disbelief . . . We were not able to link one pure mantra to another pure mantra and approach Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. Ours was bliss punctuated with negative space in the struggle to reach pure spiritual sound. Prabhupāda gave us his assurance, "You can do it. You can overcome all this."

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The standard resources
3.12

Thank you for the morning walk,
thank you for the work ahead,
thank you, Prabhupāda,
for giving us your books
in which Lord Viṣṇu instructs through you:
"Treat people equally,
don't be disturbed by distress or happiness,
control your mind and senses,
execute your duty in whatever
condition of life you may be put,
by My arrangement, give protection."

Thank you for the orders
and the kind looks, allowing me
to sit with you, to offer you lunch,
to massage your body.

Prabhupāda, I don't confuse you with God,
but you are as good as God.
You didn't create the cosmos by your
expanded plenary parts,
but you teach us
the Vaiṣṇava is more merciful than the Lord.

Let the fear of falldown guide me,
the fear of rejection by you.
Let me follow until death
accomplishing at least
the minimum requirements.
I pray for your grace,
lest my toehold slip.
Please remind me what to do.

And today I took a look
at a color photo taken in Brazil:
Prabhupāda is wearing a yellow sweater,
he is looking to the right, holding *karatālas.*
I steady and watch him as I once did.
He wears a rose garland.

These standard resources—
photos, purports, instructions,
are well-springs of mercy,
if we simply go to them
without despair or cynicism.
It happens—
we forget who we are,
and who is Bhagavān.
But the spiritual master is here,
kind as always;
and I am serving him.

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Coaching us in Kṛṣṇa consciousness
3.13

The Swami had authority. It was not like the authority of an organization, the Catholic Church or some rich Hindu mission. He was something better, a saintly person in the timeless tradition of Vaiṣṇava *parampara*. His authority went back millions of years and was represented in the Vedic scriptures. Through him we could feel the timeless and authoritative instructions of the *śāstras*.

On his authority, we chanted in the temple in such a free way. He saw us shake our heads, close our eyes and grimace, as we threw off demons and had fun. When Bob Lefkowitz got up to dance, I thought, "This is egoism," but Swamijī said, "He looks just like Lord Caitanya." Swamijī was permissive, but not irresponsible. He heard about LSD and said, "No more of that, and no more *gānjā*. But when you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, *then* you will feel bliss and dance in ecstasy."

The Swami was like our spiritual coach, and we were his team. The coach accepts his boys as they are, but he trains them. They come to him as juvenile delinquents, but as they work out on the basketball court, they become something better. Similarly, Swamijī let us work out our unruly feelings without inhibition, as he brought us together in the *mahāmantra.*

After the game is over, the boys are shiny with sweat, drinking Cokes in the locker room, joking adolescents. The coach allows it, but he is in control. We too were sweating and excited after the *kīrtana* performance. We were wild, and Prabhupāda allowed it. He let Gargamuni say, "Swamijī, I was in so much ecstasy I thought I would cry!" He watched as Umāpati cracked a joke to Hayagrīva, but then spoke things that quieted us. We listened to him and relaxed.

We never expected Swamijī to act like a hippie-guru. He never spoke our jargon, and yet he was hip in his own way. He was totally present with us, and we gave ourselves to him.

The coach-and-team analogy gets left far behind when we study the heart of our relationship with Prabhupāda. He was taking us to the eternal spiritual world, telling us of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Swamijī revealed the *Vedas* to us, and told us how to center our lives around them. All we had to do was listen submissively. He was cleaning our hearts in a way that was not perceivable to us, and yet he was perceivable, healthy and strong, our vibrant spiritual master.

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Throwing off the bombs
3.14

One evening I was sitting in the storefront waiting for the Swami to come in and begin. Allen Ginsberg walked in. He was a great celebrity, and we were all alert to the fact. He sat behind me and asked. "What's going to happen?"

I said, "Pretty soon the Swami will come in and then we'll start the *kīrtana*. We do that for about twenty minutes, and then he talks."

I was aware that my words did not express the reverence that I actually had towards the scene that was about to take place. If I were to express my heart, I would have said, "The Swami is a pure devotee of the Lord. He is going to lead us in a sacred chant which can purify us and make us understand we are spirit souls. When he speaks, it may be a little difficult to understand at first, but what he is teaching is better than any speculative philosophy or literature."

I had tried to give Mr. Ginsberg a light description of the Swami's entrance. We wanted him to think that we were hip, not like churchgoers who speak in solemn tones.

After I replied to Allen Ginsberg, I turned back to myself. It was a rare opportunity for an aspiring poet to talk to the dean of American beat poets, but I did not want to talk to him. I wanted to get back into my reverent mood. I felt ashamed of that touch of frivolousness in my description of Prabhupāda. I breathed in deeply and then let it out. I took another deep breath and let it out. I told myself, "Get back into yourself, man. Don't play a grand-

like swimming in Avalon

stand for Allen Ginsberg. You're for the Swami, not for him."

I remember another early irreverence. After my first or second visit to the storefront, I wrote a letter to my college professor, Dr. Alexander, who was in Europe for the summer. "There's a swami on the Lower East Side and I have gone now to two meetings. Last night a boy got up and danced. Who knows what will happen next?" I treated it as a humorous occasion. I was reporting on the happenings on the Lower East Side. My professor wrote me back. "Your letter was gingery."

Sometimes bombs exploded from the unconscious. Often it was during *kīrtana.* You reacted by throwing them off, and throwing yourself further into the *kīrtana.*

"Pay attention, you're way out of line. *Hear the name of Kṛṣṇa."*

Suddenly you had an urge to leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "I don't believe this! There's no God!" And desires for illicit sex. When the bombs went off you looked to Swamijī with earnestness. "I don't want this old life anymore; I want what you have. I want the pure life of Kṛṣṇa."

During the *kīrtanas* I faced the truth: "I am unhappy. Even if Murray and Steve and I are on the cutting edge of a new literary movement in America, what good is it if it doesn't make me happy? Maybe I'll find the girl of my dreams, but it doesn't seem so. Life is stark. I am *so* dependent on marijuana. The lives of the welfare clients . . . I want to get out of this."

Sometimes the bombs were temptations: "I am young and hip. I am free from my parents and free

from the Navy. I can do what I want, get high every day!"

So the bombs worked against the Swami and faith in his process. When they hit, you turned to him and called the name of Kṛṣṇa. Then everything would be all right.



'66 Kīrtana kaleidoscope
3.15

Prabhupāda sat down and began singing. Hayagrīva with his full beard and checkered shirt was hitting the big cymbal with the drumstick. Swamijī accepted it.

With rough and ready hands (clap-clap-*clap*), we were like a group of peasants stomping their feet. Our sleeves were rolled up. Young men clapping as Swamijī sang the *bhajana.* The boys played off each other's voices, so we wouldn't get bored. The main thing, though, is to hear when the Swami sings. *Then* you sing.

Look over at the others. Look at their faces moving back and forward with eyes closed. Look up at the Swami. Each one is into his own experience, but you are all together. You are not long-time friends, but there is a bond.

This thick-bodied clapping keeps the *kīrtana* solid. It helps concentration; it is what Swamijī invites.

The kids are at the door. Trucks grinding gears. We are bunched at the Swamijī's feet in that one part of the universe, drawing from the *kīrtana* that

he is giving—*and they can't get at us now.* Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

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Dip in anywhere
3.16

He walked from his room
to the backyard garden of the L.A. temple,
where we sat with him on a patch of grass,
hearing *Kṛṣṇa* book and the shouts
from the neighboring karate school.
Prabhupāda said, "Dvīvida Gorilla was no joke;
he had to be great to fight with Kṛṣṇa."
He opened the book anywhere,
as you and me listening
can dip in anywhere,
into Prabhupāda's *līlā:*

He said to Hari-śauri, "Again, finger problem,"
because his servant picked at his fingernail.
He said of my financial records:
"Satsvarūpa is expert."
He saw through Poet Ginsberg's
"hopeless self-consciousness;"
and once to Gaurasundara dāsa, "You look
skinny,
and you talk skinny."

Here is Hṛdayānanda Mahārāja:
"He gave me a piece of *prasādam*
and one second after I ate it he said,
'You rascal! You are a *sannyāsī* and you do not
wash your hand after eating?'"
My thoughts fly to Prabhupāda—
Spiritual master, I have still got the finger
problem;
I am still expert at avoiding your mercy.
The night of separation from you grows darker.
But you are sending help.

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Responding to the Swami's call
3.17

Swamijī said, "This boy Steve is nice, he gives donations and does typing." After he said that, I went downstairs into the storefront. I picked up the double bass which I had donated to the temple. No one was around, so I started strumming, feeling happy and savoring the glow of what Swamijī had said. In those days, we didn't know the proper expression for gratitude: making prostrated obeisances and saying a mantra to the guru. However, as I strummed, I chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa.

One night after *kīrtana*, I stopped on the way home at a quick-serve pizzeria for a slice of pizza and a Coke. I did not know you were supposed to offer the food to Kṛṣṇa, and that this food was unofferable. Having a pizza was a celebration of my new-found ecstasy.

On the walls of my apartment, I painted abstractions of madness and loneliness, but after I started

seeing the Swami, a different mood broke out. A positive figure appeared on the wall. I chanted and painted for over two hours.

Swamijī gave us wholesome life. At first it was hard to accept. I thought, "It is cool, the life I have. It is desperate, but after all, *life itself* is desperate—just like Van Gogh said, misery is eternal. You can get high on pot and you can try your best. You are an artist. Keep trying." I fed myself existential philosophy: "Although life is absurd, you must give it meaning." Swamijī replaced that dismal view.

He said, "You can eat again. You can love. Your life now is a sham, but you will taste transcendental happiness in eternal life."

Prabhupāda said, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind. It is the original energy of the living being." He uncovered instincts that were buried in my psyche, belief in God, desire for good food and work, all the things I thought I had to give up because they were square. He exposed the fact that I was living a lie. He proved that happiness is *now.*

Responding to Swamijī's love was one of the first things I did on my own. Everything before that was conditioned by my parents, and after that it was conditioned by a reaction against them. Not many people on the Lower East Side were going to him. It was not something my parents wanted from me, and neither was it what my hip friends wanted me to do, or what my worshipable authors wanted me to do. The religion I was raised in did not teach me how to love. No one encouraged me, yet everything was encouraging me from within. My sense of survival and sanity and religiosity—everything was saying, *"Yes, don't listen to other voices. Do it!!"*

Years later, Prabhupāda was reminiscing. He said to Kīrtanānanda Swami, "You came with the others?"

"Yes," Kīrtanānanda said. "Me and Umāpati and Hayagrīva all lived together." Then Prabhupāda turned to me and said, "You came with them also?" I said, "No, Prabhupāda, I came by myself."

"Oh yes," he said.

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Praying to the giver of the holy name
3.18

I don't know much, but I was with the Swami. He led the chanting and we sang with him. He talked and we heard. We went home and thought over what he said. "The Swami is self-realized. In the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* it says that you have to hear from a self-realized soul. Swamijī says he is going to teach us about Kṛṣṇa." I remember the books in his room, and the Swami in his room, and him coming down to have *kīrtana.*

Years later Prabhupāda said, "In the beginning, I did not tell them that you have to follow any rules and regulations. I simply said chant." It is a fact, he simply said chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and we chanted with him. That was a different time when Swamijī was here on earth, and now he is not here. He is in *samādhi,* gone back to Godhead. He had left us behind to continue the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We follow his instructions.

Sometimes my mind says, "If you go back to those days, you will be disappointed. You will see that you were such a raw neophyte. You had bad

ideas in your mind and you did not fully appreciate the Swami. Over the years, you have built up an image of how faithful you were and how much you estimated Prabhupāda as very dear to Kṛṣṇa. That is what you think now, but back then . . . "

No, it is not true! We held him in esteem, I am sure we did. I am not afraid to go back. I know it will be imperfect, and I know that imperfection will be due to *my* perception. So, my dear unconscious self and all other selves, do not be afraid to use this body and mind to allow us to go back and chant with Swami as it was then. We can do it.

One may object, "There are so many things *to do* for Prabhupāda. Why sit around and try to remember being with him?" I agree, but can't we spare some time to try to do this? Are we so effective now on Swamijī's behalf? Are we doing such tremendous things? I mean, do we have such complete potency that we do not need to get in touch with him in a very personal and primitive way again? The fact is, we do need to get in touch with him. The essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not *just* propaganda and organization, but attraction to the Lord, and especially to the Lord's holy name, which is the most merciful way that He appears in the world. Yet, as merciful as the holy name is, He has to be given by a devotee. You have to receive the holy name from a pure devotee. Therefore, I remember those mornings when Prabhupāda gave us the holy name.

Although I complain a million times over that I must be cursed because I cannot realize the chanting due to my offenses, I still chant, and I still think of you. *Bhakti* is a great science; many have realized it. I am slow, but I have realized some of it, too. In

the material world, nothing can compare with this. The *bhakti-yoga* of chanting the holy names as given by Lord Caitanya is very easy to perform, and it gives us our connection to Kṛṣṇa.

O Holy Name, You are so kind that You came with the Swami to the Lower East Side. You appeared there in the mouths of his boys and purified us. You purified Tompkins Square Park and the whole atmosphere of New York City. You kindly appeared in our *kīrtanas* by the wish of Your pure devotee who knew how to form Your sacred letters. Those "alphabets," as Prabhupāda said, are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa; they are Kṛṣṇa. You do not appear just by *anyone's* combining of the alphabets K-R-S-N-A. When Swamijī did it, You appeared in that storefront, so that even crazy boys became enthusiastic to possess You.

O Holy Name, You appeared among us because Your pure devotee appeared among us, walking on his lotus feet, playing his *karatālas* in his lotus hands. He looked at us and lived with us. O Holy Name, You were happy to appear there and we are thankful. We are sad, however, that we have offended You in many ways and have not been steadfast and strong to spread the glories of the Holy Name.

Initiation was my beginning, but I did not appreciate it then. Now I wish to fall at Your feet and surrender my mind.

That is the best kind of memory, to actually go back in time and say, "I accept." Arjuna took an hour and a half to do it in *Bhagavad-gītā;* we may have to take twenty-five or forty years to say, "I am ready, I accept."

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Prabhupāda meditations (February 5, 1991)
3.19

Taking solace from *Cc.* and then *S.B.*
I know *action* is required
as the response to these purports.
But now that you're grounded,
waiting a day, don't bother with the phone.
A few more letters answered,
but mainly the books.

Be happy in them.
Think of Godbrothers who love these books,
who can study them all day,
and then come out,
exclaiming in lectures
with learned references,
"He is teaching what we need to know."

You're not studying to write a book,
it is not for ammo in a debate,
not to prepare a morning's lecture.
Then why? Because by hearing of Kṛṣṇa
you spend time in the best way.
You save yourself at death,
you please the Lord, and by reading
you will remember Kṛṣṇa's pastimes
when it is your turn to speak.

My master is pleased
that this one day of my life
I am content to be with him,
savoring what he carefully speaks,
and thinking about it.
If I become morose at my unworthiness,
that's also not bad.

I am following the narration
of Lord Caitanya through the forest.
He was happy to eat the forest vegetables
collected and prepared by His servant,
and even happier when He had a chance
to stay in a solitary place.
"Kṛṣṇa is an ocean of mercy," He said.
"He is especially merciful to the poor
and fallen. Without His mercy,
there is no possibility of happiness."

Cars and trucks are rolling to JFK,
winter sunshine comes through the window,
quiet friends are in the house.
Nothing to prove today,
just stay awake and read.
Don't doubt it: This too is a way
to be with your master.

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Old-time kīrtanas
3.20

Recently at Gītā-nāgarī we held an old-time *kīrtana*. First we listened to a 1966 *kīrtana* led by Prabhupāda. I pointed out that Prabhupāda sang only one tune and kept a steady beat for half an hour. Then we tried it. It produced a wonderful feeling and so we repeated it again the next night. Here are some of the letters I received from devotees who were in those *kīrtanas*.

From Muktavandya: "I feel like we discovered a great secret about the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness tonight. I suggest you do this wherever you go

because it will remind and enlighten everyone about what it was like with Prabhupāda. The chanting tonight was very, very nice. Very powerful medicine. Not at all mechanical."

From Bhakta Larry: "Both nights that we had kīrtana, I suddenly felt Prabhupāda's presence there. For those moments my suffering was dissolved, as the tears rolled down my face. Any memory of Prabhupāda from twenty-five years ago is enlivening when you speak. My heart was filled with ecstatic love of Prabhupāda."

From Caitanya-rūpa dāsī: "The kīrtana last night was wonderful! One devotee told me her opinion that if we were to do this more often we would all come to love each other. I hope we're going to have this type of kīrtana again."

Our experiment took place in front of Prabhupāda *mūrti* in the Gītā-nāgarī temple room. The Deity doors were open and Rādhā-Dāmodara gave us Their *darśana*. We began sitting and we were careful not to speed up. After fifteen minutes one or two devotees stood up to dance. Soon everyone was up. The dancing was that style which some persons have called "The Swami Step." The nice thing about it was that the dancing energy was not concentrated in one place. There were no superstar dancers. The women were also dancing, as the *kīrtana* energy spread democratically throughout the room.

I thought I would become bored, and I braced myself for that, but it did not occur. The only reason I looked at the clock was to make sure we did not go too long. Something nice was happening for everyone. It was a combination of the timeless potency of *harināma,* and the special effect of chant-

ing the way we used to when Prabhupāda was present.

Try This . . .

Get together with some friends and do *kīrtana* the way Prabhupāda used to. The drummers and *karatāla* players should agree not to speed up the lead singer. Keep steady. The lead singer should keep one simple tune for the whole time. Chant at least half an hour. When dancing starts, do not create inner clique of star performers, but let it spread around to everyone.

Alternative suggestions: Do it anyway you like; there are no hard and fast rules.

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Vīdura's pilgrimage (a comment on the Bhaktivedanta purport to Bhāg. 3.1.42)
3.21

He was forced out of the palace,
wandering to holy places,
when he returned years later,
everything had changed;
the war was over, almost everyone had died.
Vīdura himself had changed—
he was now a pure devotee.
I read the story once again,
but one purport struck me—
although they're *all* valuable.
Prabhupāda spoke of the pilgrim's journey.
He said Vīdura learned to depend on God,
and thus achieved a greater freedom
than the freedom one attains at home.
"He was factually completely dependent
on the mercy of the Lord."

This brought to mind:
Don't worry about money
or that your Pan Am flight
may be terrorized,
or that you'll get another headache,
or Immigration at Heathrow might turn you
back,
stranded with the luggage and no key.
Lose your money and passport?
Any of these things might happen.

Vīdura must have known hard times,
slept in the cold, prodded by thieves,
laughed at by respectable people.
He must have been tired sometimes,
but he kept getting stronger
in his factual complete dependence
on the mercy of the Lord.

Sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda owned
only one ragged *dhotī,*
no fare to pay a rickshaw,
but he tried to print his *Back to Godhead.*
Then sometimes his dependence on God
led him to millions of dollars.
He was always unafraid,
dependent on Kṛṣṇa, strongly preaching.

Prabhupāda has said,
the Lord provides for the ant
and for the elephant, so will He not
maintain a human who is surrendered
to His mission?
No one should become a *sannyāsī*
unless he knows this and feels it:
Live to chant, hear about Kṛṣṇa
and tell everyone you meet
the glories of the Supreme Lord.
Times have changed but the challenge is the
same.
I offer my obeisances to Prabhupāda's purports.

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Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda while traveling,
February 7, 1991, Ibis Hotel, London
3.22

We were here last year during a heat wave. Now London is muffled in a heavy snowstorm. There is a bowling alley next door, and I hear the repeated sounds of bowling pins being knocked over. So what does all this have to do with Prabhupāda meditations? It has a lot to do with it.

Recently in America, I had some good recall sessions by anchoring myself in Prabhupāda's '66 *kīrtanas*. That may be the best way to remember him; but now that we are traveling again, I have to remember that Prabhupāda meditations are always happening.

Part of me wants to say that it is not possible to think of Prabhupāda in all circumstances. The sound of the bowling pins being knocked over has

nothing to do with Prabhupāda, but another part of me says that Prabhupāda must be here. If he is absent, it is my Prabhupāda consciousness which is lacking.

Let me scan my *recent* memory and see if I can think of Prabhupāda moments. The day we flew from Long Island, we stayed at the house of Rancora dāsa, who lives near the airport. In the last few hours I was leafing through the *Teachings of Lord Kapila.* I found some outstanding passages. Prabhupāda states that a pure devotee is so humble he does not even hope that he will be liberated in this lifetime. Prabhupāda wrote, "A devotee always prays, *'For my misdeeds may I be born again and again, but my only prayer is that I may not forget Your service.'"* I wrote that down and I am carrying it with me in my beadbag. Prabhupāda also stated that the boys and girls in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement do not read the daily newspaper. He said that they do not know what's going on from day to day in the world, that is not important to them. They are more interested in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā.* That stood out when I read it, especially nowadays when there is such a deluge of news about the Gulf war. Prabhupāda's statements gave me conviction. When I got onto the plane, I did not look at the newspapers or news magazines.

On the airplane we met a woman who was interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She has traveled to India several times and knew about both Hinduism and Buddhism. I tried to introduce her to the *Bhagavad-gītā* and she became interested. Later, Madhu told her how Prabhupāda came to America in 1965. She asked if he was the first Kṛṣṇa conscious person who ever came. Madhu said that

others may have come, but he was the first one to make an impact. That was nice hearing Prabhupāda's glories recited to an interested person on the Pan Am flight. She also asked if there was a biography of Prabhupāda.

As soon as we arrived in England, we were met by devotees who gave us breakfast and drove us to the hotel. Why were they so kind? Did I take it for granted? The real basis of the relationship with the devotees is that we are all followers of Prabhupāda. They took care of us because they think we are true to him. Wherever you go in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, people treat you with kindness. They are interested to hear you speak and to read what you write—*because they think you are true to Prabhupāda.* Therefore, Prabhupāda meditation means gratefulness.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, it would be best if I could serve you staunchly like some of your devotees do. I take solace in thinking that you keep a place for me in your service. I want to improve. I want to enter more deeply into your purports. By the process of recall and concentration—and love—I want to think of you more. I want to speak with you, to be your servant, to bring you nicely prepared food, to bathe you, dry you, worship you. I want to remember you, and, as I travel, do some substantial work. Prabhupāda, I don't want to waste your time, but I know that if I have something to say for your service, you will be willing to hear from me. For now, let me tolerate the bowling pins, just as you tolerate me.

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Prabhupāda instructs the sons of the demons
3.23

When Prahlāda talks to his school friends
we are among them.
We know what he means when he says,
"You are wasting your lives,
anxious for money instead of Kṛṣṇa."
When he says, "Worship of Kṛṣṇa is easy,"
we harken with hope.
Rouse us, Prahlāda, dance with us,
tell us what you've heard from your guru.

As the *daityas* trust Prahlāda,
we trust in Śrīla Prabhupāda.
He is aware we are addicted, but kind to us.
He has prepared these books.

At first we wondered,
"Where has he heard these wonderful
teachings?"
Prabhupāda told us, "From my Guru Mahārāja."
If we can place our faith in him
we also can understand transcendental
knowledge,
although we are small children.

The nectar is there,
so why do I fall asleep?
Death is near,
why do I try to hide?

Although much time has passed
I cannot forget his instructions:
What is spirit and what is matter.
He gave these blessings:
"You too become faithful like me.
Become bona fide Vaiṣṇavas."

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The red beads
3.24

Although Swamijī had a bead bag, he often chanted his beads by holding them in two hands. The boys followed this method, and even when we were not chanting, we would wear the beads around our necks in a double strand. Swamijī thought this was acceptable; he told us either keep them in a bead bag or wear them around our necks. And you can take them on the street like this, "If you're not ashamed."

Soon after Prabhupāda's arrival on Second Avenue, young men started appearing in public with bright red beads around their necks. In those days, devotees did not wear *dhotīs* or *tilaka* or shaved heads, so the main way that you could spot a devotee was by his red beads. With Gargamuni, it was his Shakespeareaṇ locks and his red beads. We thought wearing the beads was cool, with their clicking noise and red shine. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

We learned to finger the beads by watching Swamijī. You fingered with your right hand and held the other half of the strand in your left hand.

As you moved each bead through the right hand you moved the strand through the left hand and gradually passed the circle around your neck. It involved more touch and sight than when the beads were kept in the bead bag. Besides, bead bags hadn't yet arrived.

One day I was going to visit welfare clients on Canal Street and chanted as I walked. I began to feel uneasy that my chanting was not being counted in any way. I wanted to capture it and get credit for it. As soon as I saw Swamijī, I again told him, "My chanting is just going to the wind." He instructed me to buy little beads to use as counters. When I returned with the beads, he said, "You are very prompt." Then he showed us how to use the counters. He said that Vaiṣṇavas in India keep individual quotas for *japa*. Some have a thousand beads on one circular strand, and they chant one round a day.

When he held initiations, that was a good chance for us to watch him chant. He gave us instructions about chanting on our beads at that time. He told us to chant by starting with the bead next to the "head bead." Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on each bead by using the thumb and third finger. Don't touch the beads with the pointing finger. Go around once, and when you reach the summit bead, don't cross over, but start back in the other direction.

One of the best times to chant was in the morning with Swamijī. After *kīrtana*, he used to say, "Chant one round." We did it together. He usually finished before we did, and then we all trailed off, even if we hadn't finished the round.

One day I was sitting on a bench on a traffic "island" on First Street. I was fingering the beads

and chanting, when my mind suddenly faced me and said, "What do you actually feel?" I had to admit that I did not feel anything. I didn't feel contact with Kṛṣṇa. Some of my old friends had said that the whole practice of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa was a concoction from the East. It was something that the practitioners made up and believed in because of tradition. I faced that barrier and continued chanting. I concluded that rational analysis was not the deciding factor.

In my apartment, chanting privately, I sensed the *luxury* that *japa* afforded. I owned no comfortable furniture, no rug, television or air conditioning. Yet I felt luxury by fingering the beads. I imagined sages in India as described in the *Bhāgavatam.* As they were chanting, so was I.

When we chanted as a group, we watched each other's operations. Everyone moved the strand round their necks, working and clicking the beads. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Devotees wrote poems about chanting and published them in *Back to Godhead.* I wrote one called "Separation," and Brahmānanda wrote a prayer, "In my next thousands of births, may I please chant at least one attentive round." What a humble statement! Brahmānanda wrote another poem about chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on the subway. "You think I am crazy sitting here with my beads. But you don't understand that I have God's spine in my bead bag." The metaphor "God's spine" was a bit strange, but the meaning was, "I am happy chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Rāya Rāma also published a poem, "Red Cherries." He compared the wooden beads to cherries.

The cherries that grow on bushes fade, just as the patterns of flowers fade in an oriental rug. However, the cherries of devotion, the holy names, are everlasting.

Part Four

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Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda at Bhaktivedanta Manor
4.1

When I entered the temple room before *maṅgala-ārati,* Prabhupāda's *mūrti* was covered with a curtain. They dress him every day here. A few minutes before *maṅgala-ārati,* the curtain in front of the *vyāsāsana* is removed, and everyone bows down. Prabhupāda looked bright under the light. He wore a reddish cable-knit sweater and a cap, suitable for the winter day. He looked regal in the setting of the Manor.

There is also a larger-than-life painting of Prabhupāda on the wall of the temple room—Prabhupāda standing by a lake with swans. One can meditate on this painting while chanting *japa.* I remembered this painting even after I left the Manor and was waiting at the airport for a plane.

The Bhaktivedanta Manor is a busy temple, just as it was when Prabhupāda was present. I was swept up into the action and met with many people during the day. In the afternoon, I went for a quiet hour in Prabhupāda's room. I saw Prabhupāda sitting where he used to sit, with his back to the window that faces the backyard and the lake. I sat before him again and tried quieting myself. I wrote a letter to Prabhupāda and felt his presence.

In the evening, Prabhupāda's room was filled up with about a hundred devotees. I told memories of people who visited Prabhupāda at Bhaktivedanta Manor in 1973.

He like to stay here. Even in the photos of Prabhupāda at the Manor, he seems very peaceful. He was happy to see the Britishers looking like

Vaikuṇṭha angels, singing and dancing in the temple before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It gave him a special satisfaction because Britain had so long been the dominator and spoiler of Vedic culture in India. Prabhupāda reversed this, in a nice way, and gave Kṛṣṇa consciousness to England.

One of the devotees asked me, "Can you tell us what are your favorite memories of Prabhupāda?" I spoke about 1966. I admitted, however, that there are many different times and anyone can have his favorite Prabhupāda mood, such as Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana or in New York City or at Bhaktivedanta Manor. Anyone can have an intimate relationship with Prabhupāda through his books and by serving him. It is not a fact that those who were with him in 1966 have more intimacy. The most empowered devotees of Prabhupāda may have not appeared yet. For example, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the greatest biographer of Lord Caitanya, appeared forty years after Lord Caitanya's disappearance. Devotees who were with Prabhupāda personally can serve devotees in the present and the future by preserving the memories. Let us pass them on so that when the empowered devotees come, our memories will help them to gain access to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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Escaping the box within a box
4.2

One evening as Prabhupāda was lecturing, a guest became restless. He stood up and moved from one part of the room to another. Prabhupāda asked

him what was wrong. The man, whose name was Burton Greene, said, "I feel boxed-in sitting over there."

Prabhupāda smiled and said, "A box within a box." He then explained that our material body is like a box for the soul, and the room we are in is another box—and the whole material universe is another box.

When we remember Prabhupāda, it is like crawling outside all the boxes and entering the spiritual world. There is an old fashioned drawing that depicts this. A shepherd is in a field. The sky above is filled with stars and is shaped like an inverted bowl. The shepherd is crawling outside the border of the drawing. By an optical illusion the drawing suggests that the shepherd is crawling outside the universe. I want to do this by entering the *kīrtana* with Prabhupāda and hearing from him with faith.

Sādhu saṅga, sādhu saṅga—sarva-śāstra kaya/lava-mātra sādhu saṅga sarva-siddhi haya (Cc Madhya, 22.54). Even one moment's association with a pure devotee can give one liberation. We are trying to go back to that moment. "The value of a moment's association with the devotee of the Lord cannot even be compared to the attainment of heavenly planets or liberation from matter, and what to speak of worldly benedictions in the form of material prosperity, which are for those who are meant for death." (*Bhāg.* 1.18.13)

We live within a mortal anxiety, which builds during the day. Toward evening we sink and think, "Another day in which I have not done enough." When I feel like this, like a box within a box, I go to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda in his 1966 *kīrtana.* I chant with him and stop worrying about my failure to

follow him. At least during the period of the *kīrtana* I escape mortality. I hear the sweet roughness of his voice. I sing and clap. I crawl outside the boundary of the universe.

Try This . . .

Listen to a recording of any *kīrtana* led by Prabhupāda. Close your eyes and sing in the chorus. Even if you feel like a "box within a box," have faith that the *kīrtana* is beating on your heart and doing its work. When the *kīrtana* is over, speak what you experienced, or write it down.

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Prabhupāda idioms
4.3

The dictionary defines an idiom as "a style or form of expression that is characteristic of an individual." One has to know how Prabhupāda used idioms by listening to his lectures or by being present for his talks. Each of these phrases can open up a whole world of Prabhupāda realization.

"Everything is there"

Prabhupāda said this to indicate that everything we need to know is present in the Vedic literature. He said it to convey urgency. By the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, you can directly contact Kṛṣṇa. By reading *Bhagavad-gītā,* you can know your relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda enumerated points such as these, and then, as if realizing that there was no end to the favorable items, he would

interject, "Everything is there." He said it with pride as a follower of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and with confidence that there was nothing lacking in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Everything is there, so you should turn to it.

"Thank you very much"

This was Prabhupāda's trademark at the end of every lecture. One might say that this is nothing more than a formality: the speaker thanks the audience for their attentive hearing. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda did it, however, it is a trademark to remind us of him. We wonder about it. Sometimes we even imagine that Prabhupāda was being a touch sarcastic when he said, "Thank you very much." With some audiences, it sounded like he was amused. Perhaps I am reading the mind of the *ācārya* by these interpretations. Each person will hear it in his own way. At least let us keep his "thank you very much" in our collection of remembrances.

"This is going on"

Prabhupāda used this to express the opposite mood of "everything is there." By saying "this is going on," he pointed to the rascaldom and nonsense that goes on in the material world, especially in Kali-yuga. He stated it at the end of a string of anomalies. The politicians are cheating the people by taxing and not giving anything in return; people in general are in ignorance about the goal of life; gurus claim they are God but are interested in illicit sex . . . After stating a list of malpractices, Prabhupāda added, "This is going on." They are getting away with murder. The cheating continues.

Rascaldom goes on by misuse of free will. The *sādhu* and Kṛṣṇa know very well that this is happening. They are not naive. Prabhupāda also was aware that rascaldom will continue as long as there is a material world, as long as people do not take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Acts of irreligion pass in the guise of religion. "This is going on."

"Where is the difficulty?"

Prabhupāda said this after explaining how easy and accessible Kṛṣṇa consciousness is. Anyone can offer Kṛṣṇa a fruit, a flower or some water. Even a child can take part in the chanting—"Where is the difficulty?" Just as we were born from our father, so our father had his father, and his father had a father; if you go back ultimately, you will find that there's an original father who is the source of everyone. In this way we can understand that Kṛṣṇa is the seed-giving father—*where is the difficulty* to understand this?

By this expression Prabhupāda encouraged us to come forward and not make excuses. If we take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we will not find it difficult. Prabhupāda used the phrase as a challenge to those who believe that spiritual life is too problematic. Prabhupāda untangled the problems with logic and *śāstra,* and then interjected this challenge.

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The Prayer of the living entity in the womb
4.4

After seven months packed up, he begins to pray.
I read it again, thinking,
"This will increase my desire
not to be born again into this world."
I read it early, falling asleep
but waking to read,
"One cannot imagine what the pangs
of birth are like . . . The suffering continues."

He prays while in the womb,
"Although it is miserable here,
let me think of You. I don't want to
go outside to fall a victim of māyā again."

This is not Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes,
but it is for me, the pitiful prayer:
"O Friend of all fallen souls,
please let me take shelter
of clear consciousness.
Let me offer obeisances at the lotus feet
of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."
I fidget and doze,
in illusion of physical comfort,
a mendicant reading in a householder's room
on a wintry morning,
". . . and the suffering continues."

I know how the story goes:
Despite his wish, the soul is forced to come out
"head downward, breathless and
deprived of memory due to severe agony."

He falls on the bed in blood, stool and worms.
He falls into *māyā* again.
No one really knows him;
no enlightened parents,
and the suffering continues.

O Friend of all living entities,
You see my sleep-walking.
You know that all us rascals are suffering
because of our misuse of independence.
Please think of a way to release us.
Thank You for Prabhupāda's books,
thank You for sending Prabhupāda.
Please let me understand what to do,
before it is too late—
so I won't have to come back again.
Let me read and hear.

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The fighting spirit
4.5

The *Bhāgavatam* class was on the verse from the Ninth Canto about the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra. It described military action. After the lecture, one of the devotees asked a question about Prabhupāda. He said that Prabhupāda's disciples often say that he was like an army general on the battlefield. Did I think this was Prabhupāda's actual character? I replied that Prabhupāda certainly did appear like a general and he himself said that taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness was a war against *māyā*. Prabhupāda stood in front of the army and moved all over the world to spread the Kṛṣṇa conscious-

ness movement. However, this is only one of Prabhupāda's many different natures. He is also a transcendental scholar who rises at 1 A.M. and composes the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Nevertheless, because Prabhupāda was following the orders of the previous *ācāryas* to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he had to enter the battle and go forward, fighting, organizing the troops.

Of course, Prabhupāda did not ask for militant action with rifles or bombs. He said that we should fight by *saṅkīrtana* and by cultural weapons. Book distribution and *prasādam* distribution are peaceful ways to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In performing *saṅkīrtana*, though, Prabhupāda was determined not to be stopped by anyone.

We need not be intimidated by thinking of Prabhupāda as a general. One can possess the fighting spirit in many ways. If a devotee has a terminal disease and continues to chant his rounds, that is fighting. If a mother continues to take care of her children despite the difficulties, that is the fighting spirit. Whenever we continue to set good examples and not admit defeat or hopelessness—that is the fighting spirit of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Try This . . .

Take time to appreciate how different devotees could be taking this fighting spirit of Prabhupāda to heart. Perhaps you could even keep a list and occasionally add to it as you hear of other examples.

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Listening to Prabhupāda sing alone in his room, 1965
4.6

My dear spiritual master, this day has come to an end, *āyur harati vai pumsam.* I look at my calendar, eager to finish the week. Why am I wishing my life away? How can I come to you?

I sometimes try to push my way into your presence. Can't do it. It is up to you. Thirty volumes of conversations are here, but who can impose upon your presence?

In a nearby room in this house, a father is reading a bedtime story to his four-year-old daughter. The Irish countryside is quiet. I am beaming a tiny light of hope in all directions, seeking Prabhupāda memories.

May I recall my spiritual master once again, who looked at me and allowed me to accompany him. That time is now gone. . .

Up in his room alone in New York City, his is singing *"kṛṣṇotkīrtana . . . vande rūpa-sanātanau raghu-yugau śrī-jīva-gopālakau."* He is calling to them. We did not understand of *whom* he was singing. To us, it was simply "Swamijī is singing" and "Kṛṣṇa." That was sufficient, simply to know his mood, to hear his *karatālas.* He was crying to the Lord.

Why did he record those songs? He may not have known at the time what he would do with the tapes. He may not have known how his solitude in New York City would later become a legend." . . . *gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda."*

Prabhupāda, you had so little money: camping in an office lent by a *yogī;* barely having enough for

eatables, to pay the high prices, to survive the Manhattan cold—but you were not afraid.

Now when we walk in a city, we think of you there in New York City. *Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu ... patita-pāvana hetu.* Doctor Misra allowed you to stay, but no lectures. Someone knocked on your door bringing brown rice from the macrobiotic restaurant and inviting you downtown. I recall the story tonight and your singing from 1965, *ha ha prabhu nityānanda.*

We want to follow you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, although we fight so much. We pray to receive you in the standard ways. Please deliver us from the wrongs of ordinary life in which we tend to get stuck. Please deliver us from forgetfulness of you, forgetfulness of your mission.

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Misuse of a Prabhupāda story: A confession
4.7

We all have the experience of hearing someone tell a Prabhupāda instruction or story in a way that seems inappropriate or wrongly motivated. We may think that we ourselves will never do such a thing, but sometimes I have found myself guilty of it.

While staying overnight in the home of a *gṛhastha* family, I woke in the middle of the night with the need to pass urine. It was winter and the room was cold. At first, I thought of just going back to sleep, but I thought I should answer the call of nature instead. However, what most prevented me from walking to the bathroom was the fear of

waking my hosts. I did not want to creak the floorboards and doors and awaken the husband and wife and their little child. So what to do? I turned on my bedside flashlight and looked around the room for some receptacle to use for passing urine in. Maybe there was an old bottle or pot. My light-beam found nothing usable. Then I glanced upon the two large cups which I use to bathe my Deities in the morning. One is a 16 oz. plastic measuring cup and the other is a stainless steel cup of the same size. Of course, I refused the idea because it would contaminate these cups from their sacred use, but then I began to see there was no alternative to this. So I crawled out of bed and used the stainless steel cup as a chamber pot. While doing this, I reinforced myself with the following Prabhupāda story, which was told to me by Prabhupāda's secretary, Śyāmasundara dāsa:

When Prabhupāda was staying at the Moscow's Hotel National in 1971, he decided to make a quantity of sweet rice to take with him on the plane to Paris. Prabhupāda had all the ingredients, but he had no cooking pots. Śyāmasundara looked around for receptacles and found a few cups, but not enough. Prabhupāda then told him that he could use the *loṭa* from the bathroom. Śyāmasundara was surprised at this, but Prabhupāda said that, in an emergency, anything could be done.

So with this line, "In an emergency, anything can be done," I pacified myself, answered the call of nature, and then got back into my warm sleeping bag. Predictably, I was disturbed. I could not sleep and started worrying about what I had done. I reassured myself that in the morning I could wash out the cup with soap and water, and it would be all

right. I ran over in my mind the story of Prabhupāda with sweet rice. Was this really an emergency? Eventually I fell asleep, but I had a vivid nightmare that I had lost my passport in Poland and was subjected to many mistreatments and interrogations.

In the morning, I scrubbed out the stainless steel cup, but when it came time to use it for pouring water on Nṛsiṁhadeva, I couldn't do it. The cup had been contaminated and could no longer be used for worship. While reflecting on this embarrassing incident, I see that I used this Prabhupāda story as a bridge to deviate from Prabhupāda's standard of cleanliness and worship. In this way, we can pick and choose from Prabhupāda's instructions and misuse them to support any kind of nonsense. The devious mind can make up all sorts of things and make a perversion out of Prabhupāda meditation. Moreover, I am not even absolutely certain about the validity of that story of Prabhupāda in Moscow.

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Turning to someone who is close to us
4.8

Lord Caitanya said something like this: "I have no love of God, not even a spot. It is not possible to have pure love of God and still live in the world in separation from the Lord. If I loved the Lord, then how could I live?" He is describing the most intense expression of love of God, and it produces severe unhappiness, but actually Lord Caitanya was feeling bliss. For myself, I cannot feel intensity in my forgetfulness of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I follow and

repeat his instructions, but I lack a personal touch. If I loved Śrīla Prabhupāda, I would be in a different frame of mind.

Love of Kṛṣṇa is so intense and bewildering that even a drop of it can drown the whole world. One feels madness—happiness of being with Kṛṣṇa and sadness of separation. If the symptoms are not present, how can one claim to be a lover of Kṛṣṇa? Similarly, if we do not feel bereavement that Prabhupāda is not in this world directing us—as well as the conviction that he *is* still with us—how can we claim to be a "Prabhupāda man," Prabhupāda nectar-hound, Prabhupāda meditator and so on?

Prabhupāda said that on the disappearance of the spiritual master, the disciple should cry. As a chaste wife is ready to climb onto the funeral pyre following her dead husband, the disciple should be ready to give up his life after the departure of the spiritual master. The way to do this is to serve the order of the guru. This is "giving up the life" in a positive sense. One may say, "I cried tears back in 1977. It has been a long time since then. What do you expect? I am sure Prabhupāda wants us to go on functioning." I agree. A Prabhupāda disciple understands that his spiritual master has not "disappeared." Prabhupāda has entered the eternal *līlā* of the Lord. His disciple continues to live by service, and, therefore, he is cheerful. Everything is okay.

Yet everything is not okay. We are without our guide on a daily basis. We feel incomplete. We seek relief, and often we find it in contact with Prabhupāda. If we did not have ways to contact him, then it would be indeed difficult.

We approach him by listening to a lecture *and* bowing down before the Prabhupāda *mūrti*. "I did it," we should think. "I touched him, I made some contact today, so all is not lost." Prabhupāda is not sheer *vāṇī;* he is not *only* in sound waves; he is not only printed words on a page. He is a living person.

Prabhupāda is never far away, but we have to notice him. For example, when I feel envy toward my Godbrothers, I am able to check it somewhat by remembering Prabhupāda. He is always there, just as the Supersoul is in the heart. All we have to do is remember and turn to him.

Prabhupāda meditations do not have to be a huge effort. You do not first have to relax your body, do an *asana,* control your breath, and meditate on *cakras* for hours in order to come to an ultimate point. Just perform the simple act of turning to someone who is close. When we think and do something favorable for spiritual life, know that Prabhupāda is the bestower of that Kṛṣṇa conscious thought. When we find ourselves slipping into wrong actions and thoughts, Prabhupāda will save us by his relevant instructions and by his glance.

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Talking about a '66 kīrtana
4.9

I am talking about a '66 *kīrtana.* I am yearning to be within that circle again. I know about *vāṇī.* I know about the Bhaktivedanta purports. I know about his urgent mission in the here and now. But I also want to be there in the old *kīrtanas.*

His drum is a walking beat. It is like the thumping of your heart. Swamijī is the maestro. The *karatālas* are his rhythm section. We are his chorus.

We are dancing around him. This is better than stories of elves singing deep in a forest. This goes on in a storefront off Second Avenue, but you cannot hear it with ordinary ears.

He induced us to *let go.* He watched us. There were limits to the physical exhibition of spiritual emotions, but, internally, there were no limits. "Stay high forever." Dancing, crying tears, perspiring, swaying . . . and steady rhythm. The person leading, Swamijī, knows exactly what he is doing. He is an authorized person in the spiritual realm. All we have to do is follow him. His beat is jazzy. He is unexpected. He is entering into our lives more and more as our bona fide guru.

Gradually he picks up the beat. The *karatālas* are splashing playfully at the surf-edge of the ocean. We jump and feel happy like children playing on the shore. This is the best thing that ever happened to us. This is why we left behind all the junk of our middle-class upbringings. This is why we rebelled. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Don't try reading everyone's mind and putting everyone down. Just let yourself get up and dance. You, too, are a funny, freckle-faced person with bulging eyes and crooked teeth, or you are just as fat or imperfect as everyone else. It doesn't matter, because we are not these bodies. This is what Swamijī is teaching and he is leading us.

He does not mind if you have your fun—make your harmonies like a blues singer or dance your little step—it is not that important. Just give of

yourself the way he wants you to: enter the Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana.*

Faster and faster with Swamijī in the *kīrtana.* I pray to be with him with words, to praise him and worship this *kīrtana.* The chorus is swelling . . . Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare/ Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare . . . The *karatāla* chorus is one shimmering sheet, and then it descends like bells, but Swamijī is the same—steady, virile, transcendental. At last we are released from misery. Soon the *kīrtana* is going to end, but we will always come back for more. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Kīrtana ends in a shimmering of last tinkles, harmonium chords, and then Swamijī's *prāṇamas.* Breathing heavily, praying to stay with him. Craziness tries to re-enter our brains, but we are safe with Prabhupāda. "All glories to the assembled devotees! All glories to the assembled devotees! All glories to the assembled devotees! Thank you very much."



As if you were drowning
4.10

"Why do I fall asleep when I go to read?"
It's a stupid question I shouldn't ask.
It's like when I went up to my geometry teacher
Mr. Carroll, my first year in high school.
"I do well in my other classes,
why do I have trouble in geometry?"
He replied, "What do you learn in English,
to spell cat, c-a-t?
Geometry isn't so easy, that's all."

But this is different.
I want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious.
I get up early, chant for two hours,
but when I turn to read . . .
No excuses.
It requires patience.
To reread, go deeper
than you do with most books.
Know your life and death
depends on this.
At the first signs of drowsiness,
fight as if you were drowning.

Today's text:
Lord Brahmā heard from the Supersoul.
I've read it many times,
it's wonderful,
worth noting down:
"Fortunate is he who is so entrusted"—
Lord Kṛṣṇa said, "What you are begging from Me
has already been granted from before."

I've had better sessions,
and I will be better again.
Even this morning I have salvaged.
Falling at your feet, spiritual master,
I beg for loving service,
which only you can give.

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Prabhupāda on immortality
4.11

I remember one lecture Prabhupāda gave in Māyāpura (1975) in which he spoke of immortality. He said people do not know how to become immortal, and this is the greatest blindness in Western civilization. They think they can attain lasting goals within the temporary material world, but that is impossible. Prabhupāda's lecture was the most thrilling of any possible topic. If he had spoken something "higher," we would have loved that also; he gave us what we most needed, though, and it was blissful and assuring.

Prabhupāda explained immortality in many ways. Every time he said the word "immortal" or "immortality," he struck down all doubts. Prabhupāda said it was the mission of Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa to teach immortality. If we can know why Kṛṣṇa comes into the world, as taught by Lord Caitanya, we also will become immortal. *Janma karma ca me divyam.*

Immortality is inconceivable to us. It is not a topic that we have already mastered. It is the basis of everything. Although we may grasp it academically, what do we know of eternality? Who is thoroughly convinced that he is spirit soul? How

nourishing it was, therefore, to hear this from Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was another crowning achievement by Prabhupāda to gather us in Māyāpura and instruct us in our individual immortality.

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Offering Prabhupāda your love
4.12

I want to give Prabhupāda pleasure, as well as receive pleasure from him. Usually, we beg from him. We are bankrupt, and he is full of Kṛṣṇa's mercy. That is the relationship of father and son. We are always drawing from him.

However, when happiness comes my way, I want to share it with Prabhupāda. For example, now I am writing memories of my youth and the books that I have read, and I am making Kṛṣṇa conscious commentary. I thought it came out as interesting reading, and could draw people toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As I felt a lift from doing this, I wanted to share it with my spiritual master.

I worried, "Is Prabhupāda going to like this?" Then I remembered that Prabhupāda appreciates whatever is successful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He likes it if, on our own, we develop something and present it as an offering to him. The spiritual master wants to see the disciple use his intelligence for Kṛṣṇa. That may involve all kinds of deliberation and development by the disciple. In the end, his joy is that Prabhupāda does accept it.

Sometimes you dream up something; it comes out of your life, and you feel deeply about it. It may

even be an *anārtha* that you face; you deal with it and convert it into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that someone once found an old gourd and a metal string, and from these rejected pieces, he made a beautiful *vīṇā*. When we pick up the bits and scraps of our lives and make them into something useful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we feel a lift of happiness. "Let me show this to Prabhupāda."

This also works in our prayers. Prayer is not only for formal times, but for whenever we turn to our Friend.

"Oh, look Śrīla Prabhupāda, see those two hills? The hills in front of them are starting to turn brown with the dawn. And look at the road, how it twists and turns, but then disappears somewhere into the field. Look at the fields with their stone boundaries. Look at the sheep, at the ocean's white streaks, at the sky, at the clouds. Look! There is just a dim vision now, but the outlines of Skelligs rocks are just becoming clear. Prabhupāda, look at everything!"

Another time you may be working in your room, and, because there is no heat, the chill starts getting to you. You notice it, and you call out, "Prabhupāda, it is so cold here!" Prabhupāda meditation can be very ready, as near as our dearest friend. It is a respectful, intimate relationship.

If we do not offer Kṛṣṇa our selfhood, then there is the danger of making offerings only in an official way. Our offering may appear impeccable; we may do everything according to the rules, with proper standards of cleanliness, and on time. But what if we somehow avoid giving ourselves? Do we think we are too unworthy to be an offering? If we do not give ourselves wholeheartedly, we will reserve

some energy for other things. The energy will be bottled up and lead to frustration, or we will expand the energy for something separate from our service to guru and Kṛṣṇa. If we want to offer our full selves, we have to be enthusiastic. We should not hold back.

Prabhupāda tends to be lenient in bringing out the best in his students. Thus he allows his students gradually to give more and more of themselves as they feel inclined. The students try to elevate their tastes and talents until their offerings become pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. Why not offer Prabhupāda something we know is pleasing to pure devotees and to Kṛṣṇa? The highest standard of offering is a devotee's full energy and self, dovetailed with the interest of Kṛṣṇa.

One devotee of Kṛṣṇa was so ecstatic that when Kṛṣṇa visited his house, the devotee offered Kṛṣṇa banana peels instead of bananas. The offering was imperfect, but because it was done in love, Kṛṣṇa happily accepted it. The *gopīs'* service, on the other hand, was so perfect that it captured Kṛṣṇa's mind. Their service was wholehearted and perfectly rendered according to the devotional arts—they knew how to please Him.

We can all try offering whatever we have to Prabhupāda. We will always be fools before him, but at least we will have offered everything we could.

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A letter to Prabhupāda
4.13

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances.

I worked on an essay this morning for two hours. It was knotty, but it is happy work. I want to make something attractive and strong in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and it is a challenge to do it in words. You once said that writing about Kṛṣṇa and speaking about Him are some of the best ways to meditate on Him; we are forced to think of Him at every moment.

This morning I was preaching against the rebel authors I read in my youth. It was difficult to present the right attitude—I did not want to seem over-righteous or too moralistic. However, Kṛṣṇa consciousness *is* righteous and true, and I took pains to express it in a way that would be both correct and appealing. I was especially trying to address young people who are so prone to rebel.

This makes me consider how authorities usually fail us, and how we turn to rebellious "heroes." It was nice to be working side by side with you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. You are always with me when I try to write in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I was writing somewhat autobiographically. I gave myself as an example of someone who was attracted to decadent, anti-religious writers. The authors assert that we should live uninhibited lives. I read these writers in the Navy, when I felt oppressed by parents and the government. This leads me to remember how you entered my life, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and saved me from all that.

You gave such a good twist to my wrongly directed life that I am still aimed in the right direction. I know you are saving me from many, many lifetimes of hell. I only wish that I could contribute more to my own progress. It would be pleasing to you to see another disciple finish up all his business and go back to Godhead. Sometimes I think I am just coasting on your strength. You gave me a push, and its force is not slowing down. Even without my contributing my own strength to it, I am saved, as long as I don't steer myself into a ditch.

You are my lord and master, life after life. You are pushing me over the ground of *jñana* and karma into *bhakti.* What you want from me will finally happen. My heart, which is originally Kṛṣṇa conscious like yours, will awaken one day. I will understand that you are teaching *aham brahmāsmi,* I am spirit soul. Then I will start moving under my own power, attracted to Kṛṣṇa as an iron filing is attracted to a magnet. I will make up the last ground for going back to Godhead. I hope it will be like that, Prabhupāda, by your grace.

Since I am speaking about writing, let me appreciate your Bhaktivedanta purports. They are proving to be the matrix for schools of art, philosophy, and science. Sometimes devotees say that you did not organize your writing into divisions as in an encyclopedia. You wrote everything as it occurred to you and the previous *ācāryas,* when speaking in the context of each *Bhāgavatam* verse. Some of your followers have been dividing your work into sections, compiling books on the holy names, guru-disciple relationship, and so on. The way you wrote is perfect in itself, but you allow us

to keep ourselves creatively engaged in mining the jewels from the Bhaktivedanta purports.

Even in a single purport, you give impetus for a follower to dedicate his whole life. Let us always remain your submissive students, reading your purports daily. Let us hanker for your *darśana* and the *darśana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Only when your teachings become our life's breath can we come forward and create "new literatures." After all, what are our new literatures but old wine in new bottles? I am happy to be able to write on the basis of what you have written. Other followers of yours are also acting on this basis. We are like the branches; you are the tree. We are being nourished and sustained by you.

While writing this letter, I have stopped several times and almost lost heart. Cynical voices tell me that I have no right to speak to you of my little activities. If any letters are to be written to Prabhupāda after his disappearance, they should concern serious matters affecting the whole ISKCON society. These thoughts make me want to stop, but then I realize that that is not right either. As I am writing my letter, hundreds and thousands of your disciples may also write you. Somehow you are receiving them all. I know from when I was your secretary that you can answer a lot of mail. You can speak to each person if necessary. It is especially hard now, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to go without writing to you, at least occasionally. I am not expecting you to answer with a return letter. I mainly want the assurance that you hear me and accept me, and that you will always give us your guidance toward the ultimate goal. If you like, I can take up that secretarial service, helping you answer letters. It was some-

thing I was able to do by your grace. Only, everyone prefers to hear from you directly. Me too.

Your servant,

Satsvarūpa dāsa

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Did Prabhupāda make predictions for success in chanting that do not come true?
4.14

Śrīla Prabhupāda always encouraged us in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. He told audiences that the boys and girls who are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa are experiencing pleasure and absorption in love of God. What could be attained previously only through great austerity can now be achieved simply by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. As proof of this, Prabhupāda offered the example of thousands of his disciples who are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and giving up attraction to material life.

Sometimes, I doubt whether these things are actually coming true. Were they true when Prabhupāda was present, but not true now? Were they ever true? If they are true, how to understand them? Or should we not make attempts to analyze?

Prabhupāda's statements are true because they are based on *śāstra*. In the *śāstra*, we find much encouragement that lowborn or low-class persons can successfully chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Even if a person

born in a family of dogeaters chants Hare Kṛṣṇa once, he becomes qualified to perform Vedic *yajñas*. Those who are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in this lifetime must have accomplished all Vedic practices in previous lifetimes. There is no doubt that the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, and especially the followers of Lord Caitanya, praised the power of the holy name over all other spiritual practices. What Prabhupāda has added to all of this is the claim that now these teachings are actually taking place: people from all races and religions all over the world are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and getting good results.

Sociologists have their empirical methods for assessing the effects of chanting. They might follow a group of devotees for twenty years. They give them questionnaires and interviews and judge how they progress in spiritual life from year to year. In this way, they try to build statistical evidence for theories. That is not the Vaiṣṇava way—at least it is not my way.

One way to reply to doubts is to speak for yourself. When your experience confirms what is stated in *śāstra* and by the spiritual master, then you have strong evidence. I want to be a successful statistic to prove Prabhupāda correct. If I can do that, then my confidence will be strong. If someone claims that most devotees do not get benefit from chanting as Prabhupāda predicted, I can reply, "I know the benefits have been there for me." Unfortunately, I cannot claim significant progress in my own chanting. I look at some of the positive statements Prabhupāda makes about chanting, and I feel sorry.

I know, however, that Prabhupāda is not making false predictions. One has to look carefully at his use of language. He may say that if a devotee

sincerely chants, then he will get the good results. In one purport, Prabhupāda states that chanting is very simple, but you have to take it seriously. There may be something wrong with ourselves rather than Prabhupāda's statements. Our own inability to experience the benefits of chanting may be a cause for concern, but this should not lead us to doubt the spiritual master or the *nāmācārya* Haridāsa Ṭhākura, whom he represents. In fact, our individual failure is also predicted by the *ācāryas*. They say that if someone does not take advantage of this easy system of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, then there is no other hope for him.

The Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* sympathize with people like me. They have stated on our behalf, "I do not have attraction for the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa; therefore, I must be cursed by Yamarāja." Lord Caitanya speaks for the conditioned souls and says, "I do not have a taste for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa because of committing offenses."

We have also been encouraged by Prabhupāda that the real symptoms of successful chanting are not the attainment of ecstatic bodily symptoms. Steady results of chanting are shown when a devotee utilizes his time always in Kṛṣṇa's service, and when he patiently depends on Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Another general symptom is detachment from material life.

I admit that for me it is very difficult to control the mind while chanting. This brings another doubt: did Prabhupāda realize how difficult it is to control the mind during chanting? Why didn't he give us more coaching in meditation, as the Buddhists practice? The answer is that Prabhupāda *did* give us coaching. His coaching was simply this: *just*

hear. He also taught that we must avoid the ten offenses if we want to improve the quality of our chanting. Prabhupāda and the *ācāryas* describe the ten *nāmāparādhas* (including Vaiṣṇava-*aparādha)* and about *anārthas* in the heart. There is no shortage of theoretical instruction, no shortage of practical coaching to control the mind while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Let us not avoid the difficult or make up excuses. Prabhupāda did not predict cheap overnight success. Let me enter that workshop mood once again, even though I have tried before. Do whatever will help: keep notebooks, time myself with a stopwatch, increase my quota of rounds, get up as early as possible, talk about chanting with interested devotees, study the scriptures to this end, and go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare /Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

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Grasping at ways to be with him
4.15

Each day is a new chance to be with Prabhupāda. One way to do it is to see him in your present activities. As you go out on a morning walk, you see a three-quarter moon and the puddles from last night's rain reflecting the sky that is just beginning to turn blue—and you share the joy of it with Śrīla Prabhupāda. You do this by thanking him and being with him in the present moment. You do it also by correcting any errors in your point of view. For example, I may be intoxicated by the animal

sensations in my body, the tingling of health at being outdoors. So I gently remind myself, "This is only Kṛṣṇa's material energy. The thrill and beauty here is only a fraction of Kṛṣṇa's splendor." I thank Prabhupāda for guiding me on an enlightened morning walk.

We also may go back in time to be with Prabhupāda. Maybe it takes a little imagination to get it started, but once you give yourself a prod, you can live in the past again, right now. The past is as real as the water running now in a stream or the surf from the ocean or the gulls' calls. Why can't you remember?

You went on a walk with Prabhupāda. Ducks started quacking. He said. "They think we are disturbing them and we think they are disturbing us." Devotees laughed with Prabhupāda. We were all close to him. Since his departure, we have not been able to gather around a great soul like that.

You can *mix* the past and present. Take a walk with him today just as he used to walk.

We might say, "Prabhupāda, this is the countryside of Ireland. They divide the land with rock walls so the sheep can graze. Ireland's role in the European Common Market is to supply beef."

How would Prabhupāda reply? I cannot say for sure, but according to his teachings he might say, "Beef is their industry, and, therefore, their young men are being slaughtered in the war fields of Iraq."

"Actually, Prabhupāda, not many of the Europeans were killed in Iraq. It was the Iraqis who were killed."

"Then? You will not be killed?"

"Not yet."

"What is this 'not yet'? Someone is killed today and someone is killed tomorrow. According to your karma you will have to suffer next life, whether in Europe or Iraq or America, whether as a human or bird or beast."

"But Prabhupāda, some people don't seem to suffer as much as others. For example, the Europeans . . . "

"Everyone suffers!"

Perhaps I should not imagine Prabhupāda, yet it gives me solace. It is a kind of madness, I suppose. I am grasping at ways to be with him.

We can be with Prabhupāda just by being quiet, without clever attempts to recreate his presence. Be confident he is with you as you walk. Hear the cries of gulls, earthy and primal. Just think, the same birds have been singing like that generation after generation for many centuries, back to when Kṛṣṇa was here on earth. According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, everything we see is earth, water, fire, air, and sky. It is all Kṛṣṇa's energy. Everything reminds us of Him. It is Prabhupāda who points this out. We can be philosophers and meditators on Kṛṣṇa consciousness wherever we are, thanks to Prabhupāda.

Try This . . .

It is a challenge . . . but why not try it? Wherever you are, be with Prabhupāda now.

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Just imagine
4.16

Would you like to use your imagination? What if you could rise out of the body and travel into the sky, into outer space? What if the earth began to spin backwards in time? What if you were able to descend onto the earth planet again during the time when Śrīla Prabhupāda was living with us in 1966-77? What if you could be with him again?

If this could be done, I would like to spend at least a few days in Prabhupāda's association. I want to ask him how we can conduct ourselves after his disappearance. I want to ask about the disciplic succession after his departure, about qualifications for the guru. Also, after he is gone, how can we get further guidance?

However, such questioning does not seem advisable. Kṛṣṇa has arranged everything in His own way. Why should I expect to understand things before they happen? If I try to talk with Prabhupāda in pre-1977 days, it will be in one of those imaginary "As If" sessions. That is one way he is available to us now, in the present.

Straight remembering is good. If you practice, you can get better at it. As you walk in the city or down a country hill, close your eyes briefly and think of him. Do not heed the inner censors who hate to hear Prabhupāda stories told again and again. Go to the favorites, listen for the sounds, consider the tastes and possible sights.

Just imagine all your association with Śrīla Prabhupāda to be like a big ball of golden thread. Look at the ball and see if there are any threads

sticking out, even small ones. Whatever you find, take it and start unraveling.

Since I am near the ocean this week, I am thinking of Prabhupāda walking on Juhu Beach. He is surrounded by devotees who come as close as possible to hear from him. Even nondevotees can see that a guru is walking with his disciples, but the inner meaning of what is happening is closed to them.

Come close to Prabhupāda and try to hear. Sometimes his words are blown away by the wind or lost in the crashing surf. "What did he say? What did he say?" You feel a desperation to recapture his words, as if they were being blown out to sea.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda?" He turns (or sometimes gives only a glance) and that is your cue.

"Prabhupāda, how can we love Kṛṣṇa?" Our questions are sometimes impertinent, sometimes sincere. Prabhupāda responds deeply, but it depends on the listener to remember and follow what he says.

Prabhupāda used to walk for half an hour on Juhu Beach. Then he would stop as if an imaginary line were drawn in the sand. "Should we go back now?" His question was more of a statement. As one, we would turn and walk back to Hare Kṛṣṇa Land. The vista was no longer pre-dawn but sunlight on the beach—pigs and donkeys running, people dressed in white out for their morning walk, coconut sellers, debris scattered here and there—it is Juhu and Prabhupāda is cutting a swath through *māyā*.

There is still time to ask him a question. He pokes his cane into the sand and turns to you. The devotees form a circle around Prabhupāda.

"Prabhupāda, they say religion is blind faith. If there is God, then show Him to me."

Prabhupāda says, "You cannot see God because you are blind. However, everyone is not blind. If you want to see God, you have to come to one who has the vision."

What did he say?

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As his student
4.17

1

In a dream—
we were in the storefront with Swamijī
and he challenged a skeptical girl,
"Can you build cities?"
My dream is insubstantial,
but his books stay in focus.

2

He knows how to bring us up.
Go at his pace.
Recently I tried to go faster
into the *most* intimate *līlās,*
but now I feel wrong.
I beg forgiveness—
I don't want to harm
my young tree of devotion.
I pray to make up
by returning once again
to my place as his student.
It is as simple as that.

I understand better
why he speaks against *sahajiyās*.
And I understand better
why we worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa
in the attitude of awe and reverence,
and why he gives all importance
to chanting the holy names.

As good as God
4.18

It is Kṛṣṇa who makes the beautiful material world with its oceans and mountains. You cannot thank Prabhupāda for the creation, yet I feel, "Oh Prabhupāda, thank you!" What I mean to say is, "Thank you, Prabhupāda, for enabling me to see the creation as the work of Kṛṣṇa. Thank you for giving me the eyes."

I remember being in Prabhupāda's room in 1966 and thinking of him "as God." He was talking to a group of us. I suddenly thought, "He is God for me," but I did not say anything. I had never had a direct experience of God, just talked about Him. However, the Swami was a person who knew love of God. Therefore, God was in the room when you were with the pure devotee.

What I felt that day was something I could not put into an essay. When it is time for expressing things in writing, *then* we must make them very clear: there is an eternal distinction between the individual soul who is a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and the Supreme Soul. Kṛṣṇa is the complete whole and all the devotees, including the liberated souls, are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. Everyone serves the Lord. No one is the Supreme

īśvara except Kṛṣṇa. This is all very clear and the *ācāryas* are the ones who make it clear for us. Fortunately, we also have spiritual-emotional moments when we feel so grateful to the pure devotee that we utter, at least within ourselves, "You are God to me."

By his grace, I meditate on the spiritual master, who is one of the individual expansions of the Lord. He is not an ordinary living entity. His perfection is his intimate service to the Supreme Lord and to the Vaiṣṇavas. I meditate on that spiritual master who is described distinctly in each verse of the "Gurv-aṣṭakam." He soaks us with rain from the ocean of love of God. He puts out the forest fire of *saṁsāra.* When he chants the holy name, he sometimes dances and sheds tears in ecstasy. He teaches us to worship the *arca-vigrahā* of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī-Rādhārāṇī. He teaches us to prepare food and to give it to Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master is happy to see his devotees honoring *bhagavata-prasādam.*

I meditate on the spiritual master, who is always engaged in the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, assisting the assistants of the *gopīs.* He is able to do this by virtue of his intense devotion to his own spiritual master, and this has enabled him to enter the pastimes of Vṛndāvana. The spiritual master is accepted in all the scriptures to be as worshipable as God Himself, because he is the confidential servitor of the Lord. When we please him, we please Kṛṣṇa; when we fail to please him, our destination is unknown.

Try This . . .

What in this world do you find beautiful? Return that awareness to Prabhupāda, and thank him for giving you the intelligence to understand and appreciate it rightly, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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Thank you for teaching us that money isn't everything
4.19

In 1976, Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured on Prahlāda Mahārāja's verses to the demoniac school children. Prahlāda taught that the pursuit of money is hellish and robs one of spiritual life.

Money is the via medium for sense gratification. Prabhupāda said, "It is hellish; when they go into the mine, they know it may collapse; but everyone is thinking that they have to work very hard for sense gratification."

Prabhupāda said that serving Kṛṣṇa is the real purpose of life. That does not mean we have to starve to death, but sense gratification should be pursued only to keep the body healthy for serving Kṛṣṇa.

As I heard these talks, I appreciated Prabhupāda's radical philosophy, the philosophy of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I am grateful to Prabhupāda for coming to America and demonstrating that we will not die without the so-called necessities. He said, "These boys and girls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are not dying for want of sense gratification."

Making money is a complicated subject. It is not easy to apply these teachings in the world. Moreover, devotees have to work out their individual level of renunciation and sense gratification. I will not presume to preach to everyone on this subject.

However, I want to express my gratitude. Śrīla Prabhupāda has allowed me to pursue spiritual life without interruption by living as a *sannyāsī*. Some think of the *sannyāsī* as a parasite who "begs" from the householders. This is the vision of the materialist. If, however, a *sannyāsī* goes door-to-door for spreading enlightenment, it is a worthy contribution to society.

In order to chant peacefully and hear about Kṛṣṇa, our lives should be simple. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for allowing me to get out of the jaws of the worrisome situation. You have given me freedom from the nine-to-five job. Now I live with a greater responsibility. If I waste my time, I *will* be a parasite. I will have to suffer in the next life.

Thank you, Prabhupāda, for giving me the secret of my own well-being. The more I can go without material "necessities," the happier I will be. I am better off without a wife, without a house, without property. These are the open secrets.

When the Vedic age was flourishing, the most advanced persons were the *brāhmaṇas*, who deliberately led lives of poverty. However, their poverty was never demeaning. They lived in small, clean huts and spent their time engaged in Vedic studies, instructing others, and traveling. Those who were not so educated also accepted a simple life. They did not feel pressured to compete for the best apartment, then move to a house in the suburbs, and always be seeking more. The norms of society did

not drive them to this, and neither did the government or taxes harass them. The *kṣatriyas* lived with a flourish, but they paid their "dues" to society by giving protection to everyone.

Prabhupāda did not bring a philosophy of "no work." He brought the Vedic teachings which deemphasize wealth.

Every sincere follower of Prabhupāda feels gratitude for his teachings. If a devotee is more inclined to economic development, then he may thank Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa for allowing him to become successful. Only a devotee knows how to use the blessings of prosperity without letting it go to his head. One can use extra money in Kṛṣṇa's service. One does not have to waste money on cigarettes, videos, and entertainment which is suitable only for *mūḍhās.*

Money is not the great necessity. We do not worship the Almighty Buck. Because we follow Prabhupāda, we do not think that he who has the most money is the best person. We do not think that the nation which has the most money (and missiles) is the best. Rather, we say that misused money is the source of many ills. We want to live simply in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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Part Five

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Thank you for educating us in God consciousness
5.1

When I hear people make mistakes while speaking about God, I try not to be puffed-up. Just because I have received the best education does not mean I should look down on others. Students at Harvard University or Oxford University may be better educated, but they spoil their treasure if they look down upon common people. Similarly, I do not want to be a snob in God consciousness, but I appreciate what Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught us.

I feel humbled sometimes when I see someone else's faith in God. I also meet people who have more love for God than I do, even though they may have not received such a thorough education. I will never stop being grateful to Prabhupāda, however, for giving me this education. In that sense, I am proud.

In the modern age, people are proud of their college degrees, but this is also an age of increase in atheistic propaganda. Therefore, unless we get a good education in God consciousness, we are liable to be misdirected by education. Godless education is worse than being illiterate. It is like a poisonous snake with a jewel on its head.

In his evening lectures at 26 Second Avenue in 1966, Swamijī blasted the ignorance of puffed-up New Yorkers. He said, "You do not know anything. The whole world does not know anything. No one knows God. You think that the self is the body. You think that this life is for amassing money for sense gratification. This is all ignorance, all illusion." Prabhupāda said that love with the family and the

noble attempts to help people by altruism are both illusion; they will all be destroyed.

In the mornings, in an intimate setting with his own disciples, Prabhupāda taught *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Even in the pedagogical sense, his was an accredited course in advanced spiritual knowledge.

When Prabhupāda heard that IBM was donating free typewriters to bona fide educational institutions, he asked me to go get one. I met with the man, but when he heard the description of our ISKCON storefront, he said, "I am sorry, but these typewriters are only for educational institutions." I replied that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the king of education. It teaches absolute knowledge. Mathematics, for example, is one department of knowledge within the Absolute Truth. Therefore, ISKCON is an educational institution. He decided not to argue with me, but said that he would send his representative out to check on the quality of classes at 26 Second Avenue. Of course, no one ever came. An impartial educator, however, would have to admit that learning was going on in Prabhupāda's classes. Prabhupāda was teaching us the principles and objectives of spiritual science as passed down by the great *ācāryas* of India.

Anyone who studies Prabhupāda's books becomes educated in the most important subject. Whenever a follower of Prabhupāda hears a discussion of God consciousness, he spots contradictions or a "poor fund of knowledge" wherever it occurs. Even a young *brahmacārī* can note the flaws in the presentation of learned theologians or clergymen. Theologians are puzzled as to "why bad things happen to good people." Some of them theorize that God may be all good, but He is not all powerful.

Some say that God cannot have a form or that God exists only in human relationships—but we can see this as a poor fund of knowledge.

One of the benefits of a good education in any field is that one easily meets opposition from prejudiced or ignorant persons. Sometimes people would ask Prabhupāda, "What is your faith?" Prabhupāda usually replied, "It is not faith, it is fact." He also said, "You may believe or not believe, that is a different thing." When a devotee meets a strong-minded atheist, the devotee sees right away that the atheist is only speaking for himself. We are not shaken in our convictions. Let us always thank Prabhupāda for giving us the best education in the most important of all subjects. It is not a sectarian religious education. It is not less important than material knowledge. Prabhupāda teaches *rāja-vidyā*, the king of education. Most of us are unqualified to receive this education, and yet we have received a full scholarship. Just as an underprivileged person feels fortunate to receive a scholarship to a top university, we are grateful that Prabhupāda has accepted us into the university of Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇism.

A few colleges now give credits to Prabhupāda's students in courses based on his books. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine that Kṛṣṇa conscious students will be given as much credit in the world as science or business students. If Vaiṣṇavas became recognized as educators, that would be nice. If not, we will go on teaching. One who is trained by Prabhupāda is better than a PhD—yet he humbly thinks himself unadvanced.

The subject in which we are trained, love of Kṛṣṇa, is unlimitedly vast. We can never know

everything about Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, a PhD in this field honestly says that he does not have deep love for Kṛṣṇa. He reasons that if he had love for Kṛṣṇa, how could he live in this world without Him? The accomplished student of Kṛṣṇa consciousness never considers himself a master of this subject and never becomes puffed-up. He acknowledges that even simple people can receive God consciousness by the direct method of chanting the holy names. Prabhupāda has taught us everything: he has given the syllabus and the practices, and he has stressed humility. This is true education.

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Late in the day turning to him
5.2

Were you pleased when I spoke
a lecture from your books?
When I met with them
did I make mistakes?
Mostly I listened and agreed
with whomever I met.
And so it is late and only now I try
to speak directly to you.

The ladies asked me, "How could
he say that women are all less intelligent
and that we only want bangles and *sarīs?"*
Prabhupāda said many things.
We have to examine them all.
He said women are more religious than
men.
"Therefore in every religion the women
gather in greater numbers
in the temples and churches."

"Do you think women have to be shy
and can't read aloud or lead *bhajanas*
or give a lecture?"
"No! He has written letters
that women may lecture."
And so I believe, although years ago
I believed in a different way.
And some disagree with me.
We each follow Prabhupāda as we see fit.

Hoping for dreams of you,
and now it is time to offer you
your evening milk, as I used to in Bombay,
in a silver cup, with sugar in a separate cup.
Please take it. Hear my prayers.
I'll eat and drink only your remnants:
"You are so kindly teaching the message
of Lord Caitanya
and delivering these Western countries
which are filled with voidism and
impersonalism."
Today was failure, chances missed,
but at least this.

❀❀❀❀❀❀

Thank you for being a lover of God
5.3

Tom began attending the Boston temple, but then decided that if he was going to be religious, better he did it in the Catholic Church where he was raised. I was friendly with Tom and was

disappointed to think that I would not see him again. When he began practicing Catholicism, however, he wrote to me and said he felt a lot of gratitude to Prabhupāda. "Complete love of God permeates Prabhupāda's personal life and all his teachings. I will always be grateful to him." I was happy to hear this, and it made me more alert to find purports where Prabhupāda demonstrates love of God.

> One should not become an official meditator. Life should be so molded that one will always have the chance to think of Kṛṣṇa. One should always act in such a way that all his daily activities are in connection with Kṛṣṇa. He should arrange his life in such a way that throughout the twenty-four hours he cannot but think of Kṛṣṇa.
>
> —*Bg.* 18.65, purport

In another purport, Prabhupāda states, "In the advanced stage, one falls completely in love with Kṛṣṇa" (*Bg.* 8.28). Prabhupāda teaches us not to be wishy-washy, but to give everything to God. He exposes all types of *māyā*, including religion which is not completely surrendered to God. Anyone who wants to love God can learn from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

This love is not a saccharin piety. It is doing the needful, even if it means fighting for Kṛṣṇa as Hanumān and Arjuna did. The lover of God pleases Him under all circumstances. Prabhupāda was an intrepid preacher, ready to face the atheists and Māyāvādīs who deny God. This is another aspect of the lover. We may think of a "lover" as someone who seeks a soft situation, lying in an inner chamber to enjoy with his beloved. The lover of God, however, *works* on His behalf and *fights* on

His behalf to establish the principles of religion. He goes out on behalf of the Lord, just as Rāmacandra's brothers went out to conquer, and just as Prabhupāda left Vṛndāvana to come to America.

Prabhupāda taught love of God according to the teachings of Lord Caitanya. This means *Kṛṣṇa-prema,* the conjugal love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

> We have often heard the phrase "love of Godhead." How far this love of Godhead can actually be developed can be learned from the Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Theoretical knowledge of love of God can be found in many places and in many scriptures, but what that love of Godhead actually is and how it is developed can be found in Vaiṣṇava literatures. It is the unique and highest development of love of God that is given by Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
>
> —*Teachings of Lord Caitanya,* Introduction

By following Prabhupāda, I have learned that love of God is not attained cheaply. One may claim, "I love God," but it is not so easy. Prabhupāda said that the beginning symptom is obedience to God's law. Even if we follow the laws, though, we may be attached to material desires. We have to qualify before we can experience love of God.

One who attains *Kṛṣṇa-prema* feels happiness at every moment. He is not distracted by the upheavals of the material world. He is always hankering to be in Kṛṣṇa's association. "O Govinda . . . I am feeling the whole world as vacant without You." These feelings can only come in a genuine way when one becomes purified by service to the pure devotees of the Lord: *tapo divyaṁ putrakā yena sattvaṁ/śuddhyed yasmād brahma-saukhyaṁ tv anantam* (*Bhāg.* 5.5.1).

Prabhupāda has given us a realistic appraisal of the work we have to do. He assures us that we can make the necessary progress, but he does not hide the fact that we have to do a lot of cleaning within the heart. The day will come when by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, we will experience symptoms of love of God.

Quoting Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that it may take many lifetimes to obtain the price of *Kṛṣṇa-prema:* intense desire. Prabhupāda compared *bhakti* to a mango. In the beginning stage, it is unripe, and when perfected, it is a delicious, ripened mango. However, even in the beginning, we are students on the path of pure *bhakti.* As soon as we start, we receive the rewards of the *bhakti-marga*—the ability to give up illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling. We want to thank Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, for being a lover of God. May our "thank you" not be a casual remark, but a gratitude expressed to Prabhupāda and made true in our lives in every way.

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Thank you for being a mahātmā
5.4

When Śrīla Prabhupāda attended the Kumbhamelā in 1977, he emphasized to the devotees that a *mahātmā* (great soul) cannot be created with a rubber stamp. Lord Kṛṣṇa defines *mahātmā* as one who is under the protection of the divine nature. He is fully engaged in devotional service because he knows Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The *mahātmā* is always engaged in chanting

the glories of Kṛṣṇa and worshiping Him with determination.

Prabhupāda warned the devotees to be careful of associating with persons who claim to be God or to be *mahātmās*. "They are not *mahātmā*. Rather they are *durātmā* (crooked)." Yet Prabhupāda said it is not difficult to become a Kṛṣṇa conscious *mahātmā*. All one has to do is follow what Kṛṣṇa says.

It is difficult to actually find a *mahātmā* living in this world. This is Kṛṣṇa's opinion, *"vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti/sa mahātmā sūdurlabhaḥ."*

Let us appreciate how rare Śrīla Prabhupāda is. Even by material calculation, Indian *sannyāsīs* were scarce in America in the 1960s. Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs* were extremely rare. The true rarity of Śrīla Prabhupāda is that he was a *pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa*. He left Vṛndāvana to give Kṛṣṇa to others. That makes Prabhupāda one among millions.

It is also unusual to find Westerners accepting pure devotional service. When Prabhupāda came to America, we were groping for consciousness expansion. We did not find what we wanted in LSD or in friendship, in art, or in music. We were being dragged toward a cliff to be plunged into death and rebirth. We are very fortunate to have met the pure devotee.

Although we were not qualified, Kṛṣṇa within our hearts told us, "Go ahead and follow the Swami. Do as he says, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." It was Kṛṣṇa who allowed us to take that opportunity in the summer of 1966.

By the arrangement of Providence, it appeared quite easy to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was as easy as entering the front door that Prabhupāda always kept open. My place of work was only a few

blocks away from Swamiji's place. My apartment was also nearby. I discovered the storefront on my lunch hour. If it had been something more difficult, I do not know how I could have taken to it. Therefore, I am very thankful to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa that they brought me to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by an easy and convenient path.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness was right up my alley. It was consciousness expansion on the Lower East Side of New York City, as taught by an exotic swami. It fit into my desires to turn away from my parents' way of life and to reject the ethics of the middle-class *karmī*. It was something different from the mundane, far beyond the influence of government power. It fit in with all I wanted to do, so Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa led me.

I thank Śrīla Prabhupāda for being who he was. I was not expecting an elderly person to come into my life; I was not expecting a guru. Prabhupāda, however, satisfied me because he was who he was. He was better than anyone I could imagine—golden in complexion, elderly, dressed in *sannyāsī* robes. Everything about him was attractive to us, and, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, his path was easy to take to.

Shortly before I met Prabhupāda, I shared an LSD trip with my friend Murray. I remember his conclusion that night—"Life is cheap." I liked to think that life was rare and valuable, but Murray's vision seemed realistic and in tune with what was actually happening in New York City. Life is cheap. You can buy and sell it if you have money or sex appeal or power. Life is cheap because the-powers-that-be can snuff it out in a minute. I am thankful to Śrīla Prabhupāda for making my life valuable. He

upgraded our lives in a way that we could never have done on our own.

A Prabhupāda meditation may begin with any tributary, but always reaches the ocean of gratitude. We thank him for being who he is, for being rare *(sa mahātmā sūdurlabhaḥ).* The *mahātmā's* heart is expanded to help everyone, and our gratitude should be expressed by helping him in his cause.

Try This . . .

Consider how Prabhupāda has helped you in your life and write him a thank you note.

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Does he read our books?
5.5

It is unreal in a sense how you
can go in a time machine
from 1950 to 1973, 1975,
to be with Prabhupāda
in his *līlā* and preaching.
That is the beauty of his books.

And from the purports in the big books,
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Caitanya-caritāmṛta,
you can go beyond the universe
to the abode of Kṛṣṇa—with the most reliable
guide.
Without Prabhupāda,
we may get a *māyāvādī's* book which also says
"Here is Kṛṣṇa dancing with the *gopīs,"*
but what does the author know?

In one Vṛndāvana conversation,
a man was painting a sign in front of the temple.
Prabhupāda asked, "Does he read our books?
What does he know of our philosophy?"
They replied, "He reads your books
and keeps asking for more.
He reads three hours every afternoon."
When he heard that, Śrīla Prabhupāda said,
"Then it is all right."

If you want to paint a sign,
you have to read his books;
if you want to speak as a devotee,
if you want to give up attachment to senses,
if you want to go back to Godhead,
it won't be possible unless you read.

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Thank you for so many things
5.6

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for having the foresight to record your lectures on a tape recorder. You did this as soon as you arrived in New York City, and now we are able to hear you and recapture it. Your recorded speeches are unedited *brahma-śabdha*.

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for deciding to give us the *Kṛṣṇa* book and completing it in 1969. You started us off in ISKCON with *Bhagavad-gītā* and early cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If, however, you had gone back to Godhead without giving us the *Kṛṣṇa* book, how could we have covered that ground on our own? We take it for granted now

that we have the *Kṛṣṇa* book, as if we were born with it, but it took your careful consultation with Kṛṣṇa to decide to bring it out early. You were right, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Thank you for the style in which you wrote the *Kṛṣṇa* book. I pray to be able to relish it with attention and devotion. The nectar of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is mixed with the nectar of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I like the way you describe the most sublime subject matters using expressions from your own life. You speak of Kṛṣṇa's "business" in herding the cows. You say the *gopīs* "lodged complaints" against Kṛṣṇa. You also speak of the spiritual master as having the "power of attorney." You present that which is unattainable in down-to-earth words, helping us to sense its immediate reality.

I want to thank you for allowing me to type the pages from your dictations of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* and the *Kṛṣṇa* book. Impressions from that service do not go away, even if I forget the details. Let me also thank you, on behalf of everyone, for giving the world your books. Now everyone has the opportunity to serve you and feel connected with you. We hope to go and join you in that topmost planet where we can express our gratitude with unhampered devotional service.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda and His Disciples
5.7

Our meditation on Prabhupāda should be pleasing to him. When Lord Brahmā praised Lord Kṛṣṇa, He remained silent and grave. It appeared

that the Supreme Lord was not much impressed by Brahmā's speech. Nevertheless, Brahmā's words on that occasion are glorious as preserved in the Tenth Canto, Fourteenth Chapter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Our own homages to our spiritual master cannot be as eloquent as those spoken by Lord Brahmā, but how will we know if Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa are pleased with our words?

One criteria is that we cooperate within the society of devotees. If we make a disturbance among his devotees, then our praises of Śrīla Prabhupāda become a travesty.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is not alone; He is always with His devotees. Similarly, Prabhupāda's followers are part of his eternal entourage. Too much criticism of his followers is a type of criticism against Prabhupāda. We may think that we have built an indomitable fortress around Prabhupāda in our minds—we can defend him from all critics. Nevertheless, if we allow ourselves free pot-shots at his disciples, then we are not protecting Prabhupāda.

Protecting the disciples of Prabhupāda does not mean blindly accepting whatever they do. We are sometimes compelled by conscience to say that some devotees are not following Prabhupāda. This, though, is a difficult area to enter. We may easily fall into *aparādha*. The best thing is to set a good example among our devotee friends, and try to honor all devotees.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī has stated that we should offer respect by words and etiquette to all persons who acknowledge Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme and who are part of the Vaiṣṇava movement. If we think that certain devotees are not fit to associate with, then we are not compelled to associate with them

intimately. We can select like-minded friends, but we should be respectful toward all.

When we combine respect for Prabhupāda with respect for his disciples, then we have the perfect union. One way to do this is to recall Prabhupāda in his pastimes with his disciples. Lord Caitanya's pastimes are not only about Himself, but are about His disciples and relationships among them. We hear how Sanātana Gosvāmī was very humble in his dealings with Lord Caitanya, how Jagadānanda Paṇḍita was affectionate, how Govinda served the Lord without any sense gratification. Similarly, we can remember how Tamal Krishna Goswami was willing to face fire for Prabhupāda. We may recall how Prabhupāda was pleased with the friendly service of Śruta-kirtī. Prabhupāda praised Pradyumna dāsa: "I call him Paṇḍitjī because he is actually *paṇḍita*. He has worked hard to produce this *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. And his wife also." Prabhupāda gave tremendous encouragement to those devotees who distributed his books; he assured them that it was the best service. Therefore, we may think of these devotees and how they tried to please Prabhupāda. That forms a natural part of our Prabhupāda meditation.

When we remember Prabhupāda as the leader of many devotees, it relieves us from our false self-images. Usually we are not so insane as to think we are the best devotees, yet we persist in putting ourselves in the center of a meditation. Even when we think of ourselves as "the most fallen devotee," still we are thinking of ourselves first and Prabhupāda second. However, when we actively remember how Prabhupāda dealt with *many* people, it

makes us cheerful and relieves us of egotism. We take our actual position.

Śrīla Prabhupāda dealt with everyone successfully. One did not feel, "I have to be alone with him." Rather, one felt glad to be with the others. You wanted their company. When Prabhupāda was no longer able to give you *darśana* because of his work, you could spend time with his other devotees. You talked with them about what Prabhupāda had done and said, and together you formed groups to carry out his instructions.

Prabhupāda's followers contain some of his qualities. They tell us about Prabhupāda. They help us to serve him. Sometimes Lord Caitanya even appeared to reject a devotee, but His followers rallied around that devotee and encouraged him. They did this with Kālakṛṣṇa dāsa, who misbehaved when the Lord was touring South India. Lord Caitanya brought Kālakṛṣṇa dāsa back to Jagannātha Puri and said, "Now he can go wherever he wants. I am no longer responsible for him." However, the devotees, led by Lord Nityānanda, gave the rejected servant a new service, and sent him to Bengal to inform the devotees that Lord Caitanya had returned to Jagannātha Puri. Similarly, the devotees of Prabhupāda will help us in our connection with him. Even if we think we have failed and lost our connection, Prabhupāda's devotees are kind and they will pick us up. They are part of our meditation of His Divine Grace.

Try This . . .

In some small way, try to please a devotee of Prabhupāda. For example, pleasant words of appre-

ciation are a nice offering, either spoken or written. Try giving a gift or share *prasādam*. Any of the exchanges of love described in *Nectar of Devotion* go a long way toward improving our relationships with Prabhupāda and his disciples.

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Turning to Prabhupāda at day's end
5.8

My greeting is, "All glories to Prabhupāda,"
and I end with
"Yours in the service of Prabhupāda."
What can I say in the body of my letter?
Something I learned
at the feet of my master.
And why do my disciples listen to me?
Because they trust I am following him.

He sat at the low desk,
pointed his foot-sole at you.
Leaned back, asked,
"Where is Gurukṛpa, Nanda-kumāra,
Śyāmasundara, Gargamuni, Govinda dāsī?"
I tell him what I know.
"How is ISKCON?" he asks.
I realize I shouldn't complain.
There is something more important.
I brag: "I am doing a lot in my own way.
People know me. I write books about you."
Prabhupāda, why am I frittering away
this precious moment?

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What we don't forget
5.9

There is a story about a poet's meditation which I would like to relate to Prabhupāda meditations. The American poet Carl Sandburg was absorbed in the life of Abraham Lincoln while working on his biography. Every morning after writing, Sandburg would go for a walk on the beach. One morning, Sandburg's friends played a trick on him. They hired an actor to dress up just like Abraham Lincoln, with the tall top hat, black beard and suit.

As Sandburg walked along the beach in his usual meditation upon Lincoln, this tall figure began approaching him from the other direction. The man came closer and closer, while Sandburg showed no particular emotion. When they were just about to meet each other, Sandburg looked up respectfully and said, "Good morning, Mr. President," and kept on walking. For Sandburg, it was not miraculous to suddenly *see* Abraham Lincoln, since he was always thinking of him. Of course, on another level we can say that Sandburg had obviously seen through the trick and knew that this was not the real Lincoln.

Sometimes I think like that: What if I were to suddenly see Śrīla Prabhupāda on his morning walk? Perhaps I would not take it as something so unusual. If what I saw was not actually Prabhupāda, then I would go on meditating on Prabhupāda in my own way. If it was Prabhupāda, then I would join the walk for some additional pastimes.

As the years go by, we remember less detail about Prabhupāda, but Prabhupāda's coming into our

lives remains the outstanding fact. We do not forget that, despite the passing of years.

When Prabhupāda was present, we associated with him to our hearts' content. We never thought, "This may be the last night that I will ever see him." We climbed the steps to his apartment two at a time. Although we were dressed in *karmī* clothes and did not know the proper etiquette for approaching the pure devotee, still we had a spring to our step because we were going to see the Swami. It was better than any romantic notions we had about a new girlfriend. There was no letdown in our relationship with the Swami. We were learning to meet Kṛṣṇa, the inconceivable Supreme Person. We were studying the *Vedas* and seeing the Swami. Everything was nice.

When Prabhupāda visited Boston, I began to sense that he was not always going to be with us. He stayed for a month, but I had to go to work every day. Still, for a whole month I knew I would be able to see him at least part of each day. I could be with him on the morning walk or in his apartment, and then I could be with him again at night. I counted off the days—fifteen days left . . . fourteen days . . . thirteen days . . . ten days . . .

As with any wealth, association with Prabhupāda could be misspent. One tended to take it for granted, failing to appreciate it until it was taken away. Only now do we realize how wealthy we were—and how unworthy. Kṛṣṇa is kind though. We still are able to count that wealth. Whatever he gave us was sufficient to last a lifetime. We want to remember as much as we can.

From Prabhupāda's point of view:
Alone in New York City
5.10

Suppose you want to tell of your experience in facing a tiger. You were traveling unarmed through the jungle, when suddenly you came upon a tiger. As the narrator, you build up the suspense, "There I was, face to face with a ferocious tiger!"

We can empathize with the terror you must have felt, simply by stretching our imaginations a little. We *feel* your danger. Similarly, we may try to put ourselves in Prabhupāda's position. What was it like for him to come alone to America and to live in New York City? Let us think of those circumstances and appreciate it from Prabhupāda's point of view.

In New York, Prabhupāda is wrapped up in the preaching mood. He thinks, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, why have you brought me here? This place of demons is far away from Vṛndāvana. But You must have some purpose." Prabhupāda's disciples find themselves in similar situations when they go to preach in countries where there is no ISKCON temple to support them. Fortunately, by Prabhupāda's work, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is never very far away from us. Yet occasionally we are on our own. At times like that, we can remember what it was like for Prabhupāda alone in New York City.

Prabhupāda was very compassionate to accept his first disciples. Nowadays, those disciples tell of the old days in a humorous way, but for Prabhupāda, it was not merely humorous. Sometimes it was painful to see how degraded the youth were.

Prabhupāda realized in a humble way that this was the opportunity Kṛṣṇa was giving him. He said that our natural beauty was covered over by a morose, dirty appearance.

Those who became his disciples were respectful, but some people were insulting, even while sitting in the audience of the *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures. Prabhupāda's disciples were indirectly offensive in their failure to understand the etiquette of approaching the guru. Also, after initiation, they were offensive when they broke the vows. These things were painful to Prabhupāda.

We get a little hint of how Prabhupāda saw things from some of his expressions. He said that working with the broken youth of America was similar to picking up a discarded wire and an old gourd and making a *vīṇā* out of it. Prabhupāda said that his work was similar to Lord Rāmacandra's task of creating an army of monkeys.

Prabhupāda might have thought like this: "At first I planned to open a Gaudīya Math branch in uptown Manhattan, where ladies and gentlemen could come. But Kṛṣṇa is arranging it that these bewildered hippies—all young enough to be my grandchildren and great grandchildren—are coming forward. They are asking me, 'Swamijī, can I take LSD? Do we really have to follow these rules?'"

Prabhupāda preached wholeheartedly. He was a refined and elderly gentleman, yet he took on rough, untrained disciples. He gave himself in a loving relationship, yet always remained dependent on Kṛṣṇa—and that is what made him attractive to us.

Day's end again
5.11

Śrīla Prabhupāda, by pen-scratching I crawl to
you.
I don't want to be a Chinese hermit.
I want *darśana* with you,
and plans for preaching tomorrow,
my notations in your books.

It is evening and I am bankrupt.
I admit it.
You are with me.
Your eyes are smiling—
I rest in you.

******

Prabhupāda and Govinda's movement
5.12

The purpose of Prabhupāda meditation is to see Prabhupāda as a person. He is simultaneously one with and different from his movement. His movement consists of all the devotees working on his behalf, and Prabhupāda sits like a lotus on the water in the midst of it all. He is untouched by any quarreling or contamination. He writes his books, honors *prasādam,* sits in a simple room at a low desk, talks to devotees, corresponds, plans, gets involved—but he is always transcendental. Prabhupāda meditations focus on him moving in the midst of his Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees and in the world to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We suggest that everyone can meditate on Prabhupāda in a personal relationship. Prabhupāda meditation is a sanctuary from material hassles and from the frustrations that occur in socializing and dealing within his movement. Prabhupāda meditations can occur just by reading a few pages of *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* or any memoir about Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda states in the *Kṛṣṇa* book that any bona fide book about Kṛṣṇa, "even this book *Kṛṣṇa*," can be a solace for devotees feeling separation from the Lord. We read the *Kṛṣṇa* book and hear of Kṛṣṇa's activities while working within Kṛṣṇa's movement. Similarly, we hear about Prabhupāda's activities while we carry on his work in contemporary forms. Prabhupāda himself is the classic, inviolable essence of his own movement. He is always a person, the great teacher, the simple, pure-hearted devotee. The person who is mysterious to us because his intimacy with Kṛṣṇa is beyond our vision, that person we want to remember.

Sometimes we can study Śrīla Prabhupāda's life and teachings at leisure. More often we have to remember Prabhupāda while on the run, while in the struggle to live and preach. We have to renounce the pleasure of sitting at the lotus feet of the spiritual master. We have to go out and preach on his behalf. Sometimes this work on behalf of the guru creates a kind of separation from him, and that is only relieved by remembrance.

When Prabhupāda was in South India, he once conversed with Gopalacarya, the famous Hindu author and political leader. Gopalacarya asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Is it possible that your devotees may become so absorbed in the movement of Govinda

that they forget Govinda Himself?" Prabhupāda replied that that would not happen because Govinda's movement was absolute. Thinking of His movement is the same as thinking of Govinda. Prabhupāda's answer was right to the point, and it is an ideal we continually have to strive to achieve.

History proves that religious institutions do lose their original spirit. Initial enthusiasm solidifies into institutional forms, committees, structures, relations with the public, rules, and so on. When this is done as a service to Govinda, it is a meditation on Him. We have to work and meditate at the same time. By finding a service of Prabhupāda that enlivens us, we will be able to achieve simultaneous work and meditation on guru and Kṛṣṇa.

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I am reading Prabhupāda-līlamṛta Volume 5—and you? 5.13

Reading Prabhupāda's life,
a little each day.
He is traveling all over the world,
"It requires acute management."

You open the book a bit fearful
that Prabhupāda will reprimand you too.
Not just Gurudāsa and Karāṇdhara fall short.

Last night I didn't have the heart
to read of the rowdy students in Australia.
But I did it today without flinching—
I went through the exit with Prabhupāda,
into the back seat beside him, driving off
before they started throwing rocks.

Whatever he said is right:
Student: "You Krsnas are just into money!"
Prabhupāda: "I don't want money!"
Student: "I am a Christian!"
Prabhupāda: "You are Christian, we are Krsnian,
it is practically the same thing."
Student: " Why do you sit on a big throne?"
Prabhupāda: "These devotees have arranged a
raised seat. . .
If they wanted me to sit down on the floor,
I would have gladly accepted.
Students are learning not to honor.
But that is not actually the system."

Traveling fast to Ratha-yātrās,
Australia, Chicago, San Francisco.
Prabhupāda began to cry . . . "Don't deviate.
that is my only request."

I am reading in Volume 5, and you?
Wherever one reads,
that strong figure emerges,
the dauntless pure devotee.
What's he saying *to you?*

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Laughing memories
5.14

Memoirs of Prabhupāda in 1966 are usually told in a humorous way, but sometimes an audience of devotees is a bit shocked when they hear the details.

The humor of those days is that the devotees did not appreciate Prabhupāda's greatness. We did not

make obeisances to him, and we said foolish things. One day I gave Prabhupāda some typing I had done for him. In return, he handed me a few grapes. I thought, "Is this all I get, some grapes?" When Prabhupāda put a plate of *prasādam* on the floor for me to eat, I thought, "This is the way you would feed a dog." We tell these stories expecting to get a laugh, but sometimes our audience is displeased. "Why did you think like that toward Prabhupāda? That's not nice!"

The devotees' shock helps me to see how rude we actually were. How coarse and completely ignorant we were toward Prabhupāda. It is all right to laugh at the primitive and ignorant days, but I can also see now that we were rascals. Prabhupāda's exalted position of worship in ISKCON today is not a false one. When we approach him as a *jagad-guru,* we have reached an accurate level of appreciation. In the early days, however, we were ignorant. Those were lovable times because of Prabhupāda's mercy.

We should not think that we knew Prabhupāda better in 1966 because we did not offer him obeisances. The early days were not better because Prabhupāda accepted our ignorance and familiarity. The glorious part of the early days is that Prabhupāda was willing to preach when no one recognized him. He tolerated and was happy that Kṛṣṇa sent him followers, and gradually he trained them up.

It is tempting to make an audience laugh. Lenny Bruce, one of the prominent comedians in the 1960s, was once asked to define a comedian. He said, "A comedian is one who can provoke his audience to laughter every ten seconds, or at the very most, every fifteen seconds." We each have a comedian

within us, but we have to be careful not to indulge ourselves when we tell the raw memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his boys in the early days. The most sacred subject matter, association with Prabhupāda, should not be used as an object of humor.

It is a fact that the early days with Prabhupāda are rich with irony and humorous implications. Telling the stories is also a way to express our affection for Prabhupāda. We did love him, but we fell short in honoring him. On the one hand, the humor is harmless. When you are saved from a dangerous situation, you laugh with relief that the danger has passed.

Prabhupāda himself liked to share in the reminiscing. When Tamal Krishna Mahārāja was speaking in 1977 about Prabhupāda's early preaching days in California, Prabhupāda added, "Yes, and sometimes we had to speak in a garage because we had no temple."

Let us remember the flavor of early association with Śrīla Prabhupāda, but not forget to worship him as the tolerant founder-*ācārya* and pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

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From Prabhupāda's point of view:
The pleasure and the burden
5.15

In 1966, Prabhupāda ended his lectures by saying, "Thank you very much," but his words were followed with silence and no one bowed down. A few years later, the devotees began to offer obeisances

and recite Prabhupāda's *praṇāma-mantras*. I think that Prabhupāda was pleased to see his disciples become more joyful and offer him respect.

In 1968, a guest to the Boston temple challenged Prabhupāda, "Are you happy?" Prabhupāda replied that he had many levels of happiness. He said that as a householder, he had had several sons, but now that he was in the renounced order, he had dozens of sons and daughters, and these spiritual children were helping him more than his other sons. "Therefore, by renouncing and surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, I have become more happy." Prabhupāda also said that he would become even happier when his spiritual sons and daughters grew up and began to manage the preaching business.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was always blissful because of his full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he had to take on a burden of managing incompetent disciples. He saw a shallow weakness behind our statements of surrender. He also saw that his disciples were motivated by desires other than the pure desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda did not dwell on these imperfections, but he encouraged us to improve. Gradually, however, the faults began to manifest, and disciples fell away from following the principles. Thus, Prabhupāda had to face tribulations by accepting disciples in the West.

Prabhupāda encouraged boys and girls to enter religious marriage. He had high hopes that the couples could go forward with "redoubled strength." When one of the first marriages broke up, Prabhupāda expressed his disappointment. He said, "This is all nonsense, I will simply go back to Vṛndāvana and sit and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Why

should I deal with this quarrel between husband and wife? This is not the business of a *sannyāsī."*

Prabhupāda's disturbance is somewhat similar to Lord Caitanya's human-like expression. When Lord Caitanya's devotees came to Him and asked Him to save Gopīnātha Paṭṭanāyaka, Lord Caitanya replied, "If we hear about the activities of materialistic persons, our minds become agitated. There is no need for Me to stay here and be disturbed in that way' *(Cc. Madhya,* 9.66).

Śrīla Prabhupāda was bound up in affectionate dealings with his spiritual family members. By taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we disciples were rejected by our families, society, and friends. We became Prabhupāda's children, and he became our father. Prabhupāda spent almost all his time with his disciples, and together they shared the gains and losses of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

In the early days in ISKCON Los Angeles, Prabhupāda told the devotees, "There is no question of disappointment." Even if they went out all day and could not collect money or distribute magazines, they should keep trying to serve Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda said that if someone takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is our favor on them, but we do not mind if they do not join. We have to simply make the attempt on Kṛṣṇa's behalf. Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated how to be detached and transcendental. He himself invested his body, mind, and words in the work of ISKCON.

Sometimes the two attitudes cannot be separated—the pleasure which Prabhupāda felt as he led ISKCON and its devotees, and the burden of carrying it all. One time he said that some of the work (financial management) was not pleasurable, but

because we were doing it for Kṛṣṇa, it was our pleasure to serve Him. Prabhupāda guided us in how to surrender to him and in how to surrender to the movement. He did this by giving himself. In other words, *Prabhupāda surrendered.* It may sound strange for us to say that—"Prabhupāda surrendered"—he is eternally surrendered. However, the fact is that Prabhupāda *continually* surrendered to Kṛṣṇa as his own *līlā* manifested. It was Kṛṣṇa's desire that Prabhupāda execute the work of ISKCON in America and the world, and he did it splendidly.

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Preparing for a Śrīmad Bhāgavatam lecture to Sunday guests
5.16

I didn't write the book which your followers
distribute by the millions.
And I don't know Kṛṣṇa.
Sometimes I envy you.
But I am your son.
I want to place your rendition
of Vyāsa's *Bhāgavatam* in the center of my life—
I want to lecture on it,
to today's Sunday guests in Dublin:
the duty of he who is about to die.

A writer in Kṛṣṇa consciousness
serves you and repeats in his own words
what you have told.
A Kṛṣṇa conscious lecturer
faithfully serves your movement,
and repeats what you have told us.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, while reading your
First Canto, Chapters 18 and 19,
I sensed you writing them in India
in the early 1960s—
I have visited your Chippiwada room,
and your Rādhā-Dāmodara room.
You *lived* the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
You prepared the three volumes so that
you could travel West with something
substantial.
Now this handsome First Canto volume
is enduring for thousands of years.

I am going to take the time to read;
the filth I have seen
will wash away.
Gradually I will enter.
But I don't know how much time I have left.

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A meditation on language
5.17

Recently, an initiated devotee who has broken his connection with ISKCON made some sharp criticisms. One of his attacks was against what he calls "ISKCON-speak." He means the jargon used among devotees. He made a list of jargon words and said they should all be thrown out. Criticism of ISKCON slang is not necessarily a sign of disloyalty. Leading preachers have also pointed out that devotees use hackneyed expressions. Every group in the world has its "in language," but when it is

overused, it creates artificial barriers between "them" and "us."

The critic of "ISKCON-speak" traced many of the faulty expressions to the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke English as a second language. Expressions which were fine for Śrīla Prabhupāda are unfit for those who speak American or English as a mother tongue. I looked over the critic's list and agreed with some of his choices, although I could not see how we could ever manage to get rid of them from our speech. Expressions such as "take rest," "food-stuffs," "take *prasādam,*" and the pronunciation of the word "de-*vo*-tee" are habitual in every devotee's speech. The critic did not stop there but listed words like unalloyed, lotus feet, "lotus everything," opulence, authoritative, authorized . . . he even listed speculation, birth, death, disease and old age, illusory energy . . .

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has an entire vocabulary and way of speaking that is passed down from Vedic literature in *parampara.* ("Vedic literature" was another word he said should be banned.) If one were actually to succeed in uprooting all the words which a critic considers "ISKCON-speak," it would be like people from the Southern U.S.A. painstakingly removing their natural dialect. It could be done, but is it worth it? Is it necessary? Is it so terrible that as soon as you start to speak, people know what part of the world you are from? I find it charming to hear English spoken by the people of the Caribbean or by New Englanders.

What to do about the fact that we sound cultish when we speak to intellectuals and others who are outside ISKCON? I agree that we should try to clean up our act; we should especially avoid broken Eng-

lish. It is possible simultaneously to cherish Prabhupāda idioms, while avoiding some of them in our lecturing and speaking. We should at least be aware that some of these expressions were used by Prabhupāda in a particular way, but are grammatically incorrect or archaic.

Language reform may be one of those things that happens naturally as ISKCON moves past the first generation. Perhaps the pronunciation of the "devotee" will normalize itself. Perhaps devotees will say, "I am going to sleep" rather than "I am going to take rest."

Some devotees may see any criticism of ISKCON jargon as insulting to Śrīla Prabhupāda. There are seeds of offense in the criticism when it is done in a cold-hearted way without understanding the attachment we have for His Divine Grace and the way he speaks. I reminded my critic friend that there is jargon in every profession and subculture. The critic, for example, is going to college and studying anthropology. In that field, they certainly have their "Academic-speak." The academicians are notorious for using bloated language to cover the direct energy of their speech and to unnecessarily complicate it. One person's idea of unencumbered speech is another person's version of artificial talk. The jazz musicians think that they are speaking naturally; so do the construction workers and the university professors. Nevertheless, one group can hardly understand the other. Therefore, we should not feel guilty when newcomers find that Prabhupāda's followers use many curious expressions not usually heard in the English language.

I can see some ways in which criticism of ISKCON-speak is valid. It is not just a matter of

appearing correct in public. If we use speech in a way that is insensitive or unthinking, we may be offensive to our fellow devotees. Hackneyed speech can become a hackneyed way of thinking. We then fall into a habit of speaking without expressing our feelings or realizations. We speak "the party line." If I try to manipulate a fellow devotee by speaking officialese, it is offensive to the devotees and to the philosophy which I claim to represent. Devotees are repelled when they hear another devotee rattle off words which demand obedience and surrender to the highest ideal, although the speaker of those words is himself not following them. "Don't be on the mental plane, Prabhu. Prabhupāda wants us to cooperate. Therefore, you should do what I say."

The solution to language misuse is not to eliminate strong teachings of surrender; neither will eliminating the strong preaching spirit help. We have to be sensitive and non-hypocritical. We should be "context sensitive," speaking with awareness of time, place, and persons.

Let's face it, we do use language in a special way in ISKCON, and it is not all bad. Many of the words we use are the best translations of Sanskrit terms. Prabhupāda translated words such as *"aparādha"* into "offense," and "Bhagavān" into "the Supreme Personality of Godhead." One could change these terms into some other ones, but we feel safe that Prabhupāda has put his unique realization into the translations. Prabhupāda writes in one purport that we are more interested in the techniques of *bhakti-yoga* than in the language itself. In the name of purifying language, a pedant might remove the realization.

A wholesale clearing away of Prabhupāda idioms is not desirable. It would be a way of removing Śrīla Prabhupāda's strong presence from the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. No serious follower of his would want to do that. We will have to accept the fact that devotees sound quaint and even strange to people who do not speak our language. Devotees already look somewhat odd in a general assembly of people because of their shaved heads, *tilaka,* and dress. When we speak, some unusual words will come out. We should be aware of this and not fall into a mindless jargon. If we can speak normal, correct English, and at the same time preserve the important expressions of Prabhupāda, then we will do him a service.

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Remembering Prabhupāda
5.18

When I was eight years old and in the fourth grade of elementary school, Miss Williams taught us a good lesson about forgetfulness. Some students had forgotten to do their homework, so she wrote the word "FORGET" on the blackboard in very large letters. She then drew many arrows shooting at the word. It was a bad thing to forget. Later, Miss Williams covered up that section of the blackboard with a map of the United States. We all forgot what was underneath, but at the end of the year, she removed the map and there it was—



Some forgetting is good. Prabhupāda says, "We have to forgive and forget, or how can we live?" Forget grudges and forgive minor offenses that people may commit against us. We should never forget Kṛṣṇa, however, and we should always shoot arrows at our forgetfulness of Prabhupāda. According to the scriptures, even a moment's forgetfulness of the Lord and His pure devotee is the greatest loss.

How do I remember Prabhupāda? First of all, I remember that there was (and is) such a person as Prabhupāda. Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." That was his bottom line of truth. Our bottom line is, "I remember Prabhupāda, therefore I am." I am now in spiritual life because my spiritual master delivered me from darkness. I do not forget that. I remember him and follow him.

Our remembrance of Śrīla Prabhupāda is more than nostalgia for a wonderful person who was here, but who is now gone. Remembering Prabhupāda is the cutting edge of our life at every moment. Bhaktisiddānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said that when one forgets his guru, then all one thinks of is, "I run in a hurry for my bath. I become busy for preventing a cold. I run after other occupations different from the service of Shri Gurudeva."

Basic remembrance of Prabhupāda refers to the promises we made him at our initiation—the four rules and sixteen rounds and other obligations. We aspire to be Kṛṣṇa conscious and to read *Bhagavad-gītā* and his other books. We aspire to serve among his devotees.

When we remember him in personal ways, that is the sweetness which makes life worth living. We

may say duty is enough, but who does not crave joy, "the nectar for which we are always anxious?"

I remember the soft saffron on Prabhupāda's body. I sense his stature. He was not tall or fat, but neither do we think of him as gaunt. None of these words seem to apply. We met him in his seventieth year, yet we remember his graceful form. The movements of his fingers, hands, wrists never lost grace, never slowed down or showed signs of palsy. He extended his pinky in a delicate way when putting on *tilaka,* and his fingers did their "dance" of spontaneous *mudras* while he lectured. The rest of Prabhupāda's body was also graceful. Grace is not possessed only by a youngster on a trampoline or by a ballet dancer leaping. Prabhupāda was graceful in the way he used his cane and the way he put his feet forward when he walked briskly. He was graceful in the way he turned to someone who called his name. He opened and closed books and picked up objects from his desk in the same flowing way.

When Prabhupāda went on a morning walk, often a group of latecomers would catch up to him. Prabhupāda turned and waited as they came forward happily and submissively. We *liked* being his disciples. His personal command and protection were so charming that it kept scores of devotees eager to follow him.

Even if Prabhupāda were to do something that might be considered ungraceful, our hearts went to him with affection and protection. If Prabhupāda stumbled on a rock in his path, we would not suddenly think, "Oh, this is not graceful." If a pretty girl suddenly bumps into a wall or gets her hat knocked forward, we may feel scorn and some

humor, "Just see, the beautiful girl has lost her poise in the light of harsh reality." However, if Prabhupāda bumped up against a material edge, we were hurt and worried. We rushed forward to help. That is what I mean by seeing him with love.

We were not blind to the fact that Prabhupāda was growing old, or that he was becoming ill and had to confront some awkward moments in the material world. These things, though, did not diminish the pure relationship of guru and disciple. Prabhupāda had proven hundreds of times that he was the empowered representative of Kṛṣṇa. He delivered us and continued to deliver us from *māyā* by his many speeches and purports. He demonstrated his self-sacrifice by traveling many times around the world, always extending himself to help people. There seemed to be no reward for him and there was nothing further that he had to prove. Still, he served the devotees and served the people of this world on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. *Whatever* he did, nothing changed our fixed opinion of him as our worshipable guru.

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With Prabhupāda at night
5.19

Only a moment ago the sun was rising,
now it is dark again. A dog is barking . . .
Time for milk, bedtime.
I wanted to say prayers but didn't.
Still I am on course:
service to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

You allowed me
to ride in a van this morning,
and to decide not to accept any more disciples,
take care of those I already have.
You allowed me
to give advice to a 31-year-old man
who's not sure how to make a
lifelong commitment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
I was under your direction,
and I thank you at night

Oh! I directly doubted you,
in a weak moment. I thought,
"Maybe he doesn't know . . . "
You have said that as soon as we think
we are better than the guru,
from that moment we are fallen.

But you allowed me to come close
listening to your *kīrtana,*
I joined again.

Try This . . .

It is nice to take a peaceful moment in the evening before going to sleep to reflect on your daily activities. Notice how you remembered and followed Prabhupāda (or didn't remember him) in different ways. Try a little prayer to him.

Part Six

Walking next to Prabhupāda
6.1

I feel as if I am walking beside Prabhupāda and recalling for his pleasure: "Prabhupāda, I think it was like this. Isn't it so?" I feel that Prabhupāda is approving this remembering and saying, "Yes, what you are saying, that is actually the way it was." I am not telling any big secrets, but at least I am recalling what Prabhupāda did and how we are all indebted to him.

Prabhupāda, how you must have been disturbed by all the noises in New York! However, you were a Calcutta man. You were used to it. You must have been in deep communion with the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* of the past in ways that we cannot know. You were so much in the forefront of Lord Caitanya's mission. I am certain all the intimate devotees of the Lord were pleased with you. You have revealed this in some of your writings.

Prabhupāda, you were so humble that you never made a big autobiographical presentation about coming to America. Some swamis wrote books, "My Year in England," or "My Year in America," but you were not interested in telling about your adventures. You spent your time telling us about Kṛṣṇa's adventures in the spiritual world and how Kṛṣṇa brings that spiritual world into our world. You were interested in writing more and more books about Kṛṣṇa's teachings, and translating the Vedic literatures. However, from time to time, you told us how you felt from the inside, as the person transmitting the message. Now after your disappearance, as we miss you, we feel it is our duty to recall you as a person. That may sometimes include

the attempt to try to understand how you saw everything.

You have said those were happy days. One reason was because you depended on Kṛṣṇa entirely without having to depend on many disciples. Until you came, it was not certain whether Westerners could actually become practicing devotees. Your discovery of this on behalf of Lord Caitanya produced happiness for you and for us. You were such a realistic missionary, though, you did not bask in that happiness and exaggerate it with praises of your own accomplishments. You immediately took the good news and went further and further with it. I mean the news that Westerners could take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

You did not run back to India after you had made a few disciples, but you assessed the situation realistically. You thought, "This is good, but how much more can I do?" According to Vaiṣṇava philosophy, *everyone* is a spirit soul, and it is possible for everyone to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Lord Caitanya's name should be known in every town and village. In a practical way, you tried to do this as much as you could. You saw that it was not going to be easy. You were happy that you were able to rescue a few, but unhappy that so many would remain stubbornly detached from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you never lost your intelligent, cool-headed way of looking at things. You were thrilled on behalf of the *parampara*, and you remained grave and even angry (as a devotee has a right, just as Hanumān is angry) that people were

in such ignorance, and yet puffed-up with their pretenses and excuses for not accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Is that how you thought, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

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The process of memory
6.2

Memories slow down and fade, just as the physical body slows down with old age. Aging, though, can be checked so that it does not deteriorate so quickly. If you begin an exercise program and improve your diet, you may feel rejuvenated. Similarly, memories do not have to wither and die if you exercise them. As a singer grows older, he or she loses the wonderful timbre and range of the peak years, but sometimes a singer develops a personal phrasing that substitutes for lack of power. These artists go right on to the very end making poignant expressions. In this way, our memories of Prabhupāda may continue as long as we live. As we serve, we get fresh realizations.

We want to go back without obstruction to whatever memory is there and accept it. We want to go back and ask, "Memories of Prabhupāda, please come forward." When the memories come forward, we meet them halfway.

When events in the world push us to take shelter of Prabhupāda, then we can remember him best. Humility and gratitude help us here. In the *Nectar of Devotion*, we read that remembrance of Kṛṣṇa may be invoked by hearing someone play a flute, or just by seeing a darkish cloud. These

impetuses help us to remember Kṛṣṇa and become flooded with *Kṛṣṇa-prema*. It works like that with Śrīla Prabhupāda also.

Haiku poets speak of serendipity, the good luck or susceptibility to receive special moments. They say that you cannot voraciously devour special moments; you must go on with life and simply *notice and honor* the moments when they come of their own accord. I must be ready at any time to notice when I am visited by a Prabhupāda remembrance. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and thank You, Lord Kṛṣṇa, for allowing me to remember you both.

Please forgive me for not speaking more directly of Prabhupāda. This is all I have. It may be like reading a menu rather than giving you the feast. However, I am trying, and only by this way can I get closer. When I walk and talk with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I feel that I am with him. It is real, this presence. It is not tangible in the sense that you can touch it or say, "There, I just saw a vision of Prabhupāda. He was standing in the forest wearing a saffron coat." Or, "I suddenly heard his voice saying, 'Go on, you are doing very nicely.'" Or, "He just said, 'You rascal!'" Or, "I suddenly smelled the aroma of his body—sandalwood, mustard oil and roses." Or, "I suddenly felt something within myself and tears flowed and I cried out, 'Prabhupāda!'" I am not deriding such intense encounters, but I am saying the subtle, intangible presence is also worthwhile. When I come back from a walk I do not ask, "Was Prabhupāda here? Did I meet him?" I am sure I did.

We can talk to him. "Prabhupāda, do you hear those birds? I do not know their names, but it is so

nice to hear the birds sing in the morning. It is so nice to be in the country where practically the only sounds are those of nature. I know, Prabhupāda, that you deplore the industry in the city, although we should be there for preaching. Prabhupāda, is it like this in Vṛndāvana?"

We ask him our foolish questions. Even when it is we who do the talking, we feel him in the things that Prabhupāda has said. If we become enamored with nature, he may rein us in saying, "This is the material world, it is only the mode of goodness." If we ask him what it is like in Vṛndāvana, he may tell us that our question is premature. In every case, we feel him with us, despite our unworthiness.

"Prabhupāda, I feel joyful to hear the birds in the forest and I want to share that with you. The joy I feel on a nature walk leads me to the joy of you in my life. It is because of you that I am not cheated and that simple joys have meaning. Only because of you do I connect things to Kṛṣṇa. I want to thank you and share it with you."

We should not think that we are better than Prabhupāda because he has passed on and we are still living in this "wonderful" world. It is not that Prabhupāda is now among the unfortunate dead and we are living. The whole basis of connection with Prabhupāda is that we are all eternal. Socrates said that the soul is immortal, and he chided his disciples for thinking otherwise about him. If we want to be with Prabhupāda, we must have faith that he is not dead. He is eternal. He is preaching somewhere, and we will also always be preaching somewhere. Otherwise, what is the meaning of being his follower? Prabhupāda has gone ahead of us, and we are following. In the old days, people

would go ahead of their families and leave Europe for America. Their families would join them later after everything had been prepared. So Śrīla Prabhupāda has gone ahead, leaving us memories and solid teachings for our lives. If we cannot complete our progress in one lifetime, we will continue in the next. Wherever we go, we want to make further progress *with Śrīla Prabhupāda.*

Serendipity:

As I walked in the hills of Northern Italy, I suddenly flashed on Prabhupāda walking in the hills of Hong Kong.

He walked up some very high hills and saw from there the vista of the bay, and across the bay an island where there were many skyscrapers. Prabhupāda was not familiar with the place and was asking questions. He talked about how useless it was that they try to build skyscrapers, yet they are getting kicked out of them. He was always philosophical about the meaning of life. He was very much present with us, expressing himself openly—and yet we could see that there was more to him than met the eye. There was a gravity that went beyond us. Whatever we *could* see and understand from his words was so potent that it stopped us in our tracks. As he spoke about the uselessness of skyscrapers in Hong Kong, it drew some of us into debate with him. I said, "Even if a person who builds a skyscraper cannot live to enjoy it, at least he knows that posterity can use it." Prabhupāda replied, "That is a ludicrous argument."

Let us accept what we do understand. We still have conceptions of the importance of temporary

life, and that is what Prabhupāda is trying to tear away. Only by remembering him and taking his instructions can we be free.

Try This . . .

Whenever a flash or wisp of a memory or a realization about Prabhupāda does come, make a note to yourself with enough detail so that you can keep that memory alive and "on file" with all its subtleties. You will find this "memory file" to be helpful as the years go by.

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Prabhupāda's purports carry us through
6.3

Once again a bout with doubt—
why does Lord Viṣṇu
walk without touching the ground?
I know He can do anything,
but, *why* walk that way?
Silly questions we humans ask
who break our feet on the earth.

You walk as You please;
leaning Your hand on Garuḍa.
You are inclined to Your devotees.
And Śrīla Prabhupāda, our *ārya-saṅgama**
walked on the earth
and sat writing the glories of Viṣṇu.

---

* a walking tīrtha

"The members of the Āryan family
very quickly catch the essence
of spiritual life . . . but even though
one does not belong to the Āryan family,
he will become a Vaiṣṇava simply by
hearing the *mantra.*"
—*Bhāg.* 4.20.26, purport

I return to the page, trying to figure it out:
"What exactly are 'saffron particles'
on the Lord's feet?"

Prabhupāda, you are kind to keep
sorry persons like me:
"History reports that the Americans and
Europeans
proved their capability . . .
but now their sons and grandsons
are turning into reprobates."

All this junk in my past—
I can't even write a poem of Prabhupāda
without turning it into a song of the reprobate.
But I turn to you and you never refuse me.
Let me be glad and simple—
like the devotees who follow him—
who know the scent of the saffron particles
on Lord Viṣṇu's feet, because they *hear them*
carried by the words of the pure devotee.
All glories to his disciples,
to the process of *bhakti,*
and to the *mahāmantra.*
All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

❀❀❀❀❀❀

Turn to Prabhupāda. What do I mean by that? You are facing in one direction, and you hear a sound; or your mind tells you that you want to look in another direction. Physically, you move your neck and head in order to see the desired object, or you may turn your whole body. At least you turn your attention.

When we turn to Prabhupāda, what do we see? Like dawn, at first we do not see much. We strain our eyes and wait as outlines start to become clear. We see the peaks of hills and can clearly distinguish the horizon. The sun is not up yet, but we desire to be with Prabhupāda—so we talk of him.

Way off in the mind's eye, we seem to see him going out on another walk, and we run to catch up. Abstractly, but in truth, we think again of how our lives have been made fortunate by meeting a great devotee of the Lord. He gives us salvation and turns us to the next life without so much fear. As Christ says, "To those who are given, more is expected." Because we have been given his association, there is an obligation. This is *guru-dakṣinā.*

People who have a relationship bound in love are obliged to continue it. One reason relationships diminish is that people do not communicate. The same thing can happen in the guru-disciple relationship. One can continue to perform the rituals, but lose the sense of being in love. When the guru-disciple relationship begins it is romantic. One is swept off one's feet in adoration. You promise to give everything. However, we have to learn how to stay in love with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We do not think of Prabhupāda as similar to Yamarāja. He is not someone who is going to smash us. We feel assured that he loves us even though we can do only insignificant service, and we have many faults. He has a right to reprimand us, and that is also part of love. When reprimands come, we go on serving and loving. We take it on our heads for our wrongs. We have faith that he is always trying to help us. Prabhupāda says, "I will take care of you. I can bring you back to Godhead if you will follow."

Sometimes in his lectures, Prabhupāda said, "These disciples are working twenty-four hours a day, and why? Out of love." He reminded us that he saw our loving attitude toward him. It was not forced, he did not bribe us. It was not fear. It was love. Now, how to stay in love?

By Prabhupāda meditation and by right acts, we are trying to stay in love. In the relationship between the servant of God and the Supreme Lord, obedience is one of the first requirements. A disciple has to be obedient, and that must be given freely, from one's entire self. This is the obligation of the eternal disciple. He humbly knows that he is always in need of instructions. He keeps trying to please Prabhupāda and asking for mercy.

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Ice cream, fried ducks, and big bang
6.5

While in the bathroom, I heard a wonderful segment of Prabhupāda lecturing on tape. It was from 1968 in San Francisco. He was talking about

how the soul is finite and the Supreme Soul is infinite. Māyā covers the finite soul, although the soul is pure, just as clouds cover the human beings on earth.

As Prabhupāda is speaking, you begin to hear in the background the silly melody of an ice cream truck's chimes. The melody plays over and over and gradually increases in volume. Prabhupāda continues to speak through it, until suddenly he stops and says, "What is that?"

Viṣṇujana answers, "It is the ice cream truck."

Prabhupāda replies, "Oh, you are taking ice cream?" The devotees laughed, but it seemed that Prabhupāda was a little fearful that they may have sent for this truck and that they were going out to get ice cream. I think he was also sarcastic, giving them a straight warning.

So with this ice cream truck music, Prabhupāda said to the devotees, "Are you going to the ice cream?" The devotees innocently replied, "No, no Prabhupāda. It is the ice cream truck. He goes in the street like that."

Prabhupāda said, "Oh, canvassing?" He began to comment on it. "This is *māyā.*" He had been talking about *māyā* and this was the personification of *māyā* coming to give an example of his point. Then he became serious and very practical: "Do not take ice cream. This is *māyā.* Māyā is coming and saying, 'Come and enjoy me, come and enjoy me.' But it like the fish. When he goes and grabs the tackle, then he is fried."

The warning was not unnecessary. In the early days, initiated devotees used to frequent a donut shop around the corner from the temple in San Francisco, and they were also known to step outside

the temple to smoke cigarettes. So Prabhupāda told the devotees not to go after the ice cream truck.

This reminds me of a similar example when Prabhupāda was lecturing in England. He was saying that the *karmīs* are so degraded, they kill animals for eating. For example, in India, some people travel once a week by bus for many miles "just to eat some fried birds."

For the audience, Śyāmasundara dāsa adds a comment, "Duck. Fried ducks." Prabhupāda did not seem to appreciate the correction. He *sometimes* liked you to add a more specific word, but not always. If he was trying to think of an English word he might ask, "What is that word?" and then the devotees would supply it. Sometimes, though, when they supplied the word, he said, "Anyway," and went on with his point.

When Śyāmasundara said, "Fried ducks," Prabhupāda paused and said, "Anyway, whatever." Then he stopped again, focused on Śyāmasundara and said, "Do you know? You have tasted them? Are you going to that hotel?" The devotees laughed, astonished. It was a devastating cut.

Another time, Prabhupāda was giving a lecture and saying how animals are captured by one of their senses. He said the elephant is captured by its genitals and the deer is captured by the sense of sound. Then he said, "That big black—what is it? That black thing that goes *gong, gong* and flies into a flower?" A devotee said, "Horse fly, horse fly." Prabhupāda said, "Maybe." He did not accept it for sure, but went on to say, "Whatever-it-is goes into the lotus flower and is captured." You could never tell when you might be seen as over-intelligent for trying to correct your spiritual master.

These memories are available in a very ready form when you listen to the lectures. In that same lecture where Prabhupāda is speaking and the ice cream truck comes, there are other moments in which you feel his personal presence. Prabhupāda asked a devotee to read from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, then periodically interrupted and added his own commentary. While they were all listening to the purport being read aloud, Prabhupāda's breathing was audible on the tape. Sometimes he sighed. At one point, we hear Prabhupāda say, "Yes." Hearing Prabhupāda's own submission to the śāstric truth produces a special moment of faith. His whole preaching career, and, therefore, the whole Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is based on faith that whatever is stated in the scriptures is truth. There is no way to experiment upon or investigate into matters such as the existence of the soul or the Supreme Lord. We have to accept it on the authority of the scriptures. Therefore, to hear Prabhupāda say, "Yes," in a grave voice, affirming the purport and his belief in it, is nectar. Such are the joys and intimate moment we can have by listening to tapes.

On another recorded lecture, we hear Prabhupāda in Māyāpura before hundreds of devotees. He was speaking about theories concerning the origin of creation. "They have this theory, what is it called?" About six people started speaking at once—"Big Bang, Big Bang," "The Chunk, The Chunk." Devotees were supplying words that Prabhupāda had used previously, or examples they thought would be correct. Someone said, "Big Bang," but Prabhupāda did not acknowledge him. Then another devotee, thinking that Big Bang was a good choice,

repeated it louder, "Big Bang!" Others were still saying, "Chunk, Chunk." Finally, Prabhupāda said, "Anyway . . ." and carried on with his lecture.

Some of this interaction was based on the fact that Prabhupāda was using English as a second language. It also showed how much we were hanging on every word he spoke and looking for approval. If you supplied Prabhupāda a word that he accepted, then you felt very satisfied. However, if you said something and he deliberately responded, "No, that is not it," you felt a little foolish and rejected. As we hear these exchanges now, it seems to be a sort of pastime Prabhupāda had with his followers, and we can use these exchanges to spark our Prabhupāda meditations and our love for him.

Try This . . .

The next time you listen to a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda speaking, *be in the audience.*

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Finding inroads
6.6

1

I asked my two roommates, "Is it all right
that I play a tape recorder in the bathroom at 2
A.M.?"
"Sure," they said, "we don't hear it."
Ah, twenty-five minutes prime time,
"Because while speaking, evacuating,
receiving or opening or closing his eyes,
he always knows that only the material senses
are engaged . . ."

Sometimes as I listen, I am finding fault.
Let it float by like scum
on the Ganges of my mind.
Arriving in Hawaii you said, "I am very pleased
to see Gaura-Nitāi being worshiped here.
They are merciful. Never think
we are worshiping statues."

You give us Kṛṣṇa,
your words are our faith.
Like children we hear you:
"I am very pleased . . . Just go on
worshiping Gaura-Nitāi."

The bath water is icy cold,
quickly dry and dress.
The tape ends. I am ready.

2

Looking for inroads—
another is the morning walk.
Treat it like a trance: instead of lying down,
you stride through rough weather,
taking in the scenery and at peace, you start to
talk.
Now they come together—memories,
not big revelations, but live talk
with Prabhupāda on the walk.
hear him smashing the atheists—
tell him things you never said,
"Prabhupāda, I am writing a book,
I think you will like it because
people will be drawn to Kṛṣṇa."

Sharing the historical moments
6.7

This morning I listened to a tape of Prabhupāda speaking at the Māyāpura festival in 1977. He lectured on Prahlāda Mahārāja and how he was blessed by Nṛsiṁhadeva. Nṛsiṁhadeva's palm is as soft as a lotus, and yet with His fingernails, He ripped apart the demon. Prabhupāda dwelt on the apparent contradiction of soft hands and hard nails. He said this is the inconceivable nature of God. According to Jīva Gosvāmī, unless you accept that the Supreme Lord has inconceivable potency, you cannot begin to understand Him. Jayadeva Gosvāmī, in his song to Nṛsiṁhadeva, states, "*adbhuta-śṛṅgaṁ.*" *Adbhuta* means, "Your wonderful, amazing, and inconceivable activities."

Who can calculate the value of faithfully hearing Prabhupāda speak these things? The tape recordings of his lectures are a special dimension, different from the books, but similar. It is the transcendental sound unedited. We can also hear the devotees appreciation and even their silence.

In that '77 lecture, Prabhupāda said that, in the West, there is no scientific spiritual knowledge, only attachment to material things. Prabhupāda said, "Do not mind," meaning that we should not take offense if he criticized our Western civilization. He said it was a civilization of the gross material elements with no knowledge of the higher self. Then Prabhupāda said, "*Perhaps for the first time, they are getting this information in the West.*" He said it slowly, with feeling for the momentousness of his words to sink in, not just the words but the facts

behind them. When he said it, the devotees exclaimed, *"Jai!"*

Although there is God consciousness in Western countries and a kind of pure love of God in some of the Christian saints, the basic science which is given in *Bhagavad-gītā* is unique. As Prabhupāda has pointed out, people in the modern age demand scientific understanding. They want explanations for the material world and its relationship to the spiritual world. *Bhagavad-gītā* gives this. So there was Prabhupāda proclaiming himself as a witness to the spreading of Vedic science into the Western world. Scholars can note this as a historical fact, but it took Prabhupāda to proclaim that this moment of history was happening.

A few years previously, in another Māyāpura gathering before an international audience of devotees, Prabhupāda announced another fulfillment of a prophecy. He said that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's prophecy had been fulfilled; now Bengalis and Europeans and Americans have come together to chant *"Jaya Śacīnandana"* and Hare Kṛṣṇa.

It is certainly a treat to hear Prabhupāda proclaim a moment in history. After those lectures, we talked among ourselves and said how wonderful it was. Unfortunately, we were also swept along in the tide of trivial events, and some of these things were forgotten. We forgot to appreciate that we lived through that history and that we are meant to carry it out further. It is not that Prabhupāda said, "For the first time in the West, they are getting spiritual knowledge," and we were just supposed to see it as some isolated incident that had already taken place. We have to continue to work.

Prabhupāda gave a wonderful finale to this same lecture in 1977. Just as Prahlāda Mahārāja was blessed by the touch of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, so today we can have the same facility. How? Is Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva here? Prabhupāda said He was here as *nāmā-rūpa-avatāra:* Kṛṣṇa is present in His name. Pacing his words slowly and with the right emphasis, Prabhupāda said, "We should stick to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Do it with full faith and know that this is Kṛṣṇa in His sound vibration. When we chant, we are *touching* Kṛṣṇa with our tongues. So always go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and be with Kṛṣṇa in this way. Thank you very much." These words were met with another big cheer form the assembled devotees.

Try This . . .

When you hear a lecture by Prabhupāda and you are impressed with something special, why not share it? When I heard these words from Prabhupāda's '77 Māyāpura talk, I cued the tape recorder and brought it down to the devotees who were staying with me. I said, "I have some nectar for you before we begin our *japa."* I played Prabhupāda's statement that Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva's touch is the same as the Hare Kṛṣṇa "touch" and, therefore, available to us. Try sharing your own Prabhupāda meditation.

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Speaking up for the atheist existentialists
6.8

I was with Prabhupāda as his secretary for two weeks in Bhuvanesvara. We were far away from any big group of devotees, so those who were with Prabhupāda at this remote outpost were able to get his association frequently and personally. For morning walks, we went through the park. Prabhupāda stopped to look at the flowers and said, "How can they say there is no God?" We went through a zoo once, but mainly we walked in the park. The ground was unpaved, and the weather was warm, although it was January. Prabhupāda looked beautiful in his saffron. He was beginning to have that illness which was an indication of his last days with us, and this was his last year. He was, nevertheless, in full spirits and alert consciousness. The illness hampered him only because he could not travel as much or do all the things he wanted to do.

On one walk, Prabhupāda was scoffing at the theory of chance as a basis for life and creation. Bhagavata dāsa said, "Actually, Isaac Newton disproved that theory of chance." Hari-śauri mentioned a book that he had read, *Life Has No Meaning.* Prabhupāda responded with a mere, "Humph."

Then Prabhupāda said, "Does that mean life has no meaning, but the rascal's words in the book do have meaning?"

I took this as a cue to enter with some of my pet intellectual attachments.

"Life has no meaning, but we have to give it meaning." I was trying to present the case of the atheist existentialists to Prabhupāda. It was not that

long ago that I was reading those books and believing in them. I was not presenting their case as something I though unimportant; it was something within my own psyche.

I said, "That is the glory of man: he finds the meaning. He gives the meaning to the meaningless." When I said that, I felt a twinge of pride at my eloquence. I even thought that the other devotees could not really appreciate me because I was so intellectual and eloquent. I was not like others who might give Prabhupāda crude, distorted things to think about—I was giving him some straight existentialism, relevant to the times in which Prabhupāda was living.

Prabhupāda was not impressed with me though. He did not respond. Some of the other devotees repeated their lines about a book called *Life Has No Meaning* and how it had won the Nobel Prize.

I spoke out again. This was unusual for me, but since there were so few of us on the walk, and since the devotees who were present were not heavy competitors, I felt more inclined to step forward and speak on behalf of the existentialists.

I said, "They say you have to face up to that uncertainty of no meaning, and just live your life without taking meaning from the *śāstra.*"

"Simply take from him," Prabhupāda responded.

"Each person has to find within himself the meaning," I said. Existential atheism was usually the furthest thing from my mind. I was faithfully engaged in duties as Prabhupāda's secretary, typing his letters, massaging him, but now all these old attachments started bubbling up. Rather than be silenced by Prabhupāda's first rebukes, I persisted.

"Then why you are distributing the meaning?" Prabhupāda asked. This was his usual method, to address the person he was talking to by forcing him to identify with the person he was presenting. I was willing to play the role.

"Why are you anxious to give some meaning?" Prabhupāda repeated. With this remark, Prabhupāda exposed the motivation of the preachers of "no meaning." If they believed in what they said, they should let people live their own lives without coming to take the Nobel Prize for being spokesman. This silenced me and I fell into saying, "Ummm." Was it true that the "no meaning" philosophers had such a low motivation? Prabhupāda said that they simply should not speak.

Sometimes you read in history about the wonderful atmosphere of ancient days in Athens when Socrates would walk with his students. However, in Bhuvanesvara Park in 1977, we knew something more transcendental than ancient Athens. Being with Prabhupāda when he allowed us to express ourselves and when he answered these theories transported us beyond time and space. We lived in ideas in the invigorating form of a mock debate with the spiritual master.

Hari-śauri said, "Krishnamurti has written thirteen books, and the purport is that no one needs a guru."

Bhagavata added, "At the end of one book he writes, 'When you finish this book, you can throw it away.'"

"He has written thirteen books? Throw it away?" Prabhupāda sounded disgusted.

"One exponent of this philosophy," I said, "is Albert Camus. He said, 'Do not try to lead me,

because I may not want to follow you. And do not try to follow, because I may not be capable of leading you. But walk beside me and be my friend.' He said that by writing his books, he was not trying to lead other people, but to free them from false following, from following any absolute philosophy." By now I was feeling heady. I was speaking up on a morning walk for one of the first times, not just with a cryptic remark or a distorted version of the materialists, but with some favorite lines from Camus for Prabhupāda's consideration. I thought that now, at least, the atheists were being given a better chance to present their side, and I, too, would be more satisfied to hear Prabhupāda's reply to an accurate statement.

"Then he has to follow you," Prabhupāda replied. "Because by taking your instruction, I shall stop following others. I will have to follow you."

"Yes," I agreed.

"Then what is the benefit? Instead of following others, I shall follow you. My following is still there."

"Hmmm," I said. "They claim they do not want to be leaders, but actually they do."

"That means rascal. What he says, that is contradictory, that is rascal." Again Prabhupāda had exposed their motives. Perhaps I was doubtful whether that was actually their motive, but Prabhupāda was so down-to-earth about it. He was unhampered by false reverence for these intellectual idols. He saw them for what they were—people who wrote books to gain fame as international authors, but who propound the philosophy that no one should teach anything. Prabhupāda saw the innate hypocrisy in it. (I can

say, in retrospect, that if one researches the personal lives of such existential philosophers as Sartre and Camus, he will certainly find much to corroborate Prabhupāda's point.) Prabhupāda was not debunking them unfairly; he was getting at the root of their contradictory position.

As we walked along in our group, with Prabhupāda's cane punctuating the sounds of our tramping, Prabhupāda began chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Pṛthu-pūtra, a French-born *sannyāsī*, added, "Camus committed suicide at the end of his life."

Prabhupāda was not sufficiently interested to continue the discussion. We went on in silence for a little while. Prabhupāda greeted a passerby, *"Jai."*

Eventually, we began talking again on a different topic. On the previous day, Prabhupāda had asked to hear some of the charges the anti-cultists were making against our movement, and I began mentioning some of them. Our conversation continued in that direction until the end of the walk.

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6.9

I can't believe the horoscope reading that said
it was sin for me to speak his name.
What about his *prāṇama-mantras,*
and the *prema-dhvāni* prayers?
And he gave me the mantra typed on paper,
"I offer my obeisances to His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami . . . "

Maybe they mean I talk too much,
"Don't take the name in vain."
But talk is also action.
For a writer to put the names on every page,
Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya, the spiritual master—
in assurance of value. They may say I don't serve,
I just talk about you.
But I reply, "This is my service and
Prabhupāda accepts it."

It is true you are far away,
just as the nectar of the *mahāmantra*
is far away from me.
But I can talk and write—and read your book.

Of all the books,
yours are the truest:
"Although the Lord is one
in His various forms,
still His form as the young enjoyer of the *gopīs*
and companion of the cowherd boys
is the most perfect form."
Because you say it, we adhere.
you say we worship
Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa within Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa,
and therefore we are happy.
Whatever you say.

❀❀❀❀❀❀

"Śrīla Prabhupāda, you were asking yesterday about the charges that the opposing party makes against us. One of their charges is what we were just discussing, that we follow absolute authority. The temple president and other leaders have too much authority over the ordinary devotees."

"Why you have come to pose *your* authority?" Prabhupāda retorted.

This discussion took place at the time when the New York court case was going on with charges of criminal brainwashing against members of ISKCON. Prabhupāda was getting information from the devotees in America about the anti-cult movement, and the talk around Prabhupāda was surcharged with it. ISKCON was engaged in a serious struggle threatening the life of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. If the anti-cult movement could make their charges stick, then it would be almost criminal to practice full-time devotional service, to recruit devotees, to maintain an *āśrama*, and so on. To the devotees, the charges seemed absurd, that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra was comparable to the brainwashing torture perpetrated on prisoners of war by their captors during the Korean War. Who could believe such a thing? Yet certified psychologists with credits from big universities were prepared to testify that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was brainwashing. Prabhupāda wrote to one devotee, "The fight has begun," and told us we should be ready for it. These talks at Bhuvanesvara reflected some of that anxiety. Hearing Prabhupāda's sober but confident replies was important

not only to us on the walk, but to everyone who could hear it. There was no doubt that Prabhupāda was sure of himself and sure of Kṛṣṇa, regardless of what others had to say.

I said, "But I don't say that you have to accept me absolutely." I was speaking on "their" behalf, those who thought everything was relative. Prabhupāda seemed to criticize the nondevotees just for putting forward their opinions. I tried to argue on their behalf that they were putting forward their opinions as one of many. They were not claiming any absolute position. Since they were just stating their opinion in a non-absolute way, why should they not be allowed to express it?

Prabhupāda replied, "Then why do you speak nonsense? Somebody is selling something, but if he says, 'Don't purchase it,' what is the use?"

Sometimes in the fire of these debates—as we compare Prabhupāda's tactics with his opponents'—we may forget the underlying seriousness of the discussion. No matter what kind of tactic Prabhupāda used—and his tactics were always solid ones—the real point was that he was arguing on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one did not take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if one remained in material consciousness, then he wasted the human form of life. Whoever taught, "Do not surrender to Kṛṣṇa" was misleading others and causing their downfall. As soon as Prabhupāda saw that Camus or anyone else was not teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he attempted to strongly and immediately defeat their logic.

"They think that surrendering to the spiritual master is not good," I said. "If many people do this, it will be very dangerous."

"But you ask others to surrender to you," said Prabhupāda. "Why should I not surrender to my spiritual master? What is the use of changing?"

"Well, at least we do not claim absolute authority," I said. "I may tell you sometimes, and if it is not good, you do not have to follow me."

"Why do you speak nonsense," answered Prabhupāda, "that we do not have to follow you? Why do you waste your time and waste my time?" Prabhupāda was making the same point he had made about persons who teach that you do not need a guru. He saw hypocrisy in such statements. If one thinks that what he says is imperfect, then he should not advocate his point of view at all. If someone writes books and makes a learned or forceful presentation, then he *does* want to convince you. For such a teacher to argue against the principles of teaching and following is contradictory.

On one level, Prabhupāda was speaking in favor of freedom of choice. Everyone should be allowed to make choices in a democratic or free society. The member of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement had voluntarily joined Prabhupāda and were peacefully practicing Kṛṣṇa conscious life. Why should outsiders come in and demand that we stop? Their propaganda that we should not be allowed to guide others is a kind of violence. Prabhupāda saw through this. Devotees should be allowed to make a free choice without oppressive restraints by the guardians of society who happen to be anti-cult devotees.

On this same walk, an Australian devotee spoke up, "They say that each person has his own life to live. He can take from different authorities as he likes."

Prabhupāda replied, "And if I find in one place, why should I take so much trouble? Why do you induce me to go here and there if I can get everything in one place?"

"If I like everything you are saying," Hari-śauri agreed, "why should they object?"

"And why should they object," I said, "if we decided to follow one authority?"

With those words, Prabhupāda had cracked the whole nut open on the argument against authority. Although we had been defending their viewpoint for the sake of argument, Prabhupāda stopped us in our tracks. We all stopped talking and said things like "Hmmm," and "Yeah." Prabhupāda had opened our eyes again. We could see the devious mentality both of those who were arguing against Kṛṣṇa consciousness by claiming that it was too authoritarian, and also of the criticism by the "free thinkers," who say that relative opinions are best. What if a person really did like what one guru was saying? Why hinder him or criticize him? After all, it is possible that one person can have everything you want. How unfair it seemed that people wanted to stop us just because of our wholehearted surrender and love for Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda said, "Too much authority is bad if the authority is wrong. If the authority is right, however, then it is better, you submit in one place. Just like you go to some supermarket—you get everything there."

As we walked that morning, the big Indian crows caw-cawed loudly. So the anti-cultists continue to caw-caw. Now, though, we have the confidence that they are not speaking the truth. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not blind following. We had Prabhu-

pāda's books and his intelligent discussion, and we had our own hearts' conviction about why we joined and why we were making free choices.

I then related to Prabhupāda an experience I had had in approaching professors. I had been trying to get signatures in support of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for use in court against the brainwashing case. One professor told me that he would not sign. He understood that we were being persecuted because we were a small movement, but he said if we ever did get bigger, he thought we too would be intolerant of other religions.

Prabhupāda walked quietly for awhile and then said, "That means he does not understand."

"In Vedic culture," I asked, "are people allowed to follow any other beliefs?" This was another pet concern of mine, a doubt beneath the surface of my official Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now was a rare opportunity to voice this in one piece to Prabhupāda.

"In a society where there is a Kṛṣṇa conscious king or government, what if someone doesn't want to be a devotee? What happens to him?" Prabhupāda replied that the king has the power to chastise him. "If a child says I do not believe in education, so we have to accept? He must, he must be punished because he is a child. He cannot say, 'Father, I do not believe in education. Let me play.' Will he be allowed? So it is the king's duty."

The Australian devotee asked, "If someone wanted to be a Christian in the Kṛṣṇa conscious society, would he be chastised?"

Prabhupāda replied that we would have to first see whether he actually followed the Christian religion. "The father does not chastise always," he said. "If the son does wrong, then he chastises.

Otherwise, why should he chastise? One who believes in God, that is religion."

Prabhupāda established in this talk that in a Kṛṣṇa conscious state, one would get all protection as a practitioner of a bona fide religion. However, in the Christian teaching, for example, it says, "Thou shalt not kill." A king in a God conscious state would punish people who actually killed either humans or animals. "The king has no objection whether one follows the Christian method or the Hindu method. It does not matter."

Prabhupāda then said that if one does not know what is God, he must learn. If one refuses to learn, then he would be punished.

Prabhupāda said, "These are very intelligent questions." He liked the discussion. It did not end when we were in the car, but continued even when the car was parked and we were getting out at the Bhuvanesvara temple. Prabhupāda had started talking about democracy (he called it "demon-crazy"), but we were also discussing some of the delicate matters of civil rights in a God conscious government. It was impossible to cover all the points completely and I still sometimes worry over the intricacies of how people would be allowed to live in a Kṛṣṇa conscious state. Prabhupāda, though, gave enough food for thought on that one walk to last for years.

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Sometimes it is hard
6.11

Focusing and falling away,
the *Bhāgavatam* describes my state:
"When remembrance is lost . . .
learned scholars consider that the soul is lost."

Maybe it is the Kumāras,
their teachings' have more *jñana* than
I can handle. Maybe it is some arteries
in my head or neck. Or something I ate.
"Just a little mistake,"
Prabhupāda said, "and your progress is ruined.
The material energy is so strong."

Prabhupāda, I thought loving you was easier
than this.
Once I cooked you *halavā* while you
went on a cold morning walk in Hong Kong.
You like my *halavā* but
if sometimes it is hard to read,
I must take the blame,
my burnt out faculties of body and mind.
I am not like the *gurukula* boys raised in
Māyāpura,
with clean *tilaka, śikhā* tied right.
But I get my licks in too,
don't I, Prabhupāda?
Won't I one day get a spiritual body
and serve without restrictions?

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Touched by his greatness
6.12

Do not forget that Prabhupāda is your master. Never be condescending in your praise or estimation of him. As disciples, we worship our guru with affection as well as with objective evidence of his greatness. We also have to be *regularly* touched by his greatness. I say this, having been touched by listening to Prabhupāda's lecture at the 1977 Māyāpura festival, on Prahlāda Mahārāja's prayers to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.

Prabhupāda said that Prahlāda was able to please Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva even though others, great demigods and even Lakṣmī-devī herself, could not. What was Prahlāda's quality that so attracted the Lord? Prabhupāda went right to the heart of it. He spoke sweetly and simply, entering the mentality of Prahlāda Mahārāja and explaining it to us. A great teacher is one who can convey tremendous thoughts and experiences to the students. It is one thing to feel something, and it is an added empowerment to convey it to others. That teaching ability arises from compassion and empathy. Prabhupāda was able to grasp the whole relatio-ship of Prahlāda Mahārāja and Nṛsiṁhadeva and give it to an audience—not of great scholars or long-time practicing *sādhus*—but to us ISKCON folk in 1977. He stressed the simplicity of Prahlāda Mahārāja's approach: in a childlike way, he prost-rated himself before Nṛsiṁhadeva.

According to Prabhupāda, Nṛsiṁhadeva said to Prahlāda, "It must have been very difficult for you to be tortured by your father, and then to witness his killing. Do not worry, do not be afraid. Now be

pacified. I am here and you are all right, everything is all right." When Prabhupāda said, "Everything is all right," I remembered how he had said that to me and to others at different times. He is our Lord Nṛsiṁha protector.

Simple devotion to the Lord is what pleases Him. Prabhupāda did not analyze the topic with very intricate scholarship. He did examine the Sanskrit words for us, but mainly he said, *"Kṛṣṇa is not unfeeling, He is not impersonal. He responds to your devotion."*

In the same lecture, Prabhupāda spoke about the importance of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. As soon as Prabhupāda began to recite the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, about five hundred devotees roared it along with him.

I cannot adore Śrīla Prabhupāda according to my own conceptions. I cannot contain him. Nor can I keep him at arm's length so that he is "harmless" to me. Guru is heavy. He commands the disciple. That is one reason we hesitate to approach him, because we like to adore a "nice guru" on our own terms. In the same lecture, Prabhupāda spoke about the difference between imitation and following. We should not imitate big personalities like Rūpa Gosvāmī. Prabhupāda said that one of his own disciples was leaving him. This disciple said there was no *bhajana* here, and he asked Prabhupāda to bless him that he could find a guru. Prabhupāda spoke this to the whole audience at Māyāpura. It was shocking to hear, very heavy.

We may have a yearning to do *bhajana*, but we should not think that we should leave Prabhupāda or that we know better than he does how to execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda is breaking our

conceptions and making us surrender to his will, and this is part of his greatness. There is room for all that we want to do in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, room for everyone, but first we must surrender to Prabhupāda and his movement. If there is any fault in his movement, we still have to work from within and try to improve it.

Also in this lecture, Prabhupāda quoted the song in praise of the spiritual master, but he changed one word to make it *janme janme pīta sei,* instead of its usual *janme janme prabhu sei.* Prabhupāda said that Prahlāda Mahārāja never prayed to the Lord, "Please engage me in the service of my father Hiraṇyakaśipu." He prayed to serve Nārada Muni, his spiritual master. Prabhupāda said that the spiritual master is the real father.

I also pray, Śrīla Prabhupāda, please let me never come to you and ask blessings that I may find a guru to teach me Kṛṣṇa conscious *bhajana.* I pray that I might find you as you are. I pray to be able to find you in ways that I have not yet found because you are hidden from my nondevotee eyes. Let me find you in your purports and in your spoken lectures and in your community of followers. When I approach you rightly in surrender, then you will give me protection the way Lord Nṛsiṁha gave protection to Prahlāda.

Try This . . .

In a "childlike way," prostrate yourself before Śrīla Prabhupāda. Take the risk of revealing your heart to him, then allow him to accept you.

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Swamijī's prasādam fix: A 1966 memory
6.13

On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights, Swamijī gave everyone a piece of apple. The two *kīrtanas* were over, the lecture and debates had ended, and now before going back into the city night, you sat in the audience of the storefront and chomped on a little piece of apple. The daily lunch with Swamijī, however, was for those who wanted a real fix.

Prasādam worked. It made you feel satisfied and free of sex agitation. Everything seemed nice. You didn't want to argue with people. *Prasādam* helped to heal the ailing self. The *ātmā* is not only the soul; it is also the mind, body, and self. All of these will be satisfied by eating *prasādam.*

When you honor *prasādam,* the body says, "I like Kṛṣṇa consciousness." The mind says, "I like it too. I am not agitated anymore." The self exclaims, "This *prasādam* was offered to Kṛṣṇa. Swamijī says it is not ordinary food."

Prasādam was an item of faith, a sacrament. It was as good as the Eucharist taken in the Catholic Church. The Eucharist is surrounded with awe and mystery in a ceremonial ritual. *Prasādam* was eaten from a plate on the floor with the boys and the Swami. Someone might doubt, "You are eating like everyone else. What is the difference?" Swamijī would reply, "This is offered to Kṛṣṇa."

As with all other Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, *prasādam* depended on Swamijī's presence. He was right in our midst as we ate with his invitation, "Take more, take more."

Nations such as the Italians know how to relax and satisfy themselves when it is dinner time. They put their problems aside and they eat. With Swamijī, we did that also, but without heavy sense gratification and without wine and meat. It was spiritual eating. It was satisfying, but not merely gastronomic satiation. It was also different from taking the holy Eucharist once a week (or at most once a day) in the form of a tiny, thin wafer.

In his Prospectus written in the 1950s for the League of Devotees, Swamijī gave prominent mention to *prasādam*. He invited members to live with him in the *āśrama*, and he advertised the daily schedule. There were many times during the day when *prasādam* was served. The menu was described exactly. By studying that daily schedule, one can understand that *prasādam* is like attending *āratis, bhajanas,* or *Bhāgavatam* readings. *Prasādam* was not a material break in a spiritual day. It was another full-fledged spiritual activity—a devotee is either chanting or working or honoring *prasādam*.

Recently, I heard a devotee say that we should "honor *prasādam* and not just eat it." I understood what he meant by that, but in 1966, there was little distinction between honoring and eating. Swamijī said to eat. We came off the streets and he did not care how we ate. He did not say, "Be careful that you do not enjoy this, it is *prasādam*." Instead he said, "This is *prasādam;* therefore, enjoy it. You are not taking enough."

The boys joked, "Satsvarūpa, you have to work this afternoon, so you need to eat more to be spiritually strong."

Swamijī heard them and smiled, "Yes," he said, "be spiritually strong. Eat *prasādam*. This is our answer."

Regardless of what a critical onlooker might say about overeating, Swamijī was our leader and he was the one who told us to eat more. He did not say we should start with one *capātī* and decrease from there—not in those days. This was the happy entrance into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Each of us came with our many hang-ups and lamentations, but *prasādam* took care of it all. Although it is true that we should not eat in a mood of sense gratification and indulgence, there was something wonderful in the beginning—the enjoyment of eating in good company. The loving exchanges brought us into Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Eating has always been celebrated as a way to share love and togetherness. Rūpa Gosvāmī even mentions these two forms of loving exchanges among devotees: "to accept *prasādam* and to offer it to others." A spiritual family eats together in the spirit that Swamijī showed us. There was something to be learned from that example and not just laughed at as funny stories from 1966 "when everyone ate a lot."

Devotees can sit and take *prasādam* together in spiritual communion. If you do not have the fortune of having Swamijī in your midst, you can bring him into your midst by meditation. Before we eat, we offer the food with prayers. We can also converse with Prabhupāda in our minds, "Prabhupāda, please take this *prasādam*. They have given it to me, but I am bringing it to you, just as we used to bring you *prasādam*. Please take it." By meditation, you can offer your food to Prabhupāda. He can be

with you, and he can take *prasādam* with you. Anything is possible. Everything depends on your purity.

Try This . . .

Like chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, wonderful *prasādam* (offering, serving, and feasting) is not too distant from thinking about Prabhupāda. How can we avoid the connection? Just think about it—here are some suggestions: Tell Prabhupāda stories about *prasādam* while you cook or honor a feast. Cook his favorite recipes. Also, think of statements that Prabhupāda used about *prasādam* like, "Eat sumptuously, but not too much."

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Do it for him
6.14

It is reassuring to take stock of the fact that we follow Prabhupāda in almost everything we do. Often we feel bereft of love for Prabhupāda, and we think that we are distant from him. However, if you take inventory, you will see that you are always doing what he wanted you to do.

I do not wear *sannyāsī* clothes because it is my destiny to be a Vaiṣṇava monk. I do it because he introduced it. When I think like this, it gives me assurance that I am completely immersed in Prabhupāda consciousness. Even me, a laggard who does not fulfill front-line duties, who fails in many ways to cooperate with devotees—even I am

following Prabhupāda in general and in the particulars with devotion.

Chant your rounds, read his books, do your preaching service whatever it may be; do things the way he wanted them done. With the instinct of a well-trained person, you act the way Prabhupāda taught you. To give a crude example, consider the way a jet pilot moves in the cockpit. He does not explicitly think, "Now I am going to pull this switch and that lever to make the plane take off and veer to the left." He does not have to think so specifically about what he is doing because he has experience. We also have experience and should be guided by Prabhupāda's *vāṇī*. Whatever comes up in our lives, we simply act according to Prabhupāda's instructions.

If someone asks us, we may verbalize the source of the instruction. Usually, we do not have to verbalize it. Let me give a small example. When I was in Hawaii cooking for Prabhupāda, he came into the kitchen and saw that I had some big knives spread out on the table. Prabhupāda said, "Do not leave knives like that out. Put them in the drawer." Many people might have said the same thing, and some people even have phobias about sharp points. Prabhupāda was not extreme, but he made this remark, "Do not leave knives out. Put them in the drawer." It is a small point, and not even a transcendental teaching. It is what you might call a habit of Prabhupāda's, but I remember it and I agree with it. I don't resist it. So this morning I noticed that one of the devotees had left some big knives out. I put them away without saying anything. It is nice when these thoughts go through the mind, not even verbalized—you see something and you do it

the way Prabhupāda did it, because you see the wisdom of his ways.

Here are more examples of things we do as Prabhupāda taught us. You use a tongue scraper the way he does, You sit on a toilet crouched with the soles of the feet on the seat like an Oriental, not the way Westerners do. You eat only food that is offered to Kṛṣṇa. In order to offer the food, you say prayers to Śrīla Prabhupāda three times and ask him to accept it with devotion, so that the food can be offered to the Deity. You read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Whatever you do, you are always thinking, "How is this service to Prabhupāda?" If it is something he did not explicitly teach, how can it be accepted as an innovative form within the mainstream of Prabhupāda teachings? If there is anything we do that is not given by him, we must deliberate whether it is acceptable. By taking inventory of our actions, we want to conclude that we are doing everything for him.

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A Prabhupāda lecturer
6.15

Driving an hour into the city
for an evening *Bhagavad-gītā* lecture—
"The Truth of Karma Yoga,"
what Prabhupāda said.

I wanted to stay home by the fireplace,
write poems, read at leisure,
but people are waiting.
I will not cancel speaking
what Prabhupāda has said.

They will ask, "How can we know Kṛṣṇa
is actually there to accept our work?"
I'll answer strongly—
let them have it.
Teach what Prabhupāda said.

It is a formal lecture.
And then one-to-one.
Many come for the plate of *prasādam*.
And the *kīrtana!*
Off the cobbled streets of the back alley,
to the door of the Hare Kṛṣṇa center.

This one tonight is no burden, but
now they've asked me to lecture
every night of the week.
When do I get a break?

Be grateful that he is using you,
your passable English,
remembering what he said.

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Following the Bhaktivedanta purports
6.16

Prabhupāda spent much of his time teaching basic Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This was the work that Kṛṣṇa wanted him to do. He introduced Kṛṣṇa consciousness into the West by writing and speaking untiringly on the basis of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.*

Neither was Prabhupāda stingy in his discussion of Kṛṣṇa's personal form and pastimes in Goloka Vṛndāvana. He often interjected *kṛṣṇa-līlā* into a basic lecture, and in a way that showed his direct realization. Sometimes Prabhupāda said that the real feature of Kṛṣṇa is in the village life of Vṛndāvana. All of Kṛṣṇa's associates—His parents, cowherd boyfriends, and the *gopīs*—all are village people. Vṛndāvana means village life where Kṛṣṇa is the center of everything. In Vṛndāvana they have not learned about Kṛṣṇa from the *Vedas*, neither do they care much for the *Vedas*. However, everyone loves Kṛṣṇa. At any moment, Prabhupāda might speak directly like that about Kṛṣṇaloka. The wonderful thing was how he *conveyed* it to us.

The gift of an artist is his ability to feel something with love and then convey it in an interesting way. The art should infect others with the exact same sentiment that the artist felt. A God conscious teacher is able to do that, too. He has love of God, and he has the gift of conveying it. It was Lord Caitanya's desire to convey *kṛṣṇa-prema* by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda was empowered to do that—to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and to explain Hare Kṛṣṇa. He was generous in interspersing his basic Kṛṣṇa conscious talks with direct introductions into the topmost sphere of Goloka Vṛndāvana. Furthermore, he did it in plain language. Goloka Vṛndāvana is itself down-to-earth. The earth is *cintāmaṇi*, but, nevertheless, it is earthy. It is not like Vaikuṇṭha, with emphasis on the celestial.

Vṛndāvana's emphasis is on the human-like. When Prabhupāda talked about Kṛṣṇaloka, he did it like that, speaking as a resident and telling us what it was really like.

This mixture of basic and advanced Kṛṣṇa consciousness appears constantly in Prabhupāda's purports. In his *Bhāgavatam* purports, he does not always stick to a story line explanation of the verses. He feels free to lecture in each particular purport, expanding on the themes in different directions. There may be occasions when one wants to read only the verses as translated by Prabhupāda or his followers, in order to get more involved in the story flow. However, we should never think that a careful study of the Bhaktivedanta purports may be avoided or skipped over in our reading of the *Bhāgavatam*. Rather, the more we study the purports, the more we will appreciate Prabhupāda's relationship with Kṛṣṇa. As Prabhupādānugas, we want to understand Prabhupāda's Kṛṣṇa consciousness as much as we can. This will help us to understand our own relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

While reading Prabhupāda's purports in the first chapter of the Tenth Canto, I noticed how he shifts from one topic to another. In his purport to verse seventeen, we read that, at one time, the world was overburdened with demoniac kings who were harassing the people. The verse and purport are relevant to modern politics, where every nation is trying to build up its military power. Then, in the next verse, we hear that Lord Brahmā went with the demigods to the shore of the milk ocean and recited the *Puruṣa-sūkta* prayers. Brahmā received a direct message back from Lord Viṣṇu. In that purport, Prabhupāda writes mystically that you may get a direct message from Kṛṣṇa when you meditate on Him. He says that this can be done even today, and he gives the example of how subtle communications go on by television and other methods.

This is a strong assertion by Prabhupāda for communicating with God. So, in two consecutive purports, he first discusses the world with reference to present day prime ministers and presidents, and then he gives esoteric information. After that, he goes on to discuss the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as a person in the spiritual world.

When reading these purports, it occurred to me that we should be patient and happy to follow Prabhupāda as he goes from one topic to another. Gradually, we may begin to understand that, for Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere, and the jurisdiction of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is everywhere. If Prabhupāda turns his attention to the world's political situation with thoughts of lamentation or anger, that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When he turns directly to *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* and forgets this world, that is also Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "For one who see Me everywhere, I am never lost and he is never lost to Me."

We should move with Prabhupāda in his Bhaktivedanta purports from one topic to another. With each purport, he gives all that the previous *ācāryas* have said, and he reflects on it based on his own experience. If we read Prabhupāda with at least a little understanding of how he composed his purports, one after another, then we, too, will begin to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere.

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What Is that essence?
6.17

Prabhupāda, I try again to write to you.
The Alvars and other Vaiṣṇava *kavis*
wrote poems daily
praising new facets of the temple Deity.
Poem as *bhajana.*
And so I turn my mind
to my spiritual master.
As if no one believes me I protest,
"I knew him! I did!"

Someone said, "To avoid the fear of repetition
maybe you could recall his essence."—
Not just his bare feet on the floor, but what?
Any spiritual master perhaps
or an archetypical Prabhupāda—
someone in essence and in your imagination
to give you freedom to write.
"Or does it repel you," (someone said),
"to think of Prabhupāda in another form?"

I can do it, imagine
the essence without 26 Second Avenue,
tell a story
not limited by my failing memory.
But that is a different thing.
I still want to go back
to hear the '66 *kīrtanas,*
recall the inner reality of
Prabhupāda convincing me to become a devotee,
convincing me in his room,
in the storefront,
saying, "We have so many literatures that
you couldn't read them all
even if you read twenty-four hours a day."
Following him from his worship room
to his workroom asking, "Why do you always
answer from the
Vedic scriptures?"
"What about Chinese spiritual life?"
"Why do Indian women wear that red dot?"
"What about yoga?" "Can I write a book?"

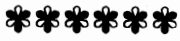
I can't forget the truth
in favor of the essence.
I fall on the floor of his room.
I beg for crumbs of a memory.
Tell again what actually happened.

A fiction of the guru is a different thing,
and I will do it.
Everyone must approach a guru,
so why not tell that story?
But I cannot abandon my daily *bhajana,*
new ways to touch him
and be touched by him,
the one who came here,
whom I see,
whom I dream of
the non-mythic Swami
who wore white rubber shoes (and the shoes are
still here),
no allegorical guru, but him
who smiled knowingly to see
this scrawny rascal with the wordy inquiries,
the boy who types and gives his money.
Prabhupāda, you accepted my money,
not in "essence," but in fact,
in your hand.

No "truth" but him singing,
no way I would have come
except by the elderly sage—
I mean the one who did come.

So if I can't remember him clearly enough
for yet another full portrait,
then please accept my fragments,
and the repeated *daṇḍavats;*
it is never the same you know,
I do go anew each day
with new earned money
and purchase a fresh mango from the fridge
and deliver it to his desk.

"Swamijī, please accept this because I heard from you that you like them and you said you couldn't get mangos in America."



GLOSSARY

A

ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

ahiṁsā—nonviolence.

ārati—a ceremony for worshiping the Lord with offerings of food, lamps, fans, flowers, and incense.

arcā-vigraha—the Deity form of the Lord in the temple.

āśrama—the four spiritual orders of life: celibate student, householder, retired and renounced life. Also a dwelling place for spiritual shelter.

B

bhakta—a devotee.

bhakti—devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

brahmacārī—a celibate student.

brahmacārīni—a female celibate student.

brāhmaṇa—one wise in the *Vedas* who can guide; the first Vedic social order.

C

caitya-guru—the Lord in the heart who acts as the spiritual master, directly instructing the living entity.

catur-vyūha—the quadruple expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa: Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkārṣana, Vāsudeva.

D

daṇḍavats—literally, "falling down like a rod"; offering prostrated obeisances.

dhāma—abode, place of residence, usually referring to the Lord's abode.

dhotī—a man's lower garment.

G

Gauḍīya sampradāya—the chain of spiritual masters coming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

gṛhastha—regulated householder life; the second order of Vedic spiritual life.

H

harināma—congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

I

iṣṭa-goṣṭhī—discussions among Vaiṣṇavas about spiritual topics and the instructions of the spiritual master.

J

japa—soft private chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

K

Kali-yuga—the Age of Kali, the present age, characterized by quarrel; it is last in the cycle of four ages and began five thousand years ago.

karma—fruitive action, for which there is always reaction, good or bad.

kīrtana—chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord.

kūrta—a simple style of man's shirt extending approximately to mid-thigh.

L

līlā—a transcendental "pastime" or activity performed by the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees.

M

mahātmā—a "great soul," a broadminded, liberated devotee.

mantra—a sound vibration that can deliver the mind from illusion.

māyā—(*mā*-not; *yā*-this), illusion; forgetfulness of one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

P

Paramātmā—the Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the heart.

paramparā—the chain of spiritual masters in disciplic succession.

prasādam—food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa, literally, "Kṛṣṇa's mercy."

R

Rūpa Gosvāmī—the leader of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, the principle followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

S

sabjī—a spiced vegetable dish.

sādhana—regulated spiritual practices.

sādhu—a saintly person.

samādhi—trance, complete absorption in God consciousness.

saṁsāra—the repeated cycle of birth and death in the material world.

saṅkīrtana—congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord.

sannyāsī—a person in the renounced order, the fourth spiritual order in Vedic society.

śāstra—revealed scripture.

smaraṇam—devotional remembrance (of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee); one of the nine basic forms of *bhakti-yoga*.

V

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

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