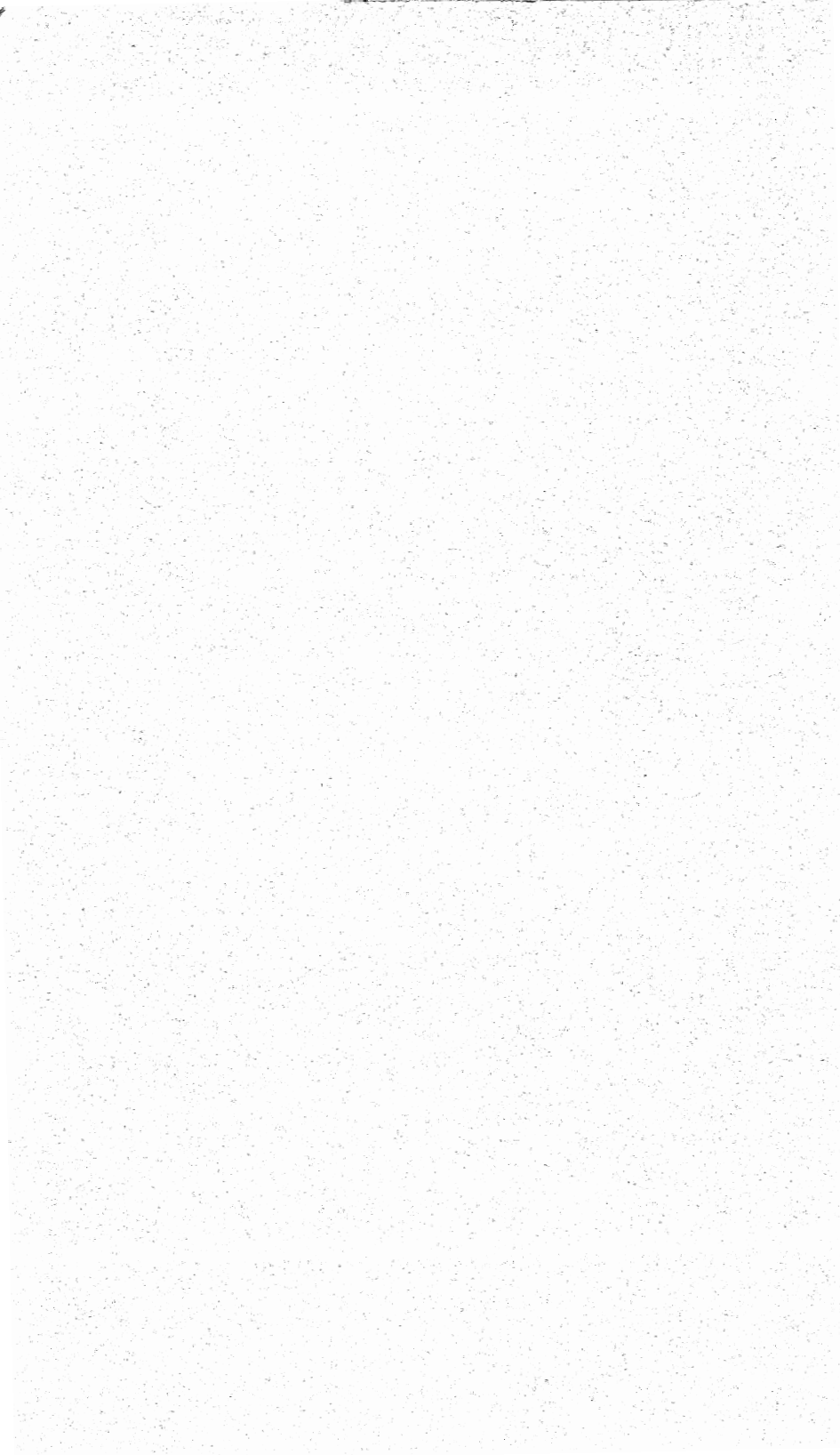


Lessons from the Road

Volume Two

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



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*The
Gītā-nāgārī Press
Virginia Beach, VA*

*Readers interested in the subject matter of this book are
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Secretary.*

*The Gītā-nāgārī Press
138 S. Rosemont Rd. #217
Virginia Beach, VA 23452*

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Printed in the United States of America
Limited Edition: 1,000 copies

Contents

Chapter 3. Atlanta/Tennessee Farm	1
Chapter 4. St. Louis	23
Poems from the Road	43
Seeing the Good	51
"How Can I Become a Preacher?"	65

Chapter Three

ATLANTA / TENNESSEE FARM

Camp Notes, Carrowinds, North Carolina, blossoming honeysuckle

Never think, “There is no real action right now.” Rather, if you can calm down from outer events, you will be able to collect yourself for new insights. I have lived enough, and I have already heard enough from Śrīla Prabhupāda to become a pure devotee—if I would just realize it! I don’t have to travel anywhere or gain new experience to find Kṛṣṇa consciousness—if I can travel within.

The introspective devotee is praised throughout the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

One whose happiness is within, who is active and rejoices within, and whose aim is inward is actually the perfect mystic. He is liberated in the Supreme, and ultimately he attains the Supreme.

—Bg. 5.24

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport:

Unless one is able to relish happiness from within, how can he retire from the external engagements meant for deriving superficial happiness? A liberated person enjoys happiness by factual experience. He can, therefore, sit silently at any place and enjoy the activities of life from within. Such a liberated person no longer desires external material happiness. This stage is called *brahma-bhūta*, attaining which one is assured of going back to home, back to Godhead.

But somehow, at this time of my life, the outer journey is helping the inner.

ATLANTA

Before visiting the temple, we stopped at the home of a Godbrother, Veda-guhya.

One morning, after the *Bhāgavatam* class, Veda-guhya said that Prabhupāda was once asked whether our pious credits from past lives contributed to our joining the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Prabhupāda was supposed to have replied, "I have created your pious activities." I said that even if we were pious before we met Prabhupāda, what did it amount to without him? Only by meeting Prabhupāda did we receive the opportunity to render pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. We should never forget or minimize how we have been saved by Prabhupāda's coming west to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If someone thinks that Vaiṣṇavism in the West was inevitable and that it was just a matter of time before we also became devotees—or if someone thinks, "It's an eternal *paramparā*, Prabhupāda was the spiritual master, and now we are the current Vaiṣṇavas"—then he is falsifying what actually happened. Our lives were going in a completely different direction. If now we are rendering service to Kṛṣṇa, that is Prabhupāda's mercy. If we forget this, then the mercy can be removed and we will again become a mouse.

There is a wonderful painting of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in Veda-guhya's temple room. It measures about four feet across and six feet tall. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are in the upper center of the picture, and They are surrounded in all corners of the canvas by many scenes of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. The painting cannot be appreciated by a casual glance, but only by a visual *parikrama*.

Starting at the very bottom we see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa going on a cruise in a comfortable boat. (Each painting is done

very simply, in a primitive style, but with a nice Kṛṣṇa conscious effect.)

Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā have transcendental auras around Their heads and the Vaiṣṇava paraphernalia, *tilaka*, crowns, garlands, etc. Moving to the left we see the *rāsa* dance in full swing. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are in the very center, and around Them in a big circle, hand to hand, are many Kṛṣṇas and *gopīs*. Nearby in the bushes, some calves are watching and also Lord Brahmā, with the *Vedas* in his hands.

I cannot relate what is going on behind each and every bush, creeper, and flower in this Vṛndāvana painting, but I'll mention the highlights. As on a regular *parikrama*, we come upon many little roadside temples where Kṛṣṇa is the main Deity, and also many *samādhi mandirs* with cloth-draped altars bearing the beads of departed Vaiṣṇavas. On the lower left but rising upward, near a branch of Govardhana Hill, we find Lord Indra bowing down before Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Indra's elephant Airāvata is nearby, smiling. Moving upward we find Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma stopping the *gopīs* at a pass in the hill and knocking over one of their head-balanced yogurt pots. Toward the middle are numerous temples, another scene with Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* under a tree, two Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇas* discussing *śāstra*, small cottages in the woods, Nārada and Kṛṣṇa discussing at a *ghāṭa* . . .

Moving more leftward we find Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa seated on a stone dias taking *prasādam* together from a leaf plate. Further on Kṛṣṇa is throwing a ball to three boys who jostle for the catch; Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are sitting on a throne while talking to a group of *gopīs* seated at Their feet; Kṛṣṇa, having come upon a group of *gopīs* in the woods, is quarreling with them; Kṛṣṇa is coming up behind a *gopī* and putting His hands over her eyes; Kṛṣṇa is accepting *prasādam* from a *brāhmaṇa*—and the first encounter with a demon in this painting, Kṛṣṇa is wrestling with a mustached, Śiva-tilaked *asura*.

There are plenty of large fruit-bearing and flower-blossoming trees. No bright sun or moon appears, the general atmosphere is dark green forest. Further upward Kṛṣṇa and some boys are entering the mouth of the Aghāsura; Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are leading happy cows into the forest; Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are being pushed on a swing by a *gopī* wearing a golden *sārī*; Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are dancing alone, each holding up the bottoms of Their own dresses; Kṛṣṇa is bifurcating the mouth of Bakāsura; and at the very top, Garbhodakṣāyī Viṣṇu is lying on Śeṣa with Lord Brahmā sitting atop the lotus.

Down the right side of the painting flows the Yamunā River. At the top, Lord Balarāma is scratching out a tributary with His plow; Lord Kṛṣṇa sits in a tree top. In the upper branches of this tree are the *gopīs*' *sārīs*, while they stand in the water of the Yamunā. On the far right bank of the Yamunā is mother Yaśodā giving Kṛṣṇa breast milk; and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are fighting a demon. Directly in the Yamunā, Kṛṣṇa is dancing on Kāliya's hoods while Nanda and Yaśodā stand in a formal pose on the Yamunā bank; Vāsudeva is crossing the Yamunā with Kṛṣṇa on his head; Kṛṣṇa is punching the Keśī demon; Balarāma is throwing Denukāśura, who looks like a small kangaroo, into the trees; and all along the Yamunā are temples cows, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in different secluded groves, bathing *ghāṭas* and one gentle tiger.

It is an education for me to meet with devotees who don't live in an ISKCON temple. They are just as good in their own way as devotees living in the temple. At least, generically, you cannot say, "A temple devotee is more surrendered than a devotee living outside." It seems to me that we are seeing just a beginning of a time when Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees will work at many respectable occupations and live in neighborhoods side by side with people of "other religions."

Veda-guhya's business partner, Emile, came today to our Ekādaśī dinner. He is becoming a devotee by association with devotees who work in their business. When Baladeva began to serve him, Emile said, "They call me Bhīma, so you better give me a lot." After *prasādam*, everyone started telling jokes. (A man prayed in the synagogue, "God, please let me win the state lottery." And God spoke back, "Meet me half-way, Sol. Buy a ticket.")

Then we held *kīrtana* in the temple room. Afterward I read from *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa's and Prabhupāda's opinion about renunciation:

There are many members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness who work very hard in their office or in the factory or some other place, and whatever they earn they give to the Society. Such highly elevated souls are actually *sannyāsīs* and are situated in the renounced order of life.

—Bg. 18.11, purport

We discussed what Prabhupāda meant by, "a man working in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a factory does not associate himself with the work of the factory, nor with the workers of the factory. He simply works for Kṛṣṇa." Kardama Muni dāsa said that Śrīla Prabhupāda once said you could sit at the same bench as a nondevotee, but you should not share his consciousness. I told the story of the monkey and the crocodile, with the moral, "Don't give your heart to the non-devotees." We also exchanged personal experiences of how a devotee may subtly influence his fellow workers by setting a good example. Emile said he and Veda-guhya work very seriously at this in their business.

I apologized to Veda-guhya that ours is not a high-powered party, just doing *harināma*, BTG distribution, and collecting money on weekends. He said, "What's high-pow-

ered? What you are doing is high-powered. Chanting, dancing, and feasting—I thought that's what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is all about."



Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-madana-mohana,
Atlanta ISKCON

AT THE ATLANTA TEMPLE

I spoke with Balabhadra, Nirguṇa, and Durdarśana about book distribution.

“We are not too idealistic are we?” Balabhadra asked. They want to depend on distribution of Prabhupāda’s books as their all-in-all. They say it has become a lost art, since most devotees only know how to do some business or sell paraphernalia. But the devotees of Atlanta are doing big book distribution again and urging all devotees to go out and try. They are turning back the clichés as to why it can’t be done.

What can I add to their enthusiasm? I say, “It’s certainly what Prabhupāda wanted.” And I think of whatever I can to encourage them—how to cut down their overhead, increase the devotees’ attraction to the books by reading them, invite devotees living outside to financially support them. . . . And in class this evening I read from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letters from the forties and fifties—how he struggled to write and distribute his books.

Balabhadra said that if they talk more about book distribution, that will also help. But they want experienced devotees from other temples to come and train up their book distributors. “Everyone should get off the mental plane.” Nirguṇa said. “If we do what Prabhupāda says we will feel the potency and get the taste.”

They are pleased that our party is distributing BTG’s and singing *harināma*. Coming in contact with the book distributors makes us *want* to become preachers, which is the fulfillment of our travel hopes.

Two Servants of Atlanta ISKCON

Some of them are short, slightly built
 front-line soldiers
 who distribute books
 in the airport
 like *kṣatriyas*
 full of power:

1

"When I enter the airport,
 and go up the escalator
 I'm in anxiety,
 and when I see all the people
 I'm nervous,
 but as soon as I start
 to speak about Kṛṣṇa
 I am like a *kṣatriya*
 full of power."

2

The *pujari*-servant
 is just as good.
 He doesn't tire
 from ringing the bell,
 he's always singing prayers
 to Gaura-Nitāi,
 and he doesn't think it's drudgery
 to iron the Lord's clothes
 or to cook
 the next offering.

HARI-NĀMA, DOWNTOWN ATLANTA

We parked the van on the eighth floor of Macy's parking garage. A sign read, "This elevator is under electronic surveillance." Then onto the street, where smoke was puffing out of holes in the skyscrapers and emanating from the truck exhausts. Balabhadra said, "It's like you said in your class this morning; wherever human beings gather they pollute the place."

"Yes," I said, "they will blow up the whole planet. Are we a walking party?"

"Strolling *saṅkīrtana*," he said, and he led us off at a slow-paced stroll, double file, a dozen men and half a dozen women.

A few devotees went out to distribute magazines and cards.

The best thing was the way Balabhadra sang and waved to people as we passed them. Somehow, both we and "they" were frozen in two different roles—and so Balabhadra's friendly wave broke the ice, and drew many of them in. A young woman sitting on a park bench smiled shyly, and an old black woman waved back grimly. There were greetings in jest, cool greetings, and greetings ignored, but Balabhadra just kept playing *mṛdaṅga*, strolling and waving to whoever caught his eyes. We knew everyone who heard received the mercy of Gaura-Nitāi.

As we approached a row of fruit stands, one vendor began shouting at us. I heard, "Bald heads!" and "No Hare!" but mostly he was drowned out by *harināma*.

"He's a regular," said Balabhadra, "just a harasser." When I looked back I saw the vendor, who was a black man, say to Haryāśva, "Hey nigger, how come you got that stuff on



Balabhadra dasa (with mrdanga) leads the devotees in kirtana after arriving at Macy's.

your face?" Then a black policeman stepped in and said to the vendor, "Don't harass them."

"I know my rights!" said the vendor.

"Don't harass them!"

"It's all right, officer," said Haryasva, "I will answer his question."

Another black vendor said to Haryāśva, "Don't pay him no attention." (Haryāśva later referred to all this as "loving exchanges." At least I was sure that Haryāśva was *tītikṣava karuṇika*: "tolerant and merciful.")

I tried to guess that everyone else was thinking. I saw headlines in the newspapers: "37 American Sailors Die in Missile Attack." In a theoretical way, I thought it would be appropriate to die here, while chanting.

When I took turns leading the chanting, I kept planning to vary the tunes, but every time I began, all I could sing was the main Hare Kṛṣṇa tune that Prabhupāda used to sing. For me that's the safest.

I thought, "We're far away from Vṛndāvana." In contrast to India, the people were dressed in stylish American business clothes, and most of the buildings looked new. But they received us with the same mixture of enjoyment and attempts to ignore us that we meet with everywhere. *Harināma* and book distribution are America's last chances.

In the park we all posed in front of skyscrapers, while Durdarśana took photos. Then we danced just as in the temple, only with hundreds watching and hearing us. I tried again to figure out what everyone was thinking and how we looked to them, until I realized it was a useless speculation. So I joined the chanting and dancing.

An article about our *harināma* appeared in the *Atlantic Journal* in a column by Francis Cawthon. Her human interest sketch, "Cultures Clash on Downtown Street at Midday," told



In the park, downtown Atlanta

of an old woman's incredulous responses to the devotees' chanting. Some excerpts:

The Hare Krsnas were bouncing around energetically in front of the downtown C&S Bank, their faces covered with joy and strategic makeup, the partially shaved heads of the men, gleaming with oily perspiration in the midday sun. Lunch time office workers wove their way past, eyes averted. . . .

A woman with graying hair and a straining double knit polyester dress of psychedelic black and white flowers that had managed to survive the 1960's, stood aside and stared at them.

"Who are them people?" she asked.

I told her they were Hare Krsnas.

"Hairy Christians?" she repeated in disbelief. "Why them men have hardly no hair at all. How can they be called Hairy Christians?"

"They aren't Christians," I explained, "they belong to an Eastern religion."

She looked at me expectantly, and I was embarrassed that despite

the many articles I had read about the group, I couldn't really tell her much.

"They are involved in the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gīta*," I said importantly—after sneaking a look at the card one of the men had given me earlier.

"I ain't never heard of him," she said. . . . "Why are they all twirlin' around like that? I ain't heard so much noise and carryin' on since I went to a Holy-Roller revival in Alabama back in the 1940's."

"Maybe it's similar," I said. "You know, expressing exultation with your faith."

She didn't comment on that.

"Well, I wish I knew what it was that was makin' them so happy," she said.

I looked at the card again. "It says, 'Chant the *mahā-mantra* and your life will be sublime.'"

She peeked over my shoulder at the words: "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare."

She guffawed, causing the black and white flowers to writhe over a protruding stomach.

"I knew it. Just like them Holy Rollers in Alabama, talking in tongues that don't make a *bit* of sense. I guess my life ain't goin' to be sublime then, 'cause I couldn't remember much less p'nonce all that stuff."

She walked off, a stolid black and white floral pattern, shaking her head, while the Hare Krishnas, still smiling beatifically and pounding the daylights out of their instruments, twirled happily in their gossamer silks.

We were supposed to travel to Tennessee this morning, but yesterday, after breakfast, a headache began in the usual place near my right eye. It became sharp and lasted all day and went away only overnight. So I have agreed to rest a day before attempting the next journey.

Pain isn't welcome. It stops me in my main activities of reading, writing, speaking, and meeting. It's never fun. But it has its meaning. Yesterday, different devotees in our party were busily engaged while I sat on the bed or lay down. Some of the men drove off to Philadelphia to pick up more books and magazines, some went downtown, some went to a meeting in

the temple, some were speaking on the phone, reading books, etc. I was mostly left alone *to do what I had to do*. It was definitely my assigned service for the day and therefore not something to be begrudged.

DISCIPLES AND PREACHERS

Some of the devotees on our traveling party find that they don't fit in. The younger ones seem more adaptable. They are very happy to be able to hear classes given by their spiritual master morning and evening, to offer obeisances to him whenever they see him, and to do any kind of menial task, such as washing pots or going out on *saṅkīrtana*. But some of those who have been serving longer express the desire to become preachers, not merely the menial servants of a preacher.

I have assured the growing-up sons that it is not wrong that they too want to be preachers. One of them would like to pioneer a new center out west. One would like more opportunities to speak directly to people about the philosophy. One wants to do it through the mail. All these desires are valid, because preaching is the duty of every devotee.

Rūpa Gosvāmī has stated, however, that we should never think of ourselves as great preachers. We should serve as instruments to the previous *ācāryas*. It is the spiritual master's duty, therefore, to help his disciples grow as devotees and preachers. He should not accept their menial service without giving them full protection. I hope that our little traveling party can create more opportunities for its members to fulfill themselves. But some of the growing-up sons will have to leave this party, either to start up a new program or to join with another.

Our party is also tightening up by purifying the

saṅkīrtana methods—towards more direct forms of book distribution. And I am insisting on stricter *sādhana*, more frugal use of money, and stricter rules of eating. This tightening up has produced another type of “boiling of the milk,” aside from the inconvenience of menial tasks.

MURĀRI-SEVAKA VILLAGE FARM

I always feel jitters just before visiting a temple. I think, “Will we be able to make a contribution to their Kṛṣṇa consciousness? And if not, then why are we visiting them?” Veda-guhya asked us to stop at Murāri-sevaka, the ISKCON farm near Lynchburg, Tennessee. He told us that there are only about six devotees living there, but that they are self-sufficient. The men all work at jobs, some in nearby Lynchburg, and they support their families as well as the overhead of the farm. Although it is small, it is secure, like the temple in Hillsboro. In these days of high anxiety over property maintenance, financial security is no small achievement.

I hope they won’t see us as intruders, and I hope we will be able to pick up the mood of what they are doing.

We were given directions to drive to Tullahoma and then phone ahead. We stopped just near Bull Durms’ Store, which had a sign out front, “Bait Beer Minnows and Worms.” There was a moldy odor in the air. Baladeva said it came from old, mown grass, but Varuṇa speculated that the odor was from Jack Daniel’s distillery. In my pre-temple jitters I was thinking, “What will I do? What will I say? Will they think, ‘Why are they coming here? We don’t need them to tell us about Kṛṣṇa’?” Thinking in this way I began to realize more that we have actually come to get the association of the

devotees at the farm and to learn from them how to serve in a steady way.

Suddenly, a woman wearing a bonnet and *sārī* pulled up in a car and told us to follow her. As we trailed her car down a country road surrounded by greenery, I said, "Like *Gītā-nāgarī*." I thought how nice it must be to feel at home in a particular piece of country land. I have heard that the devotees here have good relations with their neighbors, because everyone can see they are serious about developing their community. By contrast, we are homeless in our *Kāmadhuk*. But that's the role of a *sannyāsī*. And he should be humble, not arrogant toward householders. We should be like Lord Caitanya's devotee, Kalidāsa, who sought out all the Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal and begged to take the dust from their feet and the remnants from their plates.

As we approached the farm, the sign read:

HARE KRSNA
ISKCON
FARM VILLAGE
Visitors Welcome

Inside the gate, we passed three frisky horses and a few cows grazing in a quiet valley surrounded by wooded hills. Our first meetings with devotees were a bit awkward. Baladeva asked a man, "What is your name?" and he replied, "Jayadhvaja." We stood around a few minutes talking about electricity and water, and then Jayadhvaja left to do some mowing on the hill. I told Baladeva that it wasn't proper to ask a devotee his name like that. One should first give his own name and then ask the other devotee for his name. And yet I hadn't done that myself.

As soon as the temple president, Paramparā dāsa, appeared, everything seemed right. He said that he gotten back

at 1:00 A.M. from his sales travels. Then he began telling us the history of Murāri-sevaka. It once had a larger population, but now all those devotees have drifted away. Those who are here now are confident. “We’re lean and mean,” he said. Last September, Jayapatāka Swami buried a Śeṣanāga in the ground of Murāri-sevaka to dedicate the project anew and to ask Kṛṣṇa’s blessings that they can live and build here. Paramparā said he would try to gather some friends for a *Bhagavad-gītā* class in the evening, and tomorrow some people may come for a Sunday feast. He invited us to attend *guru-pūjā* for Śrīla Prabhupāda and to give a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

In the short *Bhāgavatam* talk I mentioned that humility does not mean to claim that one is completely disqualified from love of Kṛṣṇa. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in his 1935 Vyāsa-pūjā homage, that he was a tiny servant in love of God, but he strongly asserted that love of God is the true path of knowledge. When I asked for questions, a lady devotee commented that she was glad I said humility doesn’t mean mere self-deprecation. She told how she met Śrīla Prabhupāda after hearing from other *gurus* and how Prabhupāda was different. He convinced her by his humility when he said, “*I am a servant of God*.” But he did not unnecessarily deprecate himself. He glorified Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Her comments were nice and I elaborated on them. But later I thought, “Am I a mundane self-depreciator?” It becomes a paradox: If you withhold from criticizing yourself or if you criticize yourself too much, *either way* you may be guilty of pride. Surely it’s safe to say, “I am fallen and Kṛṣṇa is the greatest. Prabhupāda is saving me by dragging me back to Godhead.”

Paramparā dāsa is optimistic. He views the changes that have occurred over twelve years at Murāri-sevaka—and even

changes in the larger ISKCON—in a jolly, philosophical way. He doesn't angrily blame others for wrongs, although he may laughingly point out people's blunders. (He says previous devotees at Murāri-sevaka cleared and plowed hills "like Mahārāja Pṛthu leveling the earth," but now the same hills have grown up again into woods. He also mentioned the good things done, like the planting of orchards and digging of wells.) He is confident that despite the money that was spent foolishly and despite the rise and fall of the Murāri-sevaka population—at least now, and in the future, they are doing it right. Does he sense the possibility that they may still be imperfect? Yes, and he laughs. But it doesn't seem like it is wrong now. Everyone who comes to live at Murāri-sevaka has to find a way to earn his own money. And they are not burning out the area by any controversial tactics. "We are not offending anyone," he says.

He spoke of the high profile ISKCON has had for many years. He doesn't say it was wrong to have gone to the airports to sell books, but he speaks of how we are now being attacked as a result of making ourselves so prominent. Now big projects are in jeopardy from legal suits or government action. He spoke of the low profile of Murāri-sevaka as an advantage. "When the hurricane is over," he said, "we can build up." In a matter-of-fact way he also acknowledged persecution against the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Looking up and down the valley and at the hills, Paramparā went on describing Murāri-sevaka. He pointed out the different animals (he jokingly called them "ani-mules") who live here, giving enthusiastic praise to Nanda and Dharma, two holstein oxen who he said are the best workers in the world. They are twenty years old and their bodies are worn out, and now mostly they graze in the pastures. There are also cows, as well as three good-looking Morgan horses and special imported geese who are supposed to eat weeds only, but who also eat spinach crops. Two German shepherd

“hounds” run freely, and there are the cats, who just gave four new litters. There are also twenty beehives, peacocks, etc. The agriculture is just hay, worked with one tractor—enough to produce food for the cows, so devotees don’t have to buy it. Paramparā said he would like to associate more with devotees like Paramānanda and develop a master plan for the eventual growth of Murāri-sevaka. He invited us to keep paying them visits whenever we can.

GOD IN NATURE

I have been feeling sorry that I am not able to see Kṛṣṇa in nature, as much as I used to when I was convalescing at Gītā-nāgarī. Today I had an inkling why this is so. In the *Bhāgavatam* class, we read how Nārada meditated and then Kṛṣṇa appeared in His heart. But then Kṛṣṇa went away from his vision and Nārada grieved. In his purport, Prabhupāda writes that we are always looking for a form to satisfy us, but no forms of this world can permanently please us, nor can they remove our perturbation of mind. Only the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can satisfy us, and so we are hankering for His *darśana* life after life. After reading and discussing this, we went out for a *japa* walk on the wooded path of Murāri-sevaka. The sun was just coming over the hill and the trees and meadows were inviting to the soul of a naturalist. I noted that the shape of a little clover leaf is not the shape of Kṛṣṇa, and therefore I cannot expect the plants to fully satisfy my Kṛṣṇa conscious desires. Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that when a pure devotee sees a tree, he sees Kṛṣṇa. Even a beginning devotee can understand that the tree is Kṛṣṇa’s energy. But *how much* we see Kṛṣṇa in nature depends upon how much we love Kṛṣṇa. When I see the clover leaf or the trees or the sky, I *know* it is Kṛṣṇa (His energy), and yet I don’t see Govinda, the form

we are all hankering for.

Before I see Govinda in nature I must try to understand better the simultaneous, inconceivable, oneness and difference of Kṛṣṇa and His nature. But I cannot *force* any of this.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, as You desire. If I act nicely with my Godbrothers and serve Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am sure that I will be able to see, hear, and be more in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For now I must be patient and not expect to see Govinda behind every leaf and flower. But neither can I be silent, even now. I have *some* Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the woods of Murāri-sevaka are conducive to a peaceful Kṛṣṇa yearning.

At the picnic table,
Murāri family
kitten scuffing underneath.

On the Way Back from the Swimming Hole, Tennessee

With each turn in the road,
Blond Todd told me more:
"I used to follow Ramakrishna
before that, I was a Buddhist."
I told him the error
of *yatha mat tatha patha*.
"If we take the road to Atlanta
we cannot reach the Tennessee farm."

With each turn in the road,
more stuff comes out—
"What about Śiva?
They say he is God.

Why is the original form any better than the rest?"

I repeat what *śāstra* says,
why we cannot speculate.

We should accept Lord Kṛṣṇa
as the Original form of God
even if we cannot understand

"when" He expands into other Viṣṇu forms.

Todd is submissive,
adding Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa
to what he's already heard,
and his beadbag hangs
by the visor in the car.

But it will take many turns in the road,
many swims in the lake,
more *prasādam*, Prabhupāda's books . . .

"When you got your beads
from Prabhupāda," says Todd,
"I was only one year old, in New Jersey."
Now we have reached the farm,
just in time for Sunday *kīrtana*.

Chapter Four

ST. LOUIS

June 1, Camp notes, near Nashville

We have a spot by a lake. The camping spaces are decently separated. In one afternoon I have seen a red-winged blackbird, cardinals, robins, grackles, and others whose names I don't know. They are singing away and flitting from tree to tree. Sometimes the robin comes so close I can hear his body hopping through the grass. Large, black-necked ducks also come very close, begging for handouts.

The camp is run by the Army Corp of Engineers. Bill, the man who sits in the entry shack from 6:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. looks about sixty years old. He lives with his wife in a trailer, although he says his home is in western Tennessee. From his flattop haircut it appears that he is a retired corps man. Nārada and I brought him some sweet rolls this morning, and he said, "Them look real good. My daddy said don't eat too much but never turn down a free meal. So I don't mind if I do!" We also gave him a *Back to Godhead* magazine, and later I saw him sitting in the shack reading it intently.

Bill's partner, Larry, seems about the same age. He also mans the entry shack and sometimes drives around on a motor scooter. Varuṇa went to make a phone call, just outside the entry booth, and engaged in some casual talk with Larry. He turned out to be quite skeptical toward Christianity and outspoken about it—unusual for this part of the country. He said, "I see more religion in that old walnut tree than in any of the churches around here." He expressed his doubt about the Bible: "There are so many things I just don't know what to make of. God made Adam and Eve with His ribs. They had two sons, Cain and Able. So Cain killed Able. Then Cain took off to another valley and got himself a wife. *Now where did this wife come from?* It don't add up. It just makes no sense.

I can't figure it out." Larry said he wanted to buy a "cookery" book from us so that he could learn to cook vegetarian meals.

Today after reading the bare minimum in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, I prompted myself to go on and read more. As soon as I did, I felt increased reciprocation with Śrīla Prabhupāda and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I came upon a purport that encouraged me further about the efficacy of transcendental sound vibration:

Similarly, the sound representation of the Lord, in terms of His characteristics, is a complete form of the Lord, as was seen by Vasudeva and Mahārāja Daśaratha, the fathers of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma. The sound representation of the Lord is non-different from the Lord Himself because the Lord and His representation in sound are absolute knowledge. Lord Caitanya has instructed us that in the holy name of the Lord, as sound representation of the Lord, all the potencies of the Lord are invested. Thus one can immediately enjoy the association of the Lord by the pure vibration of the sound representation of His holy name, and the concept of the Lord is immediately manifested before the pure devotee.

—*Bhāg.* 2.5.25, purport

The lesson here is that a little exertion beyond minimum duty will bring definite reciprocation from Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus He states, "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly." Before this breakthrough I had been thinking, "These rest stops between temples are not vital." But when there is an opportunity to take up the first duty of a devotee, chanting and hearing the names and pastimes of the Lord, how foolish to think, "There is not much to do."

Answering letters while riding on Interstate Highway 24 West, I wanted to speak with all my disciples in one letter. But each person has a unique situation that has to be individually addressed. One is ill and wants people to be sympathetic with her and not make unreasonable demands. One asked me if she

is supposed to do whatever her husband wants even if he breaks the regulative principles. One wants to know, should he be an artist or a book distributor? One wants to know, what is that lonely feeling he sometimes gets when everything seems empty and he thinks the devotees are neglecting him?

It is not possible to answer all devotees' questions with one letter addressed to "My dear disciples." And yet I find myself making similar responses to each person. Their inquiries are also on a similar theme: "Dear spiritual master, I am struggling. Please help." "As far as possible," I reply, "follow the straight path. Don't give up. Chant and hear. Kṛṣṇa will help you."

We have decided to travel north and westward and to save the south for wintertime.

At the truckstop men's room
in Kentucky,
forced to preach.

Cooler weather:
Jagannātha smiles
in southern Illinois.

We have stopped at a campground one hour before St. Louis. Baladeva borrowed some milk from the manager, elderly Mrs. Katie Webster, and promised to bring her some "yogī food." I also gave her a one-volume *Prabhupāda*. Next day she greeted us enthusiastically, "That food was fantastic!" she said. "We scarfed up every little bit of it! My husband took up his last bit of bread and wiped the jam up clean. I especially like the okra. We're Okies, you know. Every flavor was completely different than anything I ever had." She paused, then went on: "My education jes' don't allow me to pronounce all of those words in the book right, but I like reading about

him. The ranger also looked at the book. Well, your leader really had to go through a lot to get things where it is today.”

Baladeva asked her what she thought of us following Prabhupāda.

“I don’t mind how you people worship God,” Mrs. Webster said. “When we was brought up my mother was a Lutheran but that didn’t mean we had to be. Some of us became Methodists. One even goes to the Church of Christ! You just can’t make someone believe in a certain way. It’s up to them. It’s your behavior that counts.”

We are still organizing our traveling party. I asked each devotee to let me know his present duties and how he hopes to improve them. They are all very sincere. Although they like to joke among themselves, they don’t take their service to Kṛṣṇa as a joke.

Haryāśva is our temple president. He makes sure that all the men including himself are nicely engaged on *harināma saṅkīrtana* and distribution of books. When our morale becomes low or confused, we always count on Haryāśva’s strong optimism. He hopes that our party will develop in the future so that there will be more speaking engagements in colleges and homes and that our expenses will be paid entirely by donations from books and lectures.

Baladeva is the secretary, painting salesman, car mechanic, preacher, sometimes-cook and pot washer, and whatever else is needed. He thinks he is overendeavoring, but he has to keep it up because we are short of money and men. He says, “I think we can do it, and pay our debts, by January 1st. I hope I am not in complete *māyā* or that the razor’s edge of devotional service is not on my throat.”

Madhu-maṅgala is our Irish lad. He is my personal assistant, full-time *pūjārī* of the Deities, man responsible for operation of the Kāmadhuk, treasurer, and head of the *harināma* party. He wants to improve his *japa* and Vaiṣṇava

qualities. He is gradually adapting to American ways, but he was surprised and frightened by the narrowness of the Southern Baptists. One lady at a gas station in Mulberry, Tennessee, became fascinated to hear that Madhu was from Ireland. "What are y'all about anyway?" she asked. The conversation became quite friendly until he tried to give an all-inclusive definition of God. She snapped back, "We are Southern Baptists. We believe in the Bible." After that, she was no longer friendly.

Varuṇa's service is to do all the typing and to sell paintings with Baladeva in the evening. He also wants to spend more time speaking with devotees and guests. He wants to work to his full capacity, and yet he is aware of the danger of trying to do more than he can handle. Together we discussed what Śrīla Prabhupāda meant in his purport, "A devotee's only business is to chant and remember the holy name, fame, and pastimes of the Lord and, *according to personal capacity*, to distribute the message for others' welfare without motive for material gain."

Nārada Ṛṣi, from Orissa, is cooking and doing *hari-nāma*, and he hopes to visit Indians, as we travel. He likes to cook but says, "washing all the pots is a heavy service for me."

Śarad-vihārī is the main cook. He likes to preach about *prasādam* and distribute it. But he wants some relief in the kitchen so that he can also go out on *hari-nāma* and book distribution.

Goloka Vṇḍāvana and Caitanya-Nitāi are full-time *saṅkīrtana* men. They hope they can eventually phase out the bumper stickers and learn to do straight book distribution. But in any case, they are surrendered *brahmacārīs*, and so is Bhakta Eric.

Thinking about St. Louis as we travel there:

I used to visit St. Louis ISKCON in the early years. Vāmana dāsa was temple president and for a while he dis-

tributed many BTG's financed by his construction jobs. His wife used to take care of *tulasīs* in an attic. Maybe that was the first time that Tulasī-devī flourished through snowy winters. It was a neighborhood temple. Later, Mukunlal was president and, on Prabhupāda's behalf, I installed the Gaura-Nitāi Deities. Now Sura dāsa is there. He and his men have made St. Louis famous for book distribution, and they continue to distribute books at the airports and other places. Haryāsva said that as a new devotee he was sent to St. Louis to learn the art of book distribution. "I remember the temple being full of life," he said, "ecstatic *kīrtanas* before Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda. There was always Prabhupāda-*kathā*." Veda-guhya told us that the population is down now in St. Louis ISKCON, but they are still preaching, selling books, running a restaurant, and Sura is personally cultivating a large number of people through phone and mail. He has a reputation as a heavy guy, and I have my own reputation, some of it dubious. Let us go and see—try to contribute and see the good.

As we drove from Illinois into St. Louis, we noticed that the land is much flatter than in the South. We approached the city just as the sun came up. A fog hung over the downtown, half-covering the decorative arch. My pre-temple jitters arose: "It's Sunday and I will be expected to give the Sunday lecture. But I can't do that much in just a few lectures." Then I thought, it's not *me* who will do something significant. When something good happens on one of these visits, it's the dynamics of Vaiṣṇava relationships. If the devotees of the temple are receptive to a visiting *sannyāsī*, and if we don't ruin things by taking advantage of their hospitality . . .

Approaching the temple makes you aware that you are a touring beggar, whereas the devotees in this place are undergoing the austerities of maintenance.



Their Lordships Nitai-Gaura Natharaj, St. Louis ISKCON.

Yesterday when Baladeva asked on the phone if it was quiet at the temple, Sura replied that the sound of sirens has become like music to him. Sure enough, as we arrived in the parking lot behind the temple building, I could hear the sound of the nearby fire engines and sirens. Sura greeted us in the parking lot. He was bigger than I expected, but his manner was more gentle than his reputation. He was accompanied by a high school boy and girl who are visiting for the weekend. He said that they had come from Kansas City to see the temple and that they wanted to hear me speak.

We arrived in time for breakfast, but I first went to see the Deities. The front entrance of the temple building has some shocking “changing bodies” and “changing species” sculpture. One shows a glutton on the left and on the right a pig—and in the middle a transforming mixture, a man with the ears and nose of a hog. There is also a painting of a man and woman at the beginning of a sexual encounter. The symbols show that his eyes and tongue, etc., are all becoming captured—and a green face of lust glows in his abdomen. Quite a heavy greeting at the front door. But then, it is a heavy *māyā* that we are combatting in St. Louis. The sculpture of the cow with a man’s body butchering the man with a cow’s head is appropriate here because the city is a big center for cow slaughter. Another diorama shows a tall mountain with all the lower species at the bottom. Up toward the top there are two human beings. One is climbing up toward Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is at the top of the mountain. Although the man is trying to free himself, some roots are gripping him at the legs. The other human being is falling back down into the lower species.

The temple room is very neat with a patterned parquet floor, chandeliers, and wood trim. Behind the wrought-iron gates stand Gaura-Nitāi and Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. Also on the altar is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Fourth Canto, part four, which they are currently studying in the morning class. The book is on a teakwood throne of its own, between small statues of Śrīla

Prabhupāda and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Before breakfast I also visited the second floor “Śrīla Prabhupāda museum,” where they have a room reserved for some artifacts of Śrīla Prabhupāda—a bead bag he used and a few pictures. Featured in a glass case is a copy of a note that Prabhupāda wrote to the devotees in Los Angeles encouraging them in their book distribution. At the bottom of the note, Sura has highlighted Prabhupāda’s statement:

N.B. Everyone should go with the sankirtana party as soon as possible.

When Baladeva arranged a meeting for me with Sura Prabhu, Sura asked, “What are we going to talk about?”

“Seeing the good in St. Louis,” said Baladeva.

“You’ll need an electron microscope!” said Sura.

Sura and I discussed a lot of ISKCON sociology, such as the fact that many senior devotees are moving out of the temples and getting into full-time business. Although we are aware of the righteousness of a householder living on his own, yet we lamented the shortage to a temple when too many senior men leave.

Sura is managing St. Louis temple by income from book distribution, and now he also has had to start a little business. But he wants to preach. He showed me his list of persons in five nearby states to whom he phones and writes. He has been cultivating people in this way for over six years and several people, including a college professor, have become initiated devotees. Every day Sura speaks by phone to a few people on his list, and sometimes he writes to them and sends them books. All kinds of apparently unlikely people are showing interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He told me about a seventy-year old Kansas farmer who is an alcoholic, but who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* sixteen rounds daily. The man got a book from his son who got it while he was in the army.

We also talked about the fact that ISKCON is not making many new devotees. Is it because the times have changed since the sixties and seventies, and people are not so much interested in renunciation? Or is it because we preachers have lost our enthusiasm, and thus we are not attracting newcomers? Sura said he thought the fault was less with the times than with ourselves. But we agreed that we should also be willing to try new strategies to make devotees. I encouraged Sura to continue and not be discouraged if his temple is not expanding at present. I told him about Paramparā Prabhu's mood of hanging on through these stormy times. Sura said that he is not about to go anywhere, and he hopes things will improve. He also encouraged me to continue traveling to the temples with a party of *brahmacārīs*; he said it is enthusing to the temple devotees.

As I looked out at the audience for the Sunday feast lecture I began thinking of all the unfortunate reasons why so few people came to hear us even once a week. I became depressed to think of it, and so I thought instead of the importance of the message I had to deliver. (Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī used to say don't feel sorry if no one comes to your lecture. At least the four walls can hear.) I also reasoned that there might be someone in the audience who was very receptive, such as the highschool girl with the punk-rock hair cut or maybe that man in the back with the mustache or even one of these veteran devotees who just come on a weekly basis. And all the men of our traveling party were also present. Aside from that, I had a chance to glorify Kṛṣṇa. All afternoon, I had been shaky with a growing headache. I thought that if Kṛṣṇa would allow me to speak this evening it would be very nice, and somehow the headache cleared up just as it was time to lecture. Therefore, without regret for the small audience I launched into the Tenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

St. Louis Harināma

In the purport for today's class, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Unless one is an advanced devotee he cannot fix his eyes on the Deity in the temple." Similarly, unless one is an advanced devotee, he cannot fix his hearing and thinking on the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Only if we relish the names of Kṛṣṇa and feel compassion for delivering them to others, can we sustain interest while chanting.

We went for *harināma* to a park in downtown St. Louis. It was near a fountain where there is a statue of a naked man running, reminiscent of the "universal man" who runs through the darkness of outer space. We chose a patch of grass off to one side, under a shade tree, where everyone in the small park could hear and see us. I sang for a while, then Madhu-maṅgala led the singing, accompanying himself with the harmonium. As soon as he began, it was like being in Ireland with Pṛthu Prabhu and all the devotees, with their lilting melodies.

We drew responses of mild amusement and mild annoyance from the lunch-hour crowd. On the whole, I got the impression that we were seen as trifling. One man, however, who appeared to be in his fifties, was amazed to behold us. It was as if we were an incredulous sight—he could hardly believe it—five persons wearing saffron robes, sitting on the ground, and singing with cymbals and a drum! With amused looks he turned around to the other people in the park, but they ignored him. They already knew what we were—the Hare Kṛṣṇas. The amazed man eventually accepted our existence and ambled out of the park.

A group of down-and-out black folks, talking close together under another shade tree, showed no interest in us. After all, everyone has his own thing. Most people in the park were dressed for business, talking with friends and co-workers. But "Hare Kṛṣṇa" was probably mentioned in quite a few conversations, especially when Bhakta Eric went out to give them invitation cards and *Back to Godhead* magazines.



A family at the St. Louis Zoo happily receives Śrīla Prabhupāda's books from Bhakta Eric

I hope I will become more attracted to the public kīrtana and continue it. In public chanting you have to contend directly with māyā in many forms, but it has the added benefit of delivering the holy names to others, and that makes it more exciting. By chanting in public we fulfill the purport of many Vaiṣṇava verses.

Aboard the Kāmadhuk, I spoke with Dāmodara Paṇḍita Prabhu. He recalled how in 1972 he was hitch-hiking in Oklahoma, on his way to join a Zen monastery in California. He was picked up by a *saṅkīrtana* bus I had sent out from ISKCON Dallas. Now after many years in India, including service as temple president in Vṛndāvana, Dāmodara Paṇḍita

has come back to the United States to become a businessman. He has been working for a month in St. Louis at his father's insurance business. He feels confident that he will be successful and that he will also remain protected in his identity as a devotee. He and Atreya Ṛṣi are planning to develop a business that can employ other householder devotees. He is also concerned about his children's education, especially since the *gurukula* system is shaky. I remarked that just as he was a pioneer of ISKCON when he first joined, now he is again one of the pioneers in trying to establish himself as a businessman.

As I travel, I will no doubt meet with more devotees who are joining the business world. If they can help one another, by providing association and jobs for *gr̥hasthas* it will be a significant step forward for the integration of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America. And we *sannyāsīs* and *brahma-cārīs* have to uphold our own responsibilities by living simply and concentrating on chanting, hearing, and preaching.

Sura Prabhu mentioned earlier today that all devotees will have to either declare themselves as taxpayers or sign a vow of poverty. When Haryāśva heard this, he exclaimed, "A vow of poverty! I think it's great!"

June 11, 1987

St. Louis

Dear Varuna,

Please accept my blessings. All glories to Prabhupāda. I have your letter of June 11th. You have raised a question about your own place in devotional service, but you have also raised larger issues regarding the nature of the Kṛṣṇa conscious society. I will try to answer as much as I am able, according to *guru*, *sādhū*, and *śāstra*, although I must confess that I don't have the last word on these things.

In the class last night, I mentioned the trend of householder devotees to move into business. My point was that just

as some *grhashtas* are turning to business and are feeling strong in their convictions about it, so we who are living as *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* should also be staunch in our own duties. As some *grhashtas* get into business and take up those responsibilities, so those who are in the renounced order should try to get away from business, to live simply and preach in a pure way.

But your doubt is whether it is really necessary for *grhashtas* to move toward business. You write, "It's one thing doing business, but along with it come added dangers. Eating all kinds of foodstuffs, becoming lax in *sādhana*, hardly reading, staying away from the temple and association with devotees. It doesn't have to be like that, but these seem to be the facts generally." You feel that maybe some *grhashtas* have to adopt that path, but it should not be required that all *grhashtas* go that way.

I admit that I also have been somewhat startled by the tendency you mentioned. At the same time, I am trying not to be left behind as the times change.

When I joined ISKCON we were invited by Prabhupāda to give up our worldly occupation and take shelter in the temple. As full-time devotees we lived together and learned to depend on donations that we received while on *harināma*, from book distribution and magazine sales, and we had a devotee incense business. For a devotee to leave these engagements in order to become an independent businessman was an exception. Most of us preferred the mainstream, and Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged us. When a newcomer asked how he could become free of *karma*, Prabhupāda replied, "Come and live with us." He offered temple life in ISKCON as a solution to almost any problem.

On a morning walk in Hawaii, Rameswara Swami asked Prabhupāda about the comparative benefits of practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness within a temple community or while living outside. Prabhupāda said the opportunity was better

within a temple, and he gave the example of a businessman who gets more opportunities if he regularly associates in the stock exchange. Similarly, the devotee who lives in intense association with other practicing devotees has a greater opportunity for chanting and hearing than one who is distant from association.

But times have changed, and like everyone else, I am trying to adjust and understand the proper direction. There are also examples in which Prabhupāda approved of a householder's financial independence as long as he was spiritually dependent on associating with devotees and in donating his earnings to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For better or worse, the tendency of *grhasthas* taking to business is inevitable. Many householders are voluntarily making this move, but in some cases the temple managers are asking householders to live outside, since they can no longer support them. I am not always exactly sure what it all means. Is it *varṇāśrama*? Is it frustration and resentment due to the mistakes of a top-heavy ISKCON management? Is this a reaction by devotees after being too strongly controlled by zonal *ācāryas* and temple presidents? Or is it the cutting edge of an infiltrative preaching strategy? Is it the waning of simple faith? Maybe it is all of these things.

As I travel and meet householders who are making this move, I encourage them. But I also see the shortage of manpower in the temples. One devotee who had been a *sannyāsī* and who is now a businessman was asked by a temple president, "If everyone becomes a businessman how will the temple be run?" The devotee replied, "Kṛṣṇa will take care of that." I hope he is right. But we cannot ask Kṛṣṇa to perform the *āratis* and cook and clean and give the classes. And neither can we demand from our Godbrothers who have gone into business that they give 50 per cent of their earnings (or 10 per cent, or 5 per cent) to help support the temples.

When I think in an optimistic way, I see these changes as the broadening of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so as to accommodate all members of society. Now at least we can foresee the day when Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees will be among the most respectable citizenry, just as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and other "new" religions have attained. And what to speak of the established religions like Christianity.

But we hope that the old-time spirit of living in the temple and interfacing with society as a shaven-headed, *dhoti*-clad devotee doesn't disappear. Therefore, while I sincerely and dutifully encourage devotees who are leaving the temple for the business world, should I not encourage you who wish to remain? You raise the question, "How do *grhasthas* maintain themselves?" and you give the answer, "by preaching, husband and wife both preaching, visiting people, cultivating them, getting donations, etc. It can be done." So rest assured that this simple way of living that you advocate has not gone out of style.

There is even a letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda in which he encourages *grhasthas* to stay in the temple community as full-time preachers:

Living outside and working are not prohibited, and it is not recommended that such strict rule as no outside living should be enforced, but living in the association of devotees is better. From our side there is never any objection if it is inconvenient for temple living, but if you are in charge of organizing your new center, I think you should live in the company of the other devotees there, to train them and work with them for distributing our books and magazines and pushing on with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement full time. But if there is some difficulty to do this or some problem with getting money, then you should consult further with your GBC man and make adjustment. Preaching is our first-class engagement including *sankīrtana* party, selling books, speaking, like that. But if for some reason a devotee is unable to do these things, then I say that they are allowed to live outside and work as a concession. Our service for Kṛṣṇa is voluntary and can never be forced. And whatever position in life one holds he can serve Kṛṣṇa in that way. But

yourselves being such qualified and experienced preachers, what is the benefit of engaging in the second class activity when there is so much preaching work to be done? Practically speaking, our Kṛṣṇa philosophy will save the whole world from the most dangerous condition, that is a fact. So now you just become convinced yourselves of this fact and help me spread this movement saving the world with all conviction and attention, and in this way you will be performing the highest type of activity and very soon you will go back home back to Godhead, know for certain.

(Letter to Vāmanadeva, December 1971)

You have raised a serious doubt by your conjecture that “only a very advanced devotee can be on that path without getting contaminated.” By this you mean that the businessman runs a great risk when he enters into the material world to earn his living. One answer to the problem is that all classes of devotees, whether living in the temple or outside, should come together in the sense of a larger congregation. Devotees who are making their way by full-time preaching should offer association to the “outside” householders as much as possible, by going to their homes if invited and keeping them in touch with the preaching activities of ISKCON. And the householders who are infiltrating the larger society as businessmen, should not forget their obligations to the temple. Furthermore, if the devotee-businessmen can form their own businesses, that will give them a shelter so that they can work together without having to regularly be tempted by illicit sex, alcohol, listening to abominable music, etc.

Although times are changing, Prabhupāda's instructions are unchanging, at their most basic level. He wanted his followers to cooperate and live together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Hope this meets you in good health.

Yours in the service of Prabhupāda,
SDG

Travel Day

In early morning
I write what I can,
then lock the desk drawers,
and put on my shoes.

At 4:00 A.M. Maṇḍhu comes onboard,
bathes the Deities,
and stows Them away,
along with hundreds of items,
so they won't fall out
on the bumpy road.

Hook up the trailer,
start the engines—
it's so early
only the birds are watching,
while the *karmī* campers sleep.
(The ducks in this place
were comical beggars,
several times a day they waddled
from the pond to our trucks
wagging tails, opening beaks
until we gave them bread.

And a cat and her kitten
meowed for yellow rice.)

As the sun comes up,
a tape of Prabhupāda
steers the mind
away from rumors
and hopeless disagreements.
(You could sap away a lifetime
listening to the latest threats.)

Sampling America,
you get a better picture
that all people are not bad.
You can sift through their numbers,
until you find someone innocent
who asks, "What are you?"
and gladly takes books and *prasādam*.
You feel much better
than when you worried at home.

By evening
we'll be together
300 miles north
to speak what we realize—
of Lord Caitanya in five features,
and Prabhupāda's letters—
on the way to Detroit.

Camp outside Detroit

If we travel more than five hours in a day I am liable to get a headache. That's the main reason we stop in-between temples. It's also good for studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and for writing.

Each day I read two sections of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and two of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and a session with Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters. Am I wiser? Don't answer, keep reading—gradually absorb transcendental knowledge. Keep reading so that you can develop the capacity to go on reading. . . .

On the right, there are women in bathing suits, on the left people are playing rock music, and all around us are gnats. But if I stay indoors with the fan on and the curtains drawn, there is no problem. I talked with Madhu about accepting discomforts. Some of the men in our party keenly feel every inconvenience, others don't bother themselves about it, but do their work. If we try to move to another place, there is no guarantee that it won't have its own set of inconveniences. Travel means inconvenience; I knew it from the start. A purport I read today confirms this:

A traveler leaves home to search for wealth in far distant places, sometimes in the forest and sometimes on the ocean and sometimes on hilltops. Certainly there are many troubles for the traveler when he is in such unknown places. But all such troubles are at once mitigated as soon as his sense of his family affection is remembered, and as soon as he returns home he forgets all such troubles on the way.

A pure devotee of the Lord is exactly in a family tie with the Lord, and therefore he is undeterred in discharging his duty in a full affectionate tie with the Lord.

—*Bhāg.* 2.8.6

POEMS FROM THE ROAD

Listening in America

Load on the wrongs,
the injustice
of ISKCON misleaders,
pile it on one side of the scale—
count the money lost
by mismanagement,
count the devotees burnt out,
in anger name the names,
cite the big mistakes.
And who has caused the low esteem
our movement has in the public eyes?

Load on the wrongs,
and what can you say
to balance it
on a scale of justice?
Say, "I distributed
x number of books.
I'm in charge!"
No, that doesn't work
anymore.

It's a long story,
what went wrong;
but more reforms
have to come
from new leaders—
more decentralization,
better treatment of devotees.
I sit and hear

the wrongs
 like a guilty bystander.
 I say, "I know it,"
 and when the talk is over,
 we go out and chant
 in downtown Atlanta
 just like in the seventies.
 And I am looking for Godbrothers
 who will read with me
 what Prabhupāda has taught.

But they are right,
 so much has gone wrong,
 and much has to change . . .
 Reform will come
 from the people
 who are serving still
 'tho some hearts are a little hard now.
 And who is to blame for that?

Bowing Down

I bow down
 to my disciple
 as he recites his *mantra*
 unto me.
 In return I recite,
 "A Vaiṣṇava is
 an ocean of mercy,"
 by which I mean,
 "You are so surrendered
 to Kṛṣṇa and *paramparā*
 that you accept me

as your *guru*.
I offer *my* obeisances
to you."

If

If my disciple
surpasses me
I will gladly watch
his plane to *Vaikuṇṭha*
soar over my head.
And if the *Viṣṇudūtas* ask him
who gave him his beads
maybe I also
will be carried into the presence
of my disciple's *param-guru*,
who will keep me at his lotus feet.

A Dream of My Material Father

He came to me
muscular and powerful
with his fist
ready to beat me
for what I have done.
But when I said
"You are not this body!"
he stopped and listened.

I tried to say further
"You are eternal spirit soul,"
but I had exhaled

my last puff of breath—
I couldn't speak more.

Father, forgive me:
I know you are angry
and I am sorry
that I was not strong enough
to breathe into you the life
of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

To a Friend

Last night I dreamt
you wanted to live near me
and I was moving back
to the home of my youth.
As I woke,
the predawn bull frog
reminded me of a time
when I was living at leisure
in my cabin.
But if these thoughts lack
intense desire
to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa,
aren't they just
śrama eva hi kevalam?

Prayer for Improved Reading

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
as I hear about You
in Your *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
sometimes I understand You better,
as when I heard from Lord Brahmā:

“With great zeal,” he said,
“I have caught hold of the lotus feet
of the Supreme Personality of Godhead
and whatever I say
has never proved to be false,
nor are my senses ever degraded
by temporary attachment to matter.”
Lord Brahmā also said
that none of us can ever know
much about Śrī Kṛṣṇa
and whatever little we know
comes only through devotional service.

Supreme Lord, even when I hear
these relishable statements of the
Bhāgavatam.
I am soon beset with distractions:
I read more with duty than with love.
But I am trying to go deeper.
And I know that book-study
must be accompanied by real acts.

I request You please,
draw me into the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*,
so that I become anxious
whenever I am not hearing
from Vyāsadeva and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja,
as explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Please bless me with taste
for the nectar of study
even if others think I am unbalanced.
I know that any one of the nine

forms of devotional service
 can carry me to full surrender.
 And the method of reading books
 was stressed by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

If I can hear about You
 in pure service mood,
 You will reveal Yourself to me
 just as You did to Mahārāja Parīkṣit,
 who invites us by his example
 to meet impending death
 fearlessly hearing about You.

The First Time I Spoke with You
 (to Maṭhureśa dāsa)

You came to the temple
 dropped out from Harvard,
 curious about Kṛṣṇa
 in 1971.
 The first time
 I spoke with you,
 you quoted Bob Dylan,
 "Do your own thing
 and you'll be king."
 Gentle and sincere
 you are still,
 but back then
 you weren't writing
 your lucid, lively
 Kṛṣṇa conscious essays.

Surveillance

Surveillance is up 700%,
But can they really listen?
They can point their machines
at your building
but how is it possible
to *know*
unless the heart is pure?

Let them point it
at our *Bhāgavatam* class
and hear what they can.
But maybe they'll take offense
when Śukadeva calls them
hogs, asses, camels, and dogs.
We'll be misunderstood.

But there is no harm
if they hear Sanskrit sounds
or plans of a devotee.
If we're illegal or immoral
and if government agents
expose hypocrisy,
we should be grateful for that.

We don't want privacy,
approval, or disapproval,
we simply want to please
the Supreme Lord
who is in everyone's heart—
the complete and perfect witness
whose infallible agents are
the sun, air, moon, and demigods.

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

Only He knows
what "they" and "we" are doing,
and what is best for everyone.

Let us proclaim it,
and fill the machines
with good news.

SEEING THE GOOD

Seeing The Good

A grain of devotion is more valuable than tons of faithlessness.

—*Bhāg.* 2.6.34, purport

i

If I had known the *mahā-mantra*
before I met Prabhupāda,
would my life have been different?
No, I had to meet *him*.
What I suffered in past lives,
did it help me to get ready?
No, I had to *meet* him.

Now when you read
the collection of his letters,
your own name appears,
'though right away
he pointed out your weakness.
"Forget this chapter," he wrote,
after you were cheated by Mr. Paine.
"Take it for granted that Kṛṣṇa
has taken this money from you
for your deliberate foolishness."

There is no use looking back
except to remember how degraded I was!
"Where am I in comparison
to the all-auspicious chanting
of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa?"

ii

Starting from Summer 1966,
 my life is worth sharing.
 The gems are direct moments
 with His Divine Grace,
 as was *anything* done
 sincerely in his service.

I relished simple acts
 on Prabhupāda's behalf.
 In my business suit,
 I entered the Immigration Office,
 to see Mr. Hamilton.
 Politely but firmly I inquired,
 "What about the application
 of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami?"
 "I have it here," he said,
 "and we will process it soon."
 That was all I could do.
 So I wrote back to you,
 Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In Harvard yard
 I felt blissful
 going from office to office
 for my spiritual master.
 "Put him on the faculty,
 or at least give me a letter
 asking him to come."
 No luck there,
 but Prabhupāda acknowledged my attempt.

iii

Walking city streets
 to visit welfare clients

for him.
 I say “for him,”
 but he didn’t need me.
 It was for my upliftment,
 my *tapasya*, new life,
 pleasing Kṛṣṇa by pleasing His servant.

As time rips through our deeds
 nothing stands
 except sincere acts
 of devotional service.
If I have done any!

Did you offer him
 a mango
 in the right attitude?
 Oh, he *accepted* it?
 Yes, but did you begrudge him
 that mango
 even as you offered it?
 Did you offer the fruit
 and not your heart?

iv

Prabhupāda guided thousands of souls
 in direct service to Lord Kṛṣṇa
 and his guidance is still present.
 Anyone may serve him
 now and in the future —
 that great teacher whose purports
 are written for the common man.

And who is *uncommon* in Kali-yuga?
 Those with educational degrees
 may be robbed of all knowledge.

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

Those with extra riches
 carry a sinking burden
 if it prevents them
 from simple service.

Those with bodily beauty
 may be so absorbed in their image
 that they miss the beauty
 of Kṛṣṇa's and the soul's
 true forms.

And those well-born
 may cheat themselves
 by scorning devotees
 from lower castes.

Someone fortunate takes to *bhakti*,
 tired of the material show.
 He gets a book,
 hears about Śrī Kṛṣṇa
 and tries to chant His holy name.
 That's Kṛṣṇa's mercy on him,
 and the mercy of those
 who preach on His behalf.

v

Kṛṣṇa allows His devotees
 to explain what they have realized
 from Vedic scriptures,
 instead of speculation.

He empowers them to speak: "Dear friend,
 be a devotee like us.
 Read the books.
 Chant the holy name.

Consider your undue attachments
to scientific knowledge
and sense gratification.
Keep what you need,
but add Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
And you have to die, right?
But the soul is eternal,
Please go back to Godhead.”

vi

When they preach, it works.
Someone watches them chanting
and takes a book.
He keeps it in his house,
maybe it takes him years
to read it.
Once in awhile he meets devotees;
he says what's on his mind.
He learns how to sift the truth
from the media reports
and he learns of the inner schisms
in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.
He becomes a prasādatarian.

Devotees helped him
at key times.
One gave him a book,
one befriended him.
And one told him
at the right time,
“You are a fool.”

A particular temple
opened its doors to him,
where he saw the Deities.

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

He went there.
 He gave donations, cleaned the floor,
 stopped by after work and said hello.

He got more books,
 became attracted to Prabhupāda,
 defended Kṛṣṇa,
 and accepted some scorn
 on His behalf.
 He turned down offers
 for sex, drugs, and cheater's religion.
 One day he looked around his room,
 and thought, "What useless endeavors!
 Kṛṣṇa, help me!"
 He chanted with devotion.
 He saw a glimpse
 of the Supreme Good.

vii

What is this "Seeing the good?"
 What about the facts?
 Someone decides to join
 for a life of ecstasy,
 but he often finds instead
 a life of anxiety.
 Even the devotee
 who befriended him
 expresses doubts.
 He hears one thing in the class—
 "A *brāhmaṇa* is clean, he controls
 his senses, and he doesn't lie."
 But he sees something else—
 a man with a *brāhmaṇa* thread
 cursing like a *sūdra*.

And he is sorry for himself.
Maybe he thought
he would become a saint
just by donning saffron.
He told his former boss,
"I am going to live a saintly life,
good-bye to all this trash."
But after a few days,
material seeds keep sprouting,
especially lust for women.
He wants to surrender,
but he doubts if he can:
"How can you overcome
the universe?
Brahmā fell down!"

Even his devotee-friend
whom he deeply respects
confides, "Yes, it's a struggle
for me too.
But Kṛṣṇa will help."
He wonders,
"If even senior men . . .
and so many have failed . . .
What if I give up my hopes
of worldly career
and yet fail on this path of devotion?
Won't my life be like a rent cloud
blowing in the sky with no fixed place?"

Is it through rosy glasses
or by official decree
that devotees see the good?
Is it wishful thinking,
a Pollyana pose?

viii

No, it's not like that.
 Seeing the good
 includes seeing the bad.
 It means facing the facts
 of devotees' past habits
 and your own doubts.
 When despite these facts
 you go on serving,
 that's seeing the good.

It's a glimpse of the pure soul
 enticing you to continue
 and intelligence to discriminate:
 "Yes, most devotees are imperfect,
 yet they are on the path.
Only they have the means
 to rectify."

It's worth it.
 When you take the oath,
 you also take the burden
 to keep yourself pure,
 despite the calls of *māyā*.
 You work for Kṛṣṇa's movement,
 even when its reputation
 gets sullied.

The bubble is popped—
 your illusion of spiritual life.
 Now look for the good,
 the grain of devotion
 in tons of faithlessness.

ix

When Prabhupāda came west
 he faced the facts.
 At first he thought,
 how will it be possible
 to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness
 in this land of demons?
 But he remembered the words
 of *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam*:
 The transcendental sound vibration
 of Kṛṣṇa's name and teachings
 will break the passionate grip
 that entangles these souls.

His first followers
 were covered by city grime,
 but he saw the spirit-spark.
 Even after initiation,
 some kept smoking,
 but Prabhupāda kept working with us
 asking us to chant
 and kindly, sternly
 reminding us of our promise.

He saw the good in preachers
 who sacrificed
 to spread the holy name.

x

The Supreme Lord, who is greater than the greatest,
 becomes submissive to even a very insignificant devotee be-
 cause of his devotional service.

— Cc. *Ādi-līlā* 7.145

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

Kṛṣṇa sees a *bhakta*'s faith
and He magnifies it.

He doesn't balance
like an accountant,
but He gives greater credit
for even a little *bhakti*.

And He doesn't take seriously our wrongs.
The Yamadūtas couldn't see
how much He counted—
Ajāmila's shout, "Nārāyaṇa!"

Kṛṣṇa sees, so why shouldn't we
see the good
in every devotee
and each devotional act?

A single *tulasī* leaf
offered in devotion
can outweigh the universe.

One cry, "Govinda!"
can nullify all pain.

Don't try to calculate it;
you just have to see it
as He does.

But a devotee doesn't see
much good in himself.
He knows that even a dog
who takes a piece of *prasādam*,
becomes auspicious.
But for himself
he sees mostly bad omens,

tired *japa* in the morning,
cynical remarks all day,
reluctance in the evening.

“What to do?”

I know no recourse
but to see the good
even in my own acts.

Bhakti is a science
and I am not exempt.

Let me cherish my duties
although I know best
the secret of my reluctance.
Let me cherish those duties
just as a gardener protects
a tiny plant.

If I can't be a *brahmacārī*,
let me be a good *gṛhastha* .
If I cannot directly preach,
then let me help
those who can.

Can I bow down?
Can I say a prayer?
Can I water *tulasī*?
Can I stay attentive
when someone is reading?
Can I eat?
Can I move my feet,
Can I raise my arms?
Can I sing?
Admit I'm not so staunch?

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

Then accept a broom
as not below my dignity.

And sometimes I can dare
to surrender.

I can, I know.

At least when opportunity
stares me in the face,

I can speak about Kṛṣṇa.

I can be on the lookout
for those times.

But how long
will this snail's pace endure?

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
please allow me to invest
my thinking, feeling, willing
in the standard devotional acts—
chanting and hearing.

And according to my capacity
let me serve the Vaiṣṇavas
in their crucial mission.

And if next life I have to return
because of my reluctance,
let me be born in a family
of *bhaktivedāntas*,
to live near their flow
of devotional acts.

And starting today,
let me see the good.



Baladeva's wry humor amuses an Atlanta college professor

Appendix

“HOW CAN I BECOME A PREACHER?”

Let us begin with a positive definition of preaching so that we can agree on what we are talking about. Let us not quibble about the English word *preaching* in terms of secondary dictionary definitions and usage by *karmīs*. It is true that *preaching* carries a connotation of “giving religious instruction in a drawn out or tiresome manner,” “an unwelcome moral lecture,” or “tedious and didactic.” These negative meanings may spring from two sources: (1) Bad and tiresome preachers and (2) the unwillingness of the materialist to receive good instructions, even from a pleasing and qualified preacher. We shall use the words preaching and preacher despite thoughts of Elmer Gantry, Jim Bakker, and so forth, and we will mean what Śrīla Prabhupāda means by preaching: distribution of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Lord Caitanya's Basic Instructions

Lord Caitanya told a *brāhmaṇa*, *yāre dekha, tārekaha 'kṛṣṇa' upadeśa*: “Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This means that a preacher is one who informs

people about the ultimate conclusion of life, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we fail to convey to others the *siddhānta* of the Vedic scriptures, we are not preaching. In his purport to Lord Caitanya's words to the *brāhmaṇa*, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes preaching in very basic terms:

Many people come and inquire whether they have to give up family life to join the Society, but that is not our mission. One can remain comfortably in his residence. We simply request everyone to chant the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare /Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. If one is a little literate and can read *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, that is so much better.

— Cc. *Madhya* 7.128

Prabhupāda goes on to elaborate on the four rules prohibiting illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication, and gambling. So practically speaking, preaching means to give people pure Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, especially through *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and to instruct them in the do's and don'ts of spiritual life.

An important point to note here is that Lord Caitanya simultaneously taught the *brāhmaṇa* to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to become a preacher. There are many different ways to preach, even if one stays "at home" as advised by Lord Caitanya. But although Lord Caitanya did not allow the *brāhmaṇa* to become a renunciant prematurely, He at once advised him to "become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land."

How Can I Become a Preacher?

Remaining at home and becoming a preacher may seem like a contradiction. Or to "become a spiritual master" may seem to be a tall order in any case. Yet these are the instructions of the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees. Rather than try to excuse ourselves from the obligation, we should inquire,

“How can I become a preacher?” Once we sincerely ask that question, we are well on the way to actually becoming a preacher.

When we hear by Kṛṣṇa’s own words that He is very pleased with those who assist Him in distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then we become more inclined to do it. One of the most important verses to contemplate is Lord Kṛṣṇa’s statement in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.

— Bg. 18.68–69

Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it clear that although Kṛṣṇa says “to the devotees” He intends His message to be distributed even to persons who may not be devotees at present, provided they are not inimical. By hearing from preachers, they may also become devotees and thus be fit to hear *Bhagavad-gītā*. Prabhupāda writes, “A pure devotee of the Lord gives everyone the chance to become free from all sinful reactions and to become a devotee of the Lord.”

There are many other verses spoken by the Supreme Person, as well as by His devotees like Prahāda Mahārāja, as well as many statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda which make it clear that preachers are the dearest servants of the Lord. Therefore, every aspiring devotee should approach his spiritual master and sincerely ask how he can become a preacher.

Everyone Can Preach

There are many types of preachers, all of whom can be vitally engaged in the topmost welfare activity. If we take too narrow a view, we may disqualify ourselves and others. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this in a *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* purport:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu set forth three duties for three different people. Mukunda was to earn money and follow the religious principles, whereas Nārāhari was to remain with the Lord's devotees, and Rāgunandana was to engage in the Lord's service in the temple. Thus one person worships in the temple, another earns money honestly by executing his professional duty, and yet another preaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness with the devotees. Apparently, these three types of service appear separate, but actually they are not. When Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the center, everyone can engage in different activities for the service of the Lord.

—Cc. *Madhya* 15.132

My personal preaching will not be the same as all other preachers. Some will be *gṛhasthas*, some will be *brahmacārīs*, some will be *sannyāsīs*. The expert spiritual master finds out the tendency of his disciple. The surrendered disciple wants to assist his spiritual master in terms of immediate needs, but he also expresses to his spiritual master how he would like to be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. Some will go out to meet people and distribute books, some may write scholarly papers, some may instruct the children in *gurukula*, and some may work at businesses and donate their money for the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There are many, many services in which a disciple may engage himself as a preacher in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One's particular service will be worked out once we pursue the sincere inquiry, "How may I become a preacher?"

A Preacher's Humility

If we think that we cannot do very much, that is all right. In fact, no one should think that he is a very great preacher. But we should protect, nourish, and increase whatever little we can do. Kṛṣṇa will count it as important if we do. Somehow or other, we must find the opportunity to preach. We should not be like the weak-hearted dancer who cancelled out his performance because "there was a hill." There will always be a

hill, and there will always be imperfections in our performance. Let us pray in the mood of Śrīla Prabhupāda, when he first arrived in America, “O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands. So if You have brought me here to dance, then make me dance, make me dance, O Lord, make me dance as You like.”

Encourage One Another

We should encourage one another to preach. No one should be intimidated; everyone should be invited to preach. We can help one another to overcome obstacles and mental blocks that prevent us from realizing this most pleasurable of all life's experiences. Lord Caitanya described the taste of distributing love of God as maddening and intoxicating, and all of His associates experienced it the same way. As we practice to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Lord Kṛṣṇa will encourage us from within, so that we want to do it more and more.

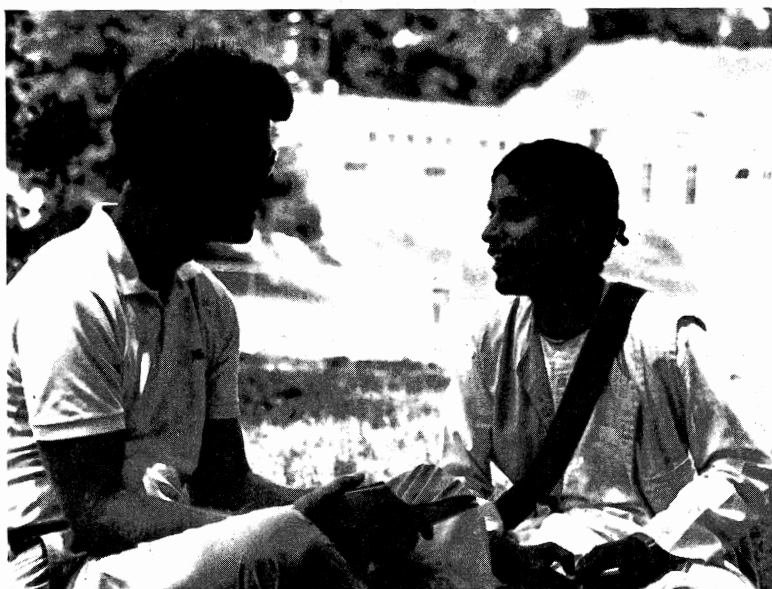
Sacrifice for Preaching

The sacrifice required to become a preacher is the very heart of renunciation. We have to give up some sense gratification and use our energies for helping others. This is especially applicable for all the followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, because his vision of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was that it should be simultaneously be practiced and spread to others. For this purpose he formed the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, ISKCON. Whoever makes sacrifices and contributes to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is directly engaging in preaching activities. And this is the way we may please Śrīla Prabhupāda the most.

Lord Caitanya requested even Lord Nityānanda to make a personal sacrifice for preaching: “Please hear Me, O holy man: I now request something of You. Kindly grant My

request. Do not come to Jagannātha Purī every year, but stay in Bengal and fulfill My desire. (Cc., *Madhya* 16.63-64)

Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission; therefore His sincere devotees must carry out His desire. It is not that one should act whimsically for his own personal satisfaction. This order comes down through the *paramparā* system, and the spiritual master presents these orders to the disciple so that he can spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is the duty of every disciple to carry out the order of the bona fide spiritual master and spread Lord Caitanya’s message all over the world.”



Varuna dasa preaching in a park in Atlanta.
The man came back with us and visited the temple.

