

SRILA PRABHUPADA
SMARANAM

SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI

SRILA PRABHUPADA SMARANAM

Photos
1966-1977

REMEMBERING HIS DIVINE GRACE

A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

FOUNDER-ACARYA OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI

GN PRESS 2011

GN Press Inc., 2011

Srila Prabhupada Smaranam/Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami
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ISBN: 09822-6004-0 (hbk)
ISBN-13: 978-09822-6004-3
ISBN: 09822-6006-7 (sbk)
ISBN-13: 978-09822-6006-7

Library of Congress Control Number:
2 0 1 1 9 4 1 1 7 5

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FOREWORD

This volume, *Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*, is a substantial literary offering by Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami meant to further increase the *kunda* of Prabhupada remembrance and glorification. The reader will find this book a delightful composition of anecdotal history, intimate recollections, conversational prayers, and commentary on photographs of His Divine Grace Abhay Caranaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the beloved Founder-*Acarya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The followers of His Divine Grace will find these pages invoking the presence of their spiritual master with invaluable particulars of his qualities and activities as well as worthy praise and moving supplications by the author.

Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami's book can be arguably seen as a private meditation, one that assumes in the reader the kinship of a life dedicated to the spiritual master-disciple relationship, particularly with Srila Prabhupada. Thus *Srila Prabhupada Smaranam* may present a challenge to one who has not made such a commitment. Even so, I would recommend that everyone who has been fortunate enough to have Srila Prabhupada touch their lives to enter the mellow waters of this volume and sample for themselves the author's successfully-rendered portrait of loving rapport with our Guru and Founder-*Acarya*, Srila Prabhupada. For the novice as well as for the devout, this book promises a cathartic journey guided by an accomplished writer who is both historically informed and intimately associated with His Divine Grace.

The substance of the book comes from intimate observations on photographs and meditative, often prayer-like, addresses to Srila Prabhupada. The spiritual master is one who delivers God to everyone without discrimination and who is ably delivering those who are willing to take his instruction the mercy of Lord Sri Krishna. *Srila Prabhupada Smaranam* gives evidence for and is in itself an experience of the sublime loving nature of such a spiritual master, and pure servant of the Supreme Lord. It is possible to find defects in any endeavor yet it is the opinion of this humble reader that this volume's only significant frailty is that of requiring a disposed audience.

It is a recommended read for all of the followers of Srila Prabhupada for its wealth of Srila Prabhupada *smaranam* (remembrance) and for its enlightening prayers. Personal, yes, sometimes even painfully so, but in

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

being so personal Satsvarupa Goswami has also touched the universal personhood that includes us all and once more has brought his readers closer to Srila Prabhupada. There's urgency in this world to find literature that gives spiritual nourishment to its readers. An even further urgency, for anyone seriously interested in achieving the goal of human life, is to accept a spiritual master. Satsvarupa Goswami has given us in this book a palatable opportunity to hear some of the teachings and qualities of such a spiritual master, and he has presented them in the proper mood of one who has accepted his Guru, Srila Prabhupada, for who he is, the representative of the Supreme Person Lord Sri Krishna. To give gifts and to accept them, to reveal one's mind in confidence and to hear those confidences—these are loving exchanges between devotees of the Lord. These pages are certainly an offering of loving exchange on the part of this author to all those who love and follow His Divine Grace. May we all be blessed with constant hearing of the person, qualities, and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Sri Radha-Krishna, and of their pure servants and representatives like our own dearest Founder-*Acarya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Srila Prabhupada. As I have been requested by the author to write this foreword, I shall simply conclude by asking readers to please accept this gift of Srila Prabhupada-*katha*, and may it increase the love in each of our hearts for our *guru-maharaja* and Founder-*Acarya* Srila Prabhupada, who is an ocean of mercy, the friend of the poor, and the lord and master of all the devotees.

Narayana Kavaca Dasa
Chair, GBC Srila Prabhupada Position Committee

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Srila Prabhupada Smaranam is a new form of visually rich Srila Prabhupada meditations and memories by Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami. This format contains a spectrum: the variegated photographic *vapuh*, reflections, prayerful insights, instructive and historical observations by the author, the endearing free-flowing prayerful poetry in prose as well as sections of modern poetry; all centered on the theme of *smaranam* or remembrance of Srila Prabhupada.

The composition, while resembling a colorful mosaic or collage, peaks in the crescendo and heartbreak of Srila Prabhupada's disappearance from this world. The nine reflective Prabhupada Smaranam sections, forming the main body of the work are enriched by a variety of photo commentaries.

This Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami book is suitable for all, senior or weathered practitioners of *bhakti-yoga*, as well as the newcomers. It is not to be mistaken for a coffee table book; it is a rather deep and thoughtful, spatially rich, experiential journey, which connects reader to the *vapuh* (visual) record of the Founder-*Acarya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and completes the personal portrait of the universal guru, Srila Prabhupada, while strictly adhering to his *vani* (instructions). As the reader approaches each segment of the *Srila Prabhupada Smaranam* volume, he or she will be tuning to the key of service in separation, which is a necessary and irreplaceable element of an individual follower's realization, and which is also an essential ingredient of Prabhupada consciousness for all generations to come; this book is an extremely valuable and yet unique contribution, coming out almost thirty years since first publication by the same author of *Srila Prabhupada Lilamrta*, the official multi-volume biography of the founder of Hare Krishna movement.

Caitanya Candrodaya Dasa
GN Press



From Srila Prabhupada's letter to devotees in New York City, 19 January 1967:

"I understand that you are feeling my absence. Krishna will give you strength. Physical presence is immaterial. Presence of the transcendental sound received from the spiritual master should be the guidance of life; that will make our spiritual life successful. If you feel very strongly about my absence you may place my picture on my sitting places and this will be source of inspiration for you."

INVOCATION

MEMORIES OF PRABHUPADA are nectar. Without them, there would be no substance to Prabhupada consciousness. If there were no memories of Prabhupada, then he would become only a legend. But there is a lot more to Prabhupada consciousness than memories of him. By meditating on the memories and practicing internal, minute-to-minute surrender, we will be Prabhupada conscious. This internal cultivation is very important. According to *sastra*, the guru is nondifferent from Krishna, *guru-krsna-rupa hana sastrera pramane*, and it is through Srila Prabhupada that Krishna bestows mercy on us now. Prabhupada recall doesn't mean only remembering what he did in the 1970s, it means recalling our need to serve him *now*.

One devotee wrote to me appreciating my poem *Soul Eyes*. He said, however, that he never saw Prabhupada's eyes, and he considered it a great loss in his life. I consoled him and told him there were many wonderful photos to meditate on Prabhupada's eyes and form, such as this stately picture of him sitting on a *vyasasana* with his knee bared and lotus foot exposed. There is also film footage of his moving body and expressive features. There's also an oversized book of special photos called *Prabhupada Meditations*, which one can spend hours with gazing over Prabhupada's beautiful body. Even when Prabhupada's health diminished and his face became emaciated, he maintained nobility in his features, and his face was very grave.

Devotees can also ease their separation by getting together and talking about his qualities and pastimes on occasions such as his appearance and disappearance days. Prabhupada personally said, "If you want to know me, read my books." So a devotee should not think he has lost out just because he was not present when Prabhupada was still alive in his physical presence.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

By the means available through *vani* (instruction and sound vibration), many second-generation disciples have developed relationships equal and even greater than first-generation disciples.

The main factor in developing association with Prabhupada is attaining the stage of wanting to please him. He is still living and open to reciprocate with devotees who wish to serve him. This is accomplished in standard ways by accepting him as one's *siksa* guru, or primary guru, and obeying his instructions regarding the rules and regulations. One also pleases Srila Prabhupada by taking up the preaching spirit and working in cooperation with others in the *sankirtana* movement. Prabhupada's reciprocal gaze of "soul eyes" is still available to the earnest soul who yearns to please Prabhupada and comes before him in the available methods of service in separation.



Srila Prabhupada, it seems like a long time. I want to be able to talk with you and be with you in prayer. You have many forms now like lecture form and book form and I avail myself of all of these regularly. Sometimes I have problems, your voice sounds rough or not media pleasant. But there's nothing wrong in this; they're just external causes to trouble me because I'm external. And there are other things like just the fact that you're now The Authority who is quoted for everything from medical advice to how to associate with members of the Gaudiya Math to opinions about this and that, quoted by persons who have so many different points to make in debate.

People quote you to argue that there should be no initiating gurus after your disappearance, and they quote you to prove that of course there should be initiating gurus. They quote you to say that only 50% of your work was finished and that you wanted to do *varnasrama* at Gita-nagari. They quote you that women should be controlled and protected because they're less intelligent, and they quote you as saying that that doesn't apply to devotee women and so on and so forth, so it gets confusing who you are. Are you just a bunch of quotes from the "folio" computer? Are you exactly your *arca-vigraha* and nothing more than that? Are you what the Temple President says you are? And if it depends just on me are you only what I can contact?

In conversing with you I wish to get beyond the official form of Prabhupada as the institutional head. By that I don't mean I wish to dethrone you. I wish to see you as the institutional head but something more within

that, and I want to get beyond my own usual limited concept of you. I want to awaken to my eternal relationship with you.

The guru prayer in the Gayatri mantra is—*aim gurudevaya vidmahe krsnanandaya dhimahe tan no guroh pracodayat*. I want to know. I want to meditate on my spiritual master as *krsnanandaya*, as pleasing to Krishna. I wish to know him and my eternal relationship with him. *Yam evaisa vrnute tena labhyas tasyaisa atma vivrnute tanum svam*. To those whom mercy is given, however, it may be revealed. (*Katha Upanisad* 1.2.23) So I'm meditating and praying to you with faith and trust that you're not an ordinary person. In making my version of "Conversation with Christ" I had to choose between God or the spiritual master to pray to. I thought that you're our Christ. You appeared in this world as a pure devotee and you tell us about Krishna. I shouldn't presume to pray to Krishna directly but to pray to you. Neither should I think that by praying to you it's a downer, that it's just an ordinary thing. But you're a divine person. In other words I want to pray to you in a form that's still inconceivable to me, that I don't know yet.

By that I don't mean exactly your *rasa* in *krsna -lila*, that has to remain unknown at present. But I mean just your unknown capacity to be there for me, to exist even though you've disappeared from the world; to be there inconceivably as my guide still, not only in the printed book, not only in a lecture but as a person I can pray to; and my guide is the person who I knew, but I also assume that I didn't really know you fully. So these are some of the starting points for me.

Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I want to make words just like I would as a kid when I was in the Catholic Confessional and confess. Or like a kid making prayers to God—you close your eyes often and put your hands together and say, "Dear God, dear Lord." I pray to you like that, putting behind me the atheists' scoffing.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, today we read this letter where you say that the sound is the guidance, that means the teachings that you've given us. They're literally sound preserved in tapes, and we can call the printed book a kind of sound record. But *vani* means also living presence within the heart. I want to think that you can hear me and that I can do better and that prayer will help me concentrate. That it will build up by practice to something I can do more often not only in a formal sense like now but at different times I can speak to you. I think praying to you like this will help me to gain faith that you are not an ordinary person. You're not a person that somebody else can completely measure and package and tell me, "This is Prabhupada." But

you're my spiritual master, and I pray to you.

I can pray to you the way I do to Krishna and say, "Please protect me." I can pray to you and say, "Please give me the strength to obey you." I can come to you and confess, "Dear spiritual master, my own guru, you know my failings but I wish to recite them to you again. Some of them are that I'm not a bold preacher, that I don't chant with attention, that I have doubts about the philosophy still after so many years. That I have various silly material attachments—those of the tongue for eating and by listening sometimes to music that's not directly *kirtana*. . . I have a tendency to find-fault and not to rejoice in the association of your other disciples. And many more shortcomings are mine as you know. So I ask forgiveness but what is the sense of asking forgiveness or confessing if I cannot stop them?" Therefore I go beyond confession to say, "Prabhupada, please accept me despite these faults and at the same time know that I don't wish to have them and I'd rather be rid of them and you're almighty, you can give me it."

Now it may be not right to say that the spiritual master is almighty. Then let me say *saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair*, you know the Almighty, Krishna is your friend. *Acaryam mam vijaniyan navamanyeta karhicit*. Know the *acarya* to be as good as Myself. (*Bhag.* 11.17.27) Bhaktivinoda Thakura prays to Gopinatha in his song: "You're the most intelligent person, find a way to get me out of my fallen lusty position." With your permission I can pray to Krishna directly too as I do everyday when I chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. That's a direct call to Krishna and Krishna's energy, Srimati Radharani. But I do it by your permission, and I've heard again and again that one has to go to Krishna *through* the guru. *Yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada*, you have to please the guru, not independently go to Krishna. So I'm praying to you like that. That is, that I pray to you knowing that a prayer to you is as good as a prayer to Krishna; *tathapi janiye ami taohara prakasa*, you are full manifestation (*prakasa*) of the Lord Himself. (Cc. *Adi* 1.44)

May I learn to talk with you with trust and faith.

I call this *Prabhupada Smaranam* also a conversation. Conversation is two-way so let me be silent and try to hear back from you by different feelings that may come from time to time.

Maybe that's enough for my first *Smaranam* session. Thanking you for giving me the inspiration to do this, and I hope I'll be able to keep it up in a meaningful way. Signing off now,

your servant eternally,
Satsvarupa Dasa



Prabhupada walks in the brilliant sunshine of a cold morning on Venice Beach, California. The surf is noisily crashing to the shore. The devotees' shoes are making deep imprints in the soft section of the sand. But Prabhupada sometimes says the Pacific Ocean is restricted not to come in any further on the land by the order of the Supreme. Prabhupada and the devotees are wrapped up warmly against the wind. Prabhupada especially seems to be enjoying the effects of the wind on his face. We know Prabhupada likes to talk on the walk, but sometimes the chilly air and loud surf makes him silent for awhile. But the sunshine is enjoyable, and he likes to be basking in the full morning rays.

Everyone looks so satisfied just to be with him. In the “Description of Autumn” section of the *Krishna* book, a saintly person is compared to a mountain river. In the rainy season he flows or talks and in the non-rainy autumn season the river does not flow, or the saintly person does not talk. Prabhupada was asked what this analogy means, that the saintly person sometimes talks and sometimes is silent. He replied, “He is not obliged.” So the devotees are content whether Prabhupada decides to talk non-stop or whether he makes his walk in silence. Either way they are pleased to be with him. If he returns from the walk and the other devotees ask, “What did Prabhupada say?” And the answer is “nothing,” that does not mean it was not an exciting adventure to walk with him. His walking companions can say, “We were happy just to walk with him. He poked his cane in the sand, and the surf crashed, and he appeared happy to be out exercising.”



PRABHUPADA SMARANAM 2

Dear Srila Prabhupada, yesterday I began this Smaranam project of talking to you which I hope I can do twice a day, fifteen minutes each formal setting, and as it becomes natural I can do it more often. I want to speak to the inner Prabhupada although I can hear you saying there's no difference between inner Prabhupada and outer Prabhupada. But when we're out of the habit of doing this kind of talking it takes a concentration of will to go from the outer duties of life to think within. Some devotees are always living with you by virtue of their dedication to your mission through one of your temples or protecting your movement, preaching your movement in various ways. I like to think I'm also doing that, but I want to be able to talk with you in separation from you.

I want to thank you for giving us all Krishna consciousness by your coming to the West and taking so much time to travel everywhere and give your devotees a perfect example of dedication to a movement for Krishna consciousness, a society of Krishna consciousness and to what individual practice of it is. You gave such an example of being absorbed in the philosophy and preaching it. You gave an example of being compassionate. Your compassion sometimes took the form of anger towards the *mudhas*, the

nondevotees who don't accept Krishna and those who even directly try to stop others from taking to Krishna consciousness. You preached to them with logic and scripture. Those who came to you, you took individual care of and you certainly did that for me from when I first came to you in 1966 in New York City, 26 Second Avenue.

So I want to thank you for that example you gave us and a mission that you gave us how to stay clear of the vices of Kali-yuga and to become followers of *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. There was no chance of that for us by our birth and upbringing but only when you came to give us Krishna's message.

Prabhupada, I still have misgivings and doubts that hold me back. As far as I can see there's no question of my leaving your service, but *maya* is very strong and even that could happen. She could take me away. We have to be very serious you always said, to show *maya* that we don't want her anymore. Otherwise you give her just a little indication, and she'll take you away. But even if I stay in this movement there's still a question of not just being a free-loader or not just dragging my heels. There's, of course, still a question of whether I can go back to Godhead in this life and if not how much progress I can make in this lifetime. So I'm praying, Prabhupada.

As I pray today at this little table, I'm looking out the window. Usually all we see is the calm (or rough) lake, in wintertime no boats just a couple of swans. But today somehow there's a small but strong red tugboat pulling a barge. I feel like that barge, and you're like the tugboat. You're leaving a powerful wake off the stern of the tug due to the mighty engine, and the reluctant black barge moves along slowly in the water. But why should you have to pull like that, I should by now be pulling other boats.

I want to thank you, Prabhupada, for giving us Krishna and giving me so many opportunities to serve you including this one of being able to talk with you to clear my mind of bad things.

Just today, Prabhupada, I was listening to your lecture while I was massaging you in your *murti*. It is always nice to be able to do that, but somehow my head was a little weak being prone to headache, and it seems at times like that I need physically soothing mellow sound vibration, or so I tell myself. Your voice was speaking in Bombay over amplification in 1974, and it sounded harsh to me. It sounded rough, it sounded gruff. You were preaching strongly the same examples. You were giving the example of matter and spirit. Material becomes spiritual like when an iron rod is put into the fire. As you spoke you became enthusiastic by the example with that wonderful quality you have of treating the same material freshly, and you said again the same

example and you repeated it. It's a very good example you said. The iron rod becomes hotter and hotter and then it becomes like fire.

But rather than hearing with deep appreciation and understanding that that's happening to me and resolving to stay in the fire, my mind was rebelling and saying that I couldn't hear this. Then saying, I better not hear it then if I'm not going to appreciate it, if I'm going to be offensive and think that Prabhupada's voice is too rough. But I stayed with it, and I hope I rode through the storm of finding fault with your voice. But that's the kind of thing I mean, those kind of irritations and outward disturbances that come as I become a prey of the fault-finding mentality.

I don't want to fall like that, Prabhupada, that's why I like it when I do get inspired hearing you. It's a fact that I do have certain attitudes or moods where I'm more receptive. It may have to do with physical strength, time of the day and so on that one is more receptive. I listen to you early in the morning, you know all this, and some times are better than others. But I don't want some velvet smooth orator or popular singer's dulcet tones to soothe me. I want your words, and if you're rough I know it's the hoarse voice of the military general who's been giving orders and himself going forward with battle cry for many hours and years, and he's grown old like grandfather Bhisma. You can't expect him to be like some court eunuch or some Gandharva or cinema singer all pampered and nice for ladies. If he's rough, if he's tough that's another source of inspiration.

I'm less than ideal. I'm not so brave, in some ways I was better. But I don't want to be centered on myself. I want to be centered on you and that way be centered for going to Krishna. My lacking should be seen as self-realization of my tininess and my weakness in comparison to all-great, all-pure Krishna. Not that I am only here myself in the universe to rejoice about greatness or to lament over my smallness. But I see myself in humility in contrast to you and Krishna and therefore I want to stay and glorify you.

Prabhupada, sometimes I pray directly to Krishna in these talks but even then it will be only because you allow me to do it that I can understand Krishna Himself as He says in *Bhagavad-gita* that one should think of Him as always a person. He says that we should always think of Him in the form of Krishna and go on with our activities of fighting like Arjuna. "With your activities dedicated to me and your mind and intelligence fixed on me you will attain Me without doubt." (Bg. 8.7)

Then Krishna says in the ninth verse of the eighth chapter, "One should meditate on the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, as He Who is the oldest, Who is the controller, Who is smaller than the

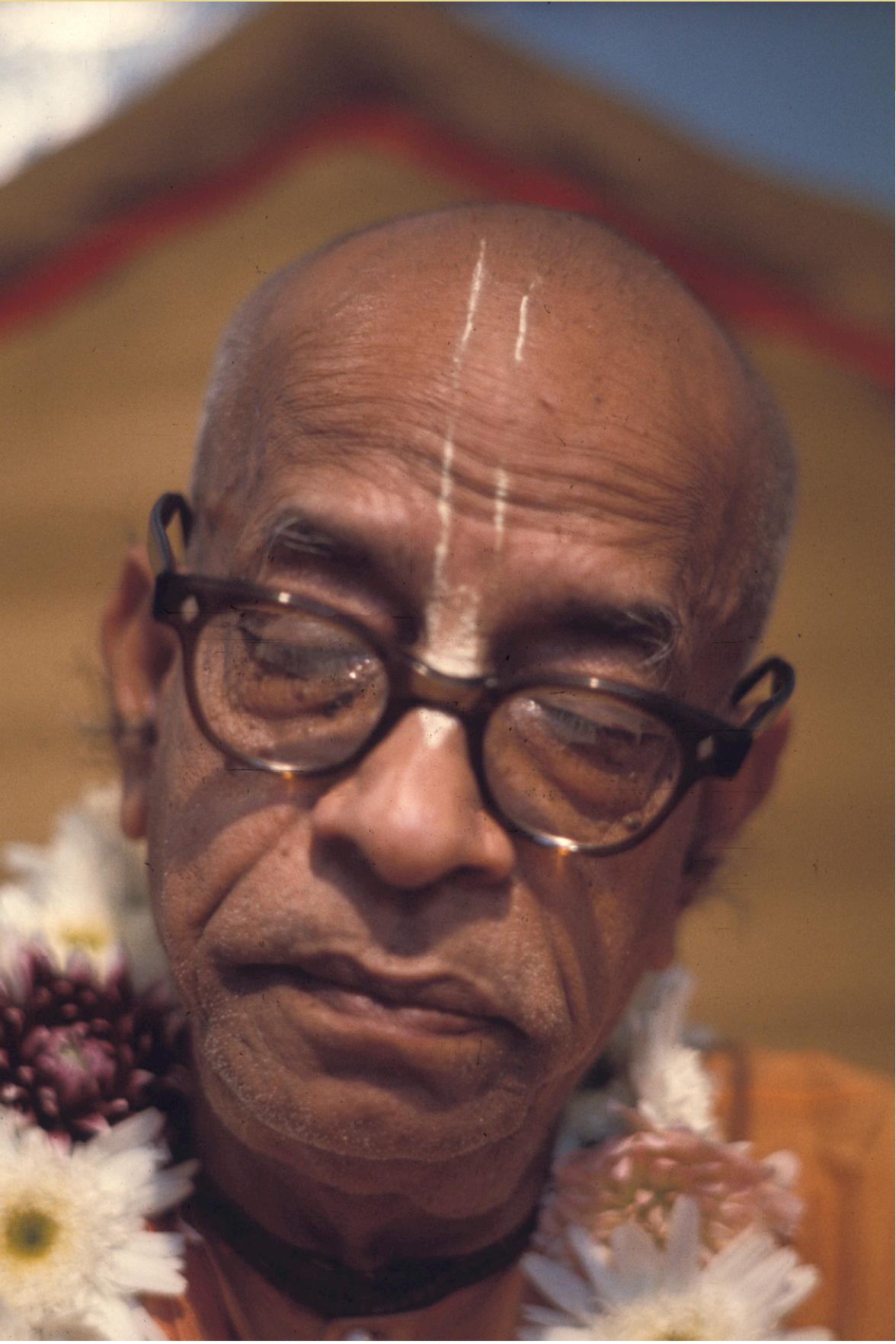
smallest, Who is the maintainer of everything, Who is beyond all material conception, Who is inconceivable and Who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun and He is transcendental beyond this material nature.” We can pray like that, we can move in this sacred realm of *Bhagavad-gita* with faith because you’ve delivered *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

Prabhupada I want to praise you more. I want my heart to break in the best sense. I’d like to cry tears, I’d like to fall down on my knees in *dandavats*. But I can’t do it in a feverish way. I mean an imitative way. You know me Prabhupada I tend to be sort of dry by nature and always suspicious of excessive emotions. But emotions placed in loving service to you are the perfection of emotions, and you even say the perfection of devotional service can be achieved by crying tears.

Let that day come when twice a day or more, I can cry tears of love feeling my unworthiness in praise of you, the praise that I didn’t do enough when you were present and the praise that I haven’t done enough since you’ve been gone. And the lack of work, I may cry that I’m not serving you enough and cry that I haven’t achieved what would be just a normal and decent amount of advancement and not be complacent. But still I feel confident that you do love me, and I want to keep praying like this. Krishna loves me, Prabhupada loves me, don’t doubt it. Now you love him back. You can do it with words, you can do it with writings and of course you can do it with your acts, show that you are grateful to Prabhupada for what he gave. I guess I did it today, Srila Prabhupada, by talking to the devotees in the temple, and I’ll do it tomorrow. I’m doing all these things for you. But that’s your mercy that you engage me in this way, otherwise I’d just be a vagabond of one kind or another, faithless, foolish and so on in this material world, heading for a next birth not desirable.

Now I’m coming to the end of this Prabhupada Smaranam session. It’s just a short exercise you could say, but I feel my vocal cords are really vibrating in what they’re meant to do instead of just loitering around and saying things that I have heard somebody say or whatever useless things. I want to vibrate this kind of praise for you even though it’s foolish and like a baby speaking. You will not find fault with me or stop me from trying to serve you and praise you.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada. “Thank You,” dear Lord Krishna, “for sending us a perfect spiritual master. Please give us the divine vision to see him as pure devotee and not with any material vision which would imagine defects in the body or the activities of the spiritual master.” This is forbidden as described by Rupa Gosvami in *Upadesamrta*, and I want it to be forbidden in my life too.



Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I think you're with me all the time not just when I pray here in a formal way in front of your photo. Otherwise how could I have come to such a nice conclusion that I don't need to read all those books that came in the mail, that I should just read your books. Oh it was Supersoul? But how can I understand Supersoul except through the spiritual master? But Srila Prabhupada, these times are also special to be able to say your name and to hear my voice talking to you, to the inner Prabhupada. I'm not trying to make believe that you're sitting in front of me, although that's good too, to feel your nearness. That's why I do have some of your pictures here. I'm not trying to imagine it, I'm trying to be there with you.

I know people say I shouldn't be self-centered but should be Krishna-centered and centered on the spiritual master, use yourself for that. Don't use yourself for deliberate constant meditation on your own limited self. Use yourself to serve and then your inevitable ego will be formed in relation to Krishna and the spiritual master. *Trnad api sunicena*, you'll think of yourself lower than the straw in the street.

You've given us such good Vedic conclusions, Srila Prabhupada, and I'm not going to gain much by learning Buddhist conclusions, beat generation conclusions, lack of conclusions, my own speculations. And it's not going to be good if I doubt the Vedic conclusions. What's the sense of going to them unless you really go to them and not as cultural India, Hinduism. Just one view out of many views, mythical and so on and so forth. I don't want to be anti-authoritarian, neither do I want to be blindly dogmatic. I want to be a free spirit. Freedom is the pivot. One doesn't lose freedom in serving Krishna but realizes real freedom from birth, death, disease and old age. That I can't get by becoming a master dreamer, a shaman. No, that comes from learning those books that teach the very subject matter—what is self? What is *atma*? What is Supreme? And how to overcome birth, death, disease and old age. Nobody else is teaching it but you and your line.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, I want to read now a letter that you wrote me. You included my name in a group letter that you wrote from San Francisco on January 19, 1967. But then on the 30th of January you wrote in one envelope a number of letters to about four of us and I was one of them. My letter begins:

My dear Satsvarupa,

Please accept my blessings. I understand that Neil has left us, and you have taken the responsibility for typing the records. Please let me know how many tapes are with you. I think you have five tapes with you because I have got only three with me. See that the tapes do not miss. You are a sincere devotee of the Lord and certainly He will bless you with auspicious advancement in the matter of spiritual understanding.

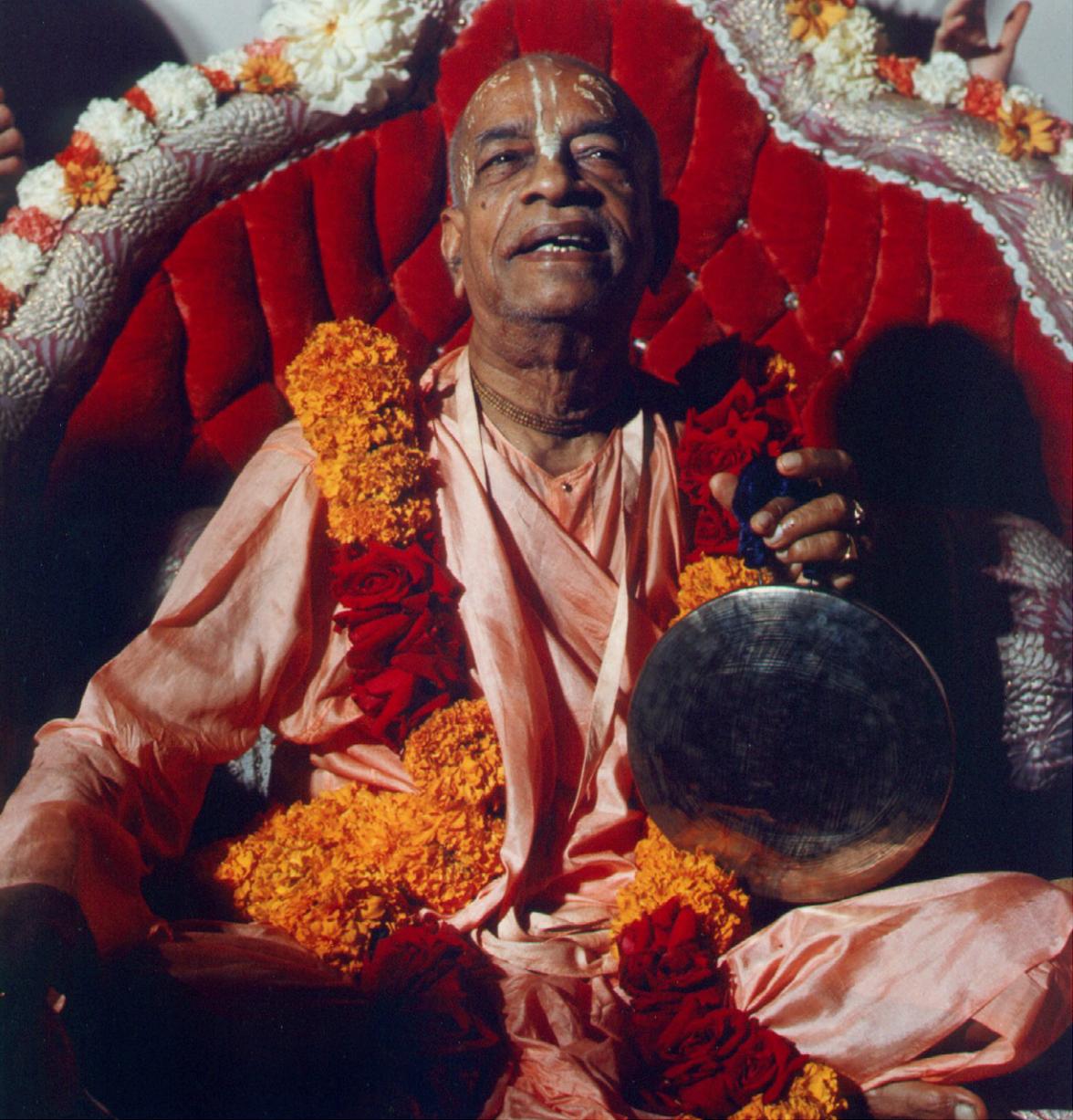
Your assistant Ranchor is doing well with me. He is not now disturbed in his mind. I hope you are all in full cooperation in the service of Krishna. I shall be glad to hear from you.

Prabhupada you worked these eight tapes. Nowadays when I make tapes, before I'll put them in the mail I first make a copy. You didn't even do that although your tapes are infinitely more valuable than mine. I could say you depended on Krishna, but also you just didn't demand so much. Maybe this is a better system that I have now. What if I asked you, Prabhupada before we mail this tape would it be better to make a copy in case it gets lost? But we didn't think of things like that. We didn't think in the beginning that you ought to fly "first-class" or at least "business-class." Maybe they didn't have business-class in those days on the airplane. We didn't think of so many things that we think of now. I'm thinking of you now, everything else is a distraction.

Prabhupada, Ranchor is doing well you said. Maybe he was right there before you when you dictated this letter. He had been disturbed, and he soon would be disturbed again. But in hope you said, he's all right now. He was all right because he was with you. But even being with you sometimes your servants got disturbed, huh? Like me.

Prabhupada, I'm your servant serving in separation. You've gone back to Godhead we say seventeen years now, longer, '77 you left. '87, '97, yeah it's thirty years. Hard to believe. But what does that mean, thirty years, thirty minutes?

In your *Caitanya-caritamrta* we read how Lord Caitanya walked on the road. When He saw the dome of Lord Jagannatha it was six miles to go from where He saw it. But each mile seemed like it took many, many, many years. Because He was so much in anticipation that became the reality to Him. Ecstatic. So ecstatic or not ecstatic, what is a few years? And then where do we go? If we think of you, we go to you. That's why I don't want to get diverted.



Here's a picture of you, your left hand is gripping a cloth that's attached to a gong. One-two-three you're gonging, one-two-three. There's a nice cloth backdrop behind you. It's the Henry Street temple with one of their many different fancy *vyasanas*. This one shaped like a lotus. You have yellow flowers on you in a big garland, with red roses. You can get those kind of things in New York City in the florist shop, or right in the garden. You're wearing soft fabric and soft color, sort of a pale saffron silk *kurta* which is open at the top. And a pale pink soft we can see on your lotus foot. Your *dhoti* and *kurta* appear to be almost like a rose pink. You weren't so strict as to the exact shade it had to be. O *paramahansa*, O *maha-bhagavat*, O great preacher, my spiritual master.

Your wrote in this letter, “You’re a sincere devotee of the Lord, and certainly He will bless you with auspicious advancement in the matter of spiritual understanding.” I’d ask you, “Prabhupada, I can’t understand the *Bhagavad-gita* unless I get spiritual intelligence. How will that happen?” Now I guess I “understand” the *Bhagavad-gita*, at least with some theoretical *jñana*. I can answer questions from the *vyasasana*, but still what I was referring to in that letter is still what I’m looking for—that mystical spiritual understanding. Actually I’m looking for love. Love in my own heart in action. Unself-conscious action to serve you to please you in a way that you will recognize. I’m getting old, Prabhupada, getting closer to you I hope. Certainly closer to my death, that insignificant event in the world when this one cipher *jiva* blots out, puffs out like a birthday candle that goes down to the bottom. Another one. And where do I go? I’m looking at that shiny gong and wanting to be with you now. I hope you’ll take me at death.

I was just reading, Srila Prabhupada, in your book, that the *Vedas* personified wanted to be *gopis*. They tried to be *gopis* directly, but they couldn’t. But then they became born as the daughters of *gopis* in Vrindavana and got finally trained up perfectly to go and join you in Goloka Vrindavana. One disciple of mine, by which I mean a devotee to whom I gave initiation to in your disciplic succession, wrote to me whimsically sentimentally and said, “I don’t see why you would have to be born again as a *gopi* in Vrindavana and not just go back to Goloka immediately after this life.” What was she getting at? I’ve already made it clear in my writings that I don’t think I’m fit. But I could be born in Vrindavana, if I can be born just a devotee. *Tandera carana-sevi-bhakta-sane vas janame janame hoy ei abhilasa*, I only wish to be born again and again to serve the Vaishnavas, to chant Hare Krishna. That’s my desire.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, I have so many petitions in my mind—make me strong, let me overcome the pain, let me think of you in difficulty. They’re natural but let me switch also to saying, “You’re great Prabhupada, you love me Prabhupada, you accept my service.” You do want me to do more though. You wish I was braver, stronger, get out there and fight, try to spread Lord Caitanya’s glories, tell people about Krishna. Well, I will do that Prabhupada, by your mercy.

Now I better end this Smaranam because I decided to make them maximum fifteen minutes. But when I end I’ll go and write some prayer and read some *Bhagavad-gita* and stay with you in other ways. There’s no big mystery how to do it, just I have to be receptive and inoffensive to you and carry out your instructions.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

Thank you again, Prabhupada, for drying up my desire to read other books—Catholic books, dream books and so on. Dried it up so quickly, before I got too much into it, and telling me to come back to Lord Caitanya’s pastimes. Hear your Srila Prabhupada in the brief time left to you and come and pray to him. Jai Srila Prabhupada.

“Falling at the feet of Rupa and Raghunatha,” Krishnadasa Kaviraja writes at the end of this chapter—I beg for their mercy. I fall at the feet of Srila Prabhupada, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and ask his mercy which he can give, which he does give by which we get the mercy of all the *acaryas* in the disciplic succession and Lord Krishna and Srimati Radharani. I don’t really deserve to even say such holy names, but by your grace you let us do it and serve you. Haribol.





Prabhupada appears to be relaxing in his rooms in his travels. He has stopped somewhere, perhaps in Europe, for a few days. At these moments he is not vigorously putting out energy in the *kirtana* or performing in a lecture before hundreds of onlookers. He is resting on his elbows and leaning back against the bolster with his arms behind his head. Nevertheless, he is Krishna conscious. He has a microphone around his neck in case he wants to speak. They will eagerly record anything he has to say, even while resting. His features are handsome although he is elderly. Maybe right now he doesn't feel obliged to speak. He is pushing on the Krishna consciousness movement, but taking a break. No doubt he thinks of Krishna because he is never without Him. But these are moments when he keeps to himself. He requires moments like this to recharge for his outgoing demeanor.

His mouth is closed, and his eyes are shut. It is a kind of reverie. Those who pump him constantly with questions or who set him up to speak before

large audiences have to respect these moments of repose. He is recollecting himself, and even his bead bag sits on the table. It is sweet to see him like this. He is your guru, and he is thinking of Krishna, not accompanied by jumping up and down or raising his voice in reprimand to the *mudhas*. This is also a part of his character, and it is a rare chance to see him in this private mood.

Never before in history has the moving form of great Vaishnava *acaryas* been captured on film as much. We have only artists' renderings of the body of Lord Caitanya and the Six Gosvamis, based on descriptions in the scriptures or simply the intuitions of artists. The importance of seeing the form of the pure devotee is mentioned in the episode concerning Lord Caitanya's visit to Vrindavana. When the Lord was staying at Akrura *ghat*, crowds of people came to Him and said, "We have directly seen Krishna at Kaliya *ghat*, dancing on the serpent's heads." In actuality the people were seeing the light of the fisherman's boat, which they mistook for the flashing jewels on Kaliya's head. But in coming before Lord Caitanya and saying, "We have seen Krishna," they were inadvertently seeing Krishna, because Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krishna Himself in a disguised form of a devotee. In his purports to the incident, Srila Prabhupada states that Krishna can not be seen directly but through the guidance of the spiritual master. "A sincere person is able to see Krishna through the transparent via medium of Sri Gurudeva, the spiritual master" (Cc. *Madhya* 18.99, purport) By seeing Srila Prabhupada's face and body and hearing him speaking, and hearing reminiscences of him by those who saw him, we are getting in contact with Krishna.

When Prabhupada passed away, I thought of his most outstanding features. I thought of the fact that he was always talking (or writing) about Krishna. Here's a casual moment, perhaps after a morning walk, and he will be doing the same thing, soon talking about Krishna and Krishna's activities. Even if you came into Prabhupada's presence to speak of some ordinary business, to arrange for his travel itinerary, or to talk of what he wanted for lunch, or to talk of finances for constructing a temple, he would soon turn the conversation to *kr̥ṣṇa-katha*. Something in the ordinary talk would spark him to quote a verse from *Bhagavad-gita* or *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and he would be off into a discourse on transcendental subject matter. He did this nonstop, with spontaneity.

He did it out of duty to train his disciples, but also because he was so dedicated to Krishna and topics of Krishna that he naturally spoke a flow on these topics. It was not always a novel speech. Sometimes he would repeat himself according to time, persons and atmosphere. But he was always serious

in emphasizing the importance of everyone engaging themselves in Krishna's devotional service.

In *Siksastakam*, Lord Caitanya advises *kirtaniya sada harih*—one should always engage in the *kirtana* of Lord Hari. This refers to the singing of God's names but also speaking *kr̥ṣṇa-katha*. Prabhupada said, "Because I was good at hearing, now I am good at *kirtana*." He referred to the *kirtana* of constantly talking of Krishna's glories. When you love someone you want to hear of them always, and Prabhupada's love for Krishna was shown by his constant speaking of his Lord. Whoever came near Prabhupada was impressed with this outstanding characteristic of his behavior, *svayam acarate yasmad acaryas tena kirttitah* — He is a living example for he teaches the meaning of the scriptures both by word and deed. (*Vayu Purana*)



PRABHUPADA SMARANAM 4

Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I thank you for being my teacher, the revealer of the *sastra*. This is your form in person in which you are so accessible to us in such a profound way. Yet we are lucky, lucky that we knew you as you came here to us. And so we know your little ways of speaking and the personal history you went through in New York City. We know your disciples and batches and batches of little incidents that they have related and that we took part in also. We know you

as a familiar person, our guru in America and around the world up until '77. That goes real nice with knowing you through the books, good combination.

But if I think of you as the revealer of the books, I thank you for taking us step-by-step through texts like *Bhagavatam*, *Bhagavad-gita*, *Caitanya-caritamrta* and giving us the purports which I know you make by studying the previous great commentators like Sanatana Gosvami, Visvanatha Cakravati Thakura, Jiva Gosvami and others; your own spiritual master, Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Then you pick out of that what's relevant.

We heard that you once said something on a morning walk about this. The devotees were encouraging you because you were writing quickly at that time in Hawaii. You sometimes took a little writing retreat in Hawaii. Not much of a retreat, you would soon be back in mainland USA usually starting with Los Angeles and then so busy visiting, preaching, managing. But you would take sometimes a couple of weeks in Hawaii, and along with other things there—classes and so on, answering letters. Still you did more writing than you would usually do. So one morning I think it was Hari Sauri, was remarking while walking on the beach that you had done a lot of writing that night. And you said, “Oh I could do it very quickly, but it takes time to make it presentable for the common man.”

So that was a little inside view of yourself as compiler, as purport writer. When you took from those other *acaryas* you did it carefully and thinking. You knew the common man. We say common man is everybody, even the Ph.D.'s are common men, their morals, their virtues are pretty low, pretty common and their theology is usually not advanced.

Prabhupada, you knew all these different people that you met from New York to Paris to India, everywhere. Where you sat behind a low table, had visiting hours and talked with people. And you knew your own disciples and the kind of questions they ask. So you weren't an ivory tower writer but a writer who's very much in touch with the mass of people and in your compassion as a follower of Lord Caitanya you wanted to give His teachings to them. You presented it for them, taking away a lot of the unnecessary technical Sanskrit terminology and anything you thought would be not interesting to them.

Another time you said that you got up so early in the morning (12 o'clock or so), and worked on these purports (in a twenty-four hour day that was very taxing you said), because you couldn't do without it. You so much liked to do it. This was an indication of taste. You said, “That's why they like my books.” This was another glimpse at your writing life. You called it “personal ecstasies” and serious students *do* like your books. That's one reason

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

as I say they're not academic or ivory tower, but not only do you know the Lord but you know the *jivas*. (*Bhag.* 1.7.14)

*anarthopasamam saksad bhakti-yogam adhoksaje
lokasyajanato vidvams cakre satvata-samhitam*

As it says in the seventh chapter of the First Canto the mass of men are suffering in this world, and they don't know the cause of their suffering or their release. They don't know Krishna. Vyasadeva just to give them mercy compiled this *satvata-samhita*, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. In the same way you knew the *jivas* and their bewilderment in Kali-yuga, their being victimized by politicians, by sex mongers, by businessmen selling intoxicants and gamblers and so on. *Mudhas* being influenced by bigger *mudhas*. And as I say you also knew the Lord so you brought them together. Like a true devotee who wants to see others coming to Krishna and gets more satisfaction out of that even than one's own union with Krishna. This is what you taught us to do. O Srila Prabhupada, I want to do that too.

When I get up at midnight I place the Dictaphone in your hands and bow down to you, and I say, "Prabhupada now write your *Bhagavatam* which is so important for the world." And I go do my writing. My writing is silly, my writing taps the mundane mind, but I pray that I can be working on the same principle. I know the conditioned *jivas*, especially this one I know. And not just as a person entirely forgetful of Krishna, doesn't even know who Krishna is, doesn't chant, commits the four sinful activities. I remember him in that way, but I know him now for over thirty years as trying to adjust, trying to convert to take to Krishna consciousness and the different problems he's having. We're having, we ISKCONites. However, I know the *jivas* but I don't know the Lord. But I have a story to tell of somebody who's trying to know the Lord. Who does know the Lord a little bit by your mercy. Who's six inches above the ocean and therefore not drowning. I thank you for this Srila Prabhupada, for letting me write. What can I say but thank you and what can I say but I think you are allowing me to write. Supersoul's allowing me to write.

Of course everyday I pray for that, and I don't really know it, and I have to be humble and ask you to please take it with all its faults. Or to correct me if it's totally wrong, or to help me improve it. But my lord and master, Your Divine Grace, I thank you for giving us the *sastra* and for letting me write in pursuance of the Vedic version.

When we say we like to pray, it's not just for the purpose of asking boons but for being with you. I like to be with you when you are writing.

“Thus ends the Bhaktivedanta purports” to this chapter, thus begins another chapter. I know it’s difficult for me sometimes because I’ve read it many times and the mind wants something novel and wants to read a different kind of prose and so on and so forth. I also deal with these things, and I take the mercy that you have given us. I want to take it more, and I want to exclude other things so that my prayers to you are not just hypocritical in the sense of being rushed off twice a day in fifteen-minute sessions and otherwise I don’t think of you. I don’t really deeply appreciate you and so on. That would be hypocritical. I want my praying to you to come out of a whole life of praying to you, a whole life of serving you.



This picture shows Bharadraja holding up a Back to Godhead magazine and giving a short speech to the folks who had gathered to watch at a distance at the Boston Commons. We would sing for about a half hour and then a devotee would give a short talk. Shortly after this picture was taken a rowdy rushed from the crowd and punched Bharadraja in the stomach. Bharadraja had the wind taken out of him, and he crumpled up, although he uttered the words “Hare Krishna.” Several devotee men immediately grabbed the assailant and turned him over to the police. We charged him with assault and the case went to court. The rowdy’s lawyer said that Bharadraj had provoked the man with “inflammatory speech.” The judge then heard Bharadraja’s version. The judge was still for a less than a minute and then he said, “I don’t think this man is capable of inflammatory speech.” He sent the assailant to thirty days in jail. But it wasn’t the last of assaults on devotees.



This is a picture of night *sankirtana* in downtown Boston in 1970. The Broadway musical “Hair” was showing at the theater in Boston. “Hair” was a musical about what hippie life was like in the 1960s and the very last scene ended with the entire cast singing the Hare Krishna mantra. The devotees took the opportunity to stand right outside the theatre and chant Hare Krishna to the exiting theatre goers who had just heard “Hare Krishna” sung in the theatre. The devotees would distribute handfuls of burning incense and hold out conch shells asking for donations. The crowd was in a good mood having just heard the Hare Krishna *mantra* and when they saw the nontheatrical authentic version of Hare Krishna chanters, it warmed them up. Devotees would usually collect forty or fifty dollars within a few minutes and thoroughly enjoy themselves chanting in such a heart-warming atmosphere.



This is a picture taken during Srila Prabhupada's July 1971 visit to the Boston temple. He made four visits to Boston, and this was the last one. He came mainly to install Radha Krishna deities at my request. During his earlier visits the movement was still small, and he did not have many temples. He visited once for a month in 1968, once for two weeks in the summer of 1969, and once for only a few days in the winter of 1969.

By 1971 he had been traveling and preaching with a group of devotees holding *pandals* in India, and he had recently been to Moscow and Paris. It was his kindness to stop and visit Boston which was now a smaller temple with the exodus of the devotees of ISKCON Press. He went out of his way to come, and I have always felt it was a personal reciprocation just to do the favor of rewarding me for sticking it out in Boston and his rewarding the temple for persevering. Besides, we had about twenty devotees ready for him to initiate. And I had written him several times asking him to come to install the Deities. He had personally purchased them in India. They were identical to the Radha-Madhava brass deities he had installed in Mayapur.

We had two separate fire sacrifices, one for the initiations and one for installing the deities. Here I am functioning as the priest in my householder dress, and Prabhupada is looking on. He also read from the verses of *Brahma Sambhita*. It was during this visit that I made the mistake of renting the VIP suite at the Boston Sheraton for Prabhupada to use as his rooms. We did not have first class facilities at the temple and didn't prepare a room for him. We also just had only one men's bathroom. That was used by all the men, and the women had their own. When Prabhupada first arrived he came to the temple and lectured and met with the devotees afterwards. Then I informed him it was getting late and that he could go to the hotel we had carefully prepared for him. He flatly refused. "I will stay in the temple," he said. He quoted the saying that living in the forest was living in the mode of goodness, living in the city was living in the mode of passion and living in the brothel or liquor house was living in the mode of ignorance. When I had paid for the hotel the lady asked me why we were getting the VIP suite for a spiritual master if he was a renounced person.

She even supplied long stemmed roses, but there was no cooking allowed in the room. We planned to smuggle in an electric burner. (I told her that our spiritual master was the most important person to us and deserved the best treatment. But it turned out I had missed out the concept of *yukta-vairagya* in this case, and I was trying to put my spiritual master in what he considered a brothel.)

The room at the temple was very simple, and all we had for a chair was a rocking chair, and it was sometimes a little awkward with our making the men and women share the second bathroom in the house. But he seemed to accept it all without any disturbance and liked staying at the temple. When he left Boston and went to New York (where they had lavish quarters for him in the temple) I wrote him a letter of apology for giving such run-down quarters in Boston. He wrote back and said there was nothing to apologize for. He

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

was a mendicant, he said, and accepted whatever his disciples could offer, but the principle should be to present the first class thing to the spiritual master. I was relieved he wasn't angry but aware we hadn't given him first class facilities. *Ksanardhenapi tulaye na svargam napunar-bhavam*, "If one by chance associates with a devotee, even for a fraction of a moment, he no longer is subject to attraction to the results of karma." (*Bhag.* 4.24.57).

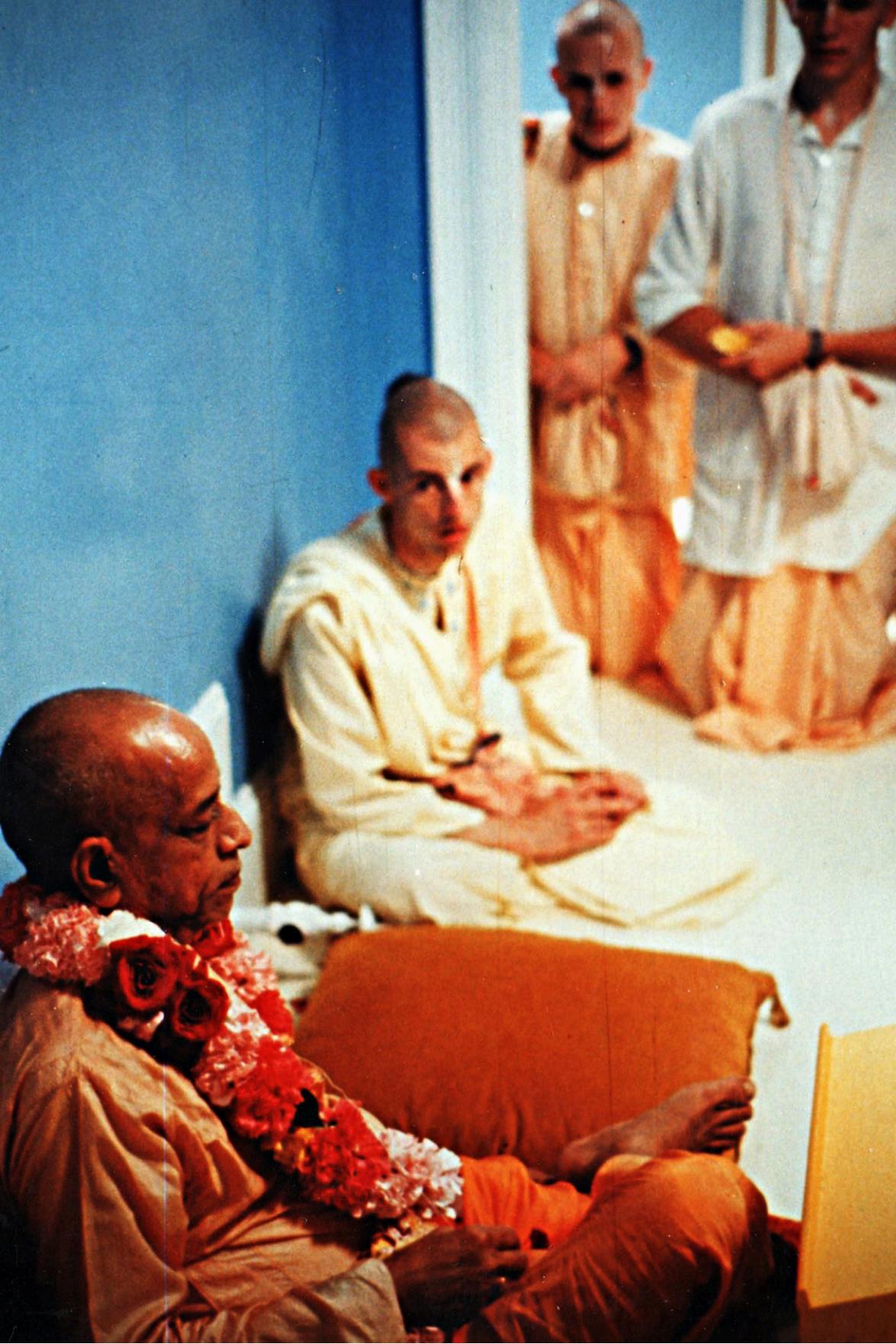


A favorite picture, I may show it again and again. Prabhupada installing Radha Krishna (now called Radha Gopivallabha) Boston, July 1971. That's a long time ago. I was still dressed in white. The installation ceremony was simpler than was done in later years. Prabhupada supervised it and told exactly what paraphernalia to use, so it was a bona fide installation even though lacking some of the ingredients and procedures used nowadays. Only two people conducted the yajna. Prabhupada reads from the Gaudiya Math edition of the Brahma-samhita, the Sanskrit prayers of Lord Brahma. He has come to Boston for a few days in the midst of worldwide quick-stop travels. Despite the simplicity, the ceremony is clean and neat and the Deities are very beautiful. The temple room is effulgent in late morning sunlight. Prabhupada has personally selected the deities in India, identical to Radha Madhava in Mayapur.

—Sriḷa Prabhupada Smaranam—

I pour milk and yogurt on the Deities. The temple is filled with devotees, approximately twenty of whom will be initiated by Prabhupada on the next day. Boston is no longer a big, important temple with ISKCON Press having moved to Brooklyn, but Prabhupada has kindly come to the city at my repeated requests. He has recently been to Moscow and Paris and he will next go to Brooklyn. He is most affectionate and caring to have stopped to perform this installation, and he impresses us with the importance of Deity worship, that he personally took the trouble of coming and that he allowed me to assist him as priest.

We sit or kneel and look reverently to our spiritual master. This was Boston in 1971. We believe everything he says. We do whatever he asks. He knows he has us under his control. We are young disciples in awe of Prabhupada. He takes the responsibility of guiding our lives. He has taken our karma. He is grateful that we are submissive, but he wants us to be much more competent and organized and preach more effectively in Krishna consciousness. We are passive and await his commands. We have shaven our heads, and we wear eastern Vaishnava clothes. We have given up our American identities. But we are still very much Americans, only recently taken on the life of followers of Lord Caitanya. He knows we are trying our best, and yet we are not yet capable of much. We can chant on our beads, but it is difficult to control the mind. We don't know the esoteric truths of Krishna consciousness. We chant loudly on the streets of Boston, and he is very proud of us for that. We are learning how to distribute Back to Godhead magazine for twenty-five cents, but we haven't learned yet how to sell his big books. He is patiently waiting for us to do more. He loves us, and we love him. We are at a sweet, early point in our relationship. It is growing to where we will be able to take more responsibilities, and he is grateful for what we are doing now.





Here is another picture of that Prabhupada's June 1971 visit to Boston. He is holding a mass initiation. He appears to be chanting on beads. The devotees are seated in a semicircle around him. About twenty people got initiated. It was a warm day, and the windows were open and a devotee cooled him with a peacock fan on a long pole. I performed the fire sacrifice pouring ghee into the fire. Prabhupada was so very worshipable to all of us.

While we looked up to him and treated him as good as God, he was also very intimate and friendly with us, like our father. He did not make any heavy criticisms about the temple management, but had many kind and encouraging words for everyone. The result of his visit left the temple and the devotees surcharged for a long time. We were staunch and positive despite obstacles, such as hoodlum hecklers to our house, because we knew we were following his orders.

By personally initiating devotees in Boston and installing Radha-Krishna Deities, he touched our lives with deep, permanent impressions; by living with us for just a few days he solidified our commitment to life-long Krishna consciousness. He was compassionate and intelligent in his strategies for capturing the hearts of the devotees and bonding them to his person and his instructions. This picture captures the immortality of the tie between the guru and his disciples.

1.

Rati-manjari says ever
since Rupa-manjari has filled
her eyes with light in the
land of Vraja, she has yearned
to see the red lac decorating
Radharani's feet.

When she saw Radha-kunda
filled with sweet water and splendid
with many blossoming flowers,
she at once began to yearn for
the nectar of direct service
to Radharani.

Rati-manjari prays, “O Queen,
I shall never ask You for anything
other than direct service to Your
lotus feet . . . May I find Your
service as sweet as nectar.”

She wants to daily rinse the drains
of Radha’s house with pure water
and dry them with her own hair
and then scent Her garden pavilion
with sweetly fragrant incense.

She wants to render all
personal bodily service of
Radha’s bathing and drying
and dressing, while her
own hairs stand up in bliss.

I read these things and
then wonder at their
beauty and desirability.
They are beyond me, but I
do not stop from hearing
them.

Service to Radha is light
years away from me, yet
Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami shares
it with his readers. And we can serve
Sri Radha by chanting Her
names in the Hare Krishna
mantra and serving Her
Deity form.

2.

I am down here on earth
with my pains and
maladies. I yearn to
be a better devotee and yet
to be who I am. I
don't mean I wish to be
a fallen.

I like reading the new
poems of Radha and
writing out of my heart
from a picture of Prabhupada
sharing with readers feelings
of devotion to him who
allows us to enter
the sacred precincts.

Unless Prabhupada permits
us, we cannot hear of Radha
and Rati-manjari, but he
had said it is alright.
He has guided us in the
diet of preaching and chanting
and service, so we will
not become *prakṛta-sahajiyas*.
He kindly accepts my service.
I am not an associate under
the direct care of Svarupa Damodara,
but I am under the care of
Srila Prabhupada and that
is just as good.

Here I published a picture of
Prabhupada in Boston in
1971. I was there with
him, and I carry that
with me even today. Whatever

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

association I had was nectar,
and I continue it now
in separation. May I
find your service as
sweet as nectar. May
I find your service as
sweet as nectar.

By accepting a disciple and handing him his beads, Prabhupada is establishing an eternal personal bond with the person. He or she gets a new spiritual name and is released from previous lives of sinful karma. It is like pulling the plug out from an electric fan. The blades may revolve a few times as they slow down—the disciple may suffer some reactions—but the connection to karma input is stopped. The disciple recites out loud the four sinful activities, no meat eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication and no gambling, and vows to stop them. Prabhupada tells him to chant at least sixteen rounds of the *maha-mantra*, and this is the basis of the honorable bond. If in the course of life, the disciple slips and commits the sinful acts again, he or she can be forgiven if they take up their service again with repentance. The same is true for the promise to keep the quota of sixteen rounds. But one cannot go on repeatedly, deliberately, committing sins on the strength of chanting and expect to be an acceptable disciple.

Prabhupada was criticized by some *smarta-brahmanas* and caste *gosvamis* in India for awarding *harinama* and brahminical initiation to westerners, who are considered to be of a lower caste. But Prabhupada was supported by the *sastras* that state as gold can be manufactured by a combination of base metal and mercury, a low caste man can be made a Brahmin by the chanting of the holy names.

Here he regally sits back and gives out the mercy on behalf of his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. The link is made, and the devotee is raised to the transcendental position in *parampara*, connected to all the *acaryas* and to Krishna Himself. Receiving their beads from Prabhupada's hand is the greatest gift they have been given in this life, and if they use it properly it will save them from the greatest fear at death and give supreme perfection.



Srila Prabhupada was a great humorist. Here in his room in Denver, Colorado, in 1975, he had his three *sannyasi* disciples all breaking up into full laughter. Memory is so faulty I do not remember what produced this magic moment. It is nice to see Srila Prabhupada so relaxed that he is leaning back with his leg, and arm relaxed and cracking jokes to the amusement of his disciples. It is summertime and we are all wearing sandalwood paste smeared on our temples. Although Prabhupada was making a brief stop at a remote place, his table is stocked with all the paraphernalia he needs for his daily work on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and his correspondence. The devotees have provided him with fresh flowers and a table full of devotional pictures. Prabhupada could travel around the world and simulate a similar environment wherever he stayed. His needs were standard and simple, and the devotees everywhere were aware of what to provide and what to cook. Still, the airplane traveling was tiring on his body, and wherever he went he kept a daily schedule of lecturing and meeting devotees individually.

Although he had worldwide managerial burdens which he carried with him wherever he went, he was able to be transcendental to them and relax intimately with a few of his senior men.

I don't see a microphone present so I don't know if this laughing moment is preserved on the database. Perhaps the other devotees present recall what he was saying. I just know it was a joy to see him in this mood and to be spontaneous with the person who was your lord and master. Prabhupada completely controlled the mood and could be grave, formal or witty and relaxed as he chose. It was not up to the disciple when to be in a certain attitude, but it depended on Prabhupada's desires and passing moods. But here is visual evidence that he was not always the person with the sometimes down-turned mouth, appearing almost sternly at the world. And here is evidence that he did not expect his disciples to always sit before him with visages of fear, awe and reverence.

Prabhupada seems amused at something his disciples are doing. He enjoyed many merry moments with them. Although he was a grave personality, he always found something lighthearted in the conducting of his affairs with his disciples. It might be the antics of the children. Or something amusing in his own remarks, or the behavior of one of his disciples. He showed that a pure devotee was jolly and lighthearted, that he was ready at a moment's notice to relish a bit of humor. His devotees loved it when Prabhupada showed these moods, and they readily smiled or laughed with him.

It is not contradictory that a pure devotee is very serious and grave and yet ready to share a bit of humor. He was the judge of when the mood occurred. Sometimes he would be telling a story and the devotees would laugh, and he would say, "Don't laugh. It is not funny." But sometimes he visibly laughed or chuckled at his own stories. Some of the joking stories of the court jester Gopala Ban were so obscure the devotees weren't sharp enough to get the humorous point. He told a few funny stories from Charlie Chaplin films that he might have seen in his youth. He told the story of some naughty boys who put glue on a bench and ripped the formal coattails of Charlie Chaplin. When Chaplin began dancing everyone was amazed and took it to be the latest style, so they also ripped their coat tails. Prabhupada told his funny stories for a point. The ripped coat tails stories was to show how people were so imitative of each other and just wanted to wear the latest styles. He weaves it into his *Bhagavatam* lecture. He's told the story of a man who was mocked for leading a donkey on a leash rather than riding it. But when the man got on the donkey and rode it, he was mocked as being so cruel as to cause a burden for the donkey. A piece of wet stool laughed at a piece of dry stool being burnt in the fire. The wet stool didn't know that as soon as he was dry, he too would be thrown into the fire.

When the king's wife gave birth to a child, he was overjoyed. He asked his court jester, "How do you feel at this moment?" Gopala Ban replied, "I feel as if I had just passed stool." The king became angry at this remark and punished Gopala Ban. At another time, the king was being rowed in a boat by Gopala Ban. The king had to evacuate, and he called Gopala Ban to pull over to the shore. Gopala Ban said, "I can't get there just yet, there are ferocious animals here." A little later the king insisted that he had to go, and Gopala Ban should stop the boat. Gopala Ban replied, "I cannot pull over yet. It is very muddy on the shore here." After several more delays the king insisted Gopala Ban pull over, no matter what. When the king finally evacuated, Gopala Ban asked him, "How do you feel now?" "Oh, I feel very happy," said the king. Gopala Ban replied, "Now you know what I meant when you asked me how I felt when your baby was born."

Sometimes Prabhupada told a funny story without tagging it onto a purport in the philosophy. Whatever he did was wonderful with us.

The devotees always got excited and ecstatic when Prabhupada was in their midst. Their love for what he brought to their lives and the charisma of his presence made them smile and dance and made them want to take his photo, audio and video. He was the most important celebrity to them, more than the president of the United States or any popular entertainer. This response to Prabhupada by the devotees created scenes which seemed fanatical to outsiders. Why should these young people be so much attracted to this "old man"? The outsiders didn't understand. Prabhupada was bringing Krishna, the Supreme Lord, to the devotees. He was Krishna's direct representative. They wanted to record and retain his transcendental words and capture a visual image of his holy form. They wanted to make eye contact with him, to catch his attention and if possible, his smile.

As it turns out, none of this behavior was exaggerated. Prabhupada was with us for only a few years, and the meetings were rare. Capturing his voice on tape or a picture of his form has become a great solace and important inspiration since his disappearance. The devotees did not overdo their enthusiasm for being near Prabhupada. He deserved every bit of it.

For his own part, Prabhupada sometimes expressed annoyance at being photographed so much and recorded by multiple tape recorders. But he considered the recordings of his lectures important and did it himself with his own tape recorder in 1966. The crowds of eager devotees pressing to be near him may seem amusing or overdone to an outsider, but the devotees were right in their *guru-bhakti* and it never went in vain.

Again I like to be with you to linger with you, to read out loud, to read silently in my best time what you have to say. These amazing activities. It's really *adbhuta* (amazing). It's not ordinary literature you used to say. It's not like Shakespeare or Tagore, speculation or fiction and so on. Imagination. These are facts of the spiritual world written by devotees who are great literary masters in their language of Sanskrit and poetry. And also good thinkers, original thinkers. But foremost they are faithful repeaters of the Vedic *parampara*. Passing down what Krishna taught the sun-god:

*imam vivasvate yogam
proktavan aham avyayam
vivasvan manave praha
manur iksvakave 'bravit.* (Bg. 4.1)

And as Krishna said to Arjuna that *sa evayam maya te 'dya yogam proktah puratanah, bhakto 'si me sakha ceti rahasyam hy etad uttamam*, You are My devotee, you are My friend so I'm telling you this mystery of *Bhagavad-gita*. You can understand it. (Bg. 4.3)

You have the mystery, Srila Prabhupada, because you're the devotee, you're the friend of the Lord. Through your spiritual master you serve Krishna directly and so you can give it to us. And you ask us and train us how we can also become *bhakto 'si* just by always being engaged in your service. So we read the books and let's hope that we also get up from our books and serve you in various ways. But sometimes you said, "If all you can do is read my books then go ahead and do that. But don't sleep."

What I'm saying here Prabhupada, is I'm thanking you for your books, of course, and I will continue to do that. But I'm thanking you for letting us be with you in a personal relationship as you write the books. Because it's not only Krishna and the verses we get, but we get to be with you. And as the prayer teachers point out to us, this is the real thing, to linger with the Lord, to linger with the pure devotee. Yes in order to hear from him and we can do that, but we want to do it with sense of personal presence and our fixed position as your devotee just hearing you and just being there attentively taking in the message. If I can be like that when I read then I can read better. I say I'm here with Srila Prabhupada, he's using his Dictaphone, he's composing it. Or he's speaking it in a conversation in his room. Not just to imitate or reflect from what you did when you were here, but now he's with me on a different level. For anyone who can tune in to the spiritual message preserved in the books by reading them, the books are not passive. The book

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

begins to talk to him, and he hears from the book and he may speak back to the book, to the writer of the book. It's a live thing by the magic of spiritual books. A little bit we know about that in material books, but it really works in these books where we can associate with Rupa Gosvami, Raghunatha Gosvami, Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Gosvami and the one who is gathering it together to give it to us in his words for our time and for our mentality, for our needs. That is wanted you said.

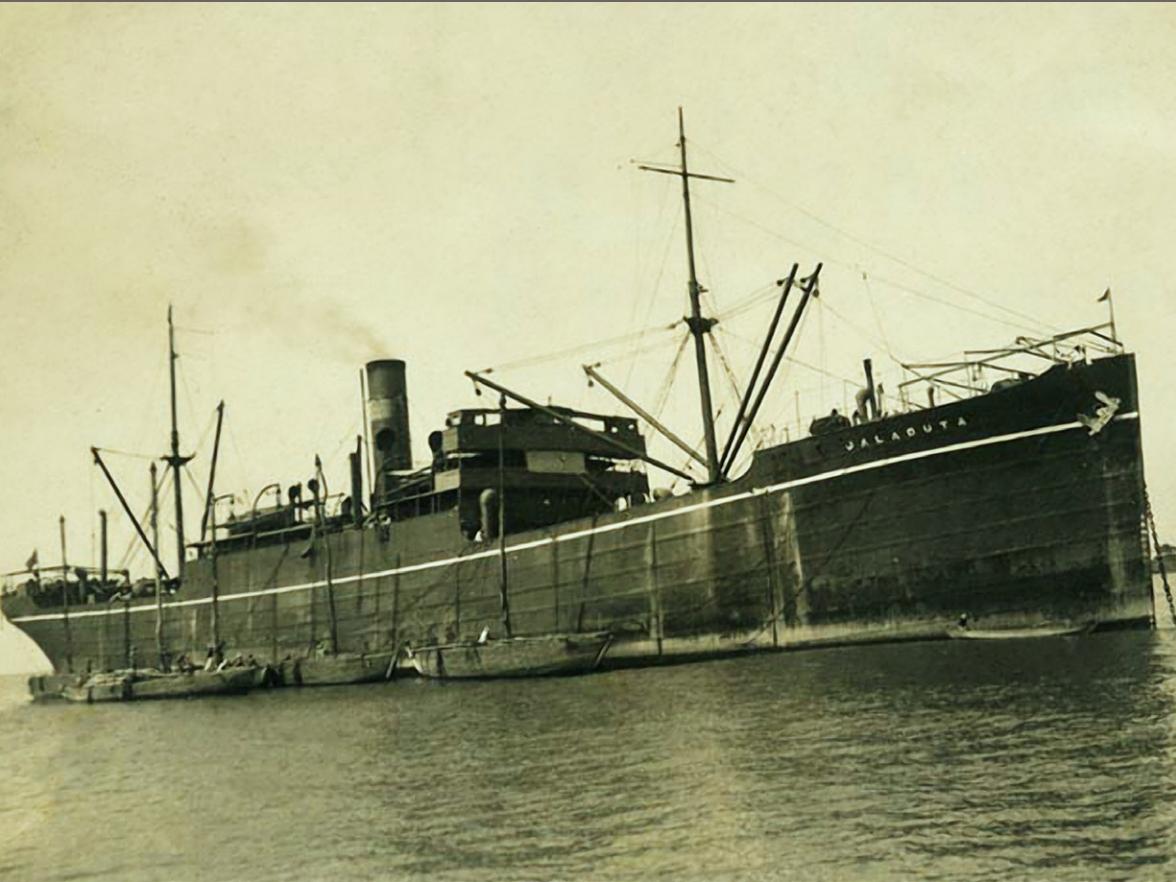
Dear Srila Prabhupada, I'll be ending this now. I was talking loudly, of course, hearing my voice speaking as if to a group, but you know it was true also that I'm speaking to you here and that's what I want to continue to do at least twice a day. Hare Krishna. All glories to you Srila Prabhupada.



Prabhupada and Sumati Morarji of Scindia Company sit together giving speeches acknowledging the favors she did for him when he was a poor *sannyasi* trying to publish his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and trying to get passage to America. Acting as a pious lady within the Hindu culture, she received him as a *sannyasi* beggar and agreed to pay for publishing one of the volumes of his First Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. (He had to wait many hours before she would give him an audience.) After she paid for his book, Prabhupada

remembered her and approached her again when he had the urgent opportunity to go to America. Without a great sacrifice she gave him free passage aboard a cargo ship, the *Jaladuta*, headed for New York. At first she did not agree. Her secretaries warned her that Prabhupada, being so old and in fragile health, might die enroute. From a worldly point of view, this was not such a wild speculation. But Bhaktivedanta Swami had his way with Sumati Morarji. He impressed her with his saintliness and his determination. Although she received some conservative advice not to let the old man ride on their steamship, she asserted her authority and gave him permission.

For this act of kindness she will always be remembered by Prabhupada's followers, and she will go down in history as a great benefactor to the world. During the first year in New York, when Srila Prabhupada did not have his own place, and when he did not make any progress in preaching, he thought of using his return ticket and going back to India. He wrote to Mrs. Morarji, and she encouraged him to stay in America until he had completed his mission. This word of support helped his spirit to remain in New York and renew his visa to stay in America.



THE MIRACLE

Krishna was with Prabhupada
on the *Jaladuta*.

Prabhupada was so brave and
all alone, “The ship was plying
smoothly,” but if the Atlantic
had shown its real face perhaps
he would have died.

He would have died, and the message
would never have been delivered by
the Swami. On the *Jaladuta* with Prabhupada,
Krishna appeared in all His
forms. He appeared in
Caitanya-caritamrta, in the love,
Swami stood at the rail of the fragile steamship
rocking back and forth.

“I have only You and Your holy name
and the mission of my
spiritual master,”
he thought. He had eight
dollars. He wore his pointy
white shoes and his worn
chadara. He appeared to be a poor man making
a daring chance at the end
of his life.

Would he make it? Could he communicate
to the people of America? They were in the modes
of passion and ignorance.
He had *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.
He had great guts,
transcendental bravery.
There was never a one like
him to take such a chance
and talking with Krishna

like his brother on the
ship praying “I am
unqualified and incompetent.
Please make me dance. You must have
brought me to this place for some reason,
otherwise why have I come here?”
He had faith something
would happen, somehow,
he would find some *jivas*
who would listen to
him, and he would
be able to get through to
them.

It was an impossible dream.
He barely spoke the language.
He had a three-month visa.
Nowhere to stay,
no one to support him.
He looked so different.
He spoke of Krishna, a
Hindu god. They would
tell him “Go home, we
don’t want to hear about
this.”

What were his chances,
one in a million.
Krishna was with him
on the ship. The two were
like brothers. He thought of
frolicking with Krishna in the
fields. He carried his
spiritual master’s orders.
I am so glad he came. They
ask me what it was like.
It was something extraordinary.
It was rare. A *sadhu* from
India. Somehow it caught on.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

The time was right,
the young people were ripe,
the Swami made himself
understandable and lovable.
From nothing, something
develops, a few dollars came
in, some very young men came
and sang with him in the
storefront. They even took it out,
to Tompkins Square Park., “Swami
chants in park to find ecstasy.”
Save earth now.

Krishna was on the boat with him.
He had to endure two heart attacks
and so much patience. He
felt separation from Vrindavana
his hometown, the abode
of Radha and Krishna.
But he made it in New
York City. They asked me
what was it like when I first met him. I told them.
I’m telling them, it was
a home-made miracle, a
transformation, a wonderful
thing on the Lower East Side.



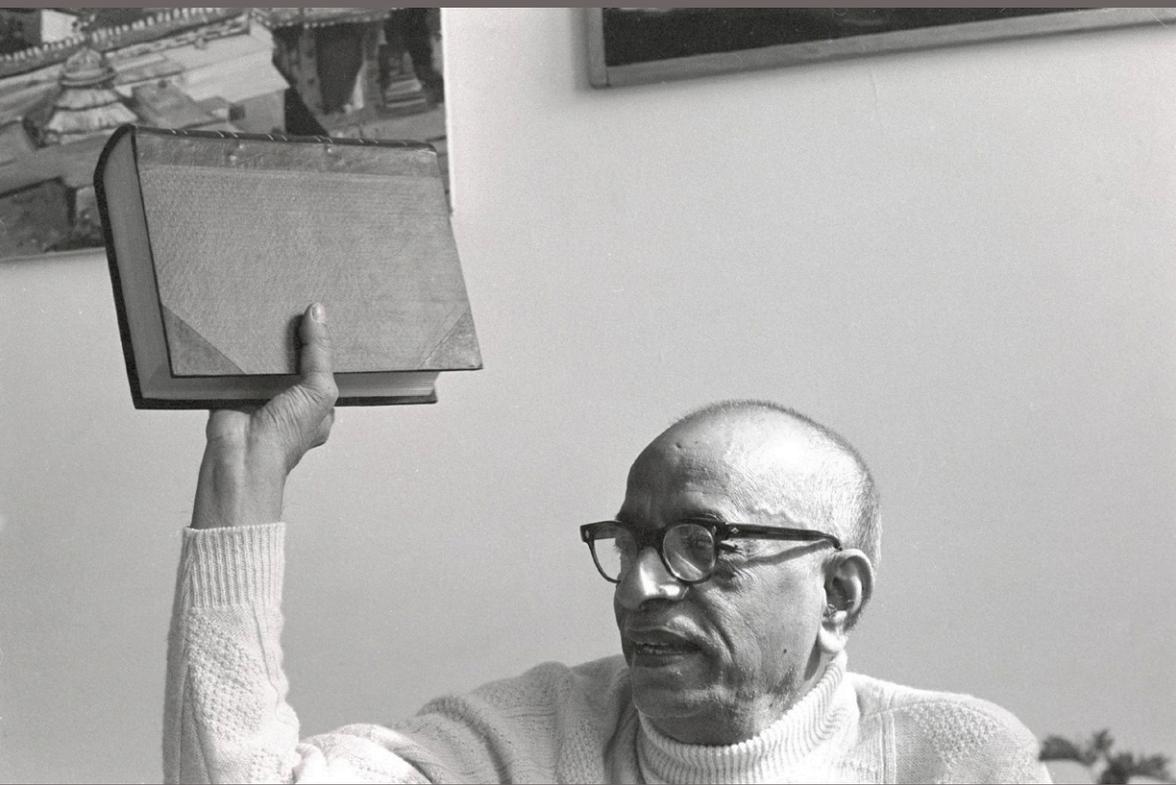
In the spring of 1966 Srila Prabhupada had to move out of the Bowery loft because his roommate, Mr. David, was having LSD trips and had insulted Prabhupada and threatened him. Prabhupada asked Michael Grant if he could find him another place “in a respectable neighborhood.” Twenty-six Second Avenue was hardly a respectable neighborhood, but it was better than the world famous skid row, the Bowery. This is 26 Second Avenue in an early stage, but when it was already operating as a three nights a week *kirtana* and lecture program. The tiny white piece of paper in the window has been replaced by restaurant type sign. And one can see the name of the establishment and the classes. Later Srila Prabhupada would post the title of the lecture for the night, and it was one of my first services to change them according to the title of the lecture. It took a long time for “Matchless Gifts” to be replaced by “Radha Krishna Temple.” In fact, I am not sure if it was ever done. The painting of the *sankirtana* group of Panca-tattva was done by Harvey Cohen, later initiated as Haridasa. On the other side of the painting, near the announcement sign, was the low level shelf put there by the previous proprietor. When the room functioned as the temple the shelf became a space to put the smelly shoes of the congregation. To the left of the storefront was a launderette. It says, “Open 24 hours,” but the metal shutter is closed shut. The red door in-between is the entrance to the apartment building in the back courtyard where Swamiji rented an apartment on the second floor. The courtyard was picturesque for the Lower East Side with a few weedy trees, plants and cement benches.

Prabhupada very much liked his setup of storefront and private rear apartment although he could barely raise the rent each month. To have the phone installed one had to make a large down payment to Con Edison. But by his personal charm he went to Con Edison and convinced them to install the phone free of charge because he was a religious mendicant and was conducting an important mission. But he soon became so disturbed by people calling him on the phone in the night time that he had it removed. He used to look out the window of his apartment at the view on First Street. He would repeatedly say about his stay at 26 Second Avenue (ISKCON kept it until 1968.), “those were happy days.” On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the hall would be half filled with guests, and once he started Sunday Feasts it was filled to capacity, even overflowing into the courtyard. Sometimes Bowery bums and disheveled young hippies would wander into the storefront without a purpose of spirituality. Swamiji would allow them to sit if they did not make a disturbance. If they disturbed he would ask one of his boys, like Brahmananda or Hayagriva, to remove them.



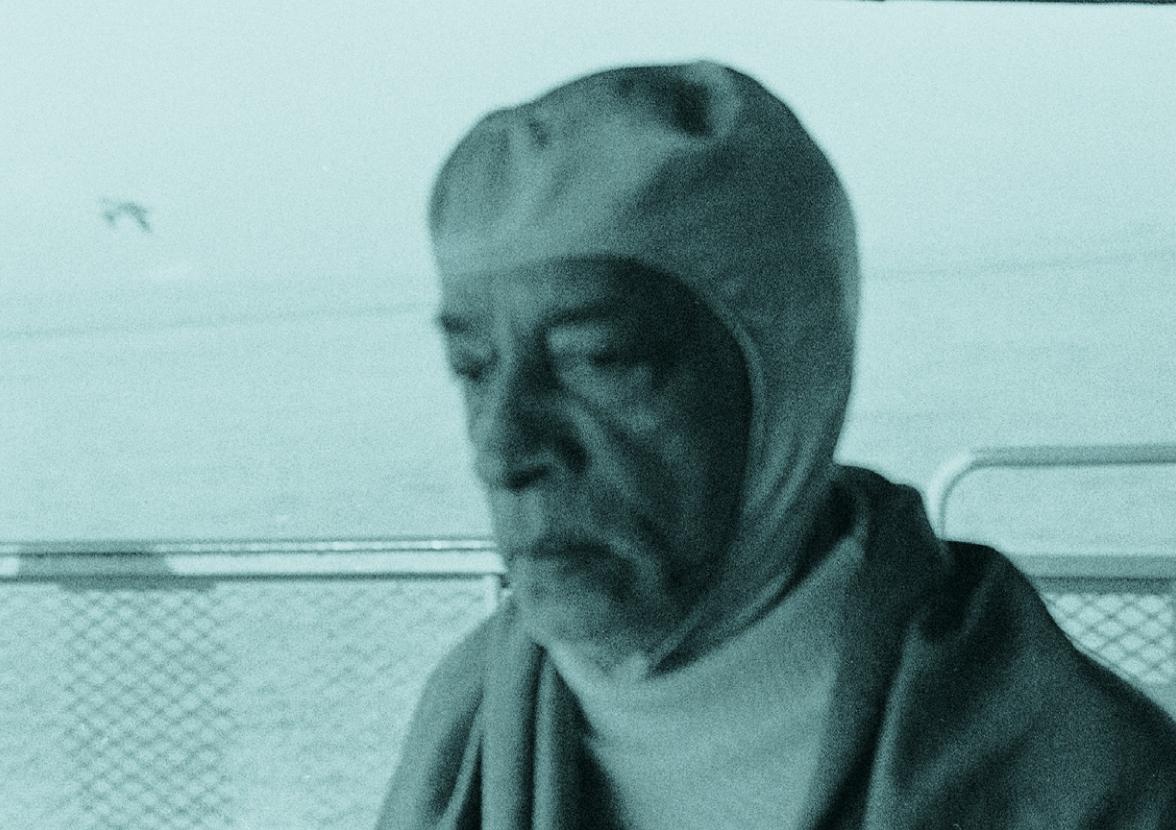
This looks like the early painting done by a first initiate, Haridasa (Harvey Cohen), which was placed in the picture window of the Matchless Gifts storefront. Haridasa gave Prabhupada permission to stay in his artist's loft in the Bowery with a roommate, and then Harvey went to California. But he gave this painting which he had done to Prabhupada, who used it in a new storefront at 26 Second Avenue. Some passersby took the young persons with long hair as women or transvestites. But they were naturally critical and thought the long-haired young dancers were strange. (They didn't stop to think that if Lord Jesus raised his arms and danced he would look much like the men in this *sankirtana* party.) Some passersby were intrigued, couldn't figure it out, but liked the occult aura. After a few weeks of operation, Prabhupada had people inside the storefront up on their feet and dancing like the figures in the painting. Then the painting made more sense and became an invitation to come on in and join the *sankirtana* song and dance.

The picture shows Lord Caitanya in a yellow *dhoti*, Lord Nityananda in a bluish *dhoti*, Advaita Acarya in a full white beard and white *dhoti*, Gadadhara, with arms upraised, in reddish *dhoti*, and Srivasa Acarya with shaved head and hands in *pranamas*. Perhaps Haridasa Thakura is playing the *mrdanga*. There are other dancers and players in the background. While a little strange for the Lower East Side hippies, it is certainly perceivable as a group of mind-expanding, ecstatic nonconformists, Lord Caitanya's *sankirtana* party, first appearing on Second Avenue in an otherwise bare window front under a big sign, "Matchless Gifts."



This picture was taken there, in Swamiji's room at 26 Second Avenue. It shows him lifting up an unusual looking book. By the binding and size you can tell it is not one of his *Srimad-Bhagavatams* from India. Perhaps it is one of the books containing the *acaryas'* commentaries which Prabhupada used in his writing work. The book is so large that a few sentimental devotees said Prabhupada is here demonstrating divine powers of weight lifting. The claim is absurd. The book is not *that* heavy, and before his stroke in 1967, Prabhupada was quite strong. He used to chant *kirtana* loudly for three hours every Sunday in Tompkins Square Park. Even after his illness, when he recovered in India, he began touring the world widely and giving many lectures and private talks. He slept only a few hours daily and rose at 1 A.M. to write. He sometimes became ill from his strain, but he never claimed he was working under miraculous powers. He was very humble about that.

When a man in India asked Prabhupada to explain the *rasa* dance, Prabhupada said he was unable to do it, even though he had written it elaborately in *Krishna* book. Another man challenged Prabhupada to prove he had the realization of *sama-darsanam* (as stated in *Bhagavad-gita*), the ability to see Krishna in the heart of every living entity. Prabhupada told the man he had no such power. But then he told him the power that he did have. He said he had been able to make Vaishnavas of thousands of young people who had formerly been drunkards and drug addicts. He was able to see Krishna in their hearts and administer the medicine of chanting and hearing which converted them from meat eating *mlecchas* to refined Vaishnavas and *brahmanas*. The man was very impressed and left the room repeating to himself, "He sees Krishna in everyone's heart." So this was the miraculous ability that Prabhupada readily admitted he possessed. He said he had it, however, only by his one hundred percent following his spiritual master, and he strictly followed the path chalked out by Lord Caitanya. We should not look to Prabhupada's lifting a heavy book to prove he is a *maha-bhagavata* but to his amazing powers to change sinful persons into servants of Krishna and humanity, from hippies to happies.



These are photos of Srila Prabhupada traveling in New York City. In 1965 he went out into the streets by himself. He took long walks just to acquaint himself with the city, and he rode the buses and subways. Sometimes he went to bookstores like the Orientalia and placed his books there on consignment. They would pay him only if they sold the books. He survived the winter of 1965–66 without boots for the snows. One day he woke up and looked out the window and saw snow for the first time covering the side of the wall of a building. At first he thought it was whitewash, but soon he walked outside in his rubber slippers to go shopping at the local small grocery. He kept accounts of his expenditures in a small record book. He had very little money and postage stamps to India—to his godbrothers and to possible donors asking for assistance—ate up considerably from his meager funds. He gathered some money from the sales of his books, but not much. He was poor and except for the hospitality of Dr. Mishra who gave him a windowless studio to stay in, he was homeless. When he moved to the Bowery as a roommate to David, he didn't have to pay rent, but David taking LSD drove Prabhupada out of the Bowery loft for his own safety. Only when he moved to 26 Second Avenue did more serious followers attend who donated from their salaries enough to pay his food and rent.

Factually, it was dangerous for Prabhupada to wander around Manhattan alone, and especially when he moved to the Bowery and took morning walks. Only in the second picture do we see him accompanied by a young companion. The young man is Gargamuni. Prabhupada used to playfully tease him for not shaving his head and for maintaining “Shakespearean locks.” But Gargamuni was a loyal follower and he raised money for the temple by buying loose incense and packaging it and selling it in the head shops and in the temple. For his ability to raise money, Srila Prabhupada nicknamed him “Gargamoney”. Here they are riding on a city bus. Prabhupada looks full faced, healthy, strong, and not very old. I once traveled alone with Prabhupada to see a lawyer on Chamber Street for his immigration status. Walking in the crowded streets I commented, “The city is like a jungle. Except it has no snakes.” Prabhupada quipped, “What about Mr. Price?” referring to a real estate man who had tried to cheat us out of five thousand dollars. On the bus going back to 26 Second Avenue, I pulled the buzzer one block too early and Prabhupada corrected me. “You pulled it too soon. It is the next stop.” I had lived in the city for three years, but he knew his way around better than I did. In all things material and spiritual he was as sharp as a tack and could not be cheated, even by New Yorkers.



Here is Prabhupada in the temple room at 61 Second Avenue in New York City. This was the second temple in the City, and Prabhupada did not visit there much. The devotees did not stay there long either but moved to an ex-convent on Henry St. in Brooklyn (that was in a tough Italian neighborhood and devotees sometimes had trouble with the neighbors, but it was a wonderful period of ISKCON history when many devotees joined). In this picture Prabhupada is sitting on a thin pillow on the floor instead of up at the lectern, because he is performing an initiation. Brahmananda, Kirtanananda and Jayadvaita are visible on the picture. It is around 1968–69. When Brahmananda purchased 61 Second Ave. he wrote to Prabhupada that it was “a palace,” but it was not very big and not such an outstanding improvement over the 26 Second Ave. (By comparison in Boston we had just purchased a much bigger house, and Los Angeles was on the verge of obtaining their spacious Watseka Ave. complex.)

Prabhupada let his disciples manage and purchase buildings in America with a free hand. He said it was their money, and they were free to spend it as they saw fit. When he moved his operations to India he was much more hands on and a direct manager in all affairs of choosing or constructing buildings, but wherever he went and whatever his disciples provided him Prabhupada accepted it and gathered his children around him to direct them in Krishna consciousness. Here, performing an initiation ceremony was one of his vital tasks. It was the way he increased the family of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. Prabhupada was not as interested in the buildings as he was in new devotees and giving them his association. And he was more interested in his writing, publishing and distributing his books. Temple life was also important for the association of devotees and congregation; and in America, he depended on his young, inexperienced men to find suitable buildings for headquarters.



I love my Srila Prabhupada, even when externally he does not appear happy and his mouth is a bit distorted. I know that internally he is always all right, surrendered to guru and Krishna and feeling transcendental bliss. He appeared to tolerate old age and disease, but in actuality he had a spiritualized body. It is always wrong to judge him as an ordinary man. He took deep pleasure and satisfaction in fulfilling his expanding duties of traveling to temples and tending to disciples and creating new followers for Lord Caitanya.

Here he is again on a *vyasasana* (it looks like New Vrindavana), playing *karatalas* and prepared to speak *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He never tired of his routine of *kirtana* and lecture and neither did his disciples. There was always something new, something deepening in the process and in the relationship. He was situated far above us, but he patiently fed us the nectar of Vedic topics and helped us gradually advance from our novice status.

The devotees prepared beautiful chairs with pillows and upholstery, and he fit into them perfectly, fulfilling the role of founder-*acarya* wherever he went. He played the *karatalas* expertly, and the devotees' hearts rang with joy. They were completely respectful and submissive to him, and he *commanded* this, he didn't demand it. A crowded temple room full of devotees watch his every move, and some of them think he is looking at them only. This was a phenomenon that regularly occurred. In fact, his eyes roamed throughout the room to each and every soul. They knew they were fortunate to be in his presence, and their hearts and minds went out to him, just wishing to be accepted as his student and servant. In the somber visage of Prabhupada, he controls all those devotees who are fortunate enough to attend this occasion and surrender to him.

THE SWEETEST KARATALA SWING EVER

In the beginning, in the summer of 1966 at 26 Second Avenue, Prabhupada played the one-headed bongo drum in leading the *kirtana*. We had about three pairs of *karatalas*, and they were played by the boys. One-two-three, one-two-three. Later a friend donated a big size *khol* (an Indian wooden drum with straps and pegs, different than the clay *mrdanga*). Prabhupada began playing that, and you can hear it on the *Happening* record album *kirtana* that was produced in December of 1966. After Prabhupada suffered his stroke on Memorial Day in 1967, he didn't play the *mrdanga* again except for studio engagements where they recorded him for *bhajanas*. He would have liked to lead full *kirtanas*, but his disciples "restricted" him, saying it was too strenuous, and he went along with the restriction. Then he played *karatalas* or occasionally a brass gong with a wooden peg, but mostly *karatalas*.

He was a very artistic *karatala* player. He would play the fast two beats of the three-beat rhythm by holding the cloths very tightly, but on the third beat he would relax the cloths and slide a kind of "splash" sound almost akin to what a jazz drummer does with his cymbal. It would produce a lively, melodious ring and then he would tighten the cloths again for the first two beats of the rhythm. You can see in this photo how he moves his pointing finger to produce the clashing together of the cymbals for the third beat. He played variations of this method, sometimes playing almost four beats or clashing the cymbals in a clapping way on the first two beats. The devotees loved to hear him play and to sing along in *kirtana* with him. Such a simple time-keeping musical instrument, and yet he played it like a maestro. Now almost anyone with a sense of rhythm can passably play the *karatalas* and some *kirtaneers* play them even more complicated than Prabhupada did, but there was not—and will not be—anyone who played them as sweetly and rhythmically as he did.

He often participated with the *karatalas* while his disciples lead the *kirtana* in the later years. Yet in the beginning at 26 Second Avenue, Prabhupada led all the *kirtanas*. It was unthinkable that a *kirtana* could take place without him leading. It was like a holy rite that only he could perform. He did it with great concentration and loudly. He would keep the same tune and tempo, only gradually speeding up after a half-hour. He did the same thing two or three hours continually when he chanted on Sundays at Tompkins Square Park.



He was an expert *karatala* player too and made a unique sound with the one-two-three beat. Up until his final days he wanted his followers to chant *kirtanas* in his presence. The *acaryas* say chanting out loud is even more important than chanting quietly to yourself, because by vocal chanting you give other people a chance to become purified by hearing the holy names.

Even when he was very weak on his last visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor in England, he would sit in his chair in the temple room wearing dark glasses and softly clap his hands while the devotees chanted and danced enthusiastically before him for long periods of time. At the end, when he was confined to his bed and wasn't even talking, he requested small groups of devotees to always sit beside him, and, accompanied by one small set of *karatalas*, chant for him all day and night. The devotees would take shifts. When the doctor asked him which medicine he wanted, he said only the *harinama* would be sufficient. He has set the example to always chant Hare Krishna *mantra*. In this photo Srila Prabhupada plays *karatalas* with a somber expression. Microphones are set up beside him on a large *vyasana*. The

book is usually placed before him on the desk. When the *kirtana* is over he will begin his lecture. He is always confident in what he speaks. He recites a verse from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and starts from there. But he expands the topic from the original subject matter and freely improvises with related Krishna conscious *slokas*, examples, stories and lessons as they occur to him. He ranges widely and spontaneously but never wanders off the *parampara*, never enters speculation or mundane talk.

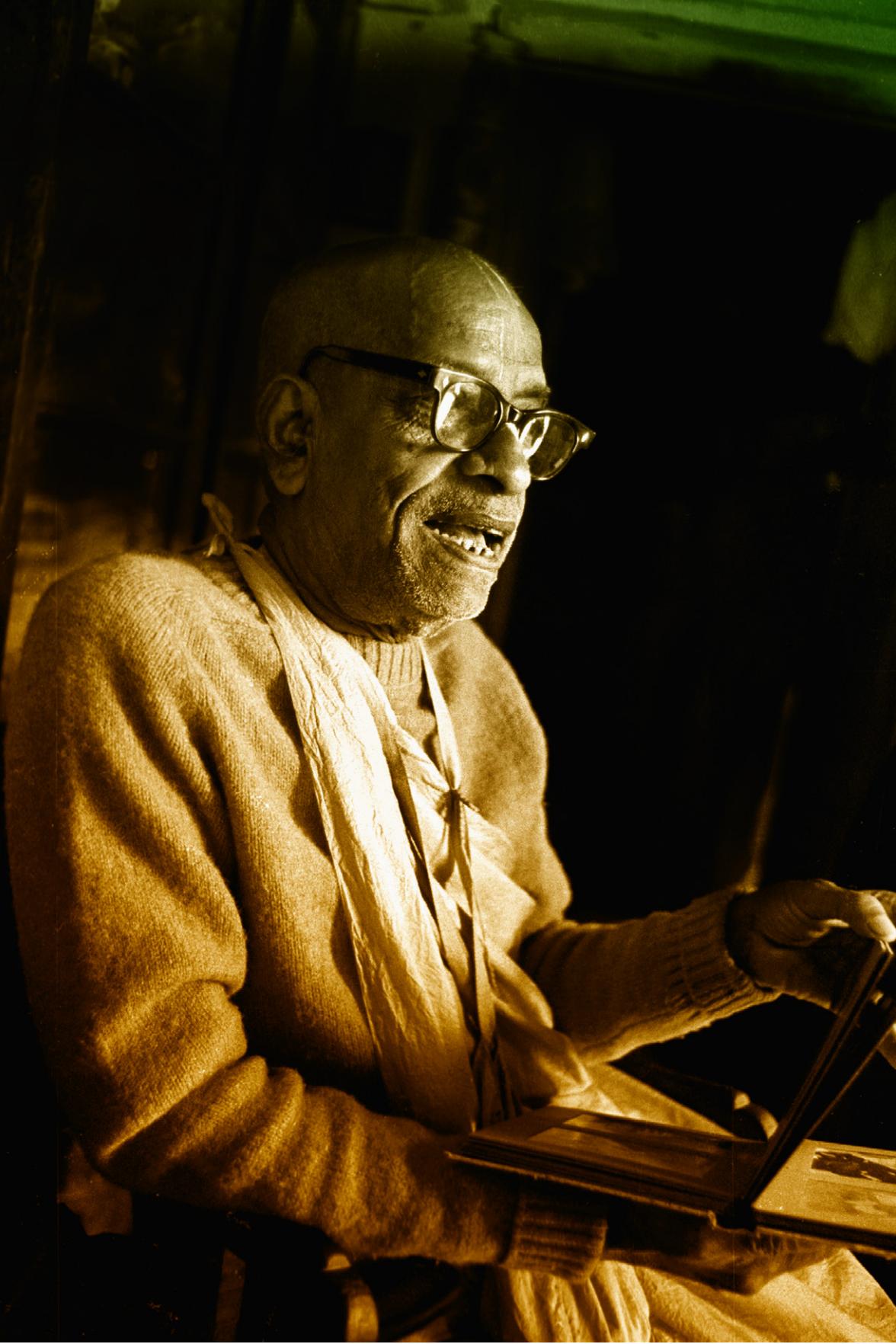
The solution to all the world's problems is Krishna consciousness. He doesn't avoid Krishna or speak in a vague way. Rather, he emphasizes personalism, *bhakti*, or devotional service to Krishna.

In describing Lord Caitanya speaking to a Muslim saintly person, Prabhupada told how Mahaprabhu defeated the Muslim's attempt to establish impersonalism on the basis of the Koran. He proved that in its ultimate conclusion, the Koran teaches that God or Allah is the Supreme Person, and all energies come from Him. He always taught against impersonalism, especially the Mayavadi doctrines taught by Vedic practitioners coming from Sankara. He usually spared some time to speak on the nectar of Krishna's pastimes in Vraja and point out that in Vrindavana Krishna displays His all-attractive form. Here he appears to be in *samadhi*, *romanca-kampasru-taranga-bhajo*, with his eyes closed, relishing the holy names and anticipating his impromptu and yet deeply prepared speech on his beloved, *govindam-adi-purusam-tam-aham-bhajami*.

*anyavilasita sunyam jnana karmady anavrtam
anukulyena krsnanu silanam bhaktir uttama*

“The continuous, unbroken cultivation of all endeavors of the body, mind, words and loving feelings of the heart, under the guidance of the self-realized guru, which is meant exclusively for both the happiness and benefit of Lord Krishna, which is completely untouched by even the slightest smell of any type of other external desire, and which is not covered by karma, *jnana* or yoga. This is called pure *bhakti*.”





I am looking at this photo of Srila Prabhupada and writing this with a headache, and it reminds me of the time I was sick when I was in Prabhupada's presence as his traveling servant and secretary. I contracted hepatitis in Bombay, and by the time we reached Rome I was completely yellow and had to give up my duties and stay distant from Srila Prabhupada. There was no bed or room for me, and I lay on the floor in a room near the kitchen. Prabhupada would pass me on his way to and from lectures, and I would bow down but then lay back on the floor, I was so weak. Then Bhagavan Dasa told me that Prabhupada said if I did not recover he would leave me behind in Rome and not take me with him to Geneva. I became so frightened of being left behind that I forced myself to get better, and he took me with him. But in Germany I contracted a high fever and couldn't massage him, and then in Australia, I grew a big boil on my knee.

As for Srila Prabhupada, he was frequently ill. Ever since his two major heart attacks on the Jaladuta and his stroke in New York City in 1967, he had a series of colds, stomach disorders, and other bodily ailments. He did not complain or announce his illnesses, and sometimes only his intimate physical servants were aware. Once during a lecture in 1966 he was coughing so much that he gave himself as a philosophical example. "Just see," he said, "this body is always giving trouble." Once in Los Angeles he had such a bad cough that he was constantly spitting up phlegm into a cup while he gave his lecture. Sometimes he seemed to bounce back and have periods of good health, but then again he would have a relapse. Once in Mayapur in 1973 he called me into his room and asked if I knew a cure for stomach disorder. Did I know a place that had curative waters? I was dumbfounded that he asked me, and felt like a complete ignoramus because I did not know of any curative waters. During this same stay in Mayapur he developed a sore red eye. Once when he was rubbing it, his disciple Devananda Maharaja said, "Don't rub your eye, Prabhupada, it will get infected." Srila Prabhupada replied curtly, "The spiritual master is never infected." Prabhupada was a pure devotee and above karmic reactions, and his appearance of disease was not a case of material conditioning.

But as long as he was in this world, he underwent suffering just to deliver fallen souls. He disregarded his health and was not a dutiful patient to the doctors he consulted. He used to periodically make miraculous recoveries from his illnesses. I was with him in Calcutta in 1973 when he got stomach cramps from eating his sister's rich food. He was moaning in bed and asked us to put a picture of Lord Nrsimha on the altar. But then he received a

flamboyant telegram from Syamasundara Dasa inviting him to a gala Ratha Yatra festival in London. The next day Srila Prabhupada got up from his sickbed, flew to London, and walked the whole way with the procession. Who can understand the activities of the pure devotee? The French philosopher Voltaire was called “a fabulous invalid” because he was mostly sick but always prolific and active. Srila Prabhupada may often have appeared to be sick, but he never stopped his active life of traveling, writing, preaching and worshiping Krishna. You cannot say he was a sickly person but a great soldier and transcendentalist in Lord Caitanya’s army, *yadi papi chadi dharma dure dese yaya, mora senapati-bhakta yaibe tathaya*.

Dear Srila Prabhupada,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to you. I would like to receive a comforting, compassionate communication from you. It has been over thirty-three years since I have received a letter from you. But I hear you in your books every day. And our relationship is well established. I have been assured of your love and guidance in my life. Just this morning I heard your purports in *Caitanya Caritamṛta*. You were writing that before Lord Caitanya appeared, Advaita Acarya was teaching pure devotional service with no mixture of *jnana*, mystic yoga or unnecessary austerities. You spoke for your own movement and said sometimes you are criticized for not teaching *jnana* and yoga. But, fortunately, you said, you never compromise but teach only pure Krishna consciousness. I'm glad you never compromised. I'm glad for all those special favors you showed me. You appointed me secretary of ISKCON New York, and I had to sign all the checks before any expenditure was authorized by Gargamuni, the treasurer. I'm glad you sent me to Boston alone, to "sound off the big cannon of Krishna consciousness." I was a timid preacher, but you put your trust in me. Before I left for Boston I had a last meeting with you, and as I bowed down before you, you rubbed your hand up and down my back. That gesture fortified me for all the austerities I had to meet in Bean Town among the ruffians there. You and Brahmananda, the president of New York, sent Damodara and Jadurani to join me. Hamsaduta and his wife Himavati had already joined me. I went to work everyday in the welfare office and on the weekend we would go out and chant at the Boston Commons. You dealt with us through letters in such a close and family way. I was not just your disciple but your son, and I did whatever you asked. We gave lectures at the colleges. You were in India recuperating your health. We waited on your mail and did our little preaching.

I remember you fondly. You returned to San Francisco in the beginning of 1968, and then we Boston devotees came to visit you when you visited New York. There were only a few of us in Boston, and we struggled to carry on, but you considered us important and worthy and visited us for a full month in the spring of 1968. You gave many college lectures. We all loved you and hung on your every word and were obedient. Please keep alive my simple devotion to you now, even though so many things have changed over the years and so much time has passed.

Your servant
SDG

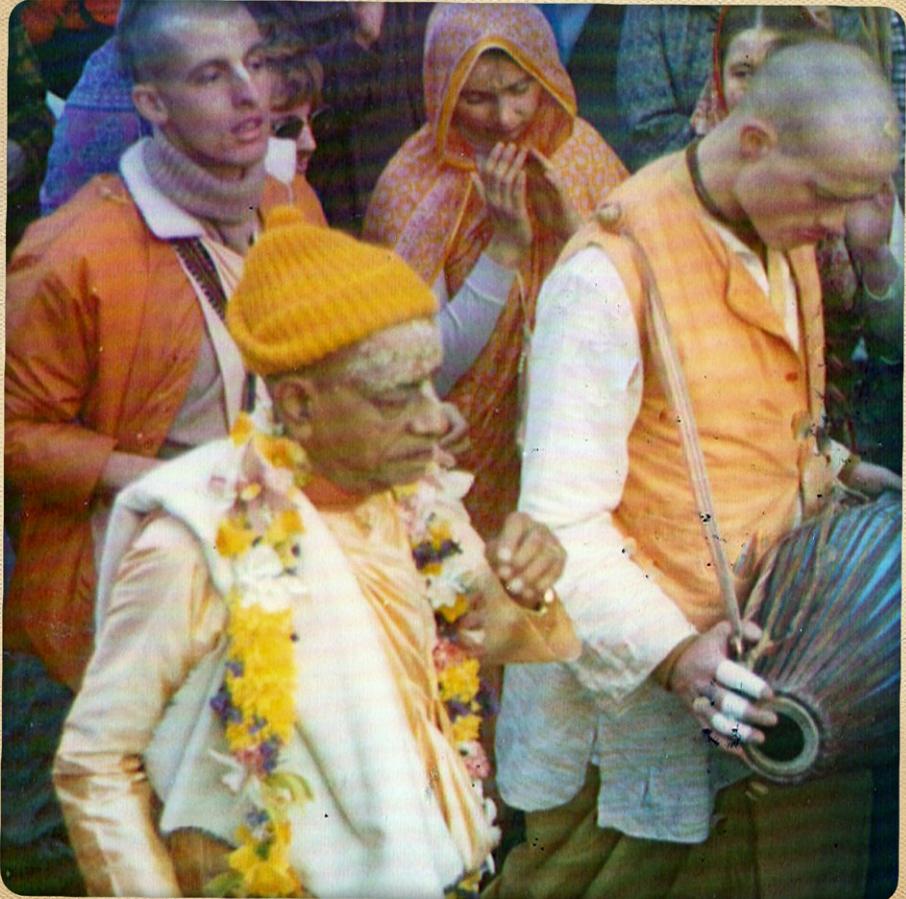


This is Prabhupada arriving at a Honolulu airport in January 1974. I had been his servant-secretary for just a few weeks in Los Angeles, and I was eager, fresh and feeling myself a special person. Bali-madan Prabhu had given up *sannyasa* to marry the “Toyota” heiress (and it later became a mystery to us why Prabhupada allowed it). Here she is sprinkling some flowers on his path while he walks contentedly covered with garlands and carrying one in his hand. In Honolulu they put Prabhupada and his servants up in a skyscraper hotel at some distance from the temple. Life was quiet and private there, and Prabhupada spent time sitting on a terrace watching the people on a beach; he disapprovingly said they were all jumping like monkeys in the surf. When he later saw the surfers close up, he said they would come back in their next lives as fish for their ardent proclivity for mixing in the sea. I had to cook, massage, type his letters and manage *Back to Godhead* magazine from a distance, and I felt it was too much to do. I told my plight to Prabhupada, and he said Pradyumna should help me with the cooking. Pradyumna discovered a way to cook the *capatis* on an electric stove by using a metal coat hanger and they puffed up nicely. In reading Prabhupada his mail I could see how he was struggling to maintain a worldwide movement. He said paying attention to the management gave him a headache, but if he did not pay attention to it, it would give him another kind of headache. He received a letter from a GBC man in India saying he wanted to resign because his *sannyasi* godbrothers were bullying him. Prabhupada wrote back that there was no question of resigning, and he offered him support. While we were in Honolulu we got a phone call that his leader in Los Angeles had left his post. Two senior devotees flew to Hawaii to get direction from Prabhupada, and he had to deal with that. We also received a phone call from Rupanuga that a demoniac person had thrown a fire bomb in a window of their preaching center in the southern USA and a devotee had been burned to death.

Aside from the heavy news, life in Honolulu was pleasant. Prabhupada traveled early to the temple every morning and gave lectures and took part in lively *kirtanas* lead by Sudama Maharaja. He took pleasant walks on Waikiki Beach. I remained in high spirits and was ready when Prabhupada announced we were next traveling to Tokyo and Hong Kong on our way to India.

I had already arranged to transfer from being Prabhupada's servant to being his library party leader, but I was enjoying my last days as his servant. The Ratha Yatra in Melbourne was a gala affair. There were three large carts, and the parade was led by a Scottish bagpipe band. Prabhupada decided to walk with the parade the whole way. He wore a yellow knit hat and flashy silk *sannyasa* clothes. He draped a wool white *chadara* over his right shoulder. He wore a huge many-colored garland that went down almost to his feet. It was very intimate walking close beside him and playing *karatalas* for the whole length of the parade. Madhuvisa Maharaja, the leader of ISKCON Australia, was right beside him, and I traveled a step beside. The crowd was packed in close around Prabhupada, and many people accompanied him and the carts through the streets. The devotees had hired two security guards, and they were karate experts wearing gloves with no fingers and one of them had a black eye. They hovered close to Prabhupada and gave a simultaneously ominous and secure mood to the atmosphere. Everything was really packed in close. The crowd did not keep neat lines of distance from Prabhupada, and many of them drifted in close beside him as we marched the long parade route. Prabhupada sometimes played *karatalas* and raised his arms in the air. He kept singing the *mantra* loudly. There were no unpleasant incidents, but it was all rather close knit and a bit disarrayed as a parade.

The procession finally stopped at a kind of warehouse, and there Prabhupada delivered a Ratha Yatra address to a noisy gathering. Prabhupada finally went home and rested for the afternoon. The best part of the day for me came in the late evening. Prabhupada called me and Pradyumna into his room to give him a leg massage while he lay in bed ready to go to sleep after the long day of marching and energy expanding. He was quiet, and the room was dark and silent. Suddenly he said to me, "You were dancing very nicely today." I almost jumped for joy to hear him say those words, and I longed dearly for them. He soon drifted off to sleep, and I drifted off to ecstasy in the next room.







Prabhupada is sitting regally, like a resting lion; he shows signs of old age and weakness, but he is still traveling, now in Mumbai, on his endless grand preaching tour around the world, again and again. I read a nice indirect reference about Srila Prabhupada in the book *Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati*, by a European devotee-scholar. He was describing the great success of the Gaudiya Math during the lifetime of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. Then he briefly mentioned that after Bhaktisiddhanta's passing away his mission fell to ruin, and the preaching stopped due to schisms among his disciples. The author says that it is not until thirty years later in the 1960s that a 'watershed' was created, and Bhaktisiddhanta's mission was renewed on the grand scale, becoming a world religion with thousands of followers. The author said it was beyond the scope of his study of the life of Bhaktisiddhanta to describe how this watershed took place. But it was so enlivening to read, even the indirect reference to the work of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, as the one who rescued the phoenix from the ashes of the Gaudiya Math and turned it into a grand powerful success.

During the lifetime of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati there were only a few harbingers, predictions and prophecies that our Prabhupada would be the one to pick up the fallen banner of the Gaudiya Movement and spread it all over the world, but history bears it out undeniably. While most of his Godbrothers fell into dispute and few did powerful preaching, it was only our Prabhupada who went *alone* to America and created the Hare Krishna explosion. The picture shows him near the end of his work, with the movement set in place that would continue, despite troubles, to endure and expand after his disappearance. All glories to Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the best disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and all glories to his faithful followers.

*yasya deve para bhaktir yatha deve tatha gurau
tasyaite kathita by arthah prakasante mahatmanah*

Only unto those great souls who serve guru and Krishna with implicit faith is the import of the Vedas fully revealed. (*Svetasvatara Upanisad* 6.23)

Prabhupada wrote with a ballpoint pen or a fountain pen mostly just to sign his signature to his letters. Since 1966 he wrote by speaking directly into the Dictaphone without an earlier draft of written notes, and his disciples edited the writing he did on the Dictaphone. His disciples confined their editing to corrections in grammar and punctuation, and Prabhupada

proofread their editing. He approved and appreciated their editing, but the major portion of the writing was a first draft of spoken words on the Dictaphone. I have heard a few devotees say that Prabhupada's writing would have been better and more polished if he had taken more time on it and didn't basically accept his first draft as his finished product. But I do not agree with this. Prabhupada had a great skill in studying the commentaries of the *acaryas* and the translation and composing the purports on his first attempt. He was so well acquainted with the *acaryas* commentaries and the verses of the *sastras* that he was able to speak them fluently without writing them down. A perfect example of this is the *Krishna* book. We have preserved copies of the Dictaphone tapes he made on composing *Krishna* book, and it's an extraordinary proof that he was speaking fluently, and it was coming out as polished prose. You can hear the "click" sound of the Dictaphone made as he pauses briefly in-between the sentences or within parts of sentences. The *Krishna* book contains straight translations of the Tenth Canto verses as well as the commentaries of the *acaryas* weaved in, as well as personal statements of Prabhupada's own self-realizations. And all this is clearly done in a conversational tone, speaking freely into the Dictaphone. His *Srimad-Bhagavatam* was composed in the same way. Prabhupada said his writing required great concentration, and so we know he studied the previous *acaryas* and meditated personally on what to say. But it all came out flowingly in his spoken word. This means he had an almost miraculous facility to gather material and speak it on the first draft. There is nothing sloppy or rushed about it, but rather it comes out (as evidenced by *Krishna* book) in meditative but conversational style.





This is the temple which ISKCON briefly occupied around 1968 at 61 Second Avenue in New York City, a block from the original storefront at 26 Second Avenue. You can tell by the mirrors and the early era paintings and a lectern. Prabhupada is interacting with an infant in the arms of a young mother, and it appears he may be giving out a cookie. There are many later pictures of Prabhupada giving out dozens of cookies to the little children in the Watska Avenue temple in Los Angeles, where it became a great tradition. Prabhupada would select cookies from big trays and give them out individually to the outstretched hands of the children, from tiny infants to grown-up school children. It was something he very much liked to do. It brought out Prabhupada's fatherly (or grandfatherly) side as he doted on the children of his disciples. It also demonstrated his approval of the *grhastha asrama*. By taking so much time every day to give out cookies to children, he was showing encouragement to family life. He could have ignored it as unimportant or just given out cookies to his *sannyasis*, but he methodically went through this affectionate ritual with care, attention and obvious affection.

Sometimes the children were shy, as in this picture, and Prabhupada had to coax them and convince them to come forward. The mothers and fathers were delighted and considered it the perfection of their marriage to have their offspring receive a cookie from Krishna's pure devotee. After giving cookies to the children, if there were any left, Prabhupada's adult disciples would push forward like eager children, to receive a piece of the *maha-prasadam*.

Wherever he traveled in the world, Prabhupada would distribute *prasadam* from the *vyasasana*. In Bombay he used to give out handfuls of *halava* to the local urchins. Sometimes he would slice pieces of a big cake that a devotee baker had prepared. Prabhupada knew the importance of giving out *maha-prasadam* from his own hand, and he never neglected it. According to the scriptures it is a great blessing to receive *prasadam* from a pure devotee, and in purely interpersonal terms it was one of the most intimate ways to exchange with His Divine Grace.



Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I want to start by looking at a picture of you to come into your presence. Here's a picture of you in Radha-Damodara temple standing inside on the veranda outside your two rooms. There's so much shadow behind you that you can't see the faces of the devotees in there with you.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, your skin looks very tanned there, and you're wearing a really nice rust-colored sweater, orange marigold garland. Your right arm is curved very delicately at the elbow as you are pointing outward. There you are in-between the two pillars with their architectural design. It's like you're set there in the middle of this artistic design like a picture drawn by an artist. And that's you, the jewel at Radha-Damodara, which you once said is the center of the universe. Lucky devotees to be with you there and hear you talk about Vrindavana *dhama*. Nice to look at a picture and be brought to where Prabhupada is in that picture, one after another all over the world.

Now I'm going to read a letter that you wrote me and stop where it seems I can say something to you. This is the second letter you gave me from San Francisco, February 15, 1967.

“I hope you have received my previous notes sent to you in different letters. I have not as yet received the copy of Narada-bhakti-sutra which you want me to write commentaries. I hope you are duly editing the tapes of Teachings of Lord Caitanya. While typing the records after your editing make it in duplicate and send me one copy to see how you are doing it.”

So as of this letter I hadn't really sent him anything yet. Seems like I should have by now. Diligent worker for Prabhupada. *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, his wonderful book, his own conception. Your own conception, Srila Prabhupada, to take five of the main philosophical sections of that book and give it to us to know all about Krishna. Your *TLC* begun in San Francisco, and I was lucky enough to type it. I like to read that book to you once a year if I can. It's a nice book. Formidable book.

“I have now five tapes with me out of which I'm returning one today. Please let me know how many tapes are there till today. Neal was to come here, but he has not come therefore I am sending you the tape both for typing and editing. I hope you will do it nicely. May Krishna be pleased upon you.”

Then the letter goes on to something I've talked about enough before, I won't do it right now, getting into the whole thing with Mr. Payne and how he was cheating us. How you had given us warnings although you were allowing us to spend the Society's money so that you could be free of money dealings and we could learn how to do it. But you saw already that we had written off a thousand dollars to him for nothing and it seemed like utopian. So you wrote me to transfer the money (\$6,200.00) back to your account.

I'm speaking this to you in *Prabhupada Smaranam*, but it's also what we call your *lila*, your dealings with us. I care about it, and there are always issues of instruction in it. So I had to transfer the money back to your account so that we wouldn't blow it all. You said you'd give it back to us when there was actually a bona fide thing.

“You are all innocent boys without any experience of the world. The cunning world can befool you at any time so please be careful of the world in Krishna consciousness. When Krishna will desire the house will come automatically. But we should not ask Krishna to give us a house let Krishna give us what He likes. Hope you are well.”

Srila Prabhupada, you're telling us what to do and there'll be more letters. I always take it that the main lesson there is that I didn't obey you strongly even though Godbrothers like Kirtanananda and Brahmananda were telling me not to do what you said. I won't go over that I guess. It's just good to remember you in any case instructing me. Still an innocent boy, the material world as dangerous as ever to me. I should be careful about it.

Prabhupada, I'm praying to you, sitting in a little shed across the lake from a devotee community. On the lake, it's just a little strait between the land and the island, there are four swans and they're sort of comical to watch. Sometimes they look very graceful but also like little rubber toys floating in the lake which is a little rough now. But then suddenly they duck and their rear end sticks up, and then they don't look so graceful. Maybe like ballerinas taking an awkward position showing us that they're all too human and not some angelic dancer to bewitch our minds. The material world looks beautiful, but it's bottoms up when it's time to eat or have sex.

Now as I talk the light comes out, the sun. Here I am in the material world, and you're in the spiritual world as you always were. But now also you're with us. You're with us in this material world by the sound vibration.

Prabhupada, it's not like I'm sitting down across a low table, and I'm now going to get familiar, put my elbows on the table like we're two equal

friends and say, “Swamiji I’m really into my writing career and I’m doing it for you. So I just want to know, ‘Do you approve what I’m doing?’” If I ask like that I’m so much begging the question; you can see that I’m so passionately involved. Or so devotedly involved in preparing this offering purifying myself and as an important by-product providing reading material for those who come to your movement. It’s my offering so naturally I’m attached to it. But because we’re in these days of separation from you there is first of all, a kind of license to do what we think is best for you without having to check with you. Without having the benefit of checking with you and without being confined or checked from our own creative conception of how to serve you. I know it’s a touchy area.

I think that if you were here I certainly would just do whatever you said. Now that I’m older I might try to demand a little more explanation why I shouldn’t write the way I write. But I’m not going to rebel. So I’m going ahead full steam. (I was going to say full steam like a swan.) But whatever it is, I’m going ahead into my old age serving you in this way with (as somebody put it) presenting the ancient knowledge in a modern form. That’s what it is. And the modern form is personal writing which includes confessional, modern poem expressions, using dreams and all these things; which actually I’m inclined to do, which seem to be meaningful to me as a person, but could be dangerous if not used in your service, certainly. So here I am, Srila Prabhupada, begging the question or doing all the talking.

That brings me to another point. I introduce this praying to you by looking at a Christian book, and they say that you should talk to Christ. So you are our Christ, you are our god, our Abba, our father. I don’t mean to say you’re Krishna or that you’re Lord Caitanya. But you’re our spiritual father, and you’re our mediator to God, and I trust that about you. So they say you can talk, but don’t be demanding things from him. And as far as the other half of the conversation, the listening, that you do by being quiet and just being with you. It’s a little hard to describe and maybe nobody really knows exactly what it is. They say that you can hear from the Lord through intuition or inspiration and enlightenment.

Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gita*, and you quote it in this context, *tesam satata-yuktanam bhajatam priti-purvakam dadami buddhi-yogam tam yena mam upayanti te*, “I give the intelligence to those who worship Me. I give the intelligence how they can come to Me.” If they really want Me. So if I want to hear from you after making my presentation I have to be quiet and listen. Listen as I read also. Listen when Godbrothers or other devotees talk with

me. Listen in my dreams. Listen in any silence. Listen as I chant—how shall I serve you?

Dear Srila Prabhupada, you got that letter from your Guru Maharaja shortly before he disappeared. It was in this month, December. I think you said you wrote in the beginning of December, and you heard from him around midway December and he left the world at the end of December. You asked, “O my dear spiritual master, you have so many intimate *sannyasi* disciples serving you.” By that you also meant that your Guru Maharaja was directing them, and they were definitely doing recognizable service for him. But you described yourself as a *grhastha*, meaning that you had so many duties that didn’t seem to be directly carrying out the order of the spiritual master like his right arm and left arm and so on—opening centers and lecturing and so on. Although you were doing those things too in householder life. but you asked, “My dear master how may I serve you?”

And then he wrote back, “My dear ... I think that you can make yourself into a very good English-speaking preacher. This will be good for you and for those other persons who you give this to. Become a preacher for western preaching.” That was the order that you took into your heart.

I look at these letters, I’ve got a lot of orders. I’ve got an order to put the money back into your account. That can be taken as symbolic that I shouldn’t spend any money on my own account, and I shouldn’t be independent. I should do what you say. And I should also take as enduring the fact that the material world is dangerous and so on. Many, many instructions I have. But some of them in their external form are out-dated. Like, “stay there in Boston as temple president.” Or “be a good husband take care of your wife.” Now it’s different, but it’s the essence I have to follow.

Anyway Srila Prabhupada, I am enthusiastic in my quiet way, to serve you. And although there are obstacles I’m serving you as best I can. You are my beloved, you are my spiritual master. I’m really sorry when these ugly *anarthas* pop up and I say, “Oh I don’t like the way Prabhupada looks. I don’t like the sound of his voice. How come he’s so heavy? Why is he speaking basic philosophy?” It’s just so unfortunate and so ugly. Some of those things were there in a gross form when I very first met you, and I was so dirty in my own *maya* way, and I overcame them. But now they come back in different ways. You’re really sweet and you’re really strong. You’re all these things, and I can’t try to make you into my pet guru. Into a guru of my own conception like a rubber doll or a clay made guru. You are yourself and you’re my master.

But still it’s natural that I want to feel satisfaction in loving exchange.

So I think I just have to come closer to you and in my conditioned way, if there are certain aspects of your personality that I'm more attracted to, that are easier for me to relate to, don't work against myself, go to those things. Some of them are so external. I like to hear a lecture when it's well recorded and your voice is mellow or modulated, and doesn't have harshness in it. And certain topics I like. Just everything I have to use to my own benefit so that I can serve you and surrender. But also I have to just take you in all your seasons and all the ways you are—rainy, sunny and in-between. You're always a pure devotee. You're always serving Krishna.

O Prabhupada, what is the need to talk so much, huh? But it's just a medium that I use a couple times a day. Prolonged speech. Controlled speech, chastened speech. And with some self-chastising. Coming before you speech. All glories to Prabhupada's words. Finding the sincerity under the bluff, under the fear of guru, the fear of surrender. The foreignness that develops as the years go on, and we don't have that contact.

Heck, I say that I'm afraid to be with you, but it was so nourishing to be with you and our faith was so much increased. We're doing without that now. I'm your child, I'm your boy growing older but still yours. I don't know Krishna, and you do know Krishna. I'm running after you saying, "Please give me Krishna." And you're saying, "What more do you want? I'm canvassing, I'm telling you what Krishna wants. Krishna is telling you what He wants." I say, "Yes, Prabhupada, just give me that magical touch so that it all becomes alive for me." You're ready to do that too, and you're doing that too. Thank you, Srila Prabhupada.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, Please accept my humble obeisances unto you. All glories to you. I am trying to find my voice in these letters to you. I have stated they are a literary exercise for coming closer to you. I hope each day I can say something pleasing to you. You once said something to the effect that Krishna likes to hear praise of His name and qualities. There are opposite stories such as Shakespeare's *King Lear*, who asked his daughter Cordelia what she had to say in praise of him. Cordelia knew the other daughters of the king were just flattering him so they would get big parcels of land. When Cordelia was asked what she had to say she replied "Nothing." Lear retorted, "Nothing will come of nothing," and the foolish flattery-searching king gave her nothing. In the end of the play Cordelia proved herself the only daughter who loved the king, but this is not an example to follow by us. We should praise you Srila Prabhupada, with our words and with our actions. Like Krishna, Prabhupada, you are a person, and you like to be liked. You

like to be respected for your true qualities of being a mighty servant of Lord Krishna. You are very humble and don't like to be called mighty, but you are.

In *Caitanya-caritamṛta* it is stated (*Antya* 7.11) that no one can spread the chanting of the holy names around the world unless he is empowered by Krishna. This statement proves that you are an empowered *avesa*, empowered personality. I want my letters to accurately praise you in this way.

I wish to write you letters as I used to when I knew you received them in the mail and read them or had them summarized to you by your secretary. I no longer have news to report to you from about half a dozen temples in my GBC zone. I can only report to you about my *sadhana* and writing. But I hope I can also reveal my feelings, aspirations, even my troubles, as one confides one's mind in confidence. I want to be even closer than I was before, if that is possible. Please help me write letters from a disciple to his spiritual master and not think it is no longer possible or practical.



A GARLAND FOR NITYA-SIDDHA

The person on the left comes from a *mleccha* or *yavana* background. Both his Italian-American father and his Irish-American mother were meat eaters and liquor drinkers and trained their son to be the same. The son then added aberrations of his own in illicit sex and taking of recreational drugs. The person on the right in the picture is a *nitya-siddha* pure devotee of Krishna who never committed any sinful activities in his lifetime. Yet the pure devotee is humbly accepting a garland of flowers from the person of the *mleccha-yavana* background. And why is that? Because he has accepted him as a

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

disciple, as a spiritual son via *hari-nama* initiation. He no longer considers that the young man is a *mleccha-yavana*, but he has told him he is a sincere devotee of the Lord and that Krishna will give him auspicious advancement. The young man is a householder, but he is a temple president and has a full time job as a welfare officer for which all his offerings go to the temple treasury. Prabhupada considers the young man qualified because he is hard working in the preaching mission, and he follows the regulated principles. Prabhupada has made him a *brahmana*. In so doing he quoted Sanatana Gosvami's verse, that as iron can be changed to gold by touching it with a *cintamani* stone, so a low-class man can become a *brahmana* by chanting the holy names of Krishna: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. The young man has faith that he has been cleansed and that he has been accepted as a son in spiritual *parampara*. The young man is aware that he is lacking in many finer qualifications of a Vedic *brahmana*, but he has sincere faith in his spiritual master and that makes him very happy.



Here is Prabhupada walking in a moment of great triumph. I think it is the procession that heralded the opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. He is walking down the street named after him, Bhaktivedanta Marg, toward the Vrindavana town. He is surrounded by a loud kirtana and long waving flags,

smashing karatalas and clay mrdangas. Prabhupada lived for several years in Vrindavana, in obscurity, and now he has returned with hundreds of followers and success. He is Vrindavana's hometown hero returning after making Vrindavana famous all over the world. He walks like a conquering general, like a soft-clothed sadhu, weighed down with many garlands. Dusk is coming to Vrindavana, and soon they will have to light lamps. It will be like Lord Rama returning to Ayodhya.

Srila Prabhupada is the main inspiration and direction for all activities in the Krishna consciousness movement. We remember his years with us over 30 years ago, and continuing from the present to future, we try to follow his instructions and maintain his society of devotees.

It is also nice to see him gesturing on his walk. You can meditate on it and cultivate feelings of separation. You can also hear the recordings of his morning walk and lectures and be in tune with his preaching presence. You can read his books and refresh yourself with his personal presentation of the classics, *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Caitanya-caritamrta*, and his other books. By associating with his followers, you can remain in his camp.

I was fortunate to meet Srila Prabhupada from his very beginnings in New York City in 1966, when he was so accessible and personable. His personality and role expanded as the movement grew, and he became world *acarya* for thousands of devotees, and a manager of complex institutional affairs. But he always maintained his intimate touch with many persons wherever he visited. As a *mahatma*, or great soul, he was able to give love to everyone he met, and encourage them to take up devotional service in their lives. Someone referred to the “Vraja-bubble” that Prabhupada lived within, and how, when you came into his presence, you left the material world and entered the Vraja-bubble with him. Traveler’s Aid, an insurance company, advertises that they “take the scariness out of life” by their insurance protection. Similarly, Prabhupada takes the scariness out of life, when we come close to him, take shelter under his transcendental umbrella, and follow his instructions.

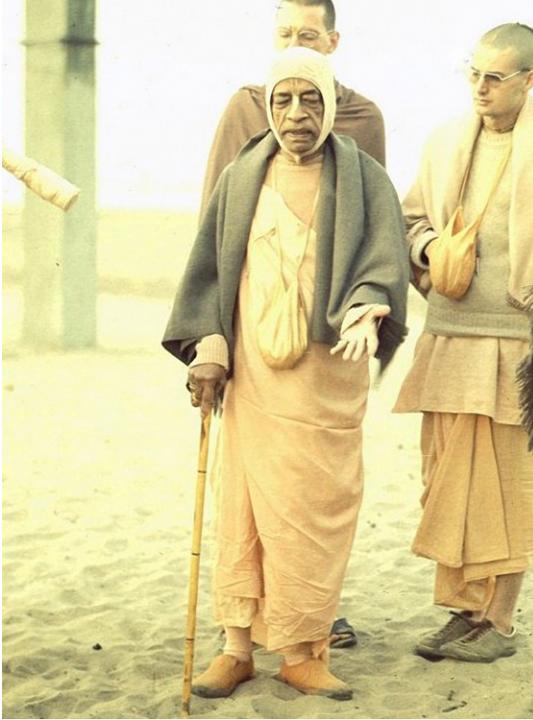


SANNYASA INITIATION

Here are photos of Prabhupada conducting a *sannyasa* initiation on Lord Nrsimhadeva's appearance day 1972. The persons receiving *sannyasa* from left to right are Bali-mardana, Satsvarupa, Rupanuga, and Hridayandana. The background to the initiation is that Prabhupada was initiating a number of his GBC men. Earlier in the year he had given *sannyasa* to his GBC men Tamala Krishna and Sudama. He had expressed through a letter by his secretary Syamasundara, that he was not entirely pleased with his GBC men because they were not actively preaching, but were sitting behind their desks and administrating but not actually lecturing, recruiting, going chanting on the streets, traveling and making new devotees. ISKCON had been purchasing buildings for centers and temples, and the GBC men had been busy managing affairs like businessmen. So Prabhupada had urged some of his GBC men to take *sannyasa* and leave the management to the *grhasthas*. When some of us heard this dissatisfaction of Prabhupada we volunteered to accept *sannyasa*. For myself, Rupanuga and Hridayananda, it meant giving up our wives. Bali-mardana was *brahmacari*. Tamala Krishna and Sudama had been householders. So it was a kind of a revolution. I heard Prabhupada was holding a *sannyasa* initiation during his visit to Los Angeles, and I wrote to him from Dallas where I was headmaster of the *gurukula* and asked if I could accept *sannyasa* with the others. He wrote back and said yes I could come, and he would give me *sannyasa*. It meant giving up all my responsibilities in Dallas and becoming a wandering mendicant traveling to other ISKCON centers and traveling to cities where there were no ISKCON centers.

We went to Los Angeles where we pulled up bamboo poles from Venice Beach Park to use in our *dandas*, and a devotee who was already a *sannyasi* showed us how to prepare the bottom and top cloth that were unique to *sannyasis*. Srila Prabhupada gave a lecture and one by one gave out our *dandas*. When I stood before him and he handed me my *danda*, he said, "Preach! Preach! Preach!" We asked Prabhupada if our names were to be changed. He said that we should keep the same name but "simply add Dasa Gosvami to your name." We had heard a rumor that a *sannyasi* should offer his *prasadam* to his *danda*, and we asked Prabhupada if this was true. He laughed and said it was a nonsense idea. I soon left for San Francisco and arranged for some free lance lecturing in colleges and clubs. Then a householder volunteered to be my assistant and drive me in his car. We drove to many cities in the U.S. approaching people in the parks and streets, preaching to them and selling

Back to Godhead magazines. We were not very successful. But not long after this Prabhupada held a Governing Body Commission meeting where GBC members were assigned new zones of management and preaching. Although I was now a *sannyasi*, I was assigned to a GBC zone in the southern United States. So I traveled to those temples. I was now a GBC *sannyasi*, preaching and managing.



Prabhupada's characteristics: He is walking on the beach with a few men. Lord Caitanya told Raghunatha Gosvami not to dress luxuriantly. Prabhupada didn't dress in rags, but he wore the same uniform every day. Simple *sannyasa* dress. A grey *chadara*, a swami hat, his canvas shoes, his cane. He walks and talks, then stops to gesture and poke his cane in the sand and holds out his hand in a graceful, yet forceful *mudra*. They gather in to listen. He stands for a few moments for emphasis. Then he begins walking again. Always the same and always new. It's thrilling to see exactly when he will start off walking again. Will he look at you? "Why don't they understand? Why are they such *mudhas*?" Visvanatha Cakravarti said the prostitute keeps changing her dresses to attract new customers. But a devotee wears the same clothes.



He stops with a far-off look in his eyes. He is right here with his men, but at the same time, he is looking far off. He is looking down at the beach, out at sea, at Krishna.

In these pictures Srila Prabhupada is walking on the beach. What do I say? He talked any angle of philosophy, mostly criticizing the nondevotee mentality. Cite some examples. Scientists say life comes from matter, meat eaters say animals have no soul, atheists don't believe in God, impersonalists say He is not a person. Prabhupada walks the beach, and we walk with him. We walk beside him, some of us, and some of us behind him. He is our master. All those mornings he led us. There are many, many pictures. The conversations are taped. He is mostly speaking against the opposition. He endeared himself to us. That was many years ago. When we look at these pictures, he is still walking with us. We carry it in our memories. The footprints indent in the sand at Juhu Beach, at Venice Beach, on Bhaktivedanta Marga (the road is named after him because it is his residence and he walked there). He wrapped himself in *chadars* and wore a swami hat. He wore canvas shoes. He carried a bamboo cane in his right hand. Later he

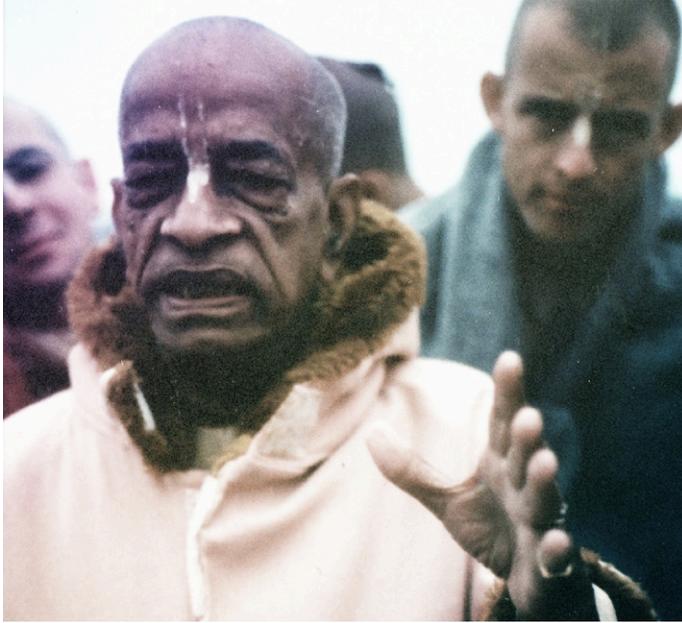
—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

carried a more opulent wooden cane with a silver handle. He wore rings and gave them away. He wore Vaishnava *tilaka*, turtleneck jerseys. He walked for an hour at a good pace. A half hour one way and a half hour back. He knew when to time himself and get back on time for the *guru-puja*. Here is Srutakirti, his long time servant and Giriraja Brahmachari, his leader in Bombay, and Paramahansa Swami, his servant for a while.

Prabhupada walked for daily exercise for his heart because a doctor advised him to do it starting in 1967. He walked because he wanted to instruct his disciples. He walked because he liked the morning air and the arrival of dawn. It would be nice if we could walk with him again.

Sometimes he stops walking and pokes his cane into the sand. We all stop and gather around. He tells a joke, and we all laugh merrily. Then he starts walking again. I want to walk with him again. Sometimes he stops talking, and we all stop talking, or someone interrupts his silence and asks a question. He always complies and gives an answer. But sometimes he wants to chant *japa* so we don't disturb him. Walking with Prabhupada is a joy and a privilege. Not everyone gets to walk with him. The majority of the devotees wait at the temple and raise a *kirtana* when he returns. They hear a tape of what he said on the walk, if they are interested. They should be interested because he is brilliant and wise and instructive and Prabhupada.





On this morning walk he looks like an army general with his field coat. (His saffron coat with “furry” collar and cuffs was made by Govinda Dasi, suitable for a *sannyasi*.) He gestures forward with a strong thrust of his left arm and hand. He is making an exciting, important point with his jabbing *mudra*. He is cutting down the Mayavada doctrine that the absolute is formless and there is no God. His men behind him listen intently and want to follow his lead. It is not so easy to follow him. It is not just done by wearing the same clothes and getting up early in the morning, although these things help.

You have to act ideally and not fall down. You have to preach to whomever you meet and tell them about Krishna. You have to study Prabhupada’s books and repeat his teachings with conviction.

Prabhupada almost looks like he is striking someone with his hand, striking them with a karate punch. He said he knew the art in logical debate to strike like in karate. He said he would look for the person’s weak point and chop. His spiritual master was also famous for his “chopping technique.” It is something necessary when meeting opposition, not to do it physically, but with logic.

This powerful military side of Prabhupada enthused many disciples who had this nature. Some had the nature but lacked the purity behind it and didn’t have the same results as Prabhupada. The military attitude was especially effective in distributing books. History has shown that purity is the force, not just chopping.



You can see in this photo that he has stopped walking, and a crowd of devotees gathers around him. He is on a footpath in a park in a European city. Something in his conversation has prompted him to elaborate on the point, and he is speaking at length. The weather is chilly without sunshine, and Prabhupada is wrapped tightly in his wool *chadara* and swami-hat. He is in the center, just as Krishna sits in the center of the *gopas* when He stops for lunch. Each disciple wants to make eye contact with Prabhupada and think, at least for a moment that Prabhupada is talking to him only. Prabhupada is flowing with Vedic truths. He wants to train up his disciples in the art of polemics, and he simply wants to praise the Lord. When he returns to the temple he will do more of the same, preach the glories of Krishna. He does it all the time. Earlier in the morning he was translating and making purports asserting that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and to please Him is the utmost goal of life. Prabhupada is completely enthusiastic to do this in one way or another, wherever he is.

He is very dear to Krishna. He is very dear to his disciples who are here frozen in time, hanging on his every word and submissively accepting his words as the absolute truth. When he speaks, the force of all the *acaryas* comes through him. It is nice to contemplate upon a picture of this faithful gathering.

As many devotees as possible accompanied Prabhupada on his morning walks. He did not consider it awkward and allowed them to tag along and crowd the avenues or parks he walked in. He would often talk philosophically, and a devotee walks beside him to record it. Most of the devotees could not expect to be close enough to hear him, but they just wanted the thrill of being near him, walking in his group and catching a glimpse at him. Maybe he would notice them and make eye contact with them, but everyone couldn't expect that. Prabhupada was now the world-*acarya* of so many devotees that they had to be content to follow his instructions without much personal association.

Jayadvaita (then a *brahmacari*) asked Prabhupada on a walk how his disciples could know he was pleased with them. At first Prabhupada replied that they could please their GBC representatives. But Jayadvaita pressed further: how would the disciple personally feel the connection? Prabhupada replied that they would feel it by chanting their sixteen rounds and following the rules and regulations. He said a disciple shouldn't crave attention. He should be humble. When he said that, I got the feeling that if I received too much attention the spiritual master would find out all my faults, like being

examined by a flashlight in the dark. Just be content to serve your guru with hard work and be confident the internal reciprocation and recognition would be present.

The young men crowded around Prabhupada on his walk through European monuments or in American cities and were satisfied to stroll with him. Back at the temple they could observe him on the *vyasasana* and chant with him. They could all see and hear the lecture and perhaps experience the sensation that he was looking at them and speaking to them individually (a sensation many devotees experienced). Prabhupada had so many disciples he could not recognize them each by name and face, but it was the responsibility of each of them to take the relationship with him responsibly in their hearts and lives and always be close to him.

Excerpts and snippets from Srila Prabhupada's walk in San Francisco in 1975

Devotee Scientists say there is no life on other planets.

Srila Prabhupada: How can you say there is no life?

Devotee They do not believe...

Srila Prabhupada: We say in the sun there is life. Krishna says I spoke to the Sun-god...

Devotee They are very convinced they have gone to the moon.

Srila Prabhupada: The moon planet can not be reached by spacecraft but by pious activities...

Devotee My father says that if human life cannot live in other planets then there is no life.

Srila Prabhupada: You cannot live in the water but there is life there and fish can live there.

Devotee Scientists say there is no life in the fire.

Srila Prabhupada: Fire is one of the elements. There are five elements so why not life in the fifth element...? Living entities come out of a dead body. You cannot say that the chemical is missing. Why is some chemical missing. How is the element missing?

Devotee They say if they accept Krishna consciousness the universities will be finished.

Srila Prabhupada: The universities should be broken. They are producing only fools. The buildings shall remain, but they shall be finished. They remain

cats and dogs. They are basically mistaken. How can they be happy?

Devotee It is said in the *Caitanya-caritamṛta* that without Lord Caitanya there is no life.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: ...Rahu is between the earth and the sun. The moon is farther.

Devotee...I went to see an exhibition where there were moon rocks. They said the moon rocks are identical to the rocks on the earth.

Srila Prabhupada: It is simply cheating (moon rocks). It is stone from Arizona. (Laughter)

(A devotee says one astronaut had a religious experience on the moon, and he was kicked out of NASA. He believes in God.)

Srila Prabhupada: That is good.

(A devotee tells Srila Prabhupada of scientists who believe in God.)

Srila Prabhupada: He is intelligent. As soon as one denies God he comes into four categories... Therefore they are rascals (pause). *Harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam* (cars go by)

Srila Prabhupada: Over-intelligent means rascal.

Devotee How does that happen?

Srila Prabhupada: We mean it sarcastically.

Devotee Speculative?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Devotee They say that they should not believe in the priests because they are also misbehaving and cheating.

Srila Prabhupada: It is your fault if you stick to false religionists and reject religion. If you receive counterfeit coin you should not reject all coins
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Prabhupada liked to make jokes, satirize, make us laugh. Even if he was involved in a stressful fight to get permission to build the temple in Bombay, or there was a court case in the USA, or he knew some of his leaders were quarreling, there was always something funny that could occur to him and could make us break into smiles. He saw the merry side of things periodically and made a quip or humorous observation. Just as when he was in a very grave mood we became serious, so we laughed with him wholeheartedly when he tickled our ribs with a laughable point of view. He could be making fun of scientists or atheists or just something that made him laugh. He might be telling a story about the court jester Gopala Ban. Or he may have been making a joke at the expense of Dr. Patel and making the doctor laugh at his own foolishness. Being senior and spiritually advanced, Prabhupada could cut a joke at anyone's expense anywhere in the world, and they would accept it in good spirit. Once at the Bhaktivedanta Manor a girl asked him why we shave our heads. He replied that for philosophy it is better to keep a cool head and warm legs. (The girl was wearing a miniskirt.) All the devotees present laughed, and the miniskirted girl smiled. Even his use of words like "rascal" and "fools" were graciously accepted, even in India where these words are considered harsh. He had genuine compassion for everyone, and so he could laugh without malice even at rascals and fools.

*suddha-bhaktah sri-guro sri sivasya ca bhagavata saha
abheda-drstim-tat-priyatamatvenaiva manyante*

Whenever the scriptures describe the spiritual master or Lord Siva as nondifferent from Krishna, pure devotees understand this is because of their being most endearing to the Lord Himself. (*Sri Bhakti-Sandarbhā, Anucheda* 216)



This picture was taken in Germany on a chilly summer morning. A couple of months before in Bombay, I had asked Prabhupada if I could change my service from being his personal servant to leading a group of traveling brahmacharis. He was displeased with my suggestion and told me not to be a “jumping monkey” whimsically changing services. I was so struck with his displeasure that I wrote a letter of apology and asked him to please keep me as his servant. For reply he had written on the top of the letter in his own handwriting, “You are very pure. May Krishna protect you from all calamities.” It was a wonderful note, and yet there was something ominous about it. Although I still felt restless about my service I resolved to stick with it. Then suddenly we were invited to leave India and take a tour of southern and northern Europe, ending with a Ratha Yatra in Australia

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

and then Ratha Yatras in San Francisco and Chicago. I had picked up jaundice in India and carried it with me to Europe where it turned into a cold and then a flu and then a pus-filled infection on my knee. Prabhupada threatened to leave me behind in Italy if I didn't recover my health, but then the worst of the jaundice subsided, and he allowed me to stay with him.

Here we are making eye contact. If one can make humble eye contact with his spiritual master it is a wonderful thing. One of his hardworking disciples who was making contact with Srila Prabhupada by vani (or instructions) could be doing even more service than I was by staring into the eyes of my guru. But there is something to be said for the moment of vapuh (direct bodily contact)—in this case by exchange of glances. Vapuh produces indelible impressions. The vapuh is like the precious gems that you keep locked in your jewel box and take out from time to time whenever you are in need of inspiration or intimacy.

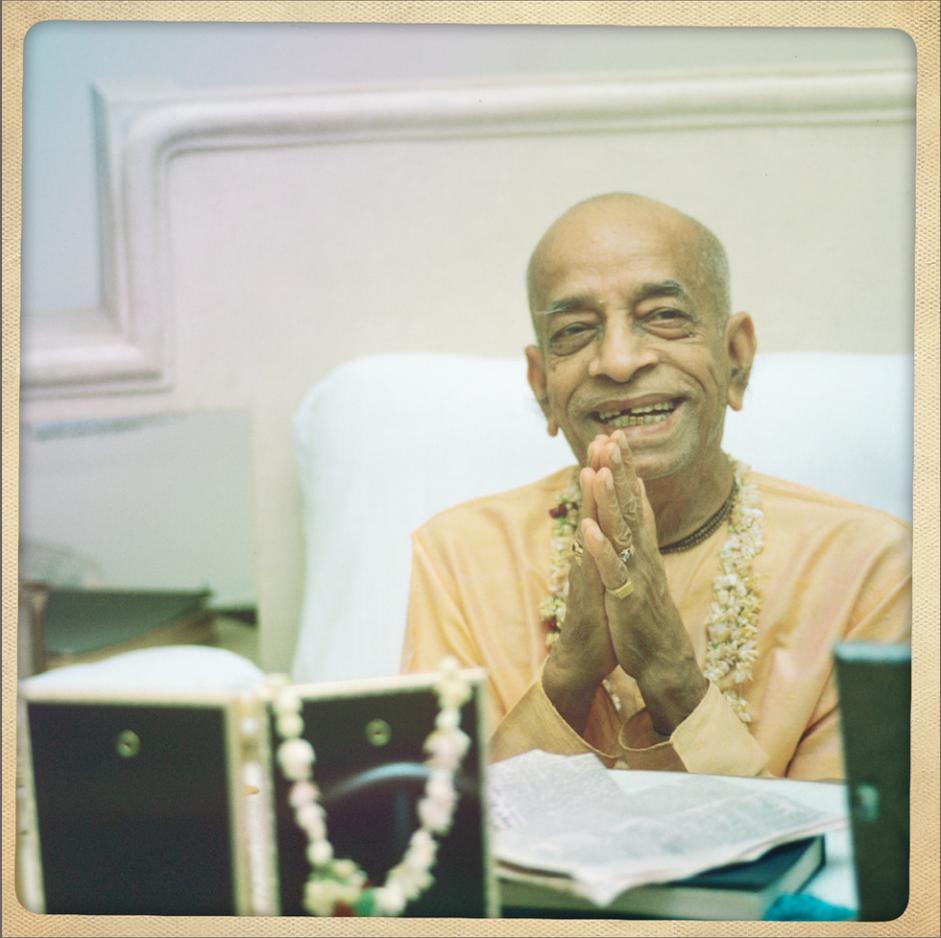


In the 1970s, when Srila Prabhupada went for a morning walk on the main road from Vrindavana towards New Delhi, it was secluded and lush trees lined the roadway. Twenty people could gather around him and walk beside him. Now it is completely different. The sides of the road are all built up with many storied buildings, hotels, temples, and businesses. The trees are chopped down or thinned out. In the '70s when I rode on a rickshaw down the roads I had a "vision" and thought I was in Vrindavana in the spiritual world, or at least I felt I was close to that. I wrote many haiku poems inspired by the atmosphere.

Vrindavana is now congested with constant traffic jams with horns making a cacophony of irritation and disturbance. Aggressive monkeys have increased ten times from forty years ago, and they fearlessly and expertly steal spectacles, fruit, clothing, etc.

The place that used to be a peaceful garden and forest with pure Yamuna water is now a bedlam of harsh sounds and polluted river water. The river is dirty because the industrial waste from New Delhi is now dumped into the Yamuna. Telephone developments and even internet have improved the communications, but these material advancements don't make up for the loss of the peace and purity that once reigned in Vrindavana.

It is said that the nasty material covering over Vrindavana is put there directly by Yogamaya to keep away less sincere people. But it has become increasingly hard to contact the spiritual level underneath the material covering. Pilgrims going to Vrindavana must be sincerely seeking Krishna. Then they can still find Him in the holy places like Govardhan, the *parikrama* trails and the major temples of Radha Krishna. Prabhupada has established the Krishna-Balaram Mandir which maintains a high level of genuine Vrindavana sanctity with beautiful Deity worship and the twenty-four hour *kirtanas*. By his foresight he has preserved the transcendental life of Vrindavana in its best temple and deities. By going to Vrindavana and chanting and hearing, the devotees can overcome the dirty covering of *maya* in Kali-yuga and contact the spiritual layer. We should be thankful to Prabhupada for preserving a section of Vrindavana in purity.



Prabhupada is happy in Vrindavana. As early as 1967 he envisioned a Krishna house in Vrindavana for his American disciples. On Rama-navami of 1975 he actually opened a gorgeous temple. It was built so that he could bring westerners to learn the culture of living as a Vaishnava in Vraja. It was for his disciples and spiritually intended westerners. He did not expect his disciples to live there but they should visit. In a letter he wrote, “Vrindavana is for inspiration only. Our real movement is worldwide.” His Krishna-Balaram Mandir was built in an isolated part of Vrindavana, in Ramana Reti (the “enchanted sands”) which used to be a playground for Krishna and his cowherd friends. But it soon became one of the most popular temples in Vrindavana (the town of five thousand temples), and the neighborhood has built up to be one of the most popular areas of Vrindavana. (Too popular and congested for the taste of most devotees.)

The gorgeous altars contain Deities of Gaura-Nitai, *Krishna-Balaram* and Radha-Syamasundara, Who are perhaps the most beloved of the three sets of Deities. On the temple grounds is the beautiful marble *samadhi-mandira* of Srila Prabhupada with a larger-than-life bronze *murti* of Srila Prabhupada which is visited by thousands of pilgrims on the weekends. One of the most drawing features of the temple was the twenty-four hour *kirtana* party. It was led by Aindra Prabhu and a group of men. When Aindra made his appearance at 6 P.M. the temple crowded with dancing and singing along with his superlative melodious leading.

Prabhupada built the temple for others and for his own residence too. He lived there frequently and passed away in his bed in 1977. His quarters are still preserved as he left them, and devotees go there for contemplation and prayer near the life-size *murti* of Prabhupada, who sits at his desk with Dictaphone, just as he did until November of 1977. In this photo he is sitting at his low table greeting guests as he often did, with congeniality, and keen to convince them of the superiority of Vrindavana.

Prabhupada’s warm smile and gesture of hands and *pranamas* is a cheerful welcome. However one may have strayed away from Prabhupada or if one never met him in one’s lifetime, he is waiting to forgive us and welcome us to his eternal residence, provided we come with an open heart and an attitude of submission to the dearest resident of Vrindavana who traveled away from Vraja to preach its glories and returned permanently to whoever has the good sense to come and associate with him.



Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I have a little agenda what to talk about today—read some letters, look at a picture of you and see what it leads me to. The picture is of you in Boston in 1971 when you installed the Deities and I helped you. The letters are from 1967.

I first want to state my hesitation in using these materials to pray to you. I think it has to do with my feeling I wanted to speak to the inner Prabhupada. There shouldn't be a conflict or duality that I think of you either in your history as we knew you and remember the things that we did with you. Either remember things that I did personally or that are a matter of record from other Godbrothers and Godsisisters. That history or what I call inner Prabhupada that makes me think that history is not quite enough. It's limited in its number of events and we go over it again and again. Much of it is history that is in the sense of something that came once and now is gone, and belongs in one sense to the 1970s whereas now we're in 1996. I think you know what I mean. I'm not saying that those times that you were with us are material time or that the things you taught and demonstrated were temporary. Or that they're just vanished from the earth. Rather we dare to use the word *lila* which some Vedic scholars say we're not entitled to use when we talk about you. They say it's only in relation to Krishna not even Vishnu. Still we use it out of affection because we don't want to think that your life was karma or an ordinary life.

Krishna's activities in this world, *kr̥ṣṇa -karma*, those activities are eternal and how the three-quarter spiritual world came into the one-quarter world, that's a mystery we don't understand. How Krishna's spiritual activities can be conducted on this material plane. But they were. A groping example it's like a bubble came within this material world in which the spiritual world existed with protection and noninfluence on the material world. A hard shell bubble. So you also came into this material world protected by the spiritual energy, and you acted here as if you were in the spiritual world. So those are very special activities. Maybe I'm not always able to see them that way but if I could then I shouldn't have any hesitation to talk again about Prabhupada and the Boston temple or Prabhupada writing to me. It's very precious and should always be protected.

But at the same time since now there's so much life going on since '77, at least also, in addition to remembering the past, we need to feel you present with us now. Therefore I speak of inner Prabhupada, *aprakata*, the spiritual master in his instructions. This is supported by your own statements, Prabhupada, that the sound vibration is more important than the physical presence of the spiritual master. Hare Krishna. I pray to you in all these different ways that I may become a true disciple.

Prabhupada, I'm reading my diary from 1993 when I was in Jagannatha Puri, and I was at that time intensely feeling myself as a disciple of a *siksa-guru*. But then there was a crisis that occurred there for me when I realized that I was trying to so hard to get his attention, and it was hard to get at that time because he was giving himself so much to the Hindi speaking followers and it put such a strain on me that I wanted to go back to my relationship with you. Partly perhaps because of the austerity of what it was to relate to him whereas you were right there easy for me. But that's not to be negated either. Why strain to develop a new relationship when easily you already have a very sweet complete relationship? Why try for a second one?

Then the next thought is that it was a gamble because the new relationship was compromising the old relationship. I began to sort out and read that it definitely was happening that way. Because he's a different person, and he teaches with a different emphasis than you do. Some people guided by the *sastras* are able to take two, *diksa* and *siksa gurus*. The scriptures will even guide them to go right ahead, and they even define it as if the *siksa* is more advanced because the *diksa-guru* just introduces you to the holy name and the *siksa-guru* goes on to give you higher and higher instructions. But Prabhupada says the *siksa* later gives you the *diksa* usually. So he's the *siksa*, and he continues to be my *siksa*. Anyway for me, I just don't like it that I found it definitely happening, this minimizing attitude towards Srila Prabhupada. Just to think of him as my *diksa-guru*, one of several gurus, I just don't like it. I want him to be my all in all. And the only instructor gurus that I could entertain or have faith in would be those who would be so sold-out to Prabhupada to see him also in an absolute way. Not to see him as a person whose opinion you differ with, which Narayana Maharaja is at liberty to do. Anyway Prabhupada, let me drop that subject now.

In your letter to someone else in 1967 you say that you'll send the tapes, but this person Neil is not typing anymore. There's no typewriter. He is not serious about general typewriting.

In a letter to Brahmananda you say: "Yesterday I have sent three tapes ask Satsvarupa to do the needful." I really grabbed onto that—"Ask

Satsvarupa to do the needful.” Prabhupada said it just in passing and with utilitarian feeling that this man will do it for me. It didn’t mean that he thought I was the apple of his eye or the most important devotee in ISKCON. But for getting this typing done—I tried with Neil, he’s gone. I tried with Hayagriva, he doesn’t want to do typing; he’s an editor. So it’s a menial task, but I know who will do it, give it to Satsvarupa he’ll do the needful. I was happy to be able to do the needful. Now I don’t seem to be so happy to do just the menial tasks. I’m an old guy, and I’m flourishing in my artistic spiritual writing career.

Srila Prabhupada, I’m just giving it all I can. Although I have headaches, and I can’t write many hours a day, still according to my capabilities and with my heart, I’m putting my foot to the accelerator and trying to make daring expressions in modern way and put my whole self, imperfect even, every bit of my confessional imperfect self into the expression of Krishna consciousness. No suppression, don’t hold back. Give everything to Krishna, but in this way. Otherwise Prabhupada, if I have to wait until I’m perfect and give only that to Krishna, there doesn’t seem to be much I can give. Only give your perfect chanting, only give your unmotivated service. I can’t do that. So I’m giving everything now even the imperfect. Just slinging it in there and serving you with my whole self and trying to purify every part of it.

And in a calculated way, like the novelist calculates the effect of his writing on the audience. Although you could say it’s naïve, and it’s sincere of me to offer to you like this and it’s humble and it’s helpless, hoping that you’ll just take me as I am. Nevertheless I’m also calculating in the back of my mind that this is a good way to preach. Because from what I see the other devotees are also still carrying imperfections (from imperfection purity will come about), therefore we can relate to this problem and I’m discussing it openly—a problem that’s usually not discussed even in Vedic texts—what do you do with the old memories? What do you do with the still existing material desires? If you’re a sincere devotee how can you repress these things or how can you dovetail them and so on? I’m giving step-by-step descriptions of my attempt to do this in writing. So it serves the devotees too.

This is my explanation Srila Prabhupada, I don’t expect you to read it because it’s filled with so many funny references to things that you don’t have to bother about, that you don’t know about. Although as soon as you hear it you understand it, you’re hip, Prabhupada. As we used to say in ’66, you were hip. To give an example of how quickly you related to something that we didn’t think you related to . . . somebody was asking you the meaning of some Christian thing . . . anyway I can’t remember it now. But you surprised

us that you did know other literature. And if you didn't as soon as you heard a little bit about it you penetrated it and gave a satisfactory answer. It's always wrong of us and offensive of us to think that you're not hip, that you're not aware or that you're not able to assimilate something. You know the world better than we do or what goes on in the world. Even in terms of illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling, nothing much has changed over the centuries. But you're so pure and you're our defender to keep us away from it. I don't want to indulge in it again, but I'm explaining my writing to you and saying you don't read it, but please accept that I am trying to do something in your service.

I don't want to berate myself about it. One could say Satsvarupa if you're so hesitant about it, if you're so doubtful, if you're really guilty then why don't you stop it? But I don't stop it because I think it's okay. And I say if it's not okay Krishna and Prabhupada will stop me. I mean that it looks like it's okay. I'm really into it, and I've gambled or staked a lot into it giving up other services in order to do this, and counting on that artistic cultural weapons are important and that you'll accept it. But if you don't accept it then I have to accept that decision of yours. But the indication seems to be that it's okay. That's why I say like that, that's my position Prabhupada. I come before you to tell you that.

“Do the needful,” you said. And you said that you've sent me the tapes because as you say in another letter to me, “You have to type the tapes. There is no other alternative.” Well I was very happy to type the tapes for you Prabhupada. You said, “Please let me know how you like it, the *Narada-bhakti-sutras* or if there is any difficulty to understand it.” O Prabhupada I loved it. And I liked that you were doing it on my request. So audacious of me to ask you to translate a scripture that I thought it would be nice. Which later you said wasn't necessary to complete, but because I asked you started it—*Narada-bhakti-sutra*. Then by your grace the BBT asked me to complete it and we have that book.

I'm very happy Prabhupada about this whole history of *Narada-bhakti-sutra* and typing for you. When I think of it now it feels so good in my heart. How can I neglect these memories. The inner Prabhupada and the historical Prabhupada are one. The most congenial form of intimacy is service. By serving you I can understand how to serve Radha and Krishna. The main thing is service not the technical conjugal apparatus, but the heart of service—first to get rid of the sex desire and other material desires. Completely serve guru and then it seems like the other could be learned in a flash—how to serve Radharani in the *kunja*. But to learn all the intricacies of

how to serve Radharani in *kunja* now and think this will develop my greed for it. I don't know.

Prabhupada, you didn't think that was the way. You said that's for liberated souls. Don't jump ahead, don't jump over. And you teach us to burn up our impurities in preaching, especially like you did traveling and preaching and facing inimical elements and so much desiring to give Krishna consciousness and organize it. I'm not organizing it but I am targeting that audience too and preaching; not so much about Radha and Krishna but about how to surrender and use everything we have.

Also Srila Prabhupada, the devotees are so much considering . . . it's like a whole new thing and you can't deny it. It wasn't there when you were here . . . so many devotees are saying I served hard, and I don't feel that I was rewarded. I feel I was cheated by the leaders who fell down and by the movement. Or some of them are saying I don't regret but it's time for me now to pull back and take care of myself. I have to heal myself. I have to know who I am, and I have to (some say) deal with my childhood traumas. I've covered these over in my early years of serving in ISKCON. I thought that it didn't exist anymore, that I was pure devotee. But now I see I have really deep hang-ups due to the way I was treated as a child. So they go to psychologists or they read psychological books. Or that jargon has entered into ISKCON, and you can't just kick it out. Partly because it has some validity. We were so screwed up that we can't completely take to spiritual process without getting some urgent repairs first.

So Srila Prabhupada, like it or not this is going on. So my books are also—not sending people to psychiatrists, but they're addressing these realities of the whole self. What to do with memories. And I'm doing it in a way that doesn't abandon the *parampara* and doesn't say that the serious alternative to *bhakti*, to *sravanam-kirtanam* is psychiatry. I say rather everything can be solved in Krishna consciousness. So this is another way Prabhupada that I'm trying to deal with things as they are and do what we call basic preaching facing the reality of people where they are. Rather than take them at once and enthuse them with the activities of Radha and Krishna. That comes also regularly in your books.

Okay, Srila Prabhupada, I better stop now. I talked over my time perhaps. All glories to your lordship. Please let me keep talking to you and coming to you and explaining myself to you and falling at your feet and trying to listen to what you really want me to do.

I get a chance to walk close behind Srila Prabhupada. My guess about the location is that it is a big pond near Dallas, Texas. Prabhupada holds his head high. He is not talking and neither am I. I have not been a *sannyasi* for long. But he has taught me so much already within a few years, and there is so much in his books, I don't feel the need to ask many questions. I *have* many questions, but I don't want to disturb him. He has his own thoughts. He is fighting a landowner in Bombay, he is constructing in Vrindavana and Mayapur. He is writing a particular section of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. If I ask him a foolish or premature question, he may tell me it is not necessary. I will get the answer in time through service. Just relish the predawn opportunity to walk with him in silence.

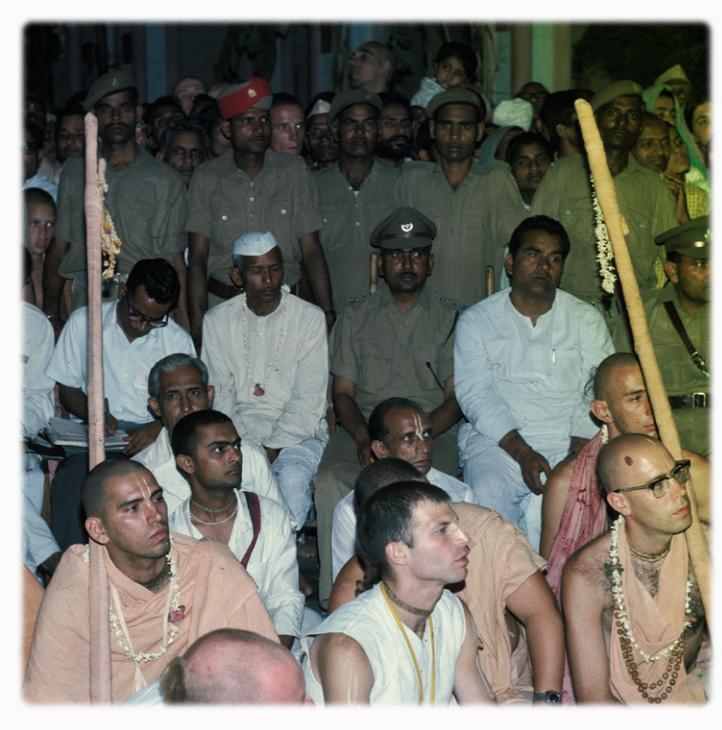
He is not unfriendly, but after all, there is great distance between us. I am a young disciple, he is a great and elderly master. Don't be presumptuous. I can't recall, but on this walk I may have broken the silence and asked a question. Basically Krishna consciousness means to serve the spiritual master and to please Krishna. I am carrying a *danda* so I have to honor the *sannyasa* order. I have to preach in his ISKCON.

I am a little afraid of him. It is a fear that comes from love. I am afraid of displeasing him. It would be terrible if I displeased him. Yet I feel very thrilled and privileged to be accepted by him, to know that he trusts me and gives me responsibility. It is a dynamic relationship, tense in some ways, not easy and casual, yet with a deep bond. And when all is said and done it is very simple: you walk closely behind him and you are filled with dedication and ready to do as he says.



My dear Srila Prabhupada, this morning I copied a statement from your book. It says, “One needs the association of a pure devotee, for only by a pure devotee’s association can one become a pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

This is Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy. Somewhat different than other philosophies of religion which also teach you need a director for your spiritual life or a guru, they may say. But the emphasis, the importance of the association of the pure devotee is really underlined in Lord Caitanya’s teachings. You, therefore, representing that philosophy, used to stress it a lot in your lectures. Sometimes we think, Prabhupada’s talking about himself. But you were talking the *parampara* but practically applied, it did mean you and it does mean you.



At the opening of Krishna-Balaram Mandir, Rama Navami 1974.
Vrindavana, India.

Prabhupada's disciples are very attentive as he lectures, especially TKG, Bhagavan and a young Indian boy who looks like Yasomatinandana except he looks so young. In the second row on chairs three men dressed in white are taking notes; the others appear not so attentive. This is a big, official event, the opening ceremony for the Krishna-Balaram Mandir, because many uniformed policemen are present standing in rows at military attention, but perhaps they can understand English. The most striking thing is how focused the disciples are upon Prabhupada. They are truly engaged in sravanam, in submissively hearing from their spiritual master. They are convinced in his message and soaking it in. They want to be able to preach what he is saying to others, and they know the most important key to devotional service is hearing faithfully. If they hear Prabhupada, they will be able to speak like him. They are not listening simply out of duty, but he has captured them, mesmerized them. Whatever you are going to do, if you get distracted from it you will lose the learning spell. But the disciples are wrapped up, at least for this hour.

The policemen may not be listening learnedly, but at least they are present and are pious. That is more than you can say for more educated or uneducated people in the general population. A pure devotee is speaking Krishna-katha in a holy place at an auspicious time. He is eminently qualified, and the audience ranges from samadhi to politeness. No one is disruptive.

In 1966 Swamiji allowed us to wear a small wooden Jagannatha *murti* on a necklace around our necks, in addition to the standard *tulasi-mala*. An eye-screw was inserted into His flat head and a strap or necklace was worn around the neck coming down to about the chest. For awhile it was quite popular and many of the then-few devotees wore them. I even wore mine with my suit and tie to my welfare office job. When the case workers went on strike, and I broke the picket lines they used to mock me for wearing my protective amulet and threatened to harm it. Some devotees even dressed the deities. But after a few years the fashion wore out. Maybe even Prabhupada suggested it wasn't such a good idea. But this photo shows the ultimate extreme in the around the neck altar. Instead of just Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra are included, in large size and complete with hands, flute, sticks, garlands, etc. There is even a little version of what appears to be the *stambha* with eyes. This altar seems to be appropriate for a procession such as a *padayatra* or Rathayatra.

Some devotees do wear *silas* wrapped in pouches around their necks. Some wear ornate flat *tulasi* necklaces shaped in fancy ornamentation. Some devotees decorate their *kanthi-malas* by alternating their *tulasi* beads with silver beads or even semiprecious stones. There seems to be a point where neck gear may be overdone and turn into jewelry ornamentation or oversized neck paraphernalia.

The altar in this picture is a nice parade piece but much too awkward for regular purposes. How do you cook with a necklace like that? How could you read a book or write? Prabhupada wore only a three-strand *tulasi-mala*.





Prabhupada reading a newspaper, New Delhi, India.

Another photo: He is on a street in New Delhi, on his morning walk, reading the newspaper and surrounded by Syamasundara, Madri Devi Dasi and Gurudasa. It's during the Indian-Pakistani war, and Prabhupada is reading the latest headlines. He used to write frequently of current events when he was publishing his *Back to Godhead* magazine in the 1940s and 1950s. He began publishing near the end of World War II. He quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury as saying, "They want the kingdom of God without God." He wrote his "peace formula" based on the *Isopanishad* verse that, "Everything belongs to God and is owned by Him. People should take only their quota, knowing well to whom everything belongs (*Isopanishad* 1)." He quoted the last verse in Chapter Five of the *Bhagavad-gita* (5.29), that peace will come to the one who recognizes the Supreme Lord as the proprietor, the object of all sacrifices, and the well-wisher of all living entities. He did not have faith in the League of Nations or the United Nations to bring about world peace because they come to meet with their same nationalistic concepts without recognizing that God is the center of existence and the proprietor. People of various nations should meet with a basic agreement on this point, or the United Nations will simply be an institution where new flags are constantly added, but God is forgotten. In a purport to the First Canto Prabhupada noticed that as he was preparing his writing, China was invading the border of India in a militaristic spirit. He said that for many years the two bordering countries had lived in peace, but now, for a lack of God-fearing mentality, they were going to war over an unimportant strip of uninhabitable land that was no use to either nation.



This is one of the most beloved pictures of Prabhupada. It shows him eating lunch in his kitchen at the Radha-Damodara Mandira in Vrindavana and looking out at the courtyard at the *bhajana-kutiras* of Rupa Gosvami and Jiva Gosvami. The picture was taken after he went to America and returned with his disciples. But he used to sit here in the early 1960s, and he said he received the order and inspiration of Rupa Gosvami and Jiva Gosvami to go to America by taking *darsana* of their *samadhi-mandira* and *bhajana-kutira* from the window. He was told by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura to preach in English in the 1920s when he first met him and again in a letter in the 1930s just before his spiritual master left the world. But there were many obstacles, and it was many years later that he was able to go. In 1960 he moved to the Radha-Damodara rooms and had regular *darsanas* and prayerful meditations upon the Gosvamis' *kutiras*. Someone told me he claimed they spoke to him.

Now he is back in his rooms visiting them. He doesn't have a temple in Vrindavana yet, but it is on the way to happening and he is also succeeding in developing Mayapur, Bombay, the Soviet Union, Africa, South America and all over the world. It all comes from this room. The effulgence of the sunshine pours on him through the lattice window from the courtyard and from the effulgent blessing of Rupa and Jiva Gosvamis.



Prabhupada and the audience appear to be watching something like a dramatic presentation. Prabhupada was pleased, absorbed in the presentation, and at ease. It is a grand occasion, and he is enjoying himself. He was surrounded by dignitaries and disciples. He looks in good health. Prabhupada and his disciples are responsible for the successful installation of the deities, but Prabhupada does not look concerned or worried at the moment. In a childlike way, he is caught up in the entertainment being played before his eyes.

They have bought almost all the flowers available in the market, and the temple is strung with garlands. The crowds have gathered in the temple all day. There have been many *yajnic* ceremonies conducted by the caste Goswamis accompanied by Srila Prabhupada and the devotees doing *kirtana*. A big feast has been prepared.



Here is our beloved Prabhupada sitting relaxed at his desk in the Manhattan skyscraper in 1976. There is a fan in his room because it is summer time. He is dressed in flashy silk, and his beautiful slim leg is exposed. He has his hand in his beadbag, but he is gesturing with his left hand. You know what he is doing? He is preaching Krishna consciousness. That is his constant engagement. There are some devotees in the room, but they are seen in the other picture. It was Prabhupada's pleasure and duty to speak to his disciples and keep them alive in Krishna consciousness. He was either speaking to hundreds from the *vyasasana* or to more informal smaller groups like this in his room, or maybe just to his masseur during the time of his massage. When he honored his *prasadam* he usually did so alone and was silent except for savoring his food. At night he would be silent for a few hours and sleep, but as soon as he woke around 1:00 A.M. he would pick up his books and Dictaphone and begin speaking again, translating and making composed Bhaktivedanta Purports. Then he would begin his outloud *japa*. Then he would go for a morning walk just as dawn rose, and he would use it as another occasion to reflect on material and spiritual phenomena and instruct those who were lucky to walk with him. Prabhupada was in constant communication, he was not a *mauna-babaji*.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

And what did he say? He would often deride the *mudhas* or those who thought Krishna was an ordinary man and did not accept the Vedic scriptures. He would offer logical proofs for the existence of the Supreme Person. He would tell one of Krishna's pastimes, he would speak on importance of sharing Krishna consciousness with others and point out how all things fail without Krishna. At an apparently leisurely pace, but actually constantly, he would travel to speak to new audiences on the topics of Krishna. He never stopped.



On the roof of that skyscraper temple in Manhattan, also in 1976. I remember looking at a photo of Prabhupada walking alone in Manhattan, perhaps in the Bowery, wearing a long black coat and looking lonely but determined. But this skyscraper picture reminds me how far Prabhupada has come in eleven years in the same city. Now he is surrounded with many admirers and servants and managers. He is in possession of millions of dollars for Krishna's use, and he is in charge of over a hundred temples and thousands of disciples around the world. He is certainly much better off than when he was struggling down on the street alone. Yet I cannot think but that he was not unhappy then. He had the vision of the Hare Krishna movement within him, which he has now accomplished. He used to say there is no difference what I was then and now, except now I have more men and money.

When he was alone he was just as intently joyful and dependent on Krishna as he is on this skyscraper rooftop. In fact in many ways he has many more burdens now, quarreling disciples, opposition from the public, and the need to travel constantly even though he is in old age and ill health. He even once expressed that he was happier alone because then he had only Krishna to depend on, but now he has to depend on all his disciples. He actually said that.

But he is proud in a good sense of his skyscraper Manhattan project. Prabhupada is always a preacher, and the preaching is unquestionably expanded in 1976, with hopes of it expanding further still. So Prabhupada is willing to take on the burden of the gothyanandi and live with many followers and seek out new ones. He is willing to sacrifice his life. He is not in the mood of enjoyment but of responsibility. He has been given more charge and responsibility by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and he is willingly taking it on onto his seemingly fragile shoulders.

When Prabhupada was deathly ill in 1977, lying in his bed in Vrindavana, Tamal Krishna Gosvami encouraged him to travel to England. Prabhupada did so and was even thinking of moving from there to the Manhattan building. He joked, "But if I die in New York you'll have to bury me on the rooftop." That never happened. His health worsened in England. and he returned to India and finally Vrindavana where he spent his last days in the peace of his eternal dhama. The skyscraper is now sold, but the preaching of Krishna consciousness goes on unbridled in New York City, with several centers, yoga ashram teachers, and interest increased and less opposition. Prabhupada achieved his mission alone and together.

The devotees bow down at the first sight of Prabhupada in the morning, and after his lecture, and whenever they meet him during the day. And they murmur his *pranama-mantras*. Once in the Seattle temple, when the devotees bowed down after Prabhupada's lecture, a college student raised his hand and said he did not want to bow down to anyone. Prabhupada replied that the boy would be forced to bow down even if he didn't bow down to the pure devotee-spiritual master. He would be compelled to bow down to rebirth, death, disease and old age. The material nature does not allow us to go through life as some master of all we survey. The real question is, since you have to bow down to something or someone, you should find that person who is worthy bowing down to. Find that person whom when you bow down to him, you will be released from the necessity of other bowing down.

In 1966, when devotees first started bowing down at the feet of Prabhupada, some of the more rebellious spirits didn't like it and went away. Gargamuni Dasa asked Prabhupada if he should bow down even if he didn't feel like it. Prabhupada said, "Yes."

Prabhupada told the boy in Seattle, "You are wondering why all these people are bowing down, but they are wondering why you don't bow down."

Prabhupada's disciples liked to bow down to him. They did not see it as a personality-cult worship, but recognition that Prabhupada was the representative of Lord Hari and should therefore be treated as good as Hari. Those who refused to bow down as Prabhupada passed by broke the Vaishnava etiquette and ran the risk of committing an offense to God's representative. Bowing down to the superior is a very convenient process, and it does the heart good to do. Prabhupada received the obeisances humbly, and not for himself, but on behalf of his spiritual master in the *parampara*.

*sei se parama bandhu, sei pita-mata
sri-krsna-carane yei prema-bhakti-data
sakala janme pita-mata sabe paya
krsna guru nahi mile, bhajaha hiyaya*

Under ordinary circumstances one's own father and mother are worshipable, but in every species one gets a father and mother. Far rarer is to get guru and Krishna. The spiritual master can bestow *prema-bhakti* to the those who have attained his mercy, therefore he is the topmost father, mother, and friend of everyone. (*Caitanya Mangala*, Madhya)



Wherever Prabhupada goes in his eleventh floor suite in the 55th Street temple in Manhattan, he is surrounded by devotees who worship him and want to serve him. Tamal Krishna Gosvami wants to help him open the door to his room, Hari Sauri, dressed in his gamsha, is ready to give Prabhupada his massage, Ramesvara Maharaja wants to lead and guide the way and be the first to accompany him through the hallway. Prabhupada accepts all the service and attention in a matter-of-fact way, neither encouraging it nor discouraging it. It is 1976, and this is his first and last visit to the skyscraper temple. Things have changed completely from when he was first in New York City in 1965. At that time he was all alone with no one to help him and no money to meet his essential needs. He was staying in a windowless studio lent to him by an acquaintance yogi, Dr. Mishra. Now he has more helpers than he needs, and he is maintaining them and engaging them as disciples for their own good. He doesn't need ten people to walk down the hall with him or two hundred people to hear him lecture in the temple, but he accepts it as service to his Guru Maharaja.

This was why he came to America, to convert the westerners to Vaishnavas, and now it has come to pass. He does not accept it as glory to himself or as sense gratification but as duty, as a preacher. It is the purity of his success to allow all these men to surround him and to tend to him, even if it may be a little infringing on his privacy. He is the same person he was in 1965, humbly serving his spiritual master, but now he has money and men and women. It has not changed his heart in his original intent—to spread Krishna consciousness as a humble servitor of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Srila Prabhupada, you know there's a bitter controversy in ISKCON and splits off the main stream of ISKCON by those who cannot accept anyone as a spiritual master after you. But ISKCON upholds that there is a *parampara* of gurus after Prabhupada who are Prabhupada's disciples who initiate, you could say, on behalf of Prabhupada. But that "on behalf" takes different interpretations. Some say that actually "on behalf" means that no one is a guru. Prabhupada is the only guru and you can only help someone and allow them to get initiated directly by Prabhupada from now until the end of time, or until some great, great soul appears who hasn't appeared yet. This controversy continues and those who like different varieties or don't like certain varieties they take their choice. But everybody agrees who wants to follow you that you're still with us and that you're the pure devotee referred by these statements that one needs the association of a pure devotees.

Anyway, I haven't come to make debate in the name of prayer to argue one or the other side to defend myself because I'm one who does initiate on your behalf. I'm not coming either to beg a mysterious voice to come and tell the answer of what you really think, Srila Prabhupada. One of the main premises of these Smaranams was not to make petitions to you but to praise you, to be with you and to listen quietly to what you want. That would have to come by different kinds of convictions with time as you desire. Not by a sudden voice or dream.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, you're the pure devotee, and I've been fortunate enough to have your association. I was just thinking that you're always present for me and for most devotees in ISKCON at a certain level, and we have assurance of this. But this could create a complacency. And certainly there's a percentage of forgetfulness, and it may be a rather high percentage. I hope these Smaranams will help in an easy way. I say an easy way because they positively let me increase. It's like walking into the water and wading and wading and then going in and starting to swim. And swimming also with the Australian crawl so there I'm with you and in you now more. But there may be some rough waves also, and there's a long ways to go. But please let me be with you.

I say this because I just caught a little spark, a growing flame of awareness about it. That unless I do something deliberately I'll always stay on that low level of being connected to you. I can say, "Yes, I'm with Prabhupada always, 'cause I follow the rules he taught and so on. And I have some vague memories. But unless you activate these things, you can't say to be fully taking advantage of the association of the pure devotee. And unless we do that we can't have Krishna.



To get pure love of God you have to be with the pure devotees. It saves hundreds and hundreds of lifetimes. And we think I better go forward then and get that association. But then we ask ourselves What about my association with Srila Prabhupada, isn't that sufficient? The answer is yes it is sufficient. Association with him is potent. But I have to take full advantage of it. I shouldn't say that I'm not so advanced that I can do it by separation I need a *siksa-guru*. Rather I should increase my devotion to him in the way that is available to me now.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, therefore I'm working these different avenues . . . looking at pictures. This picture of you sitting reading the Gaudiya Math edition of *Brahma-sambhita* while I, a young *grhastha* with my beadbag around my neck am pouring the liquids on the Deities. I was lucky, lucky to be a devotee under your care that way. So young and you so lenient, old. In charge of all of us in the temple of Boston. Picture after picture Prabhupada leading us. On the Ratha Yatra parade or my getting initiated in 1972 in Los Angeles while you sat on the *vyasasana*. You said that if somebody gets initiated and promises in front Krishna and the guru and so on then he has to keep that promise or he'll not be good at all. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

Prabhupada my master, I'm looking at these letters, and there's a short note. It's actually at the end of a letter to somebody else. It's a letter to "My dear boys" in which you say that we should resolve whether the \$5,000.00 should be paid to buy the house but you don't think it should. But we can spend it as we think. Then you give a PS to me, "My dear Satsvarupa,

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

In a previous letter you informed me that you are not going to pay a farthing unless you are in possession of the house. So you must follow the determination. You should not sign the check if you are not satisfied yourself. ACB.”

It's very clear that this is in addition to the letter “Dear boys” in which Prabhupada says he doesn't think that we should risk the money unless there's definite proof. He nevertheless says that Satsvarupa and Brahmananda are the main support, and they have to sign the checks. But I had told this to him. I had spoken up boldly. And I had actually caught from what he had said (and let's say I also caught from the Supersoul), the intelligence to know what to do in this case. But I was swayed by my Godbrothers. And Prabhupada seemed to know of this possibility or likelihood . . . that although I had the right conviction I wouldn't be able to carry through on it. I wasn't strong enough as an individual. So he gives me a note reminding me of what I had promised and the course that I was going to take. Despite this special note I still didn't do it.

I don't want to use this in a wrong way to say that now I should never cooperate with Godbrothers. Rather Prabhupada says we should cooperate. But what does cooperate mean? It doesn't mean to just go along with what the gang says or what's the predominant mood. Or it could even mean sometimes not agreeing with the GBC resolution, but following Prabhupada.



I have at least a record in this letter of a case where Prabhupada hoped that I would stand out among his disciples and do the right thing because the wrong thing was about to be done. But his hope trusting in me didn't work, and this might have led to Prabhupada later understanding that I'm not a good manager. So use it for what it is and try to keep in mind that there will be times when you have to stand up for Prabhupada according to your heart's conviction; according to your promise, and it may not be popular at all.

Hare Krishna. Jai Srila Prabhupada. I'm thinking of my relationship with you as I pray. Thinking of me as young when you were here. Now you're gone, and I'm not young. What to do? I pray that you'll always be with me and I know you will. I pray to remember you at the time of my death. Dear Srila Prabhupada, let me be your *sisya*. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

REVIVING HIS MEMORY

Here is Srila Prabhupada walking on the beach in January 1974 in Honolulu when I first became his traveling servant. He once said that Juhu and Honolulu were his favorite places because there were palm trees there, and where there are palm trees it was paradise. Thirty-three years have passed since his disappearance, but the memories of his presence are still fresh. His presence was eternal because he was a pure devotee, and so it is like with the presence of Krishna 5,000 years ago. If you are pure and devoted, and concentrate your mind, you can feel like Prabhupada is with us even now. Personally, I recall the times I was with him, and fortunately I had the presence of mind to preserve it in writing in books like *My Letters from Srila Prabhupada*, *Prabhupada Meditations*, *Life with the Perfect Master*, and others.

His influence is not fading in my life but is solid and palpable. Certainly there is a difference between when he was physically present and now. That difference is called *vapuh* and *vani*. *Vapuh* refers to the physical presence, and *vani* refers to the presence through separation. As early as 1967 when Prabhupada left us in New York City and went to San Francisco, and we felt initially bereft, he wrote to us and said the physical presence of the spiritual master was "immaterial," and the real substance of life with him was in the transcendental sound vibration. As he wrote in his dedication of the First Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, dated on the disappearance day of Bhaktisiddhanta, "To my spiritual master. He lives forever in his instructions, and the follower lives with him." I am still walking behind him on the beach at Honolulu. I am still meeting him for the first time in the summer of 1966.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

To be young and walking with your spiritual master on the beach in his morning walk is the happiest time of your life. You are aware it is a wonderful opportunity, but only when you are seventy years old and Prabhupada has disappeared for thirty years do you realize how blissful it actually was. You realize with hindsight how much you have lost. You served simply, walking beside him and holding a microphone to catch his precious words. Because of his supervising presence you had not committed any big mistakes or fall-downs. He was kind to you and pleased with you, and you felt privileged to



be in his intimate association. The morning walk of Juhu Beach in 1974 with both Prabhupada and yourself in good health, and your Godbrothers and Godsisters beside you... You were aware it was a glorious time, but now you are even more aware of its rarity and how much you have lost.

We have a memory and a photograph to revive your reminiscences, and it reminds us that it was actually a fact, you *were* there with him, and it is a service that never suffers loss or diminution—and can save you from the greatest fear. The fact that Prabhupada allowed you on his walk is permanently etched in your life, and you are grateful for it, and somehow it is eternal.

This is a photo from a morning walk in Denver, Colorado in 1975. It was a lovely park with trees, shrubberies, flowers and symmetrical walks. It was a beautiful summer morning. Prabhupada was light-hearted and communicative. We were the only persons in the large park. Prabhupada remarked that the karmis have built the park but they were not using it. They were leaving it for the devotees to use. He said, "Rich men's sons don't work." They just get to enjoy the property of their father. When he said that we all burst out laughing. Srila Prabhupada continued remarking how the devotees were the most privileged persons allowed to do anything; by their inclination to take an early morning walk they had the whole park to themselves. He made us feel so special and privileged, we were an elite core, the disciples of our spiritual master.

Aside from this isolated incident, Prabhupada made many statements indicating that his disciples were special and fortunate. He liked to repeat an incident where a Christian priest approached him in the airport in Hong Kong and said "How is it that your disciples are so bright-faced?" He liked Dr Stillson Judah's remark that Prabhupada had transformed his devotees "from hippies to happies"—and servants of God and humanity. Prabhupada had first-hand experience that his disciples had approached him as confused and morose persons and had transformed into happy devotees in Krishna consciousness. He was grateful for their service and loved them and they loved him. Once while giving a lecture on the appearance of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, his voice cracked and he broke down while saying "Because you are helping me serve my Guru Maharaja." In a lecture he ended saying, "You are all fortunate. Now don't become unfortunate"—by leaving the society of devotees. He claimed that if you compared his disciples to the followers of any yogis or gurus you would find his disciples superior. In his very last days there was a controversy among some of his disciples whether Prabhupada should be allowed to go on an oxen-drawn parikrama around Govardhana Hill. His doctor said he would die if he attempted it. The devotees who disapproved his

going told Prabhupada he was driving them crazy. Prabhupada turned to Akincana Krishnadasa Babaji and said, “Just see how they love me.” Then he said “This is my duty”—his duty was to draw his disciples love toward him. In a Bhaktivedanta purport he wrote that he would have preferred to install the Deities at Krishna-Balaram Mandir just by having his disciples perform kirtana but he submitted to the ceremony being conducted by smarta-brahmanas because without it the installation would not have been taken seriously by the residents of Vrindavana. By these and many more incidents, I believe Prabhupada felt his disciples were not fallen persons, even though their backgrounds were yavana and mleccha, but they had risen to the status of Vaishnavas by their performance of harinama and following the regulative principles. He was willing to vouch for them in front of Krishna, and a majority were surrendered to remain his sincere disciples for their lifetimes.

Prabhupada was on the go. He might have liked to like to stay where he was, but he had to travel. In a lecture in Berkeley he said, “I travel to keep my disciples alive.” He rarely traveled long distances in a car. Mostly he used the auto just to drive to a park or beach for a morning walk or to go to and from an airport. Once Syamasundara drove him to Portland, Oregon, in his father’s car. Syamasundara was driving over eighty miles an hour, and Prabhupada asked him to slow down. Prabhupada rode in a Radha-Damodara bus from New York City to Gita-nagari. At one point a disciple proudly announced, “Prabhupada, we are now doing eighty miles an hour.” Prabhupada curtly replied, “Slow down.”

His main travel was the airplane. The common saying is that he traveled around the world twelve or fourteen times. Prabhupada never took the airplane catered meals. He carried *prasadam* cooked in the last temple he visited and ate it off a silver plate. He didn’t like many devotees traveling in the same plane with him. He wanted the devotees to stay in their temples and not travel whimsically with him without any particular service. He only allowed his two or three servants and secretaries to travel with him. On long flights he didn’t engage in long conversations with his traveling companions. He preferred to pray on his beads or read a book or sit silently withdrawn. On occasion he would engage in a conversation with a curious flight attendant or even the captain of the plane.



It was raining during a morning in Mayapur, and I held a fancy umbrella over my spiritual master's head. But eventually the rains stopped, and the sky lightened blue. He walked at his customary brisk pace, and the devotees had to hustle to keep up with him. He would start a conversation on his own or be prompted by a question from one of his disciples. He liked to take part in debate, to sharpen our minds and to smash the opposition. "What do they say?" he would ask. "You sometimes take their side. What do they say?" And one of us would come up with an argument which might even be a personal doubt of our own. "They say there is no need for God. Everything happens by chance." "This is a ludicrous theory," he would say. "What is an example of something happening by chance?" We would either plunge ahead and try to take the asura's role, or we would remain quiet and hear Prabhupada argue that the beautiful complex arrangement of material nature could not take place by an accident. There is a brain behind it. We strove to keep up to him, stumbling over the clay clumps in the agriculture field and jockeying to keep a close place beside him so we could hear. "Life comes from life" was one of his favorite themes. He pointed to a clump of earth in the field and said it would be there tomorrow. It would not move, because it had no life. He compared the agriculture field to the Mayavada realization of oneness without variety. If you had to stay in the field with no activity and no variety, you would prefer to go to Calcutta where there is some life and variety. He was a walking teacher, training his disciples and exercising his agile mind. He would talk on philosophical topics, mostly polemical, for forty minutes to an hour and then return to the temple to give his Srimad-Bhagavatam lecture after guru-puja. It was the best time of the day, as he sharpened our wits and filled us with transcendental nectar from his lecture.

Srila Prabhupada's orders from his spiritual master were to preach in the West. He was told that on his very first meeting when he was only twenty five years old, and he was emphatically told the same thing in the letter he received just before his spiritual master's disappearance. Prabhupada so much modeled himself as a deliverer of the Western world that he put words in his *pranama mantra*, "He is so kindly delivering the Western world, which is filled with impersonalism and voidism." Srila Prabhupada completed this task obediently and magnificently, opening centers throughout America and Europe. Almost all of his disciples were Americans and Europeans. But in 1971 he returned to India, taking some American disciples and began vigorously preaching there. He expressed that his preaching in the Western world was the fulfillment of his spiritual master's order, and his return for preaching in India was his *own* mission.

Here in this picture taken at a *pandal* in India we see Srila Prabhupada being honored by distinguished citizens as well as ordinary kinsmen and ladies of India. His Indian movement grew in momentum until it practically overtook his Western movement. He saw the two preaching fronts as working together. He gave a comparison of a blind man and a crippled man. The western people were spiritually blind, but they had material resources, money, which they were willing to spend for Srila Prabhupada's books. The East (India) was materially crippled but spiritually pious. The lame man could ride on the back of spiritually blind man and direct him how to walk. He united the two worlds. He built magnificent temples in India, especially in the holy *dhamas*, Vrindavana and Mayapur, so that his western disciples could come there and take shelter and learn spiritual culture. And he made a magnificent temple in Bombay to preach to the Indians, with the aid of western disciples and the money they collected from book distribution in the West. Now ISKCON has become very prestigious and strong in India, far beyond what Prabhupada originally saw.



Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I wrote a note to myself yesterday, some cues. One is that I like to pray and talk with you. So many things we want to do that we want to derive pleasure from. Even we still think of the word fun, with a feeling of fun. Spontaneous happy activities, not dry activities. But as we grow older it seems like we have to be more serious. And there is doing the needful, one has just to survive do so many tasks you might not like to do. But the more we can find satisfaction in what we have to do or are doing the better. I didn't want to place a burden on myself of a new religious activity. But I want to do this even if it starts slow sometimes. I don't want to be without this contact, and I think it can be very rewarding.

Another note: It's changed from a far away "inner" Srila Prabhupada to a closer talk. That's good. But Prabhupada, you are great. So who am I talking to? Do I remember Prabhupada enough that if I saw him I would recognize him and he would recognize me? We say yes if it would be the same as it was when we met. But if his body is a different body and if he's doing many different things completely different from when he was here with us, maybe he wouldn't remember me and maybe I wouldn't recognize him.

But we say you are the eternal servant of the spiritual master. Devotees sometimes raise that question, and it always seems rather abstract to me and one that can't be answered, one that's inconceivable. They ask, how will we recognize our spiritual master in the next life? You might as well ask how will my soul go to the next body? What body will it go to and so on? We don't know how things are going to happen in the future. How will I meet Krishna in the spiritual world? How will Krishna recognize me? We don't know these things by any experience that we remember. So I try to remember Prabhupada with whatever I can. With my actual remembrance of him being a person just the way I could remember my material father or any departed person that you knew and loved, someone who was very important in your life. Also by the philosophy of what is guru, we guide ourself. In that sense we think of guru not as someone who we knew but someone who we didn't really know fully, then it becomes something similar to our knowledge of Krishna. It's based on hearing about Him. We hear about the guru, how he lives in a personal way through his instructions. So we want to go to him in that way.

There's the question of *aisvarya* and *madhurya*. We think of sweet times with our spiritual master through memories and his greatness in a mystical way, that he's the confidential servant of Krishna, the representative of Mukunda, or Lord Nityananda, of Srimati Radharani, and he's very great. *Sarva deva mayo guru*. One should never envy the *acarya*, *acaryam mam vijaniyan nava manyeta karhicit na martya-buddhya suyeta sarva-deva-mayo guru*. Never envy the spiritual master, don't think of him as an ordinary man. He is the sum total of all the demigods. Our Prabhupada is very great. Although in *yogamaya* the Vrajavasis stay always fixed on knowing Krishna as a child, as Nanda's and Yasoda's son and they dismiss any manifestations they see of His being Bhagavan. We in relating to Srila Prabhupada don't do the same. We know him as our teacher, spiritual guide, spiritual father who shared *prasadam* with us and so on. But also we know him from the scriptures as representative of Krishna. Anyway it's got to be personal, feelings from the heart.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, let me close the gap between us. Let me travel to you like they travel in a boat from one side to other in Geaglum, across the lake. It's me who should go to you although you came to me first when you came to America. And you do come to me reminding me, pulling me toward you in different ways. You can do this with all your disciples by Krishna's grace. Like Supersoul you can speak to us, remind us even when we're not good students. I don't want to be passive and wait to be dragged. I want to come to you, and this talking is a gesture to do that. Because I know I failed to do it in so many practical ways, I want to do it at least in this way. Something that I can do—talk to you, pray to you, concentrate on that, my dear spiritual master.



A favorite picture. He is allowing me to walk close to him in a meadow of wild flowers. We are both serious, and I am following his direction. I dress like him and shave my head and carry my beads because he does. Maybe I used to think that by dressing similarly, I could become like him. Now I know better how far from him I am. But the picture brings me close, and I can treasure it.

I can think we were together. When I see a picture like this I feel protected, like within a bubble.



INTERVIEWS

A young woman reporter from Channel 9 holds a microphone to Prabhupada's mouth. She is young enough to be his granddaughter. She's been given this assignment by her station, to go and get an interview with the leader of the Hare Krishna movement. He's paying respect to the opportunity to speak to many people and generously answering her questions. Of course her approach is simplistic. Why are you coming to this city? What is your philosophy? How many followers do you have? What is the meaning of the chanting? Why do your disciples shave their heads? She may have thrown some curve balls. What is the role of women in your movement? What is your position on war and terrorism? Why are your people so aggressive in the airports distributing books? Prabhupada had already heard all the questions she could possibly ask, and he was never bewildered to come up with an answer. He was always very reasonable, and the interviewers usually warmed

up to him and liked him. As one of the first reporters to interview him, a man from the *Village Voice* recalled of Prabhupada, “I just plain liked the guy.”

Prabhupada is not looking at the microphone, but looking directly at the interviewer. He has finished the formality of the interview and is preaching to her personally. He is reaching out to her. The one aspect of this scene is that she is a link to many people, but another transaction is that she is an individual who has come to him, and he is not overlooking her.

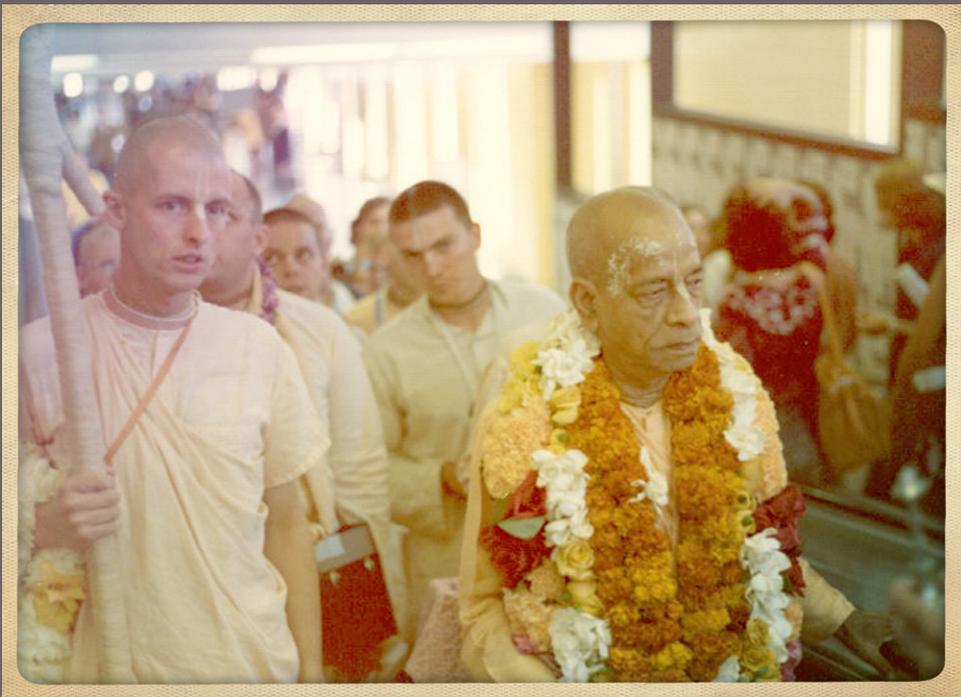
Prabhupada was often interviewed by reporters, starting with a reporter in Butler, Pennsylvania, in 1965, when he stayed at the house of the Agarwals. There an article appeared in the newspaper with a photo showing Prabhupada smiling, wearing his frayed *chadara* and described as an “ambassador” from India. That was a small-town newspaper, and they saw his visit as a special-interest topic. Later, Prabhupada was approached at airports surrounded by dozens of disciples and treated as the leader of a world religion. The interviewers asked standard questions, such as, “What is Krishna consciousness?” “How many followers do you have?” “Why have you come here to _?” “What is your age?” “How is this different from other religions?” Prabhupada answered the questions at length, always using them as an opportunity to preach the *parampara* message of *Bhagavad-gita* and Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Often the news stories that resulted reported verbatim what he had said, and this pleased him. But sometimes there were cynical comments about the fact that he was picked up in a limousine or wore an expensive watch while preaching renunciation.

Prabhupada would sometimes play with the reporters and answer their questions in amusing ways. Once when he used the word “hippies,” the reporter asked him what he thought a hippie was. Prabhupada replied, “You know better than I, something extraordinary.” He also received reporters at the temple and appeared at television interview shows. Commentators who were reputed to be caustic with their subjects were usually put off guard by Prabhupada and treated him as a gentleman without insulting him. He was such a dignified and scholarly gentleman that he raised the level of the intended interview and brought out the best in the reporter. Prabhupada also spoke to the reporters not only as mouthpieces to a larger audience, but he addressed them personally as spirit souls. He sometimes put them on the spot and asked them, in effect, “Why aren’t *you* taking to Krishna consciousness?”





Prabhupada is paying a visit to the construction workers who are just starting to build the altars at Bhaktivedanta Manor. He patiently stayed there all summer until they were completed and a grand installation ceremony of Sri Sri Radha-Gokulananda was held on Janmastami. Then he sang and danced before the Deities in the temple. He was the epitome of the *Guruvastakam* verse that says the spiritual master is always guiding the devotees in the worship of Radha and Krishna in the temple. These devotees may not have been the most expert carpenters and builders, but when they saw Prabhupada's pleasure with them, they became inspired and empowered to do the job well. It was like that with all the services the devotees performed for Srila Prabhupada. He assigned them a task, say, of book distribution, or cooking, or painting pictures, or putting together a magazine, and with a few directions from him, they learned on the job how to be expert at the task. One of the 26 qualities of a devotee is "expert," and the devotees mainly learned it by practice. Some of their early efforts may have been imperfect, but they soon learned to master difficult tasks, with the aid of Krishna in the heart and confidence imbued in them by Srila Prabhupada. He never preferred to hire *karmi* laborers but engaged his own men and women and expected them to quickly pick up a proficient skill by trial and error. Fortunately, Prabhupada had many skilled, intelligent disciples, and they learned to pick up professional skills like building a first-class altar for the Deities at Bhaktivedanta Manor. The devotees felt their spiritual lives were at stake, and they worked long, diligent hours to please their spiritual master with a serviceable finished product. With Krishna directing them, they achieved wonders, and the Krishna consciousness movement grew and developed in all ways.



*nr-deham adyam su-labham su-durlabham
plavam su-kalpam guru-karnadharam
mayanukulena nabhasvateritam
puman bhavabdhim na taret sa atma-ha*

This human form of life is rare and it is superior to all other forms of life. Having attained it, one may easily cross over the ocean of material existence. This human form of life is like a ship for crossing the material ocean. The guru is the captain and the mercy of the Lord is the favorable wind that carries the ship safely across. One who fails to make use of the human form of life for crossing the ocean of birth and death is the killer of the self.

(Bhag. 11.20.17)

Srila Prabhupada is arriving at an airport surrounded by devotees. He looks somber and inward. He may even be feeling a little tired from the long flight. He is fixed in his mission to travel and deliver Krishna consciousness, to strengthen his devotees and bring newcomers onto the path. Most of his followers are young men and women, and he is very much older than them. They are also neophyte devotees, and he is a maha-bhagavata, a pure devotee who is completely free of material desires and surrendered to the lotus feet of Krishna and his spiritual master.

His routine is to travel to a temple and deliver Srimad-Bhagavatam classes from the vyasasana and take part in group kirtana. Occasionally he will go out for a public lecture in a school or open meeting. The temple president may bring special guests to meet with him. Whenever he travels, he keeps up his practice of rising around one in the morning and working on his translations and purports of Srimad-Bhagavatam. He keeps up his correspondence, which is mostly to leaders of temples around the world, and in this way he manages a growing worldwide religion. He carries heavy responsibilities. They show in his face. As it is said in the scripture, a guru is heavy, and Prabhupada fully fills that role. He is not amused or flattered by his many followers, but he cares for them personally and does his best to give everyone individual attention. He is a serious person and does not take his duties lightly. Any objective onlooker seeing him arriving at the airport would be struck that here is a saintly person and a deep, religious leader.

His followers pack in beside him with intense devotion and worship. They worshiped him by chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. That was the method he introduced and the sound he liked to hear. Prabhupada did not emphasize his own name and personality in his movement, but the name and personality of Krishna. *Saksad dharitvena samasta sastrair*. He accepted worshipable treatment because he was the direct representative of Krishna. He never claimed to be Krishna himself. Here he appears healthy and composed, patiently waiting for his car and standing in the midst of loud, enthusiastic *kirtana*. The symptom of the *maha-bhagavata* is that he reminds you of Krishna, and when you see him you spontaneously start chanting Hare Krishna. Prabhupada's disciples loved him and wanted to please him, to show gratitude for the life of Krishna consciousness that he brought them. Upon seeing him perhaps for the first time or after a long time, they wanted to greet him and welcome him in the best possible way. The Supersoul has spontaneously dictated to them to chant Hare Krishna, and Prabhupada approves them. When he first arrived in 1965, he asked himself would he possibly succeed in turning the hearts of the demoniac



people of the West. He expressed doubt whether they would take to Krishna's message. But now without a doubt he has captured the hearts of some American youths, and it is going on on both the east and west coasts. After a hesitant start in New York, he now has temples on both coasts. On their own accord, the men have shaved their heads with *sikha* and wear Vaishnava dress, and the girls wear *tilaka* and saris. And when Prabhupada arrives in their city, they flock to the airport to give him an affectionate reception. No one told them this was the etiquette, they came because of their hearts' spontaneous inspiration.

TRANSCENDENTAL TYPEWRITER

Prabhupada worked with a manual typewriter when he began his publishing of articles and his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in India. He would carry the typed manuscripts to the printers, where they would typeset the pages into printed pages. Prabhupada worked with his old manual typewriter at his rented workroom at Chippiwada in Old Delhi. He was a poor *sannyasi* and had to beg for paper and printing and had to bring the paper himself and have it carried by rickshaw to the printers. He then read the printed pages and entered corrections by hand and carried it back to the printer. He wrote in the quiet of his room at the Radha Damodara temple, but conducted his printing business by walking through the busy streets of Delhi.

When he came to America, he continued to work with his manual typewriter, composing the translations and purports of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He was on the Second Canto and carried hundreds of pages of already-completed manuscripts with him. But then his typewriter was stolen from his room at Doctor Mishra's ashram. When he moved to the Bowery, he was given another typewriter and continued his work. At 26 Second Avenue he engaged Hayagriva in editing the pages he had already typed. Then Gargamuni bought Prabhupada his first Dictaphone, and he began using it, speaking directly into the microphone and making tapes. He stopped using the typewriter.

I was one of the first ones to type the Dictaphone tapes. No one else wanted to do it. I had my own manual typewriter at my apartment, and I would also type the tapes in Prabhupada's apartment at 26 Second Avenue. When Prabhupada moved to San Francisco and I moved to Boston, I continued to be the sole typist of the tapes. He began *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya* and sent me the tapes in the mail. He sent them in loosely-taped envelopes at the rate of about two per week. Typing the tapes was very dear

to me. Hearing my master's voice in my ears and typing early in the morning before I went to my welfare job gave me intense feelings of separation. I used to hear his voice even when I wasn't typing. I kept the carbon copy and sent the original manuscript to him in the mail. We had much correspondence about which tapes I had and which tapes he had. In this way I typed the Third and Fourth Cantos of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the entire *TLC* and the *Krishna* book. In my morning lectures at the temple I would recite *Krishna* book stories to the devotees. Typing was my life and soul. This picture shows Prabhupada and me conferring over the Dictaphone during one of his visits to Boston. Typing for Prabhupada was one of the most intimate services I ever did for him, and it made me steady emotionally, easing my separation from him and teaching me the philosophy.



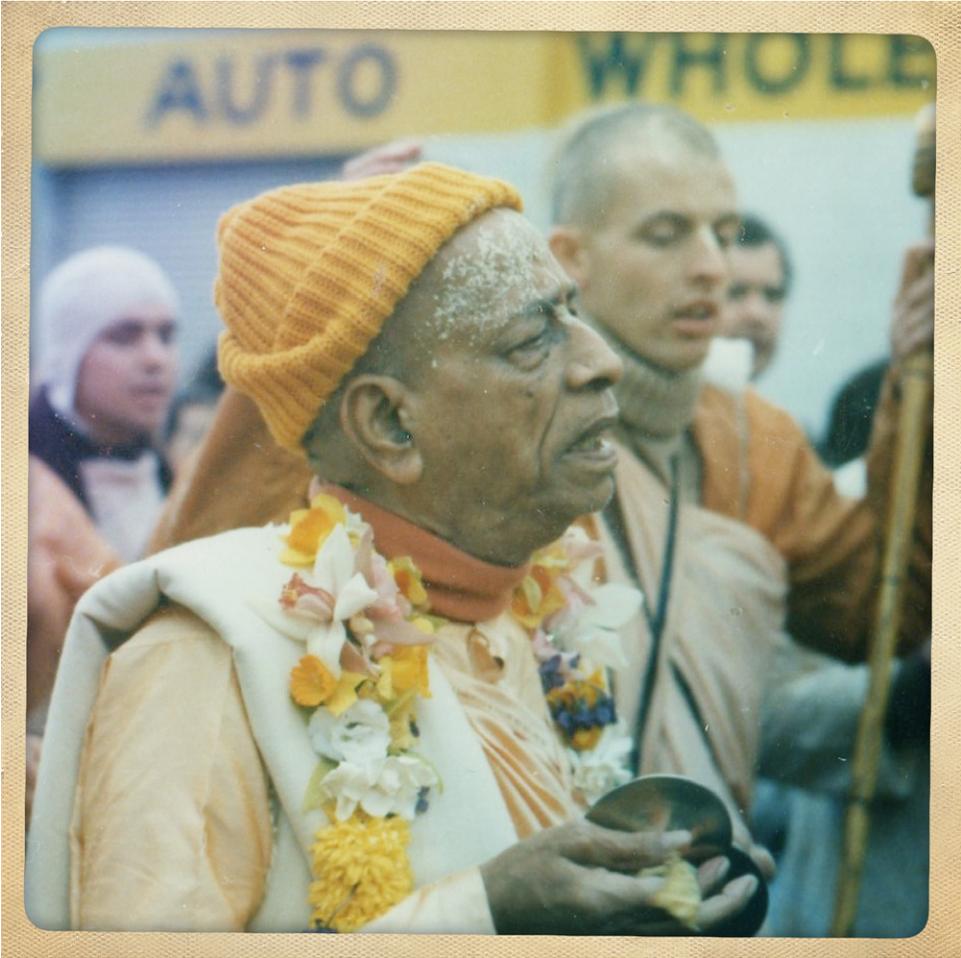
A famous picture, a wonderful moment. It is the 1974 San Francisco Ratha Yatra at Golden Gate Park. The cart in which Prabhupada has been sitting and riding has come to a halt. He rises to his feet, raises his hands like Lord Caitanya and makes little leaps with his feet. All the devotees go wild and

start leaping in the air, raising their arms, playing karatalas and mrdangas and all sing Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. They are amazed that Prabhupada can dance like this. He is causing a mass ecstasy. All they know is that he is jumping, and they are jumping and that it is a state of exalted delight, joy and rapture. These are overpowering emotions involving temporary loss of consciousness. This is the highest mysticism of Krishna consciousness—caused by Prabhupada’s dancing.

Our relationship is spiritual, like father and son. You’ve explained that the relationship is *janme janme prabhu sei* or *janme janme pita sei*, it’s not as in the *rasas* with Krishna beyond *dasya*. Although there’s friendship, there we don’t become your equal, we don’t become your parent, your conjugal lover at least as we understand it in the conditioned state until we can meet you in *siddha-svarupa*. But we’re left behind in this world and praying to you to protect and guide us, dear Srila Prabhupada. So it’s like father, father is a good relationship. Although I’m old enough to be grandfather now, I spiritually need my father. Even materially one doesn’t forget his father. Spiritual father is always older, he’s always wiser and we give him the right to reprimand us, direct us, teach us.

Dear father, please accept my service. I wish to learn from you. You’ve written everything in your books from beginning to advanced. It’s a fact that you do emphasize more basic teachings because we’re not prepared. But if there is anything that I do require . . . I won’t say that’s not in your books because it’s there—but if I need special emphasis that is not normally something you lecture on—I pray that you will give it to me through the heart so I’ll be satisfied.

I may end this Smaranam section; it didn’t get anywhere yet one might say. But I feel I have been with you. While talking with you I’m gazing in a spaced-out way visually at a very pretty scene—the dawn at the lake. There are bluish dark clouds, a lot of them. But enough light clear blue behind to show some light, not like yesterday. And on the horizon a pinkish yellow, the light of the majestic sun. These colors are reflected in the lake. While talking I saw three large white swans flying overhead, and two rowboats from the island go to the mainland, mostly silhouette. Although I might have been thinking of anything while looking at that it was only a background to being with you, and I felt you were with me seeing it and that I was spending my time well in an eternal way, talking about seeking to be with my eternal guide. Just a little, just a little, add to it each day. I hope to be praying more and more. All glories to Prabhupada.



1974 Ratha Yatra in Melbourne, Australia. Prabhupada walked and did little dance steps the whole route without riding in the Ratha Yatra cart. On the evening of this day when I was massaging Srila Prabhupada's legs he remarked to me, "You were dancing nicely today." His own dancing inspired me to dance, and here I am wielding his cane while he plays *karatalas*. He is wearing flashy silk clothes, a white *chadara* and varied colored hat and turtleneck. A Gaudiya Math *sannyasi* once corrected me for wearing a grey *chadara* with my *sannyasa* cloth. He said a *sannyasi* should wear all strictly drab brick-dyed saffron clothes, even down to his *chadara*, jacket and shoes. Aware that Prabhupada varied his clothes he added, "Your Prabhupada can wear any clothes because he is a *maha-bhagavata*." And it's true Prabhupada

didn't strictly conform to only one shade of saffron in all the articles of clothes he wore. Here he looks handsome and "dressed up" for the occasion of the festival. He mostly didn't choose his clothes but accepted the articles of clothes the devotees made for him. He was a naturally stylish dresser. The *chadara* is draped in a neat column over his right shoulder, the knit cap is worn at a rakish angle and the turtleneck jersey seems befitting a young man. He was really "dressed to kill," with his forehead smeared with sandalwood paste and a beautiful, full garland gracefully worn around his neck. He has silk cords wrapped around his *karatalas*, and he is really absorbed in singing. The fact that he has abandoned his old man's cane makes it even better. And what you can't see in the picture is that he's surrounded by dozens of persons keeping step with him and celebrating the festival of the carts where Lord Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra are led by Their pure devotee celebrant and dance master. What a glorious day!



Staten Island ferry, NY, USA, with Gargamuni and Purusottama.





ON THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY

Here is Srila Prabhupada on the Staten Island ferry with Gargamuni and Purusottama in the late 1960s. I am positive it is the Staten Island Ferry because I lived on Staten Island for thirteen years and commuted to Manhattan for many years. I'm thoroughly familiar with the wooden seating, the windows and the refreshment stand that is partially visible in one portion of a photo. The boys are wearing winter coats and Prabhupada is wearing a full, woolen *chadara* so it is not summertime. I don't know the occasion of this rare trip. I know that Prabhupada went to Staten Island in the early summer of 1967 to look for a summer house to stay in to recuperate from his Memorial Day stroke. I went with him, and it was a one-day visit in which

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

we could not find a suitable house. Prabhupada decided on a cottage in Long Beach, New Jersey, and stayed there for a week with Gaurasundara and Govinda Dasi and occasional visitors, including me.

But these shots on the Staten Island Ferry are a mystery to me. Maybe Gargamuni and Purusottama would recall the occasion. How odd to see Prabhupada as a passenger on the Staten Island Ferry, and how it digs up memories of my own relationship with that ferry. Srila Prabhupada, what was your purpose of visiting Staten Island with Gargamuni and Purusottama? It is so unusual to see you in these surroundings and to conjecture what business you had on that unimportant borough of New York City.



Brooklyn Botanical Gardens with Indira Dasi, dressed as Krishna, *left*.

Dramatic presentations capture the imagination. When we sit in an audience and watch a drama we suspend our disbelief and imagine that the story is actually taking place. We are frightened at the appearance of Ravana when he screams “I am Ravana!” and forcibly kidnaps Sita before our eyes, and we are later thrilled and satisfied when Ramacandra kills Ravana with His bow and arrow. If the actors are actually skillful and convincing, we can experience spiritual emotions in a transcendental production of a skit from the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* or a play by Rupa Gosvami. The twelve *rasas* of spiritual exchange can be tasted and an audience may even feel emotions of tears, hair standing on end, etc., as in the bodily transformations experienced by devotees in advanced states of *bhava*.

Lord Caitanya and His associates used to play dramas before qualified audiences at Srivasa Thakura’s house in Navadvipa. Lord Caitanya sometimes played the goddess of fortune and amazed all the participants. When Srila Prabhupada was young he played Advaita Acarya in a play put on by a famous Bengali director. The director agreed to work with the young actors only if they rehearsed so hard that their audiences would break into tears. The play was successful and people broke into tears as Srila Prabhupada spoke the words of Advaita Acarya in a play taken from *sastras*.

This is a scene at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens in the 1960s. Indira Dasi played Krishna, another girl played Radha and the boys and girls came out with Prabhupada for an afternoon in the beautiful park. They rode by subway. Prabhupada gathered the devotees around him and spoke to them about Krishna. He placed his garland around “Krishna’s” neck. But the rumor is that confidentially Prabhupada said he didn’t like it, despite their enthusiasm. He thought it was tainted with a bit of *prakṛta-sahajiyaism*. The pastimes of Radha and Krishna are too private for devotees to dress up as the Divine Couple and act out Their pastimes. They never did it again.

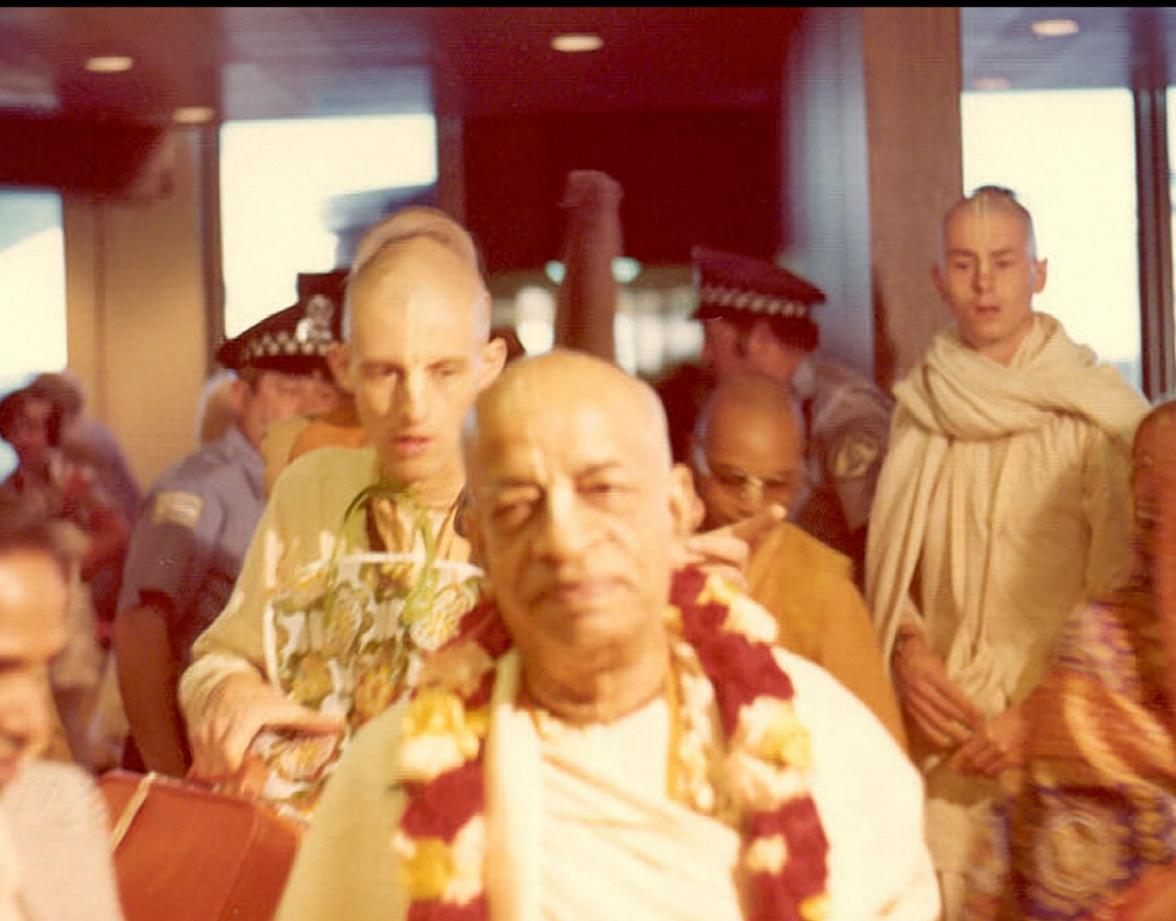
Prabhupada was so lenient that he did not punish them on the spot or call the affair off. He let it run and let them have their fun. But he later informed them of the seriousness of Radha-Krishna *lila*. In India, especially in Vrindavana, there are many “*rasa-lilas*” or dances of mostly boys dressed as Radha and Krishna and big audiences attend them and enjoy a pageant of what actually takes place in the spiritual world between Govinda and Vrsabhanu’s daughter and all the *gopis* when they dance in their dance of love. But Prabhupada forbade his disciples from attending the “*rasa-lilas*” in Vrindavana. So why should he hold his own in Brooklyn? The devotees were embarrassed and repentant when they found out Prabhupada’s actual attitude, but he easily forgave them for their neophyte attempt.



Prabhupada sits alone, a moment of reflection, waiting for a plane. He is usually surrounded by many disciples. Maybe he is in an area where they are not allowed to join him. He sits with back straight with good posture. His ever-ready *japa* bag is in his right hand. He is traveling from place to place, keeping his followers alive by giving them Krishna’s message. He wears *sannyasa* cloth, a tan vee-neck sweater and two, thick multicolored flower garlands around his neck.

What is he thinking? You can’t read his mind, but by intimate knowledge of Prabhupada you can be sure he’s situated in the position of a Vaishnava and manifesting the twenty-six qualities of a devotee. “Devotees are always merciful, humble, truthful, equal to all, faultless, magnanimous, mild and clean. They are without material possessions, and they perform welfare work for everyone. They are peaceful, surrendered to Krishna and desireless. They are indifferent to material acquisitions and are fixed in devotional service. They completely control the six bad qualities—lust, anger, greed and so forth. They eat only as much as required, and they are not inebriated. They are respectful, grave, compassionate, and without false prestige. They are friendly, poetic, expert and silent. (*Caitanya-caritamrta*, Madhya 22.78–80)

He looks particularly calm. He may be communing with his Guru Maharaja, whom he said is always with him, observing his actions. He called him the “Evangelic angel”. He may be contemplating his service as a preacher in the Krishna consciousness movement, or thinking of his internal identity as a resident of Goloka and serving Radha and Krishna in a confidential way. He’s not an ordinary man waiting for a plane. He is a *maha-bhagavata* pure devotee on the transcendental level. We must serve him to please Krishna.



Here is Prabhupada arriving at O'Hare airport in Chicago. He and his entourage delicately weave between two pot-bellied Chicago cops with their checkered caps and guns and holsters. Prabhupada holds his hand in *pranamas* and drops his eyes as he comes abreast of them, then clears through and opens his eyes with a compassionate smile with his mouth closed. The devotees were doing aggressive book distribution at O'Hare and had a tense relationship with the police. The head of the Hare Krishna movement walks past the police with no incident. The police played the dual role of protecting him and surveilling him. He passes through safely like a lotus atop the water in the pond. Krishna is protecting him. He has come to attend the ISKCON Ratha Yatra and to do interviews at the temple, and to lecture and hold *kirtana* with the devotees and visitors to the temple.

While in Chicago, Prabhupada talked with the police officer in charge of public relations. He asked the man to freely donate a specific building in Evanston, Illinois (near the temple), and we would use it to check crime. Prabhupada explained to him how we would accommodate criminals in a peaceful program where they would follow the *sadhana* of Krishna consciousness and be reformed. The police officer listened respectfully and with apparent seriousness but said that the decision for the use of the building was not up to him, but the local government. During his Chicago stay, Prabhupada had a controversial interview with a woman reporter in which he told her that the woman's brain was smaller than a man's and that a woman has no specific standing in the *varnasrama dharma* except to be a submissive wife. The reporter printed a sarcastic, critical article in the newspaper, and a summation of the interview was broadcast on the radio. Prabhupada was not disturbed by it. He enjoyed his stay in Chicago, which was, for him, filled with preaching opportunities and a successful observation of the Ratha Yatra down the city streets.



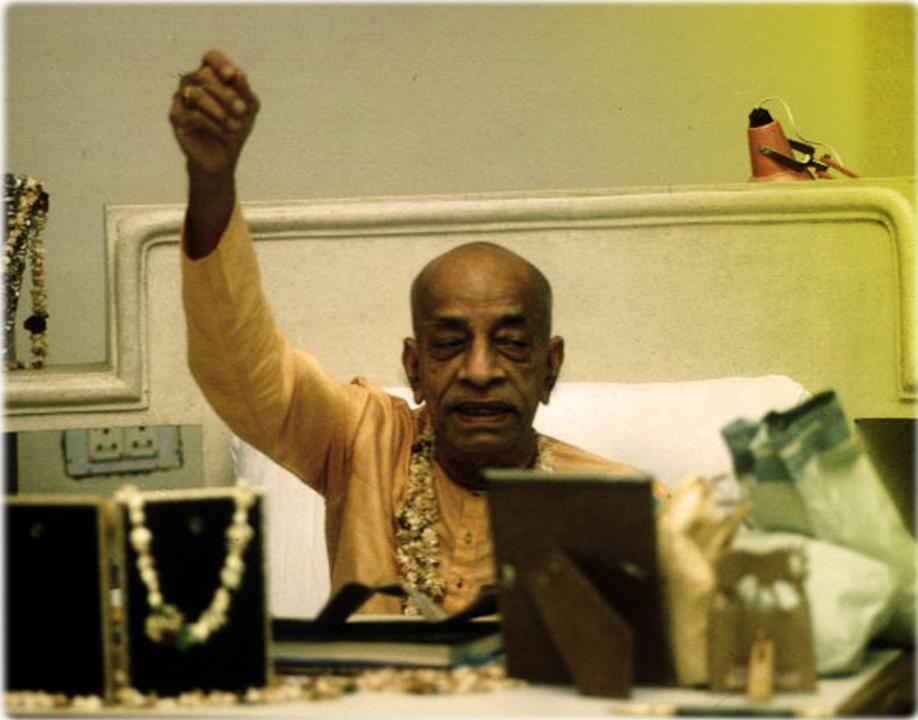
Dear Srila Prabhupada,

I'm starting by looking at a picture of you walking on the beach in Los Angeles with a soft long wool scarf wrapped casually around your head. You have a gray wool typical Indian *chadara*, but it's worn open so maybe it wasn't as cold as you thought it would be. But your neck is protected. You arranged your clothes in this way, the bead bag is there and the nice *sannyasa dhoti* and top, looks like silk maybe. I'm in the back and an electronic devotee, Krishna-kanti is behind you. Me with a kind of half-awake look, *danda* slung over my back, your *danda*. *Danda* means punishment.

You gave me that rod, but it wasn't so severe, the punishment of austerity, except no sex life with women or men—no illicit sex. With one's self either, in the body or the mind. That's the hard one. You said once that is why people worship you because you did not engage in sex life. Otherwise a *sannyasi* can have a car and eat nicely and have nice clothes, but even those things are restricted. The *sannyasi* will see that everything about *sannyasa* life is good for purification and for developing humility. Memories of you, Srila Prabhupada.

Yesterday I wasn't able to speak to you in the afternoon because I had a headache, and I wasn't strong enough to walk out here to the writing shed. Of course, I could have spoken to you in that room, but somehow I've become attached to this place as a place to feel you near and a place to talk. A good place as I look out at the frozen grass and the weeds and the lake. Now it's become a place to think of you, to be with you and to pray. Pray for being together.

You exist in the spiritual world, all the souls exist. The souls are wonderful; they can do all kinds of things. They have powers more than what psychics know as the mental powers of the astro-body of the powers of the soul. But Prabhupada you've taught, and Rsabhadeva teaches, *Bhagavatam* teaches that one shouldn't trust his mind or try to develop those powers. But the devotion which conquers Krishna as a pure spiritual one comes by hearing and tasting *prasadam*. Similarly in approaching Krishna's devotee, Krishna's beloved, the soul can do it. Even after the departure of the spiritual master, the disciple can be with his spiritual master. We say by his instructions, but it's not just a dry thing. It doesn't mean just that he's got his orders, and he forgets his guru personally. But his guru can be with him just as personally as he was before. Prabhupada writes in his concluding words at the end of *Caitanya-caritamrta*, "My spiritual master is always with me." Another time he said, of his guru, "Always by my side, they don't know. That's done by devotion."



His residential room, in Vrindavana. A plaque indicated that this is his home. He has many temples around the world, but this is the place he calls his home. It is where he came when he felt it was time for him to leave this world, and he spent his last months and days here. Here he is in relatively good health. He was sitting at his low desk, talking to some devotees and guests. There were small devotional pictures to lead his attention on guru and Krishna. He gestured gracefully with his two hands, relaxedly speaking the parampara. He was natural and at ease, at home. The table and bolster

were just to his liking as was the situation in Vrindavana, where he could hear the birds and parrots and follow a sublime routine, while the routine of worship of Krishna-Balaram Deities goes on and preaching goes on under his supervision. He is the mahant or residing leader of the grand Math, and when he is present the Vrindavana devotees are especially enlivened, and he scrutinizes the operations and management.

He is explaining the philosophy which he knows so well. This means he contradicts opposing theories in the debating mood, just as he has imbibed from his spiritual master and the previous acaryas. He has the discussion well in control and is guiding his listeners to accept Krishna consciousness as the conclusion of all the scriptures.

Krishna-Balaram Mandir is safe and sound. The first admiral is present and in control.

I could say let me first stack up an impressive bunch of acts on his behalf, and then he'll want to be with me. Like Prabhupada says you can talk to Krishna, but He doesn't talk to a nonsense. He talks to His trusted men with whom He has something to say. But I'm in a situation where I'm not doing such impressive work and yet I want to be with you. I need it, and so I'm trying to make a bridge like

*big, big monkey,
big, big belly, Ceylon jumping—
melancholy.*

When he's asked to do something the big servitor says he can't do it. "I'm not a Hanuman." But Hanuman could do it. And a spider could please the Lord sufficiently by throwing dust in to help. Rama praised him, said you're as good as Hanuman. What am I saying? I'm saying that even before I can do anything formidable . . . I'm not advocating that I should be slack, but I can't do good things, but still I want to be with you. So I'm making a prayer bridge to be with Prabhupada in this Smaranam. And I think my big lackings will be overcome if you start talking to me. Tell me, "Look Satsvarupa you're an old student. I thank you that you did the GBC work for seventeen years even though it was not your nature. And that you've told me how you're serving now by writing books for the modern mind. Yes, that's also preaching the big *mrdanga*. But there's so much more you can do. Even if you think just in terms of *bhajana*. Your *bhajana* is not so good, you say yourself. You could be compassionate, more brave." (I'm still imagining Prabhupada saying.)

“In the spirit of that letter I wrote you—‘You informed me that you are not going to pay a farthing unless you are in possession of the house. So you must follow the determination. You should not sign the check if you are not satisfied yourself. ACB.’”

Let me look at another letter from Prabhupada and touch base. Letter of March 16, 1967, “I’ve seen the typed copies of *Narada-bhakti-sutra* as well as *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. Both of them are nicely made. I think let us first finish *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, and then we can again take *Narada-bhakti-sutra*. The subject discussed with *Narada-bhakti-sutras* is already there in the teachings of Lord Caitanya. I have sent you matter for the second part of the teachings and please go on sending me one copy of type written matter. I shall be glad to hear from you.”

Prabhupada is so sweet about what was probably a burden I was putting on him, asking him to write two books at once. In the process he tells us the importance of TLC which contains instructions about *Narada-bhakti-sutra*. But then he says we’ll get back to it and finally we did. Those were nice days working close to Prabhupada in a menial way. So eager to hear him speak the philosophy in his words. I was full of admiration in the way he spoke not thinking, “His English isn’t good, it needs tons of editing.” Rather, I liked his style as literary despite his English being so-called second language. He used English in his own way. I took it as radical departure from normal English grammar, but why not? He can do it. Innocent days, happy days.

Srila Prabhupada, I want you and Krishna in the center, but I keep flipping back to think about myself and how I’m serving. Because if I get inspired hearing about you, having your *darsana* then it’s natural I have to get back inside my servant’s head and think, “What a wonderful master. How may I serve him?” When your spiritual master said, “you ask me how you can serve me?” Become a western preacher. So you had to think, “How shall I do it? I want to go to America. I must prepare the *Bhagavatam*. How will I get the money?” All the time, how to serve Krishna? You use your intelligence, your initiative but always for service of the guru. I’m thinking that I want to continue to be enthusiastic as I was for you in 1967.

But now I can’t type your books that you’re dictating because you’re not doing that, so I’m typing my own books. I guess in the process I’m releasing my own desires. Let it come out, let it be better, let it be Krishna conscious. Let the books conquer and bring people to Krishna consciousness. This is my private war against Maya from a timid soul. Weapons, cannon explosions all done gently. Gentle power given by Krishna and guru. That’s my dream hope.





AND SOFT AS A ROSE

These are photos taken of Srila Prabhupada in Germany in 1974. He manifests two very different moods, and they appear to be directed at me. In the first picture he seems quite displeased. His mouth is turned down, and he has a penetrating scornful look directed my way. My mouth has dropped open, and the other devotees on the walk are all somber. I don't recall what has occurred, but it makes me feel uneasy to see it now. My spiritual master shows a look of displeasure.



In this right picture the mood is changed completely. Prabhupada is amused, glancing my way and all the devotees on the walk are smiling. It is said that the Vaishnava can be as hard as a thunderbolt and as soft as a rose. The moods in these pictures are quick changing and may not be so serious. But if your spiritual master is gravely displeased with you, you are in great trouble. That is the state in the last verse of Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's *Gurvastakam*: "If the spiritual master is pleased with you, Krishna is pleased with you. If the spiritual master is displeased with you, your whereabouts are unknown." The spiritual master is a medium to Krishna. You can't please Krishna while displeasing the spiritual master. And if your guru vouches for

you, the Supreme Lord will not be angry with you. This shows the extreme importance of the relationship of the devotee with his spiritual master. It is said that it is more important to please the spiritual master than to please Krishna. Krishna will tolerate it if you offend His lotus feet, but He can't tolerate it if you offend the lotus feet of His pure devotee. Offending the spiritual master is called the "mad elephant offense." It has the effect of a mad, intoxicated elephant entering your garden and uprooting all your vegetables, plants, flowers and trees. The scriptures state that by the combined mercy of guru and Krishna, one has the seed of *bhakti* (the *bhakti-lata bija*) planted in his heart. The *bhakti* plant is nourished by chanting and hearing the holy names of Krishna. When the plant grows nicely it can become so strong that it penetrates the coverings of the universe, and it enters into the spiritual world. There it develops fruits like mangos which are likened to love of God (Krishna *prema*). But the same essential plant can be destroyed and uprooted by the mad elephant offense. The mad elephant offense takes the form of disobeying the order of the spiritual master, doubting his words, being disrespectful to him, taking him as an ordinary man, thinking he is suffering karma from a physical illness, etc.

The scriptures warn that one should not approach the Deity or the spiritual master too closely because familiarity brings contempt. A servant of the guru or the *pujari* should be very careful in discharging his duties. The spiritual master is very kind to his disciples, but they should never think of him as an ordinary man.

Yet, we always knew Srila Prabhupada as an elderly person. He came to us at 71 years old and lived until he was 82. As a senior citizen, he did not do any physical exercise except for his approximately one hour walk in the morning. He sat for a massage daily and that was a kind of exercise without moving. He remarked that his walk and his massage kept him alive. He began taking his daily walk on the recommendation of a doctor after his 1967 stroke. He began taking his massage at about that time also. But aside from these things he was a sedentary person in his old age. He did not engage in any hatha-yoga or workout or swimming or cycling or sport. Sometimes in the afternoon he paced in his room while chanting *japa* but mostly he sat whenever he could. When traveling on airplanes he had to sometimes briefly stand on queues before boarding or on immigration lines, but whenever possible he would sit in a seat. Once arriving at a temple he would sit in quarters his devotees provided for him in temples all over the world. That is, he would lean against bolster pillows and fold or stretch his legs under

a low table. He sat on the *vyasasana* during ecstatic *kirtanas* and only on extraordinary occasions did he stand and dance or walk in a Ratha Yatra procession.

Yet he was always expending energy. He did as shown here, by vigorous talking and gesturing. He spoke to large audiences in his daily *Bhagavatam* lecture, and he spoke to smaller groups in his room. He was always speaking Krishna conscious philosophy, which required logic and argument and quoting of Sanskrit verses. He also taxed his brain in each place he visited to discuss the management of the temple affairs, personal differences and financial matters. Daily he expended energy with his sitting with his secretary and dictating letters in answer to problems that came in the mail from all over the world.

He said it required great concentration to write his books. He strained his body by keeping his sleep at a minimum and rising around one in the morning to work on his translations and purports. He had to provide the synonyms for each Sanskrit word and then arrange a flowing English translation of the *shloka*. This was not easy because English was not his first—or second—language. Then he consulted the *Bhagavatam* commentaries of the past *acaryas*, Sanatana Gosvami, Rupa Gosvami, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and several others. After assembling their comments on the verse he spoke his Bhaktivedanta purport into the Dictaphone. Much of his commentaries came from his own personal realization and experience as the founder-*acarya* of the Hare Krishna movement.

So although Prabhupada was sedentary, and also suffered illness periodically, he led a very energetic old age. Even considering his travels alone, he outpaced the rigors of younger men and he expended all his energy purely as service to his Guru Maharaja and Krishna, as service to the conditioned souls of the world.



Here Prabhupada is touring the grounds of New Dvaraka (Los Angeles) temple. He visited the BBT offices and the householder apartments. Wherever he went, his followers were attached to come and be with him. This was at a time when New Dvaraka was at its peak as western world headquarters, and Prabhupada stayed there often. New Dvaraka still has the opulence of many householder apartments on the same street as the temple building. This was Prabhupada's original plan, to gather the properties and build a regular community. During the big festival days, like Janmastami, the block is closed to commercial traffic and booths are set up to celebrate the occasion.

Prabhupada is accompanied by Karandhara Prabhu (dressed in white) who was the head manager of the complex New Dvaraka operations during these years and worked closely with Prabhupada on the development. Later Ramesvara Maharaja took charge. Many children were born and raised here, and Prabhupada was pleased with the growing family and the new generation of devotees. A team of book distributors would go out daily to the airport and other places, and Los Angeles ISKCON was one of the world's leaders in book distribution. During the Christmas marathon many devotees took part and thousands of books were sold daily.

Prabhupada was like a father or grandfather to the community, and everyone got to see him every day. At the time, the devotees took Prabhupada's presence for granted, and now they miss him and mourn him but carry on his vision for New Dvaraka with the presiding Deities of Rukmini-Dvarakadhisha.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

As he was touring the Los Angeles headquarters he is stopping to see the devotee who operates the Bhaktivedanta Tape Ministry. They were using the latest state-of-the-art equipment, which was producing tape cassettes, which are now outmoded and replaced by MP3s. All of Prabhupada's lectures used to fit into dozens of bulky albums, and they now fit into one compact booklet. Some devotees still like the old-fashioned type cassettes although their life duration is limited. It is a great foresight that devotees so carefully taped all of Prabhupada's lectures, morning walks and room conversations. Apparently some of them have not been publicly released yet, and some of his lectures were never recorded. But we are lucky we have as much as we do, over a thousand lectures. One might say the books are more important, but the recordings are very important too. Vedic knowledge emphasizes the importance of sound vibration. To imbibe Prabhupada's teachings through the ear is unique. He had a special style of lecturing that is different than



—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

his written purports. In his lectures he would be more likely to go off on tangents, away from the subject of the scriptural verse. Then in an artful manner he would return to the subject of the lecture by the end of the lecture and round it out in a masterpiece of oratory. We also have many sung *bhajan*s which capture Prabhupada's emotional ecstasies in the songs of the *acaryas*. Professor Larry Shinn declared that Prabhupada's *bhajan*s captured his piety and essence as a pure devotee and are important evidence of his devotion to Krishna. As technology progresses, the Bhaktivedanta Tape Ministry will continue to preserve the precious sound recordings of Prabhupada's voice in the most modern methods, and they will never be lost. Generations will benefit and be able to hear the eternal sound vibration of the pure devotee made in disciplic succession in the 1960s and 70s and preserved forever. We can continue to learn Krishna consciousness and to be inspired by Prabhupada through these lectures, thank God.



Now Karandhara, the Los Angeles manager, continues taking Prabhupada on a tour of the community grounds. Prabhupada's servant Srutakirti stands behind. They have stopped at the temple grocery store. There are

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

so many *grhasthas* living at New Dvaraka that they can run a store for their family cooking needs so that the devotees don't have to shop outside. Prabhupada seems pleased with the fresh produce and the fact that the community is self-sufficient. There is another picture that shows him in a clothing store where he is sampling swami hats and devotional clothes. Prabhupada has purchased several apartment buildings and they are filled with Hare Krishna families. The whole section of Watseka Avenue is inhabited by mostly devotees. Part of Krishna consciousness, for Prabhupada, is that devotees should live and associate in a society, the International Society for Krishna consciousness. At this point in time, New Dvaraka was an ideal model. Most of the devotees living in the community attended the morning program and engaged themselves in some kind of service to the community. Prabhupada liked to stay there and called it his Western world headquarters. It shows an example of what an ISKCON community should be—many devotees living together, with Prabhupada's wishes and personal presence in the center.



And this picture shows the pageantry of the New Dvaraka morning program when Prabhupada was present. In the 1970s it was the most opulent temple in the world and his western world headquarters. The devotees owned many apartment buildings on the same block as the temple and many householders with children lived there. The temple room was large and hundreds of devotees would gather for Prabhupada's appearance. Here the devotees are standing during the greeting of the Deities and the guru-puja kirtana. Prabhupada liked the spaciousness and opulence of the Los Angeles center and that is why he called it New Dvaraka, after Krishna's kingdom as a prince living in luxury. The devotees in New Dvaraka were very hardworking and busy in devotional activities, distributing books, working on the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and worshipping the Deities. Prabhupada stayed there often for months at a time and the devotees had the privilege of hearing him give many lectures over first-class sound equipment, and just living in the same premises as he did so that they might catch a glimpse of him at any time of the day.

The best singers would lead the kirtanas and Prabhupada himself took part, singing and playing the karatalas or metal gong. He would stay there long enough to give lectures on whole sections of the Bhagavatam such as "The Prayers of Queen Kuntī" or the prayers of Prahlada Maharaja. How fortunate to be young and living at New Dvaraka at that time with Sriḷa Prabhupada as your spiritual master!

When he is leaving the temple he would modestly cast his eyes down and hold his hands in pranamas. His disciples were delighted by his presence. This exchange was simple and pure. They loved him and felt close to him for what he is giving them. They were grateful for the life of Krishna consciousness. He was molding them into pure devotees. They have changed their western dress and wear the dress of Gaudiya Vaishnavas, Lord Caitanya's followers. Their life habits are clean, and they live transcendental to the modes of material nature, and this is all due to the influence of Sriḷa Prabhupada. Because of him they are effulgent, and the temple room is shimmering with ecstasy. He manages to create a bond of love with each and every disciple in the room, and he does this in communities around the world.



Prabhupada's worship of Radha-Krishna is deeper than anyone else's. He lived in poverty and had no worldly influence, but he wanted grand worship of Radha-Krishna in the world. He pioneered. He went to America alone at sixty-nine years old in ill health and tried to start something all alone. We have to imagine what it was like to be *all alone* with no prospects. All he had was faith and confidence in the order of his spiritual master and the desire of Krishna. You can say these were intangibles, because they didn't pay for food or rent or shoes or a winter coat. By not returning soon on Scindia steam lines on his free return ticket he risked the possibility of becoming like a homeless man, or doing as Scindia's secretary thought, dying in America from ill health.

He had difficult days, but he called them happy days. Now he has passed through so much, and he is near the end of his life. He has achieved success. He is looking upon the Deities and They are looking back at him. Anyone who thinks the Deity is simply made of stone and not Krishna is fit to live in hell, according to *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada is not looking at a marble statue. He is very grateful and satisfied to see the Deity smiling at all the devotees and blessing them. He has installed Them, and They will personally stand and give Their *darsana* to thousands of devotees for probably hundreds of years. Why should it stop? He has installed dozens of Deities like this around the world, and his followers have continued to do it. He has emphasized book distribution, but Jiva Gosvami said Deity worship is also necessary for purification. Prabhupada has purified the world with Deity worship.

Dear Srila Prabhupada, whatever I do I must come to you in your pure form like I did this morning reading another little section in *Caitanya-caritamrta*. That's where I make my bridge to you without any doubt. I become the reader again. There's no change in that from 1967. Reading then, reading now. Reading better we hope, new lights, becoming a more mature devotee. Struggling through the doubts that were perhaps covered in those days. I don't want to idealize those days. I may have covered over a lot of stuff, or by Prabhupada being present we may have been lifted up by him like children in their father's arms. Now we have to admit things that we couldn't admit then, still as you go through that you may be sadder but wiser. Now you're more aware of your obvious limits. The days of your life are shortening. And the Hare Krishna movement is also sadder but wiser. I can definitely connect with you by reading I'm saying.

This morning I read in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* the different devotees coming to the Lord and surrendering to Him. The latest I read was Svarupa Damodara. They come and lay flat before the Lord. Now that He's back from His tour they want to join Him permanently in His Jagannatha Puri pastimes. Svarupa Damodara got such intimate service by his high intelligence. He prepared himself by being a humble *sannyasi* who didn't accept the formalities of *sannyasa* but studied and stayed alone and loved Krishna and then came and joined as a qualified person. Then came Govinda the servant of Isvara Puri. Isvara Puri said to him at the time of his passing away, "When I pass away your service will be over as my bodily servant. Now you go and do the same service for Lord Caitanya." Lord Caitanya is the Godbrother of Govinda, but Govinda was given that order by their guru.

I'm so puffed-up. What a fool I am, Prabhupada. Let me just think of myself and my position as reading your books and reading about these great souls. *Chadiya vaisnava-seva nistara payeche keba?* Who can become liberated except by the mercy of the pure devotee? Pure devotees are called Prabhupada. Pure devotees have no desire but to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world as Krishna desires. They are very dear to Krishna, there will never be one more dear. This is you, Srila Prabhupada. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

This is you, Prabhupada. You say yes, you can praise your Guru Maharaja, that's very nice and he likes it. But that's at home, now you have to go and please Guru Maharaja by fighting. So I'm fighting, I'm trying to do something for you, Prabhupada. Fighting to stay alive in my own spiritual life and give Krishna consciousness to others. And do it so that it's all marked as Prabhupada's teachings and so it is done not with ill motivations, or so that I'm trying to gain something for myself or it's not done cheaply—Prabhupada—but earned. That's my desire—to always stay with you. To always be attracted to your qualities and not afraid to hear you always and to be near you because I'm a simple servant.

Srila Prabhupada's garden adjoining the Los Angeles temple was a simple and not large space, but Prabhupada was very pleased with it. He used to come out in the late morning and late afternoon and sit on a platform there. The ground was covered with long grass, and flowering trees climb the walls which were covered with simple cinder blocks. It took many months to construct it nicely. I remember being in Los Angeles in the very beginning



of the construction and seeing Karandhara Dasa breaking up the cement ground with a jack hammer. The weather was almost always nice in Los Angeles, and the flowers and trees bloomed healthfully. Prabhupada would almost always have someone read aloud from the *Krishna* book and the group of senior devotees listened attentively. He would have the reader open the book randomly because he said that the *Krishna* book was like a sweet ball, and you could bite it on any side and find it delicious. Prabhupada would mostly simply listen but sometimes interject a comment. I remember once a devotee was reading about the attacks of the Dvidida gorilla, Prabhupada remarked that gorilla would often come to the assembly of sages making loud noises and ruining their sacrifices by dropping stool and urine upon them. Prabhupada remarked that Dvidida was not an ordinary gorilla, but very powerful because he had to fight with Lord Balarama Himself and so he had extra mystic powers. Nevertheless the Lord killed him for the great relief of the sages.

Prabhupada was very relaxed during the garden reading, and it became one of his favorite activities during his visits to New Dvaraka where he could be just himself and listen to *hari-katha* while having it read to him by his students.

*caitanya lila-amrta-pura, krsna-lila-sukarpura,
duhe mili' haya sumadhurya
sadhu-guru-prasade, taha yei asvade,
sei jane madhurya pracurya*

The pastimes of Lord Caitanya are the abode of nectarean love of Godhead. They are like thick condensed milk. The pastimes of Lord Krishna are like camphor. When these are discussed they are very sweet. By the mercy of the *guru* one can taste that sweetness unlimitedly. (Cc. *Madhya* 25.277)



Srila Prabhupada looks so lonely and all by himself as he walks towards the Red Square in Moscow in 1971. He visited during the time of political oppression, when the Soviet Union was engaged in Cold War with United States and the West. His visa allowed him only a several-day visit, staying in an old fashioned hotel. He was not allowed any speaking engagements, and even his personal copy of the *Bhagavad-gita* was examined at customs before they allowed him to keep it. He had one appointment, a state-supervised interview with a professor of Indology, Prof. Kotovsky. The professor was a Marxist teaching at the university. Prabhupada could not convince him of the tenets of Krishna consciousness, and he always remembered (and repeated in lectures) that the professor had said, “Swami, after death there is *no* life.”

Living for even a few days in Moscow was inconvenient, and Syamasundara had to stand in long lines to get milk, and few vegetables were available. Syamasundara dressed in his devotee clothes when he went outside, and once he was stopped and was detained by some hooligans. But a young man approached him and was attracted to his dress and made some inquiries. Syamasundara invited him to see Prabhupada in his hotel. The young man was submissive, and Prabhupada filled him with the basics of Krishna consciousness. The boy came back for a repeated visit and soaked up Prabhupada’s words like a dry sponge. Prabhupada did not formally initiate him, but after Prabhupada’s departure the young man told his friends about Krishna consciousness, and an underground movement began. The persons who became interested were very enthusiastic, but the secret police found out about their activities and began to persecute them. This story is told in the book *Salted Bread*, which relates how devotees were imprisoned, tortured, put into an insane asylum, and one boy lost his life in there. Despite the opposition, the movement flourished.

With Glastnost, the thawing of relations with Soviet Union in the West, the movement grew, and devotees even printed books in Russian translations and chanted on the streets. It was a long struggle, but Russia (in the demised Soviet Union) is now one of the most successful countries in the world for recruiting Krishna conscious devotees. All this came from Prabhupada’s seemingly innocuous but truly revolutionary visit for a few days. Such is the potency of the pure devotee.



APPEARANCE DAY OF SRILA BHAKISIDDHANTA SARASVATI

It is the occasion of the appearance day of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, Srila Prabhupada's spiritual master and the grand spiritual master of Prabhupada's disciples. He is simultaneously earnestly worshipping his Guru Maharaja and setting an example for his disciples. He is demonstrating the *parampara* to them. They should not think he comes to them in all his sanctity unconnected to the chain of spiritual masters. He has told his disciples that his qualification is that he has one hundred percent faith in his spiritual master and that his strength comes from strictly following the orders of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. He has come to the west, to America, because his spiritual master ordered him to do so. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati requested him to speak to western people on their very first meeting and then again in a letter he received just two weeks before he passed away from the world. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati also told him, "If ever you get money, print books," and he is doing that in grand and faithful style. On the occasion of the observation of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's appearance, Prabhupada performed *arati* before a picture of his spiritual master and he spoke a lecture, outlining some of the high points and milestones in his relationship with his

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

Guru Maharaja. Near the end of the lecture Prabhupada's voice cracked, and he was overcome with emotion as he thanked *his* disciples for helping him to carry out his spiritual master's orders. This demonstration, and the worship of Srila Prabhupada unto Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati drew his disciples closer to him and convinced them of his bona fide nature and his unique position. It renewed and increased their devotion to Srila Prabhupada and helped them to understand the true process of *guru parampara* and Prabhupada's position as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's most empowered preacher.



Here on another occasion Srila Prabhupada is offering flowers to an altar where a picture of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura is placed and garlanded and lit with candles. From the architecture of the room, it appears to be a humble place in India. He is observing the appearance day of his spiritual master in a simple way. If he were in a big temple there would be more opulent worship, but wherever he is, on any day of the year, he is offering his life in service to Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. Our Prabhupada said that he was not a great scholar or a great devotee. He spoke humbly about himself and made no great claims. But he asserted that he had 100% faith in his spiritual master.

It was this faith that drove him to make the long voyage to America with no money, in ill health, in old age, and with no promise of support in preaching. While on the Jaladuta he wrote a poem and said that by the force of his spiritual master he would be able to spread the holy name around the world. Of all the disciples of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, our Srila Prabhupada was the most empowered and did the most to spread Lord Caitanya's movement. *Smara param ajasram nanu manah*, one should always remember that spiritual master is *mukunda-prestha*, the dearest servant of Krishna. (*Manah-Siksa* 2) It is difficult for us to imagine how much devotion he had to his guru. In his "Concluding Words" to the *Caitanya-caritamrta*, Prabhupada wrote that he believed his spiritual master was always with him, watching him and guiding him and blessing him. Although, during the lifetime of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, our Prabhupada was not one of the leading *sannyasis*, his faith made him the most intimate disciple. Here, in a simple setting, he bows before his spiritual master and offers flowers. By the blessings of his spiritual master, this servant has thousands of followers who are grand-disciples of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and receive his blessings through our Prabhupada. In fact, Prabhupada said that the grandfather is more kind to the grandchildren than he is to his own children. Therefore Prabhupada's disciples, according to their faith in Srila Prabhupada, receive the full blessings of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and through him the benediction of the entire *parampara*.

"Very soon the unparalleled path of hari-nama sankirtana will be propagated all over the world... Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people will take up banners, mrdangas, and karatalas and raise kirtana through their streets and towns! When will that day come?"

—Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, *Sajjana Tosani* 4.3, 1885



And this is the Paris temple in 1974, and Prabhupada is allowing me to be the priest of an initiation ceremony. The paraphernalia is all set out, and the yajna has yet to begin. I will have to set out burning incense sticks and then start a fire on the sand mound with sticks from the box. It is a privilege and humble duty to be the priest for Prabhupada, who is actually making the initiations. In his lecture Prabhupada mentioned that I wrote in a BTG article the example of the wedding party, who rowed their boat all night but made no progress because the anchor was down. I was thrilled that he referred to my article which was, after all, just a repetition of what I had heard from him. Krishna conscious ceremonies are elaborate and enjoyable. They have to be conducted in an exact certain way. I was a little nervous to do it in front of Prabhupada but had experience in conducting the fire ceremony so I was pretty confident that I'd be able to do it without mistakes, as long as the wood was dry. At least I didn't have to give the lecture, which was conducted by His Divine Grace. He was relaxed on his vyasasana, not uncomfortable about the fact that he was making a whirlwind tour through various European countries.

He controlled the situation and all the devotees in the room. He was in fairly good health, and enlivened to be preaching in Europe, having meetings with Christian priests and dignitaries and seeing the progress in his various temples. It was a good time in his life. I was being honored as his personal servant, although I was restless in my service. To look at the scene now brings fond memories of a time I was actively and personally engaged in his service and fully under his protection. The temple room was packed with happy devotees, thrilled to be in the presence of Srila Prabhupada, especially those devotees who are about to be initiated.





These pictures were taken in a very big theatre hall, also in Paris. Prabhupada lectured for free admission and the place was packed. His French disciple Jyotir Mayi Devi Dasi is standing and doing the translating into French. This turned out to be an unruly affair. Some people even brought spray-can paints with the intention of spraying Prabhupada. At first the audience was quiet for his lecture except for a few hoots. Prabhupada based his lecture not on a Vedic scripture but on the first line from Saint John's gospel of the Bible, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God." The lecture was eloquent and ecumenical, and the audience was quiet. He spoke on *brahma-sabda*, the authority of hearing from the scriptures as the absolute truth. Prabhupada went on explaining the *pramanas*, or proofs, for truth as he spoke with the analogy of the statement in Saint John. But in the question and answer period, agitators started yelling. One man yelled out that Prabhupada was sitting on a raised seat above everyone else, and he shouted "Get down! Get down!" Prabhupada replied that the seat was reserved for one who spoke the absolute truth, and he invited the man to come up and sit on the *vyasasana* and speak from the platform of the absolute. The man was baffled and couldn't think of an answer. But a portion of the audience took up the chant "Get down! Get down!" Things were getting out of hand.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

An African man mounted the stage and started addressing the audience. At first he seemed to be supporting Prabhupada's right to speak, but then he contradicted himself and said Prabhupada shouldn't speak. People shouted in agreement. The crowd was basically not interested in Prabhupada's transcendental talk, and they wanted to talk on topics of nationalism and radicalism, and they interrupted Prabhupada's speech. Prabhupada saw that further discussion was useless, and he called for another *kirtana*. The *harinama* with *karatalas* and *mrdangas* pacified the crowd. But after a while they became unruly again, and Prabhupada ended the *kirtana* and closed the program. Some of the devotees were concerned for Prabhupada's physical safety, and they formed a tight ring around him and escorted him off the stage to his car. In the car back to the temple, he said he said he would not sit on the *vyasana* in public again.



Srila Prabhupada performed many fire sacrifices. Upaniya tu yah sisyam veda-madhyapayed dvijah. (Manu 2.140) He did it all over the world and adjusted according to time and place. Sometimes he had to use wooden store cartons for fuel, and they didn't burn well. They would tend to sputter and go out. But he always managed to gather enough dry wood to keep a medium-sized fire going for about half an hour. He placed colored dyes in the flame, and they flared up in blue and red and green, etc. He asked the initiates to carefully place their bananas in the fire. He coached them not to throw the bananas on the edge of the flames but place them directly in the flames. This was considered auspicious. He would personally add pieces of wood to keep the flames rising. He had to be careful if he was in a place where the ceiling was low. He chanted mantras from the mangalacarana prayers, and the devotees repeated each

word after him. Sometimes he chanted the prayers of the Brahma-sambhita. Prabhupada was an excellent priest, keeping everything neat and contained. When the fire died down he used some ashes from the wood with drops of ghee and made a mushy mixture. He had an assistant apply a dot of this ash to the foreheads of the devotees.

Before he began the fire he gave a lecture, usually about the advantage of becoming blissful and taking to initiation. He would often recite the ten offenses in chanting the holy names. He would hand out the names of the initiates. (Sometimes he would say what the name meant, or sometimes the devotees didn't understand the pronunciation of their names and would have to find out later.) Every ceremony was wonderful and successful. One considered himself very fortunate to have Prabhupada himself conduct the fire ceremony. A devotee was expected to collect alms before the day was over and present them to the spiritual master. When I received initiation, Prabhupada said in his speech that the daksina or obligation that the disciple owed the guru was to preach Krishna consciousness on his behalf. All glories to the fire yajnas performed by Srila Prabhupada. All glories to the vows the devotees accepted on that day and the spiritual names they received. All glories to the fires and the burning bananas and the grains thrown in and the dying embers. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.





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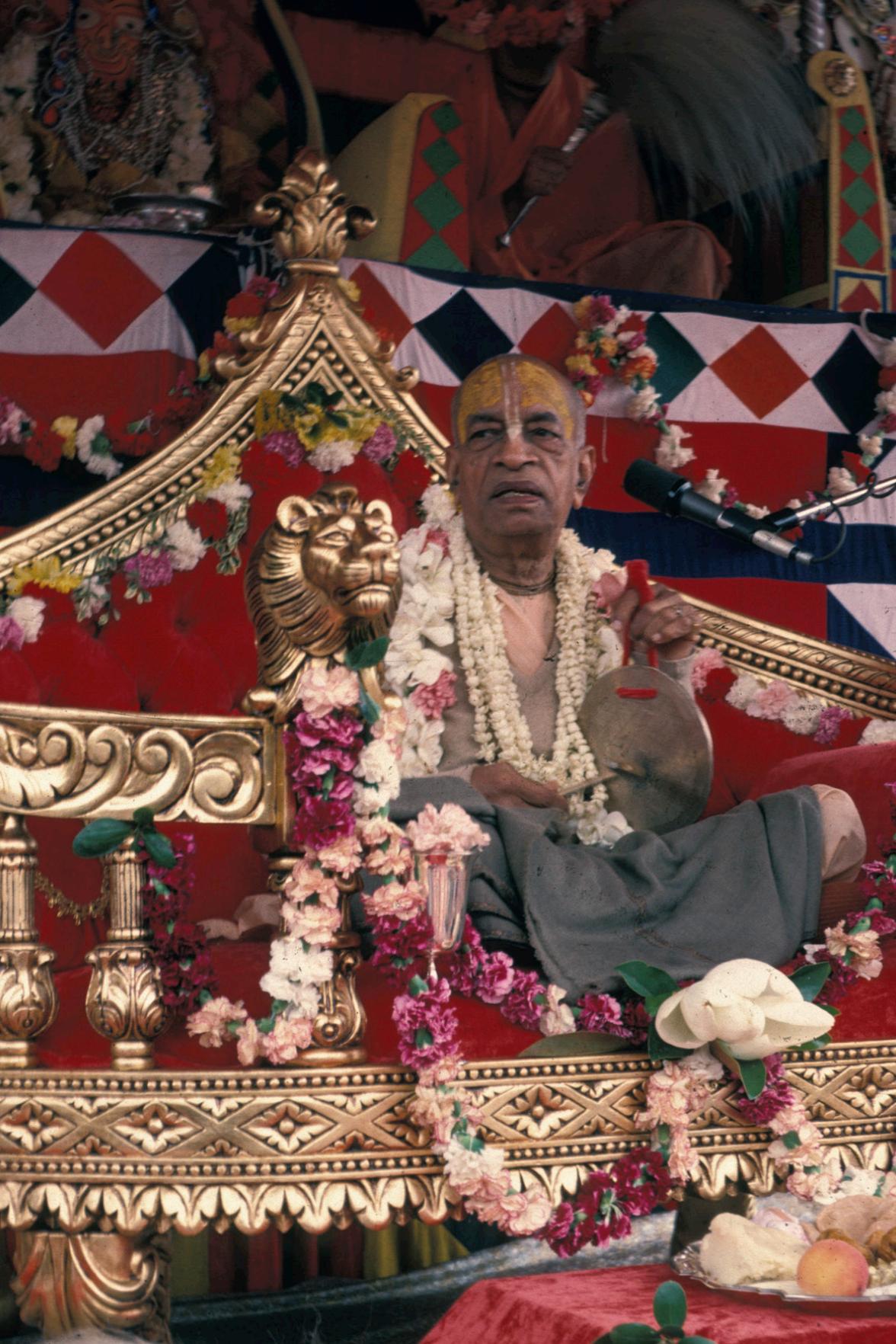
Srila Prabhupada was a jet-age *maha-bhagavata*. He stepped down from the *maha-bhagavata* level to act as a second-class devotee and travel widely to preach to different levels of people. He did not travel in an airplane until he was 71 years old, when he flew from New York City to San Francisco. After that he traveled almost constantly, moving more than once a month. He said for his writing service it was better to stay in one quiet, regulated place, but he felt he had to personally travel to preach Krishna's message to his disciples and to make new disciples for Lord Caitanya's mission. It was physically inconvenient for him to travel in old age, increasingly so, but he accepted the austerity with detachment and spiritual strength. It is said that he traveled around the world eleven or twelve times in about ten years.

When he was in the air he was usually not talkative but would chant on his beads or read. There were occasions when curious flight attendants and even flight officers sought him out and sat beside him to inquire from him personally about Krishna consciousness. Prabhupada was always gracious and informative to such persons. He would not eat the airplane food but would take *prasadam* that devotees had prepared for him. As with any frequent traveler, he had to sometimes endure long delays on the ground and even in the sky due to weather conditions. He underwent all this stoically, and lived with Krishna within.



In this photo Gurudasa is placing a garland around Srila Prabhupada, probably at the New Delhi airport. Gurudasa worked for many years managing the construction of the *Krishna-Balaram* project. One time when Gurudasa received Prabhupada at the airport, Prabhupada got into the car, and the first word he said was “cement.” He was so intent on furthering the construction of the project, and at a certain point in the process, cement was very difficult to obtain through government restrictions. Working for Prabhupada in Vrindavana didn’t mean sitting in a solitary place practicing *lila-smaranam*. It meant heavy management, trying to get permission for building materials and working with contractors and laborers who were always prone to cheat.

Prabhupada made demands on his disciples to work in these ways, and he knew that surrender to him meant working hard and keeping exact records of the income and debts as well as collecting funds to keep the projects moving. Some devotees expected more “nectar” from serving in Vrindavana and felt a strain working under Prabhupada’s discipline and work ethic. But Prabhupada regularly lectured on nectarean sections from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and spoke privately on Krishna conscious topics in his room. He was a hard taskmaster, but he was not dry. And he always insisted that the devotees chant their sixteen rounds daily. Sometimes he took devotees to see temples and holy places, and sometimes he accepted invitations to feasts to which he joined his devotees. Sometimes he bathed with them in the Yamuna. He went on a morning walk every day and was open to all sorts of questions at those times. Despite the pressure (and noise) of construction, he reserved his priority energy for rising at 1:00 A.M. and applying himself strictly to his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* translation and purports.



You can see Srila Prabhupada is sitting on a highly ornamented *vyasasana*. He is on a Ratha Yatra cart which has stopped at the end of the parade. The microphone stand is placed before him, and he is leading *kirtana* playing the gong. Thousands of people are facing him joining the musical chant. Prabhupada is accustomed to this, and he knows what to do. Soon he will give his lecture. He will speak spontaneously, and it will come out coherent and comprehensive, a talk about Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Many people in the audience have never heard him before. If they listen carefully, he will open up new concepts to them, that God is a non-material person, and to please Him in devotional service is the highest goal of life. To those who have already heard this, they will become inspired and touched at their core of faith, *krsnas tu bhagavan svayam*. This person Krishna is the *summum bonum*, their dear beloved and best friend. Prabhupada is personally carrying Krishna, distributing Him free of charge and directly. His words are the culmination of the Ratha Yatra parade. The pageantry is wonderful, but his words are the most important part of the celebration, his words and the *kirtana*. This is the Gaudiya Vaishnava method of imbibing the supreme truth. Prabhupada is delivering the *parampara* of the previous *acaryas* like the six Gosvamis, Lord Caitanya and Krishna Himself. Most people hearing him, even his disciples, don't appreciate the magnitude of the moment, but it is happening—Krishna is appearing in person on the tongue of Prabhupada. It is a tremendously auspicious occasion.

—Sriḷa Prabhupada Smaranam—

We used to be crowded around him. Often three microphones were placed near his mouth. He did not mind it because he knows what he says is important, and all those devotees around the world who are not present can get a chance to hear what he said. Even the devotees who are with him will forget what he said unless it is recorded. The tape recorder is serving as one of the most valuable instruments in the world.

He would stop walking in order to concentrate and emphasize a point. He was exacting and cool headed and gentle.

The devotees were eager to hear what he says. He is explaining Krishna consciousness in his inimitable way. They are all very young and are soaking in his talk. It is Germany in 1974. He wants them to be learned and strong. He is speaking in *parampara*, but with his own realizations.

Prabhupada placed great importance on recording of his speeches, and in 1965 he recorded in New York City even when no one was present. Forty years previously Swami Bon had little success in Germany, changing to western clothes and speaking only to learned scholars. Prabhupada spoke not only to the head but to the heart, and he had great success among the youth of Germany. Thus Prabhupada satisfied the desire of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati for the Gaudiya Vaishnava mission in Europe. In three years in Germany Swami Bon managed to convert two German gentlemen whereas Prabhupada converted hundreds with his uncompromising deliverance of Krishna consciousness. Even Prabhupada's disciples were able to break through in Germany. He gave the prize winning formula, *kirtana*, *prasadam*, book distribution and lecturing as prescribed by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati.



—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

When Srila Prabhupada stops on his walk, he dramatically gesture with both his hands. Smita Krishna Swami, me and others gather in closely and listen thoughtfully. He is not speaking something humorous that has made them smile, but they are attentive and serious. He looks like an actor on stage, with his arm pointing and his fingers held apart. He is making a dramatic point. Prabhupada wears his *chadara*, and the devotees are wrapped in big *chadars*, sweaters and scarves. But the chilly weather is of no importance.

Prabhupada is in his own world, speaking his personal realizations of the Vedic truths. He does it for the benefit of his students and also because he is unselfconsciously ecstatic over the words of the *acaryas* in praise of Sri Krishna. The devotees are spellbound because Prabhupada is not an ordinary presence on the beach but a transcendental speaker like Sukadeva Gosvami. They know they are honored to be in his presence, and they accept it gratefully and soak it in like thirsty sponges. They are fortunate to be close to him like magnets and hear the rare Vedic sound from the bona fide spiritual master. Fortunately, it is being recorded and can be heard in the future by people who are not even born yet. His words, like the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* when it was spoken five thousand years ago, are timeless, and this little group is fortunate to be in the presence of Vyasa's direct representative for a vivid retelling of *brahma-sabda*.





Here we see Prabhupada during his first visit to England. He had no temple, but John Lennon gave him some small rooms to stay in in his estate. Malati is in the picture, and Prabhupada is charmingly holding the hand of her baby daughter Sarasvati. The three American *grhastha* couples, Syamasundara and Malati, Gurudasa and Yamuna, and Mukunda and Janaki had come as austere pioneers and startled London with their street chanting, home programs and their favorable contact with The Beatles. Prabhupada arrived in England and pushed and inspired his disciples to acquire a temple. He lectured in public places and met with most of The Beatles. While staying in Tittenhurst Prabhupada would take a leisurely morning walk with his disciples on the grounds, wearing Wellington boots against the damp grass. His presence encouraged them, and they got the cooperation of the wealthy Beatles to acquire a small temple in downtown London at Bury Place, where Prabhupada installed Deities by the name Sri Sri Radha-Londonisvara. At Prabhupada's prodding, Syamasundara asked George Harrison to contribute \$19,000 to print the first hardbound edition of the *Krishna* book. Prabhupada ended his first visit with things well underway.



A few years later George purchased a mansion with ample property, which the devotees called Bhaktivedanta Manor. Prabhupada loved the Manor and liked to spend time there and preach to guests. There are many photos that show him relaxing in the afternoon on the front lawn of the Manor. It is a pleasant day, and he wears a stylish sweater and sits in the shade of the sunny British summertime. Things have much advanced from when Prabhupada was perched in Tittenhurst in the 1960s. He now has a large suite of rooms in the Manor, and there are plenty of rooms for a devotee ashram and a large temple room. Book distribution, recruiting of British devotees, and cultivation of the Indian population all flourished by the vigorous preaching efforts of the British devotees, with Prabhupada's direction. The Bhaktivedanta Manor and growth of Krishna consciousness in England continues to the present day, and it all goes back to the initial work of Prabhupada and his first *grhastha* disciples and all those who followed and who maintain it today.

This is Prabhupada in the early years in India when Syamasundara was his secretary and Gurudasa was managing Vrindavana. It is before the Krishna-Balaram Mandir was built. The event is not clear. His devotees have two microphones out as if Prabhupada is about to speak. There is a lot of motion of people. Prabhupada appears to be sitting in a small chair. He looks a bit tired. Everyone is swirling around him, treating him respectfully. They are in the doorway of a building. Syamasundara has his hand out to assist Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada looks grave. It is a candid moment, in motion. Prabhupada looks handsome. He is at home, in India, surrounded by his people, Indians and American disciples. The weather does not look very warm; Prabhupada wears a sweater and a *chadara*.

Whatever it is, it is a lovely picture. Prabhupada looks composed. Everyone is treating him with honor, as is befitting his position. He is accepting their honorable treatment of him, but he is self-absorbed, as if drawn within himself.

You get the feeling that there are many people gathered behind those we can see. They want to come and hear. Whenever a sadhu stops, especially one with western disciples, people want to gather and listen.



—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

Prabhupada is wearing a soft scarf and saffron chadara because it is January in Honolulu, and the morning is a bit chilly. He peacefully chants his japa. He is seventy-nine years old, but he is not ill. He is a jet-age parivrajakacarya, or jet-age maha-bhagavata. He has recently flown from Los Angeles, and he is on his way soon to India via eastern stops at Tokyo and Hong Kong. He travels to see his disciples and check the progress of the centers. He keeps things alive in the Hare Krishna movement. But wherever he goes he takes a morning walk. The walk in Hawaii is particularly pleasant with soft breezes and a park and beach to stroll through. Not many devotees walk with him, and he prefers to chant his private japa. It is dawn and he has already been up for hours, working on his Srimad-Bhagavatam translation and purports. He's about to receive news of a crisis in leadership in his Los Angeles temple. Devotees will travel from there to see him and get direction. He told his secretary that dealing with the management gives him a headache, but if he did not deal with it, it would give him another kind of headache. While in Hawaii he received a letter from a GBC man in India who said he was resigning because the sannyasis were bullying him. Prabhupada wrote back that there was no question of resigning. Prabhupada cannot simply travel and lecture and write his books. He has to constantly manage his institution, deal with leaders falling down and others threatening resignation. He has to hold it together by his personal presence and his strong preaching to his disciples to keep their responsibilities. Yet every morning he takes his peaceful walk.



His chanting, as recorded, is very deep. But clearly enunciated and quickly done. He taught his disciples, "Of all the instructions of the spiritual master, the instruction to chant sixteen rounds is essential." Once, in Hyderabad, after a morning walk in which he discussed many things, a disciple finally asked what was the position of a disciple who didn't chant sixteen rounds. Prabhupada bluntly answered, "He's an animal."

Here is Prabhupada on a morning walk, wearing his heavy woolen swami-cap, a grey *chadara* and tan sweater, piece of turtleneck jersey showing. It must have been a chilly morning. His face has so many expressions. He looks sad, tender, compassionate, thoughtful, transcendental in a world of his own. He could switch from these moods from one to another as parts of his self.





On a walk, people wanted to be near him, to ask him questions and hear his answers. It was not the same as words he wrote down in print, but the way he spoke them made it very different. He is carrying Krishna in his heart, and he is compassionate to share Him and teach Krishna consciousness to others. That is the main impression I get from this picture. He has wanted to create influence for his Guru Maharaja and for Lord Caitanya. For many years he was all alone, and no one would listen to him. His immediate family did not appreciate him because he did not have much money, and besides, he did not like that burden. Ever since he left home he wanted to preach for his Guru Maharaja, but he was not in a position to do so, and when he was free, his master's Gaudiya Math was ruined, and there was no organization to preach for.

But by the time this picture was taken he was at the peak of his influence in the International Society For Krishna Consciousness, his own branch of his master's movement. He was very successful, and he had thousands of followers. He looks satisfied, loved but still very humble and in a sense all alone, carrying many disciples. They all loved him but could not possible understand his exalted status. They work hard for him and dedicate their lives for him and for this he is very appreciative and loves them all as his children. But ultimately he is alone, satisfied to see the book distribution, the Radha-Krishna worship, and the bright young faces. But alone with Krishna in his heart.

A peaceful, meditative moment, Srila Prabhupada is reading his own book in what appears to be his Los Angeles headquarters. He felt at home in his second-floor suite of several rooms and liked to spend weeks at a time there. In the early 1970s many devotees lived there, and many devotees visited him from all over America. He even invited the temple presidents of the U.S. centers to visit him in LA and see how things were conducted because he felt it was a standard to be followed by the other centers. It was his western-world headquarters.

*Who knows the pleasure and absorption Prabhupada is deriving from reading his own published volume of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*? This was his main life's contribution, and he liked to see how it came out. As I have mentioned, Prabhupada remarked that he did not write the books but they were written by Krishna. He read them not exactly like an author, with self-satisfaction, but as a worshiper of Krishna, appreciating His presence in the book.*

Prabhupada had great confidence in his books' power to convince an objective reader to accept Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and

to take up the life of devotional service. Only by devotional service could the misguided civilizations of the world find the right path to peace and prosperity. That is why Prabhupada emphasized in his lectures in Los Angeles, “Distribute books, distribute books, distribute books.” He was very much in touch with the book distribution movement and encouraged his disciples to go out in public places and approach people to give them books and take a donation for further printing. He insisted that his disciples not only distribute the books but study them, and here he is setting the example. “Yes, whenever you find time, read my books. Unless you read, how will you preach?”

HE WENT WHERE KRISHNA SENT HIM

I don't know where Prabhupada
was going on the Staten Island
Ferry in the winter of 1967.
Maybe to look at some property
for a possible temple or ashram.

He never went anywhere except on
Krishna's business. He didn't take
vacations or take a day off
to entertain himself. He'd
rather stay at home and write
his books and chant on his
beads.

He went out often for speaking
engagements, even if they weren't
so prestigious, as long as there was
a promised audience.

Sometimes we arranged engagements
where hardly anyone showed
up, and he didn't get very
angry at us although he was
disappointed. His spiritual master
told him don't be discouraged

even if no one comes. You
can always preach to the four walls.
And the cockroaches
in the walls.

Once a big politician invited
Prabhupada to see him, and
Prabhupada refused saying the
etiquette was that the man
should come to see him.

We traveled maybe few hours
to get to Ananda Asrama in
upstate New York, Dr. Mishra's
country estate, and had a great
kirtana and lecture by Prabhupada
there.

He went to the place in California where the
hippies went around nude and
took LSD, and he left with
a handful of persons who became
leaders in ISKCON.

Before he came to America he
visited the prisons in India
and gave lectures to the inmates
trying to reform them.

He went to Switzerland once to
trade on the gold market,
but gave it up as ill-advised
after a few days.

He traveled without an assistant
from Montreal to Santa Fe and slipped
and fell on the moving stairway.
A gentleman helped him to
his feet. When he got to

Santa Fe, Govinda Dasi asked him in distress, “What does Krishna want us to do?” (They feared the altitude was too high for his heart and they had no good engagements for him). He replied, “Krishna wants to know what you want to do.” He stayed there and found some interested people to talk to.

He went to Moscow with two servants and was restricted to his hotel and one interview with a professor of Indology. But Syamasundara found a young man in the street and brought him to Prabhupada’s hotel room where he imbibed the basics of Krishna consciousness in two or three days and spread it to the whole country.

Once he traveled in a luxury car all morning from the Paris temple, stopping for a picnic, and looked at a castle but it was too expensive and he didn’t buy it.

He went to the ghetto in Detroit to look at the Fisher Mansion and decided he must have it. At first he asked the owner to donate it free but finally took their offer of about \$300,000 which was donated by the heirs of Ford and Reuther.

He went to Jagannatha Puri but
refused to enter the temple
since the *pandas* didn't let
his western disciples enter.
He gave a lecture and chastised
them for their restrictive
policies and proclaimed he
was holding Ratha Yatras
all over the world.

He left his deathbed and made
a final visit to England and
wanted to go to America too,
but the end was near so he
returned to his home, Vrindavana,
and stayed there until he was
taken by Krishna back to Goloka
Vrindavana.

Or did he go somewhere else?
He went wherever Krishna sent
him for His satisfaction and
fulfillment of *sankirtana*.

NOTICE

All initiated devotees must attend morning and evening classes.

Must not be addicted to any kind of intoxicants including coffee, tea and cigarettes.

They are forbidden to have illicit sex-connections. Must be strictly vegetarian.

Should not excessively mix with non-devotees

Should not eat foodstuff cooked by non-devotees

Should not waste time in idle talks nor

Engage himself in frivolous sports.

Should always chant and sing the Lord's Holy Names

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare.

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama
Hare Hare.

—
Thank you,

International
Society for Krishna Consciousness
26 Second Avenue
New York N.Y.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Acharya.

Dated Nov. 25, 1986

Prabhupada's English handwriting is clearly legible. Why did he wait so late in the year; November 25, to post the rules for initiated disciples? Maybe he saw they were getting slack. He just wanted to make it official. At the first initiation in the summer the commitments were largely unknown and not committed to by the initiates. They didn't all know that they were pledging to

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

follow for a lifetime. Some of the restrictions seemed hard to follow at first. Years of smoking cigarettes and of taking drugs and being habituated to sex had to be given up. These were deeply ingrained. But the taste of chanting the *maha-mantra* and the taking wholeheartedly to hearing from the Swami and honoring *prasadam* with him were enough to give up the old sins.

Prabhupada was one of the very few yogis or gurus in the west who made these demands. “Swami, you are very conservative,” Allen Ginsberg had said to Prabhupada, but Prabhupada had no intentions of giving up the regulative principles.

“The Notice” was a historical document, taped to the wall in the storefront without fanfare or announcement. We read it and gasped and said, “This is serious,” and “I accept it.”



This looks like an enactment of the *sankirtana* dancing of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His devotees. His associates used to join Him every year for four months, traveling from Bengal to Jagannatha Puri. At Puri they would hold wild, ecstatic *sankirtana*, especially at the Ratha Yatra festival, when the carts would be pulled from the temple to Gundica. Caitanya Mahaprabhu would lead the dancing and would manifest the eight ecstatic bodily symptoms of love of God. Seeing Him dancing and hearing Him cry and sing, the crowds would all join in and be tossed in the waves of spiritual emotions. He was so potent that by His dancing, everyone danced. When Lord Caitanya was on His tour of southern India, He even induced the tigers and elephants to dance with Him and chant in their way.

Here Prabhupada dances and induces his devotees and outsiders to join with him. On his right, his uniformed disciples raise their arms in the air and sway with him. On the left, the “villagers,” or long-haired residents of San Francisco, stand absorbed and transfixed in the Swami’s clapping and dancing. Perhaps one of them will one day shave his head or wear a *dhoti* in the future. For now they are all joyously following the movements of the Swami, who dips and sways like a young man and brings even the demigods to come and watch the world *acarya* dance in Golden Gate Park, which has become as good as Jagannatha Puri in the time of Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Prabhupada at first had no mrdanga in America, and he played in rousing kirtanas for six months with a one-headed bongo drum. He managed unique mrdanga-like beats with his two hands on the one head and played it in the temple and at Tompkins Square Park. There is a recording of kirtana with this one-headed drum, and it sounds very sweet and strongly rhythmic. Finally, he was sent karatalas and mrdangas from India, and he played mrdanga himself and let his students learn also. Someone suggested that he bring a professional mrdanga player to the west to teach his disciples. But Prabhupada said they could learn to play by regular practice and learning while playing during kirtana. By this method some of them became proficiently self-taught, and they practiced too in kirtanas.

When his western devotees went to India in 1971, they began to learn from mrdanga players in India and eventually mastered the instrument. There are now many expert mrdanga players.

Second generation devotees such as ex-gurukulis are often held to Krishna consciousness through the kirtana. Prabhupada taught everything—music, dance, mrdanga and it is being passed down through family tradition or disciplic succession. Here a boy and girl seem to be finding a healthy outlet for teenage passion in the beats of the mrdangas.





Prabhupada and some of his peers are seated at the edge of the steep pit in which the Sesa *murti* will be planted. This is the first step in the installation and construction of a temple in India. The procedure is that the foundation of the temple will rest on the head of Ananta Sesa, who is strong enough to hold the planets on His heads and who protects the form of Vishnu hovering over His head. Prabhupada is in a very jolly mood on this occasion. His spiritual master gave him the order, “If you ever get money, print books.” And Prabhupada did not get involved in trying to get possession of Gaudiya Math temples or centers after the disappearance of his spiritual master and the splitting of the Gaudiya Math into schisms. Prabhupada was not interested in constructing temples but applied his energy to writing, first *Back to Godhead* magazines and then the Herculean task of writing and printing and distributing *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. That was his primary task as given to him by his Guru Maharaja. He then went to America and recruited disciples and opened storefront temples and centers.

He sometimes said that the preaching in the West was the carrying out of his guru’s order, and his return to India and constructing big temples was his own idea. It was an addition to the order to write books. Constructing temples in India, however, became a major project for Srila Prabhupada. He devised a system where fifty percent of the profits from selling books went back into printing more books and fifty percent of the profits went to temple construction in India. Thus he began his tremendous endeavors of building major *mandiras* in Vrindavana, Mayapur and Bombay. He said that if he advertised that Swami Bhaktivedanta was lecturing under a tree, no one would come, but people would flock to see magnificent architectural cathedrals and Deity worship. It was to attract the common men and women that he constructed the temples, and also to give his worldwide students places of inspiration to worship in the holy *dhamas* of India. Thus with his own institution he completed the order of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and printed books and constructed beautiful *mandiras* in India and elsewhere in the world.

This is a picture of a pleasant visit Prabhupada made with his devotees that day to his godbrother Srila Sridhara Maharaja at his Math in Navadvipa. To get there we had to take a ferry. It was a motor run boat and was raised just a few inches above the water. It carried our car and a few others. As we crossed the quiet Ganges a few full-sized porpoises rose from the water and cruised right next to the ferry. As we landed on the other side a man boarded and frightened me by holding a just-severed goat's head in my face. I was terrified and disgusted as the man laughed in my face.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja's Math was located on a pleasant few acres with palm trees and a temple. We went to his room which was located on a second floor tower. He was not feeling very well as he sat in his chair holding a pole. He was tall and spoke fluent English. We disciples of Prabhupada were introduced to Sridhara Maharaja. I was introduced as the manager of the gurukula in Dallas and Maharaja encouraged me. After introductions, the two sadhus began to converse intimately in Bengali. Jayapataka Maharaja later told us they were talking on intimate points about Prahlada Maharaja and Hiranyakasipu. Jayapataka Maharaja said much of the discussion was over his head but that it was very philosophical and interesting. We then bathed in the Ganges and honored a very nice prasadam feast. Pradyumna Dasa who was on the far right on the photo (with his little son, Aniruddha) corrected me on where to place the tilaka marks on my forearms. We stayed overnight at the ashram, observed mangala arati the next morning before the Radha Krishna Deities and then prepared to leave. In the group photo we took before leaving, I am standing directly next to Sridhara Maharaja on his right. Prabhupada is standing surrounded by Hari Sauri and Jayapataka Maharaja.



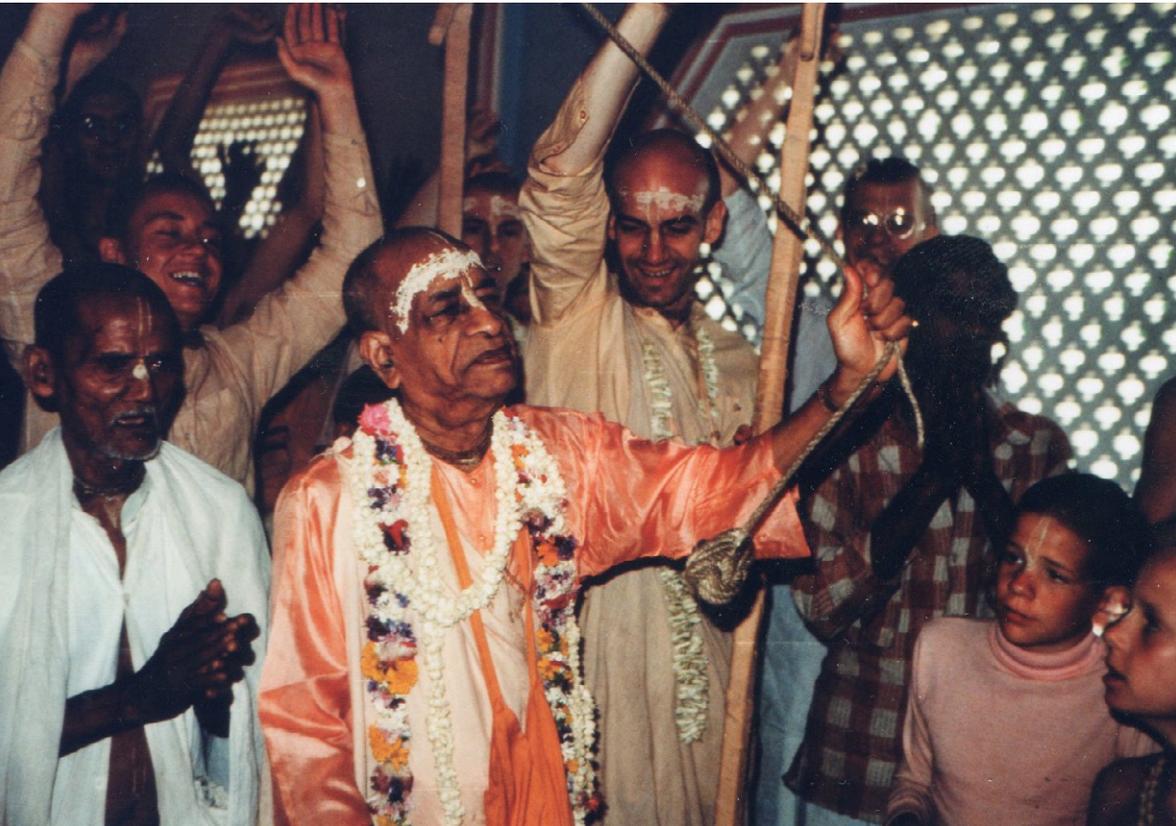


This is also an unusual picture. It shows Prabhupada walking up from the *ghat* on the Mayapur side of the Ganges. We had just crossed the river in a boat after visiting with his Godbrother Srila Sridhara Maharaja at his *matha* in Navadvipa. I know the time is 1973 because it was my first visit to India. Prabhupada had a system where he would allow a GBC to come and be with him for a month, and I had joined him, coming from Dallas to Mayapur. During my visit he stayed two weeks in Mayapur then went to Calcutta where he got a stomach ache, supposedly from eating his sister's rich cooking. And then I had stayed on while he left India, and went to Bhaktivedanta Manor to attend the London Ratha Yatra and stay at the Manor where he received distinguished guests in a series of meetings arranged by Syamasundara.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

In this photo we are savoring that sweet moment. We just had stayed overnight at Sridhara Maharaja's *matha* and now returned the next morning to Mayapur by boat. The *sannyasi* on the left is Devananda Maharaja who is visiting Srila Prabhupada at Mayapur. How pleasant it is to accompany your spiritual master on a special visit and return to Mayapur early in the morning in time for Prabhupada to take his massage, noon bath and lunch. He had enjoyed the association with his godbrother so much that he even asked him to come and live with Prabhupada at Mayapur, although the proposal was later reconsidered. I remember running my hand in the water of the Ganges as the boat plied along and sharing silence and a few words with Srila Prabhupada and my godbrother. I am carrying Prabhupada's personal belongings in the big red bag. Quiet, informal moments like this, shared with Srila Prabhupada, when he was in fairly good health and following his sacred routine of writing his books, in one of his favorite places "Mayapur, my place of worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead"—are priceless and worth remembering for a lifetime.

You can see a thrilling moment in the morning program at an annual festival at Mayapur *dhama*. After Prabhupada finished his lecture he would walk over to the large brass bell hanging on a rope and tug the rope three times. It



would make a loud ringing sound, heard from a great distance. The gleeful would gather around Prabhupada as he rang the bell and dance close to him and raise their hands in the air. Prabhupada would then walk down the length of the temple to where another bell on a rope was hanging, and he would ring it again three times. One bell was down by his *vayasana* by the pictures of Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Bhaktisiddhanta, and one bell was at the other end of the temple up by the Deities' altar. Hundreds of devotees would accompany Prabhupada as he made this walk and bell-ringing.

It was nice how Prabhupada developed this simple act and a deep meaning morning ritual. It had no particular meaning, just a personal ritual he enacted that brought about joy and family union between he and his disciples. It was the victory ring of Sri Mayapur Candrodaya Mandir, the celebration of Prabhupada bringing devotees together from all parts of the world to worship Lord Caitanya in Mayapur. Since Prabhupada's disappearance devotees continue the ritual, with someone ringing the bell and all the devotees circumambulating the temple as we did when Prabhupada was with us. By doing this we feel he is with us still.

To the right is a photo taken in the summer of 1974 in France. The devotee dressed in white on the far left is Bhagavan Dasa, who was GBC in charge of France. The man on the far right is a real-estate agent. Bhagavan had taken Prabhupada on a drive from Paris to the countryside, to look at the castle for possible purchase and use as a temple. Prabhupada (with a bouquet of pink roses in his hand) is looking up admiringly at the architecture of the building. He has a pleased expression on his face as if thinking, "this would make a nice residence for Radha Krishna and Their devotees." This was a period when Bhagavan was buying up mansions and castles in different European countries. Some of them turned out to be "white elephants", too expensive to maintain, and not enough devotees to live in them. Others, like Radhadesh in Belgium turned out to be successes and are thriving communities even today.

Once when being driven through Paris, Prabhupada noted the great museum Le Louvre and said, "Its perfection would be to be used as a temple for Krishna." He always looked at beautiful buildings with that in mind. Sometimes he asked the owners to give us the building free because we were using it for such an important purpose. Only George Harrison responded by donating the handsome Bhaktivedanta Manor as a gift. Prabhupada inherited the legacy of "*yukta-vairagya*" or using material things in Krishna's service as



—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

a form of higher renunciation, from his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and from Srila Rupa Goswami. A Vaishnava can use splendid buildings, opulent vehicles and so on as long as he does not use them for his own sense gratification but for the service and glorification of the Supreme Lord. Srila Prabhupada was prepared to utilize the riches of the whole world in that spirit, as long as it did not create too much anxiety.



Here is Srila Prabhupada sitting outdoors deep in the countryside of France. During that June 1974 visit to Paris, Prabhupada left the congested city temple in the morning and traveled in a luxury automobile for hours into the country to see a palatial building which the devotees were considering purchasing. Since the journey took some hours, the devotees stopped driving around noon and served Srila Prabhupada a picnic lunch, seated on a rug just outside the car and parked in the field. He took *subjis* and *capatis* served on a silver plate just as he would in the temple. Here he sits calmly, awaiting his lunch. As it turned out, Prabhupada saw the building but decided for various reasons that it was not a suitable purchase.

Prabhupada also used to regularly stop his car journey on his trip from Calcutta to Mayapur. His routine was to leave Calcutta early in the morning in a caravan of at least two cars. He would stop halfway at a particular mango grove along the roadway. Several *sannyasis* and senior devotees accompanied him, and once his sister, Pisima, came in a separate car with a couple of *matajis*. It was a very pleasant, isolated grove, with many spaced mango trees. Prabhupada was usually in a relaxed and favorable mood, as he sat on a blanket with his disciples and honored breakfast of fruit *prasadam* and a milk sweet. The mango grove picnic was a sweet ritual. Occasionally a dog would come by, and Prabhupada would toss it a piece of fruit before the devotees chased it away. He would stay for about half an hour and then pack up and continue the journey, over the bad roads and through the crowded villages of Bengal. It was always a great relief to arrive at the Yoga Pitha (the birthplace of Lord Caitanya and the temple constructed by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati), and then onto ISKCON Mayapur, where a crowd of devotees awaited Prabhupada at the gate.



Prabhupada's giving out of cookies to little toddlers and their parents was a heartfelt gesture of kindness to the children and an endorsement of the *grhastha-asrama*. As long as the children were safe in the arms of their parents and approaching Prabhupada for mercy all went well. But the institution of the boarding school system, *gurukula*, where the young children were sent away to live under the care of ashram teachers and instructors did not go so well. There were cases of incompetent and even ill-motivated *asrama* teachers and cases of harsh discipline and even sexual abuse. The *gurukula* grew into a disaster.

There were finally GBC reforms, break-ups of the dormitory system and a vigilance system to avoid abuse of children. But there were children who grew up bitter because of their mistreatment and rejected ISKCON when they grew up. There were also others who survived the system and grew up maintaining their Krishna conscious roots and became a second generation of devotees. The abuse in schools no longer occurs and parents either opt to send their children to private or public nondevotee schools or existing reformed *gurukulas*.

Prabhupada is not responsible for the misconduct of what went on in *gurukula*. He never wanted the children mistreated. But he was not omniscient and was not aware of the incidents that took place. When a devotee wrote to Prabhupada that a child had been hit by a teacher he wrote back that if such a case occurred it was the teacher who should be hit, not the child. *Gurukula* misconduct is a sad chapter in the growing of the Krishna consciousness movement, and misguided persons were held accountable. It should never have happened, and it should never happen again.

Pictures of Prabhupada giving out cookies to children is not an embarrassment but a testimony of his love and good intentions towards his spiritual children and the children of his children.

Srila Prabhupada was always kind and attentive to little children. He liked to hold their hands. They were usually awed and in good behavior in his presence. He would often give them cookies. They brought a smile to his face as he saw their innocence. The children's parents would be thrilled when Prabhupada blessed the little ones. There is a nice series of pictures with the child of Gopal and Sally Agarwal, the first people he stopped with in Butler, Pennsylvania. He was present when their child first stood, and he beamed. He was a natural, loving grandfather. There are many children who grew up not remembering their contact with Prabhupada because they were too young, but some remember it, and all were blessed. It was not an ordinary thing to be touched by him. He was amused at the toddlers. Sometimes he would catch their hand and not let it go. They would pull to free themselves, but he would hold on for awhile. Everyone loved to see Prabhupada playing with the children. It demonstrated his natural warmth and humanity.

Once Prabhupada took little Sarasvati's Krishna Deity and hid it behind his back. The little girl was flustered and confused. Her mother, Malati, meaningfully asked her daughter, "Sarasvati, who has Krishna?"

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

It clicked with Sarasvati, and she turned to Prabhupada and searched him until she found her Krishna Deity. Prabhupada had Krishna in his hand, and he freely liked to give his hand to the submissive, uncorrupted children.





In January of 1974 in Hawaii, Prabhupada told us there was a day in the year when the guru cooks for his disciples. He went into the kitchen, and some of his disciples joined him to watch and to help under his direction. He cut vegetables and told the devotees how to cook them. He said the trick to making good *kachoris* was to double-fry them in ghee: drop them in once and take them out to harden, and then dip them in again, this makes the best crust. He walked around the kitchen tending to the different preparations, and he also sat on a chair and told the disciples what to do, using them as his hands and arms. He actually cooked and supervised everything closely. He made many preparations, and they all came out very well. When Prabhupada added spicing, he didn't measure it with a lined cup or with a certain-sized spoon. He would take pinches of the spices between his fingers and by intuitive approximation use just the right amount.

It was an exciting and sweet atmosphere to be working intimately beside him in the kitchen. His mood was serious and efficient. He corrected devotees when they made mistakes and was very “hands-on” and strict about doing it right. He didn't allow for loose talk or devotees just standing around idly. He ate by himself but later met with the devotees to discuss their response to the meal. Everyone said it was very delicious and expertly prepared. He asked some of us how many *kachoris* we had eaten. Some of us answered, “Two.” He said he had also eaten two and that two *kachoris* were enough. I don't know if that practice is to be observed on a yearly basis, but it was a wonderful occasion how he spontaneously said he was going to cook for us and then did it so expertly.



Gayatri at the Yamuna bank, Vrindavana, India.

On this picture Prabhupada is solemnly saying his Gayatri mantras while sitting on the bank of the Yamuna in Vrindavana. Some devotees say that when you say your Gayatri you should cover your hand with your cloth. The rumor is that if the demigods see you chanting Gayatri they will get jealous and do you harm. In this picture Prabhupada is not covering his hand with his cloth. Jayadvaita Swami has pointed out that there are several photos of Prabhupada saying his Gayatri with his hand uncovered. J. S. concludes that the demigods' jealousy is just a rumor or myth, and that we don't have to cover our hand doing Gayatri.

Saffron clothes are seen scattered around on the ground. Sometimes Prabhupada would say that he should not go in the water for Gayatri but just touch it to his head. But then he gradually began to take his clothes off and join his men in the water wearing just a *gamsha*. It was a great thrill and pastime to play in the Yamuna with Srila Prabhupada. Devotees would gently splash water on Prabhupada's body and massage his limbs. He would hold his fingers over his nostrils and take a full dip under the water. How kind he was to associate and play with us in such a familiar way.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

Below is a photo of Prabhupada in the early years of ISKCON. He was lecturing near the veranda between his room and his kitchen at Radha-Damodara temple in Vrindavana. As yet he had no temples in India, none in Vrindavana, Mayapur or Bombay. All this will come in the future, and he is patiently poised in the present. Prabhupada was a perfect combination of patience and drive. He was content to live with just a few followers, staying alone at his Radha-Damodara room. But he pushed his disciples to develop big projects where many visitors and guests could come and take advantage of living in the *dhama*. He did not exactly know how things would get done, but he depended on Krishna. As it turned out, by the outburst of book distribution in the West, much money was collected and with collections from other parties.

Gradually land was purchased, architectural plans were made, cement was acquired and the buildings went up. There were delays, cheating by landlords and contractors, but progress went forward. Prabhupada wrote his books in the same way, slow but steady. He would rise every night at 1 A.M. and do some dictation of translations and purports. He used to say, “Little drops of water wear away the stone. In this way I have written all these books.” In this way the temple construction also went forward. Overcoming the constant “Indian factor,” the construction of the buildings actually went



At Radha-Damodara Mandir. Vrindavan, India.

—*Srila Prabhupada Smaranam*—

quickly. Prabhupada, as the manager, could create pressure on his disciples who could create pressure on the construction people, and he created a regular empire of buildings and printed books. In another context he said it was the desire of Krishna that the temples were constructed. Krishna wants to fulfill the desires of His devotees. So a devotee desired “let there be a temple” and from the deserted field in Raman Reti a great temple was constructed. A devotee desired that the order of his spiritual master to get money and print books be fulfilled, and it was fulfilled.

A walk - Krishna-Balaram Mandir under construction.



And here Srila Prabhupada is arriving at Vrindavana during the early stages of construction of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Dhananjaya Prabhu is still the temple president, Gopala Krishna Prabhu is still a *grhastha* and Harikesa Maharaja is still Prabhupada's secretary, before Prabhupada sent him to develop Northern Europe. Prabhupada's disciples eagerly crowd behind him, hoping to get some *darsana* time with their spiritual master. Prabhupada's residential rooms were the first part of the temple completed, and so he used to visit and encourage the devotees and patiently oversee as the money came in from his world *sankirtana* parties, and as the laborers gradually chipped away at the marble and worked with cement toward building the *kirtana* hall, altars and domes.

Prabhupada's grand plan was to complete three magnificent temples in India during his lifetime, in Vrindavana, Mayapur and Bombay. In a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* purport, he describes how Krishna fulfills the desires of His devotees. Speaking indirectly of himself, he wrote that once there was a barren field in Raman-reti, Vrindavana, but a devotee desired, "Let there be a temple," and a beautiful temple was built. Prabhupada did not live long enough to see the opening of the Bombay temple, but it was well under way (he insisted on moving into his residential suite even before it was completed), and he had the full satisfaction of participating in the opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir on Rama Navami in 1975. At the Gaura Purnima festival in Mayapur in 1975, he announced in a lecture in the large first temple building (the vast plans for Mayapur are still developing) that the prediction of Bhaktivinoda Thakura had come true, and Europeans and Americans had joined with their Bengali godbrothers to chant Hare Krishna and Jaya Sacinandana.

Prabhupada pushed for the construction of the grand temples in India so that his worldwide disciples could come to India and gain inspiration by residing in the *dhamas*. And he also wanted to revitalize Krishna consciousness in India by making palatial buildings that would attract the masses and the elite of India and divert them from their feverish materialism and lack of pure worship and education. His disciples and granddisciples are continuing his legacy of maintaining and developing temples in India and establishing ISKCON as a major force of cultural and religious influence in the country.

Prabhupada would always look very gravely at the Deities in the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. The surrounding devotees reflected Prabhupada's mood. The Deities—whether They be Gaura-Nitai, *Krishna-Balaram* or Radha-Syamasundara—all project light, smiling moods, so why does Prabhupada look so heavy? It is a look of ecstatic devotion. We read of the symptoms of physical ecstasy as exhibited by Lord Caitanya or any devotee on the advanced platform and they are varied: laughing, crying, morose (in separation), stunned, feelings of unworthiness, hair standing on end, etc. It is not that Prabhupada has to reflect the light mood of the Deities' faces in order to be in proper tune of reciprocation. His devotion is like an ocean with various waves. And his demeanor controls that of his disciples. They take their cue from Prabhupada and only want to follow him.

I don't think he is displeased with the decoration of the Deities, because he always supervised the *pujaris* and made them keep a high standard. The Deities were beautifully dressed and garlanded with many fresh flowers. Prabhupada is feeling transcendental emotion; he is not looking at a statue and feeling empty. Once a devotee looked at Prabhupada's passport photo and said, "You look very sad in this picture." In the photo Prabhupada wore no *kurta* but only his *sannyasa* top and *dhoti* and neat *tilaka* on his arms and forehead. But the corners of his mouth were turned down. He replied to the disciple, "That was a moment of ecstasy." Many pictures of Caitanya Mahaprabhu in the *gambhira* show Him with a sad-like expression. *Gambhira* means grave or deep. Prabhupada here is *gambhira*, or deep, and his emotion is very wonderful.





*His mouth is shut. His eyes are shut. He is deep within. The two lions
astride the vyasasana attack and kill the Mayavadi impersonalists.
He is not silent. He rings the gong.*



Srila Prabhupada, you are playing the gong. It has a high tinny sound, not as melodious as the *karatalas*. But it crashes loudly for the leading of the entire *kirtana* group. Prabhupada played it with the steady rhythm. The wooden mallet strokes resound on the lower part of the gong and make it heard throughout the hall. Prabhupada leads the *kirtana* of *Jaya Radha Madhava Kunjabihari*. He refreshes our memory to the time when Sukadeva Goswami spoke to Maharaja Pariksit when the king had only seven days to live. The king had insulted the yogi, and his son cursed the king that he should die in seven days. Prabhupada leads the singing and then gives the lecture. He speaks on all the sections of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. This is in Vrindavana which Prabhupada said was his residence. It is Vrindavana where he lived after he took *sannyasa* in the early years and where he printed the first three volumes of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* comprising the First Canto. Now he lectures on many different sections of the *Bhagavatam* and his disciples come to see him from different parts of the world. Prabhupada is always in Vrindavana. He plays the gong like this all over the world. He withdraws within himself and meditates on Radha and Krishna as he sings *Jaya Radha Madhava Kunjabihari*. And he lectures on all the sections of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Lecturing and singing in Vrindavana is special, but he is universal and carries this mood with him wherever he goes. He is the Founder-*Acarya* of ISKCON. He plays the gong.





Prabhupada is now smiling charmingly, happy to be giving out beads at an initiation ceremony in the Los Angeles temple. The *sannyasis*, leaders and manager Karandhara stand closely beside Prabhupada on his *vyasasana*. They always want to be close to him wherever he goes and position themselves beside him. Tripurari Maharaja is holding the beads of those to be initiated, and Prabhupada is about to give a set of beads to a new initiate. It's the most thrilling moment in the life of the initiate to get the beads from Prabhupada's hands and to hear for the first time his spiritual name. The link is being made between guru and disciple. Prabhupada always makes the initiates repeat the four prohibitive principles out loud and agree to chant sixteen rounds on beads per day. This is the basic contract and vow. Prabhupada accepted the person's previous karma, and he is now liberated as long as he does not commit new sinful activity. The vow was made publicly, and it was a kind of celebration. When the assembled devotees heard the new devotee's name for the first time they cheered and beat drums. You are not just initiated singly but into the community of the devotees, followers of Srila Prabhupada. It was a solemn occasion but simultaneously a joyful one. You now had a new name, and you are Prabhupada's disciple forever!



These are pictures of Prabhupada taken in the last months of his life. His face is thinned out and ill looking. He had said months earlier in my presence, “These are my last days.” Now it was even later. I’m not sure where the close-up picture of him wearing the garland was taken. It may have been taken during his last visit to England, but he was mostly wearing sunglasses then and he was even thinner. The picture of him sitting at his desk in his lavish quarters is in Bombay. I think it was taken after he returned from England just before he went back to Vrindavana for the last time. He appears resigned and internal. I will not say he looks sad because Prabhupada did not become sad, even at the end. He just became internal and not very communicative. He did not have much external energy. He was not eating much. He professed he did not have a strong will to live.

In the spring he called the GBC men to gather with him in Vrindavana, and he settled his last affairs, making a will and assigning trustees to the different ISKCON properties to protect them. At that time he said he didn’t want to live, but the GBC pleaded with him to stay in the world and he agreed. This made them very happy because Prabhupada had said Krishna was leaving the decision up to him. (I have described all this in detail in *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*.) But despite his saying he would live, he became weaker in his health. Then he made his last visit to England, and then he became critically ill there and returned to Vrindavana for his last days. He used to be carried in a palanquin for a daily *darsana* of Krishna-Balarama. Then near the end he stopped the *darsanas* to the temple and stayed in bed. He received visitors, especially leaders of different preaching fields in the world, and gave them last instructions and blessings. The last forty-eight hours he stopped communicating and went inside himself. All the devotees gathered in Vrindavana were allowed to come into his room on November 14th, and they chanted *kirtana* all day.



Poet Sharon Olds writes
moving visceral poems of
her mother's passing away.
She was there in the hospital
room until the end, and she
threw the ashes in the sea
from a boat.

I never even heard of my mother's
passing away. Just assumed she
died because she was so old.

I never saw the death certificate.
I found out my father died ten
years after the fact, and saw the
death certificate that said he died
of heart attack at 78. But I was
disowned by them, so I had no
contact at the end.

But I was present for the passing
away of Prabhupada. I saw him
in his last days when he was so
shriveled up but dignified and noble.
I massaged his feet with talcum
powder because it gave him some ease.
I heard some of the last words he
said. I gave up hope that he would
live before some of the others
did. I just didn't think it was possible. It
seemed he wanted to leave.
It seemed Krishna was taking him
away.

On the last day I stood from morning to night at the foot of his bed and watched the comings and goings. He was completely inside himself and made no outer signs. Only in the last fifteen minutes he moved in a kind of involuntary dance with his arms and legs, then he opened his mouth and you knew he was gone.

I was numb, not grief-stricken. I had a terrible headache, and I hadn't eaten all day but I was numb. Immediately afterwards I stood by and observed some of the preparations of his body. Then I went to a room in the guesthouse and made a few notes, what I'd overheard people say. "You don't know what you miss until it's taken away." "He was with us for only eleven years." But I didn't have many feelings.

Only days later I broke down crying. I went back to America after the *mahat seva*. I carried the tapes of his last conversations because I was going to write his biography.

I went to Dallas, and I became obsessed with listening to the tapes and giving daily lectures on the last days and passing away of Srila Prabhupada.

I kept it up for a month until I went to LA. There the mood was different. The leaders said, “Let us serve Prabhupada and acknowledge his passing away by having the biggest Christmas marathon of distributing his books. The biggest in history.” They interrupted my mood of concentrated mourning and giving lectures about his passing away. I couldn’t mourn by distributing books. I missed him and tried to do my duties at *Back to Godhead* magazine.



THE VERY END OF PRABHUPADA’S MANIFESTED PASTIMES

There are more pictures taken up to the very end of Srila Prabhupada’s manifested pastimes in this world. This one shows him in his daily ritual which he followed in his last weeks. He would be carried in a palanquin before the Deities of *Krishna-Balaram* and transferred to a rocking chair in front of the Deities. You can see the *tamala* tree blooming luxuriantly behind him. That tree has since died and been replaced by a new one. Prabhupada’s intimate servant and secretary for his last year, Tamal Krishna Goswami, is standing directly behind Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada’s eyesight was no longer very good, and he always wore dark glasses. He was not eating or drinking in his last weeks, and his face is thinned out. He used to sit and watch the Deities while a *kirtana* was held, and the young *gurukula* boys danced in front of him. Everyone was somber and feeling loving, but helpless about Prabhupada’s condition. He was no longer fighting to keep his life, but gradually diminishing. Everyone in Vrindavana and all his disciples around the world loved him and anxiously somehow hoped he would get better. But it did not appear that he would. He had done his tremendous achievements, and Krishna was calling him back to Godhead.

He appears to be in a trance. His eyes are closed, and his fingers are clasped. He appears to be meditating on Krishna. This is the highest form of meditation. In *Bhagavad-gita* Krishna says, “And of all yogis, he who worships Me and abides in Me is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all” (Bg. 6.47). To think of Krishna in His two-armed form is the best. *Bhakti-yoga* is supreme. “The ideal yogi concentrates his attention on Krishna, who is called Syamasundara, who is as beautifully colored as a cloud, whose lotus-like face is as effulgent as the sun, whose dress is brilliant with jewels and whose body is flower-garlanded. Illuminating all sides is His gorgeous luster, which is called the *brahmajyoti*” (Bg. 6.47, purport). Prabhupada is thinking of Krishna, and therefore he is the highest yogi.

I can’t see Krishna as Prabhupada sees Him because my vision is imperfect. It is as if I had cataracts over my eyes. My eyes have to be anointed with the salve of love (*kr̥ṣṇa-prema*) and then I can see Krishna. Prabhupada can see Krishna, and I cannot, because I have impure vision. It is said that we should not try to see Krishna but act in such a way that Krishna sees us. If we perform devotional service selflessly, Krishna will be pleased with us and He will appear before us. The example can be given that if a man works very hard at his job his boss will recognize his performance, and he will come before the worker and praise him and perhaps give him a raise. The main thing is to

serve Krishna as Prabhupada does, and then Krishna will manifest Himself to us. He will take us to the spiritual world and introduce us to all the wonders there.

I hesitate to publish the other photos where Prabhupada is in his last moments, or he may have already passed from his body. *Gurusu nara-matir yasya va naraki sah*—one who thinks that the spiritual master is an ordinary man is said to live in hell. (*Padma Purana*) Yet there are good photos because the helpless, lost, tender feelings of the surrounding devotees present a memorable portrait. One moment he was with us, leading us, guiding us, and the next moment, we were without him. Of course we still had his *vani* to guide us, but the shock of his departure that has registered on the devotees faces, and gestures shows what it was like at that moment. It was devastating and difficult to accept. We had stayed surrounding his bed all day, and now it was 7:25 P.M. and he had finally, actually departed. Now the awful news spread around the world, and we had to assimilate it. We knew it was coming for days, for hours, and now it had finally happened, and it seemed like the end of the world.



The Prabhupada murti in the samadhi mandira is treated just like the Deities of Radha-Shyama or Krishna-Balaram in the main mandira. He has his own pujaris and cooks and his own schedule of aratis. One of his major aratis is held after 4 A.M. in the morning before the mangala arati in the temple. It is usually

not fully attended but has a very intimate air. Most of the day the samadhi mandira is open and visitors file in, make dandavats and leave coins. He is very public and many people file through to see him. During the japa period some devotees sit in front of him and chant all their rounds.

One should approach the Prabhupada *murti* as one approaches the Deities of Radha-Krishna or Gaura-Nitai, not accepting him as an idol but as Prabhupada himself. The *sastras* and *acaryas* concur that worshiping the pure devotees is more essential than approaching the Lord directly. There is a common saying that one should first love the dog of the beloved before one shows any loving sentiments for the beloved. The stage of pure devotion is attained by sincerely serving a pure devotee of the Lord. The first condition of devotional service to the Lord is therefore to be a servant of a pure devotee, and this condition is fulfilled by the statement “Reception of the dust of the lotus feet of a pure devotee who has also served another pure devotee.” This is the way of pure disciplic succession or devotional *parampara*. Prabhupada writes as follows in a purport in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*: “In Vrindavana all the pure devotees pray for the mercy of Srimati Radharani, the pleasure potency of Lord Krishna... Therefore the mercy of Radharani is available very readily to the sincere devotees, and once She recommends such a devotee to Lord Krishna, the Lord at once accepts the devotee’s admittance to His association. The conclusion is, therefore, that one should be more serious about seeking the mercy of the devotee than that of the Lord directly...” (*Bhag.* 2.3.23, purport)

Before my ankle became painful to walk on, I used to repeatedly circumambulate the *murti* of Srila Prabhupada in Vrindavana and more recently I chanted my rounds sitting in front of the large *murti* of Srila Prabhupada in the great *samadhi mandira* in Mayapur. And fifteen years ago I also wrote a book *Prabhupada Samadhi Diary* while sitting before the *murti* in Vrindavana and addressing myself to Prabhupada and expressing my desire to return more to his exclusive shelter.

AFTERWORD

IN A BOOK on Teresian method of prayer, *Lectio Divina and Practice of Teresian Prayer*, the author quotes the saint: “Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.”

The commentator writes as follows:

“This puts prayer in the category of friendship. Clearly, it is God who has initiated the friendship; thus personal prayer is a response to a love already shown us by the God of revelation. One goes to prayer as to someone whose love for us is assured; the one praying answers the voice of benevolence and love in return. This implies that prayer is an art to be cultivated, for it requires often setting time aside to attend to the friend . . . we pray not to *win* God’s favor and love; God has *already* loved us most personally in Christ. What we need to do is answer that love.” (*Lectio Divina*, p. 8)

So for me it’s appropriate and necessary that I pray to Srila Prabhupada, my best friend, my spiritual master. He has already loved me by bringing me Krishna consciousness and bringing me to his service. I assume that I’m already serving him entirely but now I want to fill-in those silences and those times of forgetfulness by talking with him and thus bring ease to my empty heart.

I got the idea for these *Prabhupada Smaranams* from looking at a book *Conversation With Christ*, by Peter Rohrbach, which is an outline of the teaching method of Saint Teresa of Avila for personal prayer. I read this about six years ago but suddenly thought of it recently, picked it up, and looked through it. I was not going to closely follow her method of meditation, but I was using it as a springboard to talk with a person whom I’ve actually known face to face, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Now eighteen years since his disappearance, when I talk with him, I speak with a

Prabhupada who is within. I want to do it as a prayerful act.

Although I didn't follow Saint Teresa's method I'll mention it just for the record. In that book there are three preparatory stages before the main conversation. The first one is where you pause and place yourself in the presence of the person you want to pray to. I did that by sitting in front of a picture of Prabhupada. I also did it by coming out to the writing shed where I can be alone in an atmosphere suitable for talking in prayer.

The second stage is to select material. They claim that these stages are just methods to bring the wandering mind into focus. At a later stage they might not be necessary, but they're necessary in the beginning. Selection of material means that you pick a subject for the conversation, which might mean choosing something from the scripture. Or they say to study a picture or statue as subject matter.

The third is called "the consideration." When the subject matter is selected, such as a photograph, you go over it while speaking to the desired divine person. You may describe what you see. They give these traditional questions: "Who is here in this scene? What is he doing? Why is he doing it? What does it mean to me?"

But all these steps lead up to the main point, which is the conversation. Their advice is that you talk slowly telling him of your love for him, your desire to serve him, your willingness to do anything for him. Adore him in the scene of today's meditation, express your love for him. Thanks for past gifts, ask for new direction and favors, and that's the conversation. It's a very personal thing, and I should be able to do it because it's not entirely imaginary. I can remember talking with Prabhupada, or I know I want to talk with him in my own words.

Then they advise a final stage, "a conclusion," to pull things together and say good-bye until you talk again.

I think I tried to make it useful and tried to workout problems I have, but more important than that is to actually develop the habit of talking with Prabhupada and making contact with him. This is the life of prayer.

Other things came up during the Prabhupada Smaranam conversations such as why don't I also talk with Lord Krishna and so on and so forth. So

I pray to Prabhupada for his blessings on these attempts. Also I remember that he spoke on a morning walk once on this point. A devotee asked him, “Prabhupada after you leave can we speak with you in the heart?” Prabhupada said, “It depends on your purity.”

I have written so many days of “Prabhupada Smaranam,” but I feel I can’t keep it up. My memories of Prabhupada are not fresh.

I live for him. I live for myself. I want to dedicate my life to him in my own way, writing books and on the Internet. Prabhupada, I do it for you. Please accept it. Please accept me. I am ill and need to rest. I can’t churn out memories of you. But I have lived most of my life in your active service. Your service is still the center of my life. I am happy when I write a poem about you like “Soul Eyes” and “Profile of Prabhupada.” I like to gaze on your photos and your *murti*. I continue to behave according to the vows of my initiation. Hearing your books read to me is a primary nourishment of my life. Anecdotes of your life are delightful and great storytelling. You wrote me letters asking if I had received the latest tapes you mailed me. Then you wrote me that you had received the typing of the tapes I had done, and that I had done them nicely. Praise from you gave me life. If I could still hear you were pleased with me, I would be satisfied with my life. Morning walks with you were a great relief; you spoke pure philosophy. You let me massage you, and you never complained that I was not strong enough to do it. You tolerated your aches and pains and illness and old age. “We are tolerant,” you said, when they gave you a spinal tap needle in the hospital, and you were transcendental. When I visited you in August of 1977 you said, “These are my last days.” In your very last days when you were lying in bed and not talking, I was leading the singing of the Nrsimha prayers. You signaled your secretary, TKG, to come to your bed and you asked him, “Who is singing?” That was the last exchange I had with you.



Srila Prabhupada was very serious. He was in an internal meditation. He is not in this world. This is a pictorial representation of the boons promised to one who chants the *gayatri* mantras purely. It shows the intimacy one gains with Krishna and how *gayatri* helps one go back to Godhead. This is one of several photos that shows Prabhupada chanting *gayatri* without covering the thread with his hand or cloth. This disproves the ISKCON rumor that if you don't cover your hand when you chant *gayatri*, the demigods will become envious.

Prabhupada first gave second initiation and *gayatri* mantra to his disciples in May 1968, in the storefront temple in Boston. At first he said that women did not receive *gayatri* mantra and second initiation. This was a policy of the Gaudiya Math. But Govinda Dasi, who was serving along with her husband Gaurasundara as Prabhupada's servant, protested and cried profuse tears in front of him. At first she boycotted the ceremony and stayed in Prabhupada's apartment. But then she could not bear the separation and ran ten blocks nonstop to the temple to be with him. Prabhupada relented and allowed women to take second initiation, but he did not give them the sacred thread. Some of Prabhupada's godbrothers and *smarta-brahmanas* in India criticized Prabhupada for giving second initiation to women. Prabhupada defended his policy of preaching according to time and place and gave proof of its bona fide nature when writing in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* translation where Narada is teaching Dhruva Maharaja to practice "in consideration of place, time and attendant conveniences and inconveniences" (*Bhag.* 4.8.54). Prabhupada writes in his purport as follows: "Those who are not actually in the line of *acaryas*, or who personally have no knowledge of how to act in the role of *acarya*, unnecessarily criticize the activities of the ISKCON movement in countries outside of India. The fact is that such critics cannot do anything personally to spread Krishna consciousness. If someone does go and preach, taking all risks and allowing all considerations for time and place, it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to *sastra*. Srimad Viraraghava Acarya, an *acarya* in the disciplic succession of the Ramanuja Sampradaya, has remarked in his commentary that *candalas*, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than *sudra* families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaishnavas" (*Bhag.* 4.8.54, purport).

There are seven *gayatri* mantras, and an extra one given to *sannyasis*. The first mantra is to the sun god, but we actually address Surya Narayana, who lives in the sun planet. The next two mantras, which are my favorite, are to the spiritual master. Prabhupada translates one as follows: “Let me try to understand my Spiritual Master, who is always in blissful Krishna consciousness.” I like the emphasis of *trying* to understand my spiritual master. It reminds me that he has an ultimate identity which may not be revealed to me, but I pray to know it. The next two mantras are to Lord Caitanya. The last two mantras are in a *madhurya-lila-rasa* and are addressed to Krishna, the lover of the *gopis*. “Let me be enlivened by the transcendental Cupid.” Here in this final picture Srila Prabhupada is deeply absorbed in the *gayatri* mantras, and one may use this example to induce ourselves to say the mantras in all attention and seriousness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank many disciples and friends who took part, helped to produce and print this book about Srila Prabhupada, and especially Krishna-kripa Dasa and Gurudas Dasa for proofreading, and Caitanya Candrodaya Dasa for editorship and graphic design. Most of all I acknowledge my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. I pray that *Srila Prabhupada Smaranam* pleases him and that he blesses it to be widely read around the globe.

Special gratitude expressed to Gurudas Dasa and Nitai Dasa for kindly sponsoring publication of this book.