

Prabhupāda Meditations

Volume II

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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Volume II

PRABHUPĀDA MEDITATIONS

VOLUME II

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

GN Press, Inc.

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"A devotee is also sometimes described as *uttamaśloka,* meaning that he is eager to glorify the Supreme Personality of Godhead or the Lord's devotees. Glorifying the Lord and glorifying the Lord's devotees are the same. Or, rather, glorifying the devotee is more important than glorifying the Lord directly."

—(from "Additional Notes" to Chapter 1 Tenth Canto *Bhāg.*)

❀❀❀

PART ONE

Beginning a Second Volume
1.1

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has said that the order of the spiritual master should be the life and soul of the disciple. It is natural, therefore, that one remembers the spiritual master while carrying out his instructions: "I should therefore meditate and pray for his mercy three times a day and offer my respectful obeisances unto him, my spiritual master."

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, set the example for all humankind by accepting a spiritual master during His youth. Years later, when Lord Kṛṣṇa met with His boyhood companion, Sudāmā, He embraced him and said, "I hope, My dear *brāhmaṇa* friend, you remember all those days of our school life when both you and I were living together at the boarding house. Actually, whatever knowledge both you and I received in our life was accumulated in our student life" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Volume III, p. 73).

Prabhupāda Meditations is an attempt to follow in the line of disciplic succession by remembering the activities and teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. As Prabhupāda has written, "A disciple should always meditate on the order of the spiritual master and that is perfectional meditation." Of course, one can best learn from Śrīla Prabhupāda by reading his many books, which direct us in a pleasing and authoritative way to render devotional service to the Supreme Personality

of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. This offering of personal memories and reflections, delivered in Vaiṣṇava *parampara*, is just a small part of the remembrance of Śrīla Prabhupāda that is being carried on by all his followers through their daily service and meditation.

There will be many faults in my attempt to go on talking of Śrīla Prabhupāda from my own angle of vision. I do it primarily for personal purification. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraja states, "Whether I know or know not, it is for self-purification that I write this book" (Cc *Ādi* 9.5). And Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, "One should write transcendental literature to purify oneself, not for credit."

***

I am encouraged in this endeavor by Prabhupāda's words to his disciples: "Be engaged in glorifying the *parampara* system and your life will be glorified automatically thousands of times." I am also encouraged when I think of Lord Kṛṣṇa's words to Sudāmā: "My dear friend, you may remember that many such incidents occurred while we were in the *āśrama* of our spiritual master. Both of us can realize that without the blessings of the spiritual master no one can be happy. By the mercy of the spiritual master and by his blessings, one can achieve peace and prosperity and be able to fulfill the mission of human life" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Ch. 79, p. 684).

By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and *guru*, a first volume of *Prabhupāda Meditations* has been completed. On this occasion I'm praying to Śrīla Prabhupāda to give me strength and inspiration to continue this *sād-*

hana of glorification of the spiritual master. I hope that it will please his followers and stimulate them in their loving service and meditation on the lotus feet of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda.

❁❁❁❁❁❁

Desire to Receive More Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
1.2

Go down to the place
where memories come
where praises are sung . . .

First comes the scene before my eyes
and second comes the words of description.

"If memories were pictures you carried in your
wallet,
what memories of Prabhupāda would you always
carry with you?"
I replied, "A wallet is not enough.
I want many books filled
with memories and reflections."
But am I willing to pay the price?

❁❁❁

ISKCON Press, 1969
The basement walls were white and uneven;
it used to be a mortician's house—
and now it's ISKCON Press.

Prabhupāda walks into the pressroom
where Advaita dāsa proudly stands
in his green printer's pants and shirt.
Prabhupāda embraces him and roughens his red hair.
A hundred devotees crowd around Prabhupāda and the press.
By Prabhupāda's embrace we understand
that books are dear to him,
and press workers too.

He's come direct from London,
and it's late at night, but he is eager,
and so he looks at the stacks of collated pages,
and hears our promises.

Two of my favorite pictures are on the wall
above the press machine:
One shows Prabhupāda
standing beside the birdbath
in the courtyard at 26 Second Avenue.
He is stout and strong, wrapped
in big swathes of *khaḍi* cloth.
It's a formal pose, with *japa-mala,*
from the early years of strong health
when Swamijī played the drum 3 hours in the park.
You can worship his feet in gray shoes.

The other photo is also formal:
Prabhupāda sitting with his 3 *Bhāgavatams,*
with *japa-mala,* much cloth wrapped around,
and an almost sad, compassionate gaze,
taken in the early days in San Francisco.

Counting the picture where he is embracing Advaita dāsa,
I've shown 3 photos from my wallet.
And I wish to show 30 million more . . .

******

Initiation: "Go For It"
1.3

I had a conversation with Rāya Rāma just before my initiation by Prabhupāda. I said, "How can I know for sure that I'll be able to follow all these regulations?"

Rāya Rāma said, "Say it's a gamble. So gamble that it's the right thing to do with your life—that there is God and that He's the truth and that He's Kṛṣṇa. We're staking our whole life on that. So what the hell?—Go for it. There's always some risk or gamble in life, but this risk is worthwhile."

His line of reason was appealing to me. I had been willing to risk my life taking LSD and doing other crazy things, so why should I become hesitant to be initiated just because I couldn't see a guarantee? In fact, if someone *had* given me all guarantees, it would have been hard to accept. I took it as an adventure, "Go for it—get initiated by Swamijī."

On the night of the initiation, I was sitting in Swamijī's inner room while Swamijī was in the worship room preparing for the ceremony. Keith was sitting beside me. I said, "How can we actually accept that the person Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate truth?"

Keith repeated the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse, "Kṛṣṇa says, everything depends on Me as pearls are strung on a thread." That little quoting of the scripture by a Godbrother helped purge me of some impersonal hesitation. Godbrothers are so much like ourselves, so when we see that they're faithful and that they have some knowledge, we accept it—and then we do it for ourselves.

Taking initiation is supposed to be a solemn commitment, not a casual undertaking. However, despite our promises, we have to admit that we are taking a risk. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also taking a risk by accepting us as disciples. He honored our vows and depended on Kṛṣṇa, expecting us to carry out our obligations. Śrīla Prabhupāda's coming to America was itself a risk. Sometimes he had to abandon the strict regulations of *sannyāsa* in order to stay and do the more important work of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When he stayed in Carl Yeargens's apartment, he had to keep his food in the same refrigerator where Carl kept cat food. Prabhupāda explained that this was actually against the rules for *sannyāsa* living but, "If I thought,'I can't do this, let me go back to India,' then I never would have been able to preach." In Prabhupāda's case, his risks were completely protected by Kṛṣṇa.

Neither was Prabhupāda able to conduct a full ceremony with all the details for *yajña.* For bricks we found some discarded ones at a construction site, and for dirt we dug it up (when Mr. Chudy was not looking) from the garden in the courtyard. Prabhupāda conducted the initiation with faith in the Holy names and a desire to carry out his spiritual master's order. He improvised and accepted

the broken souls who came to him, provided he saw them as sincere. Everything he did was bona fide according to Vaiṣṇava *smṛti*, but some things had to be done according to time, place, and persons. If he did not have ghee, he'd do a ceremony with butter, even margarine.

"Prabhupāda, you asked for coconuts, but we can't find any. We've got bananas but no banana leaves."

"All right," Prabhupāda said. He was not going to stop an initiation for lack of banana leaves.

Prabhupāda's mood was that he was ready to go to hell for Kṛṣṇa. According to the ninth offense against the Holy name, the *guru* must not give the Holy name to unqualified persons. Technically speaking, we lacked some of the qualifications for initiation, but Prabhupāda accepted us because we showed at least some sparks of serious interest. Prabhupāda impressed on us that initiation vows were lifelong and serious, and he expected us to follow them. Nevertheless, he went ahead with tremendous trust, even though we hadn't done that much to show we were trustworthy.

Sometimes I wonder how Swamijī saw me in those early days. He had spiritual vision, and he was also a very perceptive gentleman, with much experience in business and in dealing with people. He could see into a person's character, and so he liked to quote, "The face is the index of the mind." What good did he see in me?

Although for a few years I had been living a strung-out life on the Lower East Side, I still had a *karmī* background of middle-class values. By the time I met Swamijī, I had in some ways plunged

over the edge and almost lost my physical life. He must have seen that craziness in my eyes. So why did he trust that I could follow the rules? Perhaps he also saw my desire to be a respectable citizen in his ISKCON. At least he hadn't seen me high on drugs or making loose jokes. I had shaped up soon after seeing him and had become eager to prove myself with responsible duties. He could see that I was willing to keep my welfare job and give money. I was the boy who typed.

But even though I had stopped the four major sins soon after meeting him, Prabhupāda could see my leftover decadence. I did not have to say anything; he could look through me. When he met me, he seemed somewhat startled, amused, and also compassionate. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda knew Calcutta and its *guṇḍās*, beggars, and ruffians, still, because he was so pure and childlike, he was sometimes surprised to see that his ISKCON boys were also like that. It was part of his learning to be in the West.

If you kept yourself humble before Śrīla Prabhupāda, even when he was seeing through to your corrupt core, and if you had faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and in Swamijī to help you get rid of those vices forever, then you qualified for initiation.

When the first initiation came on Janmāṣṭami, I hadn't been following for even two months. I passed it up, but then I felt sorry. The boys who were initiated seemed happy with their red beads, and I felt left out. I did not have a spiritual name. Soon afterward, I overheard someone say that there was going to be another initiation on Rādhāṣṭami.

Hayagrīva asked me, "Are you going to get initiated?"

I said, "I'd like to. I think I'm ready this time. What do I have to do?"

"You should ask Swamijī I guess, to see if it's all right with him."

So I went up and said, "Swamijī, I heard there's gonna be another initiation. I would like to be initiated."

Prabhupāda was calm about my request. He was never hasty. He took his time, weighing things deeply, and yet at the same time he seemed casual. He was more at home in New York City than I was, especially in his room, which had become an *āśrama.* When I went into his room, the room of the *guru,* which was kept so simple and spiritual, I was the self-conscious one and he was perfectly at ease. He was like a lotus sitting on the dirty waters of New York City, floating above it all. And he was all alone; there was no other devotee dressed in *dhotī* with Vaiṣṇava *tilaka*—just Prabhupāda, alone and chaste to the *parampara* and to his Guru Mahārāja. He was determined. And now some little success had come in starting ISKCON.

I said, "I would like to get initiated."

Prabhupāda replied, "You'll have to be a strict vegetarian."

I said, "I already am, Swamijī. I'm already a vegetarian."

"All right," he said.

The meeting was over almost as soon as it had begun. I like to claim that we all had access to Prabhupāda whenever we wanted, and that's true. But we always knew that we weren't his equals or

buddies. We did not want to waste his time. But to be able to go personally, even for a brief moment, and have him personally approve my initiation, was worth everything. So I was in and out of his room within a few minutes. He had accepted me!

Rūpānuga Prabhu tells a similar story about going up to see Swamijī and asking for initiation. He had a speech prepared in his mind and he kept rehearsing it, "My dear Swamijī, will you kindly accept me as your disciple and teach me about Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" But when he went up to Swamijī's room, he only said, "Swamijī, will you make me your disciple?"—and Prabhupāda said, "Yes." So Rūpānuga dropped the rest of his speech. He thought, "There's nothing else to say. He has accepted me."

All I can remember for sure about my initiation is that *I was initiated by Prabhupāda.* Everything else is a detail, although I'd love to be able to remember more of it someday. I do remember being in the room with him and that he chanted on my beads while I waited and watched. When he finished one round, he said, "Come forward" and I crawled forward.

Swamijī said, "Bow down." I did not do it until he said the words, "bow down." Then I gave myself to that act, and at his prompting I repeated line for line the Sanskrit words of his *pranam-mantra.*

Prabhupāda said, *"Namāḥ oṁ,"* and I repeated it, phrase for phrase. When he said the word *bhakti* and I repeated it, that had a special effect on me. I closed my eyes and felt myself plunging into *bhakti* by saying the word and by saying his name, Bhaktivedanta. The combination of bowing down,

reciting the sacred words, and trying to feel surrender brought a perceivable change.

I was initiated along with Bruce, Keith, and Chuck. This was the second initiation in ISKCON, and so all the boys who were first initiated were also in attendance. They sat around fingering their big red beads which were strung around their necks. It was a good time for them to chant *japa* and welcome us into the fold on Rādhārāṇī's appearance day. It was another festival, and Swamijī said he had plans for many festivals, marriages, initiations, and things that we couldn't even dream of. I knew I had done the right thing by getting initiated and that it was foolish to delay.

I had expected that he would give me a name that began with the letter "S." I was happy to be given *any* name as long as it was a real spiritual name, given by Swamijī. As far as we were concerned, all the names were similar—Hayagrīva, Kīrtanānanda, Rāya Rāma, Satsvarūpa. So mine was another one of those Sanskrit names just like the others. It had a good sound and shape to it. I did not know what it meant, but it was one of the spiritual names that Swamijī gave, and it was a real one. I was perfectly satisfied.

Some days later I asked, "What does Satsvarūpa mean?"

Swamijī said, "It is the inner form of reality." His definition was something that I would have to think about; it sounded like something mystical that would be revealed to me later.

Another time I walked into Prabhupāda's room when devotees were gathered. In an affectionate welcome he said, "Here is the truth personified."

He would often speak like that, playfully using his disciples' names. He would say, "Oh here is Jagadīśa, the Supreme Controller." Or, "You are Dāmodara, who is tied up with Mother Yaśodā's ropes." This second definition of Satsvarūpa was clearer, and I was flattered to think that I possessed the qualities of my name, rather than remembering that I was the servant of those qualities.

The morning after initiation, when I went to the storefront for Swamijī's class, some of the boys fumbled at first in trying to remember and pronounce my new name.

Hayagrīva said, "Do you have that typing done, Steve?—Oh, what is your name anyway?"

"Satsvarūpa dāsa."

"Satsvarūpa. Hmm. What does that mean?"

"I don't know. I'll have to ask Swamijī."

"Satsvarūpa!" And so they started to call me by my actual name. Things were different after initiation, and you wanted to feel that difference. Swamijī was there as before, but now you were his disciple.

******

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
1.4

Bow down before another memory;
offer my flame and incense here.

Prabhupāda lectured in the small temple room
in a residential house in Geneva.
He said that high-ranking persons,
when they commit wrongs,
get punished by the Yamadūtas.
He mentioned the GBC men.
We were buzzing after that class.

When the scholar Jean Herbert came to visit,
he said he spent 18 years
writing a book on Kṛṣṇa.
Prabhupāda said, "And still
you have made so many mistakes."

Prabhupāda came out of the house in Atlanta—
it was late winter—
wearing his long saffron coat.
Bustling and crowding,
we hurried into cars
to meet him in the park.

Prabhupāda, please draw us near,
give us a dispensation—
that even unsurrendered souls can come to you
and render some service.
Please don't throw us aside
in favor of your better men.

When we chant, when we read,
when we contribute to your mission,
when we think of you,
we are with you.

The main thing is—
you know me
& I'll never leave your shelter.
And this is true for everyone.
Why should I be jealous?
Just give me service that's fit for me,
what you'd like me to do.
And if someone asks,
I'll tell them what I know
of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

******

We Are Meant to Praise
1.5

> Persons who hear from a spiritual master with great labor and for a long time must hear from the mouths of pure devotees about the character and activities of pure devotees. Pure devotees always think within their hearts of the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, who awards His devotees liberation.
>
> —*Bhāg.* 3.13.4

Vedic literatures are filled with statements which strongly encourage hearing and remembering the activities of pure devotees. In his Bhaktivedanta purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Such pure devotees of the Lord are as glorious as the Lord; they are, in fact, recommended by the Lord as more worshipable than He Himself. Worship of the devotee is more potent than worship of the Lord" (*Bhāg.* 3.13.4 purport).

I found these quotes to be particularly applicable to *Prabhupāda Meditations*, but when I read further in the same purport, I became doubtful. Prabhupāda writes, "It is therefore the duty of the transcendental students to hear of pure devotees, as explained by similar devotees of the Lord, because one cannot explain about the Lord or His devotee unless one happens to be a pure devotee himself."

Does this mean I should not remember and glorify Śrīla Prabhupāda until I become a pure devotee? I don't think this is the intended meaning. But I should recognize that my own appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda is very limited. Only a pure devotee can fully understand the nature of pure Vaiṣṇavas, but if I follow the principles of prayer and glorification as given by the great *ācāryas*, then I too can raise my tiny voice in praise of my spiritual master. This affirmation was expressed by the "professional reciters" who were praising King Pṛthu:

> Although we are unable to glorify you adequately, we nonetheless have a transcendental taste to glorify your activities. We shall try to glorify you according to the instructions received from authoritative sages and scholars. Whatever we speak, however, is always inadequate and very insignificant.
>
> —*Bhāg.* 4.16.3

Discussion of the activities of *mahātmās* will help me to become a better devotee. When a young disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda's sent him an original poem, "Eight Verses In Praise of My Spiritual Master," Prabhupāda replied that it was "very nice

and thoughtful." He encouraged his disciple to continue praising the Vaiṣṇavas:

> May Kṛṣṇa bless you to improve more and more in writing the glories of our previous *ācāryas* and the Lord. Be engaged in glorifying the *parampara* system and your life will be glorified automatically thousands of times.
>
> —Letter August 14, 1971

The Supreme Lord and His liberated associates are beyond the estimation of even other great souls such as Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva. But it is our duty to pray, although we are inadequate, in order to purify ourselves. Prabhupāda writes, "As stated by Prahlāda Mahārāja, everyone should glorify the Lord according to his own ability. If we are serious and sincere devotees, the Lord will give us the intelligence to offer prayers properly" (*Bhāg.* 4.16.2 purport).

In teaching Sanātana Goswāmī the regulations of devotional service, Lord Caitanya also advised that when a disciple comes before the spiritual master, he should speak appropriate praises. So there's no question of "waiting until you become a pure devotee." We are meant to praise, to give thanks, to repeat the teachings of Prabhupāda and to please the devotees by remembrances of His Divine Grace.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
1.6

1969, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens
Passers-by stopped to hear as
Prabhupāda told of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana,
and he asked each disciple to stand and speak.
While the first devotee stood
I prepared my remarks
for when he would look my way, "Satsvarup."

He told the passers-by
we are attracted to country places
because our original home is Goloka Vṛndāvana.

Brahmānanda asked, "How is your health?"
Prabhupāda replied, "The windows are broken
but there is a light on inside."

A few weeks later, devotees went back
to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and they tried
to recapture the spirit of the first visit.
This time two of the girls were dressed as Rādhā
and Kṛṣṇa,
but without Prabhupāda, the whole thing
turned into *prākṛta-sahajīyā.*

What stories did he tell in the garden?
I can't recall now,
but while riding on a plane
or when someone is talking to me,
I'll recall what he said
and what it was like
to stand up
under the gaze of Prabhupāda
and say what Kṛṣṇa consciousness
means to me.

❀❀❀❀❀

Remembering the Fool
1.7

In my memoirs of Prabhupāda, I usually describe myself as a fool, and I rub it in. But some readers may doubt that this is really how I feel. They may think that I'm just presenting the image of a fool without thinking it out carefully. They may think I'm working like this: In order to present my spiritual master as superior, I make myself the dupe, just like in the Punch & Judy puppet shows, where one puppet is held up and the other puppet hits him on the head—and everyone laughs. The fact is, I am not running a puppet show. The descriptions of myself are accurate, and according to *śāstra,* the disciple is always a fool before the spiritual master.

A critical reader might find an even more insidious motive at work in my memoirs. My playing the fool may be an attempt to ingratiate myself with the reader and to upstage Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thus I try to become the more popular person on the page by my honesty in confession. Prabhupāda is always right and superior, but I am more human and likable. But honestly, I was always foolish, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was consistently a seer of the truth. He was a genuine spiritual master *and my well-wisher. That's* why I look up to him—as a truly superior and lovable person.

If unconsciously I have been trying to attract the readers to myself as lovable in contrast to a heavy *guru,* then let me expose it here once and for all—as foolishness.

Readers familiar with the Vedic conclusions will not doubt that I have presented the proper relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master. I do not claim the humility of a Rūpa Gosvāmī, but at least it is correct for me to follow in his footsteps and present myself as lowborn and subject to many mistakes when I try to serve the pure devotee. I fit the bill in every way of the fallen disciple. And Śrīla Prabhupāda fits the bill of the spiritual master. So no one should think I am creating a mock show for literary or personal effects.

My memories are a way to express my love for Prabhupāda and to take my natural position as his disciple. The difference between Prabhupāda and me is so vast that it's not surprising all my stories come out with myself in error. When I tell the memories, it gives me a chance to see more deeply and to admit to more failings than I was able to admit previously. The "new lights" that occur to me when I remember Prabhupāda make me more aware how I did not grasp what he was saying at the time. And thus I see better how foolish I was, how defensive and unsurrendered. I have every right to come to these conclusions. I *like* being a fool before the spiritual master. It's *parampara*, accurate, and good for the heart.

If at the time I was with Prabhupāda I did not feel foolish, and in fact felt rebellious, I should admit that also. I may also admit to any doubts I had at the time. One doesn't have to be afraid that in order to present Prabhupāda in a favorable way, you have to tell dogmatic stories or falsify. In my case, it comes out naturally that I did many foolish things.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
1.8

Prabhupāda and Brahmānanda
Prabhupāda and TKG,
Prabhupāda and Yamunā, Govinda dāsī . . .
Which is your favorite story?

Govinda dāsī peeking into his room when
he's alone, thinking, "Who is he?
No one actually knows how great he is!"
Yamunā hearing Prabhupāda's *bhajanas* with
harmonium
at John Lennon's estate;
TKG talking mind-to-mind, how to manage
the great and troublesome ISKCON:
"Prabhupāda I see it like this,
but what do you want?"
Brahmānanda, recipient of more
Prabhupāda letters than anyone;
Hari-sauri, who loved to hear him
and who had enough sense and devotion to keep
a diary;
Śruti-kirti, who moved with ease
as a servant likable to his master.
These are only a few, out of thousands.

Together we make a picture of him,
a collage of many Prabhupādas,
and yet he is one.
He came alone and left alone,
and taught us how
to always be with Kṛṣṇa.

*****

Flying with Prabhupāda
1.9

On a 1974 flight from Germany to Australia, I was Prabhupāda's only traveling companion. I took advantage of being beside Śrīla Prabhupāda to remind him that Brahmānanda Mahārāja would become his traveling secretary and replace me. Brahmānanda had confirmed his desire to be with Prabhupāda, but he was not certain if he could get free from his duties in Africa.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," I said, "when Brahmānanda comes, probably in America, then he can replace me and I can start the library party."

Prabhupāda agreed.

Then I said, "But in case he doesn't come, then some other arrangement can be made? Because you said that I could go to start the library party."

This was the kind of remark you'd expect a pushy son to make to his father, when he tries to get something from his dad. The son says, "Dad, remember you said that in a few months you were going to give me the money to buy my own car? Well, don't forget, Dad!"

Prabhupāda replied shortly and softly, "Yes."

We had *prasādam* packed with us and I took it out and served him. As Prabhupāda began to eat, he turned to me and said, "You eat also." "No Prabhupāda, I'll wait until you are finished." He did not insist, either that I eat or wait. But I felt like a nonsense chewing in front of my spiritual master. That's why being a servant of the pure devotee was

so intense; if one had any desire for his own private "space," it would chafe the false ego.

During the flight, Śrīla Prabhupāda opened one of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* volumes. He read for over an hour and then placed it back in the pocket in front of him. He was mostly quiet but once, while looking out at the silver wing he said, "It took so much intelligence to build a plane like this, so how can they say there is no God?" If a plane flies in the sky by human ingenuity, then how can we say that the planets, sky, clouds and the whole cosmic arrangement has no brain behind it? Prabhupāda's observation struck me as wonderful. It was simple but solid. Here you were riding with that person whose task it was to glorify God to the whole world, and even in his quiet moment he had a Kṛṣṇa conscious thought and shared it with you. I was grateful and felt renewed strength.

We stopped at two in the morning to change planes in Singapore. As we sat in the waiting lounge, it seemed to me that we were in a very strange place at an eerie hour. I was tired but dutifully thinking of whatever was best to accommodate Śrīla Prabhupāda. I kept checking our tickets and checking my watch, hoping that everything would go all right. Prabhupāda was mostly silent, but when a little child passed with a toy on wheels, Prabhupāda said, "I remember being that young. I also had toys like that." Then he said, "I once scraped my knee."

When we ended our journey, touching ground in Melbourne, Prabhupāda said, "When we took off in Germany there was all green, and now here it's also green. So why do they say that we cannot travel to the spiritual world, and that there will be no life

there just as there is here?" He said it simply, but I took it as unforgettable nectar.

After his stay in Australia, I again accompanied Prabhupāda, along with Vaikuṇṭhanātha dāsa, on a jet to Hawaii. The plane stopped briefly at Fiji, and Prabhupāda decided to get off along with Vaikuṇṭhanātha, to get relief from the confinement. I stayed on the plane with our belongings. A half hour later, when passengers started returning to the plane, I saw Prabhupāda come on, and he was smiling. Vaikuṇṭhanātha was also glowing, and he carried a large bag. Although we hadn't given any advance notice, some devotees knew of Prabhupāda's Fiji stop, and they had come with *prasādam* to give to him at the airport.

But the reason Prabhupāda was smiling was because he had just been preaching. He told me some of it, and Vaikuṇṭhanātha did also. Several people were there, and Prabhupāda had engaged in conversation with them during his whole transit break, urging them to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What impressed me about this was how Prabhupāda had become so enlivened by the opportunity to glorify Kṛṣṇa that he was smiling without any self-consciousness. He hadn't expected to be greeted like that when he had gotten off for a walk, but it turned into a very nice time.

I don't mean to say that Prabhupāda was depressed or forgetful of Kṛṣṇa, but he did tend to be withdrawn during the airplane trips. He did not feel at home with the *karmīs* and their meat-eating and smoking. He was not like a businessman, who has a few drinks and then starts talking loudly or does a lot of office work in flight. Prabhupāda, at least when I saw him, was mostly quiet, just wait-

ing with infinite patience to get to the next place for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But when an unexpected preaching opportunity came at the Fiji airport, he was smiling as he returned to the plane.

When our plane arrived in San Francisco, a very large group of devotees was waiting—it was just a couple of days before Ratha-yātrā. The stewardess made an announcement to the passengers that there was a big crowd in the terminal, and if anyone wished to avoid it, they could take a special exit as soon as they got off the plane. I could guess that the "congestion" she spoke of was actually Prabhupāda's devotees waiting to welcome him. What she should have said was, "Ladies and gentlemen, we are very honored on this flight to have the presence of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the Founder-*Ācārya* of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He has sanctified our flight, and now many of his devotees are gathered in the airport. So let us allow His Divine Grace to exit first."

As soon as we entered the airport, it was a blissful rush of *kīrtana,* smiling faces, and much shoving to get near Prabhupāda. I got lost in the shuffle and had to catch up later.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
1.10

Walk With Him

We walked with you.
"This isn't a park, it's a jungle," you said.
We walked with you and you said,
"The propaganda of the World Health Organization,
that girls shouldn't get pregnant until they're 20,
is bogus, based on sense gratification."
We talked with you and tried to avoid the wet
ground.
Your pace was quick with a cane.
It was your daily exercise.
Sometimes you were quiet.
You were always giving us Kṛṣṇa.

Your Guru Mahārāja used the word "rascals,"
and, "Sometimes I wondered
why he was so strong to denounce them."
But now, you said, you could see
how the rascals eat up a nation's people
with taxes and guns, kill animals,
teach animal life for humans,
and drive them to hell.
Even in India they won't teach *Bhagavad-gītā,*
or they teach it minus Kṛṣṇa:
"There was never a person Kṛṣṇa.
The name Kṛṣṇa means crow . . . "
Simply rascals. *Mūḍhās,*
all fools and rascals.

Once I was walking behind him,
when Bhagavān dāsa came beside me and said,
"Look at the way Prabhupāda moves his left hand."
I watched Prabhupāda extend his pinky,
and swing his hand backward,
and I was glad B. dāsa had said
such a little, personal thing—
which took careful noting—
about our spiritual master.

He wore canvas, rubber-soled shoes,
anything his disciples would buy him.
He was not interested in shoes,
or newspapers or TV or governments.
All he cared for was Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa consciousness,
because "everything is Kṛṣṇa."

Passing golfers he said, "We are trying to save
every moment of our time for Kṛṣṇa,
and they're inventing ways to waste time."
To passers-by, "Good morning!"
When two tape recorders were put in front of his face
he said, "Why a dozen recorders? One is enough."

Sometimes he would be silent for 20 minutes,
and I'd think, "He won't talk
for the whole walk this morning."
But then he would start speaking
what he had written in the morning for the *Bhāgavatam*
or he'd ask, "What is that monument?"
He'd break the silence just as I'm trying to do now.

Sooner or later I knew he'd speak,
maybe on the way back
with only 10 minutes left to go on the walk.
Even in 10 minutes he can say so much!

He wants us to go with him, he doesn't say
"I want to be alone today, you stay behind."
I am walking with him,
and he's soothing my worries,
preparing me for what I must do.
I can see Kṛṣṇa now
as sure as the light of the morning sky,
and I don't want to stop.

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Alone With Prabhupāda
1.11

Moments alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda were rare, and I cherished them. Sometimes I daydreamed that I might always remain alone with him, but I would soon be awakened to the reality that Prabhupāda was meant for everyone. If it came about that Prabhupāda was alone with a particular devotee for some time, he accepted that, but when other devotees came into his association, he showed he was not attached to being with one over the other. If you began to think that you had a special relationship with Prabhupāda and that maybe Prabhupāda liked to be with you alone, that feeling would be shattered—as it was for me when our quiet air flight ended on arrival into San Francisco, where hundreds of people loved him and wanted

his attention, and where he responded fully to them. After all, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not meant to spend all his time flying alone in a plane with one servant. When he met his many devotees, he moved right into their center and exchanged with as many of them as possible.

It was interesting to see how Prabhupāda responded to mass worship, either at the airport, or in the temple or at a festival. He liked it. Seeing many devotees surrounding him meant that the preaching was alive and that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was vital. It meant that Kṛṣṇa was being glorified. It meant that *kīrtana* was being conducted with great enthusiasm and that Prabhupāda would be able to speak to many people about Kṛṣṇa. On occasions like that, Prabhupāda could think, "I am fulfilling my Guru Mahārāja's order. Look at all these devotees who have changed from hippies into happies!"

An envious person would misunderstand and think. "Oh, this man is being worshiped and that's what he likes." But Prabhupāda was surcharged with a different emotion. He rose to these occasions and became very blissful with waves of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was a far cry from the days when no one cared for him. He also saw it as suitable that Kṛṣṇa's representative was well received.

The servant's role would then change radically from being the sole companion of Prabhupāda sitting in the Singapore airport to suddenly being a menial who had to fight to keep up with Prabhupāda and who had to make many arrangements to see that things went smoothly. The servant had to collect the gifts that Prabhupāda was given, and

carry them in a big heap, and try to get in the car with him. Both modes of service—alone and in mass worship—were bliss, but they were quite different. I was not able to make the changes so gracefully, but Prabhupāda moved smoothly from one thing to another with uninterrupted, unmotivated service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

It's not wrong to think of Śrīla Prabhupāda in moods that appeal to us. Since I tend to be quiet, I liked to see Prabhupāda when he was like that. I liked to see him alone translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I would even advocate to other devotees that Prabhupāda should be "allowed" to do this. I said, "It's good that Prabhupāda is translating so much. We should encourage him. It's even better that he does this than to give a lecture. He is able to stay alone and get a lot of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* done." It was true that I also wanted to be with him when he was alone. But I was also happy, even if I was not with him, if I knew that a simple servitor was there, someone I was not jealous of, and that Prabhupāda was peaceful and producing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Many devotees received great personal satisfaction just knowing that Prabhupāda was producing his purports. It eased the pain of my envy to think that he was doing something from which everyone would benefit, and not that only a few people would monopolize his attention.

Although Prabhupāda remained alone on a daily basis, his main service was to be the *paramahaṁsa ghoṣṭyānandi*, a pure devotee surrounded by many followers whom he trained in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His own spiritual master criticized Vaiṣṇavas who go to a secluded place to gain a reputation as a great

chanter of the holy names. But occasionally Prabhupāda expressed an inclination for being alone in order to work at translating the scriptures. He became disturbed when many letters came in from devotees quarreling with one another. Sometimes a disciple would travel thousands of miles to come to Prabhupāda just to criticize a God-brother. This exasperated Prabhupāda and sometimes interrupted his composition of purports.

One time in Bombay, when there was a rash of letters from devotees complaining against one another, Prabhupāda said that he would like to go somewhere "where I won't see anyone's face." That was a surprising statement, but I liked to hear it. And since I was supposed to be his secretary, I began to think of how to carry out his desire. At the same time, he received an invitation to take a European tour, and he immediately accepted it.

Before the European invitation came, I had tried to suggest places to Prabhupāda where he might be alone. But I couldn't think of a place that was secluded enough. I suggested Hawaii, but he said, "Even if I go there, the letters will come." So where was that place where he could go and not see anyone's face? I thought, "Wow, this is really something! How can I accommodate his desire?" But when the European invitation came, it changed all that.

"Prabhupāda," I said, "you said that you are going to go to Europe. But the other day you said you wanted to go somewhere where you wouldn't see anyone's face."

Prabhupāda laughed and said, "I don't think I can do that in this lifetime."

Prabhupāda liked to be with devotees. If he had wanted to be alone, he could have stayed in Vṛndāvana and never come to the West—and we would all be rotting in hell.

When occasionally Prabhupāda did express desires to be more apart from the mainstream of activity, it seemed to be only a kind of wishful thinking, because the demands of his disciples were unrelenting. One time in Hawaii, when Prabhupāda was writing prolifically, he asked his secretary to send a letter out to all GBC men asking them to leave him alone so that he could spend his last days writing. He said, "I am an old man now and I have a tendency for philosophy and translating scriptures." And once he said, "I will just go somewhere and sit under a tree with one or two devotees to translate books, and in this way I'll be free of all contamination."

Prabhupāda never followed up his remarks about going alone. But I have to admit that I was sympathetic to it when he expressed it. I liked to think of him doing a lot of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But he knew best. He took great pleasure seeing his devotees enlivened by his presence, and he knew that it kept them alive. To spend more time in writing would have been a luxury for him, and one that he thought he couldn't afford because of the tendency for quarrel among the devotees. He stayed with his devotees as a defense against *māyā* and because he wanted to lead the joyful *saṅkīrtana* movement.

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More Reasons for Remembering Him
1.12

Prabhupāda has said that each person is ultimately alone, like a pilot in a one-man airplane. This will be made clear to us at the time of death when we have to "fly our own plane." Then we will want to surrender ourselves fully to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. Then there will be no relief in medicines, and the body itself, which seemed to be our friend and shelter, will not be able to sustain us. Worldly pleasures and possessions will lose their taste.

Now is the time to prepare. Later, our ability to think of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda will be impaired. Telling memories of Prabhupāda is for *now,* when we are looking for subject matter for hearing and reading, and when we are capable of it. A living being is so lively and curious that if he doesn't hear of the pure devotee, he will hear something else. So Prabhupāda meditation is a way to keep the mind fixed at the lotus feet of the pure devotee.

Some philosophers say that the best preparation for death is detachment toward things of this world. It is not possible for the eternal living being to kill all his attachments and desires, but one may transfer them from material things to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whatever we think of at the end of life will form our situation in the next life. And so it is said by Lord Kapiladeva:

> Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement for the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.
>
> —*Bhāg.* 3.25.20

In a similar statement, Lord Ṛṣabhadeva said: "One can attain the path of liberation from material bondage only by rendering service to highly advanced spiritual personalities" (*Bhāg.* 5.5.2).

Who are the *mahātmās* and *sādhus?* They are described in the *śāstras.*

> The *mahātmās* are equipoised. They do not see any difference between one living entity and another. They are very peaceful and engaged in devotional service. They are devoid of anger, and they work for the benefit of everyone. They do not behave in any abominable way. Such people are known as *mahātmās.*
>
> —*Bhāg.* 5.5.2

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda was certainly a *mahātmā* according to the standard description in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* Without the presence in one's own lifetime of such a *mahātmā,* the teachings of the *mahātmās* of previous *yugas* may remain distant to us. We are inclined to the here and now, and so we need to be picked up by a living example. Prabhupāda was the one bright and holy presence in our lives, and we cannot allow ourselves to forget him. Therefore, in addition to his books which lead us to Lord Kṛṣṇa

and Lord Caitanya, we want to gather memories of the activities and teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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Our Four Defects
1.13

When the pure devotee appears in the world, his movements are mistaken by ordinary people, just as the moon appears to be moving with the blowing clouds. We mistake the activities of the pure devotee because of our material vision.

According to the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, all conditioned souls have four defects: (1) the tendency to make mistakes, (2) the tendency to be in illusion, (3) the tendency to cheat, and (4) we have limited senses. These defects can be overcome by performance of devotional service. *Atāḥ śrī kṛṣṇa nāmādī*, one cannot see Kṛṣṇa with the blunt senses but by performing devotional service; beginning with the tongue (chanting the holy names and taking *prasādam*), Kṛṣṇa becomes revealed. Until then, we perceive the pure devotee through the four defects.

By the defect of illusion, one thinks "I am this body," although I am actually spirit soul. A person in the bodily consciousness thinks, "I am young, and Prabhupāda is an old man. I am American with a Western college education and some wealth, but this *guru* from India does not have these things, and so I am better than he is." This is unfortunate, because as soon as one thinks that he is superior to the spiritual master, then his spiritual life is ruined.

To even begin to perceive the pure devotee, one must have knowledge of the Absolute Truth. We have to understand, at least theoretically, that we are spirit souls and the material opulences are actually hindrances to our realization of that fact. In her prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Queen Kuntī declares that attachment to material beauty, wealth, education, and aristocratic birth are all disqualifications for spiritual life. Only one who is materially exhausted is eligible to call out sincerely to Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is on the liberated platform, and ultimately we have to become liberated to follow him. The more we obey what he says, the more we will be free of the defects.

I can give an example of an early misunderstanding I had of Śrīla Prabhupāda, based on my defective vision. On Janmāṣṭami Day 1966, Prabhupāda asked us to stay in the storefront all day. He was lecturing on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and as usual, he used the text of Dr. Radhakrishnan's edition. Swamijī said that he was preparing his own *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*; eventually he would have it printed and we would not have to read Dr. Radhakrishnan's book with its impersonalistic commentary.

Janakī asked, "Swamijī, could you read to us today from your *Bhagavad-gītā*?"

With my impure vision, I thought that Prabhupāda became a bit embarrassed at this request that he read his book. I thought that he wanted to read his manuscript, but like an ordinary person, he first pretended to be shy. If someone had asked me to read some of my writings, I would have first said, "Do you really want to hear this?" I would want the person to say, "Yes, we really want to hear it."

Prabhupāda got his manuscript from the apartment and read from it for several hours. I also failed to appreciate the reading because of inattention. But as the years have gone by, Prabhupāda has purified me at least a bit, and I think I know now what actually happened on that Janmāṣṭami occasion. I made the same type of mistake that people made when they saw Prabhupāda wearing two rings on his fingers and thought, "This man is enjoying the riches offered by his disciples." Prabhupāda was not in that mood, but they misunderstood. They also misunderstood why he was riding in an opulent car. At the New Delhi *paṇḍal*, some misunderstood why he became angry and then criticized him according to their stereotype that a *sādhu* should never get angry. The Vaiṣṇava, however, is always rightly situated and is not subject to the criticism and judgements of materialistic people.

I have dredged up this one faulty perception that I had of Prabhupāda, but for the most part, these misconceptions are better not even mentioned. If we do remember them, we can at least correct the mistake now so that we may have a clear conscience for worshiping the pure devotee. Hearing corrective accounts can be beneficial, and they also may contain valuable pieces of history.

I can understand better now why Prabhupāda responded as he did when he was requested to read his *Bhagavad-gītā* in 1966. He was not playing coy. He did have a desire to read the *Bhagavad-gītā* manuscript, and he responded, pure and simple, with pleasure, when asked to read it. The important thing to remember is that we were still reading Dr.

Radhakrishnan's book with its *māyāvāda* commentaries. Many of Prabhupāda's disciples had their own copy of the book, and we were reading from it as our scripture. Prabhupāda said it was all right for the time being, but he was trying to get his own book ready. He said as soon as he got his book published, we would have the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and hear what Kṛṣṇa says. Prabhupāda was not proud of his book—he did not even think of it as *his* book, but Kṛṣṇa's. He was eager to get it into our hands so that we could have a genuine *Bhagavad-gītā*. He wanted to give us Kṛṣṇa.

This is the true picture of Prabhupāda's position as an author: he saw himself as the mouthpiece of Kṛṣṇa. He was pleased that a disciple had enough sense to ask if there were some way we could *immediately* stop hearing from Dr. Radhakrishnan. Prabhupāda thought that his books could save the world, not because they were his creations, but because they were spoken by Kṛṣṇa. Naturally, he was eager to read the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* to his disciples. My misconception was due to defective vision (cheating, tendency to commit mistakes, illusion, and limited senses)—and was a projection of my own egotistic experience as an author who wanted to read "his" book.

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Prabhupāda in Dallas
1.14

Our business is to save ourselves by remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda at the time of death. All his

activities are worth remembering and passing on to others, at least for the next 10,000 years of Kali-yuga. It is distasteful to us if someone says, "Prabhupāda is just one *guru*, and eventually he'll be forgotten. There will be other *gurus* with other pastimes and the main thing is the message, not this person." We don't want to hear that. If we persist in being attached to Prabhupāda, it can't be inauspicious. Even if aspects of his pastimes were temporary scenes, nevertheless, being attached to Prabhupāda in a particular setting will not go in vain. Kṛṣṇa will recognize it, and He will transform our devotion into eternal benefit. Kṛṣṇa will say, "Because you were attached to Prabhupāda there, now you can be attached to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa *and* Prabhupāda." Somehow, Kṛṣṇa can make it all satisfactory. It's not wrong to remember our teacher, how he taught us, when he taught us, and who he was.

With that in mind, let's recall moments from his Dallas visits.

The acoustics in the large temple room were poor. It produced an unpleasant echo when Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke, because of the high ceiling and the cinder block walls. It was quite different than Los Angeles where the sound was perfect. But that was typical of Prabhupāda's coming to Dallas. It was not a sophisticated ISKCON place, and yet he kindly visited there, and he even said it was better than Los Angeles. It was his kindness that he accepted what we offered.

Prabhupāda's needs were simple enough, and there were also devotees in different parts of the country who were expert in knowing how to care for him. The devotees in Dallas phoned them and

found out exactly what to cook for his lunch, how to arrange his room, how to schedule his activities and so on. That's why wherever Prabhupāda visited in the world, he found a similar arrangement for his living.

When Prabhupāda visited Dallas the first time, it was very hot, and he said it was like Bengal. He did not wear a *kūrta* but just his *sannyāsa* top piece with a *dhotī*. He sat outside in the evening in a rocking chair. The devotees had built a garden there, trying to emulate the Los Angeles garden. It had grass sod, a water fountain that ran electrically, varieties of flowers, a bamboo fence—and it had all been created within 24 hours. What had been an oily patch of cement suddenly became a walled-in garden with a fountain, not exactly like Los Angeles, but not bad. It was bliss for the devotees of Dallas to make their utmost effort to accommodate Prabhupāda, even while they knew that they were unschooled in doing so. It humbled them to know that it was highly unusual for Prabhupāda to visit there.

There are many wonderful and stormy pastimes of Prabhupāda's first visit, especially regarding his installation of Rādhā-Kālachandjī. Some of those things are painful for me to remember right now, but other moments come to mind.

When Prabhupāda first walked into his quarters in Dallas, he went to the window and looked into the back yard. Adjoining the temple parking lot was a house, which at that time was used by Mohanānanda, the headmaster.

Prabhupāda asked, "Who lives there?"

"That's where Mohanānanda lives," I replied.

Prabhupāda gave a little laugh and said, "Headmaster." I don't know exactly what he was thinking, but it seemed that he was chuckling to himself that the headmaster had managed to get himself a house. It was a renunciate's chuckle, and Prabhupāda quickly added, "Yes, why not? He's a *gṛhastha,* and so he should have a house and he should be comfortable."

When Prabhupāda came to Dallas the second time, the devotees had small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, "Little Rādhā-Kālachandjī," and we asked Prabhupāda if we could install Them on the altar. He said, "You already have a Deity, Rādhā-Kālacandjī, so there is no question of installing any other Deities."

"Then Prabhupāda, " I said, "we shouldn't put these Deities on the altar?"

"Yes," he said, "you may put Them on the altar. But you don't install Them. There's only one installed Deity, Rādhā-Kālachandjī." That was an interesting piece of education, and it helped us to understand the Deity worship. So while Prabhupāda was there, the devotees took the opportunity to put the little Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the altar, and they also placed, for the first time, deities of Jagannātha, Subhadrā and Baladeva on a separate altar. Since Prabhupāda said there was to be no installation ceremony, They were all placed for the very first time on the altar during the normal time when the Deities are dressed, before "Greeting the Deities."

Prabhupāda entered the temple room to greet the Deities, and he stood in front. The temple hall was very long and down its entire length about a hundred children were lined up. Many of the children

were as young as four or five years old, and they were not very reverent in Prabhupāda's presence. They had heard many times that Prabhupāda was very special and that you are supposed to respect him and bow down before him, but their senses and minds were too wild to understand it. Although the adults knew how to put on a good appearance in Prabhupāda's presence, the children continued their usual fighting and throwing things up in the air just a few feet in front of His Divine Grace. The teachers tried their best to control the situation and Prabhupāda did not seem disturbed by it.

When the altar curtains began to open, Prabhupāda faced the Deities. Suddenly, a cheer came out from all the children—"YEEEA!" Prabhupāda turned with pleasure and looked at the enthusiastic mob of tots who had made the big roar. For the children it was a sensation—a new Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa! And new Jagannātha! "YEEEA!" Prabhupāda wanted spontaneous *bhakti* in his disciples, and there it was.

Although the audience for his *Bhāgavatam* class was mostly young children, Prabhupāda did not give a kiddie class. But at the end he asked the teachers, "Can the students recite *Bhagavad-gītā*?"

The teachers were expecting this, and they called on the students to chant the first 15 verses of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Led by Dvārakādhīśa and Ekendra, the children made a decent response, rattling off the opening *ślokas* of the first chapter, *dharma-kṣetre kurukṣetre . . .* "

The teachers were hopeful that it was pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda. But when the children finished,

Prabhupāda said, "Can any of you explain a verse?" Unfortunately, no one could say anything, not even a word. Either they did not know the meaning of the *Bhagavad-gītā* verses they had just chanted, or they were too frightened to speak.

"This is not good," said Prabhupāda. "You are reciting the Sanskrit just like parrots, but you don't know the meaning. The teachers should instruct them."

During Prabhupāda's first visit, he gave special attention to the *gurukula* teachers. They admitted that they were having difficulty in disciplining the children in the classroom. Prabhupāda said that he would personally demonstrate how to do it. When he heard how many teachers were on the faculty, he thought it was too many. He said the system in India was that one teacher could manage a class of fifty or more children, even if the children were of different ages and learning levels. The teacher would call children up to the desk one at a time and personally tutor them. While one child was being taught, the others would silently go on with their work at their desks. Prabhupāda said it was not a problem for one teacher to manage fifty or a hundred children in that way.

He sat down on the floor before a low desk in the classroom, while almost all the children in the entire school and all the adults crowded around to see. Prabhupāda called up young Dvārakādhīśa, took his hand, and led him in making Sanskrit letters on the page. Prabhupāda had asked for several long sticks, and the devotees supplied poles about six feet long. Prabhupāda handled these sticks and said that if any of the children were naughty he would hit

them. He had previously told the teachers that they should never actually hit children, but they could discipline them just by showing the stick or touching it. When Prabhupāda handled the sticks, the children began giggling, and the older devotees laughed with excitement.

Several of the men couldn't restrain themselves. They came forward, putting out their hands: "Please hit me Prabhupāda, please hit me!" Prabhupāda began smiling, and he gently hit a few hands with the sticks. What had begun as a lesson for the children turned out to be a "nectar session" for the adults.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
1.15

Soon I'll go with Baladeva up the hill,
past rows of pines where the bears roam
and where I saw an owl, midday, guarding her eggs.
Up the no-path, crushing tasseled weeds
as we walk—to the tent.
There we will sit and I'll recall.

I'm not one who can fall back into
the arms of the past—
can't see Prabhupāda in a live movie;
it's just not possible for me.
So I cross my legs, drink water if I like,
and chat and think.
"It's always good to spend an hour
remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda."
That's true; it feels good.

Just hear how Śrī Kṛṣṇa recalled in detail
His days in the *āśrama* of the *guru;*
"Remember how heavy the rain was,
like a flood? We held hands.
We were lost all night and greatly pained.
Our *gurudeva* found us in the morning.
And these were his words . . .
Do you remember, Sudāmā?"

Will a preacher find time
in quiet relaxed talk,
to remember Prabhupāda?
Will he find someone to listen?

Will the memories themselves
open like flowers,
responding because you care?
Will I see him
and cry out, "Prabhupāda?"
and not just in retrospect?

I've told you about it,
and now I have to go.
Prabhupāda is leaving for his walk
and I don't want to miss him.

July 18, 1990, Śaraṇāgati

❁❁❁❁❁

Vanished Scenes?
1.16

Sometimes when we remember Prabhupāda-*līlā*, a nagging little voice inside says, "The places and people you are describing have vanished with time. Are you remembering a reality or was it a fantasy? Is it all gone with the wind like a Beatles craze?"

I remember the first time I heard Prabhupāda express the idea that ISKCON might deteriorate. He had just given a lecture at the Bombay temple and was riding in the jeep that was taking him to his apartment. He said that time was very powerful and that ISKCON might also break down with time. I was startled to hear him say this, because in my naivete I had thought, "That's what happens to material things and to bogus movements in this world, but it could never happen to ISKCON." I had heard devotees and scholars express such opinions, but I had never heard Prabhupāda say anything like that. From then on, I understood that such a thing could possibly happen, although Prabhupāda did not like it, and he hoped it wouldn't happen.

On other occasions he warned devotees that they should not change what he was doing. He said if devotees quarreled, they could "dismantle the whole institution." He said he feared they might change the Deity worship after he left, and that they might lose enthusiasm or return to hippie ways. These statements were given as warnings.

When conducting *kīrtana* in the midst of many devotees, Prabhupāda would look very pleased, and sometimes he would look inward in a blissful way. But sometimes, at least from my perception, he

would look at us with a compassionate anxiety for our well-being. It was as if he was seeing how some things would go wrong in the future, and how devotees would leave.

It does seem, in one sense, that Prabhupāda has vanished, and many devotees who were present in the 1970s have also vanished, and also the scenes of some of his pastimes are gone. For example, at the time Prabhupāda visited Dallas, there were over a hundred children and many teachers. Now most of those children have grown up and decided not to fully practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Most of them are not living in ISKCON temples, and probably the majority of them do not strictly follow the *bhakti-yoga* principles. This was not what everyone expected to happen at the time when they were *gurukula* children, when Prabhupāda visited, gave them sweets, asked them to recite Sanskrit, and gave them his blessings. So it appears that the *gurukula* scene which Prabhupāda visited has vanished.

One reply to this is that whatever is done by anyone in devotional service never suffers loss or diminution. The *gurukula* children, no matter what they are doing now, reap the eternal benefit of the favorable service they did, including any little exchanges they had with Prabhupāda.

Another explanation is that Prabhupāda held everything together in a special way during his presence. The Supreme Lord holds all the planets of the universe together in His fist like dust, and similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda held together all persons, activities, and places of ISKCON when he was present. As Prabhupāda wrote, "The *ācārya,* the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, estab-

lishes religious principles, but when he disappears, things once again become disordered" (*Bhāg.* 4.28.48). But Prabhupāda writes further: "The perfect disciples of the *ācārya* try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instructions of the spiritual master." No one can stop the movements of time, including the deterioration of all material bodies and material elements, but sincere disciples will never abandon the lessons and orders given to them by their spiritual master.

We may admit that some of the scenes Prabhupāda participated in are gone. But whatever he did was glorious and was done against great odds in Kali-yuga. We can't expect everyone and everything to remain exactly in place as it was when Prabhupāda was here, but the evolution that has occurred still carries the impression of his presence. Prabhupāda's association is imprinted on the lives of those who served him, although some treasure it more than others.

Those who were not present for Prabhupāda's personal pastimes are able to hear about them, and they can connect with him even many years later. This is another good reason to remember things as they were, even though they may be vanished now. In the future, sincere seekers will read Prabhupāda's books and hear about Prabhupāda, and will want to bring him into their lives. They will say, "When Prabhupāda was here, he said he wanted this. Here is a lecture that he gave at that time, and he said that we should do this."

Some will say, "No, it is no longer possible. We tried that, but it did not work."

But others will reply, "All right, we can change some of the externals from those days. But let us do it as Prabhupāda wanted when he was here."

We should not think that because things have changed we were deceived by believing in the *līlā* of Prabhupāda. Obviously Prabhupāda was not deceiving anyone. But neither were we mistaken when we thought Prabhupāda's activities were permanent. The fact that Prabhupāda came and spoke is not lost in time. This point is also stated in the *Bible:* "All things will pass away, but my words will not."

Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged that time wears away all things. Even Kṛṣṇa's places of pastimes in this world have become covered over, leaving little trace of His presence. Rūpa Goswāmī expressed this in a cryptic message to his brother Sanātana in jail. Rūpa Gosvāmī's note stated, "Where is the Ayodhya of Raghupati? Where is the Mathurā of Kṛṣṇa?" His meaning was that everything in this world changes, but if you keep your mind fixed on that which is eternal, you will be steady. This is good advice to anyone in anxiety over the terrible but temporary situation of material prison life. According to Rūpa Gosvāmī, even the *dhāmas* within this world undergo change; therefore we should always meditate on the eternal essence of life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa's *dhāmas* are eternal, but it is a fact that the temples and holy places have been plundered or neglected. Devotees lament to see how quickly this deterioration is taking place in Vṛndāvana-*dhāma,* even on a yearly basis. However, in a higher spiritual sense, the *dhāmas* are

eternal. Prabhupāda's pastimes have a similar quality; we should not be alarmed or doubt their validity.

We may ask, "Where are all those men who were the leaders in ISKCON? Where are the buildings?" And similarly you may ask, "Where is Ayodhya? Where is Dvārakā, the city by the sea? Where is the Yadu dynasty? Where is the pious humankind whom Kṛṣṇa came to restore? Where are the Pāṇḍavas or their descendants?" Although the spiritual pastimes of the Lord may disappear from our vision, they continue to exist for those who have perfect vision. Time is not greater than Kṛṣṇa or Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. But because the material world is the kingdom of Māyā, even spiritual edifices will crumble. The inner spirit is carried on by the *paramparā* of living devotees.

Even in terms of perceivable objects, Prabhupāda's most important legacies are still flourishing. His books continue to be printed in new editions, and the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* goes on just as it was during his time. His *vāṇī*, and therefore his spirit, his presence, is alive as long as there are sincere devotees. The *vyāsāsana* he sat on may not be there anymore. Its upholstery has corroded or it is in somebody's basement or in a museum. But the chair is not as important as what he spoke from the *vyāsāsana*.

The recitation of Prabhupāda's pastimes, in words and books, is not subjected to destruction as long as it is carried on from generation to generation. We want to see and remember Prabhupāda just as he was in the 1970s. We want to think of that chair he sat on, and the ring he wore on his finger,

and how he moved his left hand when he walked, and how the *gurukula* children appeared like little angels and also like little rascals, and how he gave them all *sandeśa* while their mothers watched. Prabhupāda came to teach that *gurukula* education is important, and we want to remember it as he spoke it.

Viewed against the powerful forces of time, the devotees may seem like pathetic creatures vanquished by *kāla*. In fact we are very tiny, and we have a very limited conception of time. The time of the universe is beyond our calculation, and yet even the universe is created again and again. We say, "We want Prabhupāda in the period of 1966-77, and we do not want it taken away." In reply, Time laughs, "The period of 1966-77 is just a speck, it is almost nothing at all!" On that material level we may seem foolish, but we know that Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance had an eternal reality we can preserve. "True Vaiṣṇavas never die, but live in sound . . . "

Part Two

Mosquitoes of Envy
2.1

As we try to move deeply into Prabhupāda meditation, mosquitoes come and bite us. Some of the most bothersome ones are the mosquitoes of envy and jealousy.

Prabhupāda said that there is no envy in the spiritual world. There is a loving competition for pleasing Kṛṣṇa, but it is never malicious. When a *gopī* offers Kṛṣṇa a garland and He is pleased, another *gopī* thinks, "Now I shall make a garland that will be even nicer so that He'll be more pleased." The attempt to make a better garland is not done to the detriment of another devotee's offering to Kṛṣṇa. Rather one devotee's service inspires another's. Spiritual phenomena appear in the material world as a perverted reflection, and so envy is poisonous. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says that the most envious animal is the snake because it bites anyone who passes. Even the envious snake, however, can be charmed by *mantras*. But a human being is incurable once he becomes envious.

It is especially poisonous if envy bites us when we are serving and hearing the pure devotee. I don't want to remember all the envy that was running through my mind when I was near Prabhupāda, but I know it was there. Just to give an example, here is a scenario of envy toward a servitor of Prabhupāda:

Say I am in a temple and a *gṛhastha* couple comes forward with a garland for Prabhupāda. They approach him and say, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, this is for you." But I am thinking, "Look at this guy, he

doesn't even live in the temple. Look at the big flowers on that garland. I wonder where he got the money to pay for that garland? With the same money he could have bought some of Prabhupāda's books or given some money to our temple. He doesn't give any money to the temple, but when Prabhupāda comes he goes out and buys him a big garland. Look at the *kurta* he is wearing. What a flashy color, and silk! And look, his wife is here. Boy, he is so attached, living with a woman, and they've got a kid, a by-product. He doesn't even shave his head, and yet he's giving Prabhupāda a garland. Humpf! And Prabhupāda is smiling too. Humpf."

That's the meditation of an envious devotee. He could have been witnessing a tender scene between Prabhupāda and a servitor, but he did not see that, and now it is a moment lost forever.

Here is another scenario, which is more fact than fiction:

Some devotees have brought the latest *Saṅkīrtana Newsletter* to Prabhupāda, and they are reading the book scores to him. Prabhupāda says, "This book distribution is my life. I can keep living as long as I hear the book scores. Who is number 1?"

I reply, "Prabhupāda, Los Angeles temple was number 1 and the Rādha-Dāmodara party is number 2. Tripurāri Swami's party is number 3. His party did as much as the whole east coast of the U.S."

I feel obliged to give Prabhupāda the basic information, but I'm thinking, "Why does Prabhupāda want to hear these scores? I like it when he does something else instead. I hope this is over soon and

he talks about the philosophy. It is painful for me to hear all these big scores because I don't have a big score. I don't want to think that Prabhupāda only likes devotees who make big scores. I don't think he really pays attention to these scores. I think they make more out of this than it actually is. Now he is going to ask me to read off all the names of the book distributors."

Envy works in many ways, and it can continue even after Prabhupāda's disappearance. It also works its way into hearing Prabhupāda meditations. If the hearer becomes absorbed in fault-finding, then they cannot hear someone talking about Prabhupāda. He will think, "What is his trip? Are these true stories that he's telling? Why is he putting his own purport into it?" In this way one can cover over one's ability to hear. Granted, any devotee telling memories of Prabhupāda speaks in a limited way and with some imperfections, but why don't we hear and derive the nectar?

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
2.2

Before I fall asleep there's a jumble
of scenes I can't control, voices and faces,
and then I slide under.
The dreams run along
like movies with plots,
but they are not what I want.
Base desires and fears,
and I don't think of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.
Why can't I dream of him in nice combinations?
Why only rarely?

Trivikrama Swami told me his dream.
Prabhupāda was sitting on a bed,
  speaking to him humbly.
Prabhupāda said, "I would like to continue
to be your spiritual master,
if you would still like to be my disciple."
T. Swami replied, "Yes, Prabhupāda!
I do want to be your disciple."

So I ask the dreaming self,
"Why all the crazy stuff, lurid reruns?"
I know the unconscious has to pick up
all the glop from the past,
but isn't Prabhupāda at least as important
as lions, embraceable girls,
and the old story of being lost
with delays of the ferry boat?
Can't you give us a break?
Use it for Kṛṣṇa.

Dream-self, let me worship him,
reveal to me through symbols
why I shouldn't fear surrender;
if Prabhupāda wants to speak strong words,
why prevent him?
Give me the reality of his presence,
not a hodgepodge of persons, but the one
whom I actually follow, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

And beyond the dream-self,
Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa will reveal
comforting messages
to their confidential servants.

Guru Means Heavy
2.3

During a recent Kārttika season in Vṛndāvana, I walked up to my Godbrothers Bhūrijana and Gurukṛpa Prabhus, who were talking together. Bhūrijana told me that Gurukṛpa had just said that many devotees seemed to have a sentimental view of Prabhupāda: they worship him from a distance but don't know how heavy it was to actually be in his presence.

Gurukṛpa told of a time when he went to Mayapura and presented Prabhupāda with a check for $100,000. Prabhupāda accepted the check and said little. But a few minutes later he again saw Gurukrpa and began criticizing him for wearing a bright-colored orange cloth. According to Gurukṛpa, this cloth was "not as orange as some of the devotees wear today." But Prabhupāda said, "Why are you wearing this? This is Māyāvādī dress. Don't do this. This is not good." Bhūrijana then told a story about Prabhupāda's heaviness, and I knew one too.

In Sanskrit, the word *guru* means heavy. He is heavy with knowledge, and he can also be stern with disciples in order to cut them from their attachments to *māyā*. Lord Caitanya sometimes demonstrated the feature of sternness in dealing with His personal followers. When He returned from His South Indian tour, Lord Caitanya called all His devotees together and brought His servant Kṛṣṇa dāsa into their presence. Kṛṣṇa dāsa had fallen down with a gypsy woman in South India, and Lord Caitanya had had to personally save him. So in the presence of the devotees Lord Caitanya

said, "Just see this Kṛṣṇa dāsa and judge for yourself. He fell down with a *bhaṭṭahari* woman and I had to save him. I don't want to associate with him anymore. He can go where he wants." Prabhupāda was never as stern as that, but he could put you on the spot.

We also hear that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was so strong that his disciples were afraid to go in to see him. He was called *siṁha-guru*. Our Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he was not afraid of his Guru Mahārāja but met with him in affectionate exchanges. His *guru* was heavy with some but not with all. And so it is said that the Vaiṣṇava can be as hard as a thunderbolt or as soft as a rose.

If you were particularly sensitive to being reprimanded, it could be hard for you. Prabhupāda reserved the right to be annoyed with you if he wanted. Sometimes it might appear to the servant that Prabhupāda criticized even when there was no actual wrong. Prabhupāda might ask you for a reference from the *Bhagavad-gītā* to read to a guest. But by the time you got it and started to read aloud, he decided he did not want it and cut you off. Your position was not to protest.

Prabhupāda might ask, "Bring me that collection of photos of the Ratha-yātrā in Los Angeles. I want to show this man."

You replied, "We don't have that collection anymore, Prabhupāda. You gave it to the temple president in Chicago to keep."

But Prabhupāda might say, "What do you mean? I want to see it now. Why did you leave it behind?"

At a moment like that, Prabhupāda did not want to hear you defend yourself. You had to roll with

the punch. Prabhupāda was not a heavy-handed person, never brutal in any way. But he had so much power that just by a little expression he could devastate you.

Prabhupāda was expert in going to the heart of every issue. You might have your own explanation as to why you did something wrong, but Prabhupāda, by logical argument, would make you accept his understanding of what had happened. He wanted his disciples to think sharply, and he trained them by the method of tearing apart their defenses.

Prabhupāda would stress things that we Westerners could not understand as important. Cleanliness, for example. He would insist, until you realized that your little act of uncleanliness was a serious defect. We might not grasp the seriousness of what Prabhupāda was saying, but all we knew was that it was the heaviest thing in the world because it was what Prabhupāda wanted, and we weren't pleasing him.

The first time I went to India in 1973, I saw him angry on a few occasions. When I arrived, I heard that he had been angry with a devotee who at that time was the GBC visiting secretary just before I came. This secretary had sent a telegram to me in Dallas telling me to come. Although it was Prabhupāda who had said that I should be called for, Jagadīśa had somehow "jumped the gun" in sending me the telegram. Prabhupāda had not given his final direction but had expressed a preliminary idea. While I was present, I also saw him give merciful attention to his Sanskrit editor, Pradyumna. One of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers had

delivered a slight to Prabhupāda in breaking an invitation to their *māth*. Soon after that, Pradyumna went to the same Godbrother who had delivered the slight and inquired from him on matters of Sanskrit. When Prabhupāda heard this he said, "You are such a fool! This person has slighted your spiritual master, and yet you go to him for advice. You may want to become a big Sanskrit *paṇḍita*, but . . . " Prabhupāda went on and on about that one for hours, teaching an important instruction.

Sometimes the error that a servant had committed was not obvious, and Prabhupāda wanted to make sure that you knew exactly what you had done wrong. He sent me from Māyāpura to Calcutta on bank business, but the bank teller would not comply with my request on Prabhupāda's behalf. I tried to convince him, but he refused. When I came back, Prabhupāda was angry with me. In my emotional confusion, all I knew was that I had done something wrong, but Prabhupāda wanted me to see it clearly. He said, "When he would not give you what you asked for, you should have insisted that he put in writing the reasons for his refusal. Then we could have used this in going to his authority. But now we have nothing. You have come back with nothing." Unless I knew exactly what I had done wrong, how could I benefit fully from his instruction?

When Prabhupāda appeared to remain displeased with someone, his disciples would try to encourage the devotee who had been reprimanded. On several occasions, Lord Caitanya's devotees also gave merciful encouragement to someone who had

been reprimanded by the Lord. One devotee came to see Prabhupāda in Māyāpura after committing repeated falldowns in illicit sex. When Prabhupāda was stern with him, the devotee said, "Please give me your mercy, Prabhupāda." That remark made Prabhupāda even angrier and he said, "No! You are so expert, you have outdone my mercy. I cannot give you any more mercy." I had never heard Prabhupāda say anything like that. And at least for the period of that interview, he did not change his mood.

Some of us spoke with that devotee and tried to sort it out. Someone said, "Prabhupāda says there's no mercy, but I'm sure there's a way you can get his mercy again. What you have to do is improve your situation. Get out of this fallen condition." Prabhupāda liked to hear of his disciples helping each other to follow the instructions of the spiritual master.

Prabhupāda sometimes apologized for his nature. Once he said, "I have a very demanding nature. I was always like that, even as a young man. You know how I am. If lunch is even a little bit late, I become annoyed." He explained it as if it were a human weakness. We did not take it that way—we knew that he was transcendental and that he had the right to instruct us by anger. And yet it was nice hearing him say that.

Now as we live in separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is a solace to remember even the so-called harsh moments. Anything in connection with Prabhupāda is memorable and worshipable. One is proud to recall, "I was reprimanded by Prabhupāda."

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
2.4

At a big festival. He drives up in a car.
You are allowed to go close with your *daṇḍa.*
This time he's going to speak at an outdoor
pavilion
to hundreds of guests and disciples.
Focus on hearing.

My notes:
"Prabhupāda said tigers don't go to the dentist.
He explained the word *bhagavān,* six opulences.
He said people may misunderstand why
the *guru* is being worshiped—
he's the viceroy for the king (Kṛṣṇa).
He said *bhagavata-dharma* discourses should be held
by his disciples all over the world.
(Chant, dance, and when you are tired,
take *prasādam*)
Kṛṣṇa is God.
Prabhupāda requests everyone
to "chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with us."

Now Prabhupāda is leaving, going down the hill.
The devotees are running!
Run and stand somewhere
so you can see him pass!
I'm one in thousands,
but I think I understand it.
Besides, I had my personal *darśana.*
He told me to travel in a bus,
hold *bhagavata-dharma* discourses.

The yellow Volkswagen which holds him
disappears in a trail of dust.
I'm alone with his followers.
But Kṛṣṇa is in my heart,
and Prabhupāda will lecture tomorrow.

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On Call
2.5

When Prabhupāda called for you, you dropped whatever you were doing and went at once. One time, during Prabhupāda's visit to Atlanta, he wanted to see the GBC men and *sannyāsīs*. His servant came into the temple room just as the *maṅgala-ārati* was beginning. Half a dozen men immediately left the temple room on his call. It was a thrill to be included and to go along with devotees like Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, Svarūpa Dāmodara Prabhu, Rūpānuga Prabhu, and others. The early hour of the day was also exciting, and the fact that Prabhupāda could pull us out of *maṅgala-ārati* because he wanted to see us. We left the temple building in the dark and walked to the building where Prabhupāda was staying.

Prabhupāda was sitting behind his low desk with only a small light on. On that occasion, it was mostly Svarūpa Dāmodara whom he wanted to see, but he wanted the others to be present. Prabhupāda said, "We must stop this propaganda of Darwin's theory, that life comes from matter." He wanted to discuss and defeat the theories of Darwinian evolu-

tion, chemical evolution, and related theories. So Prabhupāda started asking, "What do the rascals say?"

The fact that Prabhupāda called devotees together to discuss "life comes from life" made the issue very important. It gave you a glimpse into his mind: he had been seriously deliberating on this, and so he called in his men for action. It was also thrilling that Prabhupāda had called us together at 4:30 A.M. in order to discuss *philosophy*. When government leaders call an urgent meeting at an unusual hour of the day, it has to do with something like threat of war. In cases like that, they can't wait until business hours. But who calls his men together in pre-dawn in order to discuss philosophy and thoughts of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

When he called you, you became intensely curious, "What is it, Prabhupāda?"

"I am thinking . . . " Prabhupāda said. And then you would hear why he had called you. It was never a disappointment. You focused your attention on whatever he called you for. It was important, and that is why he called you.

When we left Prabhupāda's room, the devotees approached us, "What did Prabhupāda call you in about?" In Atlanta, I was with the library party, and I loved to repeat everything to them. We sat as a group, and I read to them from notes that I had taken for that purpose.

All devotees knew what it was like to be "on call" 24 hours a day, subject to a direct order from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda or his direct secretary might phone and say, "Come immediately to Los Angeles." Or it could come in a telegram, "Come to

India." Or a letter: "He wants the GBC men to take *sannyāsa*." No matter how established you were in a particular place or activity, you knew that you were like a fireman, ready to go at the clanging of the bell—*Prabhupāda is calling. He wants you to come immediately.*

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Respectful in His Presence
2.6

We know what it means to be respectful to an officer or superior, but to be like that with someone at all times and in all situations is rare. In fact, it should be reserved for the *guru.*

Although you are an individual with free will, you allow Prabhupāda to tell you what to do and to define reality—to tell you when you are right or wrong. In his presence you feel more peace than you do with any other person, but in a certain sense you never relax with him. You never think that his presence is ordinary. In addition to respect, you always feel expectation. The relationship was always one of servant to master, but at the same time it was filled with personal emotion; you desire more than anything that he reciprocate with you.

On Śrīla Prabhupāda's first visit to Dallas, an incident occurred that brings out some of these themes. Prabhupāda arrived at the temple, gave a short lecture from the *vyāsāsana,* and bowed before the altar painting of Pañca-tattva. He then walked into the small courtyard between the two buildings, on his way to his room. Noticing the trunk of a big

tree, he asked, "What is this?" I replied that it was the remains of a tree which had recently blown over during a windstorm. One of the devotees told Prabhupāda, "It's dead." Prabhupāda said, "It's not dead. Look!" He pointed to a small green twig growing out from the trunk.

As soon as Prabhupāda stopped to look at this tree, a crowd of devotees and children gathered around him, watching his every expression. Prabhupāda's eyes showed anger and his voice too. "Why have you done this?" he asked me, since I was the temple president. I tried to explain that the wind had blown the tree over and it remained leaning on the building in a dangerous condition.

"No," Prabhupāda said. "You should not have done it. It would have been all right to leave it." I immediately accepted that I had made a mistake, but at the same time I couldn't conceive how I could have avoided cutting down the tree. It was a large tree, and after it had fallen over, it was leaning heavily against the building. At first I hadn't tried to cut the tree, but devotees had approached me with their concern. They said, "This is very dangerous. The children eat in the room where the tree is leaning. It might collapse the whole wall and someone will be hurt." They convinced me, and so several men with power saws climbed up the tree, and after several days of work they dismantled it branch by branch. But Prabhupāda said that it was an act of unnecessary violence.

I don't mind going down in history as being demoniac for cutting that tree, since that's how Prabhupāda saw it. I liked the idea that Prabhupāda said it should *not* be cut down. Now I can quote his

statement in similar instances. We should make all efforts to spare trees and not cut them down whimsically just to suit our needs. I want to rectify for that act of unnecessary violence to the tree in Dallas. It doesn't seem to matter now whether the tree really had to be cut down. The external situation is not as important as the instruction that Prabhupāda wanted to give. And in order to receive that instruction a disciple has to be respectful.

If you were respectful, you absorbed whatever reprimand he gave you. Later you could ask him more about the implications of your mistake. After the reprimand for the tree in Dallas, I approached Prabhupāda in a quieter mood, when he was alone.

I asked, "The cutting down of that tree—was that an offense?"

Prabhupāda replied, "It was not offensive. It was ignorance."

Sometimes when guests would ask Prabhupāda questions, they would think that he did not address their inquiry. But Prabhupāda's followers would tell them, "Listen to what Prabhupāda said. He answered a more important question for you. Try to hear him. Prabhupāda's answers can get you out of all *māyā*."

If the person was a challenger, he would stick to the external situation: "He did not answer what I said." It was not improper to repeat or rephrase a question to make sure Prabhupāda understood it, but ultimately, Prabhupāda had his own reasons why he did or did not address certain issues.

Prabhupāda's disciples all felt a lot of affection for him, but they always expressed it through respectful behavior. We hardly ever dared to give our opin-

ions. But sometimes while serving Prabhupāda as secretary, it was your service to be sure that Prabhupāda knew exactly what you were saying, and that you also understood him precisely. This put a strain on the formal relationship of respect, but it rarely impaired it.

I would say, "Prabhupāda, here's a letter from the GBC man for Africa. He wants to know what he should do in a particular case." If Prabhupāda's reply did not exactly address what you were saying, you couldn't be shy and let it go. The GBC man of Africa was waiting for Prabhupāda's reply, and he wanted to know exactly what to do. He also expected that his point of view had been made very clear to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although I was timid, I had to restate the person's questions and clarify them until I was satisfied that Prabhupāda knew their precise points. If Prabhupāda did not seem to respond to their actual point, I would say, "But Prabhupāda, what he's saying is . . . "—until I was sure that Prabhupāda had focused on what the person was saying and that the person would be satisfied that Prabhupāda had heard it. That was not always easy, but it was part of your work, and Prabhupāda did not think it was offensive to press him. Still, he reserved the right to end the discussion when *he* was satisfied.

A servant is afraid when he does something wrong and he has to face a reprimand from his master. It was not so much fear of punishment from Prabhupāda, as the personal anxiety of doing wrong in service of the pure devotee and the fear of displeasing him. One evening when I returned from the Bombay temple with Prabhupāda, I dis-

covered that I had lost his spectacles case. It was my job to carry it at all times and to hand Prabhupāda his glasses when he needed them to read. This case was tan and had a figure of Lord Jagannatha sewn on its cover. When I lost it I became frantic. Prabhupāda did not know that it was misplaced, but when he asked for it, what was I going to do? I excused myself from his apartment and went down to trace my steps back to the temple. Luckily I found it on the ground, but by the time I got back to his apartment, it had again slipped out of my hands! I was in total anxiety and yet no one else knew what was happening. It was like a nightmare: "How could this happen? I just had it! Now it's gone again!" I had no alternative but to go out of the apartment and again trace my steps. I thought I was losing my mind. Fortunately, I found it for the second time.

When I returned to Prabhupāda's room, I felt great relief. He looked up mildly, perhaps wondering why I was coming in and out of the apartment so often. I did not say anything about it to Prabhupāda, but when I went to the back room one of my Godbrothers was there and asked, "What are you so happy about?"

I replied, "I just found something that I lost of Prabhupāda's."

The relationship was not always so tense. There were nectarean times when Prabhupāda told stories about Kṛṣṇa or himself and the disciples sat around listening. A perfect setting for this was in Prabhupāda's room in Māyāpura after the electricity had gone out. A devotee would bring in a lantern, and you would sit there with the light shining on

the three-dimensional carving of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda would talk about Calcutta days when he was a boy, and then he would talk about his early days in New York City, then he would tell stories about one of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, and then talk about the management of Māyāpura—one thing after another while you were sitting there.

When Prabhupāda was in a philosophical and reflective mood, there was no pressure on any particular disciple. And yet one of his topics might lead to something that focused on one of us. It could happen at any moment, but at certain gatherings it did not seem likely. Whatever Prabhupāda did, whether it was something demanding or giving us nectar, the disciples were always respectful and loving. We accepted whatever he did as right, and we even imitated him.

Since Prabhupāda's disappearance, one may meditate on what it was like to actually be with him. I think of sitting next to him in a car. His clothes are slightly wrinkled, his complexion is dark-golden, his physique is slight, but he is always commanding and grave. You speak up clearly when you address him, to be understood by him.

Prabhupāda was perfectly conversant in English, but if you mumbled or spoke in American dialect or slang, Prabhupāda might not know what you were saying. There was an art of communicating very clearly and straightforwardly with Prabhupāda. Some of the Western devotees learned to speak with a crisp Indian-English accent. They would pronounce their t's very sharply, as in the word "Cal-cut-ta." If your thoughts were vague, or your words dribbled out in fragments, that

wouldn't be good enough for Prabhupāda. He would refuse to understand if you spoke like that, and so you had to rephrase it. Eventually you learned how to do it so that you did not have to repeat everything twice every time you spoke to him.

All these things come to mind as you meditate on Prabhupāda now. You think of yourself sitting in the car beside him in his slightly wrinkled silk *dhotī*. You don't just sit and stare at him, and yet you are always aware. He is wearing slippers. He has his hand on his cane, and he holds his head back. Prabhupāda's neck and head posture was just the opposite of a slouched, defeated person. He looked majestic. Another person might try to hold his head up and not be able to carry it off as a natural gesture. But for Prabhupāda it was normal; he was regal. And the normal expression of his mouth was that the corners turned down slightly. He looked so serious that some people even thought he was sad.

And so when you wanted to speak to this grave person, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you would always say his name first. You did not just start rapping as people usually do. Usually when we converse and there are several people in the room, we *look* in the direction of the person we want to address, and we start talking. We think, "He will catch on that I am actually talking to him; I won't use his name." And why don't we say his name? Perhaps because it is too respectful, or it is too tender to actually say his name. Saying a person's name can be a very heavy thing. But with Prabhupāda, you said it frequently. You did not say it mechanically with every single sentence, but any time there was a pause of a few

minutes, you readdressed him, "Prabhupāda?" That was another measure of respect. In speaking to him, you began your sentence with the word, "Prabhupāda," and then you spoke. It came from a natural respect that he commanded, not demanded. Prabhupāda demanded very little. He did not demand that we wear *dhotis* or shave our heads, and he never said, "When you speak to me, say the word 'Prabhupāda' first." But these things came naturally, and we also learned the Vaiṣṇava etiquette and offered it.

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A Different Kind of Separation
2.7

During the 1960s and '70s we often served Prabhupāda in separation. For the New York devotees it began as early as January 1967, when Prabhupāda went to San Francisco. He assured us in his first letter from San Francisco that serving him in separation was even better than the "physical" presence of the *guru*. And yet we always knew that sooner of later our separation would be eased by being with Prabhupāda again. It might be as long as six months or a year, but more likely it would only be a matter of a few months. There was always another Māyāpura festival, always another trip out to Los Angeles to see him, always another way to adjust our schedules so that we could meet up with him on one of his tours. And when we couldn't do that, there was the mail, and in emergencies, one could telephone his secretary and hear directly from

Śrīla Prabhupāda. Therefore, in those days when we meditated on Prabhupāda in separation, it was somewhat different than our present Prabhupāda meditation.

In 1972, Hridayānanda Mahārāja and I were traveling together with a group of *brahmacārīs* in two vans. We were in St. Louis when we heard that Prabhupāda had arrived in Los Angeles. During one morning *japa* period, Hridayānanda Mahārāja began to speak about Prabhupāda, and before long he was advocating that we should immediately go and see Prabhupāda in Los Angeles. I reminded him that we had programs to do in St. Louis and in other Midwest states, but Hridayānanda Mahārāja reminded me how rare it was to get Prabhupāda's association. It would also be good for the men on the party. I agreed, "All right, let's do it." When we asked the men, they said, "What a great idea!" *"Haribol*! We're going to see Prabhupāda!" And off we went.

When we arrived in New Dvārakā, even before seeing Prabhupāda, we heard about him. Devotees told us what Prabhupāda was saying in his lectures and on walks, and we became more anxious to see him. We stayed with Prabhupāda for about a week, and then he traveled to New York and on to Europe. Rejuvenated by his personal association, we were happy to return to our Midwest program.

In those days, although devotees sometimes went out of their way to be with Prabhupāda, no one attempted to travel with him all the time except for his designated group. You couldn't become a tramp and travel around just to be with him. Perhaps if we could do it over again, knowing how

rare Prabhupāda was and what we have now lost, more devotees might have attempted to tag along with him. But perhaps not, because Prabhupāda set the standard and he did not like taggers-on. If, for example, he was leaving Australia, he did not expect a bunch of devotees from Australia to fly on the plane with him to Hawaii and America. If he saw even one extra person riding on the plane with him, he would say, "What is he doing here?" Prabhupāda was also responsive to the ISKCON leaders. If the leader of Australia said, "Prabhupāda, I need these men," Prabhupāda would not allow them to tag along. In the case of our run from St. Louis to Los Angeles, we were able to do it without too much disruption. The ability to run to Prabhupāda just to be with him was a great freedom.

If you stayed in your place, Prabhupāda would come there sooner or later. Or, if you were in a small outpost, Prabhupāda would visit nearby. If you were in St. Louis, you could go to see him when he went to Detroit; if you were in Boston, you could go to see him when he was in New York. And then there was the annual Māyāpura festival, beginning with 1974 when it took international shape. Once the routine started, it seemed there would *always* be another Māyāpura festival (although in retrospect, we see that Prabhupāda participated in the festival for only four years). From 1974-77 it was a very important part of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to go to the festival and be with Prabhupāda in Māyāpura and Vṛndāvana. When a temple leader mentioned to Prabhupāda that it was very costly for the devotees to visit India every year,

Śrīla Prabhupāda insisted that as many as possible should go. He gave the example that although food prices rise, people continue to eat.

Almost everyone had a chance to see him from time to time and at least a chance to write to him. No one thought that it would be impossible to ever see Prabhupāda or that he would never visit near your center. You would go on doing your service, but there would be that anticipation. This was also the mood of the *gopīs*; after Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana, they served in separation, but they were always in anticipation of His return.

When Prabhupāda visited your center, friends of the temple could see him, and some were fortunate to see Prabhupāda on repeated visits. I remember one old man who used to visit the Calcutta temple. When Prabhupāda would arrive there, only a few devotees would come downstairs and play on the *mṛdaṅga* and *kāratālas* to greet Prabhupāda as he came up. But that old man would always come running down with great enthusiasm, make his obeisances, and cry out, "Prabhupāda! Save the whole world, Prabhupāda!"

One time when I saw Prabhupāda after months of separation, I realized that I should not be in anxiety. As soon as I saw him moving and speaking, I realized that this was the same Prabhupāda who was available to me in separation through his books and instructions. I had been so anxious and had been thinking that my life was dry and useless until I could see Prabhupāda. But as soon as I saw him, it struck me, "I've had his association all along! I have it in the regular *vāṇī*.."

Another effect of being with Prabhupāda after an absence was to realize, usually with a shock, that you were not as advanced as you thought you were. In separation from Prabhupāda one tended to become slightly independent, to change things and deteriorate in subtle ways. You hardly even noticed it, but as soon as you saw him again, even before he spoke, his personal presence woke you up. As a Godbrother in Boston once told me, "I think I'm doing all right in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but then Prabhupāda comes, and I see that I'm nowhere." Seeing the real Prabhupāda face to face brought you up to the high demands of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And so Prabhupāda in person could keep you on the straight path, make you surrender, and ask you to do something that perhaps was not on your personal agenda. That real Prabhupāda would be the one you would meet up with after being on your own.

If we couldn't see Prabhupāda, we would talk about him. In 1970 when Prabhupāda returned to India, the devotees in Boston followed him closely through letters from his disciples who were with him. Then a professional photographer named John Griesser (initiated as Yadubāra Prabhu) joined Prabhupāda and started sending back wonderful photos of Prabhupāda in India—Prabhupāda singing *kīrtana* in small crowded rooms and Prabhupāda before huge audiences at Indian *pāṇḍals.*

When Prabhupāda was in England, his contact with the Beatles created personal excitement for ISKCON devotees all around the world. In Boston we received a tape of George Harrison leading the devotees in an informal *kīrtana* at the Bury Street

temple. I remember proudly presenting this tape and news of Prabhupāda and the Beatles to our Sunday guests. "We've got a special treat today," I said. "I'm going to play a tape of our spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who's now in England. The Beatles are becoming very attracted to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. George Harrison is particularly into chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and our spiritual master is now staying at the estate of John Lennon. So here's the tape . . . " The guests were awed by our presentation of Prabhupāda and the Beatles, and it helped to attract them to our movement.

Even the publication of Prabhupāda's books was different than it is now. They were coming out rapidly, and we knew that there would always be more books. We kept count of what canto he was on and anticipated new publications. Of course, just as now, some devotees neglected Prabhupāda's books, but many took advantage of them nicely.

One may ask, "What is the difference between hearing Prabhupāda's tapes or reading his books now and doing the same thing when Prabhupāda was physically present?" The difference was simply that you knew he was present somewhere in his travels and that he had recently produced these lectures and books. Ultimately, there's not a great substantial difference between serving Prabhupāda in separation in the post-1977 period and serving him before that. But we shouldn't deny that there was a special relationship with Prabhupāda when he was here, and those who witnessed it should share it. We are also glad to admit that it is fully possible now to have association with Prabhupāda which

can outdo any association that he had given us previously. If nothing else, our memories of what it used to be like constitute a history of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, as experienced by the devotees who were present with Prabhupāda. It was blissful to regularly hear what Prabhupāda was doing and to stay in touch with him in that way.

We all knew Prabhupāda was leading the charge. When we would speak to new people, we would be able to tell them, "This is a bona fide movement because our leader is a pure devotee—and he is living on the planet *now,* which is rare. We are all following him, and that is why there is such a great advantage to this movement." We could make this important point with great conviction in our preaching. It gave us much security, and you cannot do it in exactly the same way today.

I'm not saying that the old days were better. But it is beneficial to recall the features of that period. It was nice to be able to think and say that there is a pure devotee on the earth who is leading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement—soon he will visit your city, and you can see him. Even people who knew him only slightly would regularly ask, "When is Prabhupāda going to come to Boston again?" You replied, "I don't know. Right now he is traveling in India, and then he will be coming to Los Angeles." Everyone would be interested in his activities.

And still we ask, "When is Prabhupāda coming again? When will we be able to see him?" So nothing has changed except now the separation is longer.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
2.8

If I am driving in a van in Europe
or busy in a temple, talking,
will I remember Prabhupāda then?
Does it come naturally when you are serving?
But how will I be able to catch the nuance?
I'll do what I can and wait to come back
to these hills where memories came so freely,
in the silence of the pine trees.

But if I can't focus on memories,
Prabhupāda is just as real.
He's the one I call on to save me.
I want to remember Kṛṣṇa as Prabhupāda taught,
and when I do go down, I want to banish doubts,
turn to him and say, "Please, Prabhupāda, save me!"
He is as near as the heartbeat or breathing.
If I can recall what he said
or how he looked coming down the steps
of the Henry Street, Brooklyn temple,
that's extra.
The main thing is the heart and breath.

*****

New Freedom
2.9

According to Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta,* serving the order (*vāṇī*) of the spiritual master is more substantial than serving him in his physical presence (*vāpuḥ).* But if you have no attachment at all for his

personal presence, then when the spiritual master is gone from your sight you may forget him. This is what we were afraid of in 1967 when Swamijī went to India. He even said, "I may not come back, but you continue the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." We replied, "Swamijī, how can we continue it without you? We've only known you for a few months, please don't go away." At that time we did not think that we could endure service in separation, which all followers of Prabhupāda are now asked to practice. In 1967, we had barely even a toehold on our own spiritual lives, and not much conviction that we could represent him. It was Kṛṣṇa's arrangement that Prabhupāda did not leave at that time, but stayed with us for another ten years. We may take this as a sign that a certain amount of development is required before a disciple can fully prosecute service in separation.

When Prabhupāda left in November 1977, it seemed like a catastrophe. But in terms of service in separation from Prabhupāda, there were also signs of solace. For example, after Prabhupāda's disappearance, a new equality was ushered in as to who could approach him. Previously, only a small elite were allowed to spend time with Śrīla Prabhupāda; after his disappearance everyone could go into Prabhupāda's room. And now everyone can have their own *mūrti* of Prabhupāda and massage him daily and bathe him and dress him and cook for him. By studying his books and serving, each devotee is entitled to his own realizations, and even more than before, he is free to confirm the results of his surrender. As Prabhupāda used to say, "It is not that someone has to give you a certificate to

prove that you are Kṛṣṇa conscious, but you will know yourself. It is just like a hungry man who, when he eats, knows his own satisfaction without anyone else telling him."

In the later 1970s ISKCON grew so big that Śrīla Prabhupāda decided to manage it through his leaders, and he stressed the institutional formulas of temple life for all devotees. One time a devotee went and complained to Śrīla Prabhupāda that ISKCON had become so big that he felt he no longer had access to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda replied, "ISKCON may be big, but I am small." Śrīla Prabhupāda went on to explain that he was always the same person, and that each devotee could serve him wherever they were in the world. Prabhupāda said that the multi-duties of ISKCON everywhere were actually Prabhupāda's own service to his Guru Mahārāja. When each of Prabhupāda's disciples assisted him, whether by waving the peacock fan before the Deity or by preaching on Prabhupāda's behalf, they should know that they were personally assisting their spiritual master.

One could be with Śrīla Prabhupāda by that service meditation, but most devotees could not expect to go to Prabhupāda and reveal their minds to him. Although Prabhupāda personally knew hundreds of devotees, still most followers could not go to Prabhupāda and express how they were growing as persons and ask if some of their tendencies could be dovetailed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Such matters were dealt with by Prabhupāda's representatives, who counseled most of the devotees.

By Prabhupāda's desire, his senior followers continue to give counsel to all the followers of

Prabhupāda. But for better or worse, more devotees are also deciding on their own how they want to render service to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Thus they claim that they know best how they can serve Śrīla Prabhupāda.

There are certain advantages to the system instituted by Prabhupāda—that his disciples should go through senior representatives. Although some devotees may have felt that they had less opportunities to express themselves, yet they accepted with full faith that they were surrendering to Prabhupāda. By limiting one's choice of how to serve, one can also eliminate whimsical ideas. When a secretary or temple president representing Prabhupāda would say, "Śrīla Prabhupāda heard what you wanted to do and this is what he says"—a devotee would be fully satisfied that Prabhupāda had actually heard him out. And it is not that Prabhupāda or his representatives said "no" to every suggestion by a devotee who wanted to serve in his own way. But the emphasis was on the needs of the mission first and foremost. If, after Prabhupāda's disappearance, the spirit of willingness to surrender to the mission and its representatives has deteriorated, that is unfortunate.

On the other hand, a gain can be calculated after the *ācārya's* disappearance in terms of a disciple's being forced to rely more on the *caitya-guru,* or the Supersoul within the heart. Even during Prabhupāda's appearance, he frequently encouraged trusted disciples to go ahead and render their service to Prabhupāda according to their own intelligence. Prabhupāda would say, "You are a sincere devotee, so Kṛṣṇa will tell you how to paint for Him." Or,

"Because you are sincere, I am sure that whatever you decide will be according to Kṛṣṇa's desire." And thus devotees were encouraged to take advantage of both the inner guide as well as the presence and instructions of the *ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda. By the *parampará* method, spiritual masters continue to act on behalf of Prabhupāda and guide new followers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But all followers of Prabhupāda, as they seek confirmation of their connection to Prabhupāda, will rely both on the instruction of their *gurus* and the confirmation of the inner guide.

Thus when Prabhupāda left, it was a sign that the Supersoul should become more active in our lives. Jesus Christ also confirmed this to his own disciples before he departed:

> And I myself will ask the Father, and He will give you another counselor to be with you throughout the ages. The spirit of Truth, whom the world has no power to receive, because it neither perceives Him nor recognizes Him, you will recognize. Because He remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.
>
> —John 14:16-18

As long as the spiritual master is present as the representative of the Supersoul, one may feel less need to commune with the Inner Guide. But when the *ācārya* leaves, he sometimes directs his followers to turn more to the Lord in the heart. It is as if he is saying, "Now I am leaving and it is up to you to follow me with your whole life. And you may

know that you are doing this by inner signs as well as outer ones."

To compensate for the immeasurable loss of Prabhupāda's presence, Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa have sent us aid—and new freedom. A sincere follower should embrace the life of service in separation with enthusiasm as well as caution. To state this thought in its more daring form I would say that by Prabhupāda's act of disappearance he is saying, "Now you are not subject to my direct dictation, so serve me as you want to." Of course, Prabhupāda wants us to serve under the spiritual-managerial authority of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission and to follow the instructions which he gave, and to support his institution in one way or another. And yet within these structures there is freedom for expression. If we don't express this freedom nicely, then we will displease Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. But when we do it successfully, then, as stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, yayātmā suprasīdati*—the self will be satisfied. And this *atma*-satisfaction is the final test of whether we are prosecuting Kṛṣṇa consciousness rightly.

Upon being given freedom, a mature spiritual son or daughter may reply as follows: "Thank you, Prabhupāda, for this freedom to serve you as I like. As far as I am concerned, I don't want any freedom that will deviate me from you. I just want to serve you for your pleasure."

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
2.10

1

I know how I get envious
when I see someone praise Prabhupāda—
it's rivalry.
My own attempts at *smaraṇam*
may cause others the same disgust.
But what shall I do?
One answer is: Write but disappear.
Don't be there as a person
when you praise. Burn away
that annoying, sticky presence, Satsvarūpa dās.

2

A few times I was with him.
But mostly when he spoke someone else was there.
For example, one time he said, "Print my books
in all the languages of the world."
And a devotee who heard him said,
"It went like a golden arrow into my heart."
Do I not believe that Prabhupāda could
touch another's soul besides my own?

I cannot speak for others.
Each knows you in his own way.
I must work from this one mousehole
of my own perception
and say what I see and feel.

3

Prabhupāda, I like new photos of you
and old ones that catch me again—
here you are sitting on the ground,
on a very thin pillow,
pondering with a manly, thoughtful look.
I know you are not a "man,"
but you look manly here,
not with a big garland on the formal seat,
but you are considering something—
you are always gentle and yet
always heavy, *guru*.
And your feet are bare.
And here's a photo of you saying *gayatrī*.
My words wish to be controlled
by speaking of you.

I will never be able to speak
of Kṛṣṇa as you did.
But let me speak of you in pleasing ways—
not to agitate others
but to draw them to you.

*****

Why Meditate on Prabhupāda?
2.11

> Just as a person traveling on the road rests one foot on the ground and then lifts the other, or as a worm on a vegetable transfers itself to one leaf and then gives up the previous one, a conditioned soul takes shelter of another body and then gives up the one he had before.

Purport:

This is the process of the whole transmigration from one body to another. At the time of death, according to his mental condition, the living being is carried by the subtle body consisting of mind, intelligence and ego to another gross body. When higher authorities have decided what kind of gross body the living entity will have, he is forced to enter such a body and thus he automatically gives up his previous body. Dull-minded persons, who do not have the intelligence to understand this process of transmigration, take for granted that when the gross body is finished, one's life is finished forever. Such persons have no brains with which to understand the process of transmigration. At the present moment there is great opposition to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement which is being called a brainwashing movement. But actually the so-called scientists, philosophers and other leaders in the Western countries have no brains at all. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is trying to elevate such foolish persons by enlightening their intelligence so that they will take advantage of the human body. Unfortunately, because of gross ignorance they regard the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement as a brainwashing movement. They do not know that without God consciousness one is forced to continue transmigrating from one body to another. Because of their devilish brains they will next be forced to accept an abominable life and practically never be able to liberate themselves from the conditional life of material existence. How this transmigration of the soul takes place is very clearly explained in this verse.

—*Bhāg.* 10.1.40 and purport

This passage makes me think about Prabhupāda meditations and doubt their importance. I can see how earnest Prabhupāda is to spread the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which starts with transmigration of the soul. If you can't understand that, then you cannot go further in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And so one might argue like this: the important thing is to learn this science, starting with transmigration of the soul, from Prabhupāda's books. Cultivation of personal memories of what he did and said is therefore not important because it is not related to the important knowledge. Prabhupāda lived for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, this is what he wrote the books for, this is what the world needs. So by various means of propagation, Prabhupāda's followers try to convince others that this one lifetime is not all. It was for these lessons that Prabhupāda called us together and taught us and wanted us to serve and teach.

My reply to this is that cultivation of memories of Prabhupāda and continuing our attachment to him *is* connected to learning the knowledge and carrying out the mission. Many of us accept this knowledge and believe in it only because he said so. For some of us, our "bottom line" of faith and realization is "Prabhupāda says." "Prabhupāda says that Kṛṣṇa is God. Prabhupāda says *Bhagavad-gītā* is the best scripture, so read it." Of course everything doesn't just end with a dogmatic "Prabhupāda says." Once you actually hear about Kṛṣṇa from him and read *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, you get realization, but it rests on that foundation that *Prabhupāda said so*. The *Śikṣāṣṭakaṁ* verse declares, "The *saṅkīrtana* movement is *the life of all knowledge*." Because of

him, the knowledge of *Bhagavad-gītā* comes alive. It was Sanskrit, or mythology, or academic study, but now it comes alive. So it is essential for all devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to receive the knowledge through Prabhupāda in *parampara*. Therefore, why should they not want to relish hearing about him and become attached to him as a person and understand better how he was a teacher?

> By the grace of Kardama Muni, Devahutī experienced actual realization simply by serving. We get a similar example in the life of Nārada Muni. In his previous life Nārada was a maidservant's son, but his mother was engaged in the service of great devotees. He got the opportunity to serve the devotees and simply by eating the remnants of their foodstuff and carrying out their orders, he became so elevated that in his next life he became the great personality, Nārada. For spiritual achievement the easiest path is to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and to serve him with heart and soul. That is the secret of success. As stated by Viśvanātha Cakravatī Ṭhākura in his eight stanzas of prayer to the spiritual master: *yasya prasādad bhagavat-prasādo*, by serving or receiving the grace of the spiritual master one receives the grace of the Supreme Lord. By serving her devotee husband Kardama Muni, Devahutī shared in his achievement. Similarly a sincere disciple, simply by serving a bona fide spiritual master, can achieve all the mercy of the Lord and the spiritual master simultaneously.
>
> —*Bhāg.* 3.23.7, purport

Those who approach Kṛṣṇa consciousness by their attachment to Prabhupāda shouldn't worry—they will get knowledge just by his blessings; their position is secure. In the case of Devahuti, she did not appreciate that Kardama was a great sage, she just knew that he was her husband. Because he happened to be a great sage, through her loving relationship with him she got all the benefits of transcendental realization. It is like that with Prabhupāda also and the Prabhupāda stories. They are a supplementary activity, a body of knowledge and a literature to help us have personal attachment to the pure devotee. By that personal attachment, Kṛṣṇa is pleased. *Yasya deve para bhaktir yathā-deve tatha-guroḥ*—only by having faith in the *guru* and Kṛṣṇa is the knowledge revealed. We should not think that we will pick up the science of transmigration and the higher stages of *bhakti* by intellectual studentship. There has to be a personal relationship with the *guru*. This will hold true also for future times. They will have a relationship with Prabhupāda.

> Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment when applied to the self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.
>
> Purport:
> Attachment to a devotee is attachment to the service of the Lord because if one associates with a *sādhu*, the result will be that the *sādhu* will teach him how to become a devotee and worshiper and sincere servitor of



the Lord. These are the gifts of a *sādhu*. If we want to associate with a *sādhu*, we cannot expect him to give us instructions on how to improve our material condition. But he will give us instructions on how to cut the knot of the contamination of material attraction and how to elevate ourselves in devotional service. That is the result of associating with a *sādhu*. Kapila first of all instructs that the path of liberation begins with such association.

—*Bhāg.* 3.25.20 and purport

What are the Prabhupāda memories? We hear that one time Prabhupāda reprimanded a disciple and told him something for his good. Or one time Prabhupāda felt special ecstasy while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda liked a certain kind of food. Prabhupāda was amused one time because of this and that. These are incidents of the pure devotee in action—they are answers to Arjuna's question, "How does a transcendentalist speak and move and walk?" If by hearing these, you become attached to the *sādhu*, it is good. You will be attached to somebody or other, so be attached to him and then you will gain devotional service. Attachment to Prabhupāda is supported by the *śāstras* as a firm basis of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And by that affection we are able to accept his instructions, which many people find hard to take. Hearing from him, we start with the ABCs, "You are not the body, you are the soul. You transmigrate life after life, so keep yourself in the sattvic condition and go to the transcendental stage in order to escape falling into lower species." This science will be accepted by someone

who sees Prabhupāda as his authority and spiritual father. Even though he or she lives in the West and hears much skepticism, the devotee will say, "Yes, I accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness because Prabhupāda says so." And that can save one at the time of death; just thinking of that attachment.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
2.12

Banon! Banon! /Be Kind to Your Memories

Someone said, "No hype—be brutally honest."
All right, but be kind, brother.
See the dirty naked child in
the street of Vṛndāvana,
see the crippled dog, the rat, the hog . . .
but don't be harsh like those Americans
who hoot when they see Hare Kṛṣṇas.

Varnished truth?
No . . . be kind.
See the truth and be kind.

I need to be submissive to Prabhupāda,
and kindliness and love are included in that.
Kind also to my own memories
and lenient with my desires
to write them down.
Give me a break.

I think of that street boy who came up
to our van in Prague
and pleaded, *"Banon, banon,"*
'cause he'd spied the bananas on the dashboard.
I too am begging, *banon banon,*
my spirit is hungry;
I am greedy for Prabhupāda recall.

I can't stay on the hill
peacefully looking all day within,
although I would like to do that again.
I have to go sometimes to Czechoslovakia.
But I have an hour right now—
Please Lord, give me a banana.

* *

—Prabhupāda stern in the dark theater,
watching the banana peel dancers,
No one to tell it now but me. Go ahead.
His face stern
against the barrage of *māyā.*
The person dancing wears a banana costume,
acid music thuds,
the theater is full of freeloaders,
and Prabhupāda is most incongruously present,
protecting us
and we are protecting our faith
by chanting on stage with him
our mantra music,
acceptable to the Love-in.

Sometimes I want to see
his grave, almost-insulted look,
glaring in the dark theater.
(It reminds me of a photo of him
standing in an immigration queue
behind a beefy *karmī* in suit and tie.
Śrīla Prabhupāda has his documents ready,
standing erect, head up, very serious;
it's another insult, but he's tolerant.)

In that dark theater,
his eyes were shining,
and later he laughed.

*****

When He Called Me In
2.13

One time during the 1977 Māyāpura festival, Śrīla Prabhupāda called me into his room. I guessed that he may have called for me because we had been associating together for a month while I was his personal secretary, first in Bhuvaneswara and then for awhile in Māyāpura. Or maybe it had something to do with his reappointing me to the editorship of *Back to Godhead*. Since I was supposed to be writing essays, perhaps he wanted to give me a special chance to hear philosophy and preaching.

It was early in the morning, not long after *maṅgala-ārati*, and I was chanting *japa* in my room. His servant was Hari-śauri, but there were also men posted outside his room to run errands and be guards. One of them came to me and said,

"Prabhupāda wants to see you." I left my room and walked onto the stone veranda. When I descended to the second floor, I walked past the main stairway and straight for Prabhupāda's room. There was a light coming through the lattice window. The guard outside knew that Prabhupāda wanted to see me, and so I went inside and made my obeisances before His Divine Grace.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting at his low desk. The room was dark with only a small desk lamp. He was quiet and serious, but relaxed. He said, "I have been dictating this morning from the Tenth Canto about transmigration. I wanted you to hear."

"Yes, Prabhupāda."

He paused before pushing the switch on the dictaphone and said, "Why can't they understand the philosophy of transmigration? What is the objection? Any intelligent person can understand that the body changes. This is explained very nicely in this morning's *Bhāgavata*. You should write articles and vigorously preach and explain this in *Back to Godhead*. Why they don't understand this simple philosophy?"

"You have made it clear, Prabhupāda," I said, "and Kṛṣṇa also makes it clear in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the body is changing. But people are just too dull."

Prabhupāda pushed the reverse button on the dictaphone, and then the machine began to play. The dictaphone speaker was not meant for comfortable hearing, and so it was a somewhat tinny reproduction of Prabhupāda's voice. After each phrase you could hear the click of the pause button. As I remember it now, he played me this section:

> One's consciousness, therefore, must always be absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, and then one's life will be successful. Otherwise the mind will carry one to another material body. The soul will be placed in the semen of a father and discharged into the womb of a mother. The semen and ovum create a particular type of body according to the father and mother, and when the body is mature, the soul emerges in that body and begins a new life. This is the process of transmigration of the soul from one body to another (*tathā dehāntara-prāptir*). Unfortunately, those who are less intelligent think that when the body disappears everything is finished. The entire world is being misled by such fools and rascals. But as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.20) *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.* The soul does not die when the body is destroyed, rather, the soul takes on another body.
>
> —*Bhāg.* 10.1.43, purport

Prabhupāda then turned off the machine and talked more about transmigration. It was thrilling to be called into Prabhupāda's presence and to see him in his essence—the early morning *Bhāgavatam* speaker. I felt that he had called me into the inner sanctum where he dictates the books by allowing me to hear the playback, so that I could catch some of the urgency.

By remembering this moment, I wish to impress upon my own mind, "Please understand the importance of what Prabhupāda was saying and understand the importance of Prabhupāda himself. Remember always that he called you into his room

and explained transmigration. How can you forget it? Why don't you remember it more?"

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I want to worship that memory of you calling me in. I want to become fixed in the ABCs of transmigration, not dogmatically, but by understanding all the reasons. Although I may be familiar with skepticism, let me defeat it. As Kṛṣṇa says, "The doubts that have arisen in your heart because of ignorance should be slashed with the weapon of knowledge. Armed with *yoga,* stand and fight."

As Prabhupāda played the tape, I was very attentive because he was right there listening as I listened. I was blissful because he wanted me to hear the philosophy, because he was preaching to me to become serious and to become a preacher myself. All the memories are like that—they are not to be forgotten; they are meant to renew our gratefulness. They are means to help us learn the lessons that Prabhupāda was giving us.

Part Three

A Prayer to Continue Remembering
3.1

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the one we have to turn to at the end of life. Some of his followers have done that: they've gone all the way, to the end of life, and crossed over into the next life while thinking of him. Each of us has to do that. It will be a very difficult time, and we will be tested. One way we may be tested is that doubts will arise, even dislike or envy of Prabhupāda may come—and we have to overcome all this.

When it gets very difficult, we will not be in full control. We don't know what memories will come. But now we can prepare by cultivating memories and by cultivating a simple meditation on our protector, our *guru*. By stating Prabhupāda's name, and by the spiritual sentiment of turning to him, "Prabhupāda, please protect me, please forgive me for my deviations. I feel sorry for my mistakes during this lifetime and sorry that I did not fully surrender to you."

And then we will remember his mercy and his teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We will ask his devotees to read to us from his books. We will regret that we did not read more, that we did not read attentively, and that we did not serve him fully. But we will stay in Prabhupāda consciousness.

We may also try to think of devotees who have passed over and what they did at the end. I was not there, but I heard that Hayagrīva dāsa, although he committed sinful activities and made many mistakes during his life, rose to the occasion of his own death. This was stated by devotees, including those

who were not his friends and sympathizers at New Vrindaban. They say that he really became repentant at the end and was saying, "O God, I did not know how much we really needed Prabhupāda at the time. And I still need him now!" Hayagrīva's example is a hint to us that this kind of awakening will come—that we took Prabhupāda for granted, and that we really need him. But we should not wait until the end. This meditation should go on now.

We think of Prabhupāda as a person with various activities, just as we are also persons who have active adventures. But it may be that at the end, the variety of activities, even those we can think of, will be diminished. Our vision may start to close down. At that time we can pray for sincerity to remember Prabhupāda. He is like a rope that we hold on to.

I sometimes fear that in my own "Prabhupāda meditations" I am becoming sensational or sentimental, just talking too much. Perhaps devotion to Prabhupāda should be expressed more through activities. And yet I am begging Prabhupāda to accept my service of verbalizing these things. I know that the right words can also push me into better action. Please let these words bring out my inadequacies, let it show me that I am puffed-up, claiming that I love Prabhupāda when I actually do not. But let these words ultimately purify me, rather than shut my mouth. One reason I am talking now is that I did not make sufficient praises in your presence. I am trying to make up for it. This disciple who is so unsurrendered and uncourageous is trying to com-

pensate by speaking as much as possible, taking it as a kind of service.

And so Prabhupāda meditation may serve the purpose of helping us to build up a stock of memories for the most difficult time. This can also be done by prayerfully reading his purports, sharing it with others, and sharing Prabhupāda stories also—building the actual, tangible connection by being his servant. For example, someone who went somewhere and underwent austerities for Prabhupāda will always remember, "I did this for Prabhupāda." The devotee who is working the oxen in the field will also think, "I've been asked to do this by Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda." And these memories are also service; they come from a fountain of praises and sincere worship. Use the voice, despite its imperfections, to praise Prabhupāda and to remember him.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.2

1

Swamijī said to me,
"If you love me then I will love you"—
my personal memory.
I keep it in a can in the archives of the brain.
Bring it out on special occasions,
especially to people who don't know me.

I gave him typing and
as I left the room,
he said those words and
I bounded blissfully down the stairs.
He'd broken through my meanness,
taught me love for *guru*.
It is part of me, truly,
another piece in the mosaic,
it is not a lie.
To the best of my recollection,
it actually happened.

2

Right now Śrīla Prabhupāda is walking
up that cobblestoned hill
to Red Square in Moscow.
See the back of his head, his *cādar*,
his cane and feet,
and the light in the early morning street.
Right now.

3

I know the work is what counts,
not the dream webs, I know.
But one of these nights I'm
going to dream of him again,
and when I'm working,
I will see him again.
As Raghunātha Gosvāmī prays of Lord Caitanya,
"When will He pass again before my vision?"

*****

Giving Prabhupāda Money and Men
3.3

When I first attended 26 Second Avenue, I gave small donations in the collection basket. Then I started giving larger donations, sometimes 20 dollars. One time I "donated" 40 dollars although I hadn't intended to—it fell out of my sock. It was my habit to keep money hidden in my sock, as I had seen my supervisor at the welfare office do. He said that this was an excellent method to protect your money in case you were held up by a mugger. So one night when I went to hear and see Swamijī in his room, I took my socks off, forgetting about my hidden money. Later, one of the boys came downstairs and said, "Wow! We just found 40 dollars in Swamijī's room." I said, "That was *my* money!" The boys looked like they did not believe me, but I asked them, "Could you please tell the Swami to accept it as a donation from me?"

After that I decided to give everything I had, the balance from my total savings of 600 dollars. I still remember how Swamijī smiled when I gave him my savings, and I think about why he was so happy. At the time when I gave my "big" donation, Swamijī was residing in his apartment and using the temple storefront, but with no set income. He was simply trusting in Kṛṣṇa. He had struggled for a year in New York City, moving from place to place, and he had attained a very nice base at Second Avenue. If he failed here, he would probably decide to go back to India; there was no other alternative. And yet Prabhupāda wanted to serve his Guru Mahārāja by preaching in the West. He might have

seen a donation like mine as a sign from Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda might have thought, "Just see, Kṛṣṇa is showing me that this movement is going to go on and be successful." Even years later when Prabhupāda was getting hundreds of thousands of dollars, he saw it as Kṛṣṇa sending money for the spreading of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

After giving my savings in 1966, I no longer had the pleasure of giving so much of my own money to Prabhupāda because I had none to give. Wealthy disciples like Ambarīṣa and Lekāśravantī were able to personally give Prabhupāda substantial amounts. I continued with the weekly donations of my paycheck, and I also began to take part along with Prabhupāda in collecting the money. I remember bringing the basket up to him in the evening and presenting the small collection from the Second Avenue congregation. The money was in one of those stiff-woven baskets, and Prabhupāda counted five or six dollars, and then made the reverent gesture with folded hands and said, "Money is Lakṣmī."

As a temple president I also sent money to Prabhupāda. Whatever we collected, even if we spent it in our "own" temple, was for his cause. But there was a "maintenance fund" which was for Prabhupāda's travels. When Prabhupāda came to Boston in 1968, we collected honorariums for his lectures at the universities, and it was a pleasure to present them to Prabhupāda. He handled the checks carefully, placed them in his travel bag, and later put them into one of the ISKCON bank accounts.

Another important commodity that we gave to Śrīla Prabhupāda was manpower. He said, "When I

first came to America, I had nothing, but Kṛṣṇa sent me money and men." This solid twosome, money and men, was required for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda sometimes requested the temple presidents to send men and women to places like India, and it was a hard sacrifice for the T.P. to do it. I remember the time we sent Girirāja, our prized *brahmacārī* devotee, from Boston to India. It was in response to Prabhupāda's request for manpower.

As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, charity should be done willingly with a happy mind. That would certainly include the "charity" (*guru-dakṣina*) of giving money and men to the spiritual master. One should not do it begrudgingly or with any trace of thinking one is being exploited.

One time I was present when a disciple, Haṁsaduta dāsa, gave Prabhupāda a donation and then said, "Prabhupāda, whatever I have is yours. My life is for you."

Prabhupāda replied, "I know that." This remark by Prabhupāda struck me deeply. On the one hand, the remark was an assurance. He was saying in effect, "I accept your offer of love. I know that you are sincere, and therefore you don't have to say 'whatever I have is yours'. You are always showing it by your activities." But another meaning that Prabhupāda's remark had for me was that he actually *expected* us to give everything. Even after we had given everything according to our own calculation, from Prabhupāda's point of view, our surrender was not completely finished. The disciple's coming to the point of complete surrender is the *beginning* of the relationship. A disciple is expected

to make a thorough giving of himself to the *guru*, and the spiritual master is expected to collect that surrender on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. Once that is established, then the *guru* and disciple can go forward together and perform many activities for Kṛṣṇa.

When Haṁsaduta made that remark, Prabhupāda went on to say, "Whatever is yours is mine, and whatever is mine is yours."

Dealing in men and money often leads to nasty exchanges, but this never happened with Prabhupāda. He remained detached; if a particular person or temple could not give money when asked, Prabhupāda did not hold a grudge. Once I went to Prabhupāda in 1969 and asked him to help our Boston temple, which was becoming depleted of manpower. This was after Prabhupāda had visited us for a couple of weeks. He had performed a triple wedding, and most of the devotees had decided to move away from Boston. Then just a day or two before Prabhupāda's leaving, one of our leading *brahmacārīs*, Devānanda, announced that he wanted to go and travel with Prabhupāda. When I pleaded my case of poverty to Śrīla Prabhupāda, he assured me that he would protect the interest of our temple. Later he wrote a letter and said, "The Boston temple should not suffer." And when he saw that we were not able to sell many magazines or do very much preaching because of our small forces, he wrote, "You are not disappointed and that is a good sign. You are sincere and you are trying to do your best there."

In the affectionate dealings of Prabhupāda and his spiritual family, we all knew that in anything which resembled business exchange with Prabhu-

pāda, such as taking a loan from him, Prabhupāda would always come out better than anyone else. If you gave money to Prabhupāda, he usually did not give it back. He told how his own spiritual master used to collect money from his disciples for one project, but spent it on a different project. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī would say to his disciples, "I spent that money, so now I need the money again for the project, as I requested you." In this way, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would keep them busy collecting. If Prabhupāda did give a temple president a loan, he would not forget it but keep reminding him until it was returned. We viewed this with loving humor because we knew that whatever went to Prabhupāda was for Kṛṣṇa's cause.

When there was actually a need in some area within Prabhupāda's movement, he was quick to divert funds for that project. As early as 1968, I requested financial help from Prabhupāda to pay Pradyumna's hospital bill. He wrote back that if necessary he would pay, but he hinted that requests such as mine should be handled by a board of devotees. This was a hint that Prabhupāda was thinking of forming the GBC for managing such affairs.

Prabhupāda said that money is honey for a liberated soul. And yet even in a spiritual movement, and even for a pure devotee, the handling of money can become a headache. Prabhupāda took on this responsibility because of its direct connection to spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He cared nothing for money or power but simply wanted to make a movement for drawing souls to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, where they would be relieved from all distress.

*****

Prabhupāda *Smaraṇam*
3.4

Prabhupāda once said.
Prabhupāda gave the example.
One time Prabhupāda said.
On a morning walk,
once to a roomful of guests in New York.
One time I went to see Prabhupāda,
and once Prabhupāda told a devotee.
Once he told a reporter.
Prabhupāda says; he wrote.

I don't count how many times I say them,
but it is plenty. You can overdo it,
but when the examples come just to the point,
it is nectar for all.

Thank God I can remember them.
I don't strive for them, but they come.
Just as birds start chirping at dawn,
those references come to your mind, in words.
A lady said, "I heard that Kṛṣṇa consciousness
breaks up families. Is it true?"
Prabhupāda said no and he gestured
to half a dozen *gṛhastha* disciples in the room.
Someone asked, "Can you love your wife
without reference to Kṛṣṇa?"
Prabhupāda said, "You have to put your love in
the right place.
Carrots are good for eyesight
but you can't put them directly into your eyes."

Fortunately there is no end
to this type of remembrance,
they come a dozen a minute,
or you can slow them down.
Use them carefully.
It is worship. Serve them.
Don't hit people on the head
with your memories.
Don't boast. Tell the right story—
When a devotee asked Prabhupāda,
"What will please you the most?"
Prabhupāda hesitated a moment and then said,
"If you love Kṛṣṇa."

*****

My Prabhupāda
3.5

Everyone has their own Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda is an objective reality, and yet we don't want to be told by someone, "*This* is exactly how you must feel about him, and this is what he wants from you." No, we want our own understanding of Prabhupāda, because we have to surrender our own free will to him.

Therefore, dear Prabhupāda, let me call you, my Prabhupāda. I don't mean "pet Prabhupāda" or "illusory Prabhupāda." You, Śrīla Prabhupāda, are the master, and you will tell me what to do. And yet I call you my Prabhupāda because you touched my heart in the beginning, and you continue to do so.

When a devotee says "My spiritual master, Prabhupāda," that cry has to come from the self. It cannot be programmed into you by another person. Others may help by giving us Prabhupāda's books and telling us about him, but ultimately, with our own hands, we have to reach out and hold onto his mercy.

This is a simple fact, because we are each alone, and we must respond with our own senses. On our own we have to stop sex, intoxication, and gambling. When you dream, does someone else dream for you? When you chant *japa*, you must hear your own *japa*. When you lecture and repeat something that Śrīla Prabhupāda said, it is you speaking not someone else. *You* either know the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse or you don't. It is up to you, and you get the reward. Each plane must go by itself into the sky; each bird keeps itself aloft by its own power in the sky—and then they may meet at the destination. So it stands to reason that we each have our own Prabhupāda.

He calls my name, he calls me. He gives me work to do, he knows me. My Śrīla Prabhupāda also has relationships with many other devotees, and I like that. I wouldn't want to be the only one with him, because he is meant to be with many. And so within the society of devotees, I serve him and he gives me nice work, and I'm happy to do it. I grow up following my Prabhupāda.

My Prabhupāda has gone back to Godhead, and I am thinking of him in this world, trying to serve him. I am sorry that I failed him in many ways. But I know that Prabhupāda forgives me. *Bhakti* is a science, however, and I may not make it back to

Godhead in this lifetime. Prabhupāda said it is very rare that someone can go back to Godhead. Anyway, there's no need to speculate; just do what you can and try to be the pure servant of your Prabhupāda so that at the end, he can speak up for you as much as possible, and you may go to your next life unafraid. The main thing is to go on to the next life *progressively*—remember Kṛṣṇa, pray to Him, "Please let me take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness, don't let me be overwhelmed by the difficulties of death."

My Prabhupāda wants me to pray to Kṛṣṇa and so I am trying. Prabhupāda is still here and he is helping me. He understands that the world changes, and that his own movement changes, and that I'm changing. Prabhupāda is not so concerned that everything has to keep the same outer form, as long as we keep the inner essence of obedience to him.

But he doesn't want me to be envious and disturbed. One time when I was his secretary, my duty was to screen the guests, but then one got past me and went in and complained to Prabhupāda that I kept him away. Prabhupāda called me in and reprimanded me in the presence of his guest. Later I went into Prabhupāda and said, "Prabhupāda this service is bewildering to me. Some of the devotees are criticizing me for letting too many people in. I don't know what to do." I was almost crying but Prabhupāda said, "Everything is all right." So my Prabhupāda assures me. Once he wrote me a note, "May Kṛṣṇa save you from calamities."

I seek his attention, and yet I don't want to become puffed-up. I don't expect him to think of me as a great devotee. That would not do me any good;

it would be unreasonable. And yet I do want assurances.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda, I seek confirmation from you directly. It is hard for an old-timer like me to accept the opinions of my Godbrothers. I forgive them, I'm patient with them, just as I try to be patient with myself. But how can I accept that they know exactly what you want me to do? Especially if they seem to have a confining attitude or if they are attached to their own conception of Prabhupāda, if they want me to follow *their* Prabhupāda. It is hard.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'm very satisfied doing what I am doing for you, and I know that my satisfaction is a good sign (*yayātmā suprasīdati*). But I am ready to be corrected by you. Let me therefore be sensitive to the ways in which you are sending me messages in your books. I must regularly hear from you, and then the messages will come every day.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.6

Prabhupāda,
this white priest
this saffron-dressed guy
who goes to read your books
but falls asleep,
his head on a desk,
he wants to remember you,
"Now and at the hour of my death, Amen."

Prabhupāda, I am your boy.
But still very incomplete.
It is a fact that I have changed because of you.
Would I be in Eastern Europe preaching—
if I hadn't met you?

Yet the lack of fire,
stumbling steps,
the Western-style confessions—
that's not from you, is it?
(Though I'm in Prague on your mission,
I wouldn't mind going to find
Franz Kafka's house,
but no one here has heard of him!)

I say, "Please take me."
I open your book,
the scripture is *Upaniṣad,*
but in two minutes my head is on the desk,
encircled by bees and flies and the
blood rushes there so when I
lift my head I am dazed and
nowhere closer to you
and the omnipotent Lord.
Where does this come from?
You never taught us,
"Conk out when you go to read."

They say
you are strong and a chastiser of demons
and you want everyone to distribute your books
and everyone must surrender to the GBC
and they say that you said Christians
can never attain love of God
and women are less intelligent.
But to understand you actually,
isn't so easy.

You are beyond us,
although we quote you.
And you are kindly with each one of us.

What is it like to be with you?
I have my version too.
I went to massage you one day in France
and you said the body has foul odors.
You said I could leave you
and preach in America.

Let the memories
pass over me as waves,
I don't have to explain them.
Your hand is out to me,
you lift me up.

Every morning, every day
I'll speak your message.
"Just follow Prabhupāda,
and I'll tell you how."

❋❋❋❋❋

Awkward Times
3.7

There are awkward moments in spiritual life, especially in the beginning. One is hesitant to chant or dance or to accept the "Indian God." And yet we are drawn to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In one of his early lectures, Śrīla Prabhupāda said something which assured us not to feel awkward.

This was at a time when I myself did not know whether I wanted to be completely surrendered to him and agree with everything he said, or whether I wanted to consider myself an interested visitor to the storefront. Prabhupāda said, "I can assure you that those who are taking seriously to Kṛṣṇa consciousness are doing so because you have practiced it in your past life." He said this while lecturing on the Sixth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Prabhupāda said, "Why are you coming to the storefront? You have the urge. And this is coming from the past. If we accept what the *Bhagavad-gītā* says, then you have developed your attraction to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a past life and it is coming up again." When Prabhupāda said this, it made me feel privileged and rare. Everyone likes to think that perhaps within himself he is a mystical person, a *yogī*, and here was Prabhupāda giving us just such information about our own past lives.

Once I crossed over the line between guest and disciple, there were still awkward moments. One night, before I was initiated, I was hanging out in the storefront with a few of Prabhupāda's followers. Suddenly, Prabhupāda walked into the storefront, although it was not an evening in which he was

scheduled to lecture. He said that he had come down because he saw a light on in the storefront bathroom and he did not want the electricity to be wasted. After he turned off the light, we stood facing Prabhupāda, and there seemed nothing else to say. It was an awkward moment because our relationship with Prabhupāda was so undeveloped. Prabhupāda had his great hopes for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but so far not much had happened. It would also be in the future that we would become more attached to Prabhupāda and understand him better. So everything was undeveloped and we were waiting. One has to endure those times in order to go on to something better.

And sometimes you can see it all very clearly, how you are undeveloped and awkward. You can see your lack of serious devotional relationship with Prabhupāda. He was a stranger to you, and yet he was awesome, the way he came down gravely and caught you all hanging around idly. He suddenly came into our midst, and we had nothing to say to him and not much to offer him. At that moment Śrīla Prabhupāda also had nothing more to say to us except, "I came down because I saw the light on." Of course there *was* much more. Prabhupāda had not come to America just to stay alone in his room and to notice that a light was on in the downstairs bathroom. But at each particular moment, you sometimes have to accept only a little bit. You accept it and go on, and Kṛṣṇa makes better things happen.

There were many potentially awkward moments for Śrīla Prabhupāda as he began conducting his movement in America. When wild people came

into the storefront and played musical instruments, Prabhupāda had to handle it delicately. We rejoice now in recalling how he was so tolerant. And yet those "psychedelic" *kīrtanas* were not really as pleasing to the pure devotee as *kīrtanas* without electric guitars or banging on the wires of the piano. While Prabhupāda had some control over events within the storefront, it was more uncontrolled when we went to chant outside in Tompkins Square Park. When someone joined your *kīrtana* by blowing loudly on a saxophone, it was not easy to tell him to go away. But Prabhupāda always seemed to know best how to get through such situations.

Another area of awkwardness was the culture gap between Prabhupāda and his first followers. Hayagrīva writes how devotees had to explain to Prabhupāda what the words "fuzz," "acid-head," and "pot" meant. But once Prabhupāda heard the terms defined, he understood it perfectly and said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was better than any drugs, and was not illegal. With marvelous ease, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted the fact that many of his followers and congregation were hippies. During the hippie heyday of San Francisco, Prabhupāda addressed a large crowd, who had assembled for the 1970 Ratha-yātrā, and sympathized with the counterculture. He said, "I have all sympathy for the hippie community of America." He bridged the gap and reduced the awkwardness with specific compassion for the hairy ones who had somehow or other come to hear him. Prabhupāda assured them, "Your frustration and confusion is a good sign because you have rejected the material way of life." Prabhupāda's chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa

mantra was a particularly effective way to smooth over awkward gaps between himself and the younger generation. He just recommended that people chant Hare Kṛṣṇa "wherever you go and whatever you do."

Although Prabhupāda was worlds apart from the young people in America, the younger generation accepted him as "cool"; he was hip in his own way. He was not a middle-class conformist, and he had not come to give us Boy Scout lessons. He was not a church minister giving sermons with a piety that we could not relate to. Aside from age and cultural distances, there is always a distance between two persons until they get to know each other. In the beginning, you try to see whether you really will be able to be intimate with another person. We must never forget that Prabhupāda was able to establish intimacy with hundreds of persons. He did not merely give us lessons in perfection delivered from a mountaintop. Rather, his physical association was always nearby. He had a small room, we sat close to him; we shared his food, bought clothes for him. The awkwardness of not trusting him soon changed, and he also reached forward and pulled us toward him in a spiritual relationship.

Śrīla Prabhupāda removed the awkwardness by convincing us that we did not belong to a different religion than he. He referred to the transcendental level at which all things come together. He used to say, "No one should object and say that they can't chant Hare Kṛṣṇa because it is a foreign name and it is not one's own religion. This is transcendental sound vibration. We are all spirit souls, parts and

parcels of Kṛṣṇa." In this way, he established spiritual intimacy.

Prabhupāda taught us that all souls have an intimacy with Kṛṣṇa and any feelings we had of alienation were not based on fact. They were illusion, based on false designation. Thus he gave a new consciousness and a new way to see reality.

The awkwardness of those early days was also expressed in our feelings at first taking on the dress of the Vaiṣṇava and the shaved head and *śikhā*. So much awkwardness! Not knowing how to pronounce the Sanskrit, not being able to spell or chant properly—gradually these things were overcome. Prabhupāda did not push them on us.

As for Śrīla Prabhupāda's own unfamiliarity with Western culture, it was a feature that simply made him more dear to us. If he did not understand the use of a word in the English or American language, it was another occasion to love him. One time a devotee told Prabhupāda that he might get fired from his job. Prabhupāda was astonished and said, "Fired? They would fire on you?" Prabhupāda thought the devotee would be fired with a gun. The devotee replied, "Oh no, Prabhupāda! Fired just means they would release me from the job." We would all laugh together about his not knowing these words. We did not expect him to know such things, but neither did we think of him as a "foreigner." Prabhupāda knew the transcendental world, the real home. To be unaware of the material world was just another sign of his detachment. We did not expect that eventually he would educate himself in such things. He was not interested. They were all in the category of ignorance and passion.

Awkwardness was overcome. The all-important first step was to learn the words to the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. Once we got that straight, everything became easy and natural. When you think about the fact that within a few months a new devotee feels familiar with the philosophy and with Prabhupāda, it makes you think that maybe it really won't take so long to feel at home in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to develop a desire to go back to Godhead.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.8

I told the spiritual youngsters here
that you are their *śikṣā-guru.*
That was OK, but later
I thought how I write like a buffoon.
Would I dare to speak this way in your presence?
No.

I reasoned it out: when I praise you it is truer
than when I just recite generic
praises to the Vaiṣṇava *guru.*
I said, "Unless you know
the way Śrīla Prabhupāda did things
you can't be a responsible leader in ISKCON."
I told them to become aware of Prabhupāda.
The lecture goes
into my spiritual bank account.
But there are withdrawals,
such as when I envy your men.

Prabhupāda, thanks to you
I am still your servant.
I am striving,
and you include me.

What do they do who
think of you always?
I don't know.
Some devotees are dedicated to you
in pure, strong ways. Your missionaries.
I never seem to get enough.

I fell asleep during so many of your lectures,
in L.A., Bombay,
I was tired from work for you,
but that is no excuse.
You said, "I notice you fall asleep."
I said, "I don't want to."
You said, "Some people in India say
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is a sure cure for insomnia."
Let it not be true!

I placed the netting nicely around your bed,
tucked it in everywhere so no mosquitoes
could get in. Then you rested and
I rested a few feet away.
I waited for your next sound,
which was soon.
Waking me from sleep.

I ate your food remnants again and again,
chewed oranges, the dāl, rice and sābjī
mixed together as *mahā-prasādam.*
It's not just food.
Once your servant came out of your room
carrying your *mahā* on a silver plate.
The devotees knocked him over,
ravaged the plate.
"Once only, by their permission, I took
the remnants of their food, and by so doing
all my sins were at once eradicated."[1]

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Thinking of Prabhupāda on the Run
3.9

After performing Prabhupāda meditations for an uninterrupted month in the solitude at Śaraṇāgati, I resumed the normal duties of an ISKCON *sannyāsī,* traveling, preaching and mixing with devotees. But since I did not want to entirely abandon the regular practice of thinking of and writing about Prabhupāda, I attempted to do it in the midst of a

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1 The Bhaktivedantas as above-mentioned were pure devotees, and the boy became infected with qualities of purity by their association and by eating once the remnants of foodstuff taken by them. Such remnants may be taken even without permission of the pure devotees.

—*Bhāg.* 1.5.25, purport

busy schedule. More often, I noticed that I was not doing it.

On the first day that I returned to the city, I spent a few hours with a Godbrother. We took lunch together and drove in a car to several places. During the whole time neither of us talked about Prabhupāda specifically, although everything we said was concerning devotional service and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission. Only after we finished meeting did I note that we had not talked about Prabhupāda personally. It occurred to me that this is generally the way one does things. I am not sure whether it is right or wrong. I know that to be actively absorbed in service to Prabhupāda is pleasing to him. And so my doubt is not simply, "Why did not we think more about Prabhupāda?" but, "Should we think of him?" My tendency in *Prabhupāda Meditations* is to make thinking of him a deliberate, important service. But someone might say that this is taking time away from more important work to be done on his behalf.

As I have written before in this book, it is certainly not wrong to want to think more of Prabhupāda as a person and to reminisce back to the old days. There is a special taste in this that enlivens all devotees. By remembering Prabhupāda we can break through the doldrums.

When you don't have time to sit and meditate, you try to catch a Prabhupāda meditation on the run. Sometimes it comes without your asking for it. It is just a matter of noticing, "Oh! I just had a Prabhupāda meditation." Sometimes stressful or hurried situations enable you to see things you would not be able to see if you sat down in the most

ideal circumstances for meditation. If you are alert, you will find lots of interesting moments happening. There's an interesting word to describe this—*serendipity*—which the dictionary defines as, "The faculty to make fortunate discoveries by accident."

When I was with my Godbrother yesterday, he was celebrating his birthday. A disciple gave him a present, and my Godbrother remarked to me that one has to think of what to do with the presents disciples give. That made me think, "What did Prabhupāda do with his presents?" The answer is that he gave them away. The reason I did not say this is because I did not want to cheaply compare ourselves as *gurus* with Śrīla Prabhupāda as *guru*. This is an example of why we sometimes refrain from talking about Prabhupāda, even when we think of him. We sometimes feel it is better not said because there is an appropriate time and place for it.

Another way in which being on the run may be helpful for Prabhupāda meditation is that it makes you more lonely. At least for myself, I become lonelier when I am with people than when I am alone with time to think and write of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. But when you *are* lonely, and someone gives you a chance to talk about Prabhupāda, or you take time for a recall session on your own, then you really feel like doing it—you talk to your best friend, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Or you talk to someone else about him. You seek his shelter.

Another moment occurred when I visited the studio of the Kṛṣṇa conscious painter, Viṣṇu dāsa Prabhu. He was just completing a beautiful painting of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. He explained to me that he

used bright colors because "Prabhupāda liked bright colors."

I said, "Oh, Prabhupāda liked bright colors?"

Viṣṇu dāsa said, "Yes, Prabhupāda said he liked bright colors." I did not ask him where he had heard this, but I accepted it, and it became a nice little moment. Looking at the painting of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma had turned into a meditation on the sensibility of Prabhupāda, who supposedly likes bright colors. And that made me think of the early paintings in Boston. Bharadarāja used to paint very brightly. Maybe he also heard that Prabhupāda likes bright colors.

Another moment occurred earlier today while attending the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. I usually have trouble staying awake, but at one point I suddenly heard the lecturer say, "Prabhupāda says." I woke up a bit and anticipated that he was going to say something from Prabhupāda. Of course, the phrase "Prabhupāda says" has been abused, but still, when we hear it, it sounds like an introduction to something important. This is another example of how one can meditate on Prabhupāda even when in the normal routine: by hearing Godbrothers and Godsisters say things that Prabhupāda said and to stay awake when it occurs. Prabhupāda likes bright colors.

It is amazing how our minds go over so many little things so quickly, hundreds and thousands of things that if we try to recall later, we cannot. We may have even dreamed about Prabhupāda last night, but now we are on the rush, the stream of consciousness keeps flowing like a river, and you cannot recall what just passed through. Meditation

is an attempt to focus on what is passing by in the stream of life.

While traveling in a car today, I suddenly received a memory of something that happened in my life many years before I met Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was a childhood memory, and I was able to taste it very distinctly, although now I can't remember it. At the time I thought, "This is encouraging. You think that you have difficulty remembering back to 1966, as if it is a huge period of time to go back 24 years. But now you have just gone way past that to a memory that occurred about 40 years ago. If you can remember 40 years ago, why can't you remember 24 years?"

As I can go back in time, I can also think of Prabhupāda in the present time, even in demanding circumstances. This very moment as I try to write, there are distracting noises outside the building. I've heard, however, that sometimes meditators try to incorporate distracting sounds and make them a part of their meditation. One person was meditating but was constantly disrupted by the noise of the streetcar passing outside his room. As the days went by and he continued to attempt his meditation, the streetcar sound eventually began to remind him of a drum that his *guru* played. In a similar way, it is also possible to hear the sound of the *mahā-mantra,* even in mechanical sounds such as the rhythm in the wheels of a train, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. . . . Distractions can remind me of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.10

I'm just waiting
for the right person to ask me
about Prabhupāda;
that's all it takes.

Maybe one of those new *bhaktas,*
who has read the one-volume *Prabhupāda,*
(or at least he knows there *is* such a book.)
"Tell us," he says, "Because you were with him."
I don't giggle,
No. I tell.

I open the memory cans,
anything will do:
"He played a one-headed drum
it's called a bongo,
but somehow he made it sound
like a *mṛdaṅga.*
He sang for three hours in the park.
After that in his room he spoke
and finally leaned on his elbow,
still speaking of Kṛṣṇa,
and finally he lay down to rest."

I am just waiting.
I don't care how many times.
And that's the best reason to travel
in a van around Europe.
There are millions of people and
hundreds of devotees
who have never heard these stories,
and they love it.
As long as they don't mind,
I certainly don't mind telling it again.
I am just waiting for that audience.

And by myself I talk to you, Prabhupāda,
"Please give me the real thing again.
What it was like.
Or give me loving separation from you.
Please accept me as I am.
Let me keep my saffron,
let me serve you.
Please say, 'He's with me.'"

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Hairs Standing on End
3.11

I just did a radio interview with a man named Ashoka who operates a radio show. He briefed me before saying he had been reading *Planting the Seed* and wanted to hear some memories of my association with Prabhupāda. Right away I thought, "This is it, an opportunity to do what I said I wanted to do—remember in a relaxed way memories of Prabhupāda, even though they may be canned."

He started by saying that he had read how I had gotten out of the Navy, moved to the Lower East Side, saw the storefront, and attended a lecture. I began it once again. I said, "We called him Swamijī." I said that there was no other attraction in 26 Second Avenue. The room was bare. We sat on the floor and he sat on the floor, and he looked very exotic to me. He looked like Buddha.

Ashoka then asked me, "So you went up to Swamiji's loft in the back and asked him if you could do service?" I said, "Well, these things happened gradually. First I visited and attended his lectures, then eventually I asked a question in class, and then I went and bought books." I told these incidents briefly. "And then I asked for service, to do his typing."

Ashoka said that by listening to these reminiscences the hairs on his body were *romancita. "Romancita,"* he said, "means standing on end." This made me think that there is something authentic about Prabhupāda memories, even when you say them for a radio audience and you tell the same story again.

As I told my piece, I was not feeling disgusted or in a fabricating mood. I knew that I was not in trance or completely in touch, as I would like to be. But it was a welcome exercise, and I would like to be able to do it more and more, tell that same story. Yes, go around the world telling the same story. Don't be disgusted if next week somewhere else, someone says, "I understand you were with ISKCON from the beginning and you met Prabhupāda. Can you tell us about it?" Don't reply, "I just told this a few days ago and I am tired of telling it. I

can't remember anyway, and my memories are just canned."

I used to make replies like that. But people want some nectar and you should not deny them. I do not want to be a nectar miser, and so I am going to talk more generously, with faith in Prabhupāda memories.

Sometimes my audience may become bored. If they say, "I've heard this too many times before," then let them say it. I want to recall these memories and find people who will listen with love and attention. Then I will humbly tell these stories. I will not put myself in the center, but *through* myself I will remember Swamijī.

As I told the story on the radio, I was trying to choose the right words. The right combination of words can help unlock some of the doors of memory. For example, I told how I first bought the *Bhāgavatams* from the Swami. I said that after I had purchased them, he told me to "sit down and hear the philosophy." I told the Swami that I had to go, "and he saw that I was too restless to sit and hear the philosophy." Usually when telling this story, I don't say that I was restless, but I emphasized the fact that I had to get back to work. It is true, however, that I was also restless. If I were a real seeker of the truth and the *guru* told me to sit down, why wouldn't I have sat down and heard from him? I described myself today as restless, and it was true.

Even if you don't get new flashes while remembering the same stories, yet you maintain your memories by telling them. It is something to share. If people say that their hairs are standing on end when you tell about Prabhupāda, that means it is

good preaching. How many times have people told you that when you speak the *Bhagavad-gītā*, their hairs stand on end?

Therefore, what for me seems to be just a routine retelling, can be effective preaching. People may become interested by hearing the origins of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. They want to see a live person from that time. In the days when there were still survivors from the American Civil War, it was fascinating to hear their impressions of the cannons and the sight of the Confederate armies, etc. When you heard it from them, you felt like you were there. So use yourself: as a veteran of the beginning of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in America, freely tell these stories.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.12

If a preacher is
trying to print Prabhupāda's books
or holding a festival for a city audience—
then he doesn't need to dwell on memories
of being with Prabhupāda.
One could argue this way, and it makes sense.
Besides, many devotees have no
personal memories.

It is hard to think back.
I'm trying it here but the voices
in the next room are holding me,
computers clicking, preaching in 1990. . . .
If a few of us choose to go back
as much as possible
as a regular duty, that's all right too.
So come with me
onto the beach in Bombay.

He said to me—*Steve*
He said to me—*come here*
He said—*"If you are not ashamed*
then you can wear your beads around your neck
when you go on the street."

He walked with us.
Now he is not here in that way.
We have no clear promise if
we will see him at all.
Maybe as an assistant of the *gopīs?*
But what about Prabhupāda?

O memory, come and help me
to work here and now,
and I promise I will write down
whatever you bring.
There are people who want it.

2

Think of his shoes.
The first white slippers.
Then canvas ones, some dyed saffron.
The shoes you find now on many *vyasasanas*—
did he wear them all?
And those imprints that Kulādri took
of Prabhupāda's feet in Manhattan, 1976—
what about them?
How much of Prabhupāda do they contain?
It depends on your faith.
Even if you touched his actual feet,
what was the benefit if
now you don't follow,
and don't think of him?
Stay with his feet.
At least you are thinking about his feet.

Let us talk of his *vāṇī* and serve him,
while sitting at his feet.
I'm simply glad to have stumbled here,
blessed by Prabhupāda,
unto his feet.
I chant at his feet.

His feet are symbolic,
and rosy soles.
Walked on beaches,
floors of rooms,
pointed at you while he sat
at his low desk,
in your mind, imprinted.

They are the objects of veneration
for the humble servitor.
I bow at his feet.

*****

Noises from the Street
3.13

While we were having the radio interview, a child outside the door started screaming. We worried that it would harm the recording. Later I said, "Oh well, it was just like when Prabhupāda was at 26 Second Avenue and young children would do the same thing out on the street." By saying that it invoked further memory of that time. There is a famous example in the novel *Remembrance of Things Past,* by Marcel Proust. Proust eats a little piece of pastry, a *petite madeleine,* and as he mixed it with tea and it softened in his mouth, the scent of it and the taste of it suddenly threw him back many years to his childhood. So he started to unroll his whole story, *Remembrance of Things Past.*

Maybe we too can do things like that, by hearing the noise on the street and remembering how it was during those 1966 lectures:

I'm in my spot hearing him speak. A little afraid when hoodlums or teenagers out there make noises, but we're not going to give up our places. I hope it doesn't get into some big scene, but that they will go away so we can continue to hear the Swami. When someone comes and makes noises at the doorway, you get a flash how it looks to outsiders. They see you are just some hippies with this

strange Indian man. The whole thing seems weird to them and they can't figure it out. They just can't figure it out. The Swami is obviously an Indian, so why is he with these young American hippies? They are street-tough, street-wise; they know American hippies well enough, but they don't know the Swami.

When we were in the storefront and someone would look in or play their music and say, "Hey, what the hell is this?" Or just, "Hey!"—you sat there and absorbed it and they would usually go away. But one intruder after another would come; sometimes for a large part of the lecture there would be disturbing sounds. The thing is, Swamijī kept the door open. If he had shut the door, it might have been better, but he wanted people to feel free to come in. Maybe it was better that way. Maybe there would have been more disturbances if they hadn't been able to look in and check it out and say something. If the door was shut, they might have been more frustrated. But for whatever reason, he kept it open.

Sometimes he's lecturing and he says, "Yes, come in, sit down." That would be for a hippie who was deciding whether to come in or not, and who would look like he was eligible for sitting down and hearing *Bhagavad-gītā* if he really wanted. He might be on an LSD trip or just not wanting to actually become part of the group, and yet he wanted to check it out—so Prabhupāda invited him to step over the barrier and actually become a listener. He might invite him to sit down, but they did not always want to come under the Swami's control, even to take a seat when he asked them.

The Swami was fearless. He was convinced that his message was relevant and had to be spoken. It was his show, he was in control, but he had to protect himself, especially in the beginning. It is not that the devotees were completely ready to be on his side, so he had to control the whole thing and say, "Don't disturb, don't disturb." He depended on Kṛṣṇa as he went on speaking the difficult-to-understand philosophy—concepts of *Bhagavad-gītā* and the assertion that Kṛṣṇa is God. He just went right ahead without watering it down in the least.

You couldn't understand it all, but you stayed and listened to him. You caught a word here and there, Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa. Missed a word here and there. I can recall thinking that I did not understand very much of it. It just went over your head and stayed there. Anyway . . .

We're in the storefront and there are noises on the street, but we're sittin' and listenin' to the Swami. We like to chant; we like the ringing of the *kāratālas*. Everybody chants together: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. (Whoever heard of such a thing?—that you chant with a one-two-*three* beat and with brass cymbals? You never read about chanting in any book about Vedānta or *Bhagavad-gītā* or yoga. It was far out.) The cymbals ring loudly, and the door is open and he's singing.

When the chanting was going on and the *kāratālas* were ringing, that would be more likely to attract passers-by to look in. But it was a time when they really couldn't disturb because the chanting was so dominant. Their shouts and their remarks couldn't overcome the chanting. The Swami was

more vulnerable when the whole audience was quiet and he was lecturing. But when there was *kīrtana*, it was as if he had the upper hand. And yet more people did gather to look in at that time, and that was part of the adventure of going there. When you chant you are more on Swamijī's side, you are not just observing, but you are part of the *kīrtana*—you were what people were looking in at. Yet you did it because you wanted to experience the *kīrtana*, never mind the noises from the street.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.14

Prabhupāda, I'll tell you everything
and you will tell me if I am off.
You are the director of my life.
Let me not seek your endorsement for
my devious purposes.
Please grant me your service.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I want to meditate
on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa 24 hours a day.
You want me to do that
and you are my ever well-wisher.
I wish to go forward,
but how can I,
unless you are pleased with me?

We can only approach Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī
through Her intimate associates.
You are one, no doubt about that.
You preached Her glories everywhere,
invited and installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities
in Dallas, New York, L.A., Bombay . . .

Prabhupāda, may I to say
"Queen of Vrāja," "Mother of Bhakti?"
May I wake to Her service?
I'm not completely cleared of material sex desire,
but I am keeping my vows—
can I please begin?
It is so late already, with little time left—
I've failed to worship Radharani.
I never stopped to consider
that She is the refuge of all devotees,
the dearmost friend,
I thought I shouldn't think of Her,
but now I am begging . . .

Prabhupāda, please protect my creeper of
devotional service
through practical acts for your mission.
There I will find Rādhārāṇī's blessings.

Prabhupāda, you said Rādhārāṇī is only known
by liberated souls.
And yet you spoke to us about Her,
attracted our minds to
"the best devotee of Kṛṣṇa.
She loves Him the most."
In 1966, when we were still grimed
with Second Avenue dust,
you showed us Rādhārāṇī in a painting
and you wrote in *TLC* that she is
15 days younger than Kṛṣṇa
and when He stands in His youthful pose,
She puts Her hand on His shoulder.
When I found a color photo of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa,
looking very young, standing together,
I asked if you liked it.
You nodded and said, "Yes"
and I had that photo reproduced
for all your disciples.
Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the cow, Yamunā, the forest.
They are the ultimate abode of worship,
perfection and love of God.

You taught us this from the beginning:
"Rādhā is kind. So we only fast
until noon on Her birthday."
Prabhupāda, tell us more about Rādhārāṇī.
Often you'd say, "No, we are not fit to hear."
But then you would tell something,
with caution.

And you sent me Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities.
I was your priest and you watched me
pouring the milk on Her
shoulders, arms, and waist.
You said sternly, "On Her head!"

Prabhupāda, please teach me still.
I want to remember you and follow you
in practical service and in philosophy
of the *avatāras*, Creation, *Bhagavad-gītā*—
all leading to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes;
they are the ultimate,
you have made it clear.

And Rādhārāṇī's name is called upon
eight times in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.
You say we should call on Her
as a child calls for the mother.
"O Energy of God! O Lord!
Please engage me in Your service."

*****

Prabhupāda: The Strength Within Us
3.15

In order to stay in touch with Prabhupāda, we can't be dead. We have to be active and reciprocate. However, there are some things that Prabhupāda instigates himself. There is a spiritual strength, a faithfulness that I feel, which I know is from Prabhupāda—it is almost like a growth of some kind, and it has its own existence and its own strength. According to *śāstra*, this is the *bhakti-latā*, the devotional creeper. In *Prábhupāda Meditations* we are mostly seeking his presence by actual memories, which we try to see and feel and touch. What I'm trying to describe now it not less tangible, although it is not exactly a Prabhupāda-*līlā*. It is Prabhupāda being with us in an important way.

For example, when I hear skeptical talk against Kṛṣṇa, there are certain responses of faithfulness that are within my power, in my consciousness and intellect, and so I reply with those. Sometimes I may become overwhelmed by opposition or distractions, but nevertheless, there is this supply of strength that keeps coming from being a disciple of Prabhupāda. We speak of causeless mercy. Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda have claimed us, and in a sense we can't get away, because we have sincerely surrendered. As the *Bhāgavatam* says, "If you ever sincerely surrender to the lotus feet of the Lord, you can never go completely away even if you seem to. The Lord will claim you back."

Let me try to describe it again. We say that we are staying in spiritual life by the blessings of the spiritual master. Sometimes we can actually feel that blessing living within us, in addition to our own meager resources, and in addition to what we are as persons. It is part of you, but you know where it comes from: from Prabhupāda. One should use this strength courageously—and fight on the basis of knowing it is there. Kṛṣṇa says His devotee will not be vanquished: *Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati.* So one should think, "I'm a follower of Prabhupāda, his *śakti* is in me, I can sense it. I needn't be afraid. I can go anywhere and preach; he will protect me."

Maybe this is what the Vaiṣṇavas are expressing in their poetry when they say, "By the blessings of the *guru* the blind man can see the stars in the sky, the lame man can cross mountains, and the dumb man can speak like a great orator." It is the sense of being empowered by the spiritual master. Devotees

can witness these connections and speak of them and glorify the fact that Prabhupāda lives in us.

It may also be said that as we get attached to Prabhupāda, there is a tendency to weaken in other relationships, especially material ones. If family ties are material, then they tend to weaken.

The more you become Prabhupāda's disciple, the less you become interested in other things that are not connected to Kṛṣṇa. You also develop friendships with those who are Prabhupāda's followers.

In my case, I did not know of Kṛṣṇa except for the painting on the cover of Prabhavānanda Swami's *Bhagavad-gītā*. I thought He was some mythical figure. But by meeting Swamijī on the Lower East Side, I began to know of my relationship with Kṛṣṇa, starting with hearing about Him. And that has grown to the stage where I now identify Kṛṣṇa as God, the God whom I understood in my childhood, the Supreme being, the Creator, the God of religion and so on. As you make further progress, you begin to understand Kṛṣṇa as Kṛṣṇa. He becomes part of yourself, just as Prabhupāda does. Even if you neglect the attachment, He is still there, and He acts from His side, and that is a wonderful thing.

The Prabhupāda connection is tangible and strong. By his strength, you maintain yourself in spiritual life. If you haven't fallen down from the four rules, it is because he is protecting you. You should be able to perceive where the strength is coming from. "O Gurudeva, your mercy is all that I am made of." As I perceive it, I am grateful, and I promise—with feelings of regret for having failed so far—to protect and reciprocate with Prabhupāda's

protective presence. Request him to stay always and especially as you go over the bridge from here to the next life.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
3.16

Can I swear that the sweater I wore
which I claimed was his own,
was actually worn by him?
Do I have documents and lab tests
to prove that the hair in this reticule
is from his head? (Bits of stiff gray).
As Prabhupāda says of the spiritual world,
"You may believe or not believe,
but it is a fact."
We have memories, his books
and at least some of us know
that he wrote them because we heard him
speaking into the dictaphone,
we counted the digits on the machine,
heard his voice as we typed up entire books,
Kṛṣṇa, TLC, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam . . .

No doubt about him,
although sometimes we forget.
He was everything of the legend
and yet true and factual,
a pure devotee
who did everything for Kṛṣṇa.

He cared for the whole world,
was angry that the people were devoured
by their governments. He grew in conviction
that it was possible for everyone
to take to Lord Kṛṣṇa's service.

I want to fall at his feet
as in the old days,
losing unwillingness,
aware that I am in the presence
of one who is dear to Kṛṣṇa,
and yet speaking with him
in a natural way.
Because he has accepted us
as his sons and daughters.

Prabhupāda stands at the door
of a house in Surat
watching his disciples come down the street
in their *harināma* parade,
honored by the people of the city.
He stays up all night worrying
that we may be cheating
in the name of serving him and Kṛṣṇa—
and we are.
He loves us and wants us to
know, serve, and love Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda wakes at 1 A.M., writes on a trunk,
sits patiently through a ten-hour plane ride,
is interrupted by blundering disciples
and wild dogs all night in Bombay.
We try to help him and he says,
"It is not my credit but yours
that this movement is spreading."
But we have trouble,
divorces, falldowns, betrayals.
Of course he has good moons too,
servants that stay on the battlefield.
And many who seem to go away
never forget him, remaining true
to what he teaches.
And now he has passed through
and we are trying to serve and recall,
but what can we do?
So much independence is sprouting up
in this servant, so much unsurrender,
which I never knew before.
But I'm grateful to be his.

Part Four

Worshiping the Minutes
4.1

> If by chance such a moment comes when I can once again see Kṛṣṇa, then I shall worship those seconds, moments, and hours with flower garlands and pulp of sandalwood and decorate them with all kinds of jewels and ornaments.
> —*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 2.38

In our own little way, we are also worshiping the hours and minutes when we were with Śrīla Prabhupāda. One way to worship sacred time is to ask it, "Please come forward so that we may praise you with words and tell the world what it was like. Kindly come forward and reveal yourself, minutes and hours in which I was with Prabhupāda."

Almost as soon as I began seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda, I also began fondly remembering him and what he said. After attending his morning class at 26 Second Avenue, I would walk east one block to First Avenue and then walk north to the Fifth Street Welfare Office. Just before Fifth Street was a very big apartment building, and I used to stand in the entrance way under a roof and "kill time" before going in to punch the clock. I remember standing there and reviewing some of the philosophy that Prabhupāda had spoken. He had said that any activity, if coated with *bhakti,* becomes a type of yoga. When fruitive activities are coated with *bhakti,* they become *karma-yoga.* Philosophical speculation coated with *bhakti* becomes *jñāna-yoga,* and pure devotional service activities are *bhakti-yoga.* What a wonderful philosophy!

I worship the moments spent with Swamijī in his apartment. On one particularly quiet night, I was the only one with him. The front doorbell rang and I went down to see who it was. It was Donald, a pudgy, bespectacled young man from uptown. He was maybe the only nonhippie coming to the storefront at that time. He was a junior executive with the Pepsi-Cola company, and he usually dressed in shirt and tie. When I met him at the door, he asked if he could come up to see the Swami. I replied, "He's alone tonight, so let me see if it is all right." I went back upstairs and said, "It is someone who wants to see you."

Prabhupāda asked, "What is he like?" I told Prabhupāda that Donald appeared very respectable, he was not a crazy person. When Prabhupāda heard that, he gladly gave his permission, and I went down to let Donald in. He came upstairs, took off his stylish raincoat, and went in to sit down with Swamijī in his room. I stayed in the other room where I had some typing to do. But I overheard Donald asking academic questions about the position of Lord Śiva in relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Donald later got initiated and was given the name Dvārakādhīśa, but within a few years, he had stopped coming to the temple.

Remembering and worshiping the minutes may be done by offerings of flowers, just as we do in *ārati*. But I also have the feeling of shooting into the past like a sportsman hitting targets with a bow and arrow. The targets are there waiting, all the minutes and hours of the past.

Inevitably, we turn toward memories that we've enjoyed many times. But that doesn't make them

less important or less worshipable. If we remember a favorite moment once again, it may bring out new lights.

One time, my supervisor, Mr. Rice, shouted over in my direction, "Mr. Guarino, you are gonna have to complete the Garcia case so that she can get a check this afternoon. I want you to stay in the office and do it, so don't go out to lunch until one. Is that all right?" It was not all right, but what could I say? So I went to the hallway phone booth and dialed the Swami's number. The thing I was most attached to in the world was going every day at noon to have lunch with the Swami and the boys. So Mr. Rice's command drove me to the radical move of phoning up Swamijī. This was in the early days, before I was initiated.

I heard the phone ring and the Swami answered, "Hello?"

I said, "Swamijī, this is Steve." I can't remember for sure, but I think I added, "Do you remember me?" At least that was definitely on my mind.

Swamijī said yes, he remembered me.

I said, "I won't be able to come today at noon for lunch because I have to stay in the office and work. But I'll come over at one o'clock. Could you ask the devotees to please save some *prasādam* for me?"

"Yes," said Prabhupāda. He made it sound like it was not a problem. As I hung up, I was very pleased that I had made that phone call. Nowadays it doesn't seem like the proper way to treat Prabhupāda, and in the later years of ISKCON with Prabhupāda, there was no question of doing such a thing. First of all, you wouldn't be able to reach Prabhupāda by phone; you would reach his secre-

tary. But in those days it was right, and it was nice. It was a way to surrender and develop friendship. I very much wanted to go and be with him and eat his *prasādam.*

It turned out to be a better treat than usual because by the time I got there, all the boys were gone. Swamijī was there and the rug was still rolled back. The office had been demanding—so much bureaucracy and talk and nonsense, and now I had only one hour before I had to plunge back into it. I came to take shelter with the Swami.

He told me to sit down, and so I waited alone in the room. He made up the plate and then came in and put it before me on the floor. I said, "Thank you," and I bowed down before him.

He said, "Yes."

Nowadays we bow down so many times, but this was the first time that I bowed down. When I had met Swamijī at the door, I did not bow down, and neither did I bow down to him in the temple. When he saw this boy finally bowing down, it pleased him and he said, "Yes." I knew it was a significant step forward. Although now I bow down hundreds of times, I wonder if I'm actually surrendering and worshiping? But that time, I overcame my pride and really did it, bowed down before the rice, *dāl,* and *capatīs,* and especially at the bare, lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.2

Hawaii, January 1974

Prabhupāda cooked
in the kitchen of the Hawaii temple—
He said there is one day in the calendar
when the *guru* cooks for his disciples.
So he went in and directed,
personally stirred and mixed
and whatever was done by others,
was done by his order.
He sat on a chair in the middle of the room.
Bali Mardan cooked the *kacauris*—
Prabhupāda instructing him to put them *twice*
into the boiling ghee,
so that they would have hard shells.
He added salt into a pot,
by the measurement of his fingers.
Later he asked, "How many
kacauris did you eat?"
Me and a brother said, "Two"
and Prabhupāda said, "Yes, that's enough."

Walking with him briskly
through the flatland park
to the edge of the ocean where
waves crashed high against the rocks.
He said, "*Kṣatriyas* get enthusiasm
from their wives. But a *sannyāsī*
doesn't need that."

They had given me a camera:
"You are his secretary, take pictures."
So I ran ahead, turned, and clicked,
but soon I stopped that practice.
They gave me a notebook,
but I did not keep a diary.
They gave me an expensive tape recorder,
which I used to carefully record his words.
But sometimes in his room
in private, he might talk, and you
couldn't run out to get the recorder.

My master,
you wore a soft wool scarf
on those breezy, tropical morning walks.
We rode down the elevator with you
in the skyscraper hotel where
Hawaiian music played.
We walked out, dawn just beginning.
You did not like Waikiki Beach
because you saw everyone wasting time,
"like monkeys" jumping in the surf.
And when we drove to the temple,
facing the long line of car headlights,
you commented how they were all up early
for no good purpose.

I was happy then,
your new, bumbling
servant-cum-secretary,
masseur, cook, editor, typist.
A domestic of the beloved spiritual master
of hundreds of disciples.
No use asking myself again
why I left that service.

Every morning we walked in the same place.
"Good morning" to jogging passers-by.
You fielded our questions, defying
the atheists, and we representing them.
When I saw a 747 jet I said
"Look, they have some control,
why do you say they are useless?"
"*Some* control," you said,
"means no control."
I beg for the essence of
walking with you:
courage in the face of death,
spiritual wisdom which you taught,
faith in Kṛṣṇa.

Someone asked you, "Can we
chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *japa* while doing something
else?"
You said "Yes, just as a woman
in India can walk balancing a big pot
on her head. But it is better
to just do one thing while chanting."
Sometimes the surf was so strong
we couldn't hear you for a few minutes.
Then back to the car,
I did not like racing ahead for photos,
because I wanted to stay with you.

*****

Psychologists analyze religious conversions and give many reasons why a person accepts the absolute truth of scripture. I am not trying to analyze my conversion in that way. I know what happened to me: a pure devotee came into my life.

The pure devotee (Prabhupāda) has a lot of ammunition. He has very good reasoning power and good arguments. He has personal saintliness and a mystical connection with the Supreme. He had the ancient and great Vaiṣṇava tradition behind him. He was from India and spoke of many *ācāryas* who also accepted Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He said that what he was preaching was the same thing that Christ and Buddha had taught. So if we went against him, we went against all the Viṣṇu incarnations, all the God-teachers and sages of renunciation and lovers of the Supreme. He frankly said that the truth was beyond our senses; we should accept it and be humble.

When I speak of my own conversion, I may also speak for other devotees who joined with me at this time. One thing we all had in common is that we were suffering from material life and we admitted it. Prabhupāda said that what he was teaching would bring us freedom from anxiety. We wanted that. Swamiji himself appeared to be free of anxiety, and he was "fixed." He said that we could do it just by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. We tried it, and when we did not feel much change, Prabhupāda would assure us, "You will, eventually." He told us to be patient.

But for ourselves, did we experience *anything?* Yes, undoubtedly; *something.* I attained release from bad personal habits and addictions. This was something tangible; I knew for sure. In a more general sense, I also experienced a new meaning to life, a willingness to be part of the adventure of living and hearing from the Swami. To speak psychologically, I would say that Kṛṣṇa consciousness fulfilled a deep need in my psyhe, a desire to be like a monk, someone who would seriously approach a *guru.* I had perhaps never thought of it exactly in those terms, but I had read about it in novels like Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* and *Siddhartha.* The idea of discipleship was not entirely strange to me. These are some of the things that the Swami had going for him in his battle against our cynicism—the battle to save souls, to convert us.

Even a convert sometimes gets stuck along the way. One night, after the Swami had shaved his head so that it was gleaming, he sat in his room and talked happily about the four-armed form of Viṣṇu. But when I saw him, I fell back into thinking, "How can I believe this?" And the first time I heard him say that Kṛṣṇa married 16,000 wives, that also set me backwards, and I thought, "I can't go further. I can't accept this. It is too fantastic." Sometimes you expressed these doubts to Prabhupāda and sometimes you did not. If you did ask him, he was always ready with strong argument and *śāstra.* He was not in the slightest bit doubtful, and neither, by his own understanding, was he being dogmatic. He used to say, "You may believe or not believe, that is a different matter." Theoretically, you might imagine that someone in the world might have a better

argument against the Swami, but *you* did not have any better argument. Besides, part of you very much *wanted* to believe him, but you just couldn't get past some of your doubts.

When I heard about the 16,000 wives, I blurted out, "I can't accept this."

Prabhupāda replied, "*You* cannot? The greatest scholars cannot." My doubt aroused his concern. There I was, another ignorant person who could not accept Kṛṣṇa. Why did not I accept him? *"Why don't you believe it?"* This was another strength of Prabhupāda's—he could answer questions with cool logic, but he was also deeply involved in what he said. He was more involved in his conviction than you were in your doubt.

"Why can't Kṛṣṇa marry 16,000 wives? He's the creator of everything, and He's in everyone's heart. If He comes out of the heart of a small number of persons and becomes their husbands, then He can do it. He can do anything."

One time while Swamijī was lecturing about life on the higher planets, he added, "I am not just saying this, but I am convinced." That blew my mind. Other times he said, "Rest assured" or, "Take it from me." He was willing to teach us on that basis also. He was saying in effect, "I know what I'm talking about. I realize this. It is a fact, so please accept it and take it from me. If you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa you will understand that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All these things will become revealed to you. Take it from me, there are higher planets. Just because you cannot understand it, and you cannot touch it with your senses, that does not mean that it does not exist."

Gradually, I accepted whatever Prabhupāda said. Whatever answers and convictions I now hold, they come from that process—as a doubtful person, I inquired and got answers from Swamijī.

A Godbrother said that when you accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is like a package deal; you accept everything—the demigods in the higher planets, four-armed forms, thousand-headed forms, and so on. Everything starts to be part of the same axiomatic truth—whatever is in the *Vedas* or whatever is taught by the spiritual master. You do not pick and choose. Besides, there is a *reason* why everything is believable. If it is not "believable" to you, that is also understandable. You do not have to comprehend it with your own brain—it is often beyond you. Once you accept these premises, then you accept particular teachings that sound strange to outsiders, on the principle of *acintyā,* inconceivable knowledge. And as we know, knowledge borne of the senses is defective. The realities of other worlds don't have to tally with our world. The *guru* knows what is right.

Once you plunged into it, you began to accept it. You saw American devotees painting pictures of Viṣṇu with four arms. There *is* Lord Viṣṇu and He *does* have four arms, and it is not the most impossible thing in the world. You have *two* arms, and He has two more arms, so what's the big deal? There is *spiritual form.* We started getting unstuck from our previous conceptions, by Prabhupāda's grace.

This was a school where we sat in his apartment and asked questions, and where he lectured in the temple and taught us all these things. We became different than other people. We became his

"confidential devotees." As he said in one lecture, "The other day, some of our confidential devotees were talking together, and we all concluded that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the great need of human society."

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.4

He was giving Rūpānuga the *brāhmaṇa* thread
in the Allston storefront, 1968.
He said, "You will go to Vṛndāvana,
and they will say you are a nice *guru*."
He also said, "No matter how expert
the *guru* is, if the disciple doesn't follow,
what more can the *guru* do?"
We were surprised to hear that.
We had thought
maybe the *guru* would save everyone—
but if they don't obey?

He sometimes spoke to only six of us.
Because no one else came.
Kids running by rapping the window.
"Children are supposed to be the divine folk."
Prabhupāda: "Supposed to be."
The landlord's wife: "Goddamn this house!"
Prabhupāda: "What did she say?
This is a house of God?"

At the end, will memories of you
come to me like this, sporadically?
Or will I focus on one vision
of you leading me?
Will you pull me through forcefully?
Will you come in a dream
in saffron in a dark room
with a shining aura
opening all the riddles for me?
Telling me I get what I deserve
and yet with great solace?
I will accept your service
life after life.

Please don't fade away.
As the devotee in *Īśopaniṣad* says,
"Please remember all that I have done for you."
Prabhupāda, do you remember—
I changed the letters on your sign
in the storefront window in 1966,
I gave measly money,
grew like a plant under your care.
Why reject me?
I know you don't.

Please remember all of us.
Please come to each of us
with a riddle-unlocking light
that makes us see our failures.
Crying tears of long release,
we'll give up wrong ways
and accept new service unto your lotus feet.
Is that possible?

I will recall
& if someone will listen, that will help:
"He looked beautiful and strange
like my idea of Buddha.
He sat on a yellow straw mat,
the same level as us,
on the floor,
handed out a few pairs of *karatalas*.
In the summer. In that store.
Asked us—commanded—
"Chant. 1-2-3."
Maybe I will really see him again.
And in the dangerous moments of death,
in the interim before the next life,
Prabhupāda please forgive my offenses.
Be merciful to all of us.
As you are.

*****

Facing the Doubters
4.5

In my correspondence today, I answered a person who was doubting Prabhupāda. He said, "Most senior devotees spare Prabhupāda when there are criticism of what went wrong in ISKCON, in the *gurukulas*, in marriages and other institutional failures. Even when devotees criticize the GBC, they spare Prabhupāda. But I am prepared to criticize Prabhupāda, and even the Vedic literatures, with charges of fundamentalism and biased attitudes."

I answered this person at length, but it brought to my mind that I might be seen by him and other crit-

ics as a "true believer." It is true that I do not exercise criticism against Prabhupāda. And so I thought about why I do not do this.

If I were a dogmatic "yes man" and did not really think intelligently about the things that Prabhupāda taught, but just praised and praised him, then it might be said that I am praising him out of fear of investigating doubts that might be on my mind. Or maybe I praise him but don't make his cause presentable to all kinds of doubters. In other words, if I would face doubts—even doubts of Prabhupāda—and if I could solve them successfully, I could bring more people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

But this is tricky ground. Some of Prabhupāda's followers have been willing to see him relatively, as one of many spiritual masters. They take an "objective" viewpoint, that Prabhupāda is one of several opinions and not necessarily the best or most advanced.

But at some point, there is the danger of loss of chastity towards one's *guru*. Of course, the critics will continue to question even the relationship of *guru*-disciple as taught in the Vaiṣṇava literature. They will perhaps opt for some other kind of spiritual relationship that a seeker on the path might have with many *ācāryas* from the past, or they will give up all *gurus*. I choose not to take those steps.

Just to give an example, one charge made was that Prabhupāda was a fundamentalist, whereas other *ācāryas* favor a symbolic interpretation of the scriptures. The critic claimed that Prabhupāda is making us narrow-minded by giving us a path that is safe for us. The path of symbolic interpretation of scriptures will bring too much doubt, and we would

begin to speculate and not have faith, and therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda keeps us very strictly in line just by saying, "Accept everything here as literally true."

One reply I have to this is that even if Śrīla Prabhupāda and Vyāsadeva and other *ācāryas* do sometimes teach us in preliminary ways, as one deals with less intelligent people, we will not be harmed if we follow their exact instructions. If there is more esoteric information that is beyond us, and which we do not know because our teachers do not teach us—still we will not be harmed if we trust them. They know the best way to bring us through all obstacles back home, back to Godhead.

But I have another response: The literal presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the scriptures that Prabhupāda insists on is itself not simplistic or dogmatic. Prabhupāda states that Kṛṣṇa certainly walked the earth in His divine form, and He is also present now in His holy name. He is fully present in stone or brass Deities, but these truths are themselves very esoteric and can only be fully understood by the pure devotee. As stated in the scriptures, *ataḥ śrī kṛṣṇa nāmādī* . . . "One cannot understand Kṛṣṇa with blunt senses. When the senses are purified through service, then one can understand Him." Prabhupāda taught esoteric knowledge, but he has kindly given it to us in such a way that even beginners can accept Kṛṣṇa literally—but they should know that the full Kṛṣṇa will be revealed to us only when we are purified.

These are some typical defenses I make, and I think it is right for me to do that. I am willing to hear a challenging attitude as long as it is not blasphemous. I can hear the doubts of sincere people

even when they feel they cannot follow Prabhupāda anymore. But when I hear them, I will use a critical ear toward their doubt. It is not that I accept whatever doubts they raise about my spiritual master.

Dealing with their doubts may strengthen me; I don't have to be afraid of them. If I want to represent my spiritual master, then I will have to represent him against opposition. Prabhupāda has said that the more we meet opposition, the stronger we become. I welcome opposition that comes in the form of doubts in order to become strengthened and to remain peaceful. I should not feel puffed-up that I am better than those who are having the doubts; but still, I have to serve my *guru*.

When I hear these challenges, and when I respond by defending Prabhupāda, at those moments I stop dwelling on my own inadequacies. There is no time for it. Then you have to become a defender. With your intelligent faculties you defend Prabhupāda. One might say that when one is fighting or preaching on behalf of Prabhupāda, he gives up the "luxury" of keeping in tune with all one's inner emotions. But that fighting is itself a kind of Prabhupāda meditation.

This also makes me more grateful to the loving connections that I have with Prabhupāda. I do not see him only as a speaker of the *parampara* from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. I do not see him merely as what some people call "a conservative Vaiṣṇava teacher" as opposed to a "liberal Vaiṣṇava teacher"—But I see him as Swamijī, as Prabhupāda. And I must continue to see him that way, as the one who saved me. Lord Kṛṣṇa arranged

that I should meet Śrīla Prabhupāda, and therefore I must never see the coming together of myself and others with Prabhupāda as mundane. At the same time, let us refine and strengthen our relationship with him, and that may have to sometimes include confronting the doubts of others, and doubts of our own, with satisfactory replies.

But one may object, "You have predetermined that you are going to always agree with him." In one sense, my answer to that is yes. I surrender to him as spiritual master, and I personally accept the Vaiṣṇava method of surrendering to the *guru*. If in any way my *guru's* presentation appears open to criticism by the world, then it is my job to try to make his teachings more presentable, as a service to him. The example is given that if the *guru* sits for a portrait and his button is undone, it 's not wrong to go forward and adjust his clothing so that it looks nicer in the picture. Or if there is no garland on, add the garland; or if in his purport some editing is required, then edit it. This is all done as service.

I do not predetermine that I'm not going to use my critical faculties. When I cannot understand something that Prabhupāda says, or even if I cannot agree with it yet, I regard that as a problem to work on in my spiritual life. I try to see in the right way that I am a fool; I am a disciple of my spiritual master—I'm not more intelligent than him.

I take this position eagerly. It is a very exalted position. We are dealing ultimately with the inconceivable Supreme Personality of Godhead, and He says that He is pleased if you please His pure devotee. It is not a game to see who is the smartest wit, neither is it a test of logic. But it is a test of service, and these are some of the ways the test may come. He who remains faithful to the *guru*, and at the

same time uses his intelligence to always help present his *guru's* teachings to wider audiences, and who meets criticisms with argument and reason, will be a good disciple.

For our Prabhupāda meditations, we do not want to dwell on controversial issues. We want to meditate on relishable Prabhupāda-*kathā*, spoken and heard in the company of faithful devotees. In the *Kṛṣṇa* book, in the "Teachings of the *Vedas* Personified" (which is a chapter full of arguments against Māyāvādīs), Prabhupāda states that the Vṛndāvana associates of Kṛṣṇa do not like to deal in controversies and debates. They like to enjoy the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and to serve Him in love. But if someone comes and challenges Kṛṣṇa, then they are ready to come forward and answer him. It should be in that spirit that Prabhupāda meditation may include dealing with criticisms.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.6

Prabhupāda—they sing your name
to a tropic tune in the Caribbean,
and to a Slavonic chant in Russia.
You appreciated all *kīrtanas*
when your followers sang enthusiastically.
Now we debate, "Is it all right to
sing this way or to dance this way?"—
but you encouraged all—
although you corrected Mahā-buddhi dāsa
and gestured to him with upraised hands that
he should dance as Lord Caitanya did and not
by shaking his hips.

That was in Chicago where you lectured
on Ajāmila.
In one class you said that
at the time of death, Ajamila
called out "Nārāyaṇa!"
And then you stopped speaking
while 500 disciples watched in silence.
It seemed like a long time before you spoke again
while you were absorbed in Kṛṣṇa conscious trance.

In Chicago you also asked the Evanston mayor
to give us a building free.
He said he'd talk to the Board about it.

Airport arrivals—
Do not say they were false,
even if the same chanters
no longer serve him.
They served him *then.*

You were happy to see us
dancing down corridors,
leading the way for the pure devotee.
Not caring for outsiders.

They are outsiders—
who can't appreciate the pure devotee.
What is the matter with them?
Why doesn't everyone bow down
to see your form and pure aura?
At least we won't let them
stop our loving.
It is too rare
to receive you.

He appears to be just a small man from India,
but not ordinary, very elderly.
But see how he is dressed
without Western compromise,
and how these young men and women
are running before and after him.
It is no magic or bluff.
It is Kṛṣṇa the Supreme,
the source of all bliss,
our release from birth and death.
He carried the keys,
he's the Vaiṣṇava *guru par excellence.*
If you will just listen and obey.

Prabhupāda, remember me?
Any one of us can say that.
As we stand apart from the crowd for a moment
and with longing eyes, meet his gaze,
he shows that he knows each one.
He lives for that,
every ounce of his life is for that—
to recommend us,
to the Lord in Goloka.
Will you take me?
"Yes," he replies, "if you want to go."

Let us run to him.
I know that now it is twenty years later,
and I have arthritis,
and she has three children,
and he is too embarrassed to dance
like a madman in an airport,
and he is bitter about what has happened.

There are so many reasons . . .
but let's run to him,
be children again.
Do not care for outsiders.
Fall at his feet.

Prabhupāda, there is a car outside waiting
for you. And devotees are racing back
to the temple where they are touching up
the last paint and putting flowers
in vases in your room and I hope
that he is cooking a nice lunch for you.
Please come this way.
Step aside everyone, our spiritual master is coming!
Please Śrīla Prabhupāda, please excuse us
for our mistakes. We are so glad
that you could come to take us back.

*****

Prayer and Practice
4.7

I like to converse with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I pray to him, along with Kṛṣṇa. I say their names; I go through Prabhupāda to Kṛṣṇa. The talking is also a form of heart-to-heart talk.

I speak, and then I listen to them. Again they are together. Kṛṣṇa speaks directly in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He says, "One who understands Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without doubting, is the knower of everything. He therefore engages in My full devotional service." And after Lord Kṛṣṇa

speaks, Prabhupāda elaborates and explains to me what Śrī Kṛṣṇa means.

After hearing from them, I speak some more to my masters. I tell them what I am trying to do, where I am at. I ask for help. I express my thanks to them and feel my loving connection to them. I think that this kind of communication is far more important than too much *thinking about* Prabhupāda (rather than *being with him*). After all, I am not an academic scholar of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am a devotee.

Conversing with Śrīla Prabhupāda is a form of meditation that can be done on a daily basis. As we face new predicaments, there is always new need to express ourselves to our guides. I try not to speak *only* out of pragmatic need but to enter a loving exchange.

I accompany my prayers with action. At the end of the day, I give thanks for the service connection that I have enjoyed during that day *and* the ways in which Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa came and touched me—as well as the ways that I failed them.

Let me cite my present situation. I've come to a London airport after a nine hour flight from Seattle, Washington. There is a heat wave on in England, and it is 90 degrees Fahrenheit. I am sitting with a traveling companion in a noisy airport hotel, with all the jet noises and impure air coming in the window. I am certainly involved with all these immediate and temporary conditions, although I know they do not produce a very rarefied state of devotional consciousness. Why then should I waste Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda's time by telling them, "Here I am. I 'm hot and bothered."

Admitting my low state may be a starter, but I try to go beyond it.

Prabhupāda meditation transcends time and place, although it can happen in any time and place. He can be with you even in a hot cubbyhole in a cheap hotel. And when he does come to you, your place becomes transcendental.

Rūpa Gosvāmī has stated that everything can be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Even the botheration of travel can provoke a fond meditation. For example, as soon as we came into this hotel room, I took a shower. It occurred to me that I should give a cool bath to the deities with whom I travel—Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva, Subhadrā and Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁha. And so I did, starting with Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was a pleasure to give them a cool wipe down and to bathe the deities. In similar ways, we can always dovetail our ongoing situation with Prabhupāda meditation of one sort or another. In the case of Deity worship, the Lord and the pure devotee accompany you in Their personal forms and make you think, "How can I serve Him now? What can I do to please Him?"

What about memories? Do you have any memories now of Prabhupāda? Did any occur today? Or even if they did not occur, can you enter your memories now?

Trying again . . . I think of Prabhupāda in his worship room at 26 Second Avenue. We would go in there, especially before the *kīrtanas* in the temple, and do whatever Swamijī did as he sat before the little coffee table. On hot nights in New York, some of us also started wearing no shirts, and so our arms were bare. We watched Swamijī carefully and tried

to put on *tilaka* in approximately the same places on our own bodies.

Give respect to the memories of Swamijī. Just hold them in your mind, worship his lotus feet. You do not have to be a radio broadcaster telling everyone about it. It is a moment of remembrance for your own benefit. Appreciate that you were there; worship the minutes and hours. Prabhupāda, I loved you, I do love you. I appreciate the Kṛṣṇa consciousness that you have brought. I want to be carried out of this material world; please save me. Please let me remember that I am your menial *śiśya* who types for you, who learns from you, who practices Vaiṣṇavism under your direction.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.8

Dear Prabhupāda, I am trying to remember,
did I ever clean a dirty stove for you,
and crusted black pots,
in a messed-up kitchen?
I know you asked Nandarāṇī to scrub a pot
and she went into the bathroom tub,
wearing her Levis, scrubbed again and again
until you were satisfied
that all the black was gone.
When Stryādhīśa returned to you,
after some months of *māyā*,
he cleaned the kitchen at 26 Second Avenue,
stacking all the pots and pans shining.
And you were pleased.

Yes, I did that too,
and you looked in and saw me.
I did it today,
self-consciously sloshing and scrubbing
while listening to you speak on tape:
"The sun takes away the duration of life
of everyone, but fails to do so
for one who listens to the messages
of *Uttamaśloka.*"

You would see my essays
when they were published in *Back to Godhead;*
in your room you read aloud
a couple of my 1966 poems
and said, "That's nice" to the one with the line,
"When we are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa
and the sun goes in and out,
I am afraid that I will be taken by Lord Indra
on a ride across the rainbow."
And today, do you accept these labors?

Only because you were here
do we have your books—
they did not just drop from the sky.
But from your hand,
days and nights from your devout service,
writing and typing in Vṛndāvana and Delhi
and New York—
"Science of Godhead,"
"Prayers of King Kulaśekhara,"
"Back to Godhead Number 5."

That photo of you in *Easy Journey to Other Planets,*
wrapped in *khaḍi* folds, round spectacles,
an upright smiling *sādhu,*
a writer, as yet unknown,
the one who would come.

Because of you,
we are safely immersed in duties,
in the kitchen,
at the writer's desk
working against the clock
on "a marathon" of one sort or another,
sixteen rounds, satisfied,
lost within service to you,
with the world far behind us.
That's your gift to us.
And from here you say
we will see Kṛṣṇa eye to eye.

It is comforting to think of you,
because you accept us despite our falldowns;
you just want us to chant the Lord's names,
be servants of your Guru Mahārāja,
love the all-attractive Lord
and do not waste even a minute of time.

*****

'66 Kaleidoscope
4.9

A kaleidoscope is a tube-shaped optical instrument that you rotate to produce symmetrical designs by means of mirrors that constantly change

patterns made by bits of colored glass. Memories of being with Prabhupāda sometimes appear like that. This seems to especially happen when you travel a lot, because you tend to shake up your identity and your consciousness. It is different than when staying in the same place and following the same routine.

But a kaleidoscope is abstract. When you look into it, you do not see a meadow and cows; you see all fragments of light, diamonds, and swirls and chips and sparks. When you shake it up again, hold it to the light and look in—there is another beautiful combination of fragmented colors. Similarly, I tend to get a jumble of images when I shake my "1966 kaleidoscope."

A little flash of the movie, *Happiness at Second Avenue*—Swamijī playing the drum there. . . the artificial colors of that film. You see yourself also with shaved head. Everyone looks young, but not so pretty or handsome. It is realism, or maybe the nature of the film to make you look a little funny. There you are, and there is Swamijī playing the drum, reaching forward to get his *kāratālas*.

When you look into the kaleidoscope, you see a lot of memory cans. You can look at them if you want. It is not an actual memory but a *memory can* that contains facsimile messages. It is something like that TV film, *Happiness on Second Avenue*, but this is your own film.

Here is a can of going into Swamijī's worship room. You go in there, sit down, and Swamijī sits down. He puts on his *tilaka* and you put on your *tilaka*.

But as you look into these memories, you feel somewhat frustrated and even annoyed. You are almost sarcastic in describing it because it is "canned," and they are only words. But I have tried to tell myself not to feel that way. Treat them tenderly. Know that at least some people do not mind hearing you say these things. Say it tenderly and lovingly, even if it is "just words." The scriptures are also words. Vaiṣṇavas do not say that words are inadequate. Even if they cannot completely capture something, words do a service. So have respect for them. Have respect for the words in the memories of Prabhupāda. And accept what you see in the kaleidoscope.

The floor of the storefront . . . Prabhupāda playing the drum . . . I am being lifted out of the tragedy I was in. I am wearing an aquamarine shirt, which I later cut up into a beadbag. That shirt was symbolic to me because I was wearing that same shirt a few weeks before I met Swamijī. A girl told me that it was a nice shirt. She was the wife of a friend of mine, and I was standing outside his apartment having a few so-called innocent words with her in the night near the East river. And then I walked home; I did not have a girlfriend. So that shirt was involved in a little romantic talk. It was the same shirt that I wore to the storefront and later cut up into a beadbag. It became an item of my liberation, because of Swamijī. . .

With him we could sit on the floor with our shirts of the past, our minds becoming cleansed by the cosmic sounds he described as "transcendental sound vibration," delivering the mind from all that

Lower East Side stuff and all the hurt of our previous lives . . .

We had grown up and broken away from our parents, gotten away from our country's conformity and the US Navy and all that, but the new freedom couldn't deliver us either. And the new jazz couldn't deliver us. We were still homeless, unhappy. But now Swamijī was delivering us with the cleansing, cosmic vibration we barely understood. All we knew was that it was Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa was far-out, and you could sing with Swami leading on the drum, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. Leave everything else behind.

Is it fiction or magic to think that we can go back? No, it is the truth, and yet it is not just mere newspaper reporting. The past cannot be spoken of, except by metaphors, just as Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* can only be described by the metaphors of Rūpa Gosvāmī . . .

And so we are sitting on the floor and Swamijī is above us. We are leaning toward him, taking from him, and giving him back our voices in chant and being delivered, getting high and becoming devotees gradually under his care. His permissible, liberal, fatherly, motherly care.

Do not be afraid to say it again—how he walked across the floor with his bare feet. Wherever you go, to East Europe, West Europe, South Europe, keep finding new audiences and tell them about Prabhupāda's bare feet across the floor. Tell them that Prabhupāda said, "Eat more! Eat more!" and how you ate more than you ever did. Rejoice in your association with Prabhupāda; tell everyone about his glories and do not be contaminated by

anyone who doesn't appreciate what he did. Rejoice in the memory from the floor where you sit as you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

The evening is coming to an end. The Puerto Ricans are shouting outside, the night is wild. . .

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.10

Prabhupāda sat on a pillow on the floor
and guided us step by step
through informal, simple installations
of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities.
He performed the *ārati* himself:
"Where is Kṛṣṇa's flute?
He is never without His flute,
even overnight."

"Prabhupāda, how can we install the Deity?"
"Just sing the *Govindam* prayers,
and make it as opulent as you can.
Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Do as you saw me
do it in New York. Make a throne
just like I did in L.A.
Be sincere.
Do not think it is a statue,
but here is Rādhā, here is Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda, when you say it,
and also when we do what you say,
it seems so simple.
Treat Kṛṣṇa with love,
He's the King, Rādhārāṇī
is the Queen,
but what is simple for you—
"Just offer your love"—
it is so hard
if you do not feel love.
How do we do it?

Prabhupāda says,
"There is no question of not feeling love.
Just do it by rules and regulations,
worshiping Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa within Kṛṣṇa.
Give Him a silver flute
and a helmet with a peacock feather.
Put a flower in Her hand."

Please tell us more.
"Do everything punctually, with *utsahā*,
do not change or deteriorate.
Devotion, not decoration."

But Prabhupāda, it is hard work!
Prabhupāda says,
"If you lose the *bhāva*
and think that our spiritual master has given us
this order to worship the Deity
and now he is gone away
and it is a burden in the neck—
as soon as you think like that
then eventually the service will stop
and the temple will become a place
for crows and dogs to pass stool.
Do not make the Deity
a stone for cracking nuts."

Prabhupāda saw Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa
when he was so young; his father led him
by the hand to see
Govinda in Calcutta.
The boy stood for hours watching
the golden form, the Lord's slanty eyes.
Then he wanted his own Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa,
imitating the *pūjārīs*.

As I asked him in 1968,
while standing outside a toy store
in Allston, Mass.:
"Prabhupāda, while you played with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa
we played with battleships.
Does this still affect us?"
"Yes," he said, "the impression is there."
Battleships, comic books, television,
Frankenstein movies, somehow we survived, but...
Please Lords, help us to worship You,
as Prabhupāda wants us to do,
to keep Your impressions in our mind.

Sticking to the Point
4.11

Prabhupāda insisted on repeating the point that we are all servants. We may serve our bodies or families or our nation, but it is best to serve the Supreme Lord, and that is our constitutional position. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna, "O son of Pṛthā, O conqueror of wealth, have you heard this with an attentive mind, and are your ignorance and illusion dispelled?" (Bg 18.72). Arjuna replies, "My dear Kṛṣṇa, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy, and I am now firm and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions." In the purport, Prabhupāda emphasizes that we are all in illusion thinking we are someone other than the servant of Kṛṣṇa. We may even think that we do not have to serve anyone. But we do serve—either the illusory energy or the Lord.

This morning when I read this, I recalled a criticism I had heard that Prabhupāda is a fundamentalist who does not deal with the esoteric interpretations of Vaiṣṇava philosophy. As I read the purport, I saw that Prabhupāda was being very basic and was repeating his theme. He says for example, "The living entity's constitutional position is to be a servitor; he has to serve either the illusory *māyā* or the Supreme Lord. And only when this illusion is overcome, can one understand Kṛṣṇa."

The illusion that Arjuna refers to was mentioned by Lord Kṛṣṇa when He said, "Is your illusion gone? Is your doubt gone?" Arjuna replied, "Yes, my illusion is gone; my doubt is gone, thanks to You." But in these verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the

Lord does not specifically state *what* the illusion is. Prabhupāda tells us what it is.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that almost all conditioned souls are in this state of illusion. If it were not so, then we would be liberated; we would be pure devotees. Prabhupāda is not wrong to insist on this. Because he is such an essential preacher, he wants to deliver us just as Kṛṣṇa delivered Arjuna. He is not speaking as an academic exercise or in a theoretical way. He wants to save the soul, guide it to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda wants us to actually transform ourselves in all our activities and thoughts, into *bhaktas* of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So his proposal is the heaviest, and it is also the most relishable. He is the most existential preacher, moving us to action. If we take this action, then all the esoteric truths of Kṛṣṇa consciousness *rasa* will be revealed to us. If we do not do what Prabhupāda says, then although we may find another teacher who will freely talk about esoteric topics, how will it move us to actually surrender ourselves to Kṛṣṇa? How many readers are so advanced that they have already done what Prabhupāda has asked us to do?

I think, in most cases, if anyone is not satisfied with Prabhupāda's writing, it is because they want to discuss something else, not because they have already complied with what he said. Rather they sometimes feel disturbed that he is asking them to surrender to Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They want to discuss something else.

Even if one wants to hear discussion of something else about Kṛṣṇa—to hear about Kṛṣṇa and

the *gopīs*, or hear a symbolic interpretation of the meaning of surrender—this can only be done in a meaningful way when one has already grasped his constitutional identity. Prabhupāda is sticking to his point, which is Kṛṣṇa's point and the point of the previous *ācāryas*. He is offering the reader enlightenment and a plan of action. *Our illusion is that we are thinking we do not have to serve anyone, or we think that we ourselves are the masters. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.*

Only when Arjuna overcame this illusion was he able to act under the guidance of his friend, Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda writes, "So he could understand that Kṛṣṇa was not only his friend but the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and he understood Kṛṣṇa factually." Therefore, to study *Bhagavad-gītā* is to study Kṛṣṇa factually. When one is in full knowledge, he naturally surrenders to Kṛṣṇa. In Arjuna's case, he took up his bow and arrows and fought.

Unless we hear submissively what Prabhupāda says, we cannot accept Kṛṣṇa. If we do not accept Kṛṣṇa, then we cannot be happy. And for the science of surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda, as a pure devotee, is the best teacher. If he sticks to the point while teaching the basics, it is because we need it. And when we are ready, Prabhupāda, and Kṛṣṇa in the heart, will indicate to us how to advance further in spontaneous devotional service.

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.12

Going to his room, Vṛndāvana, 1977,
with the small *kāratālas,*
joining around his bed,
for the last *kīrtanas.*
Even an hour or two
seems long to sing softly
when he lies in bed and doesn't communicate.
Every hour the bell rings in the temple,
and it is hot
and you have to deal with your body and mind.
But Prabhupāda himself,
and his intimate servants,
go on with their routine
until the end,
and you are an outsider.

**

Paris 1974:
he put his head against a large framed photo
of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities
just before he walked out of the room,
to his car, to the airport.
I saw it and treasured the gesture.

❀❀

Riding in a back seat,
he asked me
to roll down the window.

❀❀

He demanded his servitors
to work hard, sent them to
government offices in India to get permissions.
Wanted them "to go to every home
and request everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra.*"
He expected them to sweat it out
over financial records and produce
the daily balance.
To endure the heat of the tropics,
the cold of the winter desert,
to swallow pride and live tolerantly
with Godbrothers you'd never choose as friends.
And do it all for Kṛṣṇa,
not expecting name and fame.
If you had come to ISKCON
with ulterior purpose, to eat
and sleep and not work,
then you deserved to be ignored.
In this way he was demanding.

❀❀

Prabhupāda,
you need soldiers with fortitude.
Yet I am still here and that is your grace.
You hold on to me
just as you said you did when
you went to Kumbha-mela
with your young sons.
You were afraid that the Mela crowds might crush
you and your sons—in that way I too
am in the midst of the throngs in this fearful,
pushing world, and you are my father,
protecting me.
We move together
to the Ganges edge and bathe in
the confluence of three holy rivers.
What more sanctity could I desire
than to bathe in the Ganges in the
presence of a pure devotee?
But to those who have been given much,
much is demanded.

❀❀

Please make me your child
willing to follow you,
and tell me what to do.
And please be there
to return to when I do it.
I know I am supposed to be mature now,
surrendering my life to you
voluntarily. . .

Prabhupāda's "Involuntary" Smiles
4.13

By smiling involuntarily I mean the best kind of smiles, when you can't help yourself but feel your lips parting back from your teeth, and there you are, smiling. Perhaps you even make an effort *not* to smile, but you have to smile anyway. It was very pleasing to see Prabhupāda smile like that, because it was so humanlike. Somehow or other, we all hankered to see those aspects of Prabhupāda. He was godlike; he was heavy as *guru*. If he had not been so heavy, he would not have been able to take us out of *māyā*. But we all sought his smile as a special kind of lift; and also for tenderness' sake, we very much wanted to see Śrīla Prabhupāda smile. Perhaps that is one reason why I so much like the early days with him, because there was so much of it.

Last night I thought of two occasions in which I saw Prabhupāda smile "involuntarily." One was when he was answering mail in his room in Hawaii, and one was when he was sitting in his garden in Los Angeles talking with devotees.

As Prabhupāda's traveling secretary, I was reading the mail out loud to him in Hawaii. One was a letter from Gopāla Kṛṣṇa in India. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa said that it was becoming difficult to deal with all Godbrothers, and that he had decided to resign as GBC man for India. He wrote that his Godbrothers even said that Prabhupāda thought of him as a person who is useful only for going to see people in the Indian government. They did not think of him as a real devotee.

When he heard that some of the disciples said Gopāla Kṛṣṇa was only good for seeing government agents, Prabhupāda smiled. It was not a smile for me to see, but his personal reflection, his thinking of that disciple. In this smile he seemed to assess and understand why the Godbrothers would say that about Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, and he shared the amusement. But Prabhupāda's smile also felt the hurt and identified with Gopāla Kṛṣṇa himself. Why should they minimize him in that way? Of course, I probably read some of these feelings of my own into Prabhupāda's smile. One cannot really read the mind of the pure devotee. I also thought that Prabhupāda was thinking there was nothing wrong in using his disciple in that way, to see government men for Kṛṣṇa's service. But Prabhupāda also smiled (I thought) because he saw that his disciple wanted to be recognized as a spiritual person, not just a messenger who could do worldly chores. The main thing about this smile was not the meaning but the magic of it. It was a private revelation.

Another occasion in which I saw an involuntary smile was in Prabhupāda's garden in Los Angeles. His disciple Nara-Nārāyaṇa dāsa was relating how the devotees had been on *harināma* on Venice Beach and been attacked by a motorcycle gang. It was a very frightening and violent scene, and he vigorously narrated it. A large group of devotees were walking along the beach chanting, including women and children. Suddenly a big group of "Hell's Angels" had rushed upon the devotees and started beating them. Some of the devotees ran away, but some of them fought back.

Nara-Nārāyaṇa Prabhu has a very deep voice and, with all due respects, has a somewhat eccentric manner. In his heavy, amusing voice he went on telling Prabhupāda of the horrible fight. Nara-Nārāyaṇa said that most of the devotees were not physically fit because they sat all day in their offices. He said maybe it would be better if devotees kept themselves in better shape in order to respond to such emergencies. He said that the motorcycle thugs were big and strong. Nara-Nārāyaṇa said that he himself was carrying a pole and he used it to knock down the attackers. He said, "But one of them was so big and powerful I would knock him down and he just kept coming!"

Prabhupāda had been listening with a quiet look on his face. It was not a pleasant tale to hear, and perhaps it was one that should not have been told to the spiritual master, but Prabhupāda was hearing it. When Nara-Nārāyaṇa came to the part in his story of how he had knocked this guy down again and again but he kept coming, Prabhupāda gave an involuntary smile. One "explanation" of this smile is that everyone smiled at Nara-Nārāyaṇa because he sometimes behaved as a comedian.

A good comedian makes you smile. And to some degree, a comedian is usually a bit of a clown also, and so you laugh at something he is doing. It seemed that Prabhupāda did not want to smile while hearing this unfortunate story, but it was being told so humorously—comic relief along with frightening descriptions—Prabhupāda "had to" smile.

This incident also showed me that although Prabhupāda was transcendental to happiness and

distress, he was affected by the account that was being told. Prabhupāda is fearless, and yet he fears for the devotees and for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Therefore, although Prabhupāda was not showing his emotions, he was no doubt feeling hurt by the story of innocent devotees being beaten. These emotions were being manifested by Prabhupāda, but then suddenly, he smiled in response to the grotesque and humorous details of the narrator.

Nara-Nārāyaṇa was definitely adding some comic relief to the tragic situation. He was like a court jester in the presence of his king. Kings are very grave and burdened with responsibilities, so they sometimes like to smile and forget their troubles. Śrīla Prabhupāda was not in anxiety or unhappy like a king of the material world. Yet on this occasion, his disciple played the role of the court jester and brought a smile to the grave face of the *jagad-guru.*

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Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
4.14

It is sunset and I am
hearing Prabhupāda sing
hari hari bifale.
Devotional service is possible.
As Vyāsa says,
"*Bhakti* will spring up
when you give aural reception;
lamentation, illusion and fear
will vanish."

Although he is gone
I am hearing his voice.
It is a moment *now*.
Narottama sang it long ago,
and Narottama has also disappeared,
and Kṛṣṇa disappeared 5,000 years ago.
But none of them are gone.

With harmonium and *kāratālas*,
Prabhupāda is banishing my
illusion, fear and lamentation
making me think of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa,
Their names weaving into my life.

Part Five

Remembering Prabhupāda on Janmāṣṭami Day
5.1

While attending the Janmāṣṭami festival at the ISKCON farm in Czechoslovakia, I was asked to give a lecture about the appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Afterward, I asked for questions, and an elderly, red-haired lady raised her hand. Since almost all the devotees here speak only Czech, I was surprised when she began to speak in English. She said, "Satsvarūpa Goswami, could you tell us something about Prabhupāda, because you knew him very well?"

I started out by remembering Janmāṣṭami 1966 in the storefront. "The room we are in now reminds me of that storefront," I said. "It was about the same size. 1966 was the first year Prabhupāda observed Janmāṣṭami in America. In 1965, he left India and observed Janmāṣṭami at sea a few days later. By 1966, ISKCON had just begun. So he asked the devotees to stay all day in the storefront and fast.

"His request seemed like a very difficult proposal. Some of us expressed doubt that we could do it, so Swamijī said, 'If you get hungry or weak in the afternoon, you can take some fruit from our refrigerator.'

"When he said that, it gave us some hope, because it seemed almost impossible that a living being could go all day without eating. He wanted us to try for it, and yet it was not such a hard and fast rule, that we had to do it or die.

"Fasting was one problem, and another problem was what to do all day? How to control the mind? When Prabhupāda stayed with us in the storefront,

reading his manuscript from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, then it was very enjoyable. But whenever he left us alone, our consciousness and conversation dropped way down. We began to complain, 'I don't think I can do this. How does he expect us to stay like this all day? This is like being in prison, you can't even leave the temple."

Even while Prabhupāda was present, one of the disciples who was later to be initiated as Janakī dāsī said, "Swamijī, I am sorry but I have to leave. I have to go home and feed my cats." Swamijī said, 'No, do not do it. Stay here and you can take care of them later.' Janakī thought about it but then said, 'I'm sorry, I have to go and take care of them.'"

"The rest of us reluctantly surrendered and stayed there for a whole day, which very slowly turned into afternoon, and night. We sat against the wall drowsily and weakly, trying to chant on our new red beads."

I went on to tell the devotees about the jar of ISKCON bullets that Prabhupāda kept in a corner of his room upstairs. Many of his devotees had been cigarette smokers and almost everyone committed illicit sex. This jar of ISKCON bullets was like the last resort against temptation. If you became agitated, before you broke any of the principles, you knew you could go up at any time and take a *gulāb-jamun*, an ISKCON bullet.

When I finished talking about the 1966 Janmāṣṭami, one of the *brahmacārīs* raised his hand. He wore a saffron *dhotī* but his hair was quite long, although a *śikhā* was also stuck in among his long hairs. This same devotee had asked me several technical questions in lectures I had given on pre-

vious days. One of his questions was, "How did Lord Śiva appear as one of the associates of Lord Caitanya?" Another question was, "Is it true that Lord Kṛṣṇa was not worshiped before His actual appearance, but that before His appearance, He was always worshiped in the *śalagrama-śila?*" When he raised his hand again I thought, "Oh, here we go again." But the question was, "In Czechoslovakia, we do not have Prabhupāda's biography except for the one-volume. Could you tell us more about what it was like when Prabhupāda went to sing in the park in New York City? Did he bring a carpet? Were you there? What was it like?"

That was a nice setup. I said, "You mention carpet. Yes, there was a carpet. We had an old carpet that someone had given us. We started out, about ten or twelve devotees along with Prabhupāda, and we walked to the park."

I told how we went through the streets and people hooted and jeered. Prabhupāda was sober and transcendental to it. After all, Prabhupāda had said that he was "a Calcutta boy." In his boyhood, he has seen hoodlums stabbing people, prostitutes on the street corners, and had even run away from a man who tried to kill him during a Hindu-Moslem riot. He was not phased by a few hoots.

I said that once we got to the park, we were a little shy. I thought that some of my old friends might come around and see me, and I was embarrassed. But when Prabhupāda began to sing the names of the previous *ācāryas,* and then Hare Kṛṣṇa. . . we sat close to him.

He was like a mother and father. Just as little children stay close to their parents when they are

afraid, we stayed close to our spiritual parent. We sat with him on the rug, inside his world, which he had created within the "big" world of Tompkins Square Park.

I told about the Ukranians, Polish, old people, and younger Puerto Ricans who lived in that neighborhood, and the middle-class American hippies who had come from different parts of the country to live there. The hippies came around with flutes and drums and guitars. Prabhupāda sang strongly for an hour and a half, gave a little speech, and then sang again. Then we walked back to the storefront. Many guests came with us, and we distributed cups of sweet rice to them. Then Prabhupāda went up to his room and talked some more.

In Czechoslovakia, I told the devotees how the Swami encouraged us to get up and dance in the park. Brahmānanda and Acyutānanda used to do it regularly. One time Prabhupāda looked at me and gestured that I should get up and dance. At first I was not sure he meant me, and so I turned around and looked behind me. I looked at him again. Yes, he meant me.

I was hesitant to dance because I had seen one of my old college friends in the crowd in the park. Now they would see me with my arms up and dancing with the Swami. What would they think? What would they talk about among themselves? There I was dancing in the park to this religious Hindu chant. But then I thought, "I don't care what they think. I am Swami's boy, Swami's man, and I am going to get up and dance. It is blissful and I will show my bliss; I'll do it."

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
5.2

Prabhupāda, I am in another temple
and you are waiting in the temple room.
I turn my left side facing you,
and bow down, eight points touching the floor.
This is formal, but real too.
What is life but bowing down?
As you told a student in Seattle,
"You either bow down to birth, death, disease
and old age,
or you bow down to the pure devotee."

I promise before you
not to speak nonsense.
How could I do it in front of you?
You tell me,
"Speak the philosophy as it is.
Why these additions?"
This is the power of the *mūrti.*

I offer my food to you,
rattling off your *praṇaṁ-mantra,*
and even worse, rattling my Gayatrī *mantras,*
and then a prayer for forgiveness:
"I can't chant nicely!
Please accept *this* prayer of talking to you."
But you want me to say my Gāyatris too.

❀❀

You gave us Gāyatrī in the Boston storefront.
We were thrilled then. *Brāhmaṇas!*
With our beloved spiritual master
on the floor. *Guru* to disciple:
"You do like this, say, *"oṁ bhur bhūvaḥ. . .*
And here, get the thread on,
and here's another *mantra*
you may say occasionally."

You gave me *japa* beads, gave thread,
gave me *daṇḍa* and name,
and position and work.
And Lord Kṛṣṇa will ask,
"What have you done with
all the spiritual assets
your master gave to you?"
What will I say?
"Oh I gave them away,
I left them somewhere,
I can't remember.
I . . . neglected them."

"The beads," you said, "and the *daṇḍa*
should always go with you.
You do not need to carry a Deity,
but carry these."
You've given me
the best things anyone ever gave.

I am trying to remember you
in these tangible items,
beads, *daṇḍa, mantras,* books, words—
And tonight please let me
tell them all about you.
I've got the privilege, the microphone,
so let me use it to fill in the gap,
to purify my heart, and remind them
we have been given a great chance
in this human form of life.

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*Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda on Vyāsa-*pūjā *Day*
5.3

My Prabhupāda meditation has been disturbed today by reading the Vyāsa-*pūjā* book that just came out. It almost always has that effect on me. I become very envious and fault-finding as I read my Godbrothers' pieces. Partly my reaction comes because some of the writers use the Vyāsa-*pūjā* homage as an opportunity to criticize other devotees and to point out that "I am doing the best service."

I am afraid that my Prabhupāda meditation is perhaps another grand attempt in that genre, to assert that I am the best disciple. We all have this tendency, even when we draw attention to ourselves as "the most fallen."

Simply to be an individual in the company of many other individuals is bound to bring about strife. Others will look at what we have written and find fault with us. They will measure us in comparison to our Godbrothers. The psychologists speak of

sibling rivalry, and so there is also a Godbrother rivalry. What can be done? It is like a storm, and you have to weather it.

One devotee wrote in his Vyāsa-*pūjā* homage that his memories of Prabhupāda are definitely fading. I thought, "Well that's not inevitable." But to preserve them you have to take it as an important service to recapture the memories. Another devotee wrote, "I do remember the essential instruction Prabhupāda gave me, to print his books." That is impressive, and it is certainly correct for a disciple to remember the essential instructions that his *guru* gave him. He builds his life by following that order, rather than remembering many of the details. But my contention is that it is also valid to dedicate yourself to remembrance of the details.

I feel overwhelmed by the fact that Prabhupāda is surrounded by disciples. Sometimes when I see a photo of Prabhupāda, I am distracted by looking at the people around him, and I find myself criticizing them, rather than actually worshiping the picture of Prabhupāda. But I do want to serve within the *sādhu-saṅga.*

There is also a time to worship Prabhupāda privately. When we read his books, or even when we speak about Kṛṣṇa, we do it alone, as one. But ideally, we should bring our personal realizations into the company of devotees. It is so difficult because of these bad tendencies of the mind. One has to learn the spirit of cooperating with others and at the same time be assured of a relationship with Prabhupāda by reading his books on your own.

One of the devotees speaking his homage today said, "I have received some jewels of Prabhupāda's

personal association, but I have not taken care of them very well. I never wrote them down." I thought of saying to him, "O my Godbrother, although you may not have taken care of these precious jewels, they are still within you, and you can take care of them now. It is not too late."

Another devotee wrote in the Vyāsa-*pūjā* book, "As time goes by, I find that my memory is becoming stripped of all my association details with Prabhupāda. I can't recall it anymore, but I do remember that he saved me from material life." He went on to recall the instruction Prabhupāda gave him that formed the basis of his life. In another Vyāsa-pūjā homage, our Godbrother Mukunda Mahārāja, who was with Prabhupāda a lot in the early days, stated that he indulged in "childish familiarity" with Prabhupāda in the early years, and now is trying to be more respectful. He is finding more appreciation of Prabhupāda's greatness by reverently attending the daily *guru-pūjā.*

I was struck by this and appreciated it. But I also hope that my Godbrother was not minimizing the early days. He humbly reprimanded himself for not appreciating Prabhupāda properly, but still, that mercy of seeing Prabhupāda and relating with him in those days is irreplaceable and is wonderful.

Hearing these realizations gave me some further thoughts about Prabhupāda remembrance. With all respects to the early memories and stories, I also admit that it is more important to remember the essence of Prabhupāda and to follow his instructions. There are times when we can remember Prabhupāda with all his personal qualities and particulars, but it is also true that the spiritual master

cannot be seen so readily. Perhaps that is the point Mukunda Mahārāja was making. We may meditate on Prabhupāda as *vāṇī*, as guide. In that meditation we do not think of him exactly in his form, and yet he is very personally present. These things can be realized with spiritual vision by the *tattva-darśi*, the one who know the *guru* in his heart. He knows, "My *guru* is with me always."

When you call on his name or when you pray to him, "Prabhupāda, please help me! Prabhupāda, please let me serve Kṛṣṇa"—you are speaking to the same Prabhupāda who we talk about in all our stories—but you are reaching for his essence. That essence is never impersonal. It is not like Dr. Radhakrishnan who said in reference to Lord Kṛṣṇa, "Do not surrender to Kṛṣṇa Himself, but to the unborn within Kṛṣṇa." Prabhupāda, however, says there is no difference between the outer and inner Kṛṣṇa. And similarly, the Prabhupāda whom I described as smiling "involuntarily" in the garden, is also the inner Prabhupāda. Sometimes we remember him with details and sometimes just by calling his name, by feeling affection for him. It is not that Prabhupāda is absent if we cannot bring up many memories of him. Just by knowing he is there we can feelingly say, "Prabhupāda." And this is available for everyone.

❁❁❁❁❁

What was his name? Alan Burke,
a tough, insulting TV conversationalist.
Yet he said, "Tonight we have a real swami."
He apologized for smoking a cigar.
And there we were at Prabhupāda's feet.
Our master spoke slowly but articulately,
rising to the occasion in Manhattan.

We knew you in your room in
your turtleneck jerseys and *khadi,*
but here in the studio,
it was so harsh—
who knew what might happen?
You might be struck down, laughed at,
they might say, "We can't understand
the old man's speech.
Why did you not tell us?"
But Prabhupāda knew what to do,
and he did it.

"What's wrong with sex outside marriage?"
Alan Burke asked.
Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "If your mind is agitated
in trying to capture sex partners
then you can't be peaceful for spiritual life,
and *that's* the goal for human beings."

Alan Burke said, "It was a great show!"
That was May 1967, and the next day
your heartstroke began.
Perhaps, you said, it was due to the hot lights
in the TV studio.
But you did not mention it that night,
you were so intent to speak
Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* to millions.

I still remember
you entering the studio under harsh lights,
and me afraid to see you there,
and your love for Kṛṣṇa and your strength.

*****

Recapturing the Wonder of the Early Days
5.5

In the early days of surrendering to the Swami, we believed the *śāstra* or whatever the Swami said, *just because he said it.* And we were attracted to his teachings not because an institution taught us the "official truth," but because we were very pleased and enthused to read his books and hear from him. We found his writing style exciting. All of this original wonder is still available, but with time and repetition, we tend to become familiar, and read only as duty. I notice when I do read more carefully, and when I seek a rendezvous with Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, then the vital appreciation comes back. Recalling the early days may also be helpful, reminding us how Kṛṣṇa consciousness was so personal and entertaining. If we do not keep up the

process for staying alive and awake to original nectar, we may fall dead in spiritual life, even without knowing it.

Our enthusiasm for hearing philosophy from Prabhupāda in the early days was not without a sound basis. We understood that the absolute truth did not have to tally with mundane science or material reality. There was a higher principle of truth, coming by the descending process. We accepted this principle with vigor and enthusiasm. It is probably a fact that our innocence has been lost over the years, although it has been replaced realistically with strong foundations of knowledge and faith in Prabhupāda. ISKCON continues to take Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements very seriously, but we have also become "sadder but wiser" in seeing our inability to carry out those instructions. We have also gradually become more aware of the many kinds of philosophies and groups who are in opposition to what Prabhupāda was saying. As Kṛṣṇa consciousness has spread, it has been challenged more, and there has been more counter-reply. Thus we become more aware that our appreciation of Prabhupāda clashes with the material reality. We are concerned with "presenting" Prabhupāda in a palatable way, and we are more careful with our logical presentation. We also sometimes assume that we have now fully grasped Prabhupāda's message; now we are more interested in tracking down the details and in working out any of the apparent contradictions in what he said. But this kind of sober scholarship can sometimes become boring.

Another possible danger as time goes by is that Prabhupāda's followers may lose touch with his personal nature. We can see this in the history of world religions. In Christianity some of the followers have developed an impersonal attitude toward Jesus Christ, and some may not even believe in his historic reality. They talk more about "The Christ within each one of us." There is also a danger of doing that with Prabhupāda. Although we do say that Prabhupāda is inconceivable and beyond what we know of him in Prabhupāda-*līlā*, yet we also know that his personal nature is very real, important, and lasting. He is the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and his appearance in our lives is still our greatest solace. When Prabhupāda delivers us Kṛṣṇa conscious knowledge, we accept it in *parampara* and because the knowledge is formidable and appealing—but also because *it comes from him.*

By the sheer number of times we refer to Prabhupāda and turn to him, a strain is placed upon the freshness of our perception. Our desire for novelty is not satisfied. When that happens we look elsewhere for pleasure. And then an unfortunate thing occurs. Despite our official praise for Prabhupāda, we find difficulty in reading his books. This is the dreaded *rigor mortis* that comes from too much institutionalism and not enough personal care for our personal relationship and memories with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

As with any worthy human relationship, our loving relationship with Prabhupāda can be kept fresh, but we have to make an effort. One way I have found to fight against mechanical or boring reading sessions is to read Prabhupāda prayerfully,

not just for gaining information or to finish a big quantity of pages. I read as a way to meet him and be with him. This is just one of many methods. We may have to try out new varieties and approaches just to stay alive in Prabhupāda consciousness. It will not happen automatically by reciting a "Pledge of Allegiance," but by keeping oneself alive.

I had some success recently in rereading the purports of *Īśopaniṣad.*

I walked back and forth so that I would not become sleepy. With my senses and mind alert, I began to appreciate how Prabhupāda was using words that were down-to-earth. There was a constant energy in his sentences and in his thinking. Prabhupāda did not write as a mechanical routine; it was real for him, and so it can be real for us if we tune in to his wave length. Prabhupāda refers to this as "submissive aural reception."

When we can read in this way, it becomes enjoyable. When we read only as duty, we become guilt-ridden. We think, "I know I am supposed to worship this book, so why can't I? What is wrong with me?" Then we start forcing ourselves and kicking ourselves, "Read Prabhupāda! You are supposed to do it!" But if you push and nag a little child, he will not like it and he will rebel. While reading and walking with the *Īśopaniṣad,* I found myself spontaneously appreciating Prabhupāda's purport, "Hey, this is good!" (I also got renewed appreciation for the fact that the verses were translated by Prabhupāda. They had his flavor, "The self-sufficient philosopher who is awarding everyone's desires since time immemorial . . . ")

As I received the gift of an alert rereading, it also occurred to me that *it used to be like this.* Everything was exciting—the change of diet on Ekādaśī days; the evening *kīrtanas;* your new relationships with Godbrothers and Godsisters in the temples of other cities; the Deity worship; the excitement of giving a lecture; meeting the public and representing Prabhupāda . . . everything was new and fresh, including the reading of his books.

A nostalgic appreciation of the early days is helpful, but it is also a fact that we have to live in the present situation. If we make new efforts, we will recover the childlike faith in bowing down before him and appreciating him. We have to deliberately fight off the deadening things that come by repetition and age. It is not by *fiat,* by order of the institution, that this change of heart can come about. It will not occur simply by the passing of a resolution: "Everyone shall love Prabhupāda, and he shall be the center of the movement."

It is also good that the caretakers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement pass resolutions that Prabhupāda should be in the middle of all our activities and we should not forget him. We should publish and distribute his books, and we should collect money to maintain his temples. There is a need for institutionalized direction by responsible leaders in order to keep Prabhupāda in the center of such a big movement. But it cannot be done *only* by the force of the institution and its officers. Those who make the resolutions must actually put Prabhupāda in the center of their own lives in both substantial ways and in small personal ways. They should honestly advise us that each one has to do this on

his own. One way to do this is to maintain our personal memories of association with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Just as we maintain our aging bodies by exercise and rest, so the memories have to be exercised. One has to be humble and accept even little memories as worthwhile. We should seek any occasion to talk about Prabhupāda in a natural way. We must also be humble to recognize that other devotees are repositories of Prabhupāda-*kaṭhā*, and hear from them without envy.

Approaching memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda requires humility. There is also an art to it. We should remember in an honest way. For example, when a remembrance first returns to us, it may be disappointing. This is due to our lack of devotion or our poor memories. In a similar way, sometimes a devotee attempts to paint a portrait of Prabhupāda, but it doesn't come out nicely. We may point out the defect (gently) and encourage the artist to try again.

Ultimately, the best way to retain an original freshness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to go beyond the neophyte stage and become a pure devotee. A pure devotee of the Lord spontaneously sees Kṛṣṇa in all things. As stated in the *Īśopaniṣad*, "He who sees everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, who sees all entities as His parts and parcels, and who sees the Supreme Lord within everything, never hates anything, nor any being." When one attains the stage of spontaneous Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then he will truly love Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, and see their influence everywhere. Such a pure devotee will never be disturbed by "familiarity" or opposition to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *mahābhaga-*

vata stage cannot be imitated, but we can improve our condition so that we do not fall away or become merely official devotees.

Even at our present stage of advancement, whatever it may be, we can appreciate Prabhupāda with our hearts, as he actually occurs in our lives, sometimes humorously and sometimes tragically, as when we neglect him. Although our memories and our service on behalf of Prabhupāda sometimes come out poorly, let us accept them for what they are and seek to improve them.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
5.6

He came to the airport.
He carried a small white bag.
(Later in Australia '74, devotees gave him
a larger red bag. He so much liked the white bag,
that at first he tried
to fit it within the red one.
But the devotees wanted the white bag
and so he gave it over.)

We couldn't see him at first
as he waited on the immigration line.
But we knew he was there.
The glass wall was painted black up to six feet
and he held his hand above it,
waving to us with his beadbag.
Brahmānanda jumped to see.
The sight of his master brought tears to his eyes,
and he called out loudly, "Prabhupāda!"

"Cool it," said the state trooper.
But Jāhnava was shivering in bliss,
Advaita was bleeding where he had hit himself
with *kāratālas.*
And New Vrindaban and New York devotees
and Boston devotees were a hundred strong,
with a banner and babies, winter coats—
all of us so young and so happy!

His smile was not a terse little grin,
but as we had come to expect—
the bliss of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We shoved and moved with him
until he sat at a place and spoke
a short address, intended for onlookers.
He asked everyone to become God conscious
as the imperative of human life.
But when you think of it,
who would expect to hear a lecture
on love of God and the next life—
at night, in the airport, from a swami
who had just arrived from London?
And surrounded by beaming young men
and women!
Very few heard, but *we* heard.
Then out into the night
where a limousine waited in the snow.

The tunnel, and the car with Prabhupāda.
He said London was a very old city,
George Harrison was giving money
to print the *Kṛṣṇa* book.
They made good *puris*
in the London temple.
He asked me how the typing
was proceeding for his books.
The car was dark and comfortable
and thrilling.
We loved him although we were
sentimental and untried.

At the house with its purple-pink stripes
we received our triumphant master.
He approved our brass Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities
under Their red velvet canopy,
"Polish Their paraphernalia
and you polish your heart."

"Sarādiya, do not fight with your husband.
I saw the *gṛhasthas'* rooms and they are
not tidy. So *karmīs* could criticize you.
But I approve because you are not attached
to furniture. *Karmīs* say you are crazy
but I say—and Śukadeva says—*they* are in
the darkness of craziness."
A long lecture on Śukadeva's teachings
to Mahārāja Parīkṣit, who was about to die.

We too were about to die,
but we were euphoric in his presence.
Followed him into the snow again, by car
to the house in Needham.
Passing a snow-covered field
he said, "This is Kṛṣṇa's picture."
We felt good that he was staying
in a cozy, nice house,
although it was too far away.

I came back to the temple feeling happy,
"Prabhupāda is comfortable in the house."
Everyone was talking about him,
hoping he'll come tomorrow
unless it rains or snows,
which it did.
In less than a week he left for Los Angeles,
but we had our nectar.

*****

Bombay Memories (1974)
5.7

Prabhupāda would rest while sitting in the late morning after breakfast. He wore short-sleeved *kurtas,* and he looked very nice. In the evening, he would sit on the roof without any *kurta,* just the *sannyāsa* top piece and a *dhotī.* He sat on a large white mattress on the plain roof, with the low wall of the roof behind him. Just an improvised place to sit and meet people.

At that time, Prabhupāda was receiving letters from disciples who were arguing with each other.

There was a struggle in England over who would be the leader. Śyāmasundara was away and Haṁsaduta came and tried to take over, and then Mādhavānanda wanted to take charge. There were votes and revotes as to who would be the leader. Sometimes they traveled all the way to India to present their case to Prabhupāda, or they wrote their letters. It was bothersome to him; and that was one of the reasons why he said at that time that he wanted to go somewhere in the world where he would not see anyone's face; but he revised that idea.

His afternoon sugarcane juice, very thick. Me talking with Pālika, getting rid of Prabhupāda's too flashy and mismatched clothes. We decided to replace all his clothes with new ones of the same shade of color, and nice cotton. She does it with the help of others, and Prabhupāda accepts it. We are pleased to see him looking so neat in his ironed *dhotīs*, all of a very subtle saffron shade and soft cloth.

Pālika cooks. But I sometimes cook in the evenings . . . those peanuts. He would sometimes say, "I'll have those peanuts." He meant fry the peanuts in *ghee* and serve him peanuts and a silver cup of milk—sugar served separate from the milk. One time I was cooking an eggplant (at his request) in a pan with *ghee*, and he came in and said, "I am not really hungry, but I have to train you up in how to cook."

Prabhupāda has regular meals on Ekādaśī, but in the evening he says, "It is Ekādaśī; I won't have my milk."

His massage on the veranda, which is just a tight little porch off the apartment. While sitting there he said, "It is paradise." Palm trees throughout the land. But he is upset about mismanagement. Calls Caitya-guru, "They're cheating you, and you do not know it. But I cannot be blind." Prabhupāda had allowed men to come and collect the coconuts for a price, but they also took the branches and leaves, and the devotees did not even notice.

Morning walks, the best part of all; last refuge for an agitated mind. Just philosophy on the beach, walking with Prabhupāda. Dr. Patel and company. After a while they got so bad Prabhupāda said, "We will just bring the *Kṛṣṇa* book and we will read; we won't talk with them." And they also did not want to talk with us. But those walks are wonderful . . .

Mustard oil for the massage . . . the odor of it . . . outdoors . . . Prabhupāda's skin . . . his slight movement of the body back and forward under your hands . . . sometimes he talks with Girirāja during the massage . . . Prabhupāda says to Girirāja, "Why don't you dress nicer, because you are in charge." But then he says, "I suppose it is not necessary. There is a saying that a captain is a captain regardless of his dress."

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja recuperating from a hernia and living in the hut in the middle of the garden. Prabhupāda goes to see him there. And then Viṣṇujana Swami comes, and he and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja decide to go back to America and leave the GBCship to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda is not pleased with that and says something to me in private. But it worked out for the best later.

Evening lectures in the temple . . . metal folding chairs in rows . . . sparsely attended . . . nighttime . . . the sound system is tinny and loud . . . the temple is not really a building but a metal shack. The same place that had recently been almost torn down by the municipality is now restored, and Prabhupāda is giving lectures there. An insufficient place . . . his *vyāsāsana* is an upholstered chair with an umbrella on top.

As he came back from his walk, he would go into the temple, and they would sing *"Gurvāṣṭakam,"* with the words printed on a large card. The devotees would do an *ārati* for Prabhupāda. Then he would go to his room; no class. The class was in the evening. At the evening lecture, after the last *kīrtana,* they would give him a big plate of *prasādam* from the Deity. A big mound of *halava,* and Prabhupāda's beautiful hand reaching into it and deftly taking bunches of it and giving it out to the devotees, and to dirty but sweet urchins with raggedy clothes and short pants, who took *prasādam* from Prabhupāda's hand.

**

It was from Bombay that we took a trip to Tirupati. We went to see the Bālajī Deity several times a day. Each time we were given a private *darśana;* the crowd was put aside and Prabhupāda would go right in, up to the rail to see the large black Deity . . .

Most people upon entering the inner sanctum of Balajī call out, "Balajī!" or "Govinda!" Prabhupāda said, *"Govindam ādi puruṣaṁ tam-ahaṁ-bajāmi."* To

go in with him to see Balajī was symbolic of all our association with him. Because of being with Prabhupāda, we are allowed to enter inner relationships with Kṛṣṇa; without him, we would have to wait a long, long time . . .

One time after he left that inner sanctum, he said, "Oh, my cane!" I had to go back and get it; it was hanging on the rail right in front of the Deity.

We would go very early in the morning when the *brāhmaṇas* were chanting their *mantras.* At other times it was busier, but we still would get immediate access to the Deity's *darśana.*

Then Hyderabad, at the place of Mr. Panilal Pitty. Prabhupāda talking with his host . . . Prabhupāda on a morning walk with some of his *sannyāsīs.* Debates, interesting talks . . .

On those morning walks he was not in a managerial mood, but philosophical, taking questions and ready to argue. One felt eager to approach him with questions and to hear carefully. When speaking of the atheists, we said, "They say, they say ..."— but now I think these doubts were *our* doubts. We always had so many doubts in our minds , and Prabhupāda allowed it.

He spoke very strongly with his simple but strong logical, sensible arguments; reliance on *śāstra.* Kick on your face with boots if you did not agree that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

He preferred the weather in India. But he never indulged himself, kept moving. . . He was a transcendentally restless person, always moving to new places to see what was going on and to push on the preaching.

Prabhupāda is moving through India, in the sun, his body tanned, in the nice cloth that we got for him . . . on the beach . . . in the cars . . . in fairly good health at that time . . . his thin form . . . his face . . . noble . . . transcendental . . . inconceivable—especially in his glances—grave and strong and in control but also reflective sometimes . . . sometimes resting . . . taking his breakfast . . . putting on his *tilaka* . . . talking in a relaxed way with relaxed physical posture to one of his devotees in Bombay . . . angry sometimes . . . distressed at the mail—the nature of it . . . and preaching regular *parampara* on the bad loudspeaker . . .

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
5.8

Prabhupāda, you came to Italy 16 years ago.
No one here remembers it much.
But today we heard you singing
on the "Happening" record of 1966,
while the devotees in Rome sat together for lunch.
And because you are here we went
on *harināma* downtown.
Tonight we'll read from *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*.

By disciples repeating "Prabhupāda said,"
you are teaching in Italy
and ISKCON worldwide.

You were also here this morning
in the form of your disciple Lokanātha Swami.
I spoke with him before he left for Delhi.
He's doing the bullock program as you asked,
pada-yātrās in many countries. Your Lokanātha.
And there is an excellent painting here by
Praśanta dāsa,
of Your Divine Grace holding a flower near
Viśakhāpatnam.

I am here too, Prabhupāda,
the fool who stayed back
from going to Gīta-nāgarī with you,
because I figured that the bus
would be too crowded.
That day I read alone in the cold room,
but it was *your* book,
and your books we distributed.

*****

"How Does He Speak, How Does He Sit and How Does He Walk?"
5.9

I am aware that my concentration on memories of Prabhupāda may be seen as a radical act. Most of Prabhupāda's disciples are serving him by active service, but I think that remembrance of Prabhupāda is also very helpful for all of us. We should know the person whose will we are following. It is important for us to know how he lived, even in its details.

Recently a Godbrother asked me to read the biography of a Jewish teacher of Hassidism, *The Great Maggid; The Life and Teachings of Rabbi Dove Ber of Mezhirech*. The founder of the Hassidic movement was Bal Shem Tov, and his successor was the great Maggid ("the great preacher"), Rabbi Dove Ber. I found something in this book which gave me encouragement in my proposal that remembering Prabhupāda is very important.

> The most comprehensive evaluation of the Maggid, perhaps, is that offered by Rabbi Leib Sarah's. This saint was wont to say that man's purpose is himself to become a Torah; all one's doings, every emotion, act and speech should personify the Torah. This ideal he found fully realized in Rabbi Dove Ber, of whom he said: 'I went to see the great Maggid of Mezhirech of blessed memory, not to learn Torah from his mouth but to learn how he ties and unties his shoelaces!'

It is important to hear the *guru* teach the Torah or the scripture, and yet we want to learn everything about *him*, because a bona fide *guru* is a living example of the scripture. We want to learn how the realized speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā* dealt with his disciples; how did this great author of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* eat his *prasādam?* How did he sleep and how did he walk? This is similar to Arjuna's request of Kṛṣṇa. "What are the symptoms of one whose consciousness is thus merged in transcendence? How does he speak and what is his language? How does he sit and how does he walk?" (*Bg*. 2.54).

It is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that the scriptures are hard to understand because their imports are very grave, and sometimes they even appear contradictory. Therefore one should follow the way of the *mahājanas*. This following should be very comprehensive. To know how a realized spiritual master personifies the scripture, we should actually live with him. If a reputed preacher comes down from the pulpit and beats his wife, kicks his dog, and accepts bribes, then you know that he is actually a hypocrite. We want to see him not only when he is sitting on the *vyāsāsana* but all the time. We want to learn, as far as possible, how he manages to serve and love Kṛṣṇa 24 hours a day.

*****

Report From Poland
5.10

For two nights I spoke about Prabhupāda at the request of the devotees on the Polish farm, New Śantipura. I started by telling how Prabhupāda took the Jaladuta to America. By the end of the first night I had finished narrating up to the beginning of 26 Second Avenue. There were 50 devotees in the room, and none of them had read any *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* because it has not been translated into Polish. So I had a free field. It was an unusually good opportunity to speak without worrying whether they had heard the stories of Prabhupāda in Butler, Pennsylvania, or Prabhupāda staying with Dr. Miśra. I lingered over those incidents with relish.

In this temple, the lecturer sits at one end of the room, and at the other end there is a 12-inch *mūrti* of Prabhupāda. Although Prabhupāda is hard to see, in another sense he is easier to focus on because he is in one concentrated place. I sensed that Prabhupāda was present and pleased by my talking about him. This occurred especially at certain times during the lecture, maybe when I said something humorous, or while talking about Prabhupāda's difficulties . . .

For example, he went regularly to the Scindia Steamship office in New York and asked, "When is the boat going back?" The Scindia agent finally said, "You ask so many times when is the boat going back, but you never go back, Swamijī."

I spoke whatever came to mind from the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta,* with added commentary. I said that in the first year in New York before he started ISKCON, Prabhupāda's life was full of risk and adventure. We can't imagine what it was like for Prabhupāda to be without money in a foreign country and yet to dare to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If at any point he had gone back to India, after the robbery in his room on 70th Street, or on any of those Scindia return voyages, or after he had to leave the loft in the Bowery when Mr. Paul went crazy—if at any point he had gone back, then we would never have been born.

Although the devotees I was speaking to were all his granddisciples, I wanted to impress upon them that Prabhupāda carried *all of us* within him like seeds. It was especially precarious during that first year.

It was fun to talk about him. My secretary, Madhumaṅgala dāsa, was listening, and he appreciated a few things that I said a bit differently than in the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. For example, I told how the Agarwal family in Butler first received a photo of Prabhupāda and knew that he was coming to stay with them. I said, "They saw the picture of him and they were frightened." Madhu said that in the book, I emphasize that the Agarwals were uneasy, thinking that their middle-class values and their place in America might be compromised by the Swami's coming. But I hadn't used the word *frightened*. By slight changes and additions you can tell the story differently.

I said that even in his later years Prabhupāda would remember those happy days at 26 Second Avenue. He invited us to take lunch with him. He watched our plates like a father and encouraged us to keep eating, "Take more! Take more!" We who had been smoking cigarettes and eating junk food found the nourishment, taste, and quantity of the food to all be wonderful. To be with Prabhupāda was wonderful.

I told the Polish devotees about a young man named Stryādhīśa who ate a lot. Stryādhīśa was a strange young man. Before his mother allowed him to come and live with Prabhupāda, she went to see Prabhupāda and said that he would have to take personal supervision of Stryādhīśa. Prabhupāda agreed. That's why Prabhupāda paid special attention to Stryādhīśa's eating.

"Stryādhīśa, more *cāpātīs?*"

Stryādhīśa replied, "Yes." Prabhupāda gave him four more *cāpātīs*. He would eat those, and

Prabhupāda would ask again, "Stryādhīśa, more *capatīs*?" And again, four. Prabhupāda recalled this incident many years later—how he continually gave Stryādhīśa another four *cāpātīs* and then another four. "But I stopped giving him at 20."

The devotees loved to hear that, I loved to tell it, and Prabhupāda seemed pleased to hear it again.

It is tough to speak about Prabhupāda to an audience that knows *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* well. The audience in Poland was ideal; they knew enough about ISKCON and enough about Prabhupāda that they really liked to hear. They did not think, "Why is he speaking at length and in so much detail about his spiritual master?" They are worshiping Prabhupāda every day in *guru-pūjā*, singing his *mantra*, distributing and reading his books; but they do not have his biography. What better chance than this to discuss Prabhupāda-*kathā*? I was glad to take it.

On the second night, I spoke about 26 Second Avenue. I focused on the *kīrtanas* in the storefront. I said that Prabhupāda taught us the rhythm, one-two-*three*, one-two-*three*. When he gave some of the young hippies the *kāratālas*, they wanted to play their own beats. But Prabhupāda stopped them and said, "No! Keep this beat one-two-three." Although we did not accept him in the beginning as our spiritual master, he insisted that we keep this beat, and so we agreed. He asserted his authority on the beat of the *mantras;* if you wanted to stay in the storefront and participate, you had to do it his way or confront him.

But aside from the one-two-*three* beat, Prabhupāda was very lenient and allowed all kinds of musical instruments to be played. I told about the

piano innards that were brought inside and strummed.

I also told how people who came were seeking consciousness expansion, which they had been getting on LSD, and how Śrīla Prabhupāda promised that they would find it without drugs, by chanting. I told of his writing room and the room where he performed the ceremony called "Bells." I said that Prabhupāda himself would refer to the *ārati* as "bells," because in the beginning he did not introduce all the Sanskrit words.

It was a pleasure to see the translator, Dṛṣṭā dāsa, conveying all this, and the audience, a moment later, taking pleasure. A few who understood English took pleasure as soon as I spoke. It was one volley of pleasure after another, hearing the pastimes of Prabhupāda.

I told how the people in the storefront would leave after the *kīrtana.* Maybe only half would stay for the lecture. I compared the storefront to the room we were in, which was about the same size as 26 Second Avenue. I said, "On a good night there might be about as many people as there are in this hall right now, and after the *kīrtana* half would leave."

At the end when I asked for questions, a devotee said, "Could you please tell us how Prabhupāda's disciples began distributing books?" He wanted to hear the story which I had told in *Distribute Books! Distribute Books! Distribute Books!* It was almost as if he did not want to hear about Prabhupāda; he wanted to hear about book distribution. In answering that question I said, "As far as the history of book distribution, that is told by his disciples in

Distribute Books!. But since tonight we are mostly trying to speak about Prabhupāda, I can say that all book distribution came from the inspiration of Prabhupāda. In fact all the different kinds of book distribution were originally done by him.

The library party distributed books to universities and libraries. Prabhupāda was the first to do that successfully, in New Delhi. He was also the first one to distribute *Back to Godhead* magazines in the streets and at the teastalls. He also distributed his own books in the bookstores in Manhattan."

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
5.11

You gave me my full name,
and the mission, to travel and preach,
when I was still a young man,
and I walked with you on the beach.

Tonight I am with you,
by your grace.
And I pray to you,
let me keep it up.

Being with you means
"Do not try to see Prabhupāda,
but act in such a way
that he can see you."
It means being your son,
talking for hours with new people,
advising them how to act gently
with their parents and yet be determined
to join Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
It is facing off with devotees
whose *guru* has left and who do not
see anyone they can accept
for *guru* again.

It is talking with the *pūjārī*,
the book distributor, the scholar—
as you told me, "Preaching
to devotees is even more important
than preaching to the nondevotees."

It is your mercy on me,
to be talking in Rome
hour after hour, with more coming in the door,
and my assistant objecting,
"You've been talking three hours
and we have to travel early tomorrow morning."

It's being like you;
it's being with you.
Thank you, Prabhupāda
That's what I want.

*****

(1) *The artist's conception.*

One time in Prabhupāda's room, Lefkowitz asked, "Swamijī, when someone paints a portrait of Kṛṣṇa, is it the artist's conception of Him?" Prabhupāda replied, "Yes." That answer helped me because I knew that you were supposed to think and believe that Kṛṣṇa was absolutely present in His picture. But on the other hand, the pictures were obviously stylized. They used techniques of Indian art, and you could see the weaknesses in the paintings, etc. This created a jarring problem. But Prabhupāda said that it *was* the artist's conception; however, the form of Kṛṣṇa they painted was based on facts from the *śāstra.*

(2) *In Swamijī's presence, I thought that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not fragile like glass figurines.*

One night while in Prabhupāda's presence, the thought came to me that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not fragile like glass figurines. In the beginning, my attraction seemed to be a very fragile thing. If you looked at Kṛṣṇa consciousness one way, it was there; but if you looked at it another way, it might disappear. *Bhakti* was very wonderful, and yet it could be shattered by a rude remark or by a logical argument. But one night as Swamijī spoke, it occurred to me that it was not at all fragile. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was very, very solid.

That night when I left Swamijī's presence and walked into the streets, I was no longer intimidated by the buildings. In Manhattan you always walk in

a canyon, like a tiny living entity. The buildings make you sad; they imprison you, they overwhelm you and crush your spirit. They block out the sun and the air. They keep within them millions of unhappy lives, packed in apartments with stored-up anger and violence. But after being with Prabhupāda and walking toward my apartment, I could overcome the buildings. They looked unsubstantial, as if you could go right through them. This was a little bit like Hāyagrīva's remark, which was quoted in the *East Village Other:* "By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa everything looks beautiful on the Lower East Side. Even the creeps."

Each of us was experiencing new feelings of sufficiency in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We had all been crushed by living in the city, and Prabhupāda was pulling us out.

3) *He hears from the Bible.*

One of the boys was reading something to Swamijī from the Bible. The passage referred to a prophet's lineage with worship and respect for the forefathers. When the person was described (let us say his name was Jacob), his name was given in connection with his forefathers. It was something like, "Jacob, a man of God, whose forefathers were so-and-so." As soon as this passage was read, Swamijī said, "Yes, this is the way in spiritual life. One refers to himself in terms of his previous teachers and forefathers." Prabhupāda approved of the *parampara* principle in this passage of the Bible. He then gave examples from Vedic literature. He told the story of Lord Brahmā who went to visit Lord Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā. At first Brahmā was not

allowed in, and the doorkeeper asked, "Which Brahmā are you?" Brahmā replied, "I am the father of the Kumāras." He identified himself in relationship to the recognized devotees, the four Kumāras.

(4) *"The frightening goal of annihilation."*

We were in Swamijī's room discussing an article that had appeared in the *New York Times.* Brahmānanda brought it in to Swamijī, and I was also present. The *Times* writer was discussing Hinduism, and he used the phrase, "The frightening goal of annihilation." When Prabhupāda heard this, he said that this was misinformation. Then he began to dictate a letter, which Brahmānanda wrote down, to be sent to the *New York Times.*

The *Times* writer thought that the goal of Hinduism was the impersonal experience of merging into the void of Brahman. It was frightening for him to think that one would lose one's individuality. Swamijī quoted from the *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.11, "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you nor all these kings, nor in the future shall we ever cease to exist." He asserted that the goal of "Hinduism" was not impersonalism but Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I was hearing it for the first time, and I was impressed. I did not know exactly what the *New York Times* reporter meant, or what Prabhupāda was saying, but it began to dawn on me. I agreed with the *Times* writer that merging was a frightening idea. You would practice some meditation and it would be very dangerous, because all of a sudden you would lose yourself. The Hindu philosophy was

therefore very dangerous, because if it was followed, it could lead to everyone's annihilation!

But Swamijī said that the impersonal merging was a misrepresentation of Hindu philosophy. I was surprised to learn that a respectable writer for the *New York Times* had given misinformation about Hinduism. The true information was right there in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: we do not get annihilated, we are eternal.

I was not yet a devotee; I was outside this controversy, observing it. But when I heard Swamijī's correction, I wanted to tell other people how he understood it. I liked what he said. It was authoritative. It was also very agreeable, compared with the frightening annihilation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was disturbed that the *Times* had printed such a wrong statement, and so he wrote them a letter. Brahmānanda and I could see that Swamijī really wanted to combat ignorance, even if it appeared in high places. It seemed like a hopeless struggle for Swamijī to expect to wipe out all the ignorance in the world. He did not have any government power behind him, and although he was speaking the truth from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, his letter would probably not be published by the *New York Times*. But at least two persons heard and felt themselves freed from ignorance and annihilation.

Part Six



Removing the Fear of Prabhupāda's Presence
6.1

The presence of Prabhupāda in separation is a mystical topic. He is not there in his physical form, and yet you claim that in some way he is there. What are you saying? Are you communing with spirits? Is it something weird?

No, it's not weird. Prabhupāda's presence is very real and personal, and very tangible. In one sense, it simply means to follow the *guru's* instructions. But his presence is also something inconceivable to the material senses and mind.

I do not doubt that Prabhupāda can be present before me, but I have some fear of coming into his presence—and I should remove that fear. My fear is that he will reprimand me and tell me to stop what I am doing; or I fear that he willl not understand me. I am putting so much energy into my work and sometimes coming up with some "discoveries." But what if Prabhupāda dismissed all that I do as nonsense? That would be hard to take.

Although I have some hesitation, I am trying to listen to what Prabhupāda is telling me to do. One way to accomplish this is by prayerful reading, when I speak my mind and then read from Prabhupāda's purport and listen to what he is saying. I try to apply it to my life. Aside from reading his books, I also desire his presence in my heart. As I am alive and talking, so Prabhupāda is alive and can hear me. He can communicate to me. This should be possible for all of Prabhupāda's disciples who are immersed in his teachings. They know his way of thinking and speaking from his purports,

conversations, and lectures; so why should it be impossible for them to meditate on Prabhupāda, desire his presence, and know his will?

I should assume with more confidence that Prabhupāda is my friend and that he is quite capable of understanding my mind. If I make my position clear to him, he will understand. And he will accept me. I am a grown up son now, at least in terms of years, although spiritually I am still a baby. I am exerting my free will more than when I was a youngster. And that I must do. It is part of my surrender, to give my whole life and not just wait for Prabhupāda to direct me at each moment.

There is a nice statement by Prabhupāda in an *Īśopaniṣad* purport, about free will and initiative:

> Thus from the very beginning, *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* warns us to be very careful to play the part designated for us by the Lord. This does not mean that the individual soul has no initiative of his own. Because he is part and parcel of the Lord, he must partake of the initiative of the Lord as well. When one properly utilizes his initiative or active nature with intelligence, understanding that everything is the Lord's potency, he can revive his original consciousness, which was lost due to association with *māyā*, the external energy."
>
> —*Īśopaniṣad*, Mantra 4, purport

I want Prabhupāda to accept me and understand how I am trying to serve him. I want to be appreciated and understood; and I want my offering to be accepted. I hope that Prabhupāda will accept my service and not kick it away. Sometimes disciples

fail to appreciate one another's service, but Śrīla Prabhupāda is our last recourse.

Yet I know that my offering is faulty. I should be open to any correction the spiritual master wants to give me. In any case, my offering will be accepted by Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, and I will get the result of my action. To the degree that mine is not a perfect offering, I will have to suffer the results. In the *Bhagavad-gītā,* Kṛṣṇa invites us to surrender to Him in many ways. You take your choice, He reciprocates with you accordingly. It is up to you; He is not going to force you. But in the end, He says you should completely surrender to Him, and that is the best thing.

I hope that my proposal to serve Prabhupāda is not so conditioned that Prabhupāda has nowhere to enter into his relationship with me. I am praying, "If you think that what I am doing is unacceptable, please guide me to do your will. I want to serve you so that you will be proud of my contribution. I wish to see myself as small and to appreciate the services of your many devotees."

I would like to be in the presence of Prabhupāda, and I hope it is possible more and more. I can enhance it by writing letters to him, by writing Prabhupāda *smaraṇam,* preaching in the temples, reading his books, staying fixed up. Be a Prabhupāda man and you will always be in his presence. Go to Vṛndāvana, pray to his *mūrti,* do things his way, and then you will be in his presence more and more. Speak his philosophy and do not be afraid.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
6.2

Boston, 1971
"What are they saying of the Deities?"
you asked, after you installed Them.
I said, "Everyone likes Them."
This was when you walked into the temple
for an initiation *yajña*
and you were sitting on the same level as us.

When I paid for the executive suite
at the Boston Sheraton, she handed me a
long-stemmed rose.
"Why, if I may ask, do you spend so much money
if he's a renounced monk?"
"Because it is our duty to offer him
the very best."
But he refused to stay in the "brothel."

Dear Prabhupāda, at the *yajña*
I mixed the milk, yogurt and ghee
from one stainless steel bowl to another
with a ladle, as you directed.
Gaurī dāsī had to cut and sew
under your gaze
to make the green corduroy dresses fit.

"Where's the flute?"
"Now put Them on the altar."
I carried Kṛṣṇa
while you watched.

As Indians observed the *yajña,*
you said of Karāṇdhara dāsa
who performed the *agni-hotra,*
"This boy is fit to do *yajñas,*
according to Jīva Gosvāmī."

You shared our bathroom.
Unfinished wood walls.
No heat; we couldn't pay the oil bill.
You asked for local fruit
and five seconds later Suhotra Brahmacārī
brought you a plate of blueberries.

Patīta Uddhāraṇa asked you
if you could chant on his beads again.
A thug had taken his old ones.
"I was lucky," said Patīta,
"That he did not take my life."
"Accha!" you opened your eyes wide.
Hari Nāma dāsa told you of his boils.
"A Vaiṣṇava neglects his health," you said.

You had recently traveled
from Moscow to Paris to L.A.
We were small-timers,
still you visited because
you'd promised for months
in response to many letters—
"Please come to install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa."
There were fifteen devotees
ready to be initiated by you,
and we all danced around you
at the airport
while you waited for the New York shuttle.

Goodbye, Prabhupāda,
thank you for visiting Boston.
Please forgive us for not offering you
a better place to stay.
And I have a last question—
"Do devotees like us
still come under the modes?
Are we free?"
You replied, we are free,
but like the electric fan
the blades revolve awhile
even after the plug has been pulled.
"Jaya Prabhupāda. Thank you.
May I come to see you in New York?"

*****

Prabhupāda in Dallas
6.3

I wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda asking if we could have Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. At first he said no, because we did not have many devotees. We had just moved into the big building. A large picture of Pañca-tattva was our altar deity.

A few months later, Prabhupāda wrote from India and said that he had obtained Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities for us and had shipped Them. When the Deities arrived in New York, a devotee put Them in a small rented trailer—and drove Them from New York to Dallas. Śrīla Prabhupāda was traveling widely, but by coincidence (as we say) the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities arrived in Dallas the day before Śrīla Prabhupāda did.

Even before Prabhupāda came, we began to hear stories of the Deity. Someone said that Kṛṣṇa had been by Himself without Rādhārāṇī; He was standing as a doorstop in Jaipur. Someone said that He was in a museum. Someone said that He was five hundred years old as evidenced by the ancient style of the carving. He had a big head and was not so slim. Someone said that the Rādhārani intended for Dallas had gotten mixed up and was sent to Detroit, and the one for Detroit had come to Dallas. These were some of the stories.

Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī finally came, and Prabhupāda came the next day. He was making his first visit to Dallas *gurukula*, and we did not expect that he would want to install the Deity. We were not very prepared in our new temple, and he would only be there for a few days. But maybe . . .

When the Deities arrived, some of the devotees decided to scrape off all the paint from the Deity of Kṛṣṇa and repaint Him. The chief artist, and therefore the person who became the culprit, was Jāhnava dāsī, the wife of Nandakiśora. We had placed the Deities in a large bare room, and there Jāhnava began working alone, scraping at the Deity.

To our happy surprise, Prabhupāda said he would install the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities while he was there. He liked the new Dallas temple, and he liked the climate, which was like India. He spoke on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the morning and gave lessons privately to the *gurukula* teachers as well as to the students. He did not appear particularly concerned about the preparations for the Deity installation. But after a day or so, he asked me about it.

I told Prabhupāda that the Deity was being scraped. As soon as he heard it, Prabhupāda became angry. "On whose authority is this being done?" he demanded. He was upset and raising his voice, as I sat there and trembled.

"Why did you do this? Who told you to do this? Who is doing it?" I began to defend myself and said that Jāhnava and some of the other ladies had decided to do it. Prabhupāda told me to bring her in.

Jāhnava entered his room, and soon she was crying many tears before him. She was so devastated that she couldn't answer his question. She had been working hard, going without sleep, trying to completely scrape the Deity down and put a new coat of black paint. She figured she had just enough time to get the paint on so it would dry in time for the installation. So she was already nervous and was now crushed before Prabhupāda's anger.

"Why did you do this?" Prabhupāda demanded. Jāhnava then named Bhāradrāja, the authority on whose advice she was working. She had heard from Bhāradrāja, who had done a similar thing when the Rādhā-Govinda Deities had arrived in New York. They had even performed minor chiseling on their Deity. So since they had done it in New York, it was supposedly an approved activity. If there were any flaws in the Deity when it arrived, you could repaint it or even rechisel it. She had heard this on the phone from Bhāradrāja and other devotees in New York.

"*Who* told you to do this?" Prabhupāda asked. "Who was the rascal?"

Jāhnava said, "Bhāradrāja told me."

"Bhāradrāja!" Prabhupāda shouted it. "Why do you listen to someone thousands of miles away when your spiritual master is right here? Who is Bhāradrāja?"

Prabhupāda called us all rascals, me, Jāhnava, and Bhāradrāja. His point was that we should not have speculated since our spiritual master was present. Whenever we mentioned someone else who had given us advice, that just made us even more blameable in Prabhupāda's eyes.

"So what is to be done?" Prabhupāda wanted to know what we were going to make out of the whole mess. I had no idea of what to say or do. So we were dismissed from his room, while he remained angry.

Once outside of Prabhupāda's room, Jāhnava came up with a new suggestion. She told me that she could repaint Kṛṣṇa the way He was when he arrived, by doing it with quick drying paint. Everything would be all right. He would look the way He had when He arrived. I went back into Prabhupāda's room and told him what we would do, and he said, *go ahead and do it.*

The next morning Prabhupāda went on a walk. The neighborhood near the temple was somewhat rundown, but peaceful enough and warm. Śyāmasundara was on the walk with Prabhupāda, and I was there too, and a few others.

Just before leaving the building for the walk, one of the ladies told me that it was not turning out so good; the paint was not drying. It did not look as if the Deity was going to be ready for the installation. I was confused whether that meant the Deity would not be ready that morning or He would not be ready

even the next morning. All I knew "for sure" was that there would not be enough time for the Deity to dry before the scheduled installation.

Prabhupāda spoke on the walk, and he was in his usual pleasing mood. I then timidly but decisively came close beside him and spoke.

"Prabhupāda, the women who are painting the Deities say that they do not think there will be enough time for the Deity to dry. They suggest that maybe you could stay another day in order to do it." Prabhupāda had not mentioned the Deity on his morning walk, but as soon as I had said my piece, he became disturbed.

He turned to Śyāmasundara and asked whether it was possible to leave Dallas immediately by plane. This was his response, and it struck me like a thunderbolt. It was as if he was saying, "Let's get out of here. This place is useless and these people are useless. Can I get a ticket out of here at once and leave this farce and misbehavior?" Śyāmasundara said that he would see if he could get new tickets.

"Yes," said Prabhupāda, "I want to leave."

That was devastating. Prabhupāda then said a few more things about me and the other devotees who were responsible for this mishandling. I felt shattered that we were sō displeasing to him. Everything had seemed so auspicious with the arrival of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, but now everything had gone wrong. It was all going down the drain because of our acting independently and making whimsical changes with the Deity.

Śrīla Prabhupāda returned from the walk and gave his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture as usual. I did not know what to expect next. Śyāmasundara had

gone off to see if he could get Prabhupāda a plane out of Dallas as soon as possible. But then Jāhnava and her friends came up to me and said, "It looks like we are going to be able to make it on time." They had put fans on the Deity, and the paint was drying quickly. They hadn't slept all night and they looked like nervous wrecks.

And so once again I went into Prabhupāda's room with a new story about the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. When I first went into his room, Prabhupāda spoke a little bit more of the philosophy of the *Bhāgavatam* class. That morning he had lectured on the Second Canto verse which has the line *gṛheṣu gṛhamedīnam.* Then I said, "Prabhupāda, if you like, you can come and see the Deity. It looks like it is going to be all right. He will be ready for the installation and will look just as He did when He arrived."

Prabhupāda was very light and sweet, with none of his anger remaining. He had no grudge or sarcastic words. It was as if there had not been any mishap at all.

I said, "Would you like to come and see the Deity?"

"Oh yes," he said. We both walked the short distance from his room to the hall where the Deity was kept. As we walked, Prabhupāda was humming, and he sang the phrase, *"gṛheṣu gṛhamedhīnam."*

We entered the room,and there was Jāhnava on her knees, making the last touches on the Deity of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda looked very pleased, and he shook his head affirmatively.

"Very nice, so then it will be all right. We will do the installation."

Of course, we never should have made all those blunders, and yet the whole episode turned out even more joyful than if it had just gone smoothly from the beginning. Prabhupāda had pushed us to intense surrender; we had faced our foolishness and learned some lessons.

Since we had just moved into the temple and had little money or manpower, our installation was not very opulent. We had no nice altars or thrones ready for the Deities. Vāmanadeva, an expert carpenter, had made a wooden bench for an altar and covered it with formica tile. The temple room was vast but completely bare. The walls were cinder blocks. It had formerly been used as a gymnasium and general meeting hall by the church owners. The stage was very high up, and you had to look up to where the Deity would stand.

He was a heavy Deity, and it took six men to carry Him carefully. Kṛṣṇa stood in a plastic bucket for the *abhiśeka.* Prabhupāda accepted whatever we did without objection.

He chanted the *"Govindam"* prayers from the *vyāsāsana,* and I did the bathing under his direction. There were many *gurukula* children and they all sat around. They were very interested in the big Deity who was being bathed along with a delicate, white Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī.

I poured the milk liquids onto the head of Rādhārāṇī, while Prabhupāda chanted the *Brahmā-saṁhitā.* As I poured I moved the liquids so that they flowed over Her shoulders and other parts of Her body, Her legs and feet. From the *vyāsāsana,*

which was somewhat distant from me, Prabhupāda said, "The head, Her head." I did not hear him at first and kept pouring on the different parts of Her body. Then I finally heard him shouting, "The head! Only the head!"

When Prabhupāda said that, I became more sober and concentrated on Her head.

The Deities' clothing was not very nice. It was just a simple outfit of green velvet. It is embarrassing now to see the photos from that time. Nowadays, the Kṛṣṇa Deity of Dallas is served wonderfully. His chest is so big and He is so grand that it takes expert dressing and decoration to serve Him nicely. In those days all we had was frantic *bhakti,* excitement, happiness, and enthusiasm. Prabhupāda was installing the Deity.

After Kṛṣṇa was dressed, the six men again carried Him up to the high platform and placed Him on the wooden altar where He stood next to Rādhārāṇī. There were very few flower decorations because we couldn't afford them. We had plumes stuck in jars, and other greenery, weeds, and tassels.

Prabhupāda went up to the altar and performed the first *ārati.* We gave him a big block of camphor for lighting the ghee lamp. He lit the whole ball of camphor, and a large flame and black smoke came out. He offered water to the Deity in a conch and then poured the water into his hand and threw it out to us. We were all happy to get the spurts of water from the hand of His Divine Grace. Prabhupāda did everything calmly and nicely and then went back to his room.

At the request of the devotees, I went up to his room and asked, "Prabhupāda, do you have a name

for this Deity?" Prabhupāda wrote down on a piece of paper, "Rādhā-Kalacanji the Deity of Dalas."

He then signed his own name. He said that Kālacāndjī meant "Black Moon."

Prabhupāda had captured the essence of the Deity. With His beautiful blackness, and his handsome massive head, He was like a big black moon. "Rādhā-Kalacanji, the Deity of Dalas."

When I think of these things, it makes me want to be there in Dallas in 1972. As I sit here recalling, I am looking out the window and thinking, "Where am I?" Oh yes, I am in Germany; but I do not feel like I am in Germany. I feel happy to talk about Prabhupāda in Dallas.

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Sri Sri Rādhā-Kālācāndji

the deity of Dallas.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Sept 12th 1972.

3764 WATSEKA AVENUE • LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90034 •

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
6.4

The Stroke, May 1967

Swami Satcidananda, the photogenic *yogī*
kindly came
to visit our Swami in the hospital:
"Swamijī is better now."

He sits up in bed for the yogi's visit,
Swamijī plays him the Hare Kṛṣṇa record.
Then has us read a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport,
the one that states, "Why does mankind
waste his vital energy in industries?
Why does he slaughter the cow?
Has this civilization produced anything better
than animal-like people?"

We youngsters knew our Swami was best,
but since our own guru was pleased
by the visit of the *yogī*,
why should we be quarrelsome?

Swamijī, I belonged there with you,
young and ready to
do your order, whether it is
to type a letter to your friend in New Delhi,
or to go to Boston on your behalf.
But in those days you did not demand much.
You knew I was a foolish child.
I'd given up other engagements
to be yours for life.

With you in that hospital,
while you slept.
Then sitting on the floor at the foot of your bed,
while you ate some of the hospital meal
and whatever we had brought.
You distributed your remnants with your hand.

You slept, tired from illness,
then woke in twilight.
Maybe I was the only devotee in the room,
on watch beside your bed,
when you sat up quietly and said,
"I do not know Kṛṣṇa.
I just know my Guru Mahārāja."

"Hospital means hospitable,"
you said, explaining that
we did not have to be in anxiety
if we couldn't immediately pay the bill.

You were dangerously weak for a few days.
I can't remember them.
But I recall when the worst went away;
it seemed natural that you should recover
in a miraculous way.

You told Mukunda by letter
that his San Francisco *kīrtana* was nice,
and his American tune,
"Nārada Muni, The Eternal Space Man"
was nice, so write more.
You said their prayers had saved you.

Now it is Kārttika in 1990 and
we are burning candles in the back of a van
off the highway in France.
I wish to fly away from here,
to you—not that you should be sick again
but smiling, recovered,
accepting a watermelon,
with your spiritual children.

When will you come again
and teach us what to do?
Where will this separation end?
We can't go on forever hearing your tapes
and preaching in your temples.
Just as you came and left,
so will we. Then where will we go?
After we cling to you across
the barrier of death, then what?
We are following you all the way,
please claim us.
Although we are defective—I speak for myself.

*****

Drops From the Ocean
6.5

The shaky table covered with a white sheet upon which Prabhupāda sat . . . (Marsh Chapel at Boston University, May 1968.) This engagement was very poorly attended because it was student examination week. We borrowed that table from the university, but it was high, and not meant for sitting upon. I offered it confidently, "You can sit on this, Swamijī. It

is all right, it will hold you." Prabhupāda looked at the table doubtfully. He stepped onto it by first stepping on a chair. The offering was shaky in another sense—to offer him such an inadequate seat.

Except for the devotees from Boston and some devotees from New York, there were only about six people in the audience of the large chapel. Prabhupāda conducted a full half-hour *kīrtana.* Toward the end he broke the rhythm from the usual one-two-*three,* one-two-*three,* and started making a continuous rhythm without any pauses in between. He usually did this only in the very final moments of a *kīrtana,* when everything would build up to a finale. But at Marsh Chapel he reached a finale in the *kīrtana* and kept the high pitch of intensity going for maybe ten minutes. After the *kīrtana,* Prabhupāda asked Brahmānanda to speak first, and then Prabhupāda spoke a full, strong lecture.

During Prabhupāda's visit to Boston, a radio interviewer phoned the temple and said, "If I could get Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to come to the studio with Bhaktivedanta Swami, would your Swami be willing to do that? I understand that they have a basic disagreement." We asked Prabhupāda if he wanted to do it, and he said, "Do you want to see your spiritual master in a dogfight?" He did not want to do it. We were always enthused to see Śrīla Prabhupāda's boldness in going forward to take preaching engagements, and his disciples tried to carry on that tradition. But it was also nice when we saw his caution. He did not want to go on the air with someone he was opposed to, just to make a debate.

The moment that Prabhupāda came into the Allston storefront for the first time: we had done extensive advertising by putting up posters for his arrival in all the subway stations. We also had a second poster, a large cardboard, which listed all the events for his month long stay. In 1968, there was still a high interest in swamis and *yogīs*. They were not seen as cult leaders but as an exciting part of the culture of the times. On Prabhupāda's arrival evening, people came from many parts of the city and filled the storefront.

There we were, waiting for him to come. The house where Prabhupāda was staying was a half mile away, and Prabhupāda walked because we had no car. The moment that I am talking of is when he came in the door and saw a hundred people there. He was wearing his Swami cap, which had two hanging straps, resembling an old aviator's cap. As he entered the door, Prabhupāda reminded me of an intrepid aviator from a fighter plane with an open cockpit—a dashing figure. He looked rugged in the sense that he was ready to deal with the world and give his transcendental wisdom. Rugged handsomeness. When I first saw him through the storefront window, he had not been smiling, but once he opened the door and saw the people, he smiled.

I was responsible for whether things were successful during his visit. At every moment I was in anxiety, whether I had pleased the spiritual master. I hung on his every word and expression to see how he took it. So it was a great relief and happiness for me to see that he was pleased.

When Prabhupāda gave lectures to such crowds I would listen on at least two different levels—both of them intently. I would listen for my own spiritual benefit, but at the same time, I listened and imagined the mentality of the nondevotees and how they would receive it. I was eager for them to accept it and eager to accept it myself, thinking *"This is a great opportunity, Prabhupāda is here; let's hear him."*

After a few of his lectures in the storefront, the audience diminished greatly. That was disappointing, but Prabhupāda accepted it nicely, and it allowed us to have more intimate meetings. One evening when he entered, he made his obeisances before the altar, but instead of standing up again he remained on his knees. He had noticed one of the pictures and stopped to examine it. A devotee asked, "Swamijī, what does this picture mean?" It was a print from India of Vasudeva crossing the river with Kṛṣṇa. The picture showed the river Yamunā holding Kṛṣṇa and offering Him back to Vasudeva. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that Yamunā-devī wanted to play with Kṛṣṇa and arranged for this pastime. It was also a pastime to be with Prabhupāda and hear his explanation while we were all down on our knees, which seemed to be the best way for looking at a picture of Kṛṣṇa.

During that same visit, Prabhupāda explained other pictures. One was the famous Indian print of Rādhārāṇī worshiping Kṛṣṇa with flowers. She is looking up at Kṛṣṇa, and His *cādar* is floating in many wavy lines. Devotees liked that picture very much, and ISKCON artists had copied it. Rādhārāṇī is at Kṛṣṇa's feet, and He is playing the flute in His

youthful pose. That picture was on the altar, and one night he looked at it while lecturing. He began to explain how people misunderstand Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. He told the story of a cow who had survived a fire in a barn. Now, wherever that cow saw red, she thought, "There is the fire!" and was afraid. Similarly, when the nondevotees see Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes, which resemble sexual relationships of people in this world, they also mistake it.

There were many other pictures in the storefront. In fact, all the wall space throughout the little building, including the kitchen and basement, was covered with Yadurāṇī's paintings. One was a huge canvas of Kṛṣṇa and the eight *gopīs,* and there were many other regular size canvases—Nṛsiṁhadevas, Viṣṇus, Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana,* and so on. Prabhupāda liked to see the pictures, and we loved to stand beside him and hear him make comments. Kṛṣṇa conscious paintings are often called spiritual windows, but we couldn't see out of those windows. Sometimes we saw only mundane memories when we looked at pictures of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, and we cursed ourselves for those impressions. But when we were with Prabhupāda and he spoke of a painting, it became a wonderful open window to Goloka. Prabhupāda entered the *līlā* confidentially and shared it with us. Depending on our purity and submissiveness to him, we could also freely enter the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

One picture showed Kṛṣṇa's father, Vasudeva, taking Yaśodā's newborn child Kṛṣṇa, while Mother Yaśodā slept. Prabhupāda laughed and said, "Look, he is cheating for God. He said that he

would give all of his children to Kaṁsa, but when Kṛṣṇa was born, he cheated. And now he is cheating Yaśodā."

*****

On A Walk In Los Angeles
6.6

I am trying to become more conscientious to write down a thought of Prabhupāda whenever it comes. The other day I suddenly remembered incidents when I was present on a walk with Prabhupāda in Los Angeles.

This was very soon after Prabhupāda had moved into the Los Angeles, Watseka Avenue temple. At that time, he took his morning walks by starting right at the temple door and walking around the neighborhood. Years later, Prabhupāda would drive in a car to either Venice Beach or Cheviot Hills Park. This was before that started, in the early 1970s.

It proved to be a rather unpleasant walk, with a few tense moments because of the neighborhood.

I can remember myself and Karāṇdhara present, and there were maybe two others. We started out from the temple, turned right, and walked along the sidewalk. About a block away, we saw some guys working on a motorcycle on their lawn. When we reached them, Prabhupāda stopped for a moment and looked. Prabhupāda was friendly and they were unfriendly. They said something. At first Prabhupāda did not understand exactly what they said. We continued to walk. Prabhupāda asked Karāṇdhara what they had said, and Karāṇdhara

described it in a general way, saying that they were not very nice. Karāṇdhara said that in general, the neighborhood was not very friendly.

Walks with Prabhupāda were usually in more open settings, on the broad beach or in walkways within a park. This walk was more confined, up and down the sidewalks in the tight suburban setting. Near the end of the walk, we were down on a busy boulevard, near the location of what later became Govinda's Restaurant. Prabhupāda stopped to look in the window of a store that advertised protection against termites. There was a picture of a house that had been completely destroyed by termites. Prabhupāda asked Karāṇdhara how much it cost to get termite protection. Karāṇdhara said it could cost as much as $10,000 dollars. Prabhupāda expressed surprise in a childlike way. He said, "Oh, then let my house collapse!"

Soon after, as we were walking forward, a man approached us and handed Prabhupāda a card. The man looked like a derelict, and when he spoke it was incoherent. So Prabhupāda accepted the card and we kept walking, leaving the man behind.

Prabhupāda said, "He is a drunkard." The devotees affirmed that this was true. Then Prabhupāda said, "In Germany it is called *drinkin* or *drunken*."

Perhaps on this walk there was more serious philosophy discussed or serious management. But over the years that has disappeared from my mind; yet I remember these incidents. I remember feeling tense because of them. And I retain an overall impression of the devotees' reverence and love for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
6.7

It is easy to forget now,
embroil yourself in religious politics
or steer your own course away from
those politics,
get too absorbed in yourself,
your dwindling days and so on.

But do not forget, he saved us.
He taught the exact right thing—
Lord Kṛṣṇa and chanting and
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu;
and he taught it in his own way:
No one else.

There was no *mṛdaṅga,*
no Air India flights to the *dhāmas,*
no Sanskrit scholars
or rituals from the various *sampradāyas;*
no idea that Western culture can be
mixed in with Kṛṣṇa consciousness once
you learn it,
and no one spoke of *varṇāśrama* except
to try to understand in a simple way
what Prabhupāda meant.

I just want to see him,
remember him lifting
my life up.

I remember coming home from work—
home was the storefront in Allston,
and my job was to earn money for the temple.
My family was two or three devotees.
Supper was warmed-over *prasādam* from lunch,
and the evening was spent in *kīrtana* and lecture,
looking at devotional paintings and
maybe phoning the police if the
teenage hoodlums threw rocks.
Mostly peaceful. Always fully
engaged in devotional service.
Steady influx of tapes from him,
his dictation of *Kṛṣṇa* book or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,
for me to type.

We talked about Prabhupāda
all the time.
We were younger.
Things hadn't happened in ISKCON.
No one thought he was a *guru*.
Only Prabhupāda.

I went off to work.
Girirāja went to chant and
collect money in a conchshell.
Yadurāṇī painted Nṛsiṁhadeva and Paramātmā.
Pradyumna was in the basement with
Sanskrit grammar.
Devānanda going to the grocery, singing too loud.
And all of us very young, faces unlined,
nobody married.
We were brought together by
allegiance to Prabhupāda and
we talked of Kṛṣṇa as if we knew Him.

And no one thought of the future
when we would not see him again.

He's with each of us until we die,
when we hope to go to him in a chastened way
free from the temporary,
into the entourage of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa,
or maybe back to another Allston,
more letters from Prabhupāda.
From one life to the next,
Janme janme prabhu sei.

*****

Following the Saint
6.8

Reading a biography of Saint Francis of Assisi by Johannes Jorgensen, I was reminded of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his relationship with his disciples. The biographer tells us of the days when Francis was a teacher "not only in word but also in action." His first disciples were also very eager to follow him and please their spiritual master.

The biographer writes, "Everyone who has had the happiness in his youth to have lived near a highly exalted personality will therefore understand that a young Brother named Ricerius had acquired the conviction that the good will of Francis was the infallible sign of the satisfaction of God."

I am struck by the phrase, "Everyone who has had the happiness in his youth to have lived near a highly exalted personality . . . " What are the odds that one will be born in the human species in Kali-

yuga and get the opportunity to meet the pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa? It is very rare. To meet him when one is young adds to the possibility of taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness as soon as possible, and of doing it with the ardor of a young man or woman.

I am reminded of another phrase by the 19th century Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, about the French Revolution. To the Romantic poets, the French revolution was an emblem of freedom for humanity. And so the poet wrote,

> Bliss it was to have lived at that time,
> and to have been young was heaven!

Although we Lower East Side boys were cynical toward middle-class American values, yet in our way we were innocent and idealistic. When you meet a person like Śrīla Prabhupāda, then youth and idealism are wed to a tangible goal.

We may curse our fate for being born in Kali-yuga when we hear of the piety of previous ages. But as the *Bhāgavatam* states, there is one great quality in Kali-yuga which redeems the ocean of vices—the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. But the holy name cannot manifest itself unless it is carried by the pure chanter. So it was bliss and heaven that Prabhupāda came to us while we were young, and that he took us with him to chant in the park.

Francis's biographer gives sketches of many of the first disciples. One of them is Brother John the Simple, who had a tendency to do whatever he saw St. Francis do.

> When therefore St. Francis was in the church or other place to pray, he watched him closely so as to follow all his ways and movements. And when St. Francis bent his knee or lifted his hands to heaven, or spit, or sighed, then he did exactly the same. But as St. Francis became aware of this, he scolded him very cheerfully about it. Then Brother John answered, "Brother, I have promised to do all that you do, and therefore it is fit that I copy you in all things.

Some of our behavior was in the copying mood, such as imitating Prabhupāda's Indian accent and uttering his ecstatic sound "Mmmmmm." To outsiders, we may have seemed like copycats wearing *tilaka*, dressing like Prabhupāda and shaving our heads. But we were actually following the standard Vaiṣṇava methods. And Prabhupāda did not force us to do so.

When we read of John the Simple, we think that there is something favorable to be said for the affectionate desire to follow the saint in everything he does. It is certainly more attractive than limiting the saint's influence in your life so that you follow only a few general principles. Nowadays we even hear some initiated disciples say, "Prabhupāda was a great saint, but I no longer follow his instructions." Instead of that, give us the devotion of Brother John the Simple!

Francis had many chaste female followers, led by Saint Clare. The biographer points out that Francis was a high object of admiration for all of these sisters, and that "a part of their religious feeling was intertwined with his personality." Because he did

not want to become the object of a personality cult, Francis withdrew into the background. The biographer states, "He did not wish to stand between them and Christ. For no consideration did he encourage the purely personal devotion to the priest or the individual."

Prabhupāda also did this in his own way, by his steady emphasis in teaching that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All living entities, including the pure devotees, are infinitestimal spirit souls, servants of the Lord. Swamis often declare themselves incarnations, and their followers advertise that the guru is the source of all *śakti*. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, taught that he was only the peon or messenger of his spiritual master and of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore his movement became known as the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and his followers are called "Hare Kṛṣṇas," not "Prabhupādas."

By Śrīla Prabhupāda's natural humility and strict *parampara* teaching, we can now combine our worship for him with the right understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who receives all our service.

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
6.9

Prabhupāda poems can come from France or Spain,
can come from me.
For example, one time I was shaping dough
into *purīs* for the Sunday feast
at 26 Second Avenue,
and the Swami came into the room.
He picked up one of my *purīs* and said,
"It is not standard."
"Should I do it over?" I asked.
No, he said, "It will have to do."

In two days my path is supposed to cross
with Girirāja Swami.
He's a person I can pump
for Prabhupāda meditations.
I remember Girirāja in somewhat tattered
brahmacārī clothes, coming to see his
beloved mentor, Prabhupāda,
in the apartment on Hare Kṛṣṇa Land.
"You should dress properly,"
Prabhupāda said,
"because you are the leader."
Humble Girirāja,
going to see the lawyers and friends in Bombay,
and everybody treating him like a dear son,
because he's a child of Prabhupāda.
Sweet and clever, but not completely expert
in worldly dealings—after all,
he had come to Prabhupāda for spiritual life.

Prabhupāda did not see only me—
how boring and limited!
He saw many, loved many,
required many able sons
to carry out his plans for Kṛṣṇa.

Rāmeśvara to print his books;
Rādhāballabha to manage the production.
(When Rādhāballabha went to Prabhupāda and said
he wanted to do something else,
Prabhupāda laughed,
"What else can you do?")
Tripurāri and his crew to distribute the books.
Madhudviṣa in Australia,
great leader of *kīrtana.*
Syāmasundara, who with great difficulty
found some fruits and vegetables for Prabhupāda
after shopping all day in Moscow.
And scores more.
Their service
is eternally recorded.

You weren't the only one.
Sometimes you got special attention.
But if you are really a Prabhupāda man
you should be happy
to hear Prabhupāda-*kaṭhā*
from the devotees.
Therefore I say I will pump Girirāja.

We can share Boston days.
Girirāja bowing down as a new boy
before Prabhupāda in Arlington St. Church.
Lending us his red car,
driving Prabhupāda to engagements.
Giving money, his father
coming to see Prabhupāda.

"Since Girirāja came things have improved,"
said Prabhupāda. It was true,
he was a lucky charm.
He suggested we not give up looking
for a new house, do not be intimidated
by landlords (as I was).
He sent the deed to his father-lawyer,
and that impressed the real estate man,
that we weren't babes in the woods.
He had courage.
Collected money all day (in a blue cloth bag,)
on the Boston Common.
Then he went to India,
when Prabhupāda called for help.
He went everywhere with Prabhupāda,
and then got his orders for Bombay.
He knows hundreds of stories,
and feelings too.
When I was compiling *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta.*
he talked with me for a week.
He's got much more to tell,
and when we meet he usually says
"One of these days I'll stop and write it all down."

*****

Convinced by Śrīla Prabhupāda
6.10

When I reflect on specific aspects of Vaiṣṇava philosophy, I often recall the time when I first heard these teachings from Prabhupāda. Hearing face to face while he was present produced a special impression. An example of this took place for me while Prabhupāda was recuperating in Long Branch, New Jersey. This was after he had been hospitalized in 1967. Prabhupāda was being massaged daily by Gaurasundara dāsa. One day, during the massage, he said, "How can they say there is no God? It is a ridiculous argument. For example, if a man goes to a doctor and the doctor examines him and finds that his vital organs are working, his metabolism is in order, his pulse, his heartbeat, his blood circulation, his breathing, everything is working—if after discovering this the doctor concludes, "My dear sir, you are dead"—this statement is nonsense, absurd.

"In a similar way, if we see that the universe is working, the planets are in orbit, the sun is shining, the law of gravity and other natural laws are strictly being observed, and everything is going on—and if we conclude, 'There is no intelligence behind it: God is dead'—it is the same absurd statement."

When Prabhupāda said this, I was convinced. What convinces one person may not convince another, but when you are convinced, you know it. You are fully satisfied and ready to advocate that which you are convinced about.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures cannot obtain

God consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this life nor the next" *(Bg.4.40)*. And yet we are plagued with doubts. When we gain a strong foundation of faith and conviction, it is the best possible thing that we can have.

Some of it is gained gradually. We have to protect it by hearing and chanting. But first there must be a time in which this *bhakti* knowledge is rightly and deeply planted within the heart. Prabhupāda was the planter—and he still is, through his books and by his devotees in *paramparā.*

*****

Prabhupāda Smaraṇam
6.11

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,
today I heard you on tape
when you were in Hṛsikeśa, May 1977.
Your voice was weak,
but your logic very forceful;
you were intolerant with *māyā*
as spoken by your guests.
You said Indian culture
is "hopeless" due to "misleaders."
"We do not care
if they do not agree with us.
If Kṛṣṇa agrees we are satisfied."

Listening to lectures, reading—
this all counts as Prabhupāda meditation,
yet I feel absence.
I have no choice: either I remember and talk,
or the absence and forgetfulness
get worse. So I talk.

When you are bankrupt,
even a dream becomes an asset.
Something stirred within you,
it was ambiguous
but with a definite impression—
Prabhupāda in your dream.
Did I dream last night,
but immediately forget?

There are lean days.
But you are able to think,
"I am serving the devotees,
I am in his movement."
You go to your duties,
as if just performing them is enough.
Morning lectures, *"Dāmodarāṣṭakam,"*
bowing down before pictures,
singing *"Gurvāṣṭakam"* . . .
There are lean days.
At least they remind me
that I hope for better.
Even a moment within a day,
to serve and rejoice
in the presence of Prabhupāda.

*****

As We Knew Him
6.12

In discussions among devotees, I have heard that the Prabhupāda we knew is temporary, and we will not see him again in that form. Only those who go back to Godhead will see him again, in his eternal liberated form. As the Six Gosvāmīs have spiritual forms—and therefore Rūpa Gosvāmī is known as Rūpa Mañjarī—so the liberated spiritual master may be seen in his spiritual form by his liberated followers.

These topics are beyond me, although I accept what is stated in the *śāstra*. But on an emotional level, I do not like to hear it put so bluntly, that I will not see Prabhupāda again. Perhaps some things are better not spoken about, because we do not realize them. When we try to speak, it does not come out right.

This much I can say: Prabhupāda will continue to live for the people of this world, at least for the next ten thousand years. Even Lord Caitanya's mercy will not be manifest after ten thousand years, because then, by the Supreme Lord's will, the Kali-yuga will set in in full force. But as long as human civilization is capable of receiving Kṛṣṇa's grace and Lord Caitanya's grace, Prabhupāda will be celebrated as the great devotee of the Lord, the first one to effectively spread *bhakti* all over the planet.

I will content myself by knowing that any memories we can preserve of Prabhupāda will endure for the people during the time when a Golden Age is

possible. And so we will go on remembering Prabhupāda as we knew him.

I say "as we knew him," but much of Prabhupāda's identity is beyond us, even in his form as a *sannyāsī* pure devotee. *Vaiṣṇavera kriyā mūdra vijñe nā bhujhaya;* No one can understand the mind of the Vaiṣṇava and the nature of his activities. But as far as we know Prabhupāda-*līlā,* we can recall it with assurance that it is lasting and spiritual.

The Supreme Lord and His liberated devotee may appear within this world for some time and then return to the spiritual world, where the devotee may take on a different form. Only if we serve Śrīla Prabhupāda in the form as we knew him will we be qualified to understand further spiritual transformations. If we jump over the Prabhupāda we knew and as he taught us in his books, if we try to imagine some other Prabhupāda—then we will never reach the spiritual world. By the grace of the *guru,* one can transfer to the eternal world, where Kṛṣṇa will arrange that we may recognize our spiritual master. The relationship is eternal.

*****

1966 Wisps
6.13

Standing in the storefront, wearing those gold-colored turtleneck jerseys, and Prabhupāda standing beside us smiling. He is youthful in his own way. ISKCON is youthful and our association is new. When we were standing together I felt very happy, relishing the essence of a lively *guru*-disciple relationship.

Prabhupāda led us in a dance step. He did the step and we followed him around his room. It was in front of his desk where we usually sat. He taught us two varieties of dance steps: one quick and one slow. Two steps per beat or one step per beat. You put your left foot in front and draw it back; then you put your right foot in front and draw it back, and while doing that you move forward and your arms are upraised. There were at least three of us walking behind him as he taught us.

*****

Leading Up to Prabhupāda
6.14

Recently I started thinking of the places I had lived in around 1964, 1965, rehashing. After I got out of the Navy, I rented a tiny, slum apartment with no hot water, down on Suffolk Street. After six months there, a real estate agent came to the door and said I had to leave; they were going to tear the building down. He helped me find another place, which was a real dump. It was one block north of Houston Street, more into the stream of things, in a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood. It was a basement apartment without lights.

That summer I was like a young boy playing in a treehouse. I played at being a hipster on the Lower East Side, smoking marijuana, with a part-time job, wasting my youth, very unhappy but playing a game. Forget by getting high. Once again, the real estate agent came to the door and said that I had to

get out; they were going to use the building for something else.

I was so burned out from taking LSD and being hurt by "friends," that I moved back with my parents on Staten Island. After that, I got a job in the city on the Lower East Side. Then I almost killed myself during an LSD trip by jumping out a window. I broke both my heels falling from the fourth floor. After six weeks in casts I moved back again to Staten Island, to my own apartment. While still hobbling around on crutches, I decided that I wanted to get back into Manhattan where the action was. Staten Island was too far for me to travel to my job on 5th Street in Manhattan. Actually I was strategically placing myself for what was going to happen very soon—but I did not know it.

I remember the night I moved from Staten Island. I had some furniture from my boyhood room, a bed and a bureau, and I had to move it. I called up a freelance mover in Manhattan, and they came and picked me up. I did not tell the landlord but just checked out and brought two cats with me.

On the ferry, I tried to act urbane and hip, to impress the guys in the cab of the truck. It was nighttime when we pulled into Suffolk Street, and there it was, the congested, steaming, passionate city. The air was filled with Spanish accents, music, and a violent atmosphere. As we pulled in front of the building, one of the movers said, "Why are you moving here? You had such a nice quiet place."

The other mover said, "He wants to be part of the action, right? Staten Island is dead."

I especially remember that moment with the two movers. The first guy's remark had really hit it on

the head: "Why is this young guy moving back to the city?" And as I relive that frightening and yet courageous move that I was making to try to get back into the action, searching for whatever I thought I could find in the city, suddenly I recall that *that was the apartment I was in when I met Prabhupāda!*

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If I had met an astrologer back then, and if he had been accurate in his reading, he would have looked at me knowingly and said, "Oh, you are about to meet a very special person, and he is going to make a momentous change in your life!" But I had no such anticipation.

That apartment on Suffolk Street, and the nearness of it to the time when I would meet Prabhupāda—the fact that it was the place where I lived when I first met him and began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa under his direction—makes it very special in my personal history.

I want to celebrate all the things in my life that led up to my meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda. I am thankful to everything that happened. Thankful mainly that I survived. I am so happy to have met Prabhupāda, that I am willing to be grateful to everything that happened to me. Somehow or other, by Providence, it must have all been leading toward that which happened.

Even if events seemed to be wrong and with no connection to meeting Prabhupāda, still they were part of the flow that led to meeting him. So how can I be resentful?

For example, in 1962 I dropped out of Naval Officer Training School, and became a sailor. I could resent that or be unhappy that my father put me into the Navy. But since my life led to meeting Prabhupāda, I am grateful. If I had become a Navy officer, maybe my life would have been different. I might not have been working on the Lower East Side, and might not have had the attitude of a seeker.

If I hadn't jumped out the window, if I hadn't met friends who hurt me, I might not have been in that place at that time. I might not have been the person who gratefully accepted the *prasādam* and the teachings of His Divine Grace.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I do not know if you remember how I was when you saw me. There were numerous people coming to see you, and they were all strangers to you. Maybe you do not remember what I was like. Maybe you do not care about it; the main thing is that you picked me up. There is no need to remember how wretched I was. But I just want to say: you knew me from the beginning. *Thank you.*

Completed during Kārttika, 1990, while
traveling in ISKCON, Europe

GLOSSARY

A

ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

ahiṁsā—nonviolence.

ārati—a ceremony for worshiping the Lord with offerings of food, lamps, fans, flowers, and incense.

arcā-vigraha—the Deity form of the Lord in the temple.

āśrama—the four spiritual orders of life: celibate student, householder, retired and renounced life. Also a dwelling place for spiritual shelter.

B

bhakta—a devotee.

bhakti—devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

brahmacārī—a celibate student.

brahmacārīni—a female celibate student.

brāhmaṇa—one wise in the *Vedas* who can guide; the first Vedic social order.

C

caitya-guru—the Lord in the heart who acts as the spiritual master, directly instructing the living entity.

catur-vyūha—the quadruple expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa: Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkārṣana, Vāsudeva.

D

daṇḍavats—literally, "falling down like a rod"; offering prostrated obeisances.

dhāma—abode, place of residence, usually referring to the Lord's abode.

dhotī—a man's lower garment.

G

Gauḍīya sampradāya—the chain of spiritual masters coming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

gṛhastha—regulated householder life; the second order of Vedic spiritual life.

H

harināma—congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

I

iṣṭa-goṣṭhī—discussions among Vaiṣṇavas about spiritual topics and the instructions of the spiritual master.

J

japa—soft private chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

K

Kali-yuga—the Age of Kali, the present age, characterized by quarrel; it is last in the cycle of four ages and began five thousand years ago.

karma—fruitive action, for which there is always reaction, good or bad.

kīrtana—chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord.

kūrta—a simple style of man's shirt extending approximately to mid-thigh.

L

līlā—a transcendental "pastime" or activity performed by the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees.

M

mahātmā—a "great soul," a broadminded, liberated devotee.

mantra—a sound vibration that can deliver the mind from illusion.

māyā—(*mā*-not; *yā*-this), illusion; forgetfulness of one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

P

Paramātmā—the Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the heart.

parampará—the chain of spiritual masters in disciplic succession.

prasādam—food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa, literally, "Kṛṣṇa's mercy."

R

Rūpa Gosvāmī—the leader of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, the principle followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

S

sabjī—a spiced vegetable dish.

sādhana—regulated spiritual practices.

sādhu—a saintly person.

samādhi—trance, complete absorption in God consciousness.

saṁsāra—the repeated cycle of birth and death in the material world.

saṅkīrtana—congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord.

sannyāsī—a person in the renounced order, the fourth spiritual order in Vedic society.

śāstra—revealed scripture.

smaraṇam—devotional remembrance (of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee); one of the nine basic forms of *bhakti-yoga.*

V

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

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