

**The
Voices of Surrender
and Other Poems
1979-1982**

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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Preface

The poems in this book rarely employ meter or rhyme, and other standard poetic devices are also lacking. Perhaps a sharp literary critic will say my work cannot be considered poetry. Even so, I think they are poetic writings, communications that will help readers to remember Kṛṣṇa and become Kṛṣṇa conscious. If the poems accomplish that, then I don't care so much what literary critics consider. I am publishing them for my disciples.

The poems were not willful acts of my imagination, but mostly they came to me at different times, out of experience in devotional service.

By its nature poetry is inspirational, artistic, and allows the reader's imagination to work for itself, expanding within the unlimited realm of devotional service. It is an attractive form of preaching.

I offer these poems as home-grown strawberries, tomatoes, asparagus, and potatoes from my devotional garden, to be shared by my friends.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse may be applied here, that because these writings regularly describe Kṛṣṇa they may be appreciated despite their faults. At least in that sense, they are more valuable than Great Poetry composed by atheists and agnostics. Perhaps someday an ISKCON devotee will emerge who is a master of poetry. That certainly isn't me. But I have found a personal form in which to communicate the struggles and realization of life on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I am using it in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

SDG
Gītā-nāgarī
August 1982

Images of 26 Second Avenue

Sturdy ISKCON
survive and grow
from roots planted here.

The ground—
Manhattan's asphalt
and the hearts of bewildered
boys of America.

But the seeds took hold
and grew in some, then more
and more, around the world.

ii

He came here to teach
crossing the ocean
onboard the Indian freighter.

Rainstorm in the Red Sea,
he had two heart attacks
and Kṛṣṇa appeared in his dream.

The Lord was rowing a boat,
encouraging, "Come along,
Do not fear, Abhay Charan
I am with you."

He recovered and cooked
kicharī in mid-Atlantic
then thirty days
passed, and Boston Harbor

Arrival, his heartfelt prayer:
"Kṛṣṇa! I am just a puppet
in Your hands—
so make me dance!
Please make me dance!"

America was difficult
the first year.
In a Pennsylvania townhouse
while Hindus were eating meat
He entered like Nārada
(a saintly traveler).
They were embarrassed for their sins.

Then Manhattan,
closeted
in the backroom
of another swami's *yoga* studio,

And no one wanted
to give him millions of dollars
to buy a skyscraper.
New York gave snow and dog stool
and no money.
India gave nothing.

"I must not be discouraged,"
he thought, then
they broke into his room
and stole everything
material, and he moved
to the Bowery, bums lying
across his doorway;
he lived with a boy
who went crazy from LSD.

But others were gathering
to hear him.

Then walking ten blocks
carrying heavy suitcases,
boys helping
but no taxi
from the Bowery
head held high
to 26 Second Avenue.

O Prabhupāda!
 You brought the message
 of *Bhāgavatam*!

You decided to dedicate
 Your life, to implant
 Kṛṣṇa in America.
 Kṛṣṇa blessed your efforts;

a miracle took place
 in a degraded place
 and you transformed
 the face of the world,

starting small
 Lower East Side storefront
 under the direction
 of your Guru Mahārāja.

O Prabhupāda!
 What none dared, you did
 in your 70th year.

iii

Preaching center,
 "His Divine Grace
 A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami,"
 his own boys
 put a sign in the window:
 Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
 Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
 Hare Rama Hare Rama
 Rama Rama Hare Hare.

*I know I often think
 of those first days
 with the Swami.*

We had no other reason to be
 together as a group,
 Me, Madhusūdana, Kīrtanānanda

Catholic, Jew, Baptist
 thrown together
 eyes opened: "You're not this body!"

"Innocent boys"
 he called us
 "Give everything to Kṛṣṇa!"
 O how pure he was!
 no one equals him
 in his absence.

"He can defeat you!"
 "He's jolly and pure!"
 and everything—India
prasādam (food offered to God)
kīrtana, knowing
 about Brahmā-Śiva-Viṣṇu,
 politics, psychology—

and if he hadn't heard
 of Nietzsche or Kafka, he'd ask
 "What do they say?
 What is their philosophy?"
 demanding quintessence,

and they'd all crumble under
 his stare, and
 hard logic
 you and your favorite
 author-philosopher, left
 groping with your sincerity,
 for no one knew God.

God is Kṛṣṇa
 running in the fields.

Sitting in his room
 at night, whorl of
 the topmost spiritual
 planet in his possession

never mind New York
Swamiji affectionate
God's servant
gathering us in.

Down with the rascals!
They contaminate the air
false yogīs, religionists
politicians, fools of every sort!

Who knows God? *who*
believes God?
who follows
God 24 hours a day?

Test them
they all fail
no one left
but Swami, and
Kṛṣṇa, and Hare Kṛṣṇa.

He sat on the floor,
lit storefront,
a dozen sitters facing
him.

*Give us a scrap
of his cloth,
of his life,
a view.*

Intense kīrtana,
he led
the rhythm, showed how
to follow, depth of devotion,
sonorous voice
"Hare Kṛṣṇa"
singing in the storefront—
it was Kṛṣṇa.
In the minds of the boys,

fantasies and visions
of Hindu teachings
psychedelic ambitions
to see the face of God
with presumption that IT
was ALL Impersonal Light.
But the submission, the cleansing,
the genuine ecstasy
chanting and hearing
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare.

The cymbals sound
like ringing bells,
shimmery brass
in the Swami's expert hands.
And now more clearly
we see his universal presence.
His golden-hued skin,
robes reminiscent of Buddha,
his shoes beside him
he sat cross-legged, barefoot,
shaved head held high
shaking in tremble

of singing emotion.
On his forehead
in two lines
the white markings of Viṣṇu.
And when he opened them
from shut tight,
his eyes.

Not a casual sight
for tousled haired
hip boys,
finding themselves attracted
by very deep waters
of spiritual chanting.

And all this in their own place.
The Lower East Side
was a neighborhood universe
and he had come to us.

That's the job of the spiritual master
to live here
and make us perfectly at home
in the world of eternal truth
—and everything else is temporary,
according to what he's teaching
in the *Gītā* he's speaking.

iv

Swamiji,
in time
we learned about you.
You led us.
We came around
hearing you,
each one.
You took the time,
smiling in your apartment
waiting for crazy men
to challenge you:
"What have you got that's better than LSD?"

It took your time
unravelling madness
using the hospital rule
saving those who showed hope of surviving.
But so many hours and days
even for those who fell away;
your patience
seemed never to end.

We couldn't act
your plans
but had to hear;

it takes time
to become sane
to taste pleasure
and give up sin
to believe again
in God.

Who would believe
I too could come
again to devotion?

Kṛṣṇa is not Indian God
but He walked there
and you brought Him
and His paraphernalia
nondifferent from your own
pictures, *dhotī*, cooking,
Kṛṣṇa is appearing
living in you
staying in you
in New York City
(as long as it takes to gather us).

Mysterious to us,
we believed and felt
you could talk to Kṛṣṇa face to face.
From His planet He came to your room
like the picture of Suradāsa
seated in Vṛndāvana,
Kṛṣṇa, bluish cowherd boy
sat beside him listening
to his ancient *bhajana* (devotional song).

We begged,
although arrogant and ignorant:
"Kṛṣṇa is yours, help us!
Give us *capātīs*, *prasādam*."

After lunch you sat in your back room
One after one we approached,

"What about *yoga*? what about philosophy?
what about work? what about ego?
what about war? what about me?
What about my girlfriend? my job?
my mother and father?
How can we believe *śāstra*?
What about society?
What do you want us to do?
What should we think and say and eat?
Where should we live as a devotee?"

Some thought you
part of the hip scene:
"dig the Swami, his *kīrtana*
is part of what's happening."
But before the journalists
started calling them hippies
he had *ended* the scene,
vaulted us out of history.
Eternal truth lifting us
above the drugged tenements
beyond heaven.
"Square Virtues" one newspaper reported.
"The Swami is conservative," said poet Ginsberg.
But Swami knew,
"My students have taken
LSD and all these things
and now they have given them up.
I never knew any of this,
never drank coffee or tea or smoked cigarettes."
Hayagrīva (a disciple) wrote a paper:
"We don't take drugs.
Your spiritual life is already here."

Jolly and relaxed
in his high spiritual company
Swamiji's coterie.
You have given us

the eternal world.

I remember you
one night, it was raining,
I went to see you,
two others were there.
You asked if I wanted a *capātī*.
I took one and then you asked
if I wanted another.
I kept taking.
If I left you there was no love
or simple bread,
only dark rain
outside your door.

And your other disciples,
your plans extending far
beyond our storefront—
we didn't dare think
you were only briefly camped with us
waiting to leave
the transcendental nest
you created.

v

Tompkins Square in trance.
It appears to be a warm October day.
We arrive before him,
he comes walking
surrounded by a competition
for who shall be his intimate men;
whatever he did or said
we accepted.

Brahmānanda brought the drum,
harmonium's here, pair of *karatālas*,
a worn oriental carpet
from someone's garage.
He started intense chanting

and from distances, they started coming,
as into a magnetic field, toward us,
from the pageant of Lower East Side Sunday afternoon
strolling in leisure,
poor Polish and Puerto Rican,
leisure of children and
'66 *avant garde* American seekers
drawn to his chanting.

At first no one knew what we were.
It rose, ancient-song, a beat with cymbals and drum,
playing the bongo like it was Indian *mṛdāṅga*,
the people couldn't grasp what was happening
but it took over,
public religion,
chanting God,
Swami and followers.
We in humble pride
at his feet.
All instruments turned on,
hands and voices worshipping.

And him?
Drumming,
not shouting but singing for hours
outdoors, sonorous,
fulfilling the prophecy of Lord Caitanya.
We were well received,
I think, because of his presence:
"A Swami is leading them
he's in the center,"
Not just some boys from Brooklyn.

When there is chanting Hari's name
demigods come,
it is not an impersonal universe
or, as Ginsberg thought, "a frankly
physical universe,"
but the management is spiritual.

The public couldn't see Kṛṣṇa
but they saw Swamiji
they heard words,
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma,
they got the shadow of the holy name,
even nonmoving life chanted in echo.

You chanted and heard,
you didn't watch five minutes and
walk away toward Greenwich Village
lost in material desire
failing to transcend.

You stayed in the *kīrtana*
dedicating your self
to Kṛṣṇa.

Only Swami could do it,
or someone directly blessed by his order
to follow him—
it's free, anyone
can follow chanting and dancing.

Incense arrived,
a sax player, a flutist,
hip celebrities, a *New York Times* reporter,
and *East Village Other*
got the picture of Swami Bhaktivedanta
standing at an intermission
addressing the crowd,
a flowering tree
behind him,
disciples at his feet.

Raymond squinting up through a shielded hand
to see him in the sunshine,
Kīrtanānanda's head's cocked to one side
like a bird listening to the ground
as Swamiji spoke.
The sunshine dappling leaves' shadows
against the thick tree trunk,

Indian summer—a middle-aged woman
holding her coat, looking the other way,
how could she hear?

They were looking this way and that
at dogs passing stool,
meat-eaters,
looking at cars
their senses distracted
but somehow they are grouped
around him in the photo
conservatives on the right
radicals on the left
disciples at his feet.
Smaller bushy trees
in the rear of the park
and outside, the fire-escaped tenements,
the old world steeple.

Bright saffron
Bhaktivedanta Swami
he told them
in a soft spoken voice
there is material, mental, intellectual
and spiritual is eternal.
Please chant with us and
he sat down, took the drum
again led us all afternoon
singing both lead and chorus,
in his old age taking all risk for Kṛṣṇa.
Too good to stop,
he had come far from Vṛndāvana,
all winter in poverty,
walking through the snowstorm
the non-Kṛṣṇa *yoga* society
waited so long—
this country also waiting hundreds of years,
no Kṛṣṇa chant coming from Thoreau or Emerson
or Vivekananda in Chicago

—too good to stop.

His heart was
the infinite mercy of Lord Caitanya,
his old body was no limit
to his desire to give us chanting.
Tompkins Square was Kṛṣṇa's plan
it didn't matter
it was a good place
and these people perfect candidates.
Go on chanting
Hare Kṛṣṇa,
it is earth, they are human,
and this is the Dharma of the Age.

vi

Angels' Chorus:
not the *gopīs'* songs to Kṛṣṇa
or demigods' praise from the sky
but true memory
You walking amid cement and asphalt
in coat in winter
looking tough to endure.
We spiritual striplings
in turtleneck gold jerseys
sporting shaved heads and *śikhās*,
under your charge.

Representative of God
means good as God.
We bowed to you,
foreheads on the floor.

In the kitchen, the temple, the street,
once on a bus, in the Village Theater,
in the empty Judson Hall, Times Square,
subway seat, TV studio, making a record,
returning home in a car,

at a *yogī's* country *āśrama*,
in dreams too,
your blessed shelter.

*Daily verses**To Śrīla Prabhupāda 2/23/79*

I came to your door 94 Bowery
not with your boldness
but yearning for the picture of you
alone in the city-hell.

I come as your student and son
praying to evoke memory of you.
I have no power,
but I have come to praise you.

New Delhi Night 2/24/79

All night long the New Delhi watchman
walks blowing a whistle,
knocking his stick against the railings.
He's so frail,
safety is elsewhere:
at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

Evening on Bhaktivedanta Marga 2/25/79

In Vrindaban
I spoke my mind
under darksky, bright stars,
soft sands of Braja.

Morning Meditation 2/26/79

I'm a frightened person praying
for the mercy of Gaura-Nitāi.
Aside from crying out for mercy
what use is writing poetry?

The Owl and the snake

The owl woke me at 2 in the morning.
The snake was four feet long.
The white owl—eerie to me—
stood on the branch of a tree.
The black snake was at my door.

The next day I gave purports—
“The owl,” I said, “was an omen,
‘Wake up! When are you going to become
Kṛṣṇa conscious?’ ”

I talked about the snake but
didn’t know what about him was
Kṛṣṇa conscious.

I had thought, “Since I am a devotee
whatever I say will remind you of Kṛṣṇa.”

But the owl and the snake
have to be realized

in higher consciousness:

as examples in preaching

or to be seen as God’s creatures

or somehow to be given the Vaiṣṇava’s mercy

or for proving myself a devotee

by not being afraid of the snake

or by remembering Kṛṣṇa even when hearing the owl—

“I am the sound in ether . . . of snakes I am Vāsuki, the chief.”

Otherwise the owl and the snake are *māyā*

and we remain asleep.

Thoughts at Lake Huntington 9/28/81

Prabhupāda,
 I have to be honest,
 I am ever connected to you.

But something is fading,
 like the once youthful color to my cheeks.
 Memories seem
 to have less value—
 but *bhakti* never suffers diminution or loss!
 Then what *is*
 diminishing
 growing further away
 with Time?

I have no leisure
 to muse and discover alone
 because here at my door
 are a hundred *śiṣyas*
 asking *me* what to do,
 how to remember Kṛṣṇa and you;
 what strength do I have
 to tell them?

Your books
 Your books
 Your books
 their inner mission
 their inner meaning;
As I appreciate them,
 I live in you!

ii

Critics bark at our heels,
 like dogs
 they require to be fought;
 and righteous defense
 of your ISKCON house
 is right.

Money collecting!

Marriages!

Administration!

But it is for Kṛṣṇa, through *guru*—

And practices—

Chanting the Holy Name.

What was done in ecstatic love

by Haridāsa Ṭhākura

we do

as neophytes.

And preachers telling the new ones,

“stick at it, you will succeed,”

and the advanced teachers

are only one chapter

ahead of the new ones.

Prabhupāda, I am for this ISKCON.

I am not criticizing

the flag above the mortgaged temple building.

Pragmatic, stumbling, fallen,

but true, so long as we stick to it,

not knowing where it ends,

but death

we've heard

comes to each

and after that

another life—

the goal is

Kṛṣṇa

in eternal life.

iii

When they were singing *bhajanas*

I thought of the meaning—

calling to Lord Caitanya

and praising Kṛṣṇa,

the humble poet

in ecstasy.

And I wanted to make my own *bhajana*
if it is possible from such a low place.
I DID know Prabhupāda,
I AM living for him.
So maybe one day—in far future?—
I can write
Prabhupāda bhajanas.

If I could

- If I could draw
the beautiful temple,
Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma,
the *tamāla* tree
in the courtyard.
- If I could sing
the chanting
*śloka*s,
early morning
auspicity,
Vṛndāvana.
- If I could feel,
my tiny identity,
my worshipable Lord,
my place
at His lotus feet—
No fear.
- If I could know
Kṛṣṇa is everything
Kṛṣṇa is everywhere;
matter is dead.
- If I could write
I would make
glories of Prabhupāda
people would
always remember
eternal pictures,
songs,
feelings and
knowledge of him.

11/10/81

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Now as they define
how the *jīva* came
from the *brahmajyoti*
from the lower *rasa*
and by *guru's* grace
he's finally to return
to eternal home
with Kṛṣṇa—
when I hear it
I think
I want my *rasa* with you.
I don't care that there
are higher understandings,
I want my *rasa* with you.
I want to serve you
and this time
do it right.

Where you are—
are you preaching?
Is it right for me
to think this?
I know there are many
who are your men,
I am in their number
not exclusive, not the best
but you know me also;
take me to you,
that's my request.

11/11/81

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Life's relief
is to talk to you.
Not to *get* something
but to speak to you;
to be with you.
Who can understand
but you and I?

I am proud to be your
man. And pray I never
fail; let death come
first before I desert
you. You will protect me
in a difficult hour. To
chant the Lord's Name
is your grace.

And this moment
of composed words
is another fortune,
another way, to move
in your direction,
to look back at,
and recall,
yes Prabhupāda
is here
and I am
with him.

Two poems written in India

Vrindaban 11/81

Our Heros,
Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma,
please give us strength.
I know in some city
this body meets its end.
It is nothing wonderful
or a loss to the world.
Beyond my sorrow
is transcendental life,
mine and others.
And writing is
expressing to all
the realm where we live
in eternity and bliss
the home of the spirit-soul,
told, followed, and attained.

Mayapur 12/81

Green-and-yellow-speckled leaves,
black-and-white-winged birds,
the Ganges on the flooded plain,
The Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir
rising like the reddish sun.

Onward Soldier, on Christmas Day, 1981

I wish I knew Kṛṣṇa,
I wish Prabhupāda were here and I were
rightly situated as his servant,
satisfied with menial duties,
trying to do more work for him,
and writing down what he did.
I wish I meant what I just said.

I wish devotees weren't leaving ISKCON,
I wish the *gurus* had never made mistakes,
I wish the world weren't on the edge,
Wishful thoughts—
I wish I could resolve it.

I wish I weren't so far gone,
established in my habits and my limits,
I wish I could help others,
I wish I could speak from the heart,
from a deep reservoir of my own compassion.

But what are all these wishes?
Now I am riding
in the back seat
in the inevitable moment of Now.

It is Christmas day.
I know I am soul—
eternal spark.
I know I'm not pure,
but my heart
is with Prabhupāda.

They gave me a brown coat
and an expensive pen
for Christmas.
Bumpity bump—
enroute to Selinsgrove
I wish I were pure.

But still I deliver lectures,
repeating the message unchanged,
and I follow the rules
and sometimes sink in ego
but fight to the surface
calling, "Kṛṣṇa!"
"I wish" is the cry of an idle dreamer.
Onward, soldier.

Poem 12/27/81

The green typewriter under my fingers is *asat*.
Outdoors tonight the whiteness of the ground is *asat*,
but the hand of the supreme is eternal.
Radio and telephone sound waves move through the air
—what color are they? gray? blue?—
they are not visible in this moonlight, and are also *asat*.
Everything that comes is not necessarily valuable;
dark night passes, feet leave imprints in the snow.
The mystery of life is revealed in *śāstra*;
rules are sometimes broken, like thin ice,
and fingers move like branches,
trying to make meanings clear.
Communications go obscure, break down, as in wartime,
life warms legs and feet before an orange fire
and we wait, reading *Bhāgavatam*.
(The *sat* world is filled with golden liberated souls,
whose faces, hands, and bodies are all effulgent.)
A friend may help, but maybe not;
we turn from one thing to another;
fortune is fickle and we sometimes see a face in vain.
The orders of the *guru* are golden, his feet worshipable.
The path of the poem ends in the forest.

Gītā-nāgarī in Winter

1. The creekside is not holy like the Lord's Name but the water is His energy.
2. The animals are cold but thickskinned and dull; Kṛṣṇa dāsa says their bodies heat the barn; he is thinking of Kṛṣṇa sometimes.
3. Back to air, back to the earth, incomprehensible elements, the great *prakṛti* of Kṛṣṇa; a path leading into the woods in wintertime, these are beheld in Gītā-nāgarī to whoever comes and walks.
4. The women are teaching the children, within they are thinking of their husbands; the children are thinking of the immediate moment and nothing beyond; the furry animals are hibernating, snakes in holes, birds high in nests, the fish even live and breathe under the ice.
5. The holy name is Kṛṣṇa, whereas the place, a lump of earth, has holes in which live millions of bugs, ants bundled against the cold, oxen shouldering against the night, ice hanging upon their great chests; fire in the stomach of each creature, endowed by God.
6. That man, a celibate monk in goosedown coat, is walking alone on the road under the sky, going back to his room to read and chase away thoughts from his mind.
7. A holy article of the absolute is the flame offered to the Deity of Rādhā-Dāmodara; but many thickets on the hillside are all alike, leafless, old trees, silent, cold.
8. Kṛṣṇa dāsa is milking; Upendra cooking; Joe chopping wood; these are devotional acts, whereas the animals pass stool and chew and move. Within each devotee desires mix as he tries to hear the Holy Name.

ii

1. Gītā-nāgarī is a natural place where the Name and Fame and entourage of Kṛṣṇa flourish amid earth, fire, water, air, and sky.

2. A devotee is driving the car, although we plan to work the oxen instead, to carry out the vision of Prabhupāda.

3. There is a meadow where boys play sliding on the six-inch-thick ice, calling out the Names of Hari along with other names.

4. Cats and cows share the barn, with mice and billions of tinier creatures; the main creatures are Kṛṣṇa's cows. Paramānanda is always thinking how to protect them.

5. Trees are only wood, water is only ice, air is vaporized white body smoke from our mouths, fire is heat and light, the Deity form of God is golden and Rādhārāṇī is a sweet young girl meant only for the pleasure of Dāmodara, who stands in threefold bending form playing His flute. That is also a natural place: the marble altar on which stand the forms of Their Lordships in the temple.

6. They are gathering around the drummer and the *karatāla* player, exchanging rhythm and singing hard, Hare Kṛṣṇa, everyone is joining, children jumping, voices loud in the early morning. Kṛṣṇa is absolute and we are relative but bathing in the absolute—*oh, we are now absolute!* We are pure Kṛṣṇa Conscious!

In the temple there are painted cows and auspicious elephants of ivory and Śeṣa Ananta the divine snake-bed of Viṣṇu and decorative peacocks, reminding us of Kṛṣṇa as well as parrots, *parijātas*, cuckoos, *tulasīs*.

7. The dark road to the main building is icy; boys like it, oldsters fear it. Everything is a holy article, part of the energy of Kṛṣṇa, either internal or external. Now the pantheist's call is complete and true in the perfect sense—Everything is Holy.

8. A person is milking, a person is giving birth, a person is dying, a person is going to the doctor, a person is feeling envy, material desire, boredom, doubt, ecstasy, tired limbs, satisfaction, enlightenment before the *Bhāgavatam*, sameness—it depends on the devotees,

it depends on the time of day, it depends on the season.

Kṛṣṇa is ever-fresh. He is eternally inviting the spirit souls in their march back to home, back to Godhead, the spiritual world which is ever beyond the gaze of their sensuous inspection.

iii

1. "Today we have exams"—boys are slipping and sliding on the ice, surrounding the *guru* like a comic entourage. Unholy and holy together dovetailed in service to Kṛṣṇa.
2. One boy fell back on his head; for a moment no one tended to him, then—"See how he is!" He cried like a baby but nothing was wrong. But it is not the body but the soul. That is what the school is for.
3. Again, back to schoolwork: And beyond this is the simplest offering to Kṛṣṇa, like Vṛndāvana-līlā's offering of a piece of incense and her gap-toothed smile.
4. "Yes we heard," the blond boy says, sliding on ice as if his boots were skis, "it was Maitreya talking to Vidura." And I thought, "Oh I can speak on that," but I could not enter fully.
5. Is the essence intellectual conclusion or description? It is both, and that is called *uttama-śloka*. Stay on that path.
6. "In the deep woods," writes Dayānidhi, "it is snowing and there are many tall trees. . . . Standing close by is a big mountain lion. He is about five feet long and four feet tall." He is learning how, so that he can write for Kṛṣṇa.
7. This is intended as an offering to Rādhā-Dāmodara.

Patience

The walk from my cabin to the woods. I have been here three years. There is a confidential hint that comes at night when I am walking outside for the last time before taking rest. My feet make a crunching sound on the pebbles. It is cold now and will get much colder. But what is this intimation?

Maybe it is remembering days when I was deeply involved in the biography as in that winter when I did Volume I. I would take rest prepared to get up at 12:30. I don't do that now. Writing is dependent on the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, not my own doing. A period now of waiting.

Still the intimation comes as I walk out there, a short walk on pebbles in my own yard under the tall dark sky, stars seen above the trees.

It is an intimation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and possible great devotional fortune, and writing to come, and nearness to Kṛṣṇa.

Lines in Winter 1/82

Look out and see. Wood stove fire burns bright red coals, to heat the thermometer-like body. The human waterbottle!—a tube of skin, encasing semiprecious liquids, an illusion of beauty and fortitude, fashionably wrapped in coats and scarves. Oh, if it freezes! The encased, bottle-body, with frankfurter-like arms and legs, the awful flapping truth of human movement—one slip and his feet come out from under and he breaks in three places. Too cold to pass stool, too warm to die, too foolish to know the truth beyond the body. We prefer to dream of young girls and think everything is all right.

Look in and see. Every line is a prayer to the Lord, a casting out for my spiritual master, a recognition of my place.

Lines 1/82

The room is hot, outside it is cold.
Oh, I wish I were back in my homeland!
Why did I have to come here?
The room is hot, the outside's cold,
the windows sealed, the night approaching;
and there is nowhere to walk
except a highway
racing with cars—no place.

ii

Govinda is coming home
Balarama too
with flute and plough.
They walk the blessed earth
surrounded by cows.
Green-brown Vrindaban
trees fill the air,
birds singing
frolicking beauty;
but only confidential servants
live there.

iii

Like a boat at sea
my soul floats in this bodily life—
ocean of birth and death.
Lost at sea
alone, mad, lost;
a small lifeboat
on a vast ocean.
Cold and death-bringing,
the water rocks the boat
on the deep drowning sea
and I cling to the sides
clutching at life—
Oh Holy Name!

iv

Govinda is
revealed to Brahma;
His garland is ever-fresh; His teachings are the *Gita*.
"Oh Govinda, I shall not fight."
Govinda is the Lord
Govinda is the cowherd boy
Govinda is the truth.

*A Prayer to Begin the Fifth Volume of
Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*

Only as Kṛṣṇa wills can I venture into the realm of Prabhupāda's immortal life.

Spiritual master, you are like a distant star to me; I am trying to follow your inconceivable orbit in the years of your ascending the dark sky of Kali-yuga.

You moved auspiciously through the heavens, 1974, '75, '76, '77—please allow me to be with you again and through me grant the vision of your *līlā* to the world.

I, a lost soul, desire to realize my mission of tracing your path and traveling to be with you. I must go at all costs, but I pray to you to lift me there.

Your life is a Milky Way—so many glorious heavenly bodies mix that I cannot count them all, and each one is an almost unreachable mystery.

By your grace I have already been granted the gift of travel to the planets of your *līlā* and have seen there your human-like activities, beneficial for the people of the universe, and I have described it.

There is no end to the orbiting of your life. And now I desire to go again—please take me further than ever before, to those worlds where you enact the preacher's mission.

We yearn to behold you again, preaching the message of Lord Caitanya, dictating your books, moving with infinite mercy throughout the continents of this earth.

Although you are fixed eternally as a star in the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu, you simultaneously appear before us as the incarnation of the devotee in 1970. Please come into my vision in that form, as the safe-from preacher.

The world was sunk in the Garbhodaka ocean, and you

dove, O *bhāgavata* preacher, to the bottom and brought her up again, carrying her on the tusks of your preaching. You killed all demons and left behind staunch followers to carry on the mission of Lord Caitanya.

You are as exalted as *Vaikuṇṭha*'s majesty,
and you sit humbly,
and you preach as lion-guru,
and you move as jet-age mendicant
and set the pace
for ten thousand years
of devotional life on earth.

Whether we fail like *Jaṭāyu*
or succeed like *Arjuna*,
there is only victory
if you allow us to engage
in your service.

Let the *Līlāmṛta* shower
like meteorites of mercy
on the suffering, demon-gripped earth,
and please grant me entry
into your *līlā*.

1/9/82

Līlā 1/82

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are walking
through a grove that dapples
shadows on your form.
Your words illumine
your face
and your followers
also beam, surrounding you,
as you pace quickly
through a lane, under the trees;
the morning is cool
and you wear a chaddar.

Kṛṣṇa wills the universe

Kṛṣṇa wills the universe.

He makes me choose; He makes me anxious
to approach Him again, in love;
because He is the all-attractive abode of love.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is spiritual master and friend,
for me and thousands on this earth.

He leads me to say, "Yes!" in answering the question—
"Will I live and die for Kṛṣṇa?"

Kṛṣṇa moves everything and is everything;
I am also His, but He is so great
that I cannot know Him.

But He is known to His pure devotee.

It is Śrīla Prabhupāda who brings me to Kṛṣṇa.
Sometimes I feel like Sisyphus rolling the stone
to the top of the hill, where it rolls back down again.
But he (only he) will lead me over, once and for all.

Kṛṣṇa is all-powerful,

He makes me want to reform;

but if I desire, He places me under His illusion.

The illusion is His mercy, so I think, "Let *me* be God!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda argues on my behalf to Kṛṣṇa,
protects me, nourishes my devotional life:

"Let this soul be Your preacher, free of *māyā*."

I pray not to fail him, to offend or fall.

I am false ego; I dictate to the soul:

"You are as good as Kṛṣṇa; you are yourself Prabhupāda—

Take care of your body—get a woman, be notorious."

But, by Their grace, I cast *ahaṅkāra* aside.

The world suffers and all matter and all beings are destroyed;
I fear its power, pains and pleasures—
unlimited tortures, and all false promises!

I promise to help. I will follow the path
and work to save the illusioned.

1/20/82

Guru and Śiṣya

My dear disciples, please take to Kṛṣṇa
not just because I say so, but the *śāstras* say,
and Prabhupāda says—that you must take the way
through me. Do you understand?

“We understand from the books and from your words
that you are our eternal *guru*. Sometimes it’s
difficult to control the senses, but as for you, it fits
to think you are our guide: Prabhupāda has made you.”

Beloved *śiṣya*, I am unfit in love and realization,
but I believe this is His will, for your survival;
I am his spiritual son, his menial servant, not his rival;
and in the simplest way I can serve as your *via-media* to
the Lord. What do you think?

“ ‘We think that we have met your Goodness
by the will of Providence, just so that we may accept you
as the captain of the ship.’ Our faith in you
grows strong from your devotion to him.
The trouble is with ourselves.

We are so young and foolish, please give us strength.”

Since the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, there has been
chaos
as predicted, but sincere disciples help the *guru* to restore
the order. I have also faltered and been mistaken before
the task. I pray for courage and inspiration to push on.

Many Godbrothers have left the cause,
but greater merit is in staying.

The joy and the burden are with us; we are paying
the dues of self-motivation. Only he can save us.

And this bond grows stronger in love and understanding;
by divine will, through a perfect system, we bow at *guru’s*
feet.

I admit my error, pride, fear, distrust, and envy—but not
defeat;

Today all I can say is "Prabhupāda, please let me work,
because the transcendental system has to thrive,
and the *śiṣyas* are the leaders of tomorrow."

Surrender and symptoms

I surrender in the morning, rising.
 Kṛṣṇa is king; I raise my hands to Him.
 What is the sense of pretending to rule or enjoy?
 Unsundered we wander lost.

I surrender to my senses in my folly;
 Whatever my mind wants, or the tongue,
 words, taste, belly, sex organs, I go with them
 and wind up with a shrunken body and fearful mind.
 Who is the exception?

I surrender my wife and family and goods, said Bhaktivinoda
Ṭhākura,

To Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of my life.
 I will maintain my life and home
 as Kṛṣṇa's servant and use everything to please Him.
 This is best surrender.

Kṛṣṇa promises the surrendered soul relief from sin's reaction;
 giving up the unwanted and feverish,
 a relief, an act of love,
 giving up a heavy burden, a mad pride.
 Free will exerted, he gives everything to God
 and owes nothing to anyone else.

It is difficult because we fear
 we will be bereft if we give to Him.
 "I'd rather die than surrender
 my God-given right to do as I please."
 But the rub is I am driven mad.

He was the most surrendered,
 he gave up Vṛndāvana residence and peaceful chanting
 and entered hell on the order of his *guru*.
 He acted in oneness with the Lord
 and everything he did was blessed.
 Now the world has Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Take sex pleasure away and I'm emasculated, take my
money and I'm miserable,

take my food and I'm dead."

(I don't know He provides for this soul,
I don't trust.)

But Kṛṣṇa promises, "My devotee is never vanquished,
and I take him to the other side of birth and death."

If I insist, He allows me unsunder, and the bitter reaction,
the proud possession of myself.

We all surrender, anyway, at death.

Last breath, then next life.

Shall it be given in love

or only when beaten down by blows of death?

Final surrender is eternal life of bliss and knowledge;

he enters Kṛṣṇa's abode of unlimited freedom.

He surrenders the false

and gains eternal

loving service to the Lord.

ii

The Symptoms:

1. To accept things favorable to devotional service—like performing *saṅkīrtana*, reading *śāstra*, taking *prasādam*, the society of like-minded lovers of Kṛṣṇa; taking the burdens and tasks and worries for His mission in this world. Says Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, "Trouble taken in His service I will consider a great happiness."
2. To reject things unfavorable to devotional service—languor of long sleep, lure to revel in the *māyā* of flesh-pleasures; madness of chemical hallucination; the centuries of speculative knowledge; the vain, mad chase for distinguished career, and safety and prominence and victory and service to man as the ultimate religion.
3. To believe firmly that the Lord will protect His devotees always—this is natural as I am His child, a pure soul dependent on Him. He is all-powerful and can do anything He likes. The sun and moon and air move out of fear of Him, and death goes about taking its toll out of fear of Him. His protection is for all but

especially those who seek it. Why should I worry or listen to another? He is fully manifest in His Name.

4. To feel exclusively dependent on the mercy of the Lord—there is no other way; He holds sway. The world is a prison; His own home is total bliss and meant for us. His mission in this world, assumed by His dearest servants, invites us too—"Just act in devotional service, and depend upon Me for results." To know that nothing happens but is willed by God; to work in His Name.
5. To have no separate interest from the Lord—Kṛṣṇa's not meant for supplying me, but I am meant for the joy of serving Him; this oneness is the perfection of surrender. Nothing is of interest, nothing has a promising future except His service. What Kṛṣṇa wants me to do is my best interest; and pleasing Him, learning about Him, is my own desire. To teach this science of surrender He appears as Lord Caitanya.
6. To always feel oneself meek and humble—It's a fact, I need help; I'm tiny, I'm not great. To surrender to this reality of my fallen nature means I turn to Him, "Please help me to love You." He has to help me or I'm lost. These are *feelings* of devotion, but they are also absolute facts.

These are symptoms, the ways of allowing
Kṛṣṇa to take charge of your soul.

*Reading Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
on a porch in Puerto Rico*

Blue smoke in the distance,
the chickens far away
cry unaware.

On this mountaintop
I read
in Prabhupāda's book,
how Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself
to the sincere chanter
of His Holy Name.

The sunshine falls peacefully,
playful lizards don't disturb,
the warm winds whistle through the pines.
I look up
and catch myself again,
a shallow reader of *Bhāgavatam*.

One white cloud
is like the nuclear bomb;
bluegray clouds above,
like Kṛṣṇa's own body
and the sunshine flashes
off and on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda,
please guide us
away from our poor ways.
Give us shelter.
Help us in trouble;
guide us through duty.

Dear Lord, today
please grant me an hour or two
to read your pure devotee's books.

Why we travel

If the plane crashes
and you are thinking
of your favorite girl,
it is too late
and too late
to erase your *karma*
for slaughtered cows.

But if I travel for Kṛṣṇa
each mile and inconvenience
is a proof of sincerity.
I am going there for Him,
waiting in the crowded terminal
for Him.

Although I have become averse
to cigarettes and nondevotees' speech,
yet I am *not* angry with them,
because of Him.
And He will protect me
however I die.

I am traveling
as did my spiritual master;
and other disciples also,
sannyāsīs wandering in duty,
all over the planet
glorifying Kṛṣṇa.

And in each place we go
sincere souls come forward
and chant and take *prasādam*
and fill the temple hall
joining Rādhā-Gopīnātha's *kīrtana*.

Sometimes stripped of clothing
by government agents who suspect us
and sometimes jailed

for Kṛṣṇa;
we are not traveling
to enjoy this body.
Other travelers
have their own adventures,
but not for Him.

Let me travel purely
hearing the words of Prabhupāda
high above the clouds,
above the sun,
beyond time,
speaking to me,
"Just become Kṛṣṇa conscious,
go back to Godhead."
to the abode of Kṛṣṇa,
to where we are traveling.

The present season 2/82

It's winter.
White turns into night
and the wood-only trees
stand starkly.
My last breath
may come in any clime.
But it's the present season
that impels me
to remember Kṛṣṇa.

In a room in Māyāpur 2/24/82

The Indian match box
depicts two camels
and mosquitos bite through my cloth.
Early morning *japa*
went well.
In three hundred years
I may improve.

My Lord Jagannātha deities
are kind to me.
They endure
very simple treatment.
They look gorgeous.
I don't understand Them,
but They come with me
Wherever I go,
in a briefcase, on airplanes,
under surveillance of customs officers
who ask, "What's this?"

They wear orange and gold,
the next day pale purple and silver,
the next day royal blue and gold.
Kṛṣṇa with peacock feather,
Baladeva with plumes,
Subhadrā wears veils.

I lay Them to rest.
They are kind
to grant me vision,
God's nearness
in every room.

Jagannātha,
what should I do?
Is there bravery in me?
Is there truth?

Will You lift me
beyond the body
and small-minded
envy and politics?
On my own
I have no power.

Am I asking
that You accept me
and be satisfied
with my lackadaisical service?
Am I taking advantage?
Is my small service to You
a symbol of my entire devotional service?
Am I saying,
"This is all I can do,
it is good enough
and that's all You'll get
from me"?
But what kind of prayer is that?

Dear Lord of the Universe,
please free me from this conditioning!
Force me,
to do whatever You want.

Grant me attachment to You.
Let me see
Your eyes and face
and peacock-feathered turban,
Balarāma's red mouth,
Subhadrā's golden visage
as I light
my stick of incense

Let me praise You,
offer You service
in many ways

Lord
who has consented
to come into the room
of a poor one.

Voices of Surrender

*ādaṁ śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā
tato 'nārtha-nivṛttiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ
athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyañcati
sādhakānām ayaṁ premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ*

"In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is matured in *bhāva*, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love for God is called *prema*, the highest perfectional stage of life."

—*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*

Early this morning,
the wind is racing high in the sky
like cleansing an eye
of a dirty particle.
It shows the winter stars
and a small moon
close above the horizon.
The outer door slams all night
and I wake, anticipating
the voices of surrender.

I

Faithful Hearing (*śraddhā*)

I am the voice of faithful hearing,
I live as a spark within each heart.
When the philosophy is presented,

somehow I respond.

I want to help the soul rise.

Wayne was a Christian and a *yogī*;
he first got a book in Dallas.

"I read the *Bhagavad-gītā*
and began chanting. But then
the book merged into my shelf
with other books
by other *yogīs*.

But then I came here
seeking the devotees.

I still have my doubts:

Out of so many philosophies,
how is this one the absolute?"

And as I reply, he hears,

'though not with *śraddhā*.

Śraddhā is the gift of God,
the Supersoul within: firm faith.

Listen, spirit soul,

and believe. This is the
worship you wanted.

Remember? You truly want
to worship God. Now is
the time to surrender, and
here is the message—this
speaker is true. Yes,
out of so many, this speaker
is true. Listen with firm faith.

I simply said, "All religions are true
when their essence is *bhakti*,
but the *Bhāgavatam* is best;
it throws out all cheating,
teaches only the highest truth;
it is not another sect
but the science of pure love of God.
Here is the most knowledge

and the best practice of *bhakti*.
 Hear it well, and at least
 you will never be cheated
 by impersonalists."
 Wayne nods assentingly,
 but voices mixed within him:
 it *may* be.
 He listens, but not with *śraddhā*.

Alas, *śraddhā* in Kali-yuga
 is often abused.
 He heard the same promise
 from a crook,
 and on the radio the preacher said
 send in your money
 and I'll pray that you get a car.
 And the *yogī* seduced him
 into thinking he was God.
 Wayne sorted it out:
 "He's trying but there's more."
 And it has led him to our door,
 where he is hearing.
 But there must be more,
 the next step,
 if he is to survive in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

ii

Tom laughs spontaneously.
 "I was really into sense gratification.
 Yet I came to the temple,
 somehow I got a taste
 from the very beginning—
 Kṛṣṇa's mercy. I thought
 this is great
 let me give everything up
 and live like the devotees.
 But after a while
 I became unsundered.

One day I told Viṣṇu-gadā,
 "I'm going to sleep today."
 He said, "What about your spiritual master?"
 I said, "He's pure
 but I've only seen him once or twice
 and I don't care
 I'm going to sleep."
 Then I left the āśrama.
 I looked back at the building
 and told myself,
 "You've walked away
 from situations before
 and you can leave this one too."
 But after hearing the Gītā
 I kept thinking
 what good is mere enjoyment?
 I kept thinking
 this is not the way
 to be happy.
 I have to live for the soul,
 I have to solve death
 I don't want another birth!
 I want Kṛṣṇa."
 New *bhaktas*,
 if they stay,
 can gain
 firm faith.
 That faith may be little,
 but for the Gosvāmīs
 real *śraddhā*
 is strong.
 When Kṛṣṇa demands "Surrender!"
 and you *do* it,
 only then is *śraddhā*.

 Spirit soul,
 pray for *śraddhā*
 even if you don't know

the name of God,
 call out
 "Please help me
 please appear
 and let me hear
 with faith
 from Your pure devotee!
 When he appears
 don't let me turn away;
 on that blessed day
 When I get the chance
 please let me think
 Oh these are the people
 I was looking for:
 this is the truth."

II

Saintly Association (*sādhū-saṅga*)

I am the essence of saintly association,
sādhū-saṅga:

"We have each come
 not just for the philosophy
 but because of a devotee."
 The voices of saintly association
 are the friendly sages
 who sat together at Naimiṣāraṇya
 and spoke of Kṛṣṇa.
 A conditioned soul gets attracted
 to be with them.

ii

Devahūti first had her father;
 he was saintly association
 because he was Manu,
 but he turned her over
 to the great *yogī*, Kardama,
 and he became her husband and great friend.
 She served him in austerity

and begged to have a son by him.
 He consented,
 and the incarnation Kapila was born.
 Then she had the best son
 for *sādhū-saṅga*,
 and he taught her *sāṅkhyā*.
 She called him the axe to cut her attachment.
 She said he was her transcendental eye
 to lead her out of darkness of ignorance.
 He spoke to her
 the words of truth.
 At the end she was alone,
 but by then she was able
 to always think of the Lord.

iii

In a former life
 Nārada was a simple boy;
 by saintly association
 he became a great sage,
 and then by his association
 a hunter became a devotee.
 There is another example:
 Some dirty hippie boys
 in New York City in 1966
 met Śrīla Prabhupāda.
 Like for me
 it was Prabhupāda.
 (I came to see him
 like Devahūti,
 who approached her son
 in a solitary place, and asked him
 "I am sick of my own material desires.
 Please get me out
 by your association.")
 In that storefront,
 in Lower East Side summer
 out of the desolate decay of my youth,

I clutched at his association.
 I took it like a hungry man
 takes his food.
 "Oh spiritual master," I asked,
 "is there a stage we can advance to
 where we don't fall down?"
 "Yes," he said.
 He was my fatherly guide.

iv

Association means you want to be with them,
 and you can't stand being without them.
 Like Gitaji,
 she can't stand just being
 with her husband.
 He has a good heart;
 he is a machinist and works hard
 and comes home at night.
 But she is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.
 He doesn't like it.
 She wants to serve Kṛṣṇa not him.
 She rises two in the morning chanting
 and runs off
 leaving husband and children behind
 and joins the devotees,
 "Like a *gopī*," she says,
 which is an exaggeration
 because the *gopīs*
 ran out from their husbands
 to join Kṛṣṇa
 in the dead of night,
 but they were the world's greatest devotees!
 There is no higher standard than they.
 They were mad after His association.
 But Gitaji, also, runs,
 to be with the devotees of Kṛṣṇa,
 and her husband yells after her,
 "Take your clothes and don't come back!
 Go live with them!"

He doesn't mean it
 because he is Hindu;
 he also respects the *sādhū*
 as long as they don't demand too much.
 And the same day
 he accompanies his wife
 along with two boys and one girl,
 and they go to see the *sādhū*
 and give him a check,
 and the *guru* consoles Gitaji,
 "Be balanced, serve both
 your husband and Kṛṣṇa."

v

Faithful hearing has to be solidified
 by *sādhū-saṅga*.
 You want to be with
 those like-minded in devotion.
 You only want to be with those
 who talk about the Lord
 and dress His Deity form
 and sing His praise
 and read His book
 and do His work,
 and they find no taste in anything else.
 Those who stay with saintly persons
 have gone to the next stage.
 There is no surrender unless you learn it.
 And if you think you have nothing to learn from them?
 Illusions. . . . One preacher, he didn't think
 they could teach him anything.
 But that was his pride.
 Pray to be with them.

III

Initiation and Practicing the Rules
 (*bhajana-kriyā*)

"The devotees are serving Kṛṣṇa,
 they are also shaven-headed,

they have got neckbeads
and chanting—
why not myself?"
This is the voice of *bhajana-kriyā*.
Unless initiated
by a spiritual master
you can't have the link with Kṛṣṇa.

You have to follow the four rules:
No illicit sex,
no meat-eating,
no intoxication,
and no gambling.
Can you do it?
"Impossible!"
said the Earl of Zetland.
But we can do it
if we want to.
"Yes, please give me the initiation
before it is too late;
I want the shelter,
I want the *guru*,
I want to do it."

There must be a *guru*.
"But is there
really some one
who is that pure
who can save me
and carry me
back to Godhead?"
If you think
in the whole world
there is no pure devotee
then it is hopeless.
There is hope
for others,
but not for you.

Go to him
 the *Gītā* says;
 offer service and inquire;
 the self-realized soul
 will impart knowledge to you;
 he has seen the truth.
 He has his *guru*
 and his *guru* has his *guru*.
 Go to him.
 He is in the line
 faithfully following
 the *via media* of Kṛṣṇa.
 But don't see him
 with your eyes;
 see him with your ears.

ii

Gaura Pūrṇimā was fourteen years old.
 He had heard of Prabhupāda,
 but was kidnapped by his parents
 and sent to Europe
 where they tried to deprogram him.
 He escaped and went to London,
 then to India,
 but Prabhupāda had disappeared from the earth,
 and he was too late for initiation
 by the founder-*ācārya*.
 But he stayed
 in Prabhupāda's *gurukula*
 and chanted and learned Sanskrit
 in good faith.
 When I came
 he accepted
 in a simple way.
 Because I wrote
 "Readings in Vedic Literature"
 he thought I was a scholar,

and his teacher was my friend,
 who said, "Yes, Satsvarūpa."
 Then he approached me.
 It was faith in Prabhupāda,
 but then faith in me.
 We accepted each other
 as *śiṣya* and *guru*
 and it grew,
 real bond of spiritual
 service and trust.

So after the first step,
 if you are serious
 you want the next step.
 You want the *guru*,
 and you want to follow him,
 and then you are on the next stage.
 You may not notice
 the good results of *bhajana-kriyā*,
 but they are there
 just as you don't notice
 sometimes when the plane takes off the ground
 suddenly you are hundreds of feet in the air—
 that is the result
 of *bhajana-kriyā*.

iii

Bow down and pray
 once and for all
 with thoroughly honest heart
 and agree never again.
 Jagāi and Mādhāi
 were freed from sin
 but promised
 they would never again.
 Only when they said that
 were they freed.
 You have to promise,

you have to have the gumption
 and the grace,
 pray to be saved,
 pray and promise,
 don't just say you will try.
 Before him and the fire,
 and the devotees and the Lord—
 "I will not sin again—"
 These are the four rules
 and the *guru's* order;
 this is *bhajana-kriyā*.

IV

Diminishing All Unwanted Habits
 (*anartha-nivṛtti*)

I am the voice
 of giving up unwanted things.
 I don't think it is wise
 to retain them.
 They lead to repeated birth and death.
 I grace the soul
 so he can live without them.
 I am the fire of knowledge;
 when ignited by the spiritual master,
 I set ablaze
 all *karmas*,
 turning them to ashes.
 I destroy the bad habits and doubts.

 He no longer goes to a restaurant
 to taste meat or onions;
 nor does he care to smoke
 or drink coffee or tea.
 He avoids sex entirely.
 He is not interested
 in wasting his time
 speculating or gambling—

this is *anartha-nivṛtti*.

We can immediately become
great souls
by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa,
but because we have doubts
whether or not
Kṛṣṇa is actually the supreme
we have to take time
to dissipate the doubts
through the study of scripture.
I am the fire of knowledge;
when ignited by the spiritual master,
I set ablaze
all ignorance,
turn them to ashes;
No more unwanted things.

ii

Because he was His pure devotee,
when he talked about Kṛṣṇa
the words were potent
and entered my heart.
Finally, I understood
and said, "Of all the saints
or sons of God
Kṛṣṇa is unique—
He is most relishable!
Is this not true?"
"Yes," he said, "It is so.
Not only all bliss is Kṛṣṇa's
but all strength and knowledge
all beauty and fame
as well as all wealth and renunciation.
He is called Bhagavān,
the all-opulent one.
And Kṛṣṇa is the best name of God,

meaning all-attractive,
as God must be."
When I heard He married 16,000 wives,
at first I started.
"How could it be?"
His pure devotee assured me:
"He is the Lord within the hearts
of every living being;
if He desires to come out
of the hearts of a small number
of yearning devotee-souls
and become their husband
to answer their prayers,
what is the harm
or difficulty
for God?
Kṛṣṇa can do anything,
and that is the meaning of God.
They say God is all-powerful,
but when He comes
and does an act
of small indication
of His power,
the atheists disbelieve,
and say, 'He cannot do it.'
But lifting Govardhana Hill
is nothing for God;
the showing of the whole universe
in His body
is also a minor act.
Appearing in every atom,
He is the beginning, middle, and end.
He is the taste in water,
the light of the sun and moon,
the syllable OM,
the chanting of the holy names,
of fishes the shark,

of beasts the lion—
 and all these are fragments of His splendor.”
 Gradually, I began to learn
Sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma,
Vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti.
 “If after many births
 as a philosopher
 he finally understands
 ‘Kṛṣṇa is everything’—
 why not do it
 in one birth instead?”

Becoming always thoughtful,
 while practicing *bhakti*,
 the devotee concludes,
 I don’t want to come back again
 for birth and death,
 suffering repeated miseries.
 And with resolve,
 and Kṛṣṇa’s grace,
 while always practicing
 chanting the *mahā-mantra*
 and eating only *prasādam*,
 all doubts
 and unwanted things
 diminish.

V

Steadiness in Self-Realization
 (*niṣṭhā*)

Niṣṭhā means being fixed
 in the conclusion of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
 Anyone can come and say
 any damned nonsense,
 but a Kṛṣṇa conscious person
 won’t be affected.
 Nondevotees don’t believe.
 They are doomed,

and one who believes them
is also doomed.
But not one in *niṣṭhā*.

Whatever happens,
he doesn't mind
even death
or if he meets a clever *Māyāvādī*
or a beautiful woman
like the prostitute
who came to see *Haridāsa Ṭhākura*.
He had a higher taste than she;
he was compassionate
and liberated her
by his pure chanting.
She could not make him fall.
All glories to *Haridāsa Ṭhākura*.
He was caned
in twenty-two marketplaces
but remained steady
and undisturbed—
remembering *Kṛṣṇa*.

ii

They reach a stage
where no talk or act
will dissuade them
from the lotus feet of *Kṛṣṇa*.
No matter what,
they remain faithful to *Kṛṣṇa*
and stick with Him
and chant His name.
They are always faithful
to their spiritual master,
even if others
invent some new way:
"Let us surrender to someone else
now that our *guru* has gone away."

The *niṣṭhās* say, "No other love—
I will not be a prostitute!"
As Bhīṣmadeva said,
Love means all your love
on one,
Kṛṣṇa and *guru*.

Fixed doesn't mean stubborn
but always Kṛṣṇa conscious.
If there is an enemy in debate
no matter what he says
a Vaiṣṇava has a solid reply,
and there is no lure
or power
to take him away
from the lotus feet of Govinda.

Let us pray for that.
"I carry what they lack
and maintain what they have."
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa
and the spiritual master
are the voices of *niṣṭhā*.
"To those who worship Me
with love," Kṛṣṇa says,
"I give the intelligence
by which they can come to Me."

This is a prayer for *niṣṭhā*:
Even at the cost of the body
or all possessions,
I have to keep fixed
knowing this is the one thing
I cannot lose.
Hold on tight
even in the difficult hour;
let me not abandon you.

iii

We are now describing
 the advanced stage
 of always being steady.
 I who narrate this simple poem
 am now in water over my head.
 I can only pray
 though I waver.
 My own consciousness
 is flickering.
 How can I ever describe *niṣṭhā*
 or the stages yet ahead—
ruci, the taste,
āśakti, attraction,
 and then *bhāva*, the emotion or affection for Kṛṣṇa,
 and finally, at the summit,
 the crest jewel,
kṛṣṇa-premā,
 pure ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.
 Now I falter and stop.
 Honesty dictates that I end my poem,
 Voices of Surrender.
 I am one
 with two feet planted in this world,
 my eyes cast above,
 to the spiritual world.
 I write from realization
 and voices of my experience,
 so how can I go above *niṣṭhā*
 or speak of *niṣṭhā* at all?
 All I know
 is the books
 and the great saints' lives.
 And I know the life of my own spiritual master.
 Once again, I am brought
 to the feet of my spiritual master,

Śrīla Prabhupāda.
 Clinging to his lotus feet
 is the only way
 in my poem or my actions
 that I can rise
 to the higher stages of the *bhakti-mārga*.
 If I follow his order
 and bring practical results,
 then I can be *niṣṭhā*.
 I cannot stay a moment away
 from the vows I made
 to him
 to always chant sixteen rounds
 and follow the four rules.
 And do as he says;
 this is *niṣṭhā* for me.

iv

One time before a room full
 of his leading men
 he challenged,
 "Are you convinced?"
 We were all terrified silent.
 "Are you convinced?" he repeated,
 but no one answered.
 "Are you convinced that Kṛṣṇa is God?
 If you are not," he said,
 "Then you cannot help me.
 I am convinced,"
 he spoke for himself,
 "and not that I *believe* only
 but it is a fact.
 I am convinced on fact."
 And he went on saying
 how Kṛṣṇa is God
 although He appeared before Brahmā
 looking like a small village boy
 with no education

and kept a flute in His belt
and in His other hand
held fruit salad and yoghurt.
He appears to be a cowherd boy
but He is God.
Govinda showed Brahmā
all the universes and demigods
and all time and space
coming in and out of the body
of Govinda.
Prabhupāda is fixed on that Govinda,
and I pray to be fixed
on the order of that Prabhupāda.
This is *niṣṭhā*.
New *bhaktas* coming
into this world
can also become fixed
on Prabhupāda and Govinda.
They can follow
my straight words
and become followers
of Govinda and Prabhupāda,
of Lord Caitanya and the *mahā-mantra*.
They can take
the wonderful transcendental life
given us by the past *ācāryas*,
and it will work for them also.
They will feel personally cleansed
and become fixed
in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

VI Conclusion

Although the higher stages
are beyond my realization,
I believe in them with faith.
To discuss them from the books

is to know the truth.
 Also, even in the beginning
 there are symptoms
 and real-life accounts.
 Thus I can complete the course
 I have here outlined
 and point to the highest goal.

The next is *ruci*, and then *bhāva*—
 taste, attachment, and love.
 Even to survive,
 there *must be* higher advancement.
 Restraining the senses
 cannot be done
 by artificial imposition.
 If a doctor tells the patient
 not to eat,
 the patient still retains his desire.
 When a transcendentalist
 restricts himself,
 it doesn't diminish his desire
 for material things
 until he experiences
 a higher taste.
 By the mercy of Lord Caitanya
 the taste is given freely
 especially in this fallen age
 by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.
 And there is no food as sublime
 as Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*,
 and only a blind fool
 can fail to see
 the superior feelings
 among the devotees.
 And so he gets a higher taste
 to chant and hear and be with Vaiṣṇavas.
 One drop of that genuine taste
 in Kṛṣṇa consciousness

can raise him above
 the whole ocean of material desires,
 so that even if he tries
 he cannot leave Kṛṣṇa.
Bhakti has become
 like drinking hot molasses:
 it's so nice and sweet
 he cannot stop,
 although he complains that it's too hot.
 Kṛṣṇa has even warned
 if you still want the taste
 of laughing with family and friends
 in material life,
 then don't look at Govinda
 standing in the moonlight:
 He will steal away your heart
 and you will never go back.
 For even the glimmer of *ruci*
 can conquer the attraction
 of 33 million demigods.

ii

Mahārāja Parīkṣit
 was sitting on the bank of the Ganges
 for seven continuous days
 without food or drink
 hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
 from Śukadeva Gosvāmī.
 I was not there,
 and I do not realize it fully,
 and I cannot do what he did,
 but I love to hear about him;
 until the end of my days
 I will go on hearing daily,
nityam bhāgavata-sevayā,
 what Parīkṣit asked Śukadeva
 and what Śukadeva replied.
 This is also a kind of taste,

a small taste,
 by which I can rise beyond
 all other literature.
 At least I know the secret;
 only the *Bhāgavatam* can satisfy
 and take me back to Godhead.
 I kick away all speculation.

iii

Prabhupāda says
 you must have *bhāva*,
 feeling and love,
 to carry on the worship
 of the Deity in the temple.
 Without *bhāva* you will resent it:
 "Our *guru* has given us a burden."
 You will think Him a statue
 and offer Him dead flowers,
 thinking it doesn't matter
 since He is only stone.
 Without *bhāva*,
 the temple will close
 like old temples in India
 and cathedrals of Europe,
 empty museums,
 with no *bhāva*.
 So we *must* go to the higher stages
 by regulated practice
 and by crying out our heart's desire
 in intense longing.
 When will the day come
 when my offenses ceasing
 taste for the name increasing
 I can chant the holy name in ecstasy?
 When will the day come
 when I can relish the books
 of the Gosvāmīs
 and offer my respects

to every Vaiṣṇava
 and every living entity
 by preaching *kṛṣṇa-premā*?
 To reach this stage
 I can only cry
 and break my head
 against the rock.
 With hope against hope,
 somehow or other,
 I must persist
 on the order of my *guru*.
 Worse rascals than I
 have been raised to love of God.
 I am insignificant
 and cannot claim
 to be The Worst rascal.
 Even I can be uplifted;
ruci and *bhāva* are possible
 even for you and me.

iv

It takes work,
 and that work should not be resented.
 It is just:
 to the bold goes the prize.
 Deserve and then desire.
 If you take to it cheaply
 you will only imitate pure love.
 Let us not forget
 what we were.
 We have been saved from the pit of snakes.
 For countless births we have been wrong,
 only recently taken this song
 of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.
 Let us not forget
 what we did.
 We were sinners long
 before we took to this sacred, healthy life.

Let us not forget
as Prabhupāda wrote to his Guru Mahārāja:
"Personally I have no hope
for any direct service
for the coming crores of births
of the sojourn of my life,
but I am confident that some day or other
I shall be delivered
from this mire of delusion
in which I am at present
so deeply sunk.
With all my earnestness
I pray at the lotus feet
of my divine master
to allow me to suffer the lot
for which I am destined to suffer
due to my past misdoings.
But let me have this power
of recollection:
that I am nothing but a tiny servant
of the almighty absolute Godhead
realized with the unflinching mercy
of my divine master.
Let me therefore bow down at his lotus feet
with all the humility at my command."

New devotees

"I traveled always searching and I became—insane."
 Tom, why not now take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness?
 It's up to you—but how deeply have you drunk
 impersonal poison? I lightly advise, "Choose
 carefully and wisely"—I mean, "choose Kṛṣṇa."

"I can't drink this water or breathe this air," says Tex;
 but his wife already loves or accepts
 anything connected with Kṛṣṇa: "she will never let me leave."
 A positive case of attachment to wife. These spiritual hippies
 are looking for a solitary mountain top
 which doesn't exist.

And naive Jīva, I sympathize, his duty is a strain;
 going door-to-door agitates his brain.
 But his invention for relief?—"Study. India. On my own."
 The *guru* is like a cowherd's man, to usher them home.

There are two ways, regulated and spontaneous;
 The *ācāryas* say first one and then the other;
 rising early, chanting, working even when it's a bother
 must precede the stage of constant ecstasy.

New men have to forgive the imperfections of their seniors.
 "Nothing is absolutely pure in the beginning.
 From imperfection, purity will come about."
 Everyday is a test—their faith against their doubt.

The symptoms of surrender: whatever is good for Kṛṣṇa,
 accept it;
 and whatever is harmful, to advancement, avoid.
 When newcomers catch hold, convinced the void
 is nowhere—all the Vaiṣṇavas rejoice.
 Another Mṛgāri has become a disciple of Nārada!

Every servant of the Vaiṣṇava should be anxious
 to save conditioned souls.
 It is a hunt for one in a thousand.
 And as soon as we attempt it and are fully engaged
 at least our own case is assured.

Concerns

Beyond the body, beyond death, I hope to face it,
not living blindly, each day, disbelieving eternal life.
At the last moment, 'though grief and pain attend me,
I hope to remember Kṛṣṇa, not the corpse, blood, and spit.

Another fear—that I may fall.
Illusions are the energies of God and very strong;
if I offend the Vaiṣṇavas or some other big mistake
I beg to be spared, surrendered to Kṛṣṇa—but after error,
is it too late?

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is also our concern;
knowing it's right, and making its wrongs right
is a life's commitment. In ISKCON, Prabhupāda's pleasure
is hard-earned.

And why don't I chant the holy name in love?
When will I understand the books of my spiritual master?
Why isn't my progress going faster?
How much more time do I have to improve?

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, that's my first service.
I've got to get it done and do it well.
It will bring hundreds of thousands to his feet,
and I will be among them, remembering him in bliss.

You're concerned for your chanting and reading,
but what about the people?
Every minute they are cutting live flesh, twisting and
choking life.

What is your program to help?

Kṛṣṇa is their Master and Guide;
the practical work is to publish His glories.
Though I can't claim great compassion,
I too serve to bring them to His side.

It's truly Kṛṣṇa and *guru* who care;
my concern should be to humbly serve Them.
This is the focus if I want to live sincere;
this is the action of my prayer.

From Trinidad 6/82

One more stop on this tour,
further south
to earn a stripe
for completing a whole tour.

Right now would be a good time
to realize *aham brahmāsmi*
amid hammering, sweat, and cigarette smoke.

I saw the big Eastern jet
take off powerfully.
I want to be somewhere,
'though no plane this morning
can take me there.

I sit with observers,
who wave to family friends
onboard the loud jets
taking off for the North
while we wait to go South.

Irish Poem

Saṅjaya dāsa suggested:
 Write about Ireland
 mixing experience with
 the Absolute Truth.
 But what can I say?
 I am a stranger here.

Daisies are tinier,
 white petals, tinged with pink
 yellow grosse bushes
 everywhere you see
 the brogue is vogue
 only for tourists, Irish-Americans
 returning to old sod
 to see where their O'Sullivans
 once died in a small stone house.
 Now Guinness Stout,
 Boom Town Rats lead
 Dublin's fair city
 and today Belfast's
 shot-dead son has two
 live brothers, both
 joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

That's Patrick and Martin,
 now Uddhava and Patrī dāsa.
 Uddhava laughs when reporters ask
 how he suffered in H-block cell,
 happy now he's sheltered
 by Prabhupāda.

Ireland's transformed
 as never before.
 Although the land is ancient,
 they never had the *Vedas*,
 now she has new sons,
harer nāma saṅkīrtana,
 on O'Connel Street, and a

Kṛṣṇa conscious lecture
at Trinity College.

We have a farm in Glen Gariff,
have to give it a name.
What about calling it
Kṛṣṇa-nāgarī?

I've come
as *guru*
beyond the modes of nature
history and culture
are only background
to our transcendental work.

In the North
where Uddhava comes from
we are popular;
on a wall with graffiti,
"Brits Quit" etc.,
there was, "Long Live Hare Krishna!"
We're neither Catholic or Protestant
Irish or British
but we chant and dance in these bombed-out streets
and when we don't go out they complain,
"Where were you?"
We get our best men from there.

Appeared on TV
with a priest, nun
and pretty presenter,
she introduced me
as one who gets the youths
that used to go to Mass.
Seans, Phillips, Patricks,
now Kṛṣṇa's devotees,
raw, happy, a little fallen,
but eager, led by one of Prabhupāda's
ISKCON lieutenants from Germany.

ii

"We don't want to hear
just about you.
What about the view
from your room?"
Mist on mountain top.
"And what is the difference
between the Irish
and English trees?"
The Irish
are light green,
the European are dull.

Poets of Ireland and England,
why do you dwell on earth and body and vague thought?
Even your best verbal contraptions
are decorations of a dead body.
When you're dead
you take the next life
which you doubt.
You don't know
you don't praise Kṛṣṇa
your religion at best
is to speak honest and sincere
but that's not enough.

"Many times," wrote William Butler Yeats,
"man lives and dies . . .
and ancient Ireland knew it all."
But all they knew
was a faint idea, concocted,
and when Saint Patrick arrived
transmigration was hidden.
Only now does Ireland know
Bhagavad-gītā As It Is
thanks to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Land of meat-eating religion,
pub-drinking clergy

I don't want to criticize.
 I'm here to initiate
 Prabhupāda's men
 and speak the truth,
 behave myself properly.
 But when I heard
 what the Pope ate and drank
 on his Aer Lingus flight from Rome
 —beef, eel, salmon, lobster
 (toss 'em alive in boiling water)
 washed down with two glasses of Mercot wine, Irish
 Coffee—
 and said to the stewardess, round-eyed,
 "This was fit for a team!"
 —then I knew for sure
 it can't be topmost.

Pr̥thu dāsa said he believed
 the appearance of the Virgin
 at Knock, why not?
 At least we uphold
 the divine appearance of the Lord.
 There is a verse that sums it up:
 "The Lord appears through
 lower systems of worship
 according to one's desires,
 although He appears as the demigods
 and not in His original form.
 What is the use of these other forms?
 May the original Supreme Personality of Godhead
 please fulfill my desires."

iii

North and South and Southwest Cork,
 throughout this little Isle
 the *saṅkīrtana* is going forth.
 It won't be long now
 before Rādhā, the loveliest colleen

joins Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Godhead
and blesses the mountains of Caha.

Since television
even the villagers
are going degraded
with media's immorality
from illicit Dublin and New York,
and Kali-yuga is daily expanding.
Still, Lord Caitanya's mercy
can save this misty, greeny place
where millions have suffered
for thousands of years.
But it's up to us
to climb the ladder
taking Erin with us
to Kṛṣṇa's place.

Time poem

Now in each moment the future is die-cast.
 But I feel as I grow old it becomes too late
 to change or say any longer For Sure that I am Right.
 All I can say is I am committed in a certain direction
 and the die is cast.
 I am trying to be a devotee and convinced *that* is right,
 but I cannot say the quality of my devotion
 and the decisions I make in surrendering to Kṛṣṇa
 are absolutely right.
 What more can I do?
 When day turns to twilight
 I cannot say it should be daytime,
 but must live with less time.
 I wish I could change!

ii

We put the month and year on *Back to Godhead*
 and with wristwatch keep the time:
maṅgala-ārati early in the morning, then time
 to chant, time to read *Bhāgavatam*, time to write
 time when a black cloud pushes into my head
 with lusty thoughts and then goes away,
 time for impulses of purity, desires to preach and surrender,
 time when I go to speak,
 riding in the car, talking to disciples,
 time is passing, going down the hourglass,
śāstra says the day passes and all that happens
 is one loses another day of his duration,
 except for the pure devotee.

iii

Time is the way you spend your life
 time is the clock for the *karmīs*
 Time is the impersonal form of Kṛṣṇa
 time is running out for the earth
 complete ruin and collapse of the nations
 all buildings to dust unless

before relative time runs out
they change their *karma*.

iv

How much time?
Khaṭvāṅga asked.
The demigods said,
you have only a moment to live.
He dove to the earth where Kṛṣṇa was
and bowed at His feet
made *Bhāgavatam* prayers,
"I always think of You
I surrender everything to You
I honor the *brāhmaṇas*.
You are the sum total and You are in all hearts,
You are the Supreme, please accept me
as Your most menial servant
and the servant of Your servants."
The Lord accepted that prayer
and thus Khaṭvāṅga was saved.
I asked Prabhupāda about that—
"How can we be mature—"
he cut me off and said, "Never think you are mature.
Think you are *not* mature and yet
you have very little time
at any moment you may die.
Death will come into the home
of even the multimillionaire
and say, 'You stole so much oil which belonged to Kṛṣṇa.
Now you have to be punished.'"

v

Don't go the wrong way!
Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa,
this is all that is needed,
and serving the great souls.
Your time is now saved,
it is all right,

now you can leave at any time,
the time of dark moon or full moon,
it doesn't matter
everything is safe at *guru's* feet
and even if you haven't made a hundred percent
you can still continue
in the next life
pure devotional service.

Isha had ghosts

Isha had ghosts.
 (He got initiated too soon?)
 He said he wanted to leave
 to go be a monk
 or clergy in the Catholic church.
 We talked an hour and he decided to give it up.
 He knows how wonderful are the large-eyed cows.
 I said if you went there
 they would kill them.
 Once learning this *rāja-vidyā*
 you can't come down to something less.
 They don't know the soul is eternal!
 and they don't offer *prasādam*.
 Isha agreed, but said
 "They say their prayers quietly
 they are more strict
 and devotees bother me
 when they chant loud or talk loose."
 "Still," I said, "you can't give up this path.
 Even a loose talker in Kṛṣṇa consciousness
 is better than an advanced priest."

Oh Isha, wherefrom comes
 this impurity?
 Don't you remember
 you were filled with ghosts,
 used to think everyone
 was out to kill you with their thoughts,
 your face all scrunched up?
 Now you smile, brightly,
 fairhaired quiet boy,
 you are a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.
 Yes, he said I know I
 shouldn't look to the left or right
 that's why I think I was initiated too soon.
 "Anyway, stay, stay,

give up the other thought.

Let us talk—

there is no question of leaving
the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

And Prabhupāda even anticipated your case.

He said, yes, they will come and
learn spiritual life for the first time
and then think, 'If I am to be religious
then let it be in my own religion,'
meaning the material sect,
but on that plea,
they become lost in the wilderness.

Once having come to
the pure *bhakti* path
the claim that you want to be religious—
in favor of some lesser, mixed *dharma*—
means you are tricked by illusion."

"Yes," he said, "I went in and out of churches
hundreds of times and never felt anything
but the first time I came to the temple
I took to spiritual life."

I am no big thing
but I know Kṛṣṇa consciousness
is better,
and I wanted then and there
to go on reading the books
of Prabhupāda to show
Isha and me, that it is true.
Every *śloka*, every word,
there is no comparison, no competition,
pure love of God
without mixture:
whoever comes is rare.

He: "Then what do you want?"

Don't write to the monks, I said.

Don't you know they also have people

who are too loud and speak loose?
Remember Jñāna dāsa told
how he stayed with Zen monks?
He traveled all the way to the mountains
in Japan and found the monks drunk
on rice wine.

I agree the devotees must
live up to Kṛṣṇa consciousness
but Kṛṣṇa says,
when they worship His Holy Name,
and take His *prasādam*,
and hear about Him,
and do service to His pure devotee,
this puts them as saintly people
and their loose talk and loudness and bad habits
will go away in time
and pure love of God
will manifest.
Isha, please stay,
don't listen to the church ghosts.

All-pervading truth

I see
apples
in Pa. orchards
upholding branches,
dwarf trees under the sky
expansive as Texas
& green-silky
August-high corn
& pinwheels
on breezy lawns.

American flags
I see
silos, corn stalks
tall as men
millions of souls
ready to give offspring.

A blue pickup truck
& corn, cars whooshing
as we ride
past a backyard yellow umbrella
and white clapboard house
—across the breadth of Pa.
round winding turns
enclosed in August greenery.

ii

The bluish form
of the Lord of the Universe
flickers like sunshine.
In the Prayers of Lord Brahmā,
he bowed to Kṛṣṇa,
"You are God,
You held the Govardhana."
That Lord Supreme
is standing, hand on hip,

rod in hand.

& He is
the yellow, roadside wildflower.

Poles, lines, highway miles
we travel along with red blossoms
and new restaurants
on the road
under a gray
cornfield sky
Kṛṣṇa is everywhere.

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