

REMEMBERING SRILA PRABHUPADA

“The sky is unlimited, but many birds fly higher and higher according to their own abilities. The pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu are like the unlimited sky. How, then, can an ordinary living being describe them all? I have tried to describe them as far as my intelligence allows, as if trying to touch a drop in the midst of a great ocean.”

—Cc. Antya 20: 79-81

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*REMEMBERING
SRILA PRABHUPADA*

*A Free-Verse Rendition
of the Life and Teachings of
HIS DIVINE GRACE
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of
the International Society for Krishna Consciousness*

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

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INTRODUCTION

I

You didn't want a book about you.
"Give us volumes of books on Krishna," you said.
Finally in your last days you assented—
we may do it
if it is spiritual.
There is a way
you liked us to speak of your achievements
and of old days,
especially your first in America,
and a way we spoke with you
for hours in your room,
sometimes discussing Krishna's *lila* and instructions,
sometimes Kali-yuga's horrors,
sometimes your own activities:
you brought our lives together.
Since you, no one can speak
Krishna-*katha* so spontaneously.
Then, for your pleasure,
let us sit with you again
and recall your teachings
and your own life story—
if we can do it sincerely.

2

Do higher beings and great devotees
see me and smile as I retell
the human-like dealings
of their liberated associate?
Do they know him differently than I?

Is mine but a tiny child's view of the father,
affectionate but knowing little?

He represents the entire *Gita*,
and he is the *Vedas* personified.
He is all sages in *parampara*.
His life's history we are savoring,
though his work defies description,
even were we to tell the entire work
of the Krishna Consciousness Movement.

Yet his human-like struggles are also glorious.
Lord Rama is described as great—
according to the measure of humans
and according to the measure of gods.
The life story of Prabhupada
is also great—
according to the scale of the humans
and according to the scale of the *Mahabagwat*.

3

Through him we enter Krishna's *lila*
and join the eternal associates in Krishna-loka;
through him the material world,
though also inconceivable,
can be known as it is.
Krishna has arranged
that we hear and see through him,
the person sent by God to us,
to teach us how
to save ourselves from nuclear destruction,
to reform government,

to avoid death and rebirth,
to be happy.
Because his *lila* is sweet,
because by hearing we are cleansed,
and because we must—
let us tell his life story.
Everyone will like it,
except the beast.

4

People don't know who they are—
you kindly tell them.
They don't know where they're going,
where they've been—
but you direct them.
Even the cleverest say, "Death annoys.
I'd like to know what happens after."
They don't know how the soul lives on,
but you have given them
Bhagavad Gita As It Is.

You teach what no scientist,
poet, or philosopher knows. Indeed,
their gifts of technology,
their thoughtful oratory, their sometimes
good feelings—
all are misplaced.
They can have no compassion
who save only the shirt
of the drowning man.
They can have no love
who take these lumps of flesh as lovable.

They can be of no help
who themselves are blind and bound.
They lead us into the ditch.
But Prabhupada, you can build a house
in which all mankind can live—
a Krishna Conscious world.
It's you who should be
enshrined in national monuments,
read about in school books,
praised as liberator—
although you don't want it.
Yet you acknowledge that
the Vaishnava should be praised.
Please allow us
to do it nicely.



BOOK ONE



SEPTEMBER 1, 1896

Under a jackfruit tree, in a little house,
almost a hundred years ago
in Calcutta—an unlikely place someone might say,
but it lies within the geography and culture
of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu,
and the great saint Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur
was also living there.

The most important day it was
for the sorry, sad world
where millions were killed in the wars,
killed and then born again
into different species of pain.

Under a jackfruit tree, in a little house
almost a hundred years ago,
the day after Krishna's birthday,
his mother delivered him,
he who is actually the savior,
the messiah who would bring
Krishna *bhakti* to the West.

The world would receive true religion
from him.



EARLY DAYS

Across the street stood the temple of Radha-Govinda,
where Abhay's father took him for *darshan*:
*"I can remember standing at the doorway
of Radha-Govinda temple saying prayers to
Radha-Govinda murti. I would watch for hours together.*

The Deity was so beautiful, with His slanty eyes."

Of all the devotees, the little child
was by far the greatest.

His love for Govinda would blaze
the world into Krishna Consciousness.

There was never a time when he forgot Krishna.

British occupation of India, the buildings
and streets of Calcutta—these are background only
for the entrance of the great soul,
comparable to the coming of Uddhava,
Pariksit Maharaj, or Prahlad.

Eating puffed rice with his father,
wanting *two* guns for two hands—
it is sweet to recall,

because he was the preacher to deliver us.

There were signs of that too:

his father was a pure devotee.

He is lying in bed—

noise of horse-drawn carts and carriages outside.

Late at night and family in bed,

but father, returning after the day's work,

is worshipping Krishna on the altar,

trying to be quiet

not to waken anyone,

but worshipping the Deity;

and the faint tinkle of the bell

wakes Abhay,

who turns and sees

father and Krishna.



A CHILD'S RATHA-YATRA

The fathers were looking on,
the mothers were looking on,
the demigods were looking on.
Little *murtis*—Jagannath, Subhadra, and
Baladeva—rode on the three-foot cart.
A children's festival,
but the leading child was intent, in *samadhi*;
he must have an authentic cart,
painted just as at Puri,
with wooden horses in front.
Blue wood with white swans,
the sixteen columns, the canopy,
the red, green, and yellow paints—
it must all be done just right,
with a spire and flag on top.
and the parents must make *prasadam* for distribution.
He insisted, and they smiled and complied.
Do it right, he insisted.
It was a real festival,
done in intense devotion.

Who knew?
His father, for one.
He complied; he loved his son
and did whatever he asked.
Father obeyed son out of love.
Maybe he knew that
it was the harbinger
of Ratha-yatras to be held in dozens of cities—
fifty-foot-high carts, splendid big

festivals in dozens of places at once,
before millions of people, Jagannath proceeding—
all from this intent child's festival,
which must be done.

Abhay's hand offering the *aratika* flame,
his mind intent, in trance,
on the Lord of the Universe
and the happy festival of chanting
down Harrison Road into Radha-Govinda *mandir*.



ALONE WITH HIS MURTI

A child of golden hue,
a six-year-old boy,
is worshipping his Deity of Radha-Krishna.
To him They are not toys or idols;
he dresses and bathes Lord Krishna,
as do the Brahmins in the temple,
as does his father morning and night.
Singing to Krishna,
bathing and dressing Him,
a small boy worships a *murti*
in a corner of the room
with his sister alongside.
Older brothers and sisters tease them,
but he doesn't care.
Krishna holds His thin brass flute,
standing beside Radha, the Queen of *Bhakti*—
Radha and Krishna in the spiritual world
with the small child in Calcutta.

THROUGH HIS EYES

Through his eyes,
as he cycles through Dalhousie Square,
see Calcutta:
the proud Britishers in carriages,
water fountains playing in the green maidan.
Through his eyes,
see his kind father
waking him for *puris* and *kachauris*,
training him to play *mrdanga*,
his mother Rajani,
trying to tame him,
trying to protect him with prayers and *mantras*.
Through his eyes,
see the black-and-white illustrations of Mahabharata.
Sadhus come to his father's house;
a *babaji* comes chanting Hari Nama during the plague.
He sees Radha-Govinda every day,
stands for hours beholding the Lord.
He studies train schedules and fares
to Vrindaban.
In his heart is the Hare Krishna Movement.



AT HOME

If a single grain of rice fell to the floor,
his mother would make him pick it up
and touch it to his head: "This comes from God
and should not be wasted."

Many years later he recalled it.
Those days were pure and simple,
even though he once saw a *gunda* stabbing someone,
and he was chased by a man with a knife
in a Hindu-Muslim riot.
Mostly he remembered his father,
peacefully managing the household,
buying grains in quantity.
A bounty of food and love
and topics and worship of Krishna.
*We were happy—not that because we did not purchase
a motorcar we were unhappy.*



KACHAURI MUKHI

You liked them
fried in ghee
with hot spices, but not too hot;
and the dough crust must be fried two times
to get an elegant, crispy edge.
The insides well done,
peas, *dahl*, and potatoes.
You watched the men cooking on the street,
each Brahmin would cook for himself
and offer to God. You learned by watching;
they didn't have to give you a verbal cooking class.
But they gave you a *kachauri*,
and into your vest pocket it went.
Then at home you got more
from your mother and father

and a few more from men on the street,
until all your pockets were filled.
You liked *kachauris*, as did the Lord;
He ordered His father, Nanda Maharaja,
to stop the Indra sacrifice
and make *kachauris* and other savories and sweets
for the worship of Govardhan Hill.
You always liked the Lord's *prasad*
and later fed us, your Western children,
though we could not learn to cook
or honor *prasad*
as expertly as you.
Even when you were founder-*acharya* of ISKCON,
you cooked *kachauris* and showed others how,
and when asked how you learned,
you remembered watching men on the street
squatting down beside their fires,
stirring the vegetable-packed pastries
in the bubbling *ghee*, outdoors in the air
as you stood by, a patient, bright boy,
keenly observing all you saw and
learning on the spot how to cook *kachauris*.



FATHER'S LESSONS

Mrdanga?

Why teach a tiny child
to play a drum?
He is so small his hands
can barely reach.

It is the idea of his father,
Gour Mohan De, the cloth merchant,
whose most important activities are
worshiping Krishna and guiding his son.
“Bless my son to become a great devotee of Radharani.”
Gour Mohan has a dream
of his son as a great *Bhagwat* preacher,
so he wants him to learn *mrdanga*,
to fully equip him for *kirtan*.
Not important?
It is essential!
He will, the astrologers said,
cross the ocean to open temples;
there will be many gatherings of people
who do not know Krishna,
and Abhay will lead the *kirtan*.
His expert playing will attract them;
his hands will deftly play the rhythm.
He is a pure devotee of Radharani,
and his singing will be in pure devotion.
So let him learn expert *mrdanga*.
It is very important.
Tee nee tee nee taw—boom boom.
Others are amused,
some even critical of Gour Mohan.
His wife thinks it unimportant.
But he is serious and not to be dissuaded:
What do they know about raising
a pure devotee of Radharani?
He is not to become a barrister,
misled by sinners in England.
He is not to become a hammer man

or technologist-*sudra*.
These are the things he will need:
Bhagwat knowledge and devotion,
Krishna Deity, the Holy Name,
and if he can play expertly *mrdanga*,
that is needed. He is
not an ordinary *bhakta*,
but a very great one.



MOTHER

Whomever Krishna protects no one can kill.
But Rajani loved Abhay as her son,
touching his forehead with her saliva,
putting an iron bangle on his leg,
offering her breast blood to demigods—
all to protect him, to keep him alive,
which was at least as important as *mrdanga* lessons.

Didn't she know he would become a great
preacher and savior of the fallen?
Know? She didn't care so much
(as Yasoda didn't care
whether Krishna was God).
She cared for her son.
She intimately shared his childhood.
He would go nowhere without her permission,
and for that she will always be remembered.

His qualities come from Krishna,
yet he appeared as her son.
She could be stern and fiery,
and so the son was like the mother.
Later he would be fiery and loving and intimate
with his disciples.
Though like his father he would be lenient,
like mother he would be fiery and stern.
“You must do it!” she would try to force him,
but he, being stubborn as she,
threw himself down and banged his head,
flailing fists, until his father
came and acquiesced to whatever he wanted.

A loving exchange: she and he,
fighting in love, like Yasoda and Krishna.
*If she were alive now,
she would simply be satisfied that I am well.*



COLLEGE DAYS

Why should a *nitya-siddha* go to school?
Why not?
Must he walk without touching the ground?
“By the order of the Supreme
he remains within the material world
like an ordinary man, but his only business
is to broadcast the glories of the Lord.”
Throughout his life he sometimes told
how at Scottish Churches’ College

he learned worldly knowledge:
Shakespeare, Dickens, economist Marshall,
psychology, chemistry, history.
It neither baffled nor appealed to his soul.
Though the college was Christian,
he remained pure Vaishnava.
They gave him a new Bible and collegiate academics.
“What are you thinking?” asked a friend.
“I don’t like these things,” Abhay replied.
When a professor disparaged
transmigration of the soul—
“How could a person be judged without a witness?”—
Abhay rejected the flimsy logic:
This is their Christian philosophy?
Don’t they know there is a witness?
Don’t they know the Lord is in the heart?

As a lily on water remains dry,
you remained unaffected.

Srila Prabhupada,
in your college drama
you played Adwaitacharya,
and the audience cried.
We want to hear it,
we want to see it—
yourself as actor,
pure soul appearing as a Bengali college youth,
strong of bodily frame, noble features,
broad forehead, penetrating gaze,
smooth complexion, full, well-shaped mouth.
And for the role of Adwaita

you wore a white beard,
an elderly saint's demeanor,
and exchanged in direct *lila* with Gaura-Nitai.
The audience cried in ecstatic *bhava*,
watching you perform.

"For one who sees Me everywhere,
I am never lost to him, and he is never lost to Me."
Krishna Himself came in a dream,
"Worship Me always, not closed in a box."

Narada Muni saw the future *lila* of the Lord
and relished it:
"I will see You kill the demons, and all these acts
will establish Your glories more and more."
Abhay's father did not recite
the future glories of his son,
nor did Abhay. But they prepared:
"Take it as a great fortune
if you do not become attached
to wife and family. That will help you
in your future advancement in spiritual life."
Traveling alone to Puri
to see Lord Jagannath,
reading *Srimad-Bhagwatam*—he had no other plans.
Yet just to live in Calcutta was the greatest preparation:
his eternal spiritual master
was waiting there,
and the time drew near
for them to meet.

Krishna took over
after Gour Mohan De
had brought him as far as he could.
Marriage and a job
at Dr. Bose's lab—a *grhastha's* way.
Minimizing but retaining worldly duties,
he focused on Krishna as Supreme.
But when Krishna took over,
Abhay was ready.
He remained uncaught
by the national passion,
surging like a tide
behind the figure of Gandhi.
Abhay wore protestor's *khadi*,
but his heart was not in it.
And Krishna took over.



THE MEETING

They met on the roof
in 1922 in Calcutta.
The evening air was warm. Stars and moon
and scanty electric lights
revealed the form of the saintly person
sitting on the roof.
At once he told him, "You are intelligent.
Why don't you preach Lord Chaitanya's message
to the whole world?"
Abhay challenged: "What about *swaraj*?
India is not an independent nation."

It doesn't matter, said his Guru Maharaj.
Krishna Consciousness cannot wait
and doesn't depend on king or president.
All it needs is a pure devotee,
someone submissive to his *guru*
and bold in Krishna's service.

One was sent by Krishna,
and the other also.
One appeared as *guru*,
the other as disciple.
And they met.
Radha and Krishna, Arjuna and Krishna,
Pariksit and Sukadeva, Vidura and Maitreya,
Lord Chaitanya and Rupa-Sanatana—
all these were great meetings,
as was this in 1922
when the seed-direction was given
for delivering humankind.
All the world was dreaming nightmares,
three-fold sufferings and repeated births and deaths.
But the way to their awakening
was ordered that night
by one who had seen the truth
to one
capable, trusted, chosen, and blessed.
It began from there.
Now the spiritual work would begin.
No more sublime discussion
followed by inaction,
no more centuries of charitable enlightenment
locked within a crippled nation.

Now it would burst forth,
according to the desires and plans of the *acharyas*.
The release of all the Jagais and Madhais!
The release of all the cave-dwellers!
The liberation of women and children and animals and men!
The ushering in of a golden, pious age
by the release of knowledge of the eternal soul
and knowledge of loving union with God!
Hope for everyone
now assured by this exchange
between two powerful servants of the Lord!
That the meaning remained hidden on that night
was also the will of the Lord,
so nothing would interfere
with the sacred unfolding of His plans,
starting with this confidential exchange
that fools and rascals could not
understand or disturb.
In the guise of a young Gandhian,
Abhay appeared to argue,
appeared to be defeated.
After he went downstairs, he revealed his mind:
“He is wonderful! Now I know
Lord Chaitanya’s movement is in expert hands.”
I accepted him as my spiritual master immediately.
Not officially, but in my heart.



BUSINESS AND FAMILY

It wasn't yet clear
how he would carry out the order,
but even while he traveled
out of Allahabad on business,
he kept within his heart
the image of their meeting on the roof.
Such a nice saintly person I met.
Sitting at his desk before papers and pharmaceutical bottles,
he always thought in separation of his spiritual master,
"How to serve him from here?"

What can you do when you're far away?
You want to give money,
but as yet you have little;
you want to give your full life,
but you have to maintain wife and children.
You want to be with him,
but you have to travel far away.
You wait for Krishna to arrange it,
and you sit up sometimes late at night,
the desk lamp reflecting off the windows,
the dark night outside.
You look up,
not at anything in the room,
and you think,
not of family or money,
but of him, that saintly person.
The pen in your hand doesn't write
chemical formulas or finances,
but pauses in the air above the page.

You wait to write
as soon as Krishna will direct.
Already you are His, and you wait patiently
for Him to tell you *when*.



MEETING IN VRINDABAN

*Because I was good at hearing,
now I am good at kirtan.*
In a room at Kosi,
during Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's Vrindaban *parikram*,
Abhay sat fixed in hearing.
Bhakti was entering his heart.
Dry reason cannot comprehend,
but it happens by the grace of the Lord.
Abhay, accepting his Guru Maharaj
as speaking on behalf of Krishna,
received the highest truth.
Perfect speaker and perfect hearer
are like man and woman conceiving a child.
The child is *bhakti* in the hearer's heart.

Others left the room,
but Abhay stayed.
What more wondrous place to go?
What more wonderful thing to do?
When I have seen you, what else
on land or sky is there to see?
Even if he cannot fully
grasp his spiritual master's words,

just to be with him
and hear immortal truth
clears away all obstacles.



DIKṢĀ

It is true for every devotee,
and even for Sri Bhagavan.
Beads given, linked now,
real and personal bond.
That day the giver of the Name
also received the Holy Name
from via medium, *jagat guru*—
“He likes to hear. I have marked him.”
He wore a garland,
and received the Name.
He sat at his *guru*’s lotus feet
and received another name:
Abhay Charanaravinda.

The churning within increased;
he wanted to do more—
urges for writing and speaking,
for using his home to preach to guests.
He also strove to build his business
to expand Lord Krishna’s service.



TIMES WITH HIS SPIRITUAL MASTER

There is a balcony in Mayapur
at Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's house
where he chanted *japa*,
pacing back and forth
uttering the Holy Name.
And by his pacing,
Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was planning
how to give Krishna to others.
In the backyard tall palm trees grew,
and in front ran the road named after him.
All around lay the flat land of Bengal,
rich with rice, jute, wheat, and cane,
and the shining, silver ribbon of the Ganges.
Abhay would join his master
on the balcony and chant with him
and pace with him,
looking up to his Guru Maharaj, following him,
imbibing his pacing mood:
let the people be delivered,
think of ways to save them all,
we have no other desire.

Abhay observed "the chopping technique,"
his *guru*'s handling of impersonalists.
Others doubted: "it might frighten people."
But Abhay said, "Guru Maharaj is perfect."
He went on hearing and seeing his *guru*—
how he refused a woman a private audience,
how he cried when a *sannyasi* disciple fell,
how he sat erectly, ate austere,

managed several printing presses,
printing books and a daily newspaper.
He loved doll exhibits of Krishna-*lila*,
rode in automobiles, and wore a long coat.
He spoke philosophically to the Englishmen
and was conversant with many views,
but logically he explained Krishna as the Absolute Truth.

Abhay traveled to Calcutta to see him,
came into his room and was welcomed with affection.
“Fools rush in,” others foolishly remarked.
Abhay entered like a close friend,
where most were afraid to enter at all.
Abhay was deeply impressed with his master
and loved him
and worshiped his lotus feet.
He remembered his saying,
“Don’t try to see God, but act
in such a way that God sees you.”
He saw him order a snake killed,
heard him give learned lectures in English-Bengali-Sanskrit,
understood his bold spirit of no compromise,
and heard him deal expertly with Subhas Chandra Bose.



KARTTIKA, 1935

Radha-kunda is a great, intimate secret
known only to the pure devotees,
and one cannot expect to enter the mystery cheaply.
Krishna das Kaviraj wrote there,

on the banks of the lake,
Raghunath das Goswami lived there too.
And another wonderful pastime
happened there:

In 1935, in the time of Karttika,
Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was at Radha-kunda,
speaking Krishna Consciousness
and relishing the *tirtha* as
only a pure devotee can.
And he who was to become
Srila Prabhupada also came there
to be with his spiritual master.
Together they walked on the bank
beneath long hanging branches,
and other disciples gathered.
The sacred water was still,
the blue sky streaked with white clouds,
and the tall, stately *guru* was walking.
But he was disturbed in mind;
members of the *math* were quarreling
over possessing certain rooms in the temples.
Temples and devotees are for teaching
ultimate unity and detachment from matter,
and this quarreling disturbed him;
it showed in his face.
“There will be fire in the *math*,” he said.
Dissension—he was disgusted.
“Better to take the marble from
the walls and floors and print books,” he said.
Others nearby heard what he said.
Then he turned to Abhay,

and Abhay came close.
He was already a great disciple—
a writer, a preacher, a *grhastha*—
and Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
knew him better than anyone,
knew what great work he would do
and said gravely to him,
“If you ever get money, print books.”
Others present also heard these words,
but they were meant for Abhay.
And he took them personally.
Later it would come forth
in a torrent of mercy,
because he took it in complete faith,
his order for life.
From that instant, he took the work
and readied himself,
not to fight for temples
but to print books.
Later it would come forth as a torrent of mercy.

No need of trumpets sounding
or of thousands saying, “Yes! Yes!”
or of a voice from the sky,
but the order was received by the most sincere soul.
Later he would say
he had followed that order “blindly,”
not knowing what it would bring.
From that Radha-kunda exchange
we are all today in Krishna Consciousness
and 65 million people have
Krishna’s books in all the languages.

As a result of that Radha-kunda exchange,
Prabhupada has given Krishna Consciousness to each person
in his own language,
and they are all becoming devotees.



BACK TO GODHEAD

During the war Abhay lived
in a small house in Calcutta,
building his pharmaceutical business,
but more than ever he turned
to *sastra* and preaching;
neighborhood men found him
interested only in that.
He saw bombs all night on Calcutta
and starvation in the streets,
created by the British, the Japanese,
and the rice sellers.
He began to speak out
in a journal.

Even if this war would end,
how would they prevent another?
Where was hope?
To the despair of wartime
he responded with a journal.
He had to fight
to get paper to print it,
and he did it all alone
from his front room.

One person out of hundreds of millions in India,
one out of billions in the world—
what were his chances of being heard?
Another little voice,
a pure voice, but with no backing
of government or money or masses.
But he has Krishna and *guru*,
and that is everything.

He designed a logo:
lower right, people groping in darkness,
upper left, Lord Chaitanya extending His arms
and His golden light streaming
to the people.
And Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati,
looking up thoughtfully while writing.
The title: *Back to Godhead*.
This was the journal
that came out during the war,
in between explosions and deaths,
during starvations and political statements:
“There is no meaning in a fight where the parties do fight
only for the matter of different colored dresses.
There must be therefore an understanding of human relation
without any consideration of the bodily designation
or colored dresses. There is a great and urgent need . . . ”

He had the solution to the war,
but they were too mad to hear
God and His devotee.
Yet he spoke out anyway.

He also wrote letters
to prominent leaders
including a letter to Mahatma Gandhi,
who didn't read it
but who was killed a month later
as Prabhupada had predicted:
"I tell you as a sincere friend,
you must immediately retire
from active politics
if you do not desire to die
an inglorious death."
He wrote to this man and that man
and sometimes they wrote back,
mere official replies.
Few took him seriously;
they weren't about to change their ways
just because of a letter
from a pure devotee of Krishna.
After the Hindu-Muslim riots of '47
he wrote to the Rehabilitation Committee Chairman.
who replied, "Do *Hari Nama* as you like,
but we are not interested in meeting you."
Once in a while, someone was impressed,
"I thoroughly appreciate . . . send me your scheme."
But even the serious were not serious
about actual change.

He also wrote on *Geetopanisad*,
amassing 1200 pages.
A man came forward to pay for the printing,
but the manuscript was stolen from his room.
He couldn't prove who stole it,

but it was gone.
So he began to write it again.
Now writing had begun full force
like the Ganges,
and nothing could stop it.



ONE SIDE DWINDLING, THE OTHER RISING

Krishna says in *Bhagwatam*,
His first mercy on a sincere soul
is to take away success,
leaving him only Krishna.
Abhay moved his business from Lucknow to Allahabad
and lived there, mostly away from family,
and went on writing letters, manuscripts for books,
plans and projects for spreading Krishna Consciousness.
Even though no one was interested,
he grew more and more inclined to it.
His master's *maths*
had dissolved into splits and litigations,
so he worked alone.
No money even for *Back to Godhead*,
with business dwindling,
54 years old,
the flame within grew more intense.
Twice in dreams his spiritual master came,
"Take *sannyasa*,
take *sannyasa*. Come on with me."
Twice his master motioned to him
to come . . .

“Yes,” he replied, “yes, I will.”

He was becoming free,
preparing for a final break
and the great going forth;
while hardly a single person in the world
knew what A.C. Bhaktivedanta was about to do,
he wrote on.

And Krishna took over.

He had gone through two of the four *ashramas*.
His father and mother raised him to be celibate,
worshiping Krishna in childhood.

That was as good as *gurukula brahmachari*.

And through more than 30 years of
marriage, he was most responsible.

Although detached, he was dutiful.

He raised the children,
fed them, clothed them, housed them,
took them to Kumbha-mela,
taught them about Krishna,
and though never attached to his wife,
he never cheated or deserted or was cruel.

Now he was coming to the third stage.

He had had enough of family, had paid ample dues
by any standard, and now the greater work was pressing,
while the family life was dwindling
and becoming more unpleasant.

They weren't willing to earn money
or sacrifice for spiritual life.

He was maintaining them, but how long must he do it?

He has the calling to save the entire world!

Should he stay at home with wife, sons, and daughters,
when he has the order of his spiritual master

telling him to come out? And when he has the original
order of his *guru* to go forth and preach in English?
How long is he expected
to stay in family and discharge the petty interests
of ungrateful ones who think Krishna Conscious writing
a bother and who only want more, more?
Some will say, "How long? Until the end of life!"
So let their criticisms be on him, he thought,
as Madhavendra Puri said:
They will criticize me, think me mad or proud,
but I am worshiping Govinda. And that is sufficient.
He had to do it, and all the sages will praise him.
And we, who were doomed,
shackled by Maya, and who are now
free in his Krishna Conscious shelter—
we will certainly praise him and insist
a million times over, "Please come out!
Come out from your family
and fulfill your mission!"
We are thankful that somehow he did,
even though it meant his business had to fail.
What does it matter if a now-forgotten father-in-law
complained, "Why are you always talking about God?"
Now we see it as the arrangement of the Lord.
We who were doomed, who now look back at this history,
can only cry out, "Let him come out!
It does not matter what relatives say.
He has taken care of them for thirty years
and the sense of responsibility that made him care for them
will now shelter the whole world.
With the same patience and hard work
that made him tend his family, let him now tend us—

we are waiting,
dying in America and Europe and South America.
We await deliverance by this savior.
By all means, let him out of the little family circle.
Let him save us!"



THE LEAGUE OF DEVOTEES

He was 56 years old,
attempting the impossible.
How do you start a world movement
when you have almost nothing?
It requires a bold vision.
Otherwise how could he see opportunity
in Jhansi's dirt streets, open sewers,
and worldly medical students?
He was invited there just to lecture.
Even his talks they took
as another *dharma*,
accepting in the way they accepted all *sadhus*.
They applauded politely, folded hands in *namaskar*,
thanked him, and went home. And he returned to Allahabad.

Abhay saw the bright side.
There was something there, he thought.
He took the chance and returned.
His secret was constant devotion,
glorification of the Lord.
He had plans to start from Jhansi
a League of Devotees.

“The whole world is waiting, Mr. Mitra,
for spiritual revolution.”

He walked the streets day and night,
talking with pious, worldly students,
trying to budge them into action,
to help him print books,
to help him start training and sending out teachers
to all parts of the world.

Prabhupada spoke at Radha Memorial,
thanking people, lecturing
on the 9th Chapter of *Bhagavad Gita*,
and it was recorded in the newspaper,
but with no mention of a world movement
of Krishna *bhakti*, sweeping every nation.

“My mission is to train up 40 devotees,”
he wrote to Rupen, an old school friend,
inviting him to be among the first.
He asked the government to help.
He placed a classified ad:

“Candidates from any nationality
to qualify themselves as real Brahmins.”

He went around Jhansi recruiting
and duly entered the League with the
registrar in Lucknow.

This is how it started,
by initiating a half-interested, part-time disciple,
by taking up residence in a deserted temple
with no assurance of staying,
and by writing day and night
essays and books to be printed

and translated into many languages
and studied by the qualified Brahmins
of any nationality.
Planning, even before he had anything,
and meeting with opposition.
The silent landlord soon appeared,
reneging his charity
and demanding five thousand rupees.
Then Abhay, who had no local financial support
learned one day that his pharmacy
in Allahabad had been plundered.
So he returned to Calcutta
to earn more money to keep afloat
the world-wide League of Devotees.



LAST FAMILY SCENE/CALCUTTA

He invites his wife and son to come
and join him in *Gita* talks. But
the son looks back, sullen, hands behind,
and the wife sits at tea.
He asked her to choose,
“between me or tea.”
She thought he was joking.
“Well, I will have to give up my husband then.”
Of course, it wasn’t only tea—
it was the force of Krishna Consciousness.
He had to earn some money
for the League of Devotees,
but he was plunged again into family duties.

After 36 years—unbearable!
Rent, bills, daughters to marry,
where would it ever end?
He had to choose
between the League and the home.
The tea-taking, and then her selling
his *Bhagwatam* in exchange for biscuits—
the final stroke!
When he left, they didn't know
he was never coming back.
The time is up.
Never mind whether daughters are married.
“God will take care.
Now I am dead.
Whatever you like, you do.”

For a day or two he chanted *japa*
with Godbrothers south of Calcutta—
getting his bearings, praying to Krishna.
Yes, he had done the right thing.
Chanting the Holy Name,
loosed from family and income,
on his own, a spiritual dependent on his *guru*'s order.
“Let me go now,” he thought,
“back to Jhansi.” That little field awaited,
and he had the vision to work it, expand it,
by Krishna's grace, into a glorious,
formidable mission—something practical—
a movement to engage us all
in pure devotional service.



LOST JHANSI

Women were plotting
to take away the buildings of the League of Devotees.
Make it a ladies' social club, they said,
a more important cause than Abhay's.
Suryamukhi asked him to vacate.
But he refused.
She went behind his back
with support from Mrs. Munshi, the governor's wife.
The landlord agreed, "Please get out,
the ladies want to use it to uplift themselves."
Try to understand, Abhay wrote Mrs. Munshi,
the ladies' club is a limited designation.
My work is for everyone's upliftment.
"Even one of low birth can take shelter
of the Supreme Lord."
It was a peaceful compound near Antiya Pond,
shady orchards, the temple a stout little palace.
The League had begun with a well-attended ceremony.
"THE LEAGUE OF DEVOTEES" painted 6 feet high
on the outer wall,
but the governor's wife insisted.
He could fight her in court, said lawyer friends,
but he thought, "I have left home,
and now I should take up litigation?"
It wasn't meant to be.
The League? Yes.
Jhansi? No.
Krishna had some other plan.
The loss was to Jhansi
and to those who drove him out.

Carrying his large Deity of Lord Chaitanya,
he moved to Mathura and then,
alone, to Delhi.



NEW DELHI IN THE 1950s

These were very difficult years, he said,
but the sufferings were all assets.
Let us try to see him
by the scale of the *Mahabhagwat*
and also by the humanlike scale.
He went without food or residence
when he could have been comfortably at home
or residing in Godbrothers' *maths*.
But he wanted to try,
more ambitious than his Godbrothers,
and certainly he wanted to be free of the home.
He was alone in New Delhi,
trying to make heard the message of Krishna.
A far cry from Hastinapur,
the Delhi of thousands of years past,
when Lord Krishna and the Pandavas ruled in pure goodness,
protecting the citizens and animals from attack.
Now it was independent India,
filling up with ruffians and cheap cinemas
and politicians determined to forget the best
of their own culture
determined to ape the hedonism of the West.
And on these streets he was trying to be heard.

He was in New Delhi because a *sannyasi* Godbrother
asked him to edit *Sajjana Tosani*.

But when he arrived at the *math*,
there was no preaching but much quarreling,
no typewriter and no promise of one,
no money even for a *dhoti*,
but a letter:

“Please manage the whole thing.”

Since he could not afford to produce his *BTG*,
he agreed to work at *Sajjana Tosani*;
but it should be like *Illustrated Weekly*,
widely read and well done.

Increase the circulation. Improve the editorial.

But his Godbrother wanted it small,
no more than 500 copies a month.

And when Abhay persisted—
color photos and high quality paper—
they wrote him a flowery letter
dismissing him:

“You are a favorite Vaishnava with lofty plans,
and we cannot keep up with you.
So go on your own.”

He wanted to start a spiritual movement,
so he went to the wealthy
with his writings and plans
to train 40 men to send to foreign countries.
They heard him out
in their law offices, their gentleman’s chambers,
impressed by his simple, grave demeanor
and his scholarship and saintly purpose.

But they could not help,
except to give him 5 rupees to drag on.

Another ad: "Study the spiritual secret
of '*Bhagwat Gita*' at home by correspondence
and be a strong man."

Krishna was maintaining him with little,
like a *sannyasi* mendicant.

If he had wanted only maintenance,
he could have lived at a beggar's temple
and chanted Hare Krishna alone.

But he wanted to preach with the Big Mrdanga.

He waited no longer—

even before there was money
for rent or food or to replace torn clothes
he went to a printer
with a manuscript, to revive *Back to Godhead*.

The printer, Kumar Jain, judged him by the human scale,
since he himself was an ordinary man,
but he couldn't help but see
extreme dedication to the spiritual cause.

Why else would this pauper come early in the morning
to look at the printing proofs,

walking in the cold without a coat

no fare for ricksha, no money for breakfast?

Why publish at all when you have no money?

To Mr. Jain it made no sense, but he could understand

Back to Godhead is the work of pure devotion;

this customer wants to start a movement,

wants the people to turn to Krishna,

doesn't care anything for himself,

has no other, lower motivation.
He is a very rare soul,
and yet he is a humble, gregarious person,
more a friend than a poor customer,
sitting to talk about God
and how He is the answer
to life's degradation.



OUT ON SANKIRTAN

He is the origin and model
for all book distributors going out
to meet conditioned souls,
approaching them without knowing
whether they will be rude, violent, cold, or receptive.
As he was going door to door,
a homeowner shouted from his second-floor veranda,
“Go away! We don’t want you here!”
He carried a stack of newspapers
and sometimes went to the tea stalls,
sat at the table with tea drinkers,
kindly offering them his paper.
They usually had No Time for him—
too busy paying illusion’s toll,
sipping tea, dazed by Maya,
on-the-go, making a living,
unconcerned about Krishna and *sadhus*.
But they would look up in an off-hand way
at A.C. Bhaktivedanta, and sometimes took
a copy of his unusual tabloid,

with headlines, "Sufferings of Humanity."
Prabhupada was kind to them
as Prahlad was kind to his demon schoolmates.
"Please take to Krishna Consciousness," he pleaded.

Mostly they replied, No Time.
Despite long hours of refusals,
walking in the passionate Delhi thoroughfares,
pausing to catch someone in the rushing
throngs of passersby, Abhay was always feeling
brahma bhuta, spiritual happiness.
He prayed to his Guru Maharaj,
knowing he was pleasing him.
He tasted the supreme bliss.

He was walking
and a cow gored him.
In India even in the city
cows come and go,
but this one, when she saw him,
lunged forward and put her horn in
his side, knocking him down.
"Why is this?" he thought.
"I have taken to renounced life to preach,
so why this reverse has come to knock me down?"
But such things were assets,
he later said, and he understood this as Krishna's mercy.
Reeling in the 112 degree heat,
he tried to sell *BTG*
even in the oven atmosphere of midday Delhi.
A person had recently died from the heat,
but Abhay was out distributing *BTGs*

despite the heat. As he reeled,
a man passing by in a car noticed
and stopped and took him to a doctor.
Unremitting beyond body and intense weather,
Abhay paid it little mind, although warned.
He went on preaching.

He sent copies of *Back to Godhead*
to the people of the West,
with a letter: "You have seen so much wealth,
but peace is not within your control."
He sent copies to the President of India:
"Don't think of me as a madman
when I say I shall go back to Godhead.
It is quite possible for everyone and all of us."
At the post office
an Arya Samajist clerk criticized,
"What is the use of propagating Godhead?"
The copies each contained the truths of Vedic sages
and Prabhupada's own experience from
preaching on the streets and meeting
all varieties of speculators.
One man saw the title and challenged,
"Where is Godhead? Can you show me God?"
Next issue an article appeared with Abhay's response:
"Seeing God is not so cheap."
One thousand copies a month,
eight consecutive issues by June of '56,
all written and delivered
by his own hands.

India was so fallen—
 thousands welcomed Lord Mountbatten
 at the Delhi airport,
 likewise the Shah of Iran,
 and Secretary of State Dulles—
 honored guests to Delhi.
 the Indians cheered,
 not caring for their own Visnujana, Prabhupada.
 Not knowing, not caring, not heeding.
 In the land of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama
 true religion was ignored
 in favor of the flitting fireflies of Maya.
 Prabhupada had come to expect it—
mandah sumanda-matayo.
 He went on and went out,
 searching for one in a million,
 and *yet everyone* he met
 was blessed by his contact. Just a glance
 or a touch of his journal could save them
 from the greatest fear.
 Such is the potency
 of the *Mahabhagwat*'s preaching.



LIVING IN VRINDABAN

He went to Vrindaban and imbibed
 the special quality there.
 From his rooftop at Vamsi Gopal Mandir
 on the edge of the town of temples,
 close by the River Yamuna,

he felt great ecstasy remembering Krishna.
Why does a devotee go to Vrindaban?
Ask why does a bird like the sky
or a fish the water.
For Prabhupada it was inspiration and shelter:
he came to write.
He would commute to Delhi,
to walk the city streets with *BTG*—
but now with his residence in the *dhama*.
We speak of his plans,
but they were more like attempts
to serve and depend on Krishna:
“In all activities and for their results
just depend on Me.”
There were daily attempts
and larger hopes, as yet unfulfilled.
In Delhi he tried collecting enough funds
to produce and sell the next fortnightly issue.
In Vrindaban, he bought charcoal for cooking,
and he spent for postage
to send missives around the world,
urging scholars and leaders to take part in the great attempt.
He lacked money to send magazines to all
the men and countries on his list.
Soon he was traveling in and out of Vrindaban,
to Bombay, then Kanpur, then Bombay again,
but he couldn’t raise financial support.
People liked him and mostly gave ear,
but money was another thing.
They also needed money.
After twelve consecutive issues, in ’56,
he stopped producing *Back to Godhead*.

He had barely enough money to travel to Delhi.
Thus went the daily plans.

Meanwhile, the greater plans
swelled and grew surer within him:
He felt he must go to the West.
His countrymen were too intent on politics,
deliberately putting aside the *Vedas*.
Westerners, he thought, would be more inclined.
Only due to lack of money he had to wait,
but he took it as Krishna's arrangement.
He tried the League of Devotees again
this time from Vamsi Gopalji,
but his one disciple was inclined elsewhere.
Prabhupada was more than 60 years,
with no money coming.
Yet he wrote and hoped,
while entering into his intimate
relationship with Vrindaban.
One day while sitting alone,
getting many realizations,
he wrote a Bengali poem, "Vrindaban *bhajan*":
"I have my wife, sons, daughters, grandsons, everything.
But I have no money. So they are a fruitless glory."
Why should a *sadhu* hanker for money and travel?
Shouldn't he stay in Vrindaban,
protecting himself from wealth and women,
and never cross over the ocean?
Yes, if he can do it,
staying alone, without cheating.
But if he has in his heart
orders and desires of the previous *acharyas*

to save the wretched people in Maya—
those outside the holy places,
those outside all hope and scope
of redemption by the Vedic process—
if he has such a big heart,
then he may hanker for money,
to go to them.
Then his hankering is *lalasamayi*,
and he will cry tears,
hoping to be allowed to reach the fallen souls.



TAKING SANNYASA

His spiritual master came in a dream again,
this time in Vrindaban.
Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati gestured again
and said the same thing,
“Come with me. Take *sannyasa*.”
His *guru* was calling to him.
A dream of *guru* is not ordinary,
not to be taken lightly.
He appeared and spoke,
and Abhay took it seriously.
But he was cautious,
“Why take *sannyasa*?”
Before, he had asked himself *why*,
and he hadn’t concluded with an impelling reason.
Now he did.
Sannyasa would be good for his purpose
of traveling, writing books,

and leaving India to preach.
 That was what *sannyasa* was for,
 not for advertising oneself as ascetic,
 not acquiring cheap praise,
 like the cheating *sannyasis*
 who distort the Vedic way.
 So Prabhupada was cautious.
 He approached a Godbrother
 who discouraged him:
 "First you join our party."
 Another made no condition
 but only insisted "Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, you must do it."
 Prabhupada thought,
 "Through the voice of this Godbrother
 is coming my master, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati.
 He wants me to do it.
 It will enable me to go
 and make a League of Devotees somewhere."
 So he went to Kesava Maharaj's *math*,
 and another man, 99 years old,
 also took *sannyasa* that day.
 But Prabhupada's *sannyasa* was different.
 His was a getting ready not to leave
 the world but to go into it,
 as Krishna's representative.
 His *sannyasa* was arranged by the Lord
 for getting him ready to go.
 It was like his learning *mrdanga*,
 his being dissolved of business interests,
 like his leaving wife and family.
 His purity and bravery,
 his immunity to greed and doubt,

his determination—
all these qualities and many more
he would need for venturing forth
at such a late age.

Venturing forth?
He has yet no money.
It is something like a dream.
Sannyasis of Gaudiya Math have already gone
to England and returned, saying,
“It was impossible.”
It is something like a dream only.”



STARTING THE BHAGWATAM

The sparking incidents were external:
an army captain and a librarian
said books were more permanent than newspapers,
so Bhaktivedanta Swami should write books.
But there were other deeper reasons.
For a headline to one prospectus,
Bhaktivedanta Swami had printed,
Anartha upashamam sakshat:
“The miseries of the living being,
which are superfluous to him,
can be remedied by *bhakti-yoga*; but no one knows it.
Therefore Srila Vyasadeva, out of his compassion,
has compiled this *Srimad-Bhagwatam*.”
The *Bhagwatam* is Krishna Himself
after His departure from the earth.

Lord Chaitanya called it “the spotless *Purana*”
and stressed reading it,
as did Bhaktivinode Thakur and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta.
For Prabhupada to translate the *Bhagwatam*
was as natural as his going to Vrindaban
and chanting Hare Krishna.
It was the work *par excellence*
for a Vaishnava world preacher.

A project without end,
not something to whip up
for carrying and showing when he went abroad.
It was a specific calling.
Whenever and wherever he might go,
this would be his life’s work,
begun in Vrindaban
just after taking *sannyasa*.
As Lord Krishna had Vyasa wait until his mature stage
before compiling *Srimad-Bhagwatam*,
so He perfectly prepared His Divine Grace
to begin the Bhaktivedanta purports—on time,
at 64 years of age.
And as Vyasa worked from a vision,
so did Srila Prabhupada.
Vyasa saw the Lord and His various energies;
Maya was unable to stand before Him.
And Vyasa saw the sufferings of the *jivas*,
as well as their remedy, *bhakti-yoga*.
Within Srila Prabhupada the vision of the remedy
through the *sankirtan* of Lord Chaitanya
had grown to the point where he knew
he must carry it out,

going to the wildest lands of Maya's realm
to personally lead the chanting.
He saw the sufferings of the *jivas*
from within his mind and heart,
and with his own eyes over decades in India,
he saw their subjugation through war and partition,
and he knew the suffering was worldwide.
Maya could not stand before the Lord,
but before the demons and conditioned fools
she was riding triumphantly, defeating them.
And Prabhupada saw himself
as the instrument of the past *acharyas*,
easing the *jivas* from Maya's grip
by offering the light of the *Bhagwatam*,
the life full of grace as wrought by Chaitanya
and as desired by Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati.
Sometimes Prabhupada dreamed that he was already in
New York, and so he prayed to deliver the Westerners.



THE CALLING

He moved into Radha-Damodar temple,
a room 5 feet by 17
with a view from the kitchen
through cement lattice work
of Rupa Goswami's *samadhi*.

Rising at one A.M.,
while spiritually bright stars
illuminated the dark Vrindaban sky,
he wrote on *Bhagwatam*.

The blessed purports came
from his intelligent, transcendental labors.
His own English he apologized for,
although it was perfectly clear:
the inmates in the house of fire
would know he was calling them out.

By electric or often by candle light,
month after month, in weather from hot to cold,
in his new, ancient room
he composed the purports
on a small manual typewriter
on the backs of Soviet propaganda sheets
or whatever paper he could find.

He was known locally as the *sadhu* who is always writing
and who regularly walks, chanting Hare Krishna,
through the bazaars on simple errands,
but usually in his little room,
typing or cooking or chanting outside
by Rupa Goswami's *samadhi*.

His body is golden hued
as when he was a child,
his eyes as clear as a child's,
his heart purer than a child's,
his hands aristocratic, figured with the vein lines,
and his hair growing gray, cut short
and shaved monthly, leaving *sikha*—
this Vaishnava *sannyasi* who is always writing.

He is sweet to the few who come by
and converse with him on the veranda in the evening
when he takes off his reading glasses;
he patiently hears others, and discusses
his own desires to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness,
He doesn't talk nonsense.

He goes away here and there,
but usually to Delhi to the printers,
and then he comes back by *tanga*,
back to his room, where you can hear the typing again
as he methodically collects the pages.
He says he is writing the *Bhagwatam*
for English readers and will publish it
and one day go to the people there in America
and present it, along with *Hari Nama*.

He used to do medical business in Allahabad and Calcutta
and he had a family.
But that is all gone,
and he is a Vrindaban *sannyasi*,
talking and writing and worshiping Krishna,
looking up from his simple *prasadam*
with intent, private gaze into the courtyard
to the *samadhi* of Rupa Goswami.

He is a disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
but has nothing to do with Godbrothers' disputes.
He writes and chants and tries to publish
in the true Vrindaban spirit.

Rupa Goswami lived there and Jiva.
 All Six Gosvamis gathered and spoke Krishna *lila*
 and honored *prasadam*, sitting on the stone floor,
 eating from leaves, writing on other leaves,
 chanting on *tulasi* beads,
 dancing on the banks of the Yamuna.
 The literature they left is a vast treasure house
 in Sanskrit, and Prabhupada is writing in their footsteps,
 for a worldwide English-speaking people
 whom he has not yet met.
 But he is creating books for them,
 inspired by the Six Gosvamis
 and his spiritual master.
 It is they who are blessing him—
 to live in Vrindaban
 as well as to leave Vrindaban
 and to ignite the world with *bhakti*.
 They are sending him forth.
 He lives in their place,
 and he prepares to leave with their permission.
 He loves their abode and the simple renounced life,
 but he is unhappy at the unhappiness of others.
 He will go out to fulfill a duty—
 into hell with Vrindaban's message.



PRINTING THREE VOLUMES

He went to Delhi for printing—
 up and down the streets.
 A book, once written, cries to be printed,

and Delhi, Chandni Chowk, is the place—
if a *sadhu* is not afraid of crowds and
mixing with materialists for the sake of glorifying Krishna.
Hitsaran Sharma suggested he try Hanuman Poddar.
Using almost all his money, Prabhupada went to see him.
A donation—enough to start printing.

Up and down the street,
carrying the printed sheets
through crowded chaos of Chawri Bazaar,
the paper-selling capital of India.
He wrote in a room in a tenement temple
at Chhipiwada in Old Delhi and went out
from that noisy place into the noisy, dirty streets,
where people spat pan and smoked
and pushed and shoved and bought and stole,
and he was among them, as saintly as Vrindaban.
He was peaceful in Krishna-thought,
yet all-intent on business:
Get the *Bhagwatams* printed—
that was everything.
And he was alone.

It is a practical thing
to physically manifest the desires
of the *acharyas*.
It takes tedious work,
material dealing with a spiritual eye,
back labor, paper, ink,
hammers, saws, glue, patience,
and sometimes anger: “You have wasted my
whole day, Sharmaji! You said it would be ready!”

Is this the same person who wrote during quiet
moonlit hours in the crude temple cell?
Yes, the same Prabhupada, intent on printing
what he had been inspired to write.
Because Krishna *is* God,
because the printed word *is* worthy,
because the desire and inspiration
were tangible and the sufferings of the *jivas*
were not mere abstractions, therefore,
he comes to Chawri Bazaar,
reads the galleys two times, three times,
looking for mistakes, and he prints anyway,
even if he can't catch them all.
And sometimes he is tired.

One tells me a *nitya-siddha* cannot be tired
and we shouldn't say that he reeled
in the streets from heatstroke, shouldn't
say he displayed impatience or anger with the printers.
But they don't know
these are also transcendental glories.
He is *not* an ordinary man,
therefore he goes to Chawri Bazaar
only on Krishna's business,
and he prints the *Bhagwatam*
and collects for that only,
lives and breathes and works,
and gets tired and impatient
and reels in the street, falls down gored—
to advance the cause of Krishna Consciousness.
They don't know the mind of the *acharya*,
nor do I, but we hear from him:

“So even though we are not in the Himalayas,
even though we talk of business,
even though we deal in rupees and paise,
still, simply because we are 100 percent
servants of the Lord
and are engaged in the service
of broadcasting the message of His glories,
certainly we shall transcend and get through
the invincible impasse of Maya
and reach the effulgent kingdom of God
to render Him face to face eternal service
in full bliss and knowledge.”



FINALLY GOING

Mr. Agarwal of Mathura
only casually mentioned
he could get Prabhupada sponsorship
in America through his son,
and Prabhupada only casually
took him up on it.
In Butler, Pennsylvania,
Mr. Agarwal's son, Gopal, only casually
did the needful, yet
that was the way of Krishna.

After that, you moved intent as an arrow.
You went to Mrs. Morarjee for travel fare
and she said, “Yes.” But only after you

insisted that you would not die en route,
as her officers feared.
So she gave you fare,
a room on the old steamer
going West.

But the P-form was a problem.
The agent said "No" because
your patron was a private person,
not an institution.
So it seemed after so much effort
you would be blocked by this
one last bureaucratic snarl
and you wouldn't be able to come to us.
Although you so much wanted to break out,
since India was stifling and unreceptive,
but at this last bureaucratic door,
you were blocked by
the Bank and Government of India.
They should have been glad
to send you as their ambassador,
but they were cripple-minded.
So you spoke up for yourself,
"No, this is not right.
Give my file to your superior."
The clerk complied, and his officer
came out to where you sat
in a Bombay government waiting room
and said, "Swamiji, don't worry,
I have passed your case."
That too was Krishna.
After that, everything else was ready.

Scindia's agent
bought you some clothes.
You packed a bag of dry cereal
and took an umbrella.
You printed a flyer
"India's Message of Goodwill,"
and you went to Calcutta,
rode in a taxi down to the dock,
and walked up the gangway,
carrying a suitcase,
your books arriving separately.

* * *

Now, only the ocean's storms
separated you from us.
On our side,
the hour was very late,
but not too late.
No one was waiting for you in exactly the form
in which you were coming,
yet we were aching for you nonetheless—
as parched land awaits rain,
as a lost child awaits the mother,
as a lonely lover awaits the beloved,
as the soul aches for God.
The dumb tongues stuck, unable to utter "Krishna,"
the blind groped,
the mad went madder, incurring reactions;
and every moment more *jivas* fell
off the cliff of human life, down
into the abyss of *tamo-guna*.

Inching from the weathered pier,
the black-hulled *Jaladuta*
moved toward the seas, bearing him to America.
By the law of the Almighty,
the ship floated in water.
By His will only,
the clouds in the skies moved.
Out of fear of Him,
the planets were spinning in tremendous orbits,
and by His inscrutable, sweet will,
the pure devotee was coming,
to rescue the damned.



BOOK TWO



THE PAST

Kshatriyas cast out from Bharatvarsha
ran further West, where people are more ignorant
(the Vikings tried to cross and plunder).
Unaware of Lord Chaitanya's advent,
Columbus sought a westward route.
Mayflower pilgrims came running
to start a new theocracy,
without liberation from birth and death;
ready to endure hard times,
they killed birds and gave thanks to God.
Unlimited voyages West ensued,
as immigrants entered New York's harbor illusioned,
free of old sufferings, plagued by new.
In 1965 a *Jaladuta* voyage seemed only another,
a small black merchant ship
making her roundabout way from India.



AT SEA

His face turned out to where he saw no land,
but endless moving hills beneath the sky.
Below the deck, in simple saffron dress,
occasionally he spoke with the captain and his wife,
respectable figures who saw him as a traveling saint.
Not a recluse, he cooked *kichari* and shared it
and talked about Krishna with the ordinary seamen.

The Bay of Bengal was like the ocean of birth and death.
He was alone with his inner thoughts,
reading the poem of Krishna das Kaviraj,
at which the metal bulkheads fell away
and he beheld the fair sight
of Lord Chaitanya singing and dancing.

The sea was a bridge of time separating him;
it was a huge deep for a tiny soul afloat,
but endurable by His will.
The traveling was rough
but sheltered by the Lord
—at sea and yet beyond.
His mission was underway,
despite the injunction against swamis crossing.
On Janmastami and on his own (69th) birthday
he refused to be daunted
by the vast energies of water and sky.
He held to his purpose.
The sea was his route, the pathway to his service,
and not to be begrudged.



SICKNESS

Deep down the ship prowed,
then rose high, mounting a swelling wave
in a sea-sick rhythm and roll.
In the hold, in a small, cramped cabin,
sitting up or lying down,
there was no comfort

from the sea-tossed roll and pitch
as rain poured down on the Bay of Bengal.

More rain on the Red Sea.
sudden pains in his chest
made him think he would die.
Were Scindia's agents right,
that he would die at sea?
What is the pain of a pure devotee?
Only he and Krishna knew
what he was willing to do
to serve his Lord in any condition.

If we like we can ask,
"Why was Haridas Thakur beaten?
Why were the Pandavas exiled and harassed?
Why Prahlad tortured by his father?
Why Rama banished? Christ crucified?"
But we cannot demand the answers.
The Lord unfolds His plans
as He pleases,
and the devotee knows
it is best for all.
Prahlad never doubted:
"If God is almighty and just,
why am I, a devotee, being tortured?"
In confronting the demon,
he did not suffer,
but remembered Krishna
and attained the Lord's abode.

Prabhupada tolerated
two attacks in two days.
*But if it comes again,
I will not survive.*
The rains and winds persisted.



HIS DREAM OF MANY FORMS OF KRISHNA

On the night of the second day
Prabhupada had a dream;
Lord Krishna in His many forms
was rowing a boat
and encouraging him along.

Lord Matsya, who saved the *Vedas* from the flood,
waved him on. To protect the *Vedas*
from the ocean of vices,
Prabhupada must reach the West
and print and distribute his books.
The West was drowning in sins,
and Indian *gurus* were drowning
the Vedic message
in a sea of bogus speculation.
Come Prabhupada!
You can cross this sea—
the Lord is here!

Lord Kurma of the nectar-churning *lila*
urged him on to America
to churn the *sankirtan-amrta*.
Mohini Murti stole the nectar
in favor of the *devas*,
but if Prabhupada could reach his goal
he would give immortal quaffs of *Hari Nama*
to one and all.

Therefore the Lord was blessing him.
As the moon and gods came forth
from the churning of Mandara Hill,
so during the friction between demons and devotees,
Srila Prabhupada appeared.
And in his hour of attacks at sea,
he beheld the Lord in His many forms.
Come Prabhupada!
You can cross this sea—
the Lord is dear!

Lord Nara Hari's divine advent
is to kill the miscreants,
and He encouraged Prabhupada
with His fierce demeanor,
which vanquishes the demons' false dominion
and assures the followers of Prahlaḍ.
The enemies would not touch
a hair on Prabhupada's head,
but he would kill them all
with the healing, cleansing weapon of the Holy Name.
False threats and illusions
cannot sway the Lord's devotees,
but Prabhupada must come at once

because until now
the sons of demons
have never met the teachings of Prahlad
or known the protection of Nrsimhadeva.
As sons of demons they have only suffered,
sometimes longing for another world.

Come Prabhupada!

*You can cross this sea—
with the Lord there is no fear!*

Balarama and Krishna also assured,
“Come along.”

They appeared to him in a most delightful way,
running and frolicking in the forests of Vraja—
the all-attractive Lord and His brother,
who deliver the most fallen as Gaura and Nitai.

Let the Americans also share this nectar—
Krishna is not “the Hindu god.”

The Americans will gladly embrace Him—
Krishna with flute and Balarama with plow.
The Westerners can relearn to love Them,
since all are eternal spiritual souls,
servants of Krishna and Rama.

Come Prabhupada!

*You can cross this sea—
the Lord is here!*

*Srila Prabhupada, you will cross this sea,
because the Lord desires.*



CROSSING AND ARRIVAL

He recovered and ate *bhat kichari*,
while the *Jaladuta* plied through smoother waters—
Suez, Mediterranean, south of Italy, Gibraltar,
then out upon a broad, peaceful ocean.
“If the Atlantic would have shown
its usual face, perhaps I would have died.
But Lord Krishna has taken charge of the ship.”

Thirty days crossing,
and his only solace was *Chaitanya-charitamrta*.
He thought of the unfriendly risks,
so far from Their Lordships Radha-Damodar.
Vrindaban life was natural and sublime,
at home with Krishna devotion.
If life at sea was alien,
what of the new land and the task ahead?

He confided to his friend, Sri Krishna,
a page of Bengali script
announcing a bold vision:
His spiritual master's desire
will prompt the whole world to chant.
Alone, and coming closer
to the unknown, he foresaw
that the mercy of Lord Chaitanya would conquer.

As the boat entered Boston Harbor,
no one suspected
the extent of the change to come.
But history was changing—
from no pure devotee in the West,
to one.

His awe heightening before the task,
he drew closer to Krishna's grace:
"Why have You brought me here?"
How could Captain Pandia know,
as he took his saintly passenger
on a short walk through Boston?
Only Krishna could hear
as Prabhupada spoke with hope and helplessness:
"I am Your puppet.
Make me dance, make me dance."

With early morning mist lifting,
he saw the dead-spirited city,
the dirty streets and buildings,
the victims of Kali-yuga going to work.
And he grew anxious.
How could he even talk with them?
How could he change them,
turn them from sense-delights
and show them the vanity and defeat
of hope dependent on a myth?
How would they be able to hear?
Only the expert mystic, Krishna,
could change them.
Prabhupada prayed for the Lord's mercy:
"I wish that You may deliver them."

Boston was heavy,
but *Bhagwatam* the heaviest.
Bhakti science could work anywhere,
its transcendental sound penetrating the deaf ear,
cutting the stone heart.

smothering the fire of lust,
and cleansing the filthiest place.
These people who ate meat,
who indulged in sex like dogs,
could rise to human behavior.
Those who were desperate
could at last find shelter.
If they could hear,
the knots of their hearts and all misgivings
would be cut to pieces;
Prabhupada had come to give them that chance.
They could stop the chain of *karma*,
if Krishna would bless His pure devotee's words.
Feeling himself tiny, an "insignificant beggar,"
Prabhupada prayed for the Lord's mercy:
"I wish that You may deliver them."
He had no other desire.



YOU IN BUTLER

Gopal Agarwal hosted you,
because his father asked him to.
He picked you up at Pittsburgh
late at night, and drove you
to his Butler home.

When you spoke at churches
there was an uneasiness among the audience,
"as is natural for any religious sect."
Some loved you, like Sally, Gopal's wife,

and some didn't, like the reporter.
Those intent on materialism
misunderstood you entirely,
thinking, at best, you were an Indian phenomenon,
and they claimed they couldn't
understand your speech.
If they had known
what radical changes you came to make
they would have been much more alarmed.
In Butler they saw you as an innocent scholarly guest
from India, in strange robes.
A child called you "Swami Jesus."

You spoke to students at Slippery Rock College.
You looked into the supermarts and laundromats,
stayed at the Y, and sat in the Agarwal's backyard.
In the evening you met guests in the living room.
Then, after warm milk at nine,
you rode back to the Y
to rest, to rise, and to write.

In the first photo
you appeared confident,
though you had no men or money.
You stood with your open *Bhagwatam*.
Your *chadar* was frayed,
but you looked firm
and charming and deep—
"an inner stability
that would be difficult to shake,"
observed Professor Larsen.
It would take all these qualities and more

for venturing forth at a late age
into Manhattan.

Two months' sponsorship was all you had,
so with half the time gone, you left for New York,
with a few coins
and the name of a *yogi* you'd never met.
Sally felt sick to see you go
into the city without a friend.



FIRST DAYS IN NEW YORK CITY

*Once in England on a morning walk
surrounded by loving disciples Prabhupada
spoke of his childhood.
When they were building the Victoria Memorial,
he climbed to the top, using the scaffoldings.
"You must have been brave," one disciple remarked,
"I am still brave. Or how could I have come alone?"*

The New York *yogi* was just the opposite
in his view of the Absolute Truth,
but he kindly gave to Prabhupada
a windowless room in his *yoga* studio.
And it was just the kind of *yoga*
Prabhupada had come to preach against.
But he had no temple or residence of his own,
so he did not complain.
He had no plan,
except to tell everyone he met about Krishna.

He sometimes sat in the back and listened
and was sometimes permitted to speak.
“You say the Absolute is One
and we are all God, but how is it
that we are now within the grips of Maya?
How could God come under the sway of illusion?”

Yogi Mishra attempted to reply,
but the Vaishnava logic pierced
the fallacy that denies and insults
the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
Whether in New York or India,
the Vaishnava cannot allow the Lord to be defamed
by a jugglery of words that all is senseless,
all is impersonal, God has no
hands or ears or eyes
to accept His devotees' service.
*Absolute is sentient thou has proved,
impersonal calamity thou has moved.*
“Swami,” said Yogi Mishra, “you do not speak.”
But Prabhupada could chant at least,
and they liked to hear his *bhajan*.
“It touches the heart like something electrical,”
said Mishra. “No one can sing like him.”

Students of *hatha-yoga*
got up and danced with him.
Prabhupada, you sang so nicely,
not for show, but for devotion.

Somehow you and Dr. Mishra got along.
He very much liked your Krishna *prasad*

—even the Mayavadi is charmed,
and his students also.
“Swami makes the best food,” they said.
“It is Krishna *prasadam* ”
And Mishra advised them,
“He is a highly evolved man of God.”

On your own, you wandered out
to Manhattan’s streets,
seeing what this place was like.
You heard the horns and sirens.
A Calcutta boy, you were
not amazed at the population’s madness.
You were encouraged to preach.
New York is the proudest place, you thought,
but look how degraded it is!

A letter arrived from Sumati Morarjee,
“I am glad you are in better health
and are already speaking in some lectures.
I think you should stay until your mission is complete.”
Prabhupada had been thinking to soon return,
but this word encouraged him to stay.
If people were paying for nonsense *yoga*,
why would they not accept the real thing?
He wrote to India, to Godbrothers,
for help in getting a building.
But it was the same as before,
just as when a Godbrother had not wanted to print
more than 500 copies of *Sajjana Tosani*.
They could not dream of sending Bhaktivedanta Swami
money for a building in New York.

YOU ALONE

You were alone in the city
where no one knew Krishna.
Only a backward boy came,
but Krishna in your heart
was your direct companion.
You had kept your courage on the lonely Atlantic,
and now alone in the ocean of vices.
The Lord protected you,
just as He protects the sages in the forest.
Loitering in neighborhoods
thinking how they could be transformed
for Krishna's mission.
But it seemed impossible,
and you went to Scindia's man
to ask when a ship was returning.
Still you extended your stay again:
Let me try a little longer.

Subway trains rumbled beneath your feet,
steel-reinforced concrete soared to the sky,
carcasses hung in the deli windows.
The laws of the streets,
the laws of the traffic
—rush or get run over.
The false sense of Uptown Civilization,
dignity for two-legged animals.

But then why are you here?
Now, because it is my duty.
I have brought some message for you people
as ordered by my spiritual master.

BHĀJANŚ

Charms to soothe the savage beast—
that soft jingling and your deep voice.
They quieted to see
how you were alone with Krishna.
They sat and watched.
Not caring to flatter,
you gave them devotional songs,
singing of *Madhurya-līla*
beyond the ken of the listeners.
Your eyes closed in ecstasy.

You didn't tell them to join,
but by a nod of the head
you indicated
it would be nice to sing,
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare,
Hare Rama, Hare Rama,
Rama, Rama, Hare Hare.
And a few persons
casually joined in chorus.



FIRST COMERS

Robert Nelson became the first associate
to regularly visit Srīla Prabhupada,
to receive instructions,
to help find a place for Krishna's temple.

But all Mr. Robert could do
was purchase a few eccentric items
with money from his unemployment check.
Elderly Mrs. Ferber of the Paragon Book Store
refused Prabhupada.
But when he returned persistent,
she fetched him a cup of water
and bought his books.
He sat on a city bench
with a man who would never forget him—
“a holy man who went out alone, like Elijah.”

Others didn't know Prabhupada
but saw him walk past on his route—
Columbus Avenue to Westside Drive.
They saw a swami of 70 years
with white pointy shoes and wrapped in a grey shawl
pass by their window at a brisk pace.
The word spread Downtown
to the health-and-occultish Paradox
that a swami Uptown in a little room
had a far-out chant and
whoever went could see him.
In 1960s fashion, Bill Epstein went
bringing brown rice and a handshake:
“We are doing our thing to make reform,
and so are you. So dig the scene.”

Prabhupada received them each.
He was a deep reservoir of devotion,
yet always a person
as real and ready to deal

as any one of them.

He regarded even the ant as worthy of respect
and shared an hour with whomever inquired.

His social service
was to give them Krishna.

He was a real person
from the spiritual world,
but no one knew.

They mostly saw a swami of 70
in pointy shoes and a grey shawl
quickly passing by their window.

And even if they received his *mantra*
it was not as *sisya*.

The mad eclectics moved on,
searching for another experience,
unfortunate lives of short duration,
lazy, cheated, and always disturbed.

The flotsam and jetsam *jivas*
could not, in their downstream rush,
halt to take shelter on the shore
of Srila Prabhupada.

He humbly offered them *prasadam*
and gave of himself,
but they could not see the value
as they careened by.



YOU IN THE SNOW AND COLD

You awoke, looked out the window,
and saw the next building all white,
“Someone has whitewashed?”

You walked outside into the cold, wet deep.
Your shoes looked less white now
and didn't keep your feet dry.
Iced air rushed at your throat and head
and blew open the thin *dhoti* on your legs.
For this climate they had advised you
take meat and wine and wear hat-pants-coat.
You accepted from Mishra a black wool second-hand coat
but did not become an Uptown swami
in pants and leather shoes.

Seven inches had fallen overnight;
the city was in emergency.
At the Midtown Superette you bought
milk, clutching it in a brown bag.
You walked through the cold and snow.



THE BOWERY

When his Uptown room was broken into
and all possessions stolen
(probably by the janitor),
an acquaintance offered to share a Bowery loft.
With youthful daring Prabhupada agreed

and shifted there for Krishna's purpose,
despite insistent warnings
from an Uptown friend, "Don't go there!"
Prabhupada reasoned, "I do not see danger.
I see everywhere as home."

On one side was the Half Moon, a derelict's tavern,
The Palma, a bum's hotel, above that,
and on the right, Harold's Tavern.
In a corner of the loft, behind a movable partition,
he hung his clothes on a line,
arranged his papers, and went on
composing *Srimad Bhagwatam*.

A set of artists and musicians
living in nearby lofts
found Prabhupada more mystical
than anyone else in town.
They liked his music.
Struggling souls, covered with the mental grime,
of New York City 1960s,
their interest held at least a hint
of inquiry into the Absolute:
Is there a personal God,
an ultimate origin that cannot be known
by Western science and thought?
Prabhupada saw their motives weren't pure,
but as long as they were willing
to take up chanting
it didn't matter.

The lower depths of Manhattan
became his morning walking grounds.
Bums sleeping on his doorstep moved aside
as he stepped into the infamous streets.
To his refined taste,
every feature of the Bowery was repulsive.
The drunkard residents, the cold weather,
the lack of tropical fruits, the faces of atheists,
the constant rumble of trucks,
the blaring sinful life, the absence of Vaishnavas,
a roommate whom he soon found chemically hallucinating—
almost every feature
meant inconvenience and repulsion.
But Prabhupada smiled, enlivened.
Where should he have gone instead, some estate
in the hills far away from this madness?
The city was the ideal place
by the awful fact
that more tortured souls
were here,
and he had come to administer to them.
Snila Bhaktisiddhanta had once refused
a piece of land too far from teeming Bombay.
After 6 months of trying, Prabhupada had now begun
to gather listeners. Talking about Krishna,
he was blissful
in New York City.

Preaching here required being completely free—
not a pinch of desire.
It took willingness and satisfaction
to manage everything on his own—

cooking and offering food to Him,
and being satisfied in devotion.
To transform the Bowery into Vaikuntha
took the sweet realization of service in separation,
assurance in living only for His Holy Name.

He would go down and sit on a bench
by the East River under the Brooklyn Bridge
and think again about returning to India,
“Just a little longer,” he would say to himself.
“Let me see what Krishna desires.”
Three nights weekly he was holding *kirtan*;
sometimes the room was almost filled.
It was becoming a city-happening,
to gather in the Swami’s loft
and hear the brass cymbals and watch him
lead chanting, hear him speak *Bhagavad Gita*,
adjuring them to take the truth of the soul.
He would hold his audience a few hours
and then talk with whomever stayed late.
Like restless children they would disperse—
no one sensed the need
to follow.

A *Village Voice* reporter arrived,
advised by a contact that this holy man
seemed about to start a major religion.
The article appreciated the Swami
as honest, learned, practical, and direct.
The photographer took some pictures,
grey-white studies of the pure devotee
in a corner of the dingy loft.

Those who came reserved their right
to do whatever they liked;
they were inclined to save in their day
an hour or two for sitting with the Swami,
meditating through his musical chanting—
but then leaving him after his discourse.
Not what you could call disciples.
Prabhupada said, “I know it will
take a long time. But I am patient.”



MOVING TO SECOND AVENUE

There was assurance from the *Bhagwatam*
that the words of Sri Bhagavan
could penetrate the hearts of the conditioned souls.
And personally he had realized,
foreign as it seemed to American life,
that here was a place for Krishna Consciousness.
Already they were seeking after *yogis*,
and the Mayavadis' mission had a building Uptown.
Indian dancers and musicians drew crowds,
and Prabhupada, alone on the Bowery,
had attracted an artistic set,
who came to chant with him.
If he could only stay and persevere,
he knew that it would work.

But when his roommate went crazy,
Prabhupada had nowhere to go.
A few days he stayed with Michael Grant,

then Carl gave him a place,
despite his wife's resentment.
She feared the Swami would change her man
into a liberated soul,
free of illicit sex and drugs.
Prabhupada knew he wasn't wanted;
precariously he waited,
asking friends to find another place.

In Carl's refrigerator
he saw meat and had to put his own
fruits and vegetables there.
If he could not bear it,
then he would have to give up
preaching in America.
So he prayed to Krishna,
"What can be done? Please protect me
and allow this mission to come forth."

On a hot day in June he moved,
walking ten blocks to the new address.
He was never really of the Bowery,
yet he lived among its residents—always kind and profound,
giving them the best of spiritual life.
They were not eligible to know the mysteries
of Radha-Krishna or the *Uddhava Gita* or the *Bhagavad Gita*,
But he gave them whatever they could take.
The *Gita* is only for the devotee, said Prabhupada.
Others will think the Lord's injunction,
"Surrender everything to Me and I will protect you,"
is too much to ask.
"Then in the beginning of the *Gita*," we inquired,

“where Krishna explains the body is not the Self—
is this at least suitable for the non-devotee?”
Prabhupada replied, “No, that is also only for the devotee.
Who else can understand
that he is spirit soul, eternal servant of God?
They have to become devotees.”

Second Avenue, with traffic pouring
noisily past the front,
seemed not an ideal *tirtha*,
but the souls were falling off from here,
and so it was a good place to catch them.
He walked out in his new neighborhood
and saw the gas station people
and the tombstone people, and they saw him.
The Empire State Building was plainly in view,
like a huge hypodermic needle, standing falsely proud,
and the plain of the Avenue was sprawling Uptown
into congestion and sordid lives.
Prabhupada was used to New York
and ready for a step forward,
as fresh and eager as a young boy.



STOREFRONT

A small storefront was all he had.
He walked inside, surveying, hopeful.
From the second floor apartment's window:
fruitless trees in the courtyard,
and a gas station to the left.

“All right, from here,
I will try again.”
At night in the storefront
under a single bulb,
Vaishnava *tilaka* marking his golden forehead,
his expert, shapely hands and fingers
gripping the *karatal* cords,
he looked out at the motley crowd.
He sat on the floor,
on a straw mat,
the same level as they,
leading the chant.

When he spoke
they did not know,
Bhagavad Gita or *Mahabharata*
or refined Vedic manners
or *kshatriyas* or *prasad*;
they did not know his Bengali Vaishnava childhood,
his lifetime in preparation,
his father, his Guru Maharaj,
the wars, riots, famines, the British Raj, Gandhi, Nehru,
his years in Delhi sacrificing;
they did not know Vrindaban or Lord Chaitanya.
All they knew was Western
gadgets and philosophies,
blue jeans, suicides,
rock-and-roll, and LSD.
The most educated
thought him to be a Hindu.
But Prabhupada was not contemptuous
or unnerved by them.

He was grateful they had come.
His ten months in America had been hard,
so a few eager persons
were dear to him.

His talk was standard:
Krishna the Supreme
is good for everyone;
the message needed no updating.
He urged them with fervor
and with logical discourse from the *acharyas*:
Jiva, Rupa, Sanatan.
He was lecturing
on how everyone can serve the Lord,
when a Bowery bum entered,
whistling and stumbling
and carrying toilet paper rolls.
Making his way up front, the grizzled bum
donated the rolls at Prabhupada's feet
—then exited.
Prabhupada smiled and said, "Just see,
he is not in order, but he thought,
'Here is something.
Let me give some service.'"

Midway in his lecture
an arguer stood up.
"Wait a minute, man! I want to speak!"
Prabhupada had to handle them,
like a lion-tamer,
an amused philosopher,
a tolerant saint,
a stern defender of the storefront.

Kirtan captured the singers,
shut up the outside world
of trucks and street shouts.
The sounds rang rhythmically,
shining with golden rays,
comforting and gladdening the hearts
of those who tried it.

He could hold them for two hours.
In the last minutes
they were most receptive,
watching as he cut an apple
into halves, quarters, eighths,
and served it from a wooden bowl.
For the moment, they were all his disciples.
Then they bolted out the door
into the artificial night,
pursuing fantasies of desire,
unaware they could surrender.

He liked the people who came,
fallen though they were,
and he remained with them,
extending his love.
Gita scholar and Krishna-knower,
tending to the whole world,
he was a true minister
on the Lower East Side.



A LOWER EAST SIDE VOICE

A *guru* means
you can take from him
spiritual information
like a priest or a mystic,
a scholar of the texts;
but to live with him
or to be his servant
is asking a little too much.

A *guru* is like a mentor:
you could say Bob Dylan is a *guru*,
Timothy Leary an LSD *guru*.
So the Swami is a genuine *guru*
of the Vedic spiritual realm,
but, I mean,
you can regard him as a *guru*
without being his follower.

He lives alone I think.
We go there sometimes and sing with him.
He doesn't have much money;
after his *kirtan* he passes a basket—
I think he must live on that—
and he may sell some of his books.
What he says seems to be true—
teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*,
the self is eternal,
Krishna is the name of God,
and if you always chant Hare Krishna
you'll get self-realization.

It's great that he's on the Lower East Side;
it adds to the scene,
to have a genuine *guru*
who gives out food.
And if you want to get high, try chanting
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.



THE SUMMER OF 1966

You began to gather them. They came to you—
Keith and Chuck and Howard
and Wally and Mike and Steve
and Ray and Bruce and Stanley and Bob and Jim—
looking up to you with the first inkling,
that one has to surrender to the *guru*.

Spending the summer in coming to you,
taking the storefront and your back room as hallowed places,
religiously attending the evening class,
they effortlessly gave up drugs,
while losing a taste for illicit sex—not *trying* to give these up,
but like a snake throwing off his old skin.

They came to you.

The first to consider you as their spiritual father,
enjoying your elderly, spiritual company.
Ragtag eclectic youth, but plain and simple enough
to see clear truth through the mind's confusion,
that you are their spiritual master.

The hot city summer passing,
their lives came to new birth,
confiding to one another, "This is really it.
We should not kid ourselves and assume
to know everything.
Swami is telling the truth.
Why try to be smart over what we've read
and what drugs and women we've known?
There's nothing to be proud of. Let's face it.
He is our spiritual guide."
A kindergarten of spiritual life,
a free grounds of learning for the first time,
They unlearned the old empirical ways,
gaining hope in God consciousness,
what they always wanted.



THE SWAMI SAID

The Swami said, "I am not God,
but the *guru* is as good as God."
For a week they misunderstood,
thinking he said that he was God.
They went to him and he clarified,
"No, never God, but servant of God.
But therefore you should honor."

The Swami said we are going on an outing
to Dr. Mishra's *ashram*, to show them
how to chant with heart and soul
and to be together in the countryside.
"One day you should also aspire
to get such a place for Krishna."

The Swami said, "If I told you everything
at once you would faint. You should all become devotees."
Hours and hours of inquiry, days and nights
in learning and dreams
that the Swami is like Krishna and we Arjuna,
that the Swami is really like a beautiful youth.

Each wants to be alone with him
for the confidential exchange, to ask the questions
a little child can ask his father:
"Why is the sky blue?
Where does God come from?
Can I really be saintly and not slide back again?"
And taking private assurance from him.

LSD is not needed, the Swami said.
Your spiritual life is already here.
Whatever he said was passed around.
Slowly at first, some still skeptical
joking on his name, the Swami.
"Old Swami Cigars, Old Swami Rum," they said.
But I said "Ah, don't joke about him."

"The Swami said we are going to the U.N."
In sneakers and jeans, they rode the bus
to U.N. plaza, but were not allowed *kirtan*.
"This is a silent vigil."
But Prabhupada adjusted. Standing erect,
with morning river breezes rustling his saffron,
he spoke and then sat with his boys,
chanting *japa* in a ring around the monument.
These vigils will never work, he said,
unless they turn to Krishna.

The Swami said, you can come to my room
in the off-evenings.
They lost the key and had to break the door,
then lost it again and forgot to replace the lock.
They used his bathroom but didn't clean it.
They failed to allow an important visitor to see him,
slept through his classes,
argued with one another,
read Ramakrishna and then asked his permission to do so,
spoke loosely and slept extra hours,
hung around lazily in the storefront,
kept long hair and old musical tastes
and wondered how Krishna could really have
sixteen thousand wives.

The Swami said, what do you know?
You are wet behind the ears.
You only know your mother's womb.
You are prejudiced in favor of the scientists
and proud of American highways.
You're on the material platform.
You don't know what you speak.
You're like the rascals who are cheaters.
Your impersonal conception of Krishna is foolish.
What do you really know? You are simply rascals,
all nonsense rascals. Don't mind if I say so.

The Swami said, just come and eat with us each noon,
all you want. (And there was no charge.)
Just come with the boys and sit
and take *prasadam*. Keith will cook.
I have taught him and called him Kitchen-ananda.

You just come and take all the hot rice,
hot *subjis*, hot *chapatis*, fresh food as you like,
to your heart's content. Take more, take more!
Sit on the clean floor with plates in a circle.
Take *prasad* in the sunlit front room.
Say the prayers, and eat to your heart's content.
And not just once, but never again go hungry.
Don't eat in a restaurant or go lonely with bad food.
Just come and I will be with you.
I will show you the best food, the best everything.

The Swami said, "Chant one round,"
and sat with the boys at 6 A.M.,
quiet sessions so as not to enrage the neighbors.
But eternal wisdom was with him,
in the fresh morning, a revolutionary movement
with this revolutionary thought: Everything,
including the telephone, is actually spiritual,
as long as you use it in Krishna's service.
There is no other qualification for spiritual.
Now take this knowledge and be strong, he said,
and next time we meet I will teach you more—
such as how to share this with others.



THE FIRST INITIATION
By One Who Missed It

I didn't know that you announced it,
but there was a day set—Janmastami.
We would meet all day in the temple storefront;

at night there would be initiation
and anyone who wanted could take it.
You had us chanting on beads,
the large red wooden cherries
strung on a white cord, a knot
between each of 108.
“Am I kidding myself?”
I thought, sitting on a bench
at a traffic safety strip on First Street,
chanting and reading the *Bhagwatam*.
“It this real or imagined?”
I couldn’t say for sure, but went on.
It was new,
and I felt like an old sage,
passing beads through my fingers and hands.

Rising early, chanting,
taking to the life he was giving,
I became enthusiastically free.
The tyranny of buildings, no more;
meaninglessness in the office, no more;
desperate lonely relations with friends, no more.
I felt real life, and more than anything,
a natural duty.
To not have taken what he offered
would have been the greatest cop-out.
Everyone should take to it,
but at least I myself had to do it.
Everything had been leading to this.

Hadn’t I expressed it
the week before my first meeting with the Swami,

when in a room with East Side buddies
I had said, "I'm looking for something to worship,
but I don't know what it is."
So when it came,
the ancient, authorized science of *Gita*,
meeting with ever-fresh Krishna the Supreme,
and the bona fide, self-realized soul,
a spiritual father and friend—when he actually came,
how could I refuse him
and live with myself as honest?

I chanted while going to work,
under my breath on the telephone,
in my silent mind,
above the din of nonsensical talks,
and open-hearted and loud
in the company of devotees in the storefront.
Open-throated also when on the street,
singing Hare Krishna.

And the book, *Bhagwatam*,
the red brick volume,
was always in my office drawer,
and I would open and glimpse
at the strange printing from India,
the new world of "the Lord,"
"the Supreme Personality of Godhead,"
the existence of God and the soul,
the categories of three-fold miseries,
three kinds of devotees, five *rasas*,
the incarnations and expansions of Vishnu,
His lying on the Garbhodaka Ocean,

Lord Brahma on the lotus,
and Radha and Krishna pastimes.
That book went with me everywhere,
and a pale blue booklet from India,
Easy Journey to Other Planets.

I couldn't read carefully,
but, in my distracted way,
picked out that this was the Absolute Truth,
solid knowledge of God through *bhakti-yoga*
by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.
The Swami was always there,
like the sun in the sky;
we could count on him to be present
in his room and temple,
waiting for us like a kind mother,
reassuring father, best friend,
best nightspot entertainment,
best nourisher of body and soul.
He was there, morning and night,
the most important person in the world.

"Go to him, wretched one,
the faithless, cheating game
of looking for a lover
in the material world can end."
Go to him. Be guided
by the sweet protecting voice of Inner Guide:
"Your life is headed for a wreck on the rocks,
far worse than you can imagine.
Harsh punishments await
a short and sinful life,

for sins you have committed.
Take care and go to him.
Don't be distracted,
no matter who says go elsewhere."

On Janmastami I also went and stayed all day.
He read his *Gita*. It was hard to stay,
since we knew so little
how to spend our time in a Krishna Conscious way.
When we became weak from fasting,
we took fruit from his refrigerator.

I stayed all day as he desired,
but then at night I thought,
"All right, let me go home
and type for the Swami."
Walking the slum blocks to my room,
watching factory smoke rise above the city,
past billboards for Mustang Fords, past playground fences,
I was already, by his mercy, free of it all.
Yet I thought, "Not yet am I ready.
I should keep my sovereign whimsy,
as I have kept it all these years.
Even when imprisoned on the Navy ship
I was alone and free to myself,
my speculation, my whimsy writings,
my whimsy right to sense gratification.
Let me wait.
Because to become a disciple
I must be completely serious.
I will hold out for more affection,
until he plucks me out of the gutter

from this whimsy and reluctance.
I cannot say yes.”

The next day Prabhupada set me right.
Firm-handed, he looked at me, saying,
“I will love you if you will love me.”
From then, it was only a matter of time.
I was convinced not to miss
the second initiation.



PREACHING IN THE PSYCHEDELIC WEST

Prabhupada blasted the LSD myth
that Krishna had come in the form of a pill.
True sages had never indulged in acid
but had reached perfection by the natural way.

The boys felt credit was due to the drug
for opening new doors of perception,
but Swami said no. The daring to search
was a credit, but to take drugs for *yoga*
was the greatest mistake—like mixing sex with *yoga*.

He blasted the myth, and got challenged
by followers of Leary who came to the *kirtan*,
demanding, “But *you* have not taken it, so how do you
know?”
“My disciples have taken,” the Swami replied,
“and given it up.”

The whole East Side mystique was built on drugs,
but Prabhupada pierced through the marijuana fog.
“Hallucinations,” he said.

Krishna can be known in His Name,
but without His pure service, it is all a bad dream.

Take Krishna or Maya,
the Name or the drugs.
But together is crazy and cannot be *bhakti*.
Be happy in *kirtan*, the transcendental high
—so he preached to the psychedelic West.



*SWAMI'S FLOCK CHANTS IN PARK
TO FIND ECSTASY*

I

Bring out the old Persian rug,
carry it through the crowded streets
past taunters of Prabhupada and his boys.
Carry the old rug rolled,
one man at the front, one at the back,
up Second Avenue, then East to the park,
past stares and yells.
A timid devotee grows brave with him;
he is with Krishna and they are with him.
Carry it into the park along with the bongo and *karatal*s,
set it down and unroll it on the asphalt,
for sitting and dancing in *kirtan*.

Grasping the strap of the two-tone bongo,
its skin held tightened by metal studs,
Prabhupada's deft fingers would play
bouncing and muted beats in the center and on the rim.
He knew how to play
so that it sounded like a two-headed *khol*.
His chanting attracted—
a quick dozen came, then twenty, a hundred,
joining his boys in chorus at the people's park.
"To choose to attend to the Lower East Side,
what kindness and humility and intelligence!"

As a voice together,
he and his followers sang,
but his voice and presence
made it happen.

His boys were a newly formed group,
not thoroughly convinced, not yet a team.
Among themselves they had little,
except they were with him, their saving grace.
Dressed niggardly like others in the park,
yet somehow, out of millions, they were his.
That was simply his grace,
that they were beside him,
sitting closely on the rug.

The Sunday park was popping up with people,
on the walks and benches and patches of green,
so when Swamiji began his chant,
plenty were there to hear.
A whole parkful attended his *kirtan*.

You took your boys and mixed with the people.
 What their lives were didn't faze you,
 because now they were chanting the Holy Name.
 I can't imagine the pleasure
 as felt by you and persons on the spiritual planets
 to see that dirty speck on Earth,
 in New York City (itself a speck in the smallest universe).

You saw them
 breaking their chains.

Direct contact with Lord Krishna,
 very difficult to obtain,
 now streamed out freely from your singing.

What you did that afternoon was only a start,
 yet whatever great thing devotees may do today,
 is inspired by your chanting in Tompkins Square Park.
 Your intimate act of redemption lives on;
 the singing continues because of you.

Were you to have not chanted,
 the world would have ended.
 A world with love
 means love of God
 in the heart of His devotee,
 who leads the people.

As you stood before the oak tree and spoke
 to the common people on public ground,
 hippies found it mellow,

local poets and musicians celebrated for the moment,
rowdies and hoodlums were held at bay,
and a few were struck with the serious thought
to surrender.

That afternoon is not recorded
in American or World History books,
although it was the perfect act
to save the country and the world from ruin,
but the day lives forever as fulfillment of scripture,
that every town and village shall chant
and even meat-eaters shall take part
in *Hari Nama*,
the highest service to God and humans.



A POEM ON CHANTING

Approved for Publication by Prabhupada in 1966

When we were chanting
Hare Krishna
and the light of the sky
was going in and out,
my pleasure was so
great I was afraid
lest I be swept to Indra's heaven
and there given a chariot ride
down the length of the rainbow.

Whereas here on earth,
standing on Houston Street,
I can chant
the holy name of Krishna,
and He is with me,
kindly dancing on my tongue—
He Who is the Source of Everything.



DISPLEASED

"I cannot change the philosophy to please the Americans."

Bruce's mother, Chuck's mother,
my mother, the Fugs,
the lawyer in defense of illicit sex,
an upstairs tenant—
these were not pleased.

Bruce's mother was all right,
but when they told her about Krishna Consciousness,
she thought her sons had gone crazy.
"Who is crazy?" Prabhupada replied.
"Are we or they?" Take it to the platform of reason.
One who lives for the temporary body
is doomed at death to lose all that he works for.
Is he not crazy? We live to serve
eternal Krishna, in this world and the next.
What is wrong with that? Who is crazy?"
She admitted the new, good qualities in her sons,
social and human improvements
and no more drugs.
But shaved heads?

At the second initiation,
when Bruce became Brahmananda das,
Mrs. Scharf attended, and Prabhupada told her son,
“Bow down before your mother.”
She was sitting on a metal folding chair,
and it was awkward. Yet she liked it.
But when Prabhupada asked for a donation, she exploded,
“What! I have already given you two sons!”

Swamiji said, because Krishna said,
sex should be used as religious only,
to deliver and raise a Krishna Conscious child.
Or else it is fornication like a pig,
with next-life's *karma* in the body of a pig.
This displeased many, even the liberal
who otherwise liked the enchanting chanters.
And Prabhupada had written in his book,
“Pornography should be censored.”
A disciple asked, “Can this be edited out
because what will the American people think?”
“I cannot change the philosophy,” said Prabhupada,
“to please the Americans.”

Proud Americans may think their missiles and dollars
can save them from suffering and death,
whereas an Indian's philosophy is weird.
But down they go, one by one,
bowing to old age, disease, and death.
And their nation cannot save them,
and their highways cannot save them,
nor their mild and hard drugs, their uppers and downers,
nor can their emancipation set them free.

Is it really weird or wrong
to ask people to have sex like humans
as taught by every scripture of the world?
Who is crazy?



JUDSON HALL INQUIRY

At Judson Hall the problem was we didn't advertise,
and yet we paraded with a bass drum
past Carnegie Hall to Times Square,
and back in time for the scheduled lecture.
Or was the mistake that we charged no admission?
Swamiji stressed the latter.
But had it been a free naked show,
I think we would have packed the house.
The problem was the same as what he'd found in Delhi:
No Time to inquire about the self.

But Swamiji held *kirtan*,
and we wildly danced around the stage
in yellow *dhotis*, shaven-headed,
wearing Vaishnava *tilaka* just like him.

After Swamiji's lecture, a man in the empty hall inquired,
"Is this for helping the wayward and underprivileged?"
"No," Swamiji replied, "everyone is lost.
Everyone is destitute. Because we have forgotten Krishna."
He went on to smash the notion
that Krishna was for failures
or that one could be successful without Him.

Maybe it was our reputation
as Hare Krishna from the Lower East Side,
or maybe that man was snobbish,
or maybe in another sense he had been right.
Although our parents had money
and most of us had been through college,
we had no hope of happiness in the material world;
we no longer sought progress
in wealth, education, beautiful body, or good birth;
we had found that inkling of truth—
made starker by the failures of our elders and guides—
but we had opted for nothingness
until the Swami had picked us up.

We may have looked like dropouts
to the casual observer,
and so we had been.
But now we were becoming
as ambitious as the *karmi*—
in fact more eager than they,
and bright-faced in our newfound transcendental work.
As our defender, Swamiji explained
the real success of life
is not just to wear nice clothes,
although you do not know
your existence beyond the body.
“These boys chanting Hare Krishna
are the most fortunate,” he said, “and their future is brilliant.
Because they have accepted Krishna. Why don’t you try it?
You don’t have to change your dress or way of life,
but chant with us. But if you think,
‘I can be successful without inquiring into the Absolute,’
then your life will be all useless.”

After Judson Hall meeting
 when we apologized that so few had come,
 Prabhupada replied, "You did not see Narada?
 You did not see Lord Brahma?
 When there is chanting of Hare Krishna,
 even the demigods come to participate."
 For myself, I say, I did not see Narada,
 did not see Lord Brahma,
 but *you* I saw,
 and my spiritual senses were fully satisfied.
 Just because the hall had seemed empty, I do not doubt
 that the demigods came to see you chant.
 But even I could see with my eyes and feeble brain
 your confidence,
 your entirely transcendental self,
 and your fatherly defense of your disciples
 through the universal truth of Krishna Consciousness.



UNIQUE MERCY

You knew it was deep, mystic attraction
 to cook for Krishna and give out the *prasadam*,
 and you were expert.
 The crew liked your *kichari* onboard the *Jaladuta*;
 and when Sally Agarwal saw your lunch
 cooked magically in her kitchen
 on your triple-tiered brass cooker
 (that wonderful paraphernalia
 you never tired of praising,
 and which actually did perform a miracle in cookery,

making rice, three or four different vegetables,
as well as *dahl*, all within 45 minutes
on a single flame, under your nimble hands
by your quick, instinctive intelligence)
—when Sally saw it, she wanted one for her husband,
who had been gulping dry sandwiches until you came.

From your very first days in Manhattan
you envisioned the exciting prospects of food distribution.
Writing to Mrs. Morarjee,
“When they will have the actual commodity,
and feel pleasure by eating very delicious
prasadam of Bala Krishna, I am sure a unique thing
will be introduced to America.”
Even your simple cutting of an apple
and giving it out at night in the storefront
was something extraordinary
to those sitting on the floor—
hearing, chanting, and then taking
an apple slice from you in silence,
watching you spit out the seeds onto the nearby sink.
“How wonderful!” they thought. “No one else can do that.”

At noon you gathered a dozen young men
who came without fail,
even if they could not follow the regulations;
no one missed the *prasadam*
or was unenthusiastic.
Was it ordinary rice? Just some unleavened bread?
But weren't rice and bread available in the luncheonettes?
And who had even thought of rice as special—
until you brought it as *prasadam*?

It wasn't just rice. It was the way you served it.
And *the prayers!*

And having the open pots on the floor
in front of the little picture of Lord Chaitanya,
and the fact that you were there cooking
or at least presiding, moving on bare feet
in and out of the kitchen.

You were openly stressing *prasadam*
by quoting the *Bhagavad Gita*,
and your followers also accepted
that food became completely spiritual
when offered to Krishna in *bhakti-yoga*:
“All right,” we said, “this is *bhagwat prasad!*”

We had known soups, but not hot, spicy *dahl*.
We knew peas, carrots, *et cetera*,
but not your special mixtures
of spinach, cauliflower, eggplant, and potatoes.
And the secrets of *masala* spicing,
the luxury of deep-frying in ghee,
made food new, healthy, hot, and delicious—
and all brought by you.
“*It was not bread he gave me—
he gave me prasadam.
This was life, and he saved my life.*”



ISKCON BULLETS

It was very easy
to reach into the large, covered bowl.
You left it in the outer room,
preventing us from cigarettes and worse.
We saw your leniency as you smiled.
You did it so we could remain Krishna Conscious,
because of all the senses
the tongue is the most difficult to control.

But why did you name them after killers?
You said that they were our best weapon
against Maya.
We laughed, ourselves victims
of the golden balls.



YOU CAME ALONE, BUT NOW . . .

But now you were not alone.
Your boys went out on their own
to the Love-Pageant-Rally, a hippie protest meeting,
and while the crowd was milling aimlessly,
started Hare Krishna chanting.
In the same park where you
had led them personally,
now on your order, among their peers they chanted,
with your drum, *karatals*, and a tambourine of soda caps.
The Love Pageant flared up in devotional chanting.
And the *Village Voice* reported,

“The backbone of the meeting was the *mantras*,
holy chants from the Sanskrit *Bhagavad Gita*,
and for three hours it became like a boat
on a sea of rhythmic chanting.
Led by fifteen disciples of Bhaktivedanta Swami,
who operates from a storefront on Second Avenue,
the *mantras* ebbed and flowed with the rhythm of drums ...”
They ran, ecstatic to tell you,
“Swamiji, it was fantastic!”
As if to say, “We did what you told us
and it worked! We ourselves are amazed,
and our faith increased a hundred times
to go out and spread this everywhere.”
Do it, you said. Go everywhere
and chant, and save your people.

The American revival of *Back to Godhead*
was also accomplished by your men,
and no longer were you alone
writing that Krishna is supreme.

“I am an old man,” you said,
“but you are young.
Learn it and do it—
how to play drum, how to sing and cook.
Be without sense gratification,
and chant 16 rounds daily without fail,
and one day you can each go
and open a center, just as I have done.
In Russia, in China—who will go?
Brahmananda, will you go to Russia?”
At first it seemed too much—a joke by Swamiji.

But maybe we could do it,
if that was what he wanted.

You were no longer alone,
as a mother with young children is not alone.
It was more burden to have us.
Years later you even said,
“When I was all alone in New York,
it was very nice—no one to depend on but Krishna.”
But you wanted this burden,
the growing-up youngsters
readying to go out
to turn protests into chant-ins,
to turn the world into devotees,
when empowered by you.



SWAMIJI

Now we know the name “Swamiji”
is a third-class address used for any swami,
no more respectable than “Mister.”
But somehow it was dear to us then,
because it was you, and all we knew.

“Swamiji” meant you,
the dear preceptor, *guru*, lord, and master,
the expert teacher to whom we surrendered.
Swamiji, eternal spiritual guide,
solver of immediate daily problems—
like what to do about roaches
and how to answer the challenge, “You are all escapists!”

It was Swamiji who had to deal
with the landlord, Mr Chutey,
when all our efforts failed.
He liked you, but not us.
On getting a curt note from a writer who lived upstairs
who said his musical and cooking tastes
did not run into Indian
and so we should please desist
from loudly singing *mantras* and cooking with ghee,
it was Swamiji who asked him to come down
and who calmed him with a discourse beyond designations.

We knew that Swamiji was alone in his apartment, writing,
and that sometimes he rested,
but that even at those times we could see him
through the window in his room. He lived in our view
and was always ready to help,
as long as we were serious and not a waste of time.
Who can say now how much of his time
was wasted on us?
But he gave it unstintingly.

Swamiji, soft as a rose.
He continued to receive the eccentric Robert Nelson,
joking with him like an old friend—
“How are you, Mr. Bob?”
—although the man was clearly not in order.
Swamiji, hard as a thunderbolt.
He chased Raphael away from the door because
he had punched a devotee, carried marijuana,
and posed a threat to Swamiji’s movement.

“Swamiji” means Srila Prabhupada
in his first temple 1966,
just as regal as he ever would be,
although without a car,
wearing an unpressed *khadi dhoti*
and an inexpensive jersey with a stretched turtle-neck.
We knew he was as good as God
and bowed to him,
but lacked the means and knowledge
to rightly serve and worship.

He was the same person as he was later,
but with little money and few men;
his plans were ambitious, but he was at the beginning.
The mixture of his grave, refined dignity
and the little world he created
out of a small storefront and two upstairs rooms—
where he handled all the petty cash
and cooked the sweets
and sat alone with whoever asked—
out of a ragtag group of boys and one girl,
is very special and dear to recall.

Swamiji, I too have been to other places,
seen you and been with you on later fields
when there was bigger work to do,
and I have taken on new services, new names,
but I always return to you in the first days,
because that is the way it will always be.

Srila Prabhupada, you often recalled
this beginning and said, “Those were happy days.”

when you would look out your kitchen window,
the weedy tenement garden below,
the rush and noise of the traffic on First Street,
and you would be full of hope.
Throughout your years of travel
and fabulous growth of success,
after opening multi-million-dollar temples,
writing and publishing sixty big books,
and taking thousands of disciples,
still, you often said, "Those were happy days."
Remembering them one by one, as if they were before you,
you spoke about your preaching at 26 Second Avenue
even in your very last days in Vrindaban.

They were happy days for you, and also for us,
the boys you lifted up.
They were happy days for the whole world,
when you began your preaching on Second Avenue,
your first place in America,
where you chanted in Tompkins Square Park
and stood before the oak tree.

Then one winter day in '66 you shocked us:
"Now I will go to the next place," you said—
"to San Francisco.
Take care of everything here.
Keep up the classes, and the love feasts,
Go out with magazines and *kirtan*.
Everything should be maintained in my absence."

*And, then you left—in January 1967.
And then you left, in November 1977.
And now we are living on your orders.*

A LAST QUESTION, AND ANSWERS

Prabhupada, if in those days you were
externally so meagerly equipped,
and the Krishna Consciousness Movement
had barely begun,
then why do we recall it as so important?
Is this merely nostalgia?
The answer is, "No," It is not mere nostalgia.
Is remembrance of Krishna material sentiment?
No, Lord Krishna Himself declares, the pure devotee's life
is as good as the eternal pastimes of Krishna!

Prabhupada, when you were Swamiji, you could not enact
many of your far-reaching plans
because your instruments, the disciples, were too few,
and they were just learning how to be humans.
There were few published books, and no temples,
except for one meager storefront.
Yet we think of you in those early days so fondly,
because we clearly see you
entirely depending upon *guru* and Krishna.
Even a neophyte is moved to know
how you suffered heart attacks—for our sake—
while crossing the ocean on the *Jaladuta*.
Seeing you alone carrying forward
the worldwide movement on your shoulders,
naturally we are more and more drawn to you.

Lord Rama worked with brave, noble monkeys,
but you worked with the Lower East Side's uncivilized men,
and to think of you that way endears you to us

more and more.

As Lord Krishna went on to Dwaraka
to enact His later pastimes
and yet His simple childhood pastimes are the dearest,
so you (and we) like to remember
the earliest days of ISKCON,
when the Krishna Consciousness Movement was only
a playful, charming, seemingly helpless child.
It was not an ordinary child,
and now we know it more and more,
as ISKCON grows, covering and benefitting all the earth.
Yet we continue to recall those “childhood” days.

Remembering your willingness to work
under such rude beginnings,
your positive joyfulness
while physically carrying forth the entire ISKCON,
we are drawn to you more and more.

You did not look down upon the situation as unbearable
when stinking bums barged into your temple,
or when LSD freaks visited your room
to claim that they were God,
or when the upstairs tenant
poured water through your ceiling.
You accepted all these as Krishna’s mercy,
the opportunity to preach in New York City.

Later, one of your Godbrothers said
he also could have succeeded in America,
but he did not have a temperament inclined to low-class men,
being himself very high class and inclined toward scholars.

But that you agreed to work with us
is not due to your inclination towards Lower East Side youth;
it is your endearing compassion,
your dedication to the order of your Guru Maharaj,
your complete faith in the power of the Holy Name.
And when we recall this we are amazed.

Remembering you on the Bowery
and on the Lower East Side,
all devotees are inspired to go on and do the same,
giving their association to whoever shows a spark,
whether in China, East Europe, or New York City today.

Just as the sun is always illuminating the universe,
your 26 Second Avenue days will always illumine
the preachers throughout the world of ISKCON.





BOOK THREE



"WE ARE NOT CONSERVATIVE"

*"A holy man from India,
described as one of the more conservative
leaders of his faith,
launched a kind of evangelistic effort yesterday
in the heart of San Francisco's hippie haven."*

Conservative means he doesn't approve
of LSD, of homosexual acts,
of boys and girls touching, wasting vital energy
with no connection to Krishna.
and he decries the slaughterhouse.

But Prabhupada was thinking
in a different way than they,
not politically left or right,
but bringing the Vedic truth unchanged.
No one among the Vaishnavas had ever
come to mingle with the mad
who call being sane conservative.

He was not for preserving the existing order.
Not an old fogey, no stand-patter,
he dared to move among the wildest youth
yet remained as a lily on water.
No conservative could do that.

Arriving from his first plane trip,
he passed between two rows
of chanting, incense-bearing hippies
and accepted their Wild-West obeisances.

The bewildered young seekers
saw him, golden, smiling, dancing,
arms upraised in the airport,
and all their hopes were satisfied.
They were attracted by his words:
“From the sky the houses looked like matchboxes.
Just imagine how it looks
from Krishna’s point of view.”

Never had they thought like that
or known anyone who did.
They were wild ones,
and for him to land among them
to teach and guide them,
he could not be conservative.



TRANSCENDENTAL LIGHTS AND SOUNDS

At the Avalon Ballroom
hundreds of colored lights shone,
but in Prabhupada’s room at one A.M.,
there is only a desk lamp
and a tiny colored light, a red bulb,
on the microphone of his Grundig dictaphone.
And when that light is on
and his words come forth
during intimate, brief moments,
as they accumulate into hours and pages,
the world reaps the harvest of Bhaktivedanta purports.
That small red light—

more precious than the colored beams
that dazzle jaded eyes
and smear across the ballroom floor
in psychedelic mixtures.
The quiet of that room
with one firm, faintly uttering voice
is worth a million times
the roar and thunder
of the Grateful Dead.
But even the Dead
had their transcendental hour,
their Night of Consciousness,
the Mantra-Rock Dance.

It was a rock-dance crowd,
drums and people high,
no place for a *brahmachari*.
The old *babajis* of Vrindaban
would have fainted away.
But Prabhupada saw compassionate preaching
and chanted with all his heart;
better they join him in *mantra*-rock
than their usual, unabated hell.

Swamiji was cheered, a new superstar,
a pure devotee of Krishna,
a master of the transcendental chant.
They applauded his entrance,
quieted for his words,
then joined him
in an hour long *mantra*-rock dance,
which grew to a frenzy,

until rock and *mantra*
merged in the rhythm of the Names:
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.
And Lord Krishna, the supreme form,
twenty feet high, projected on the wall,
with a golden crown, peacock plume, and flute.
The chant swelled
stronger and faster.
With a chorus of a thousand souls,
Swamiji's voice rang out
in praise of Govinda.



KRISHNA'S WELFARE WORKER

He sat in his rocking chair
upstairs on Frederick Street
in Haight-Ashbury,
and they came before him,
into his room.
Those were the serious ones,
who sought him out
after his storefront lectures
and after their own experiences
of chanting.
They wanted to see him,
the *guru*.
"Take to the chanting," he advised.
"Give up sinful life and get married."
With confidence he gave them the *bhakti* prescription

and personal treatment,
encouraging an artist to paint
and a scholar to study the *Bhagwatam*.

Otherwise, as it had always been,
material life was unhappy,
and so it was in Haight-Ashbury—
it was no different here.
Life after life of misery,
and Krishna is the remedy.
Prabhupada had come for that,
to give the best medicine for the worst disease.
That was his transaction
with the serious ones.

They entered a sweet exchange,
seeing him as their leader
and taking to his movement
as much as they were able.
They wore the large red *japa* beads
in loops around their necks
and attended his sessions morning and night,
cutting out most of their sinful habits
and truly liking the chanting.
The men married their girlfriends.
Completely they accepted the Swami
as *guru*—the serious ones.
They took to his cause,
aspiring to go back to Godhead.

But some were not ready
for his spiritual treatment.

Allen Ginsberg had invited,
“Come by Bhaktivedanta Swami’s space station.”
He had said it was good
for those coming down from LSD
“to stabilize their consciousness on re-entry.”
So they came
to the little space station,
seeking shelter in the Swami’s *prasadam*
and the sweet sound vibrations.
And sometimes they insisted
to see him.
Prabhupada was willing,
and he had no secretary
to screen an incoming guest.

The dirtiest hippie in that famous neighborhood
was infamous Rabbit, known for his head lice
and dirt-caked body.
Outside the door after *kirtan*
the Rabbit approached, “May I see you?”
and Swamiji agreed.
Another boy repeatedly demanded,
“WHAT ABOUT MY MIND?!”
And Swamiji replied, “I have no other medicine.
Just try the chanting.”
A fat girl insulted him
one night before his audience,
“Who are you?” she cursed.
“Are you just going to sit there?”
He let it go,
and Krishna protected him.
When a menacing man jumped up on the dais,

kirtan was Swamiji's response.
A drugged Bahai girl pounded on his door
crying, "*Maha ula!*"
in the middle of the night;
Swamiji was calm and cool
and laughed the next day to recall it.
When a blond boy with a red headband
screamed against the sound of Krishna *kirtan*,
"No! *I am God!*" Swamiji continued singing—
until "God" gave up
and ran out to the street.

Swamiji always persevered.
Troubles came and went
like the changing seasons,
while Swamiji and his followers
went on chanting.
"*That was a real test of his powers,*
how he handled trouble cases.
Then I realized he was great."



HARI NAMA ON HIPPIE HILL

On a walk through Golden Gate
they had shown him Hippie Hill
"Hold *kirtan* here," said Swamiji.
And on a balmy Sunday
he sent them to the park
and joined them, eager to sing.

They had a flag for each religion;
the blue Star of David,
the Islam Star and Crescent,
the Vedic Omkara,
the Christian Cross.
And universal *dharma*
poured forth as *Hari Nama*,
with trumpet, *karatal*s, and kettle drum.

Hundreds were already watching
the Swami's people with their large red beads.
The rhythmic chanting was peace and joy.
And when the Swami himself sat down
to play *mrdanga*,
“the whole disciplic succession arrived.”

Bhaktivinode Thakur had also proclaimed
that when the Holy Name showers nectar,
all the people of the universe
become mad in ecstasy,
and Lord Brahma joins the dancing
and exclaims, “All of you kindly chant,
‘Hari Bol! Hari Bol!’”

Brahma's son, sage Narada,
wanders singing the Holy Names
and sometimes goes to hellish worlds.
He also saw
Prabhupada delivering nectar
in the eucalyptus meadow
with his warm and expert playing
on the reddish clay *mrdanga*.

Narada was blissful
as Srila Prabhupada
playing the same role as Narada,
whose *vina* causes joy and dancing,
enlivening even Mahadev,
who cries, embracing Narada.

For composing *Srimad-Bhagwatam*,
that *brhad-mrdanga* which Prabhupada
continually played in his pre-dawn trance,
Srila Vyasa (the follower of Narada)
was already intimate with Prabhupada.
And Vyasa was pleased to see the *kirtan*,
for as he had predicted,
Kali would be an age of fortune,
but only because of *sankirtan*,
“By which one can attain the Supreme
and free oneself from birth and death.”

All the past *acharyas*, all transcendental causes
were present in Srila Prabhupada
as he sat with the tight-strapped *mrdanga* on his lap
in the center of the chanters,
surrounded by receptive hearers.

It was open and free,
a sunny Sunday *kirtan*
on Hippie Hill,
they bounding in a circle around him
in the meadow
and he, the beautiful saffron center,
like a cheerful lotus,

the wise person with greying hair,
not old man but saintly traveler
from the spiritual world.

Swamiji danced from side to side
in stately measure
while they leaped
as lively as colts,
throwing their limbs into it
and thinking of the body,
thinking the soul is a way
to put your body into it,
a physical dance with the *mantra*.
Their dancing showed little awareness
of Krishna, the Supreme Person,
or of their being His servant.
Nevertheless, they exulted
in the *kirtan* of His Holy Name.

Swamiji smiled,
conducting the dance with knowledge.
He stood in the center, swaying.
They ringed around him, bounding.
They didn't know
how very good it was
for the soul.
But he knew.
And he led them.
Through the afternoon they danced,
boys and girls hand in hand,
with the Holy Name
ringing around them

as breathlessly they ran,
the *mantra* wreathing
through all their movements.

They thought it was a far-out song,
a free-form dance,
as Swamiji led them
back to Godhead.



KARTAMI-SAYI

Kartami-sayi means
“the boss”—that’s Krishna.
With His hand on His right hip,
His left hand holding a rod,
He looks up boldly—
“When will you surrender?”

He is the Supreme Law,
yet everyone wants to argue with Him.
He supplies their body and their breath,
arranges for their birth, fulfills their desires,
lives in their heart as Supersoul,
giving knowledge, remembrance, and forgetfulness.
Yet they want to make Him minus
and take everything from Him.
So they will always protest
when He says, “Surrender to Me.”

Sitting beside the cowherd boy
 who rules the universe,
 Swamiji spoke on His behalf.
 (Some of the devotees were not waking up
 to come early and hear the class.
 Some still took a cigarette break
 and went to the diner for donuts and coffee.)
 “When are you going to surrender
 to Krishna?” Swamiji pressed them.
 “Whatever Krishna takes for breakfast
 we should all take as remnants.
 He is God, so please His senses.
 As the hand cannot eat by itself
 but must feed the stomach
 before it can enjoy,
 so you please Kartami-sayi.
 Then you will be happy.”



INITIATIONS

Later Prabhupada said his “fault”
 was to take so many disciples.
 If they sin again
 after taking sacred vows,
 then he has to suffer—
 sometimes in bad dreams,
 sometimes through disease.
 And sometimes he is embarrassed
 before Krishna,
 when a so-called disciple
 wrongs him again and again.

Why take such a risk?
Because he feels he must.
If he decrees too strictly
and they cannot follow,
then he will never start his movement.
He agrees to accept whoever is willing.

One day a stranger in the storefront
raised his hand and asked,
“Can I be initiated?”
“Yes,” said Prabhupada,
“but answer two questions.
Who is Krishna?”
“God.”
“And who are you?”
“The servant of God.”
“Then tomorrow you may take.”
That was the essence—
if they were willing.
His was the most lenient act
done on behalf of Krishna.

Bonnie and Gary looked crazy,
and they were.
The thing most on Gary’s mind
was how to avoid the military draft.
Bonnie was looking for a *guru*.
After two weeks, when they felt
they were ready, he accepted them.
Who knew what they would do—
how long they would stay?
But he took the risks

to let them serve Krishna.
In the future they may go astray—
misuse of free-will is always possible.
But he accepted them.
She liked to read and paint,
and the boy like to read the *Bhagwatam*.
Let them become devotees:
Govinda and Gaurasundara.

Who else is there?
Let them come forward.
Whoever wants to come out of the hell;
no one shall say they cannot.
They have no other chance,
so let them come.
Whoever will speak up and say,
“I want to come. I will take the vows,”
then *they* may have Krishna’s mercy.
If they promise, that is good enough.

Prabhupada accepted them on their word,
those raised on lying and cheating and meat-eating.
When after two weeks of chanting they said,
“We will never again turn to drugs or illicit sex,
and for the rest of our lives we will chant
daily sixteen rounds,
and our aim shall be back to Godhead”—
on their honor he took them.

Where are they now?
How many have left?
If you knew then, Swamiji,

would you still have accepted so many?
How many will be true
until their last breath?
Prabhupada thought
whatever service they do
will be good for them;
a little *bhakti* saves them
from the greatest danger.
When the first ones left, he said,
“Do not be shocked. The real wonder is
that in the presence of the powerful Maya
some of us may remain devotees.”

In this world we are going downstream
in the powerful current of Maya,
over the waterfalls crashing down
into the lower regions of next life,
down into painful species, into birth and death—
and he saves us by this initiation.
If we can catch hold.

He was prepared to suffer
the misdeed of accepting too many disciples.
Making disciples is what he had come for.
He had no other purpose
in accepting their worship or service;
if a genuine spark was present,
he was there to fan it,
guiding them with infinite care.



TO UPENDRA DAS

"There is no love in the material world,"
Swamiji told you.
You loved to go to his room,
and that is to your everlasting credit.
Sometimes you would go before him in silence,
simply watching him until he said,
"All right," and made you leave.
Or during his *prasad* he allowed you
to watch, like a child,
and he would hand you some *sabji*,
with a taste like heavenly nectar,
and that is to your everlasting benefit.

He knew your mind and your life,
saw when you were lying,
but took the best part of what you offered.
When you presented useless, sentimental *guru-daksine*
(baby blanket and beach towel),
he first dropped them on the floor,
but later used them as mats for guests.

But when he tried to save you
from your uncontrolled sex drive,
at first you denied the problem:
"Swamiji, I'm not having sexual connections."
No, he said, where there is a girl and a boy
there must be sex—butter and fire.
And he asked you to stay with him
as a celibate *brahmachari*.
You agreed.

You would come in late at night
from your post office job,
and he would be resting.
But at one A.M. he would rise
and begin his dictation.
He was so kind to take you in
and let you live in the outer room;
in the fresh time of your neophyte devotion,
he liked to see you read his books.

One day you approached him
while he was pacing, chanting *japa*.
“Swamiji, if in Krishna Consciousness
a boy and a girl don’t live together,
how can there be love?”
“You want a girl?” he asked,
and in his *japa* pacing he went to the window,
where women were walking below.
“Pick one,” he said.
Out of the masses of women walking by—
legs and hips and breasts and heads and minds and hearts—
so many girls can be taken
as a partner in sex
or a partner in life, a wife.
But he had said, “There is no love in this material world.
Love is for Krishna.”

At that time, in the powerful presence of his form,
as you became his servant,
you understood
true love is for Krishna.
One day you brought him posters from India,

and there was the picture of Govinda in the moonlight.
As devotees looked over Swamiji's shoulder,
he sat in the rocker and said,

"Write this down:

If you want to go on enjoying and joking
with family and friends in the material world,
then don't go look at Govinda,
standing at Vamsi-vata,
with the moonlight on His flute.
Because if you see this cowherd boy,
you will not want to enjoy anymore
but will always love only Govinda."

Godbrother, your everlasting credit
is the service you offered in his presence.
Wherever you go, that will
never suffer loss or diminution.
And we also recall here
the everlasting mercy he showed you,
and we are inspired to think
how kind he was
and how wise was his counsel
as offered to all:
"There is no love in the material world.
Love is for Krishna."



THE STORY OF LORD JAGANNATH

As Varaha first appeared the size of a thumb
from the nostril of Brahma,
Lord Jagannath first appeared in the West
in a form three inches tall.

The Deity did not suddenly arrive
when a girl found Him in an import store,
but because of Prabhupada,
the inconceivable took place—
it didn't happen by chance.
Swamiji explained why the stubby arms,
the special shape of the head,
the simple round eyes, the big smile.
Jagannath had been carved at the request of an ancient king,
who could not wait to see the Lord
but had burst in on the sculptor.
The sculptor had fled, and the king had accepted:
"I shall worship Him in this form."
And Lord Chaitanya had accepted,
"This is Krishna, whom I have longed to see."

"Yes, He is Jagannath." said Swamiji.
"The Lord of the Universe," and he explained:
God can appear in metal or wood or stone—
it is no problem for Him.
Everything is His energy,
but we cannot see Him in person
in His original spiritual form
as long as our eyes are covered
with material desires.

Yet He appears in His form,
as described in the *sastra*,
with blackish hue like a fresh rain cloud,
as in the picture of Govinda in the moonlight
or the statue of Kartami-sayi with His hand on His hip.
He is not a youth of this world
but is the transcendental source
from whom all worlds have come
and all gods and time and space—
all from that eternal form.

They took it on his word,
and Shyamasundar carved the three-foot forms
and made a redwood altar with canopy
and colored blinking lights.
They cooked a feast for the local hippies,
who came to celebrate with chanting.
And all were glancing up
at the Lord in His round-eyed majesty
beside His sister, the auspicious Yogamaya,
and His Brother, Lord Balaram,
the source of strength
for those who take shelter in Him.
While the two Lord Brothers and Their Sister beamed down
from Their place on the altar,
Prabhupada introduced Them:
“Here is Krishna.
His form is there, His color is there,
His instruction is there, His helmet is there,
His advice is there—everything Krishna.”

*“O Lord of the Universe,
kindly be visible unto me.”*

“But, Swamiji, how could the Lord come
in such a little form?”

“For the ease of worship by His devotee,
He sometimes comes into a little box
or remains in the storefront
to receive your worship.
The biggest of the big
can become the smallest of the small;
that is part of His greatness, His kindness.

“One sees an odd-shaped doll.
Another sees only what he can theoretically feel,
but the pure devotee sees Krishna,
who comes in dreams and speaks
and sometimes orders His devotee
to repair a temple or to act in certain ways.”

Prabhupada spoke
of separation from Krishna,
how the Goswamis felt:
“I am unfit to see Krishna.”
“So Lord Chaitanya always felt like that
and one night wandered and fell on the sea:
‘Krishna, if You are here? Krishna, if You are here?’”

They knew when Swamiji spoke
about Lord Jagannath and Lord Chaitanya,
he was intensely feeling separation.
And one day right before them
he entered an internal trance—

beyond their vision,
and yet they saw and felt him go away
and then return to them,
in ecstasy of separation from the Lord.

Swamiji was coming down to be with them.

“But how fallen we are!”

While he thought of Krishna,
their thoughts were mundane:

“Should I get married?”

“Is Krishna really God?”

“How can we worship this Deity?”

“What about after your lecture and

the nice evening feasting

when I go out from the storefront

and I want to smoke or have a woman

or I sense that all is void

and you and the storefront seem

only a small part of existence,

what should I do then?”

Spiritual reality was not yet firm for them,

yet Swamiji was firm in Krishna consciousness,

always present in his room

to encourage and convince them

of the reality of the soul.

Even brief contact with him

would bring assurance of the soul's existence

and the Godhead of Krishna,

whose path we should follow.

For doing welfare work among the spiritually poor
he was staying in this world,
not remaining constantly in spiritual trance,
never to come back.

And yet sometimes,
when the talk of Krishna reached a certain pitch,
touching his own feelings for the liberated souls,
when it grew to a certain intensity,
touching his feelings for the company of the Lord—
then only he left
the vigorous, caretaking role
and joined fully in a trance of love.
But he would soon return
to the fledglings in the storefront
who waited like baby birds,
depending on their mother.
He would never abandon them.

“O Lord of the Universe,”
Swamiji led the prayer,
“kindly be visible unto me.”
As a teacher recites the ABCs
or pretends, his hand around the child’s,
that he too is learning to form the letters—
so Prabhupada stayed with his students
and encouraged them to pray and serve.

Since 1977 Prabhupada has left us,
slow, needy students
waiting for his return.
But he has taught us in another way—
to serve his order.

And so we take on duties
but wait for the consummation:
his personal presence again,
where separation from Krishna is
sometimes a stormy sea with waves,
and sometimes an ocean calm.
We await to return to him
but serve in remembrance,
sure of duty.
Jagannatha Swami
nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me.



FROM NEW YORK CITY IN SEPARATION

Our storefront, our place to live,
where transcendental life took hold.
We would go for lunch
even in his absence—*dahl*, rice, *chapatis*.
He expected each of us to serve
and to repeat his *parampara*.
Six months of steady teachings we had received,
and now we had to share it.

New York City streets . . . what can I say?
We felt for him.
The wooden desk at the welfare office . . .
walking in the door of the storefront for lunch . . .
the aroma of *dahl* . . .
the pots and plates on straw mats on the floor . . .
and talk of Krishna as far as we were able.

We would go up to Swamiji's room
and do the things we used to do
when he was there.

He used to come into the worship room
after his shower—"I feel refreshed."

He would sit before the small table
applying *tilaka* to twelve places on his body,
and we would also try.

Now, in his absence, we did the same
and looked to his empty place.

He used to ring bells and offer incense
before the picture of Lord Chaitanya.

The picture was there, and we rang the bells,
thinking of Swamiji.

Our talk was light, not quite like his.

He had held the absolute gravity to control us.

But some of us strained to bring
the loose talk back to *Bhagavad Gita*.

We tried to keep the *ashram* clean;
we continued the lectures and *kirtans*.

Brahmananda was president,

Acyutananda could play the drum,

Rupanuga was sober,

some new boys were coming,

and Jadurani was always painting.

We moved in and out of his apartment rooms
as when he was there,

and sometimes one of us would go alone
into Swamiji's room,
quietly thinking of him.

In his absence we prayed
to keep what he had given us.

Looking in his closet,
the stack of manuscripts left behind . . .
he wanted to do such great things!
Yet all we could do was try to attend
and chant our rounds
and eat *prasadam*,
instead of something else.
We went about our little routine he had given us,
and that made us happy.

On the Lower East Side
in the absence of his presence,
we were saved from Maya
by adhering to his way
and by remembering,
like children living bravely
while the father is away.

Letters from him were very special—
his stationery, the typing marks,
knowing that he had typed it himself,
the impression of each letter on the page,
a spelling error—
documents more valuable than hundreds of dollars.
The first letter established service in separation
as a tangible fact.
(And we did *live* on philosophy, didn't we?)
"Krishna will give you strength.
Physical presence is immaterial.

Presence of transcendental sound
received from the spiritual master
should be the guidance of life."



SAN FRANCISCO LILA

*"Some of this must have been really strange for him,
to come to the U.S. and end up in Haight-Ashbury
with a storefront for an ashram
and a lot of very strange people around.
And yet he was totally right there,
right there with everybody."*

He promised his New York family of devotees
he would return, especially after they were cheated
of five thousand dollars
by following the shrewd business men's advice
instead of his.

He had to go back to lift them up.

Two temples to maintain,
but how do you teach separation?

Not only by the book
but also by the bond of real affection.

It was his work, as ordered by his Guru Maharaj,
giving his love and himself.

In the *lila* of his preaching
they were his parts and parcels;
from them ISKCON would grow
and bring Krishna *prema*

within the reach of every soul.
Those who had come forward
were a close part of his life.
He did not forget them.

Hayagriva was very important:
an English professor could edit
Bhagavad Gita and *Back to Godhead*.
Swamiji narrated to him many scenes
for a play about Lord Chaitanya;
Hayagriva should write it nicely
and perform it all over the world.
Swamiji gave ambitious suggestions
to whoever asked for service.
If Ray Rama liked, he could take the credit
and put his own name as author
of *The Nectar of Devotion*.
Swamiji didn't mind, he just wanted
to spread the science of Krishna.

Swamiji spoke at Stanford U.
where the students joined in—
“Swami's Ancient Trance Dance.”
The devotees brought him to the beach at twilight
where he sang with them in a wind-muffled *kirtan*,
wearing a checkered coat over a hooded sweatshirt,
and offered obeisances to the Pacific Ocean.
They took him to Morning Star Ranch,
a haven for “spiritual” nudists,
and in an hour or two of chanting,
he planted the *kirtan* seed
that later would yield half a dozen followers.

To the Psychedelic Shop for *kirtan* and to the YMCA. . .
These are only a few
of his unlimited, merciful pastimes.

Like a bird trying to empty the ocean
by taking drops of water in its beak,
we bring forth his pastimes.



LOOKING BACK AT THE TEMPLE

In that look back at the temple,
in that sad look, you gave yourself.
You were from the spiritual world,
dignified and liberated;
you were beyond all merely human motivation—
you manifested real love.
Better than anyone else, you could see
your storefront was small and homely—
you knew the great temples of India.
But you also knew that those temples
were mostly abandoned,
with scarcely a trace of preaching.
Your storefront was alive.

This was your own work,
given by your spiritual master.
You had started alone with nothing,
and others had predicted you could not
make devotees out of hippies.
But you had done it—

in New York and now in San Francisco.
and when you looked back one last time
to the scene of many disturbances,
the scene of the Jagannath installation,
the place where you had turned animal-like couples
into *grhasthas*,
the place of chantings and ecstasies,
the site of discussions of *Gita* and Lord Chaitanya—
when you looked back,
you felt love
for the infant life of ISKCON,
for the sweetness of the new branch
of the Lord Chaitanya tree,
love for your Guru Maharaj,
who had personally empowered you,
and love for his order.

Your new branch was admired
by devotees of the spiritual world
because they knew the truth
was not a rented building
but the activities of the devotees
you had rescued and revived.

You yourself were captivated
by the miracle of Krishna.

You prayed that these shaky fledglings
in their real affection for you
could carry out the work—
continue the free lunches,
the Sunday feasts, the nightly *kirtans*.
Even if they couldn't speak from scripture,

at least they could keep the *kirtans* alive,
as when Hayagriva played his coronet,
enthusiastic drummers drummed,
and hippies danced in their own way,
incense fumes swirling.
You prayed they could simply continue,
yet before leaving you also asked for more:
“You must arrange a procession down the main street.
Do it nicely. We must attract many people.
They have such a procession yearly in Jagannath Puri.
So this is New Jagannath Puri.
Do it nicely, and I will return.”



PRAYERS TO LORD NRSIMHA

*“But if I die in this condition
my mission will remain unfulfilled.
Please therefore pray to Prabhu Lord Chaitanya
and Vrindaban Bihar, to rescue me this time.
My mission is still not finished.”*

It was enough to fell any man,
but he asked his students to pray,
“Our master has not finished his work.”

A *bhakti-yogi* can evade death's blow,
and by Krishna's grace his life's duration may grow,
and he may step on the head of approaching Death
to go on with his mission in this world.

In Kirtanananda's presence
Swamiji fell back and cried, "Hare Krishna!"
That was the moment
it was supposed to end,
by normal calculations.
But he kept going,
the heart kept going,
the mission kept going,
and then he asked for the *mantra* to be sung,
the prayer to Lord Nrsimha,
and the all-night-praying.
"Our master has not finished . . ."

Krishna carried him over,
as on the *Jaladuta*
when Krishna had appeared,
reassuring him from a boat.

Stonehearted, dull, selfish youth
got a chance to touch the body
of the pure devotee
in his difficulty while serving Krishna.

"What's going on?"—the devotees were baffled,
as one by one to the storefront they came
expecting to see Swamiji preaching and strong.
But instead he lay in his room,
and they received pieces of paper
with the prayer on it.
"But who are *we* to pray?
Isn't he the only one
who can really pray to the Lord and know Him?"

But he wanted them to pray,
to massage and to worry
how to take care of him
and to decide what to do.
When Acyutananda paused with his mouth open,
Swamiji said, "Why are you idle? Chant Hare Krishna!"

They called San Francisco temple and told
how Swamiji had fallen back,
had almost passed away,
and had cried out,
"Hare Krishna! Hare Krishna!"

Kirtan through the night . . .
"Krishna should not see us sleeping.
What else can we do
but try to chant and pray?"

And they talked:
"Swamiji was not under *karma*.
How could a pure devotee
be subject to a death blow?"
"The spiritual master may have to suffer
for the misbehavior of his disciples,
but never think he has ordinary pain."
"By allowing us to massage,
it is another way
to serve him more closely."
"So many devotees are praying on his behalf."

Still we are dealing hammer blows
to Maya in this world,

and Prabhupada has warned us
there will be reaction.
Remembering that night
when helplessly we prayed
from the pieces of paper,
we still pray to Lord Nrsimha.
Recalling the emergency
and the prayers and chants required,
we pray to Prabhupada to guide us
through nights when the stab of Maya
hits so hard
we think this is the end.

We must pray to be like him,
as he called out, "Hare Krishna!"
and then went on defying death,
leading us, even in his illness.



HOSPITAL WATCH

Out his window,
tree tops in the park . . .
He stirred in his bed at twilight;
we sat silently at his side.
After hours of silence he spoke,
"I don't know Krishna.
I only know my Guru Maharaj."

He extended his right hand to Swami Satchidananda
and spoke in Hindi,

"This is *prakrti*. What can you expect?"
A faint memory persists,
and I try to hold it,
like holding his hand.
Somewhere within me his smile remains.

Sitting silently on the bedside chair,
fingering my beads,
I felt happiness and pride
simply to be his boy.

Touching his body, massaging the smooth skin . . .
"If I were not ill," he said, "this would be too familiar."
They brought a large needle.
He sat up, uncomfortable:
"We are tolerant."

Walking downtown toward the storefront
after being with him,
with devotees, friends,
carrying things from the hospital,
I was completely satisfied
to be a servant of the Swami.
Not going home to a wife,
or off to a bar,
not going to study mundane books or to smoke,
I felt relief that now he was getting better.
We were walking down the Avenue,
workers on his behalf.



OUR LAST DAYS WITH YOU?

On the Jersey shore you spoke of leaving.
When the sun didn't shine
and it seemed you wouldn't recover,
your mind began to turn
to Vrindaban, India.
Looking out to the dark sea on a windy day,
you said, "Some of my disciples will take *sannyasa*."
You would make us a home in Vrindaban.

India meant we might never see you again.
At least for a few days you were with us,
even if without the sunshine,
but our moments with you were rare.
You didn't belong to just a few,
but wanted to train us all.

Back to California you went,
to Stinson Beach—
a sandy path to the ocean,
yellow wildflowers, seaside weeds, a wooden fence,
and you, walking down to the West Coast ocean,
looking for the sunshine.
But it wasn't meant to be,
and you didn't feel much stronger.
Thoughts of India, and thoughts of the end—
"If I have to die,
I wish to die in the last days
of my life in Vrindaban."

From your Stinson Beach house
you heard of the Ratha-yatra success—
two dozen cars following the cart,
five hundred people marching to the sea.
Procession, *prasadam*, and chanting—
as you had requested—
and next year would be better.

In ignorance one asked,
“Swamiji, if you do go to India,
should some Godbrother of yours come here
to be the spiritual master?”
The question was an insult,
yet you considered it,
tears flowing from your eyes
as you remembered your own spiritual master.
How could this be?
No, the spiritual master is not interchangeable,
Not just any Gaudiya Math sannyasi will do.
Don't you know that?
It has to be your own spiritual master,
it cannot be another:
“If he says one word different,
it will be a great confusion among you.”

Grey skies at Stinson Beach.
If you went away . . .
maybe you would never return.

Some days you thought, *If the sun comes out,*
I may stay.
And you walked the surf's edge

with a few of your boys,
and as the waves crashed and echoed,
you said it was the sound
of the *gopis'* beating hearts
in separation from Krishna.
And in the evenings in your house
you held dancing *bhajans*
and debates against the Mayavadis.

Beneath the crude painting
of Lord Chaitanya in *kirtan*,
with Kartami-sayi on your right,
on the last night,
humbly you asked the devotees
to work together and never leave.
They should not take it as just some fun
but should live as a spiritual family
and work to spread the message
as you had given.

In your room, while your servants packed your bags,
you chanted on the beads of new initiates,
staying up late to add as many as possible
into your family, the Hare Krishna Movement.



SWAMIJI'S DEPARTURE

It was too soon for him to leave them,
but Krishna had arranged it.
So his followers were resigned.

*“Either I will die there,
or I have work to do
to make an American House
for training the Western students.”*

But he was also sad,
bound with deep affection
for the transformed boys and girls
completely dependent on him.
And the question remained:
could they go on without him?

The *gopis* had reasoned with Krishna,
“Do You think it is right that You leave us like this?”
But the New York disciples did not accuse,
as he embraced them
in a last farewell.
Yet the question remained:
would he ever return?

With a *chadar* neatly draped
over his shoulder
and the same umbrella in his hand,
he flew away on Air India.

Already he had given them
lifetimes of work,
and as his plane flew into the rainy night
they turned back to their duties,
fingering their beads and chanting.
This time they had not forgotten
to keep his picture.

RETURN AND RETURN: INDIA AND THE WEST

Hare Krishna chanting had gone
with Bhaktivedanta Swami to the West,
and now he was returning.

At two A.M. in Delhi heat
arriving at his Chippiwada,
turning on the electric light,
the room was as he'd left it two years ago.
"Over here was my cooker and typewriter.
I would cook and type and sleep and type."

He had come for health,
but he got worse, a fever.
He struggled to Vrindaban
and there recovered
in his rooms at Radha-Damodar.
"I am here," wrote Kirtanananda, "with beloved Swamiji
in Vrindaban with the trees and the peacocks
and everywhere devotees wearing *tilaka*, and temples,
but I can honestly say
I like our *kirtans* better in New York."

Prabhupada also wrote,
"I cannot stop my Western world activities. . . .
I will come to you again."

One hundred and ten degree weather agreed with him.
He felt his health returning,
and thought of going back.
"Vrindaban is inspiration only."

Even if I die,
you are my future hopes,
and you will do it."

Weather and illness
got the American boys depressed.
And Prabhupada wondered,
how he could start an American House
if they could not live here.

He had always thought of
how to do something great for Krishna.
Before it had been theoretical—
the League of Devotees—
but now ISKCON was a fact, and growing.
Reports had reached him of chanting
in Mexico, Holland, and England.
And it would spread everywhere,
as the spiritual culture traveled
among the youth of the world.

He was the same person as before,
making plans,
but with a foothold now
and followers to return to.
Even in Vrindaban they were on his mind.

Light blue aerograms floated in from the West,
filled with urgent pleas for his return.
Television appearances scheduled,
quarrels needing his mediation,
and hearts feeling empty without him—

affairs in ISKCON were somehow going on,
but everything called for his personal attention.
“Don’t worry,” he said, “I am definitely coming back.
Just trying to get the visa and a flight.”

He had no plan to retire,
although sometimes he would mention it
when in a certain mood.
But now his aim was clear:
to recover in Vrindaban’s warmth
and then return.
Calcutta, Tokyo, San Francisco—
to every town and village in the world.



WAITING FOR YOU IN BOSTON

We were always thinking of you, Prabhupada,
although sometimes I was too ashamed
to even look at your picture.
But we wanted you to come back,
and you very kindly wrote
that you wanted to join us and give us typing tasks.
You gave us the feeling we were something worthy
and that when you came back
we could work along with you
in your mission.

In Calcutta you sized up the situation again:
India was not making spiritual progress
or even maintaining her original culture.

In the West you had already seen
100 percent rascaldom.
Krishna consciousness was the crucial need,
and only you could supply it.

As it was when you were in India
readying to come back,
so it is now.
All the world-wide devotees are your assistants,
and ISKCON, although growing,
is still at its beginning.
and still it is the only way
out of the dungeon of demons.





BOOK FOUR



SAN FRANCISCO HOMECOMING

December, 1967

He was always golden,
but from months
in the sunshine of India,
he was tanner
and his step was lively.

He had purchased *saris* for the girls
and silk garlands for Lord Jagannath.
With these items in his bag,
along with *karatals* and a coconut grater,
he had passed through the Immigration and Customs line,
carrying his *sannyasa danda*.

He hadn't come back for money,
for enjoying the senses,
or for Hindu conversions.
He saw America in a spiritual way.

When the TV reporter asked him
what was his complaint against America,
he replied, "I have no complaint.
Rather, they are taking to it."

The important thing was to convince his students,
to start more centers and print more books.

He was ambitious, but grateful
of even the smallest genuine
increments in service to the Lord.

He was pleased to see
that in his absence an infant was born
to Krishna Conscious parents.
“I will take her to Vrindaban,” he said
and threw flowers on her crib.

He had Krishna, the supreme,
and the association of Lord Chaitanya,
and he gave that wealth liberally,
as a *surabhi* cow gives milk.

Thus he returned,
his plans only beginning
for the Krishna Consciousness Movement.



FIRST TIME IN LOS ANGELES
Spring, 1968

In L.A. an ISKCON first:
divorce American style.
“This is all nonsense,” Prabhupada said,
“I will simply go back to Vrindaban
and sit and chant Hare Krishna.
Why should I deal with this
quarrel between husband and wife?
This is not the business of a *sannyasi*.”

His health was still not good—
a ringing in his ear—
yet he went on working.

preaching even in his dreams.
He was more than a *sannyasi*.

Natural commentaries based on *sastra*
came from his lotus lips;
not only in the hours of lecture,
but always
he gave the Krishna conscious conclusion.
On a front lawn
in the Watts suburb
he sat under a tree,
like a sage of old.
“Whatever happiness you have felt,” he said,
“you simply tell someone else.
That is all you have to do.”



BOSTON
May 1968

While I stood by, cooking,
you stood in the kitchen of the old house
and looked at the poster—
The Spiritual Master of the Holy Name
Is Coming to Boston.
You smiled and said, “A month’s engagement!”
—the perfection of my life.

Northeastern University—
even today that place
is the worst for *sankirtan*.

Yet you drew
a full chapel.
The students were not serious,
but they filled the hall
to see a Swami from India.

I put the garland around your neck
and played the drum, thrilled and proud.
I knew what you said was true
and that you were my spiritual master.

You began by thanking them
for the opportunity
to glorify the Supreme Lord.
In the lecture you mentioned the sun god, Vivaswan:
“You cannot disbelieve it.”
Fifteen devotees were sitting beside you.

We felt we were guarding you—
past the bronze Husky,
through the throngs of students,
across the paved urban campus.
But *you* were guarding *us*
in a university alien to your spirit;
you had kindly attended and now led us
back to the cars and back to the house.

Boston U. was a flop,
and I was to blame.
But I remember you.
Thousands of students—riding on the trolleys,
walking in and out of grey-faced buildings,

girlfriends and boyfriends with books,
sitting and talking in luncheonettes—
but only a dozen in Marsh Chapel with you.

On a table draped with a white cloth you sat—
another good, full lecture,
and you leading *kirtan*,
playing the *karatal*s in a mounting beat.
A sophomore Advaitavadi stood and challenged . . .
The big empty chapel . . .
It was a flop.
But you were with us.
And we were the ones—
who heard what you said,
who accompanied you,
who loved you
as you blessed each place.

At M.I.T.
in the posh student lounge,
my reputation was saved
when 150 attended.
As always, you spoke perfect truth—
but with a special dose for the scientists.
“This is M.I.T.,” you said,
“but where in this institution
is the department to teach
the technology of the soul?
There is life in the body, and it leaves at death.
But what is it? What is the difference
between the living and the dead?

It was a proud, prestigious place of learning,
but we knew you could answer every challenge.
We watched the animals, whether they would jump
and in what way they would jump against you.
All went well until the Indians surrounded you.
They hadn't come to M.I.T. to honor *sadhus*,
but you held them off,
grabbing one man's collar:
"If, as you say, everything is One,
then why don't you wear a cotton ball
instead of a shirt?"

Intimate talks in the back seat.
"Was it all right?" you asked,
as the car drove up Memorial Drive.
And recalling, you again became angry and amused
at the arrogant men who could never understand
the difference between the living and the dead.

Harvard Divinity students and teachers
heard in their own way,
but that you spoke there was important.
When they called you a teacher of Hindu thought,
immediately you corrected them.
In a complimenting, humble way,
you addressed the Boston Brahmins.
Harvard students were gold, you said,
but if they would add Krishna Consciousness,
they would be gold with a sweet aroma.
You were regal and power-packed,
sitting enwrapped in your *chadar*,
on an improvised *asana* atop the desk.

And they were exposing, with their foolish questions,
that Harvard men and women don't know
anything about the Absolute Truth.
But at least they saw you
as a saint and a scholar.

Entering the storefront full of people,
you were pleased and ready.
A woman asked about happiness in this world;
you said it wasn't possible.
You wanted to enlighten her and others
lost in sentimental body-concepts of *yoga*,
expecting the Swami to teach mystic techniques
for the service of sex and money.
Bhagwatam culture they didn't want,
and your strong assertions turned them away.
You shouted, "There is *no happiness* here!
With repeated
birth, death, disease, and old age,
where is happiness?"
This reduced your audience,
but you didn't care.
You spoke to dispel illusion,
demanding surrender to Krishna.

At my desk in the Roxbury Welfare office
I studied the calendar, counting my fortune:
a month of your lectures.
I waited for the evening
when we would sing
with you and hear you speak.

On a Friday night
as you were going out the door,
you looked my way.
“Satsvarupa, tomorrow you have no work?
So you can come and see me.”
To be selected by your glance and words,
I jumped for joy.

Our month of fortune
dwindled down
to a last
day.
And suddenly
we were on our own,
feeling fortified by your philosophical mind
and your commitment
to preaching in Boston.



MONTRÉAL
Summer, 1968

At the temple, a former bowling alley,
Prabhupada lectured from a high seat
beside a banner of the Hare Krishna *mantra*.
He also sent some books to the printer
and worked on getting U.S. residency.
He spoke to the Christians
and wrote a letter to the Pope—
“I think we should meet together and chalk out a program.”

These are some signposts in his preaching life,
but no one can know the mind of the Vaishnava.
We have his words and books,
his living followers,
and these all carry his teachings.
His teachings are the greatest gift.

Even those who utter "God" in reverence
cannot *know*, unless they hear from him,
exactly *how* God is great.
For lack of that science,
millions cannot believe
and cannot understand
why there is evil in the world
or why they should control their lust.

He set the example
of a pure devotional life.
Therefore, we want to remember him.



THE ROAD TO ENGLAND

During lectures he used to say,
"I could pass away at any moment."
It was a way of prompting us
to become mature and share the burden,
thinking that at any moment
we would have to do it
without his personal presence.

He pushed ahead at a rapid pace—
to print the books, open the temples, initiate
and send disciples throughout the world.

In that enthusiastic mood
he sent three couples to London.
Be bold he said—
as in the Charlie Chaplin movie,
where a man who had his coattails ripped
pretended it was the latest style,
inspiring all the other dancers to follow.
Though the English might think the devotees mad,
they should go on chanting.
Others would soon follow.

ra.

SEATTLE

October 1968

On the Occasion of

*the Passing Away of Bhakti Prajna Keshava Maharaj,
the Sannyasa Guru of Srila Prabhupada*

Prabhupada was in Seattle at the time,
reading from *The Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*
and speaking for hours each night
before his students (and Maya's)
in a room converted into a temple,
with Jagannath Deities on the altar
and the American *sankirtan* party at his feet,
eager to be there.

The program over for the night,
he returned to his room to find a telegram:
BHAKTI PRAJNA KESHAHA MAHARAJ
HAS PASSED AWAY.

Immediately composing a Sanskrit verse,
he returned to the temple, although it was late,
to instruct his followers
about separation from the *guru*.
He played a taped *bhajan*
and then informed them,
“The person who gave me *sannyasa*
has left his body.”

Prabhupada wept,
remembering his own beloved *guru*,
Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur,
who had come to him in dreams
asking him to take *sannyasa*.
Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati was the one,
but through him a Godbrother, Keshava Maharaj,
had brought the message.
Prabhupada had been alone in Vrindaban
when this Godbrother had insisted,
“Bhaktivedanta, you must take *sannyasa*.”
Vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yogam
apayayam mam anavishnu andham
sri-keshava-bhakti-prajnanam.
“Devotional service is the way
of renunciation. I was unwilling,
like one blind. But he forcefully
made me drink the medicine.
His name is Sri Keshava, Bhakti Prajna Maharaj.”

“He has entered Krishna’s abode,” said Prabhupada.
And his little band in Seattle,
awed by the spiritual emotions
and the *parampara* mysteries
and especially thrilled
that Prabhupada was sharing with them,
duly signed the letter of condolence and praise
to be sent to Navadvipa.



IN AMERICA,
1969

To Santa Fe,
where your secretary thought
the altitude would be bad for your health,
so at the airport she tried to turn you back.
She was flustered and crying,
“Prabhupada, you know Krishna!
What does Krishna want us to do?”
But you retorted, “No!
Krishna wants to know what *you* are going to do!”
Finally you decided to ride
under a clear sky with high white clouds
to the Albuquerque center, where you shared
laddus and Krishna-*katha*
with the hippie meditators,
who suddenly came down from the mountains
at the hour you arrived.

To Los Angeles,
where your devotees were nightly holding *kirtan*
in the thick of Hollywood Boulevard,
but who were soon evicted from their ideal location.
For weeks they were scattered,
and you lectured in different garages,
until finally you purchased the best building so far:
a wooden church on La Cienega.
You planted 108 rosebushes,
and a special era of burgeoning began,
with hundreds attending the weekly feasts,
with ecstatic *kirtans* and *Back to Godhead* sales,
and a festive, loving family of devotees.
Meanwhile you wrote in Beverly Hills,
turning out two books at once:
The Nectar of Devotion and
Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

To Columbus, Ohio,
where you conversed with Allen Ginsberg,
who was looking
for a more American *mantra*.
"Krishna is everything," you said.
"He is universal."
And you proved it the next night,
as two thousand students
in the All-American City chanted,
jumping up on the seats,
dancing in the aisles,
crying out,
grabbing for your thrown flowers—
as you led them:

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.”

To New Vrindaban,
where you behaved as if
you had always lived there,
walking the two-mile road through the woods,
as if you were at home,
stepping on stones to cross the creek,
accompanied by Kirtanananda Swami
through thick forest and blue phlox.

To the old house on the New Vrindaban ridge,
you entered for the first time,
but as if just coming back from a walk—
to the room, to the chair where you sat,
declaring this the best way to live.
There was no need, you said, to live in the city
at the terrible cost of factory labor,
producing the unnecessary
objects of sense gratification.
Man can live simply, depending on nature—
from the fields, his food,
from the cow, nutritious milk—
and save time for chanting Hare Krishna.

You drank the milk of the black cow Kaliya,
sat at a low desk under the persimmon tree,
lived in an attic room with your Radha-Krishna Deities,
accepted simple corn cereal, pokeweed, blackberry chutney,
and spoke on the philosophy of *Varnashram-dharma*,
yourself the personification
of simple living and high thinking.

A month passed in the backwoods.
Grasses grew, untrampled by civilization,
as you daily fashioned your *Bhagwatam* purports,
bathed outdoors, read and walked and breathed outdoors,
and spoke with your men of many plans.
Little mail and no phone could reach you,
but gradually the messages arrived:
your presence was greatly needed
throughout the U.S. and Europe.

To Los Angeles again,
where you installed golden Radha-Krishna Deities.
They stood for *darshan*
on Their velvet-canopied throne
and began to receive worship
with six daily offerings.
Should the devotees ever lose enthusiasm, you said,
the worship would become idolatry.
But where there was life, then Krishna,
“this very Krishna will talk with you.”

To San Francisco,
where you accompanied Jagannath, Baladeva, and Subhadra
during Ratha-yatra through Golden Gate Park.
At a low bridge the cart stopped,
because its super-mechanical-collapsible dome
failed to lower.
While the men tried, a thousand chanters sang
under the stone bridge, creating
a tremendous echo.
You stood at the front of the cart,
raised your arms to the people,

and began to dance,
jumping up and down,
causing the crowd to jump with you,
as flowers tumbled
from your broken garland and the chanting
became a roar.
When the cart moved on through the park,
10,000 people were following you,
and they were fed from 10,000 plates of *prasadam*—
halava, chutney, and fruits.
“Chant, dance, and take *prasadam*,”
you advised the multitude.
And even if you do not hear the teachings,
you will be elevated
to the topmost platform of perfection.”



HAMBURG
August 1968

The history was touching:
Shivananda went there alone, inexperienced,
and Prabhupada wrote him,
“I came to New York in the same helpless way.
Don’t be disappointed. I am always with you.”

On Eppendorfe-Weg,
a plate glass window painted blue,
and in an oval, “*Radha-Krishna Tempel*,
Internationale Gesellschaft Fur Krishna Beweusstsein-V.”

Prabhupada's secretary was morose.
"Why did we have to come here,
where it's cold and grey,
and stay in a small room
in the middle of the city?"
But Shivananda was in bliss—
"Prabhupada is here just to give us the mercy
of his personal association."
And Prabhupada was also in bliss, but serious.
He spoke for hours with the boys and guests,
giving practical suggestions on how they could increase.
Perform *sankirtan*, he said.
Collect your funds from selling magazines.
Learn the language and preach.

There were only four devotees,
and he spent Janmastami and Vyasa-puja with them.
The major events on Janmastami
were that Prabhupada shaved his head
and that they sat with him until midnight
and then enjoyed a feast.
On his birthday,
he received in the mail a Vyasa-puja book
with the prayers of his many devotees.
"You are providing for me," he said.
"What can I do?
I can simply pray to Krishna for you.
But don't be satisfied that you have understood.
This knowledge should be distributed."

On cold mornings walks,
he observed the German people,

saw the ditch diggers drinking beer in the morning,
saw the ads for *Ziggeretten*,
talked several times with blond Professor Bernhart,
who studied Vaishnavism with distaste.
And he showed Shivananda how to cook and massage.

Shivananda was apologetic:
"Hamburg must not be very good for you.
There's nobody here."
"That's all right," Prabhupada smiled.
Preaching sometimes brought him to decorated halls
where hundreds loved his name
and sometimes to a park
where 10,000 followed, chanting.
But sometimes he was quite alone,
stared at in a hostile way by ditch diggers
or insulted at the home of a Christian professor.
"We are doing our preaching work," he said.
Heaven or hell made no difference to him;
all that mattered was Krishna
and being able to preach.



LONDON ARRIVAL
September 11, 1969

As a child he had heard about the city,
had stood with a flag by the roadside in Calcutta
as King George V
in a gilded carriage had passed by.
Buckingham Palace and the River Thames, he had thought,

must be great objects of the imperial crown.
But he found the Queen's Palace smaller
than many houses in Calcutta,
and the Thames a canal,
much smaller than the Ganges.

His father had told him not to go there;
his spiritual master had prepared him.
Both instructions were the same.
He was not coming to London to be like the British:
"I have come to teach what you have forgotten."
"Which is what?" snapped the reporter.
(The pressmen's cameras were clicking.)
"That is God," Prabhupada said, full of challenge.
"Any nonsense can come to me—I shall prove there is God."

After a hard year,
his disciples had met
the Fabulous Four, the immortal Beatles,
and George Harrison had become their friend.
He had been playing Prabhupada's record,
and he liked to chant.
They had made an Apple record, *Hare Krishna Mantra*,
with thousands of copies selling daily.

Prabhupada would stay at John Lennon's
in exchange for his disciples' work.
Prabhupada in the servants' quarters,
while John and Yoko roamed the mansion.

As soon as Prabhupada arrived, in the rain,
George, John, and Yoko came to his room.

“We can’t accept authority,” John said.
“We don’t follow anything,” said Yoko.
And George said, “We accept Krishna as God,
but not your translation
of the *Gita* as the only one.”
“Oh? You accept Krishna as God?” said Prabhupada.
“So if that is accepted,
then you should follow that person
who is most addicted to Krishna.
How can he who doesn’t utter
even the name of Krishna
become His representative?”

The English rain came down . . .
He was not nervous talking to the superstars;
he saw them as foolish youngsters.
Yet as a devotee, he was respectful,
even to the ant.
Speaking expertly
of Krishna, peace, music, and death,
he told how President Kennedy was much applauded,
but had died in a second.
And where is he now?
Is he reborn in China?
Has he returned to America?
Where is he?
Prabhupada gave a warning to John and George
that they too,
although wonderfully famous,
could be cut off at any moment.
And he snapped his finger loudly—
suddenly Kennedy had been finished.

We also may be forced, and where do we go?
What is the soul's destination?

The superstars quibbled from no real position
except their proud youth and ignorant, worldly success.
Prabhupada invited them nevertheless,
“Try it, and the peace
you yearn for can be achieved.”



AT THE LENNON'S ESTATE

Six devotees, three husbands and their wives—
the group who had “startled London” with chanting,
who had done more in London in one year
than the Gaudiya Math *sannyasis* had in 30—
gathered for a reunion with Prabhupada.
He was an affectionate leader,
accepting the women's cooking and flowers
while charging the men with heavy duties—
get permission to occupy the downtown center
and transform it into a temple.
Go every day, he told them.
Obediently they took his order
as just what they needed.

The tall grass was wet,
but Prabhupada liked to walk
in the morning,
through the morning mist,
through the orchards, gullies and lawn expanses,

wearing black coat, black Cossack hat, black boots,
sometimes silently chanting,
sometimes speaking of Krishna.

Yellowed grasses cut off at the root
he compared to souls disconnected from Krishna.
The British economy, due to *karma*, he said,
was sinking into the sea.
In the distance, John Lennon watched from his house.



THE WANING OF PURUSHOTTAMA DAS

In London during the second
manned U.S. moon landing,
one of Prabhupada's disciples became doubtful,
hearing him say
the landing was a hoax.

But most of us had no trouble
accepting the logic that *sastra* is perfect.
Our senses are imperfect,
so we tend to make mistakes,
become illusioned,
and cheat.
We don't even know who we are.

In a talk with an L.A. reporter regarding
whether men with no pious credits
could actually go to the moon,
Prabhupada had said they could not.

“But what if they do go, what will you say?”

“Wherever they go,
it is not Chandraloka.”

He didn't argue
the landing was staged
in a Las Vegas desert,
but he explained according to Vedic scriptures
the moon is a heavenly planet.
You can go there only when your *karma* is right,
as when entering a foreign land
you need a visa.

“It is a waste of time,” said Prabhupada,
“better to become Krishna conscious.

We must go beyond
this Universe to where
life is never followed by death.”

Did they go?
Yes, we went, they say.
Here is the movie,
and here are the rocks.

But who has gained?
Are the moon-walkers immortal
for rocketing out
and returning with a splash?
Who has learned to love God?
“Since we have conquered the other planet,
we no longer believe in God,”
the moonmen say.
But do they really *know*?

We know for sure.
Prabhupada in London
watched the moon landing on TV
and ate *kichari* with his disciples.
“Malati,” he said,
“has done far more valuable
service than they
by making some *kichari*
for Krishna.”

Why should we doubt
our spiritual master
or the scriptures?
In favor of whom?

But Purushottama, the same secretary
who had been morose in Hamburg,
was more morose in London.
He stopped shaving his face
because of the moon,
stopped changing his clothes
and finally fell away.
He lost his one chance
in a million lifetimes
to serve the pure devotee,
because of the moon.

Prabhupada tried to save him
in a light, joking way:
“Today Purushottama has gone to the moon.
Why not? Anyone can go.”
But Purushottama didn’t smile;

he thought the American scientists
knew well what they are doing.
He began to think, again, that his body
was himself.

Snakes in his head—
envy, doubt, lust, and fear—
began to stir.

He got the idea to go back
to a normal life of drinking beer,
going to school,
calling himself a Christian,
and believing in the moonshot.
He gave up his life
and went away,
because of the moon.

“I can understand,” said Prabhupada,
that he might not accept it
because I said it,
but how could he
disbelieve the *sastra*?”



THE RADHA-KRISHNA TEMPLE OF LONDON

Shyamasundar was the delay.
He had a grand conception to build
a temple room like the Ajanta Caves,
but in redwood instead of stone.
Prabhupada let him do it,
but after months when still it wasn't done,

Prabhupada insisted.
“We will open in two weeks.
Print the invitations.”

Before his room was ready,
Prabhupada moved into the city
and directed the daily affairs.

The Deities of Radha and Krishna
came in a special way.
It was the trick of Krishna, Prabhupada said,
just as Krishna tricked His Mother Yashoda,
not allowing her to bind Him;
and at Kurukshetra He sometimes played
a chivalrous or diplomatic battle trick.
So Prabhupada saw the trick of the Lord in London:
Krishna had had Himself transported
from India by a London Hindu society,
and in transit they chipped
a very small piece of Radharani's finger.
On custom the Hindus had hesitated
to install the chipped Deity,
and they had phoned to see
whether Prabhupada was interested.
Before they knew it, Krishna was carried away
in the arms of Prabhupada's men.
With his permission
Krishna was embraced by the pure devotee.

Excitedly Prabhupada brought the Deities to his room
and ordered Yamuna to sew saffron garments
for the grand opening

of the Radha-Krishna Temple of London.
The Lord, His consort, and Their pure devotee,
who brings the Divine Pair together
to be worshipped
and who brings the fallen souls before Them—
this is the most merciful of unions.

Shyamasundar was to blame
for the canopy's almost crashing down
on the Deities during the installation.
The pillar and canopy weren't secure.
He had worked so hard and had finally collapsed
before the last, important detail was done.
But when the canopy began to slip
and the heavy pillars tilted,
Prabhupada jumped and saved the Deities,
putting his arms above Their heads
and grabbing the pillars,
leaving Radha and Krishna standing
safely on the marble altar.

On the opening of the Radha-Krishna Temple of London,
Krishna Consciousness West leaped forward,
protected by the mind
and strong arms
of the Lord's pure devotee.

Only he could sense the deepest meaning
of the triumph of bringing the people relief
from the ocean of birth and death.
All glories to Radha-London Isvara!
All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

ISKCON PRESS
Boston, December 1969

The press was in Boston,
and Prabhupada agreed to visit.
The devotees there were worshipping
very small Radha-Krishna Deities
in an old house in the suburb of Allston.
One hundred and fifty devotees were on hand
from various East Coast temples.
At the airport people could hardly believe
the intensity of the reception for the Swami—
it was as if the Beatles had arrived!
The devotees were also amazed;
Prabhupada was so great,
coming from London wearing a white wool sweater
and carrying a white plastic attaché case,
smiling to see his disciples,
his right arm upraised,
his bead bag wrapped around his hand.

He was pleased with both
the temple and the press,
but in the press room he embraced the devotee-printer.
“This is the heart of ISKCON!” Prabhupāda said,
standing beside the off-set press.
“You are the heart of ISKCON!” a devotee cried.
“And this is my heart,” Prabhupada replied.

The basement was like a chilly cave,
but filled with precious goods,
printed pages of his books in dozens of stacks,
ready to be folded, cut, collated, and bound.

He loved the press
that printed Krishna's books,
and he appealed to those who were helping him
to work hard at producing those books.
Type them, edit them,
paint pictures for them,
compose them, lay out the pages.
Or be the wife of a press worker
and peacefully raise children.
Or be the printer, the collator, the hand binder.
Or for extra mercy go to the front lines
and distribute the books.
But somehow or other work with the books
and know the greatest nectar.
That was the open secret
he conveyed that night,
as the ISKCON press workers already knew.
"This is the major *sankirtan* party.
As the street chanting is heard a block away
by the sound of the thumping *mrdanga*,
so the press is the Big *Mrdanga*,
to be heard all over the world."

As he stood in the cellar
he made a pact,
"Print my books, at least one every two months,
and you will go back to Godhead.

We have unlimited stock.
I can translate more—
if I can get time.
And if you can produce them.
This is the field work of our Movement.
Temple worship is secondary.”
This was the thing most dear to him.



TO INDIA

We thought that Prabhupada
would spend the rest of his life in America.
And that was his mood.
But in the summer of '70,
when the L.A. center was burgeoning
and unfortunate signs appeared
of a too-familiar attitude toward him,
he left with a few *sannyasi* disciples
and informed us that India
was his next important field.

When Prabhupada went to India,
I was in Boston.
We didn't know if we would ever go,
but like his other followers,
we were swept up to hear it.
First letters came from his servant,
and some photos.
We heard from the devotees how India
was harsh and very exotic.

One devotee wrote that other Indians
looked and even gestured somewhat like Prabhupada
but that no one was genuinely like him.
Probably in all of India
there was no pure devotee like him.

And then letters came from Calcutta and Bombay,
exclamations of how even the disciples
were being honored and were staying at rich men's homes,
and some of them were getting sick.
Prabhupada, they said, was preaching like a lion.

He was different in India, they said,
and he lived more simply.
In L.A. he accepted a suite of rooms,
and rode in an American car,
but in India, where such things weren't available,
he lived like a simple *sadhu*.
Mosquitoes didn't seem to affect him,
nor did the heat, power failures, and delays.
He was relaxed and more at home.
He even dressed differently.
He still wore the dhoti,
but now he had no need for sweaters
or socks or hats or coats.
Usually he wore no shirt but just a top cloth
and sometimes sat bare-chested,
drinking water from a *lota*.

When he arrived in Calcutta,
reporters and elderly friends,
afraid of the Naxalite terrorists,

asked for political solutions.
But he said, just chant Hare Krishna,
the actual panacea—
if people will take to it.

He sent his few men out to chant
in the heat of Dalhousie Square.
Their *kirtan* was a sensation.
But Prabhupada, thinking it might be misunderstood,
introduced Life Membership,
a form of preaching
where a gentleman will pay
for Krishna conscious books and guest privileges
at ISKCON temples around the world.
He asked that we also try it in America,
but it didn't work as well.
The Indians were pious
and Prabhupada was personally
conducting that campaign.

Devotees in India also told us
the most wonderful thing of all,
which made India worth the trouble:
Prabhupada was much more available there.
He would keep the door to his room open,
and at any time they could come.
He formed more personal ties,
and even the women got to talk to him.
The devotees with Prabhupada in India
got to see another side of him.
He would sympathize that they had no milk,
that the weather was hot,
and their stomachs upset,

and he encouraged them that a year in India
was worth ten years' service in the West.

And he told them his strategy . . .
Due to Mogul and British domination,
Indians had grown ashamed of their culture.
The intelligentsia had come to accept
their religion as backward—
they should imitate the West,
with its money, technology, happiness, and success.
So Prabhupada thought if the Westerners
came to India and showed
that they preferred to be Vaishnavas,
that they were not happy
being rich and hedonistic and had given it up
to serve Lord Krishna,
then the Indians might
wake up and stop their madness
of the blind leading the blind.

Another wonder from India
was the massive *pandal* programs,
meetings in open tents,
where ten or twenty thousand would gather
to hear Prabhupada and Hare Krishna *kirtan*.
They would rush forward for a piece of *prasad*;
or to touch his holy feet.

Nothing like this was in the West
And Prabhupada would strongly preach,
denouncing bogus *gurus*, false saints,
ignorant politicians, Mayavadis—
anyone opposed to Krishna.

This is the land of Krishna, he told them.
Why are you rejecting Him?
Why are you changing
the direct meaning of the *Gita*?
Why are you wasting your human form of life?
Then the “foreign devotees” would hold *kirtan*,
and the people marveled to see
dancing white elephants.

In Boston through letters we heard
that Prabhupada was easily able to meet
with national leaders and the biggest businessmen,
like Mrs. Gandhi and the Birlas.
He was respected, considered a leader
for his work in the West,
for his books, and for a saintliness
no one could deny.

In India Prabhupada was also
more involved in managing ISKCON.
The devotees were like babes in the woods
in dealing with Indian merchants.
Prabhupada called his boys, “Damn cheap *babus*,”
a name Indians used for a Westerner
who pays five times the normal price
but is convinced he bought it “damn cheap.”
Taking control, Prabhupada showed them
how to keep accounts,
how to deal with the ricksha-walla,
murti-walla, *karatal-walla*,
the *dobhi*, the *mistri*, the *bhang*i,
bank clerk, government clerk,
barrister, policeman, rich man.

How Not To Be Cheated was one of the most important and difficult lessons he taught. He was expert at it, but he thought it might not be possible for his students to thoroughly learn.

And when people in India criticized the Hare Krishna members, calling them sporadic faddists, or saying that the white men had no right to become Brahmins or *sannyasis*, Prabhupada staked his reputation defending the Western Vaishnavas. All the *sastras* supported him attesting that one from any birth could become a Brahmin, provided he associate with a pure devotee and take up Vaishnava habits. And when his students' conduct was below the standard of a Vaishnava, when they ate too much in public, or used the wrong hand, or insulted a ricksha-walla, or fought among themselves and it didn't look so great—still he defended them and said: In any case they are chanting Hare Krishna. They have long been accustomed to fallen ways, but surely they will improve. As Krishna says, *Api cet sudaracaro*.

TRAVELING THROUGHOUT INDIA

To Amritsar's Vedanta Sammelan
you went with nine disciples to demonstrate *Hari Nama*.
When the train stopped at Kurukshetra station,
you stood up, saying,
"They say this is a mythical place."
But you proved Kurukshetra does exist,
by arriving there at sunset.
At the Sammelan they gave you a small room.
It was very cold at night, and the devotees huddled
for *mangal-arati* in your candle-lit room.
Attending at least six engagements a day,
you showed your prowess,
accepting *prasadam* and speaking at each place,
without break from morning till night.
On a side trip, you visited Ram-tirtha Sarovara
and stood at the edge of the lake.
From your lotus mouth
your disciples heard
how Sita had been banished by Rama
and how finally she had entered the earth.

At Indore's Gita Jayanti Mahotsava
you argued with a man who said,
"We do not subscribe wholly
that Sri Krishna is the sole God.
There is a power behind Him."
"What kind of Gita Jayanti is this?" you asked.
"The Gita declares Krishna is the highest truth."
At Indore you also swung your *karatala*s
near the face of a man harassing your devotees

while they danced and held *kirtan* on stage.
And in Indore you began your lectures
on the life story of Ajamila.

In Surat you showed your devotees
a glimpse of the spiritual world;
the streets were lined with all the residents,
chanting and praising the Hare Krishna Movement.
A simple *kirtana* by 20 of your disciples
became a major parade, a city-wide holiday,
as your followers were repeatedly worshiped
with *aratis* and offerings of spiced milk and *prasadam*.
Thousands gathered wherever you went
and would not go away till they saw you.
And in the mornings you spoke
on the life of Ajamila.

At Allahabad Kumbha-Mela
your devotees were bewildered
by the practices of ascetics and naked *yogis*,
by the huge crowds and crude conditions,
until you arrived, answering their prayers,
explaining the Mela's real meaning:
a chance to preach.
You led your followers
on a walking *kirtan* throughout the camps,
bringing joyful *bhakti* to the seekers of liberation.
Thousands came to see the Radha-Krishna Deities
and to accept *prasadam* at your ISKCON tent.
And in the mornings you spoke on Ajamila.

You were invited to Benares for a parade
commemorating Lord Chaitanya's visit there,
but it seemed you were being used
only to draw a crowd.

Although they had you ride in a silver chariot
drawn by a pair of white horses,
you remained grave and silent.
There was no occasion for you to lecture.

In Gorakhpur you took a break
from your rapid, tiring travels
and set up a regular ISKCON temple
in the ranch house lent by Hanuman Poddar.
You installed the Deities of Radha-Madhava
and one morning broke into ecstatic tears
while explaining the meaning of
Jaya Radha Madhava Kunja Bihari.



A PANDAL

It is not so easy to hold a *pandal*.
When Prabhupada first introduced the idea
to his followers in Bombay,
they didn't want to say no,
but they wondered:
Where could they collect so much money?
How could they erect such a big tent?
Where would they get so much food?
And how would they be able to cook it?
Prabhupada smiled and said,

“If you are going to hunt,
go after the rhinoceros.”

A pandal is a triumph in preaching.
The helium balloon hovering over the city . . .
And in the newspaper
a beautiful picture of the Founder-Acharya,
superimposed over a globe,
and the words, “Bhagwat Dharma Discourses . . .”

A pandal is anxiety,
a chance to work hard
and surrender to Krishna.

A pandal is a marriage of two disciples on stage—
a boy from Sweden and a girl
(with a red *sari* and a nose ring)
from Australia.

A pandal is a particular event,
and it is also a symbol
of a great endeavor
to convince people
by cultural presentation—
a mass festival.

Ratha-yatra or any big preaching is similar,
and Prabhupada wanted it.
“Don’t be satisfied that you have understood.
This knowledge should be distributed.”

AUSTRALIA, THE LAND OF THE MLECCHAS
May 9, 1971

After surrendering, they were no longer *mlecchas*.
But some of the bad habits remained,
so Prabhupada wondered.
He had carried Radha-Krishna on the airplane
for the Sydney ISKCON temple,
but when he got there
no one knew how to cook
or how to make a Brahmin's thread,
and they didn't keep the backyard clean.

But they worshiped his person,
as they had worshiped his order.
On his word, they had gone to the streets,
getting arrested and put into jail
for chanting and giving out his magazine.
They were ready for that,
not about to give it up just because it was hard.
Therefore, he taught all he could
within a few days and prayed to Lord Krishna—
to please descend as *archa-vigraha*.
The nondevotee Australian public,
who knew nothing at all about Krishna,
were receptive to hearing from Prabhupada
in various halls and schools,
and so he blessed the entire land
of devotees and *mlecchas*—
the former prison colony of England,
another of the many meat-eating republics of Kali—
making it a *tirtha* of Lord Krishna.

But because such mercy and leniency was required,
Prabhupada stood before the altar of Radha-Gopinath
one last time before leaving,
and he spoke to the Lord in a confidential way:
“My dear Lord Gopinath, now I am leaving You
in the land of the *mlecchas*.”
He could not guarantee that his new disciples
would discharge the duties of Brahmins properly,
so he said to the Lord, “I cannot take
the responsibility.”
Krishna should please take care of Himself!
But Prabhupada knew
it would not be long
before the land of the *mlecchas* would be transformed
and their Deity as royally worshiped and enthroned
as in the finest mandirs of the East,
and with even more devotion.



VISIT TO MOSCOW

No one really knew what he did in Moscow
until he returned and told us.
I received a letter from the Moscow hotel,
which didn't tell much of Russia
but assured me that selling *Back to Godhead* magazine
was more important than selling incense.
Even in his Moscow room, Prabhupada was everywhere.

He entered Russia with Shyamasundar
and a servant named Aravinda.

They went as tourists, and the government
carefully restricted their movements.

He went because he wanted to preach.
He wasn't naive
or working for the CIA.
He knew he had a right.
When asked in Australia why he had come
he had said, "The governments
have made demarcation. But we see
everywhere as the land of Krishna."

His contact was also good—
Indology Professor G.G. Kotovsky,
Department Head of Indian and South Asian Studies,
U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.
They had exchanged several letters,
and the professor had said he would talk
with the Swami if he visited Moscow.

With these plans in mind, Prabhupada had flown
Air India from Bombay to Moscow.
"Let us see," was his attitude.
They passed through Immigration,
although a holy picture of Krishna
fell from Shyamasundar's book.

At the Hotel National Prabhupada found
no cooking acceptable for a Vaishnava.
Aravinda managed to use the maid's kitchen,
but food was hard to find.
If a country doesn't believe in God,

has no rice or fruits,
and for a very high price
provides a small, dingy room,
and you cannot speak as you like,
then what kind of paradise is that?

But they did not prevent
his early morning walks
through the designated streets.
Prabhupada alone, with Shyamasundar dashing
ahead and behind with his Brownie camera,
must have seemed an odd sight
to others out early.
Alone, walking uphill
towards Saint Basil's domes,
pure devotee alone in Red Square
not detected by the secret police
as being especially alarming,
like an atom bomb spy
or a dangerous religious zealot.
Otherwise, they would not have allowed
him to walk alone with Shyamasundar
past the Lenin tomb and on past
churches and other sights,
making comments.
They figured he was all right
and that they could keep him
within bounds by their regular laws,
as long as he held no religious meeting,
attempted no preaching or book-giving.
There was no harm if the old shaven-headed
one in the grey *chadar*

walked here and there
and stayed in his hotel.
After all, India and Russia were friendly.

Prabhupada also appreciated
Moscow's clean streets,
wide walkways, and sparse traffic.
And the people seemed more in control
of their senses than the Americans did.
If they could only be given Krishna consciousness,
they would take it up staunchly!
"Everywhere people are good,"
was the principle he applied;
the governments made them bad.

Seeing Prabhupada face to face
in his office
at the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences,
Professor Kotovsky backed down
from the statement he had made in his letter.
Now he flatly denied that Prabhupada
could hold any meeting with faculty.
What had seemed safe enough by mail
now seemed too close and spiritual.
But he agreed to a private talk.
Kotovsky told how Russians collected
many, many translations of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*,
examples of "old, old thought."
They argued about *varnashram*,
because Kotovsky thought Brahmins were born as such
and that in Communism no distinction existed
between the *vaishyas* and the *sudras*.

And he could not accept the *atma*:
“Swamiji, when the body dies, everything is finished.”
Prabhupada objected, unafraid.
There should be a department to study
whether or not there is a soul.
Let there be inquiry through logic and experience,
just like the Montreal cardiologist
had recently admitted,
“There seems to be life after death.”
Prabhupada concluded that both
the Soviet and the devotee
stress surrender,
one to the state and one to God—
but surrender.
Both parties are looking
for the ultimate surrender,
whether to Lenin or to God.

Prabhupada more than held his own
in the private office.
But soon it was over, and he was taken back
in a government car to his cramped room,
with no further prospects.
But then to his door
came Shyamasundar with two young men,
an Indian and a Russian.
The Russian youth was interested,
and Prabhupada within a couple of hours
told him everything:
the difference between body and soul;
the soul's eternal relation with Krishna.
He taught him how to practice spiritual life,

even in a place like Moscow.
There could be a reading room,
or if not allowed, one could chant
very softly in his home.
Prabhupada led a soft *kirtan*
within that hotel room,
while Ivan and Narayan sat at his feet.

Shyamasundar also talked with Ivan
and found him exceptionally keen
to practice *bhakti-yoga* and follow Prabhupada.
On a second visit Prabhupada taught him
the art of making *chapatis*, rice, and *dahl*,
for offering the Lord *prasadam*.

Two days went quickly by,
and it was time to leave.
But he had planted the seed.
Ivan was a budding *bhakta*.

In like a needle . . .



JET AGE PARIVRAJAKACHARYA

Like Hanuman soaring over the gulf,
he goes from nation to nation,
Moscow to Paris, nonstop to L.A.,
with the rescue-message of Lord Chaitanya.

He carries his white attaché.
In complete faith,
he carries the mission of his Guru Maharaj.

The plane—hard metal, jet-driven.
Prabhupada, soft and compassionate,
a deep, bright-burning light in his eyes:
the knowledge of the Vaishnava,
of one who sees Him.

His only companions are very young,
untrained men. He remains silent for hours,
and sometimes talks with them about Krishna.
A scientist can build this plane, he says,
and keep it airborne.
Why don't they admit
there must be a supreme scientist
who keeps the planets afloat?

He reads his own book—
he says Krishna wrote it—
and sometimes he places it
in the pocket in front of his seat
and closes his eyes
or looks out the window.

If he didn't use airplanes
they would have no worth at all.
But now that the bona fide preacher can soar
like Hanuman, over clouds
from Paris to Los Angeles,
the machine is justified.

His cane beside him,
his saintly form clothed in wrinkled saffron silk,
he wears a wool sweater and keeps
his hand in his bead bag.
He thinks of many places
and sometimes asks his secretary,
“What about the books for the Life Members?
What are the devotees doing in Delhi?”
He recalls Moscow:
no proper food, but the people seemed good
and that one boy was eager to learn.
Prabhupada is alive with his plans;
because he travels
his ISKCON is awake and well.



RETURN TO AMERICA

June 26, 1971

Why were they so beautifully happy?
People couldn't understand.
But when one knows he had been on the verge of death
but his eternal father came to save him,
naturally he loves him
and worships his lotus feet
and becomes happy.
He is coming from Krishna,
and his airport arrival
is not merely official,
nor is their emotion,
as they suddenly cry to see him.

Every person—clever or dull—
who has no such shelter
is unspeakably doomed.
They don't even know.

Naturally the devotees want to honor him.
They just want to hold *kirtan*
in his presence for a few days
and feel the flood of enthusiasm
and the solidification that comes
when he speaks the science of God.

In the temple in Detroit,
seated beside the large Deity of Jagannath,
he chants and looks about the temple room.
He is chanting in America—ecstasy!
He cites the success of Bhagavan das.
“What is his credit?
He is doing what I instruct.”

“These boys actually *worship* you,”
says a mother, incredulous and
wanting Prabhupada to know, in case he doesn't,
to what extreme the admiration goes.
“Yes,” says Prabhupada, “that is our system.
I am also worshiping my Guru Maharaja.”

They accept him,
not by a sentiment,
but it is a fact:
he is a pure devotee
and can rescue anyone
from the cycle of birth and death.

“Some look on the soul as amazing,
some describe him as amazing,
and some hear of him as amazing,
while others, even after hearing about him,
cannot understand him at all.”

It is unfortunate that others cannot accept him—
understandable, but unfortunate.



LESSONS IN BOSTON
July 1971

When I paid in advanced for the top floor suite,
she gave me a long-stemmed rose and asked,
“Why do you spend so much for your guru?”
It is our small expression of love,
I explained. He is a pure devotee of God,
and *all* should treat him with honor.
But Prabhupada would not accept it;
the hotel is like a brothel, he said,
and the temple is Vaikuntha.

Another visit to Boston
was not important
compared to his world-wide preaching,
but we had been begging him for a year
to please bring Radha and Krishna
and initiate some followers.

But he was disappointed
to find a broken window pane
and on the front lawn yellow grass.
I had excuses why the overflowing paint can
he saw from his room was not a waste
but was due to the rain.
“Never mind,” he said,
“We obtain everything at great labor.
So do not waste Krishna’s energy.”

According to Jiva Goswami, he said
before a roomful of Indians,
this boy is fit to perform the *agnihotra*,
because he is chanting Hare Krishna.
I sat beside him,
as he guided me
in arranging ghee, yogurt, and milk,
and allowed me to pour the liquids
on the heads of Radha and Gopiballabha,
the golden forms standing before us.

His annihilating glance
when I omitted a *mantra* during the *yajna*—
“What have you done?”
I thought it wasn’t so bad
and had no answer why.
“Why have you done this?” he insisted,
and from his piercing, hurt glance, I read,
“Don’t you know the *parampara*
is the most sacred trust
and cannot be whimsically changed?
How can I let you carry the charge,

if this is what you do?”
While still in his view,
I stumbled to rectify
and prayed to keep the lesson.

At his order, I carried Their heavy Lordships,
dressed in Their new, greenish clothes.
I placed Him, lightfooted, on the altar,
with young Radha standing by His side.
“What are they saying about Them?” Prabhupada asked.
“We are all very happy,” I replied.

“Travel with Prabhupada as much as you can,”
my wife advised. “See everything he does—
how he moves,
because a pure devotee is very rare,
and when will you again get such a chance?”
But with forty Boston devotees I saw him off,
and danced before him at the airport,
chanting Hare Krishna for his smiling pleasure.

Farewell, again, Srila Prabhupada.
But we will soon catch up
and see you in another place,
if only from a distance,
to behold your regal New York pastimes.
Your younger disciples need our care
and the temple needs repair,
so we shall follow you shortly.
We cannot thank you enough
for stopping to bring us Radha and Krishna
and teaching us how to cherish

our humble temple as Vaikuntha.
Please forgive us
for offering you such a bare room
and such an unprepared, meager heart,
and forgive us for these unmeasured, flowery words.
All we have is your service.
We beg that you keep us as atoms
at your lotus feet
and let us work, despite our reluctance.



"COME LIVE WITH US"

A small room
jampacked with two hundred people,
and more standing at the door,
in the hallway,
and on every stair.
But everyone was quiet as he spoke;
even the neighbors were miraculously subdued.

Prabhupada was in triumph, speaking *Bhagwatam*,
his lectures on Ajamila and sinful reaction
delivered gravely to responsive ears.
No longer alone without temple or home
but in 60 worldwide centers,
with brilliant hopes for all.
The sparkling chandeliers, the velvet curtains,
were not for him;
it was the temple of Radha-Govinda
and the residence of Their servants.

That vision was taking shape,
and Prabhupada was happy.

Speaking for himself, a man inquired,
“How can a sinner get rid of his *karma*?”
“Come live with us,” said Prabhupada,
“you simply come and live with us.”

The first boys in New York had heard that hint,
“come live with us,”
and had promptly moved in with Prabhupada.
He meant you either live in the temple
or at least always visit;
be packed up tightly
in the association of devotees.
Or else your home is like a cage of fire.

When he heard in Los Angeles that the neighbors
were envious—“Just look, new cars and bright faces!”
He had replied, “Then tell them to come
and live with us. But that they won’t do.”

Come live with us meant come to ISKCON.
That was why he had formed it,
“To bring the members of the Society
together with each other
and nearer to Krishna.”
If a person did not live with devotees,
how could he expect
to rise early for *japa* of the Holy Name.
Or how could he expect to avoid illicit sex?
If in a person’s house there was no rhythmic *kirtan*,
then how could one live there?

And so he invited, "Come live with us."
And he was building more places,
temples for his Lord
and residences for his devotees.
That was his desire—
"to bring the members closer together
for the purpose of teaching
a simpler, more natural way of life."



KARUNIKA
July 29, 1971

All day he gave them mercy.
Just to go to such a remote corner,
far from the birthplace of Lord Chaitanya,
was the mercy of Lord Nityananda.
Prabhupada kindly served his devotees,
speaking in their little temple
on the saving grace of chanting.
And then he was merciful
at the University of Florida campus.

In the rain he spoke,
his desire ever-strong,
explaining the teachings of Krishna.

And at night he outdid
a TV interviewer,
beating the logic of faultfinding
by the logic of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Are you discouraged or encouraged,
the interviewer asked,
and Prabhupada replied in the positive,
that many Americans were chanting.
But the interviewer doubted—
“But out of two hundred million Americans,
I see only two dozen.”
“Yes,” Prabhupada replied,
“When you are selling diamonds,
you cannot expect many customers.”

He was merciful, staying up past midnight,
sitting bare-chested on the bed,
giving out beads and initiation names.
He was merciful to give
of himself so much,
talking and traveling
and writing his books
at two in the morning—
another verse, another purport.
he was a *surabhi* of mercy,
giving nectar-milk
regardless of what field he roamed in.

By jet he moved quickly,
at an inconvenient pace,
and his mercy never stopped.
He was surrendered to giving mercy,
and empowered.



TO AFRICA
September 10, 1971

To Mombasa's beach,
where he recovered from ill health,
then flying to Nairobi—
a city for preaching.
Staying at Hindu's homes,
Prabhupada became their guru and friend.
But one night, calling Brahmananda Swami to his room,
he said, "Preach to the Africans.
They are the proprietors of this land.
You say they are poor,
they speak Swahili,
and they are culturally alien
compared to the Indians.
But we have come to Africa
for the Africans. So do it."

Prabhupada started it himself.
Showing no distinction between African and Hindu,
in a Radha-Krishna temple downtown,
they opened the doors to all,
and a rushing sea of young urchins
poured in the door,
along with the poor and the pickpockets.
When Prabhupada arrived
the black sea of humanity parted,
welcoming his entrance.
Onstage, he spoke in English
to a Swahili-speaking crowd,
but they were patient,
and loved the *kirtan* and *prasad*.

He sent Brahmananda Swami into the street
to hold *Hari Nama*—a great success.
And he went to the University of Nairobi,
where he told the students,
“Don’t follow the Westerners with their empires.
When there is nuclear war,
all their skyscrapers will be finished.
Build your nation on a spiritual foundation,
without discrimination, with Krishna Consciousness.”
Wherever he went in Nairobi,
Indians and Africans loved him,
just as all people loved the Six Goswamis of Vrindaban.

In the midst of these activities
Prabhupada told his men,
“Work now, *samadhi* later.”
The trance of absorption in Krishna-thought
could be obtained by working,
with the body and mind engaged
in spreading Lord Chaitanya’s mission.
So they should all do like he,
who at 75 was working day and night.
“Keep me talking—that is my life.
Don’t let me stop talking. . . .”



*THE BOOK BHAGWAT
AND THE PERSON BHAGWAT*

Duty kept calling,
and Prabhupada kept heeding the call—
the invitation to go to a new land
or to return to where he was loved and needed.
The briefcases traveled with his men
and opened in each place,
where verse after verse,
purport after purport issued forth.
“Little drops of water wear away
the stone,” he said.
“In this way I am writing all my books.”



HIS REQUEST FOR A BIOGRAPHY

Prabhupada said,
if they write my biography,
have them say
I am like one
who transplanted a *tulasi* plant
from one continent to the other.

It is not easy.
It has to be done
with care and devotion
or else it will die
as you attempt to plant it
in the new land.

To the harsh West-lands of the *mlecchas*,
he carried the *tulasi*
of Lord Chaitanya's teachings
and placed it in the earth
in such an expert way
that it has sprouted
into hundreds of Krishna conscious centers.



CONCLUSION

To turn a sinful person
to a life of pure devotion
is the work of a highly empowered soul.
The thoughtful scholars of *Bhagavad Gita*
(like Thoreau and Emerson)
had never turned to *bhakti*
nor could they convey it to others.
The Indian swamis who journeyed West
(like Vivekananda) regarded the *Gita*
as a vague treatise on many paths.
How could *they* lead others
to the highest path—devotion to Krishna?
Srila Prabhupada was the first,
and he was the greatest.

Uplifting the most fallen
is the heart of Lord Chaitanya's
mission in this world.
The Lord Himself is called Patita Pavana,
deliverer of the lowly, fallen souls.

And the mercy of Lord Chaitanya
was especially expressed
in the person of Nityananda Prabhu.

On the wish of Lord Gauranga,
Nityananda Prabhu and Haridas Thakur
daily went out with *Hari Nama*,
reporting in the evening to the Lord
of the preaching adventures of the day.
One morning while walking, they came upon a roaring crowd.
Two drunken brothers, Jagai and Madhai,
were the cause of all the noise.
Lord Nityananda at once desired
to give the drunkards
the mercy of the Holy Name.
He and Haridas hastened to the pair
and asked them to please chant Hare Krishna.
But Jagai and Madhai used filthy language
and moved to attack them.

When Lord Nityananda reported His attempt
to deliver the dacoits and drunkards,
Lord Chaitanya was pleased to hear
even the attempt to increase
the glories of His *sankirtan*.
Spurred on by His pleasure,
Lord Nityananda and Haridas returned the next day.
But as they approached, Madhai threw a stone,
hitting Lord Nityananda on the head.
Blood oozed from His forehead,
but He spoke as follows:
“It doesn’t matter that you have hurt Me,

but please chant the Holy Name.”
 This mercy-mood suddenly changed the heart
 of Jagai, who wanted to surrender,
 while Madhai remained unmoved.
 But Lord Chaitanya, receiving the news,
 had arrived on the spot with His Sudarshan weapon
 ready to kill Madhai.
 Placing His hand
 upon the shoulder of the Lord,
 Nityananda Prabhu implored, “Please do not be angry
 and kill these two. In Your present incarnation
 You are not out to kill but to save the fallen
 with the mercy of the Holy Name.”
 His pleading for their pardon,
 even while bleeding,
 melted the hearts of both brothers,
 who groveled beneath
 the upraised *chakra* of Gauranga.
 So they begged
 at the lotus feet of Gaura-Nitai.
 “You are forgiven,” said Lord Chaitanya.
 “But sin no more.” And He let them go,
 Vaishnavas now.

.

This is the history of the saving of *two*,
 in a more pious time, 500 years ago.
 But when Bhaktivedanta Swami came West,
 the whole population was like Jagai and Madhai.
 That he had converted, by 1971,
 hundreds into chanters of Hare Krishna,
 strict refrainers from the standard sins,
 is the empowered mercy

of the two Lords, Gaura-Nitai.
This is the conclusion.

And by the mercy of Lord Nityananda,
he was doing even more
than Lord Nityananda Himself.
The Original Guru was blessing the efforts
of His empowered representative in *parampara*.

As Prthu had been empowered
with a *shakti* for rule,
as the Kumaras had been given
the *shakti* of knowledge,
and as Buddha, Christ, and Mohammed,
each in their times,
held *shakti* for conversion to faith in God,
so Srila Prabhupada was a highly empowered soul,
although considering himself
a humble instrument
of the previous *acharyas*.





BOOK FIVE





Mayapur



❧ HISTORY ❧

I

By 1969,
he returned to India,
into Calcutta heat.
For his neophyte disciples
in strangeness and sickness,
he was their only solace.

He wanted to give them
a place in Sri Dham Mayapur.
“Is it right?” he asked a Godbrother,
“that they are loitering
in the streets of Calcutta?”

Taking a few men
and setting out for Mayapur,
he got only as far as Navadwip
when floods turned him back.
“Maybe,” he said,
“Lord Chaitanya doesn’t want
us to have land in Mayapur.”

But Lord Chaitanya willed it
and the land was acquired,
adjoining Bhaktisiddhanta Road
very near His birthplace.

In England he called together
 talented devotees to plan
 a building for Mayapur.
 He himself gave the full idea.

A residence-palace for devotees
 and for the Deity of Radha-Madhava,
 the Mayapur building,
 facing east
 to get the best breezes,
 would be the first of many.
 When someone criticized,
 "Why don't you build a temple first?
 You can't have devotees
 living in the upper rooms
 with the Deity below!"
 He replied, "I build
 for the devotees first,
 because the devotee is greater than God.
 And as for living above Him,
 the road is also Krishna,
 so why do you walk on the Krishna-road?

"In our temple
 we are worshiping Krishna
 in a marble hall with chandeliers,
 and one day we will build the actual temple.
 Then you will see!"

His first structure in Mayapur

he planned from his pure mind,
putting the plan on paper.
It would be pink and copper-toned
trimmed in yellow
with Rajastani arches,
a long flat roof,
and surrounding gardens—
a palace on the Ganges plains.

He planned an entire city
for Mayapur,
with the Temple of Understanding
bigger than the U.S. Capitol
or St. Peter's of Rome.
The whole world will be drawn
to Sri Dham Mayapur
to worship by appreciation
Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Prabhupada described
a vast ceiling like the sky,
with models depicting the universe:
the lower, hellish planets,
then the middle planets (including Earth),
then the demigods' planets,
then the Spiritual Sky,
and at the top—
the eternal planet of Krishna-loka,
full of eternity, knowledge, and bliss,
where Krishna and His dearmost reside.

Any visitor—and they would come
from every country—
would admit
that here was the spiritual world
on earth.

They would be awed by the colossal architecture,
charmed by the beauty of the gardens,
impressed by the social planning—
a city peacefully providing all human needs.
And an inquiring visitor
would hear deep, scientific knowledge.

Melodious *kirtans*,
sumptuous Krishna *prasadam*,
theater, dance, literature,
crafts, agriculture, ecological engineering—
a living example of good government
with everyone contributing
to please Krishna
and to instruct others
in the knowledge of the soul
and the soul's service to the Supreme.



GROUND BREAKING

In 1971,
his devotees made a sign:
“Welcome Srila Prabhupada.”
Some of his Godbrothers
enviously said,
“You cannot use that name.”

But “Prabhupada,”
used for Rupa Goswami
and Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati,
meant one at whose feet
the masters sit—
so it was fitting
for A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.
No one had ever
preached as widely as he,
by the mercy of Gaura-Nitai.

Prabhupada lived
in the straw-roofed hut.
Under a mosquito net
he wrote his books.
He was happy
to see his disciples
on their own land in Mayapur
distributing *prasadam* to the thousands
and on the *pandal* stage
holding *kirtans* and lectures.

At the ground-breaking,
he nimbly climbed down
into the 15-foot pit,
looking up wide-eyed
as they handed him
Ananta-Sesa,
the golden Deity
upon whose serpent heads
the future temple would rest.

Prabhupada is more wonderful
than the past, present,
or future buildings.
His form is better than
reinforced concrete,
his order stronger than
steel,
and his purpose higher
than the Kailash dome
atop the tallest temple.

By his empowered effort
the waxing moon
of Lord Chaitanya
will be
visible from every corner of the earth.



HOW TO LIVE IN MAYAPUR DHAM

*“Every moment we are passing here
in great delight.”*

In June 1973,
before the building was yet complete
and despite the workers’ hammering,
Prabhupada came there to live.

The King of Devotees
showed his followers how
to reside in ISKCON Mayapur:

no abuse, no careless breaking,
no slamming of doors,
not simply sleeping and eating—
but working and preaching.
The marble floors must be
washed daily
in the early morning—
everything clean and simple.

Prabhupada walked the wide
veranda, with constant loving care,
pointing out deficiencies.
What they had worked so hard to obtain—
a precious gift from Lord Krishna—
had to be maintained
by a lifetime of work.

Prabhupada cried
that his devotees had no milk.
He was indebted to those
who were fortunate
to live in his house.
By their personal difficulties,
they were securing the pleasure
of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

His own room was simple:
a clean stone floor
covered with thin mattresses,
covered with white sheets.
There was a desk,
white bolster pillows,

a shelf of books,
a picture of his Guru Maharaj.

When a violent wind storm howled
through Prabhupada's room,
billowing the clothes
on his body,
he happily declared,
"There is no place
in the whole world like this!"

He instructed his devotees
by his own delight:
"I have given you
the kingdom of God.
Now develop it
and enjoy it."



A VISITOR TO MAYAPUR

Every month
a different GBC disciple
would come
to live with Prabhupada
to learn first hand
how to serve *guru*.

One such visitor came,
a naive incompetent,
but made into a *swami*
by His Divine Grace.

Flying from Dallas,
the visitor arrived—
his first visit to India.
Carrying his *danda*
on the ferry from Navadwip,
he finally arrived
in the presence of Prabhupada,
who was pleased to receive him:
“Now we have 5 *sannyasis*.
So stay here
and chant Hare Krishna.
I will give you letters
to type and reply.”

The visitor stayed
in the next room,
running in when Prabhupada
rang the bell.
Delighting in bananas and yogurt
and answering Prabhupada’s mail,
the visitor was otherwise bewildered
in the sweltering heat,
learning slowly
the secret of the *dham*.

Approaching the master
in awe and reverence,
he watched how Prabhupada preached—
always, always, always—
speaking on behalf of Krishna
the ever-fresh instructions
of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Slowly, from Prabhupada's
perfect activities,
the visitor learned.

Writing down
a few lines
from the ocean of Prabhupada's
philosophic talks,
the visitor stayed
a few weeks,
seeing with opened eyes
the reality
of the sincere workers for Prabhupada,
those who stayed on in Mayapur,
the sold-out servants.

The visitor noticed
from his sweltering room
the file of rickshas
like a desert mirage
and people walking
in the brilliant sunshine
with black umbrellas.
He was only a bellring
from Prabhupada in the next room,
but intimacy of consciousness
had to be earned.

Prabhupada began
commenting on *Upadeshamrta*,
and the visiting *sannyasi*
took the dictation in shorthand.

It was Prabhupada's mercy
to engage a fallen soul
in secretarial work
during the quiet, hot days
of a Mayapur summer.



CHAITANYA-CHARITAMRTA

Without *sastra*
how could we understand
Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?

Not by merely visiting
Navadwip's holy places,
ruins, rivers, *murtis*,
can one receive
the realized meaning
of *Sri Panchatattwa*.
Nor by casually talking
with local *sadhus*
can we grasp
the dynamic nature
of the *sankirtan* movement.
Authorized books are needed,
and the best is
Chaitanya-charitamrta,
by Krishna das Kaviraj.

Even if at first
understanding is theoretical,

without this book of knowledge
there would be nothing at all.
Gradually, by reading and serving,
the truths become known:
“To those who worship Me
with love, I give
the understanding
by which they can come to Me.”

Accepting *parampara*,
the method of hearing
with certainty and logic,
we accept the version
of Krishna das Kaviraj,
as given by Srila Prabhupada.

Krishna das Kaviraj’s book
would be otherwise hidden.
read only by a few Bengalis.
Or worse—it would be rendered
into English by atheist scholars
who would twist its meaning
into a mundane perversion.

But now we have the nectar
of *Chaitanya-charitamrta*
given by Prabhupada—
the entire *Adi-lila*,
Madhya and *Antya-lilas*.
Now Krishna das Kaviraj
becomes the well-wishing
friend of all the world.

Only Prabhupada could comment
with knowledge and living proof
that the predictions of *Chaitanya-charitamrta*
had come true.

Now, the distribution of the fruits
of love of Godhead
was being tasted.

Now proven, the premise
that the *Panchatattwa* made
no discrimination as to who should receive
the Holy Name.

Now proven, the axiom
that Gaura-Nitai should be worshiped everywhere.
Now it was reality—
the worship of the bona fide
spiritual master.

Now the widespread glorification
of the land of Lord Chaitanya
and the constant remembrance
and relish of Gauranga's *lila*.

Now on all the continents
in the twentieth century
continue the practices of Lord Chaitanya
and His associates—
honoring *prasadam* together,
going out together
with *mrdanga* and *karatals*,
chanting *Hari Nama*,
being stopped by the Kazi's police
and protesting that interruption—

going on with the *sankirtan*,
whatever the costs.

Now transcultural, bold preaching
on behalf of Lord Chaitanya,
in His shelter,
millions of families
recalling the pastimes
of Lord Krishna in Vrindaban
in the authorized way,
through the teachings of the Goswamis.

Now all these goals and more
were going forth,
and the very verses
of Krishna das Kaviraj
were preserved
as worshipable books,
placed in universities
throughout the world.



THE MANGO GROVE

In the mornings,
traveling from Calcutta
to Mayapur,
Prabhupada used to stop
at the Mango Grove.
The wonderful adventure
of being with him,

taking breakfast outdoors,
the outing-happiness
of going to Mayapur—
a car ride
with a short rest—

the red blossoming Krishna *chor* trees overhead
and the cool ponds,
being free of the city,
with the villagers
in simple atmosphere . . .

But all of this
is of little importance
except that Prabhupada is here.
(Otherwise, the Bengal tropics
don't seem much different
from Trinidad or Guyana.)
But here is the Mango Grove
where he always stopped.

Put out a mat.
He sits,
and beside him
come *sannyasis* and others.
At a cue, they also
honor *prasadam*,
sitting in a leafy grove
amidst the aisles of trees.
There are usually women also,
his sister.
They sit apart
and open the tiffins.

Grapes, bananas,
mangoes, melon,
chidwa, something fried.
Prabhupada doesn't speak much.
We shyly glance
at his moving hand and mouth,
and watch him wash with water.
One time a dog came,
and Prabhupada tossed it a sweet,
the dog catching it
in his mouth.

Now, on to Mayapur—
we are halfway there.



FULFILLMENT

By 1974's Gaura Purnima Festival
the temple room was completed,
and he walked with great pleasure
through the marble hall,
beheld the Deities,
and was able to say
before 400 devotees
that now the desire of
Bhaktivinode Thakur was fulfilled.
On that day
the Americans, Europeans, and Bengalis
were chanting together
Jaya Sacinandana and
the Hare Krishna *mantra*.

Strong, young, intelligent men
surged forward,
leaping and shouting
before his *vyasasana*
as Prabhupada smiled.

Hundreds of young women
dressed in *saris*
worshiped him from a distance,
feeling the surging, binding
dedication of love
and obedience
to Lord Chaitanya's pure devotee.

Because *he* went
before Radha-Madhava
with folded palms
and bowed on the marble floor,
lying like a rod,
all his disciples followed.
They left behind
mere idolatry
or iconoclastic thoughts,
and through the devotion of Prabhupada,
they saw God in the Deity.

Because of his books
and his love-filled looks,
his pushing demands
to get things done,
the prophecy became fulfilled.

Only because of him
these disparate persons,
mixed races and nations,
gathered as one strong union
to embrace the precepts
of Lord Chaitanya
with real appreciation
and real work.

As Prabhupada walked
into the sparkling temple
(roaring *kirtan* on all sides),
as he bowed before the Deity
and gracefully walked the length
of the long hall,
taking his majestic seat,
and as the prophecy unfolded
in waves of consummation,
he felt great satisfaction
as the servitor Godhead.
But when they brought to his attention
that he was amazingly great,
he turned away from that,
firmly reflecting the will of Lord Chaitanya
and the desire of the *acharyas*
as the cause of his success.
“If there is any credit for me,
it is that I have
unflinching faith
in the words of my Guru Maharaj.
I am presenting
what he has given
without the slightest change.”

MUCH MORE TO COME

Much more was to come.
He would go on
in his eternal *lila*,
leaving to his followers
the great, unfinished work.

He never said,
“I am now satisfied
that my disciples
have carried out all my cherished plans.”

But he felt confident
that from his books
and personal guidance,
sincere workers
would continue his desires
for Sri Dham Mayapur.
Their success
would depend on their following
the unchanged message,
working peacefully together
in love for him.
Because nothing can come
in devotional service
except through the pleasure
of *guru* and Krishna.



२० MEMORIES २०

Into his room Jananivas brings
coals of smoking frankincense,
and Prabhupada allows the room
to fill, until
you cannot see him—only smoke.
“This is a wonderful atmosphere,”
he says, relishing
the Mayapur evening,
pleased to hear his men
singing in the *kirtan* hall.
“Bhaktivinode has said
there is nothing in all the 14 worlds
like the chanting of Hare Krishna.”

He walks down the grand stairway,
cane in hand,
to see Radha-Madhava.
Accompanied by his *sannyasis*,
he walks down
as hundreds look up to him
from the bottom of the stairs.

He rings the temple bell,
and we crowd in close,
eager to catch the bliss
as he tugs the rope.
He didn't ring the temple bell
or lecture only once.
Abundantly he gave,
twelve years he was with us,

and often in Mayapur,
sitting on the red-cushioned *vyasasana*,
the stone lattice work behind him.

Each of us
is a part
of his spiritual family,
sitting on the marble floor
hearing his *Bhagwatam* lecture.
“You have traveled 10,000 miles,”
he welcomes us,
“spending hundreds of *lakhs*. Why,
if you are not devotees
of Lord Chaitanya?”

When the lights fail
he accepts lanterns
and goes on speaking
in his room
before the sandalwood relief
of Radha and Krishna.
In lantern-light
he recalls Calcutta
at the turn of the century:
there was no electricity,
but life was happy.

A MORNING WALK IN MAYAPUR

When he was well, he would walk
down the long front path,
out the entrance,
and onto the road of his spiritual master,
and as many as 20
would be with him.

He would walk through the plowed fields,
rows of hardened chunks of earth,
and he would call for Jayapataka
to ask about development.

Prabhupada always spoke philosophy—
absolute, realized, strong,
convincing.
He pointed
with his cane to a lump
and said it will be there
in the same place tomorrow;
it cannot move by itself.
Krishna moves everything.

One after another,
questions came to him
exhilarating us,
who were prone to quarrel,
bouncing against each other
to get closer,
like a roller derby of bodies
moving beside him,
jockeying for the best hearing spot.

Panchadravida asked Prabhupada
what he would say
if they could create life,
for they would claim
they had controlled Krishna.
Prabhupada said Krishna is not
your order-supplier. He is God.
Hard with logic
(and beyond logic also),
he was the defender of the Lord,
ready with boot to the face
of the illogical atheists.

Through the fields
along the farmers' narrow foot path
he would walk,
the temple in the distance,
pink and cheerful,
filled with devotees
awaiting his return.

If I asked you to live
in this field, he said,
you would rather go to Calcutta.
The Mayavadi is like that.
He says he wants to stay
always in Brahman, but he will have to
prefer the painful material varieties.
But the spiritual varieties—
living with devotees
in the Mayapur temple—
are preferable.

Walking, talking,
ordering, drawing us to his
teachings, his kindness.

When he was not well
he would walk on the roof.
His left hand swung as he walked,
his head back,
aristocratic.
He was worshiped, yet remained
the humble servant.
“My Godbrothers say,” he laughed,
“that I have succeeded because
I am a good businessman.
Yes, I have the capital
of American money
and the good business
of Krishna consciousness.”

We were imperfect
but tried to hear
the many lessons from his walks,
as now we try to follow in his footsteps.



ON THE VERANDA

After his morning class,
while sitting on the veranda,
he greeted some men and women from Calcutta.
He was gracious and kind

and pleasant with them
while he spoke of trivialities.
He looked down
holding the index finger
of his right hand
in the palm of his left.
Pensive and sweet,
absorbed in Krishna consciousness,
sometimes he looked up
while they spoke.
His countrymen were not aware
he was of the spiritual world.

❧ PRABHUPADA IS PRESENT ❧

I

In Mayapur,
ISKCON World Headquarters,
Prabhupada is present
in all things.

He is a person;
at the same time he is the
energy of devotion
in all his disciples:
devotees are distributing millions of books
in every country—
all Prabhupada's *shakti*.

He is the force
drawing us to Mayapur
even after his disappearance.

As he wanted
preaching in Manipur, Bangladesh,
Tibet, China, Russia,
so it is going on.
As he wanted devotees,
pacca Vaishnavas
in saffron *dhotis*
with shaven heads and *tilak*,
so they are gathering in Mayapur.

Are not the rows of marigolds and roses
his desire?
Because of him
the plants are watered,
and in this tropic heat
fountains are pulsing upwards.

The *gurukula* boys
walk in file
singing his *Geetar-ghan*.

2

Prabhupada is
the *tapasya*
of giving one's life
to Krishna,
service
performed in bodily

distress.
Remembering Prabhupada's austerities,
devotees
perform their distress-filled
tasks
on his behalf.

He wanted Mayapur
to be
the site for annual
meetings,
the place to decide
where
in the world
one goes
to do his work.

Each has his own desire
how to serve,
and their individual choice
may also be the presence
of Prabhupada.
But when the assembled
Godbrothers,
offering Vedic evidence
and their desire,
direct us to change
or take up new service, surrender
to that instruction
is the desire
of Prabhupada.

The power
of the GBC majority
may seem a threat
to one's possessions,
but it is Prabhupada's will
that they have the right
to decide who is in charge
of what.

3

He has started
a significant new branch
as did Ramanuja,
Madhavacharya,
and Lord Chaitanya.

If disciples want
some glorious distinction
for their *guru*,
let them claim,
“He is Prabhupada's servant.”

Praising his eternal
pre-eminence in ISKCON,
the best servants
carry out his will,
taking what he has given
and making wonderful
what he has approved.

We are like the Ganges worshipers

who offer Ganges water
to Mother Ganga.
We can only offer
what he has already given.
His vision for Mayapur
encompasses all—
the tallest buildings in Asia,
the most money spent for Krishna,
a city with air fields,
theaters and stadiums,
bathing *ghats* and libraries,
schools of higher learning
organized for the four orders—
brahmin, *kshatriya*,
vaisya, and *sudra*.
Is this work already done?
Is everything
completed as he asked?

The burden of staying together,
the difficult task
of protecting ISKCON,
will take lifetimes
of dedicated endeavor
before even a fraction
of what he asked
is carried out.
First do this,
then ask,
“What next?”



PRABHUPADA HAS BROUGHT US HERE

Prabhupada has brought us here
to Mayapur,
where in a few days we accrue
great spiritual gain—
beyond our dull perception.

We can see
Radha-Madhava
even without love-annointed eyes.
We can see morning stars
in a clear, country sky.
We hear
a radio all night,
violins and falsetto voices
drifting across the darkened fields . . .
Brass gongs of *mangal-arati* worship.
We hear
ku-ku-ku
rise-and-fall melody
of the cuckoos.
The steady, busy crickets,
and the first devotees
chanting Hare Krishna.

We can hear the pre-dawn sound of workers
cutting rice and wheat,
and we see the starting of cow dung fires . . .

When the sun silently emerges,
filling the world with light

like a vital liquid
poured onto land and sky,
then the myna birds,
cocky, orange-footed,
start their squawking,
and sparrows dutifully appear,
hopping along the wall.

Simply dressed men without machines
beat and thrash the paddy.
These ordinary things
anyone can see,
but in Mayapur
we can better understand
all things are related to Krishna.

Taste
the Bengali portals,
rasagulla, sandesh,
and the sweet, delicious
Ganges water.

Feel
Vaikuntha breezes
through the quiet of midday heat.

As we bathe in the afternoon
we feel the water and Ganges mud.
We hear the parrots screeching,
taste the dob's liquid,
and smell the delicate,
malati and *campak*.

With evening comes
the tick-tick of the lizards,
the invasion of the insects,
owls hooting, hyenas laughing,
fruit bats moving near the light
—mosquitoes!
And at dark,
the *kirtans*,
the aroma of nightqueens blooming.



ALWAYS REMEMBER, NEVER FORGET

He is always with us
who knows
and loves Krishna,
who sees Krishna
whom we trust utterly,
the perfect example
as practical business chief,
spearheading leader
of the world-wide movement,
always the soft-as-a-rose
servant of the servant of the Lord,
standing before the Deity
in confidential *darshan*.

Those moments when
it seems he is not present,
the world is all vacant
and we are like a loitering crowd,
rather than a unified squadron.

When we forget him,
easy things become impossible,
association becomes dry,
everything breaks
into cliques and voting blocks—
when we forget him.

And the powerful Maya
lures us
into independent action.

He does not say,
“Simply sit idle
and think of me.”
To remember him means
the inspiration
to work together
with basic trust.

When we forget him,
we stumble,
staring blankly
at Radha-Krishna.

When we remember,
Krishna comes
into our view again;
we return
to Krishna consciousness.



ON LEAVING MAYAPUR
March 1983

Today we went on *parikram*,
starting on foot from the front gate.
First the *kirtan* party
with pennants flying
and amplified singing
led by Lokanath Swami,
then all the men,
then yellow Gaura-Nitai Deities
atop the elephant,
and then the women—
down Bhaktisiddhanta Road
heading toward Yoga Pitha.

The sun was mounting,
but before it turned hot,
we walked along chanting
and soon reached
Lord Gauranga's birthplace.
We wound through the grounds,
quickly making obeisances,
since there were many other pilgrims
in moving lines miles long.

At Srivas Angam,
the house where Lord Chaitanya
held nocturnal *kirtan*
with His best associates
and where He showed His form
as the Supreme Person,
we all sat down

in the backyard under a long canopy,
and I addressed the devotees.
There were translators
in Spanish, Bengali,
Italian, French, German,
Swedish, and Chinese,
as I read from *Chaitanya-charitamrta*.

I repeated what I had
heard from Srila Prabhupada:
you gain knowledge from the *guru*,
who sets you free,
and in return
you have to help him
spread Krishna consciousness to others.
And I recited about the
tree of love of God,
with Lord Chaitanya as the seed,
the trunk, and the Gardener,
who wants to distribute
the fruits to all people.

Then Jayapataka Swami spoke.
He urged the devotees
during their stay in the Dham
to beg the Lord
for the power to preach.
He described Sri Dham Mayapur
as the source and center
of the *sankirtan* movement
because here Prabhupada wants
the Temple of Understanding,
a cathedral more wonderful than

any religious building in the world,
a temple to make Mayapur
a great world-wide wonder—
just as people marvel at
the sphinx of the Taj.
But from this Temple
they will get real knowledge.

And Mayapur is the source and center
for another reason:
from here we go out,
purified by our short stay,
to give what we have gained
to the nondevotees
to turn them toward the Lord.

Now we are going out
like rays from the sun.
We are messengers,
carrying the best news
to unwilling people.
Tolerant, merciful,
friend to all—
assume these qualities
of the Vaishnava,
and on Prabhupada's command
go out and preach.





Bombay



❧ HISTORY ❧
"REMEMBER ME AND FIGHT"

Bombay is no holy place
like Mayapur or Vrindaban,
but it's India's number one city
in wealth and fashion—
less political than Delhi,
more receptive to a new thing—
so it wasn't unlikely
that there
Prabhupada would concentrate.

It is the logic of the Vaishnava
that where the demons go all-out,
the devotee goes all-out,
where the *asuras* have
their greatest success
in wealth and power,
the devotee should go,
establish a big temple
and big preaching.
But that means trouble,
fighting on behalf of Lord Krishna,
and tolerating one's own distress.

Krishna in Vrindaban is famous
for submitting to His parents,
dancing with the *gopis*,
and playing with the boys and cows.
But it seems that more than anything

He fights with the demons.
They are always coming—
Putana, Agha, Trinavarta, Baka—
sometimes two attacks before lunchtime.
And as Krishna is always
defeating the demons,
so it was
with Prabhupada in Bombay.

He even said it was like Kurukshetra,
a *Mahabharata* of intrigues and sufferings
before the Pandava's ultimate victory.
And like *Bhagavad Gita*, wherein the Lord
arouses the fighting spirit
in reluctant Arjuna,
imparting to him eternal knowledge,
so Prabhupada destroyed
his disciples' reluctance,
gave them knowledge,
and inspired them to fight.

Srila Prabhupada,
you first took Bombay by storm
in 1970, the year
of the dancing white elephants,
when Hare Krishna *kirtan*
hit the headlines:
"MILLIONAIRE'S SON SEEKS SOLACE
IN KRISHNA SOCIETY."

At the Sadhu Samellan, you said,
"I have not done anything magical."

But a miracle occurred
as the beach crowd of thousands danced,
chanting and even crying with your men.
A quick-struck victory,
but the *asuras* took note.
Letters to the editor appeared:
“The Hare Krishna movement is just
a sporadic fad of sentimentalists.”

Your attack on the *asuras*
was Krishna’s attack:
you were repeating His words.
As you spoke you felled the atheists,
the enjoyers of false ego
who defy service to the Lord.
You strongly opposed
the slaughterers of cows,
the sex mongers,
the Godless politicians
who capture votes to abuse the people.
You boldly criticized them all,
and they took note,
like venomous serpents.

Opposition to *kirtan*,
you also told us,
is a sign that we are genuine.
Just as Lord Chaitanya’s followers
were interrupted by the Kazi’s police,
so the same breaking and threatening
is going on
in 20th century dress.

And as Lord Chaitanya rallied His men,
you rallied us:
“Don’t be afraid.”



THE FIGHT TO GET THE LAND

I

You wanted the land for Krishna,
and at first it seemed easy enough—
a paradise spot in Juhu Beach,
acres with palm trees,
tourist traffic,
pleasant sea breezes,
and your vision
for a gorgeous temple and hotel.

Mr. N. gave a good price,
and you took it,
although there were suspicions
and your own disciples
saw the land as jungle
—they had no building!

There were hardships,
mosquitoes, rats,
brush and tall grass to clear,
and you stayed in a tent.
Anticipating a landlord’s snag,
you took a bold step
to assure possession,

bringing the Deities
to be worshiped in a tent
that swayed in the wind.

This is not easy to understand.
Rasabihari was your Lord,
and you were the humble
servant of Radharani.
Yet you invited Them
to come right away.
Krishna would establish
His own proprietorship.
Fervently you prayed,
“My dear Sir, please remain here,
and I shall build a beautiful temple
for You.”

2

No devotee wanted to take charge,
until you appointed Giriraja.
Then you resumed your world travels.
But wherever you went,
you worried over Bombay.
And there was cause:
where was the deed?
Months had gone by,
and Mr. N. had withheld.
He had your downpayment—
and you had the land.

You telegraphed from L.A.,
“Get the conveyance,”
but Giriraja wrote back
with complications—
new taxes, new payments
put forward by Mr. N.,
and no deed.

From London,
another telegram:
“Finish immediately.”
Giriraja tried on your command,
but Mr. N. applied another knot:
“You never got permission
from the Charity Commission.”

Wherever you traveled,
you carried the burden.
In New Vrindaban
or Dallas Gurukula,
the devotees hardly knew
what was on your mind;
more telegrams to Bombay
were of no avail.

You sent more leaders
to join Giriraja:
“I cannot tax my brain
from such distant places.”

Then a letter from your lawyer—
he had resigned.

You saw him as a cheater
in league with Mr. N.
“Let us fight,” you decided,
“take them to the court.”

3

Now in open battle
Mr. N. shut off the water
and sent a hoodlum
brandishing a knife.

Your leaders in Bombay
decided to abandon
and informed you by mail.
“You are too timid,” you replied,
and your order was
to press a criminal charge.
“Do not be afraid.”

In Hyderabad you met
and convinced Mr. N.
with a new sales agreement.
When still he delayed,
your disciples in Bombay
cancelled all agreements
and agreed to quit the land.
“I shall be the last man,”
you declared,
“to give up Hare Krishna Land
to the rogue Mr. N.”

Tempers flared
between you and Mr. N.
in a personal encounter.
You said, either take our money
and leave us alone,
or return our downpayment.
He did neither,
but cursed the devotees
as CIA spies.
Threatening to destroy the temple
and remove the Deities,
he stormed out of the room.

Two weeks later,
after a severe heart attack,
he died.

4

Mrs. N. and her lawyers
recommenced the fight.
Demolition of a Krishna temple
was scandalous for India,
but they almost succeeded.
By her order
police officials
arrested the devotees
and one hundred demolitionists
with hammers and torches
dismantled the pillars
and tore off half the roof,
approaching the inner room
of Radha-Rasabihari.

Not a minute too soon,
influential Hindu friends
intervened.

Demolition was a great reverse,
but you turned it in your favor.
You organized a protest
and got permission to rebuild.
Mrs. N. was running out of steam.

Her demolition was unpopular,
and she went to you,
bursting into tears.
“Don’t worry,” you said.
“You are just like my daughter.”

In a straw and bamboo cottage
Mrs. N. signed the deed,
and the land was legally ISKCON’s.
Serving a feast for guests,
you described your plans
for a large temple and hotel.
Then leaning back, you exclaimed,
“It was a good fight!”



JUST BETWEEN YOU AND HIM

Srila Prabhupada,
wherever you went
there was a Deity

of Krishna
and you worshiped there.
But you carried the picture
of Radha-Rasabihari,
and once you even prayed
to Lord Krishna in London
to please engage you
in the service
of Rasabihari.

You were protecting Him,
and He was patiently,
valiantly waiting
during the fight
for possession.

Just between you and Him,
you had invited Him to stay
and you could not tolerate
that anyone should force Him away!

Appearing white and delicate,
with a long silver flute,
His right wrist resting
on a herdsman's rest-stick,
with a garland of roses and marigolds
like the one you also wore,
to the temple
He drew them
for His *darshan*.

To His left,
you sat erect,
facing the group
to whom you strongly lectured
on the teachings of Lord Kapila.

After philosophy,
whatever *halava* and fruits
had been offered to Their Lordships
you distributed from your hand,
grasping the *prasadam*
between your fingers and thumb.
Everyone received
at least a small palmful
from the inexhaustible plate
of your Rasabihari.



GIRIRAJA

At first he winced
as you handed over
so much responsibility,
but he did not falter.
“If you think,” you said,
“that this is Krishna’s project,
so let Krishna worry about it,
that is not very good.”

His initial idea
was to follow

Raghunath das Goswami,
austere in study
and regulative *bhajan*.
But you reminded,
“Raghunath handled his father’s estate
like a first-class businessman,
and *then* he became a *goswami*.”

“They have come to me for *bhajan*,”
you thought,
“and if I ask them to do business,
they will not like it.”
And you told the story
of a mother
who watched her little son
do his “one plus one is two.”
When the son grew up
he studied higher math,
but all his mother noticed
were the same numbers 1 and 2.
She did not know
the gulf of difference
between the child’s and the man’s
use of 1 and 2.
“If my students,” you said,
“could realize this point,
they could do much more.”

Giriraja realized more simply
that whatever you said
he would do.
He went out on your order

approaching friends and enemies.
Seeing everything as Your Divine Grace,
he simply served,
satisfied
to be your *chela*.

And so you made him
into a fighter
and were satisfied with him.



THE FIGHT FOR PERMISSION TO BUILD

One battle won,
another followed:
you owned the land
but could not build.

The Police Commission said
they would grant permission
as soon as the City agreed,
and the City said
they were waiting
to hear from the Police.
Devotees went from
one to the other,
sometimes held three hours
in a waiting room
before being given
another non-conclusion.

Half a year went by,
but still you could not build.
Then finally,
a message from the office of Police:
“You cannot build because
the *bhajan* is a nuisance.”

To reverse this insult
to Lord Chaitanya’s *kirtan*,
you sent your men into the city;
as late as they returned,
you would stay up waiting.
Their austerity was
but a glimmer
of your concern.

This reminds us
of your account of “Shah Jahan.”
A man asked the author
of that play why the title
was “Shah Jahan,” since all the action
is about the son, Aurangzeb,
while Shah Jahan is in prison.
The author replied,
Shah Jahan is the hero
because all the events
were beating his heart.

You were serving and struggling
at Hare Krishna Land,
and your devotees were
trying to help you.

Your pure consciousness
keenly felt the insult,
and you planned the counterattack.

Lord Krishna had stated,
“My devotee always chants.”
And Lord Chaitanya had also ordered,
Kirtaniya sada hari.
But the government was atheist,
discouraging religion
as a waste of time.
(They had not complained
to the Chand movie house,
which caused a nightly traffic jam
and noisy, milling crowds.)
Taking the situation
as a chance to preach,
you glorified the Lord
and condemned the vicious times
that claimed *kirtan* a nuisance.

You suspended all travel
and stayed three months to fight.
But every evening you would lecture,
completely transcendental.
From the *vyasasana* one night you saw
Giriraja and Bhagavan returning,
fatigued and unwashed.
When they did not dance,
you included in your lecture,
“We must always dance in *kirtan*,
even if the Police Commissioner
doesn’t give us permission.”

When you informed the police
of hundreds of people who would march
and thousands of names in petition
in favor of the temple
and the Hindu religion,
they gave a partial permit—
for the hotel towers,
but not for the temple.
But the Municipality
cancelled even that,
and when you asked to see
the Governor,
there was no reply.

By Lord Krishna's will
a new Chief Minister took office,
who was favorable to *kirtan*;
for both the temple and hotel
permission soon was granted.
Now you could begin.



THE STRUGGLE TO BUILD

One day during lunchtime
you called for Giriraja.
You could not eat
due to anxiety.

You were very doubtful
whether your men could manage

such a great construction;
they were being cheated
and the quality of work was poor.
You said, "Spiritual life
is supposed to be eternal bliss,
but it is becoming eternal anxiety."

You had to travel,
but even from Africa
you could see
more than your disciples in Bombay.
They were unaware
that an engineer and guard
were stealing supplies
from Hare Krishna Land.
Again, in Nairobi, you could not eat;
"How—
when my money is being stolen?"

Returning to Bombay,
you hired the nation's best
construction firm.
Now it would get done,
with money coming
from devotees in America
by selling your books.



FIGHTING WITH THE MAYAVADIS

Every night you fought
in your powerful lectures,
and every minute you were fighting them.
“You are so kindly delivering the message
of Lord Chaitanya
and delivering these Western worlds,
which are filled with
voidism and impersonalism.”

India is especially a hodge-podge;
they misuse the *Bhagavad Gita*
and worship many gods in ignorance.
No *guru* ever showed them,
kṛṣṇas tu bhagavan swayam:
“Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”
But whoever came to you—
so many kinds of Mayavadis—
had their illusions removed.

On the morning walks
your friend, Dr. Patel,
received your mercy
as you argued against
his stubborn, proud Hinduism.

He and his doctor and lawyer friends
would join you on the beach,
and we came to dread their disrespectful debates.
One time it came to a crisis.

You were chastising bogus teachers
to whom these men were sentimentally attached;
you detected impersonalism
even in their beloved Swami Narayan
and other well-known “saints of India.”

It became a shouting match—
“Then we don’t accept *you*!”
We could barely restrain ourselves,
but you roared back at them,
and then laughed and went on walking.
You considered them foolish,
you their friendly, elder brother.

Still, it was too much.
You also decided,
“We cannot speak with them.
We will walk on the beach
reading *Krishna* book aloud,
and if they like they can join,
but no more talk.”

For awhile they avoided you,
walking at a distance.
But that was artificial.
They returned like puppy dogs,
and it continued, every morning,
your drubbing the thick head
of the Hindu doctor
who claimed he was your brother
in a previous life.

In this give-and-take manner
you were teaching everyone—
Krishna is the Param Brahman,
and those who deny it
should be captured at the throat,
as a policeman grabs a thief.

❧ *MEMORIES* ❧

I

Nice weather
and the palm tree breezes.
Even when there was litigation
or anxiety,
you always liked
to take an outdoor massage
with palm drops of mustard oil
applied by one of your men.

Of the aged body you said,
“The windows are broken,
but there is a light inside.”
You were always jolly,
as a saint should be.

So many aspects to you—
this is one:
You sat on a thin mat,
your body moving languorously
back and forth in the sunlight
under the hands of the
rugged rubdown,

at the same time talking
Bombay business
with a trusted devotee.

Your talk would always
turn to Krishna
as you examined a thing
in its Krishna conscious light.
Sitting for massage,
your whole spiritual body
was golden and smooth.

Eyes half-closed, smiling
amidst tropic breezes and mustard oil aroma,
you confided,
“I am not anxious
about going back to Godhead.
I just want to
expose these rascals.”

2

Taking rest around 10:00 P.M.
(or if talking to a lawyer, 11:00),
lying down on your bed under
the white mosquito netting,
you rose of your own will
around 1:00 A.M.
Walking into your other room—
the mosquitoes were so bloodthirsty
we had another mosquito tent
at your desk—

you entered and sat with
the microphone and books
to deliver your ecstatic purports.
(You didn't like the dog packs
howling outside the window,
but even though we would chase them,
they would return, always yapping.)
After two hours
of recorded *Bhagwatam*,
you began chanting *japa*.

3

I used to sleep on the porch,
under a mosquito net,
and at 3:00 A.M. I would rise.
Then I would have to
pass through your room.
Once you engaged me
in some conversation from
inside your net; you asked
for a certain English
word meaning chains.
I guessed *shackles*
since you used that word often,
and you replied, "Yes."
To me that was
as delightful and satisfying
as Lord Kapila's teachings,
an intimate, friendly
gift from you.

But one morning I forgot
 to put ginger on your breakfast plate.
 You were angry, and when
 you saw me take it lightly,
 you broke me into pieces
 by your use of sarcasm.
 Suddenly I beheld
 my lack of surrender,
 like a chasm at my feet,
 and still today I call to you
 to save me.



JUHU BEACH

“Just by seeing these palm trees
 one makes spiritual benefit.”
 And you also said, “To become purified,
 I go to three places in the world—
 Mayapur, Vrindaban,
 and Juhu Beach.”

But it is you who are
 the true purifier
 of Juhu Beach,
 or even of Vrindaban.

Now the Bombayites are still walking there:
 the old man calls out
 “Jaya Ramji!” to passing joggers,

the coconut *wallas* are there,
the dogs, hogs, and ponies,
old men in white clothes
with walking sticks—
but who will explain to the people
the actual meaning of Rama and Krishna?

Only you.
Your followers can do it,
but people will only listen
if they believe we are your sons.

When you walked the beach,
it wasn't just a deep purple sky
lightening to blue with white clouds;
it was *Bhagwatam* realization
at every step.
Either silent or talking,
with your cane marking the sand,
you were the undisputed
Chairman of *Bhagwat* Philosophy,
and with the light of the *Bhagwat*
you illumined every
darkened subject.

The sun coming up daily
over the Arabian Sea
doesn't mean automatically
we can become Krishna conscious,
and even if the big Air India jets
leave on time, lifting over the ocean,
that doesn't mean mankind is progressing.

You have to be there, Prabhupada,
you have to be there.

As we come back
from our beach walk,
now see,
the white marble domes
and the formidable twin towers
of the ISKCON *ashram* hotel.

We are trying to keep you
in our hearts.
Your potential work is not completed.
The fights are furiously continuing;
Rasabihari's rights are still contested;
again we are in the courts.

But you have left a legacy
in Bombay—
“Don't be afraid.”
“Remember Me and fight.”
By your preaching you have gained
the loyal support of important men,
and your own devotees,
trained by you,
know how to continue,
how to fight,
how to depend on you.



PROOFS AND CONCLUSIONS

I

I can give
sastric proofs of your exalted state
as Krishna das Kaviraj gave
on behalf of Lord Chaitanya:
the *dharma* for this age
is *krishna nama sankirtan*
but unless one is empowered by Krishna
he cannot spread the holy name (*C.c., Antya 7.11*).

Or take any *sastra* that proclaims
the devotee is even dearer than Krishna,
like Lord Shiva's statement to Parvati,
“ . . . *tadiyanam samarchanam* (*Padma Purana*).
“Vishnu worship is the highest,
and higher than that is worship
of the devotee of Vishnu.”
Or take Lord Vishnu's own statement,
“Saints are My heart . . .” (*Bhagwatam 9.4.68*).
To prove you are the most saintly pure devotee
described in all the *Vedas*,
one who behaves and preaches well,
one who knows the conclusion of all knowledge
and who can convince others of this knowledge,
who is peaceful, self-controlled,
a friend to all,
completely attached to Krishna,
who enacts great desires
on behalf of the Lord
for spreading His glories—
these things are not difficult
to prove among your opulences.

In Hare Krishna Land you showed them also.
You tolerated
the demons' delays,
but since you were merciful,
you did not leave.
In your nightly lectures
in the temporary temple,
you always strictly kept
the *parampara*—surrender to Krishna.
Through all the struggles,
you led the devotees
by perfect precept and action,
and by doing so you created
a broad following
of many families in Bombay.

2

Those persons whose homes you went to
took up chanting and worship of the Deity
and still they come to Hare Krishna Land.
Others whose lives you touched
only in passing—or so it seemed—
have since grown up like late-blooming creepers
from the original seed you planted.

They come to the temple—
a thousand each day,
twenty thousand on Sunday—
to take the *darshan* of Rasabihari
and to accept Their *prasadam*.

Mainly, it is the Deity
who draws them,
and in the course of their visit
they will also hear
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

We who are seeking you
by service in separation
can see you in this preaching.
It is you who brought the Deity,
and brought them to see the Deity.
It is you who have named and built
Hare Krishna Land.

When we preach in Bombay
everyone remembers you.
Those who saw or heard you
become life members
because of you.

The unrealized potential of Hare Krishna Land
is your presence,
driving us
to maintain what you gave
and to expand it
for your pleasure.



Vrindaban



❧ HISTORY ❧

I

You came to us from Vrindaban
and you brought Vrindaban with you.

As a child you would think
of going to Vrindaban,
studying the train tables—
how to raise the fare?

In Radha-Govinda Mandir
you saw Vrindaban worship.
At five years old
you wanted your own.

Your childhood Ratha-yatra
is also connected
by an intimate meaning
to Vrindaban.

In your household life
you traveled to Vrindaban
and named your son Vrindaban;
but when you met your Guru Maharaj,
then you went to Kosi
(on the border of Vrindaban)
and heard from him—
the pure consummation
of all your youthful yearnings
for entering Vrindaban.

And it was in Vrindaban
at Radha-Kunda
that you heard from him—
whom you held
as the expert knower of Vrindaban—
heard of his desire
for printing books.
Vrindaban, you learned,
should not be kept hidden:
the message of
Vrindaban Chandra,
Vrindabaneswari,
and Their eternal abode
should be widely given
as nectar and
as sumptuous food
to the parched and starving
souls of Kali-yuga.

On his order, you preached
in India's cities
during World War II,
and the struggle for *swaraj*.
But you also sought
the shelter of Vrindaban.

On the banks of the Yamuna
you resided.
Simple, pure days
and nights, writing
your essays,
but also leaving Keshi Ghat

and going to deliver
Back to Godhead
to materialistic men and women
in New Delhi.

You took *sannyasa*
and at Radha-Damodar you began
the *Srimad Bhagwatam*.
Reside and write in Vrindaban,
collect and print in Delhi—
three volumes you published that way.

In Vrindaban, ISKCON was created
from the desires of the *acharyas*
and from your personal will
to deliver Krishna to the West.
But so much were you
attached to Vrindaban's dust
that when you journeyed
on the *Jaladuta*,
you thought yourself
the son and messenger of Vraja:
"I am feeling separation
from Sri Vrindaban and my Lords
Sri Govinda, Gopinath, Radha-Damodar."

And in Manhattan's winter
you declared,
"My heart is always hankering
after that Vrindaban . . ."

In 1967,
 when you became very ill,
 you desired to return—
 to recuperate or to pass away.
 “I am feeling too much
 to return to Vrindaban
 to the lotus feet
 of Vrindaban-Bihari.”

Your disciples were anxious,
 “What if Krishna keeps Swamiji
 in Vrindaban?
 What if
 he never returns?”
 It sounded to them
 like you were transferring directly
 to the spiritual abode
 “where once going
 one never returns to this world.”

You encouraged them,
 “When you see Vrindaban
 you will not be able to understand
 how I could have left that place
 to come here—it is so nice.
 . . . There, everyone is always
 chanting Hare Krishna, and there
 are thousands of temples.”

But as soon as you arrived
 you were planning your return;

your life of pure service
must be shared.

Vrindaban was inspiration,
the ideal training ground;
here the neophyte disciples
would find austerity and culture.
Two days here were more valuable
than a year in the West.

3

In 1970, in triumph,
with 40 disciples—
the fruit of vigorous,
empowered preaching—
the hometown Swamiji
returned to Vrindaban.

At an official reception
the Brijibasis praised you;
it was all very pleasing,
but you had come for land.

With 40 men and women
you went to Govardhan—
which they knew about from your books—
on *parikram*.
And they saw delight in your eyes
and heard your ecstatic, smiling laughter.
But mostly very gravely you went,
as if you were thinking of the *tirtha*

in a way you did not express,
sometimes speaking, but not obliged
like a professional performer
who is obliged to speak
to earn his keep
or to please a crowd.

You went to the Ksuma Sarovara
where Radha and Krishna enjoyed.
At Barshana
the devotees carried you
on a palanquin
up the stairs.
While at the home of Radharani,
you said little,
because what could we understand?
Only, "Just over there, Krishna
used to come down that hill.
Radha would come down this hill,
and They would meet in the middle.
There was a forest there.
So this is a very special place."

You had revealed
you wanted a center in Vrindaban,
and that was the main thing.
How it would come about
was yet unclear.
As your disciples could not
realize fully Krishna's *lilas*,
so they also could not grasp your order.
Who among them would be ready

to live and work all year
through the harsh, Vrindaban climate,
battling with bureaucrats and workers
to construct a temple?
Maybe that is why you were silent on *parikram*,
wondering who among those
sight-seeing children
would endure
and create a temple in the Dham.

You had defended your followers
with sastric references
that they should be accepted
as *brahmins*, *sannyasis*, and *pujaris*.
Your followers were bona fide *bhaktas*.
You were very strong,
arguing these points
with the caste *goswamis*.
But when it came to substantial work,
who among them would stay
and manage a construction site?
And from where would the money come?
As yet you had only a promise
of Raman Reti land.
Patiently you depended on Krishna
and continued on *parikram*,
dunking and splashing in the River Yamuna,
your men shouting in glee—
Prabhupada! Prabhupada!

In March 1972,
 you returned to finalize the deed.
 Radharani had said “Yes,”
 convincing Mr. and Mrs. S.:
 give the Raman Reti land
 to Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Another aspect of your vision:
 You would revive the spiritual life
 as it was when the Six Goswamis
 wrote in Vrindaban,
 discovered the *tirthas*,
 and built the major temples.
 Externally, Vrindaban was degraded.
 A respectable man may say,
 “Why do you want to make a center *there*?
 It is dirty and full of thieves!”
 (Full of Mayavadis also,
 and *sahajiyas* who talk only of *rasa* dance,
bidi-smoking *sadhus* chasing after women.)

But Vrindaban is always Krishna’s place,
 so you would serve the Dham
 with reform,
 with pure and youthful *bhakti*—
 a new temple
 as service to Rupa and Jiva.

The first steps were the same
 as in Bombay and Mayapur—
 get the land,

get the deed,
and, with festive ceremony,
place Ananta in the pit.

But in the dead of night
hired hoodlums desecrated the ground
and stole the ISKCON placard,
as if to nullify your claim.

You were angry,
but never thwarted.
This is a sign, you said:
we should move here at once,
fence and protect the land,
and start to build without delay.

5

In October 1972,
for the season of Karttika
you returned to read and speak
from *The Nectar of Devotion*.
You resided in your Radha-Damodar rooms
and spoke by the *samadhi* of Rupa Goswami.

A few dozen devotees from around the world
were eager to hear you.
You wore your *chadar* and held
kirtan in the evenings outdoors,
your face and singing strong
reminiscent of your *kirtans* in Golden Gate Park.
Here was a rare treat:
Karttika with you in Vrindaban.

The steps in *bhakti*,
the right of the lowborn to take to *bhakti*,
the world-wide *bhakti* mission—
you spoke spontaneously on these themes
at a rapid pace,
life-giving instructions
to make a follower strong.

“We are all followers of Rupa Goswami,
and by reading his book
we are worshipping him.”
Only because you said so
did we know it was true;
the *rupanugas* from abroad
were gaining access to the Nectar
only by your grace.

As in your early preaching days
in New York
you were free and open—
especially after lectures
when you met with your disciples
in your room of “eternal residence.”

But there was a price.
You requested each devotee
to render some service—
whatever they could do.
As the servant of Lord Krishna,
you also offered:
“As they surrender unto me,
so I reciprocate with them.”

To serve you in India
was more intimate and personal—
you were often there
taking close personal care
of the projects and the devotees.
But the test was more severe.

During this Karttika stay,
Subal, the boy you charged
to begin construction on your land,
came before you with a heavy heart:
“I don’t have time to read.
I can’t chant.”
He said he was distracted with too much worry—
cement and money and cheating builders—
and so he could not think of Krishna.

Your response was strong:
thinking of the check book
was like Arjuna’s thinking.
“This is Krishna’s service,” you said.
Don’t pursue an inactive trance
in the name of Krishna *bhakti*.
Don’t seek to chant in seclusion,
but fight on His behalf,
rendering service to your *guru*
in his cause to stop the demons
from destroying the world.

Only active service could control
the mind and senses,
while secluded meditation

would end in sleep and sex.
Active service was the topmost *yoga*.
And what was Prabhupada's desire?
That was clear:
build a temple in Vrindaban.
They had held the land a year
but still no building!

Subal said he couldn't do it.
So to get things going,
you went yourself,
and with your hand
you applied the first cement
for the temple's foundation.

Thus, Karttika with you
was a lesson in devotion.

6

1973:
"Why so much delay?" you asked.
Just pick a competent engineer,
and design a temple
with some of the features
of Govinda Mandir.

Worship the Two Brothers,
Krishna-Balaram,
right in Raman Reti
in the sands of Their play
where even today

cuckoos, parrots, and peacocks
fill the forest
with an atmosphere of songs.

Their confidential pastimes
will become an open secret—
that is Their desire.

Let people come and see
in a gorgeous temple
the Supreme Person Krishna
and His Brother Balaram.

*Vrajendra nandana yei
sacisuta haila sei
balarama haila nitai:*

Balaram and the son of Nanda Maharaj
have advented Themselves
as Gaura-Nitai.

Let people come and learn
these open secrets.

But get it going!

Gurudas, now your man in charge,
gave an optimistic promise:
the temple would open by Janmastami, 1973.

But real obstacles—
the cash flow,
the unwieldy workers,
the torturous heat,
and the incredible saga
of obtaining steel and cement

made it impossible
to open on time.

All right, you said,
just make my room ready
so I can come and push,
but next year,
by Janmastami '74,
you must definitely open.

7

A sudden shock—
Mr. S. telegrammed
to reclaim the front 50 feet!
How could it be?
Again, you stressed
your men should have built by now—
then this could not have happened.
But still S. had no claim—
the land had been given
in the name of Radharani.

You handled the threat
like the ones in Bombay,
telling S. the history
of Nrga Maharaja,
who had been accused of taking back
from a gift of thousands, one single cow:
And for that act against the *brahmins*
King Nrga had to suffer.

Mr. S. withdrew
and you sped ahead to build
a 12-foot wall,
encircling all the land.
Then you had to travel,
but promised to return
for the grand Janmastami opening.

8

Again, they failed to open
at the designated date—
you arrived in Vrindaban
to half-finished walls
and piles of sand—
still a construction site.
“There is nothing here!
Where is the temple?”

In transcendental anger
you criticized your men
for creating a fiasco.
Then when will it be ready?
You considered
the shortage of cement
and decided on Rama Navami
in April '75—
they would not disappoint you again.

But while in Vrindaban
on your 80th birthday in 1974,
you grew very ill.

Now as I recount
the dates and events,
I see I cannot touch
your transcendental greatness.
I may write, "you grew ill,"
but how to understand
your words
that your illness was due
to the misdeeds of your disciples.
By not following the rules,
by not chanting 16 rounds,
and by failing to rise early,
they were causing you to suffer
the external symptoms
of severe malaria.

In the monsoon season's
humid heat
you lay without appetite,
your fever rising to 104.
"No doctor can cure me."

Your condition worsened,
and you accepted the proposal
that all around the world
your disciples hold *kirtan*
24 hours a day.
"Yes, this *kirtan*
is what actually gives us life."

Devotees prayed for your recovery,
and those who heard your heavy statements

of why you were lying ill
prayed to never misbehave
and cause you pain.
This was the reality
of Sri Jiva's injunction
not to take too many disciples.

You had known such things would happen
when you had first left Vrindaban
to come West.

Other *sadhus* stayed behind
out of fear of this
reaction for the mercy
of uplifting fallen souls.
It was the will of Krishna
to your further glory
and to warn disciples
of the gravity of their personal bond
with you.

You took the risk
again and again—
“What can be done?”

Out of compassion
you were ever-willing,
facing pain and death to save us.
Here I speak of “pain and death”
and so fail to understand
the liberated soul.

For you there was no pain or death—
not like an ordinary man's.
And yet we saw you undertake

many risks and dangers
of this world.
Although we cannot see you as material
yet we cannot take you lightly;
we will not understand
if we judge in meager terms
of our own experience,
but through the eyes of *sastra*
and through the eyes of love
we know you endured many risks and pains
just to save us
from the ordeal of illusion
of repeated births and deaths.

9

You had come for a celebration,
but now your servants carried you.
Your followers were supplicating Krishna,
and you were lying down
amidst continuous *kirtan*,
depending on Krishna.

Suddenly the Governor of Uttar Pradesh
was coming for a visit to the temple!
He can come, your disciples said,
but Prabhupada cannot see him.

The fever almost a delirium,
still you ordered,
and four men carried you
in a chair into the courtyard.

With dozens of policemen, cars, and militia,
the Muslim potentate arrived to find
you—greeting, smiling, standing, lecturing,
and requesting that he please
help you obtain cement.
Finally, after accepting *prasad*,
he departed,
and your temperature rose to 105.

We do not like to speculate
but take your every act
as divine instruction.
Half a dozen devotees
were also ill,
but with your example
leading the way
everyone was laboring
to build Krishna's temple.

Gradually your fever broke,
and you returned to duties—
two tapes daily
of *Chaitanya-charitamrta*.
Then off to Bombay
and a world-wide tour—
twelve cities and
34,000 miles in fifty days.
You would return
for the grand Vrindaban opening.

*"In Vrindaban," you wrote,
 "we are attempting to build a temple
 for our disciples throughout the world."*

Lord Chaitanya also wished
 His disciples to visit the *dham*,
 and He asked Rupa and Sanatan
 to live there and receive them.

Some of the greatest Vaishnavas—
 Ramananda Ray, Haridas Thakur,
 Srivas, and Gadadhar—
 always saw Vrindaban in their minds,
 although they never traveled there.

Your own devotees,
 although living in the West
 in mundane cities like Paris and L.A.,
 were also always in Vrindaban
 by living in the temples,
 but by your mercy
 now all could journey to Vrindaban
 to a place so wonderful
 even the neophyte would be inspired
 to understand the real Vrindaban.

To understand the real Vrindaban!
 At least you gave us the chance.

And now the work was done.
 On Rama Navami in '75

your heart was thrilled
when you reached Raman Reti
and beheld the mandir domes,
monuments of victory
rising in grace and strength,
proclaiming: "Here is the temple
of Krishna and Balaram!
Stay here and worship the Brothers!
Rama and Krishna are Gaura-Nitai!"

In the evening you led
a procession—
blazing torches, *shenai* music,
elephants, 600 devotees—
to the center of the crowded town,
inviting Brijibasis
to the next day's opening.

Your room was crowded,
and every moment you were busy.
You even put your writing aside
and received special guests,
heard reports on the thousands
of installation details,
and met with your leaders,
hearing their urgent news of preaching
in dozens of needy countries.
None of this seemed a burden on you,
but was constant, ecstatic *samadhi*.

You stressed the real celebration
was of *kirtan*, *prasadam* distribution,

and the great chance to preach.
More than the rituals of the *brahmins*,
it was the Hare Krishna *kirtan*
that would inaugurate the worship.
“Do it for 24 hours each day!”

The opulent, transcendental forms
of the ten deities were bathed and dressed,
after three days of *mantras* and preparations,
and finally you were asked
to perform the opening *arati*.
You were also transcendently
dressed in shiny saffron silk
and decorated also with the natural glories
of pure love of Krishna
as you entered the Deity room.
Conchshells blasted,
the large doors opened,
and thousands of roaring devotees
cheered your presence before the Lord.

It was no routine *arati*.
The ecstatic mood increased
as you held each article
in your upraised hand.
And as you turned, after offering to the Lord,
and offered each holy article before the crowd,
the devotees all cheered,
congratulating you
with shouts of appreciation
for what you were doing:
giving the breath of life,

giving the gift of *darshan*
in open audience with the Lord.

The newly-elected Governor,
surrounded by his guard
of 50 drab-tan soldiers,
was also swept along
in the rushing waves,
the sights and sounds of spiritual bliss.

Krishna and Balaram,
beautiful Black and White,
stood under a golden canopy,
Balaram's left hand resting
on His gnarled cowherd's rod,
as He leaned on His strong, younger Brother,
who held His jolly flute before His mouth.
Both Brothers,
covered with fragrant garlands of roses,
allowed us to worship
Their visible lotus feet.

Srila Prabhupada,
you offered each article so nicely,
holding up the flaming ghee lamps,
sprinkling the water on our heads.
Pure *bhakti* was flowing
from you to us
and from us to you
and spilling over
to onlookers, who also joined
by the force of the event.

As you turned and waved
the *chamara* to the crowd,
your smile—
coming straight from your worship
of the Raman Reti Lords—
showed you were in the real Vrindaban.
You couldn't hide it—
you were in Vrindaban with Krishna-Balaram,
and *we* could also see!

By the time you offered the peacock fan,
the crowd was tumultuous.
Then, quieting the audience,
you spoke, even while standing
in the intimacy of Their altar.

This is an international temple,
you said. Everyone can come
and worship here. It is not
restricted by sectarian views.
Everyone should come and
chant Hare Krishna.

After that, as you requested,
continuous *kirtans* tested
the strongest singers and dancers,
while *prasadam* was served
to the thousands of guests.
The Krishna-Balaram Mandir
and international guesthouse
was now an operating life,
never to cease in its service.

And I can imagine
the deep satisfaction
felt by you
and those who served you
dearly through years of striving
to bring this about.

But I can remember
the following morning
you went out to walk
and informed us all
of our special relation to Krishna-Balaram.
Balaram, you said,
is the source of spiritual strength,
and we should pray to Him
in our weakness.

Devotees should come
to Vrindaban, you advised,
and renew their strength.
Balaram and Krishna will protect
the Krishna Conscious Movement
and its many bold preachers.
The devotee can renew his strength
and then go back
to fight the demons
in the attempt
to save the innocent of this world.



YOU IN VRINDABAN

*"It is a special influence,
if you stay here without visayi—
you will see the real Vrindaban."*

There is also a special influence
of you in Vrindaban:
More than anywhere in the world,
it is your home.

From before your coming to the West
up until your final *lila*,
Vrindaban was inspiration
for your outgoing mission.

Like Lord Krishna, you are a person,
and like Him, you make this your home.
And now you are here in eternal *samadhi*.

Let us visit without *visayi*
and find the special influence
in your home.

❧ MEMORIES ❧

As you walk out your front door
to go for *darshan*,
Gurukula boys are chanting
Govindam adi purusam,
heralding your appearance;
they surround you as you smile.

The upstairs floor is exclusively yours,
and only a servant
can join you there.
Early in the morning,
after giving your purports,
you are chanting on the roof.

You take to the front road
for your morning walk,
and every common man or woman
greets you in passing.
Stepping out of their shoes,
offering *dandabats* to you,
the residents of eternal Vrindaban
offer you obeisances again and again.



IN ALL SEASONS

I

You are in Vrindaban in all seasons.
In April-June, the hot season,
when the only noise is from doves and peacocks,
when everything else is scorched,
and the smell of small white *baila* flowers
permeates the breezeless night,
when no rain falls
but the fragrant, falling *tamal* flowers
patter,
twice daily you apply
rich sandalwood pulp,
cooling your forehead.

In Summer with no shirt
while chanting *gayatri mantra* in your room,
you point your finger upwards,
and your servant turns on the fan.
Sitting by your backyard fountain,
you enjoy the falling water
and dictate letters to the West:
“I have read with pleasure
the book-selling scores—
now double it!”

2

In July-August, the rainy season—
season of bugs and humidity—
when the heat-spell breaks,
when the peacocks dance,
and thousands of village pilgrims arrive
(*kadamba*, *malati*, and jasmine also arriving)
during Janmastami festival,
you are pleased to hear the villagers
singing and dancing
in the Krishna-Balaram *kirtan* hall.
And you inquire about *prasadam*—
you want *halava* and *puris*
to be given out freely
at the temple front.
“How many plates?”

In your lectures you mention
the benefit of the *dham*
in the rainy season—

for serving saintly persons.
“If you aspire for menial service
and you eat the remnants of a pure devotee,
you will get his ‘disease.’”

When a sudden rain occurs
while you are working outdoors,
you gather dictaphone and *Bhagwatam*
and move indoors,
hearing the pleasant downpour
as you recommence your work.

3

In the autumn season
when the rain stops,
the land and trees become green,
and pink roses appear.
Days are hot, while nights are cool,
and all these Vrindaban phenomena
you have beautifully described
in the *Krishna* book.

You return home in Autumn,
and devotees join you here
as you invite them to feel
it's their home also.
Of your house
you know every detail,
even of the papers in your locked almira.
In every room you are at ease.

You saved the *tamal* tree,
and in the autumn morning
you sit beneath it
in your rocking chair.
While birds chirp and hop,
you give instructions.
“This dirt [beneath the *tamal* tree]
may be used to polish the Deities’ brass.”

You surround your house with *tulasis*
and impart the practical precept,
“It is the duty of every Vaishnava
to water Tulasi.”

Blaring from loudspeakers
come sounds of *rasa-lila* plays,
but you do not allow
your devotees to go.

Thus you protect us in the *dham*
from the dangers of *sahajiya*.
Krishna is not so cheap
that we can find Him loitering in Loi Bazaar,
nor should one ever hear of Krishna
from the professional reciter.

4

In Wintertime,
when peacocks lose their tails
and devotees shiver without bodily relief,
you walk in the chilly dawn,

wrapped in sweater, scarf, and woolen hat,
always ecstatic,
seeing the bare land, animals and birds.
And even if you do not say it,
we know you feel especially right
in any season
when you are walking in Vrindaban.

5

In Springtime, March-April,
the season turns again.
Yellow mustard flowers blossom,
and the Deities dress in yellow
on the first day of spring.
While walking in the park
down by Seva-kunj
you stop to bargain
with a *sabji-walla* and his daughter.
“For a good price”
you buy everything they have,
bundle the vegetables
in your *chadar*
and take them home.

6

In every season
you live in each devotee’s heart
wherever he may be,
and at the same time we see you
in your eternal home.

Within the span of one day,
at the speed of mind, you travel
and also expand
to live in all your centers
throughout the world.

You live forever
in your instructions,
and the follower lives with you;
wherever one follows you,
that is Vrindaban.

Yet now by your mercy
your devotees may come and walk
on Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg
and see Vrindaban
through your eyes.



SEEING VRINDABAN THROUGH YOUR EYES

It is the preachers' Vrindaban;
as in the *lila* of Lord Chaitanya,
some men remain
to serve the devotees,
while others come and go.

And here you want the children
in Bhaktivedanta Swami Gurukula.
"To live in Vrindaban is the highest perfection;
to grow up in Vrindaban is the greatest fortune;

the atmosphere is beyond compare,
and the Krishna-Balaram Mandir is the finest in the world.”

You have opened our eyes
and given sure direction—
to avoid the Mayavadis,
(an anomaly to the *dharm*),
with their concocted *bhajans*,
and to avoid all *visayi*
in the holy *dharm*.

By your training
we see even hogs and dogs
as well as low-class men
—if they live within Vrindaban—
as beyond our comprehension.

Even if we do not see
with love-annointed eyes,
your training allows us
to see through the eyes of your teachings.

By serving Hari, Guru, and Vaishnava,
surely Krishna will be pleased
to lift the veil from our eyes,
then we may know
what is Vrindaban
with you.





BOOK SIX



PREFACE

A Prabhupada moment,
or selection of his words,
is always a treat.
As he said of his books,
“They are like a *gulabjamon*,
on whichever side you bite it
it is sweet.”

And even I can light
the fire of this *yajna*
as my desire to serve
overcomes pretense.



STARTING WITH VYASADEVA

It starts with Vyasadeva
in collaboration
with Lord Krishna:
out of compassion for the fallen,
to give us the *Bhagwat* light,
the learned one prepared these books
for all the people of the age
who die in darkness.

Further treasure-books were written
by the Goswamis of Vrindaban
followed by Krishna das Kaviraj,
Vishwanath and Narottama.

Each great *acharya* in *parampara*
adding his own, until Srila Prabhupada
gathered them all together,
and through him Krishna added more,
into the Bhaktivedanta purports.

On the order of his Guru Maharaj
he wrote the *Back to Godhead* essays,
the First Canto,
pushed them through production,
and sold them on the streets.
Before anyone knew anything in America
he was there on the Delhi thoroughfare—
the founder-*acharya* of book distribution.



HANDING OUT HIS BOOKS

Can I describe
that cold, windy day
at San Francisco Ratha-yatra
when Prabhupada,
surrounded by devotees,
received into his hands
the first dozen *Krishna* books?

This much I know:
he took one in his hand,
lovingly looked through it,
then quickly sold them all—
taking in dollars and handing out books.

(A week later on the lawn in Boston,
in front of the temple-house,
we grabbed at the
just-arrived books
and gasped at the
picture of Prabhupada
ecstatically smiling
on the back cover.)

Thus he led the way.



PRABHUPADA'S SOLDIERS AGAINST MAYA

Tripurari preferred to be
at the airport distributing books
than at the temple in a crowd,
greeting Prabhupada with flowers.

Because Prabhupada had said,
“I am so pleased upon all of you
who are understanding
the unique quality
of our transcendental literature,
and voluntarily going out
to distribute, despite all difficulty.
By this effort alone,
you are assured to go
back home, back to Godhead.”

2

“Where is Prabhupada, do you know?”
“He is in his books.”
“And what is his mission?”
“That every man and woman in America gets a book.”

3

Srila Prabhupada said
the temple is a place not for eating
and sleeping,
but to be used as a base from which we send out
our soldiers to fight with Maya,
to drop thousands and millions of books
into the laps of the conditioned souls.
Just like during wartime
the bombs are raining from the sky.

4

They sometimes get spit on,
“It is like Kurukshetra number two.”
But that is part of it, expected,
and the battles lead
to great and final victory
where even the enemies
who at least touched the books,
are raised at death
and saved from a lower species;
and there are no dearer servants to Him
than they who preach in the field.

LIBRARY PARTY

A plan by Prabhupada,
it worked magically.
We traveled,
detached from sex life,
placing standing orders
in university libraries.
What no big publisher could ever do—
success wherever we went.
“Do not doubt it,” he wrote us.
“This is the most important work.”

A different town every night,
together, six men
in a couple of vans,
we read from your manuscript
Chaitanya-charitamrta.
And we spoke of you.
Telling Prabhupada stories
was all I knew;
and what you said,
and what I saw you do.
The men all loved it,
and submitted
to stories of you from me.

In the early morning,
we chanted our rounds.
Each would read to himself,
taking notes in diaries.
After buttermilk with granola

we changed from *dhotis* to suits,
loaded the briefcases into the vans
and drove to the target
where we worked as a team
to *somehow* get the orders
before the end of the day.

It was Prabhupada's party,
based on his books.
It ran on his order
and won by his mercy.

Such freedom you gave us!
We were singing
with your singing
as we rode
roaming from state to state.
Brahmacaris without a care,
only the order of the guru!



*"WHEN I HEAR THAT MY BOOKS
ARE SELLING NICELY,
I BECOME ENERGETIC LIKE A YOUNG MAN"*

Because he had no material desire
nothing material could encourage him;
but news of the books going out,
seeing his young followers take it seriously,
hearing competition between the temples,
translations into different languages,

favorable reviews by esteemed professors,
seeing copies of just-published volumes,
these were the sweet juices
encouraging Srila Prabhupada.

As long as books were being printed
and widely distributed
the illness of his body
was relieved;
and problems for money
for construction in India
were solved.

“I never thought this Krishna Consciousness
Movement would have been so successful,”
he said. “Actually, the whole thing rests
upon these books. There is no such
literature anywhere in the world
as our books. So go on selling
more and more books!”

His clear message—
received from his Guru Maharaj
and carried down to us—
get the books out,
by hook or by crook,
which doesn't mean criminally,
but you have to find a way;
you cannot say,
“I cannot give out these books.”
It is his order for all time.
That is Prabhupada.

Everyone knows that's what he wants.
And that is what the people need.



BRIGHT MORNING IN DENVER

I

In the limousine
he revealed his thoughts:
the leaders of India were fighting
and he wanted to offer them
—both Indira Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan—
the wisdom of the *Bhagavad Gita*.
So he had written letters to them,
if they would listen to him.
In the Vedic age it used to be
that they would listen.
Now they don't.
But he asked us,
“What do you think? I have written a draft
of a letter this night. Let us take a chance.
We want good for everyone,
and this is the only medicine,
Hare Krishna, for all wrongs.”

We *sannyasis* replied pragmatically
that the letters might not be read,
and one of us said, “What about writing
a letter to the U.S. President?”
We were embarrassed and foolish in our remarks,
but we were also aware
that Prabhupada didn't have to ask our advice

and we were awed by his great concern.
We also believed in his capacity
to solve their problems,
if they would listen.
We saw his insight into the times,
the upside-down nature of the age,
when the deepest, most influential soul
has only a few young men to speak to,
and the leaders will not listen.

2

As we rode Prabhupada asked
how things were going in Denver.
I said the devotees
were distributing many books.
“*That* is the most successful,” he replied.
Suddenly I saw it—
if the people of the city did nothing else
but buy his books
and to some extent read them,
then Denver was a good place to preach,
even if it was otherwise
a beef-raising capital.

3

When we arrived at the scenic park,
the sun rose so brightly in golden rays
that any photos taken that morning
captured a portrait of flooding light,
Prabhupada walking wrapped in grey,

his disciples' chilly, bright faces
adoring his discourse
and his personal way.

That was the morning he said
devotees do not have to work like asses,
but Krishna will provide for them.
We were laughing and debating,
as he beat down the charge
that a devotee is a parasite-escapist.
"Open your eyes!" he loudly challenged.
"We are enjoying our Father's property.
They are escaping or *we* are?
Just see how foolish they are!"



A LITTLE INTRIGUE

In the Denver temple
they allowed the women
to dance up front,
Sannyasis and *brahmacharis* were
face to face with dancing women.
One of the *sannyasis*
requested them to stay in the back,
as in any other temple—

But Svarat dasi, wife
of the temple president,
took it as unbearable insult
and decided to leave

husband, temple, spiritual life—
she was seen going tearfully
by Upendra das who in a sudden move,
brought the case to Srila Prabhupada.

He agreed to see her and
she came in crying.
“What is the problem?”
“They make us dance at the back!”
“That’s all right,” consoled Prabhupada,
looking to Upendra and then to her,
“you can dance in the front,” he said,
and he spoke assuringly—
“Spiritual life is not easy.
We sometimes have to tolerate
but go on chanting and hearing.”
As any disciple would,
in the soothing rays of his compassion,
Svarat dasi calmed down,
and the next morning
she was dancing up front,
but eventually the *sannyasi* had his way
and she retired to the back.

The woman’s tears,
and Upendra’s move were both unpopular
for bringing our spiritual master
into such an emotional case;
yet it afforded us another view
of Prabhupada’s personal handling,
as he stressed his strongest wish,
that we somehow remain
in his Krishna Consciousness Movement.

LOOKING BACK

One day after the Sunday feast,
when he was alone,
after he had lectured,
Prabhupada called for me.
As I entered he suddenly began.
“The farms are very important.”
While I agreed in a theoretical way
that Krishna conscious farms
should be developed,
Why tell me? I thought.
No such farms
were in my zone
or even in my mind.

But now I take it
he was instructing me
to do it in the future.
And now I believe in
the great importance
of Krishna conscious farms,
and one is my home.

How many things did he teach
which I still do not understand
as applicable for me?
And when will I understand
his deeper meaning?
When will I wake up and hear
Prabhupada’s prophetic call
and fully take up his work?

What is there to wait for
when already we have
his spoken command?



BOLD IN CHICAGO
JULY 2, 1975

He asked the Mayor of Evanston
to donate a large building
even after being told by the mayor
that he wanted it for his City Hall.
Prabhupada asserted a solution to crime
based solely on the transcendental power
of the Holy Name and *prasadam*
to purify the hearts of criminals.
When challenged that his plan
was like so many religions
Prabhupada replied, "No,
we are strictly following,
and it is potent."

Then he challenged
his *sannyasi*-disciples
to get out, hold meetings.
A *sannyasi* should do more
than ring the temple bells.
Not only teach the devotees in class,
and not only distribute the books,
but speak on the books
to important people,

tell them what is lacking
now that they are admitting
they are baffled
and want to stop crime.

2

Sri Govinda das arranged
for the Sheraton Hotel hall,
a *prasadam* buffet,
a pillow for Prabhupada,
and reporters came.
Prabhupada was elegant,
aristocratic philosopher,
in saffron silk.

His English usage was clear,
but they could not understand him
as he explained *varnashrama-dharma*.
“Do you know that what you say goes
against everything American?”
“But we can train you,” said Prabhupada.
“As you are training engineers,
you can train first-class and second-class men.”

He could have been silent,
and stayed in Vrindaban;
he obtained no selfish pleasure
sitting on a pillow in the hotel
(which he regarded as a brothel).
It was no special treat for him
to talk with snappy, irreverent journalists
who cannot listen to philosophy

for more than ten seconds
before they blow their mental fuses.
But he came among them because
he and the previous *acharyas* wanted to help.
And now society's leaders were admitting,
they do not know how to solve crime.
As the mayor had remarked to him,
"We can use a new approach
because we are not successful now."

But the reporters were not concerned
to waste time hearing the *Vedas*,
they were more interested
in the Swami's "expensive gold watch,"
and they wrote down snide notes
about the adoring nature of
Prabhupada's disciples,
like flies looking for a sore.
"The old man" they saw,
"the retired businessman from India."
And when, at their request,
he spoke about women
then suddenly they had their story
—the Swami was a "male chauvinist!"

Walking quickly to the phone
or to go write up their stories,
the reporters felt rewarded—
instead of spiritual chit-chat
they'd got an angle against the Swami
for saying—get this now—
"Women are less intelligent than men!"

When Prabhupada heard
 they were putting it on the news, radio and TV,
 and that another TV crew was coming out to see him
 he was amused, and pleased—
 at least they were saying “Hare Krishna.”

They are not explaining it fully,
 about spiritual equality, said Brahmananda,
 or about great women in Krishna Consciousness.
 Yes, great women are chaste and faithful,
 said Prabhupada, like Kunti and Gandhari.
 All souls are equal,
 but bodily they are different.
 And women should be protected
 from exploitative men.

But the feminist TV crew
 who came into his room
 knew only the body,
 and demanded all are equal.
 “Then why does the woman
 bear the child, and the man cannot?”
 That one they couldn’t answer,
 but it didn’t matter to them—
 they were too angry to hear him.
 They wanted liberation
 through the body,
 and they thought he was against them.
 “In that case,

if they do not like to hear,”
Prabhupada later said,
“then let us chant Hare Krishna,
that’s all.”



REMEMBER THE BABAJI

In Chicago,
one of his disciples was described to him
as about-to-die.
He was Adi, and he had a heart condition;
several doctors concurred he would die
in six months or so—no cure.
So he asked Prabhupada
if he could take *sannyasa*.
Prabhupada said no, that is for preaching.

Then Prabhupada thought it over,
and called back his secretary:
if he thinks he will die,
then I may award him *babaji*
and he may simply sit down in Mayapur
and chant Hare Krishna.

So it was done in the temple.
“Because you think you will die,”
Prabhupada said,
“therefore we give you this—
an advantage to chant
and go back to Godhead.”

But devotees should not
come to him asking,
“Please give me *sannyasa*!”
“Please give me *babaji*!”
It is a stage of life, he said,
and when one enters it, then he can take it.
Not by nagging the spiritual master.

It was thrilling to see him
take the white cloth from Prabhupada
who sat on the *vyasasana*.
This was the first time in our society.
So Babaji went to Mayapur and chanted Hare Krishna
and his heart began to pain him.
He lived in a little hut, and it got hot.
He was just supposed to chant,
and he was supposed to die.

But finding Mayapur too hard,
he returned to the West
for residence in different temples,
first Detroit, then San Diego,
which aren't the same as Mayapur.
He got bored and restless
trying to chant one hundred rounds
and read all day,
so he wrote Prabhupada a letter,
“Can I give this up and do active preaching?”
His terminal disease
seemed to be abating,
but he wasn't pleasing Prabhupada
who soon wrote back

—“Don’t be whimsical.
You took *babaji*,
so live up to it—
no preaching, but sit and chant,
that is your vow.”

I admired Adi’s vows and told him
he was fortunate
not to have so many duties.
He seemed all right,
but he kept getting restless.
And finally he gave up—
he went back with his wife,
left all spiritual life,
and he never died.

I saw him once later,
pink and healthy,
but spiritually dead.

So I can understand
we should not prematurely
ask for *babaji*,
but go on preaching
on the order of Prabhupada,
and whatever we promise him
we must stick to that.
Or else,
it is a fate worse than death.
Yes, better *babaji* had died
in Mayapur chanting
the Holy Name!

TO PHILLY, TO BERKELEY, TO L.A.

I

To Philadelphia you went,
met by a hundred East Coast devotees
and reporters from TV
who again challenged
your policy towards women
and added, "We heard you also
discriminate blacks from whites."
You replied, "No, *only we* in Krishna consciousness
are uniting man and woman,
blacks and whites,
in a happy, spiritual family,
whereas others *talk* but cannot
come together in love and trust."

"What about skepticism, disappointment?"
Ravindra Swarupa asked.
And you uplifted all devotees
by describing Krishnaloka
where Krishna is pleasing everyone
and there is no disappointment;
to one who lives in Krishna consciousness
you promised that will be his.

Ratha-yatra from Independence Hall
was well received by thousands,
and so you commented from where you saw it
atop Subhadra's gorgeous cart,
"I am thinking the American Vaishnavas
are permanently in the West."

Women reporters, favorable and not,
parents of disciples, favorable and not,
offensive and receptive professors
came to see you.

And in each case you patiently explained
the message of Lord Chaitanya,
while they sat on cushions on the floor,
and you sat on their level,
on a saffron pillow
behind a desk with flowers
and drinking water, preaching.

2

To Berkeley,
their new church, new red *vyasasana*,
two golden lions on each side of your seat.
Sometimes your countenance was as grave
as the dark, grey ocean,
as you lectured,
“My duty is to see
that my disciples
who have accepted me as *guru*
may not fall down.
That is my anxiety.”

“What will happen to your movement
when you die?” asked a reporter.
“I will never die,” you replied,
“I shall live from my books,
and you will utilize.”

Walking on the Berkeley campus,
they showed you the high tower
from which the students jumped to death.
“Disappointment,” you explained,
“this is their education.”
On nuclear weapons:
“They must use it,
that is nature’s arrangement—
that you all die.”

Yogi Bhajan, Swami Chidananda,
and several prominent Sikhs and Jains
visited Prabhupada in Berkeley
to invite him to their Unity Convention.
“I told you before,” Prabhupada said,
“there is not going to be any unity.”
And they laughed
because he was so candid
and spoke the truth.
Unless they accept
the *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*
no unity,
but all agreed to attend
the San Francisco Ratha-yatra,
and with Prabhupada
they sat and took *prasadam*.

It was the largest
Ratha-yatra in the West;
some trouble with the cart wheels,
but finally Prabhupada was smiling,
and the sun came out;

eight hundred disciples present,
ten thousands participants,
his lecture invited them,
but when he noticed people leaving—
“If you do not want to hear
then simply chant Hare Krishna.”

Thus, in another city
of madness, violence and death,
he performed the Ratha-yatra
just as he had envisioned
from his childhood.

3

To Los Angeles,
where the marathon he ordered
was underway
to produce seventeen books
in two months.
He answered all their questions,
the Bengali-Sanskrit editors,
the artists, the publishers.
Why did he order the “impossible” push?
Because time was limited,
and for years manuscripts were piling up;
how could he write more
if nothing were published?
So the BBT was working 24 hours a day,
the entire *Chaitanya-charitamrta*.

In his garden

in the early evening,
peaceful despite shouts
from the neighborhood karate school,
in an enclosed space rich with grass,
cared-for flowers and miniature trees,
Prabhupada, traveling, flying everywhere,
working, worrying over ISKCON,
relaxed for an hour
hearing *Krishna* Book
with pensive, alert demeanor,
mostly silent, hearing,
and sometimes remarking out loud
how wonderful is Krishna.

Sometimes he places his hands
over his face
and smooths the skin downwards
as a man does when he is tired
or reflecting inwardly.
What is Prabhupada thinking?
The *sastra* says,
“No one can know the mind
of the Vaishnava.”
But we know
—the depth we cannot fathom,
or the intimacy of his prayer—
but we know
he is never lost to Krishna
and Krishna is never lost to him.

He contemplates
continued travel,

five more U.S. cities in two weeks,
then Canada, the Northeast U.S.,
Europe, India . . .
He is concerned
for his disciples and projects
and distressed
for the condition of all people.
As he said in Denver,
“We want good for everyone,
let us take a chance.”
As long as he has power,
for this he will travel and preach.



FREEDOM FROM ILLUSION

Laguna Beach
is of course a nice place,
nice beach and people,
although sometime no sun
comes through the sky all morning,
as when Prabhupada went there.
He walked along the beach
and there was garbage and seaweed,
and two big dogs ran toward him
until he raised up his cane
and shouted, “Hut!”
and the dogs ran the other way.

In Laguna, Rsi
came to see him,

a shaven-headed *sannyasi*, now bearded,
time taken with drugs and saxophone
and no deep respect for his master.
“Just dropped by to say hello,
I have more freedom now.”
“Where is freedom?” Prabhupada demanded.
“If you cannot stop from growing old,
where is freedom?
If you are controlled by drugs
how are you free?”
Rsi laughed
but he had no answer
as we can have no answer
against time’s demands,
and there is no good reason
to leave the *guru*’s order
except the *guna* of passion,
guna of ignorance,
from which Prabhupada came to save us
in his visit to this place.



TO SAN DIEGO, TO DALLAS, TO MISSISSIPPI

I

In San Diego,
in the middle of an outdoor festival,
there was a confrontation
from a loud-voiced man
just as Prabhupada was about to lecture.
“What does he say?” asked Prabhupada,

and the nearest devotee replied,
“He says he wants to have sex
more than once a month.”
A tough note to begin on,
especially in the summer park
in Southern California
before a young crowd
noisy under any circumstances,
but Prabhupada replied
with his words extemporaneous
and focused on the man who had shouted.

“Sex life is not denied,” he said,
“But in a regulated form,
to produce good population.
Otherwise, the world is going to hell.”
He described the empires of the past
and he gave praise to Americans
for helping him;
“They have a good heart,
the only thing wanting
is Krishna consciousness.”
Somehow he won them over,
and they chose to hear,
several hundred sitting on a lawn,
quietly attentive, including
the man who had shouted.

“Why are you unhappy?”
Prabhupada asked, “The cause of this
you should try to find out.
It is a lack of Krishna consciousness.”

As he finished,
the people applauded
and almost everyone agreed to eat *prasadam*;
some of them even chanted,
and ten or twenty stood up
dancing back and forth
with their arms upraised.

2

Dallas:
“It is my home.
I have so many children
and grandchildren
and I have come to see them.”

It was warm and some of the children were
unruly even in his presence,
yet they loved him and
saw their parents’ and teachers’
love for him
and they felt their own appreciation
for this elderly person
who gave them *rasagulla*
and was different
than any other person:

He sat on a great, red *vyasasana*,
he was Krishna’s pure devotee,
he wrote all the books,
he walked with a cane and with the *sannyasis*,
he flew in at the airport and smiled,
and it was he who brought the Deity of Radha-Kalachandji.

And as they approached him
he always gave them *prasadam* sweets.

He was sitting in a rocker
in the backyard,
(then most children were in bed)
“The sky is made by Krishna,” he said,
and all looked up as on a cue
at the turning-dark-blue
Texas evening sky.
Before him on the grass
sat his disciples and guests
looking up at his words,
seeing, “Yes,
Krishna made the sky.”
There was no doubt
in his presence.
He could slash your doubts.

Also in Dallas,
he admitted
he felt ill,
but that didn’t stop him.

3

To the Mississippi farm,
I went along too,
and now I remember him
so others can rejoin us.
This is the service of the poem,
an attempt to spread the Krishna Consciousness Movement
by bringing its members and friends

closer to Prabhupada.
Only through him
can we make the revolution.

To us he is like Christ and more
and time will bear that out.
His passage through the Earth
is not like yours and mine.

He arrived at the flat land,
and went into the house
where he encouraged the residents,
“Stick to this spot,
be satisfied, no artificial life.”
From the moment he spoke
the Mississippi farm took birth.

Then in a smaller room
he talked of cows and milk,
how every drop
can be drunk or transformed
until everything is used.
And there is no killing her,
but sweets and curd and cheese and *ghee*
from her natural bounty, this mother of Earth.
Do not kill her.

With no shirt on he
stood in the kitchen.
It was warm and flies came,
but everyone watched him excitedly.
Why? Because of love.

Because of that devotional love
that hour of cooking
is still memorable today.
And the Mississippi kitchen
is the place
where Prabhupada cooked
nine preparations in an hour
in his shiny brass boiler,
his thin arms moving, his expert, swift
chemist's pinching of spices
tossing them in the pot, and deft
home-grown secrets known only to him.
Dahl, rice, *chapatis*
kerela, potatoes, eggplants, peas—
when made or tasted
by the pure devotee
it is known as *maha-maha-prasadam*.

He walked in the fields
through tall sugar cane and grains,
and criticized Nityananda das
for rusting machinery in the rain,
and then went back to New Orleans,
all in a day.



END OF THE AMERICAN TOUR

In Detroit,
Prabhupada showed his potency:
Henry Ford's great grandson bowed at his feet,
and chauffeured him in the company car;
Walter Reuther's daughter, a surrendered soul,
gave all her money and went out to get more
by distributing his books.
With such rich men's children by his side,
Prabhupada took a walk
through the dream-like Fisher mansion.
"Each room is worth the entire price," he softly confided,
and told the owner he would give him full cash.
Unsure exactly how the money would come in,
yet he desired the gorgeous building,
not with a plan that he would live there,
but that Radha and Krishna should reign
for the people of Detroit
to receive Their liberating mercy.

The place was his
within a day,
and the next day he left.

2

In Toronto
he was shown a massive stone church,
and he asked the Indians
to try and purchase it.
Then suddenly he was called away

from further touring of America—
a telegram from Delhi:
if he came right away
the Prime Minister would see him.

Who can appreciate the pure devotee
except the devotee?

Who else cares?

How can we say the puffed-up man
whose intelligence is stolen,
the lowest of mankind
or the outright atheists
will also like to hear
of Prabhupada's potency, his gifts,
his sweet intimate moments,
his turning the crowds toward Krishna
—how can we attract to him the enemies of Krishna?

Let us then describe him as he is
and hope they may rise to meet him,
attracted by some aspects
of his life and mission.

Just give us more Prabhupada-*katha*,
how he went to India,
what he did next,
and if you can,
give us more.



WE CAN ALWAYS BE WITH YOU

When you were here,
I should have been
more aware to stay by you,
but the greatest lesson
is to stay by you now.

When I praise you,
I feel satisfied.
As when I dress the Deity,
I feel beautified and pure,
or when in heat I fan you,
I feel cooled.

Your books are with us
and sacred duties.
No one can say
you have gone away;
at worst, we must say,
“I have abandoned him.”
And whoever does that
can yet return
within your shelter
if he takes it up again
and resurrects his life.

There is no running-out supply,
no starvation from your presence.
Who can claim there is a shortage?
If there is a waning,
that *we* must mend;

it is the *jiva*-bird turning
away from his friend.

You are instructing us from within
and by *lila-smaranam*
you are again speaking from the *vyasasana*,
going for a walk at dawn
and we can come too.

The Holy Name is given by you
and to chant is to please you again.
You smile at the servitor
who distributes your books,
and your disciples, *mahatmas*,
are like expansions of you;
to serve them is also to stay with you.

Let me not begrudge
service in separation,
but take it as-it-is.
this is no poem's concoction,
but the facts described:
you live forever
and the follower lives with you.
Both here and in the spiritual world
there will be no breaking
for he who holds fast,
eternal service unto you.



NEW DELHI: A VISIT WITH INDIRA

It is a duty—
whether talking to a young boy
or the Prime Minister,
he wants to engage them
in devotional service to Krishna.
Now if she wants to,
she can help.

She stood to receive him,
the world-famous woman,
the stylish white streak in her grey hair,
the sharp nose and elderly beauty.
He was clearly her senior,
but for sweetness and peace,
Prabhupada was like a fair spring day.
Two days ago they killed
the P.M. of Bangladesh;
“Maybe I am next,” she thought,
and they surrounded her palace with
army guards in trucks.

“This is not a good time
to meet you,” she said,
but Prabhupada took it in his favor.
Even while in fear of death,
she kept her obligation.
She offered him a seat,
and he began to speak.

Prabhupada had written notes,
“Grant immigration for five hundred followers,”
and nine other items.
Extreme-seeming demands:
all ministers must train as *brahmins*,
close the slaughterhouses,
stop prostitution,
at least all government officers
must join in *kirtan* twice a day.
And India should support the worldwide
Krishna Consciousness Movement.
Prabhupada’s notes were a glimpse
of a different world,
where a king or a queen gives heed
to the pure-hearted servant of the Lord.

As a Vaishnava bold and pure
he comes to ask
surrender to Krishna
and not for the benefit of shaking hands
in a photo-moment with the head of State.
He had the stature as world-*guru*,
in the realm of spiritual knowledge;
and as international leader of
a culture and world religion,
he had followers and experience
beyond even hers.
And so she respected him.

She was too anxious
to hear the proposals,
yet she praised his work,

and Prabhupada replied,
“They are good boys.”
But with assassination possible
at any moment,
she could not consider
even the permanent visas,
not today.
And so they parted
after fifteen minutes.

At least he was back in India.



HEAVY IN VRINDABAN

I

Prabhupada came to us
not only to smile to us,
but he was also anxious
and sometimes angry,
because he really cared.
He had to show us
exactly what to do,
how to clean a floor with a clean, wet rag,
how to travel and preach *parampara*,
and how to manage the Vrindaban temple.

2

Seven just-printed books arrived
during his Appearance Day.

His disciples had toiled,
now they telegraphed:
“WE HAVE LOST ALL DESIRES
EXCEPT TO PRINT AND DISTRIBUTE YOUR
BOOKS.”

Deeply pleased,
he thought he might
just stay in Vrindaban and write
through all the Krishna seasons.
But the temple was new—
and there was too much to do.

3

Again and again Gunarnava tried
to fix the bell to the temple-front;
it kept breaking the rope,
or didn't ring right
and Prabhupada heard it
as he walked out front
to see and insist.

Through the night he stayed awake
and when the night-guard slept,
Prabhupada called for Harikesa.
“Do you hear that?”

“No, I don't hear anything.”
“That's right! Go out and wake him!
He must ring the bell each hour!”

To make a proper garland,
to dress the Deities on time,
to live in Vrindaban in renunciation,
to cook expertly for the guests,
not a dirty yard,
or a bell that doesn't ring,
or rude words to Brijibasis—
his followers had to learn it
to make a strong Vrindaban temple,
to attract the people
away from bogus teachers,
away from birth and death.

4

He stayed with them to mold a temple.
He pointed his cane
to a bird's nest on the ceiling—
no one else had noticed.
On his walks he didn't speak much
of Krishna dancing with the *gopis*,
but made criticisms.
When would they get the temple together?
When would they do things right,
not get cheated, learn to cook,
be happy with hard work
in Krishna conscious duties?

He stayed shaping them.
He was beyond anger,
a gravity beyond knowing,
sitting in his room

he may seem displeased,
but that is his ecstasy before the Lord.
(Madhavendra Puri cried at
the time of his disappearance:
“I could not attain Krishna,
I could not attain Mathura.”
But only the foolish Ramachandra Puri
came to console his *guru* saying,
“Why don’t you be happy in Brahman?”)

His down-turned mouth,
his sharp glancing eyes
full of light
and with a look
that penetrated self,
he was heavy at disciples’ mistakes,
but then he would dismiss it
with no trace of a grudge.
But like a storm it recurred
at the next foolish incident;
when after showing us first-hand,
we still could not do it,
then came his reprimands.
Another type of teaching,
not easy to surrender to
as when sitting back adoring him from a distance,
or comfortably hearing his lecture.
But chastisements were just as important,
and more merciful.
He stayed to mold the temple,
to mold his men and women.

Heavy like a rock,
 profound, not to be moved,
 like a mountain
 is *guru*.
 His stern face.
 People may not like it,
 but when everyone else
 is lost in frivolity,
 in chaos and confusion,
 to have that one rock you can go to—
 when in the storm all other
 trees are uprooted,
 to know you can always go
 and find him
 fixed in Krishna, the Absolute,
 assuring us to depend on Krishna's holy name—
 that is Prabhupada.

“The more grave the better,”
 said Sesa, in selecting a picture of Prabhupada.
 Though we may want to see a smile
 we also want to see
 the down-turned mouth,
 and we don't misunderstand him
 as sour or depriving,
 but we need someone very heavy
 to turn down all nonsense,
 to look it in the face unafraid.

Let us always yearn to see him,
 stern and grave

before the glitter of Maya,
disapproving of our wrongs.
No one else cares—
no one even knows our wrongs as wrong.
Only he can frown and show disappointment
when we're lost in Maya;
in his love
he reaches out to us and says,
"That is nonsense! You are a fool.
Now do it right.
And remember you are serving Krishna."



FROM AFRICA, ANXIETY OF LOVE

From Africa, they called to you,
"Dear Srila Prabhupada, please . . ."
and you went.
Even after a total-wreck car accident in Mauritius
you traveled on to Nairobi;
you didn't care for your own body
as much as for the welfare of others
and the well-being of your
Krishna Consciousness Movement.
All the way from Africa
your eyes could see,
you knew workers were stealing
from your Bombay construction site
and therefore you couldn't eat:
"How can I eat when
my property is being stolen?"

Your worldwide movement was like your body,
and a scrape or hit on any part,
the falling down of a single disciple,
or the attack of demons,
in any part of the world,
produced pain to the person
like a sliver under the skin.
That was your exchange with Krishna
as world preacher,
just as Vasudeva tasted loving panic
when his son, baby Krishna,
fell from his arms
into the River Yamuna.

In anxiety of love,
rarely crying tears in public,
we saw more the constant devotion
of your active life.
Care and concern—
that the books be printed exactly right—
and the always incoming letters—
Why were they fighting?
Why did the wife of a devotee go away?
What will happen with that temple's debt?
Where is the money going?
What about ISKCON
in Argentina and Russia?
The tide of Kali-yuga,
animal slaughter, abortion, war,
the cheating of the people
by organized gangs
—your anxiety of love rose

with the tide of sinfulness,
but you were triumphant, peaceful,
fighting always,
anxious, but always
depending on Krishna.



HIS ORGANIZATION

I

People may say, "We don't
want organized religion,"
but that wasn't Prabhupada's view.
"It must be *very* organized,"
he told the anti-organized of Hawaii,
"to carry out our mission's aims."
"But won't people get more attached
to the institution,
and thus forget Govinda?"
"No, since Govinda is Absolute,"
said Prabhupada,
"His institution is also Absolute."

He formed it in 1970,
defined it,
picked the men,
assigned them to zones,
the GBC of ISKCON,
told them to see that
devotees are chanting sixteen rounds,
the temples are clean,
finances are in order.

Spare him the headaches
so he could write.
Once a year meet in Mayapur,
settle the affairs of world ISKCON,
and chalk out a program,
then *everyone* should follow it,
even Prabhupada took shelter—
“Bring your problem to the GBC,”
he said, “I cannot manage the whole thing.
It is not one man’s work.”

2

But when an argument arose
between *grhasthas*
and *sannyasis*
he had to solve it.
The war between the
saffrons and whites
never got bloody,
but there was derogatory talk
and stealing of men from temples
to go join the traveling *sannyasis*,
and *grhasthas* forbidding the *sannyasis* to speak.

He had to solve it
as they converged
at the Mayapur meeting in 1976.
It climaxed in his room,
two groups with
their own sides,
but he settled it with the verse

kiba vipra, kiba nyasi.
Anyone can preach, anyone can manage,
be he *sannyasi* or *grhastha*,
only provided he knows
the science of Krishna
and is actually advanced.
Both sides were satisfied
by his sastric and personal
pulling them together,
his strong spirit to harmonize
his spiritual family.
“Let there be no personal ambition,”
he said, “keep it together,
work for the good of all.”



PRABHUPADA IS WRITING AGAIN

I

He wasn't writing much.
Sometimes weeks went by,
only a few digits each morning.
Demanding work had prevented him:
managing Bombay temple construction,
training us up in Vrindaban,
healing an ISKCON schism in Mayapur,
or worrying.
A conspiracy was working itself out
of his spiritual movement.
Was a trusted disciple in trouble?
Or it might be his personal health.

But diminishing in his writing
shouldn't be, it was wrong,
it was like dying.
Sincere disciples had to right it,
find a place where he could go,
like Hawaii, peaceful, where
sometimes he had done
hundreds of digits per day.

He agreed, and even mentioned
Aurobindo's practice of seeing people
only one day a year.
Just think, Prabhupada *constantly* writing—
at least for *some* time!
So he went, with a determined, trained group,
servant, editor, typist, cook,
and an attitude—
to concentrate on *Srimad-Bhagwatam*,
now in the Seventh Canto.

2

We loved to see him at writing,
knew it wasn't ordinary work,
went best when there were no door slams
(knew also not to demand him
to produce as if it were factory labor).
But we waited outside the door,
eager to see early morning results,
carrying out the tape to be typed,
good news for the world.

We had seen him
 sometimes through a keyhole,
 the microphone in hand,
 pausing a second, then speaking,
 head moving for emphasis,
 his private audience with Krishna. And yet
 he was addressing *everyone* for thousands of years
 —and all-scholarly! Vaishnava-*siddhanta*!
 Deep in the universe of eternal Sanskrit,
 twelve commentators from different centuries
 rushing together just as sages all came
 to the meeting of Pariksit and Sukadeva.
 Now they flew to join the Bhaktivedanta purports,
 combined meeting of minds, speakers, hearers,
 descending from spiritual planets,
 to the clean, quiet room and desk of Prabhupada,
 to the lips, the mouth, the gestured words,
 the clicking off and on of the “pause” button.
 We saw the externals, knew it was eternal
 but could only wonder
 at the extent of the intimacy
 —Prabhupada, Krishna, and the *acharyas*.

3

We could not even explain our own
 inconceivable pleasure.
 He had said it was his most
 important service to his Guru Maharaj,
 so for us also, it was like a benediction moon,
 better than money, fame, women,
 better than sports, politics, business.

It was extended, full *kirtan*,
singing and dancing,
the perfection of our family love,
and the most serious preaching to the world.

And, in Hawaii,
he immediately increased
to 200-300 digits a day.
One night he shut his door
at nine P.M. and stayed up all night,
finishing the Seventh Canto
“completed in the temple of the Panchatattwa
by the mercy of Sri Krishna Chaitanya . . .”

On Waikiki Beach one morning,
his servant exclaimed joy
that Prabhupada was working so fast.
“Oh, I can finish very quickly.”
Prabhupada said, “but I have to present it
for their understanding. It requires
deep thought, very carefully,
to present it for the common man.”

4

And who was that common man?
It is me, and you, and everyone.
The big scholar is a common man—
he knows nothing of Krishna—
and Prabhupada made sure to give him
Krishna many times on every page.
The intellectuals, world-leaders,

youth-in-search, future generations,
black, white, yellow races,
all are common men,
kirata-hunandhra-pulinda-pulkasa,
because wherever you go,
you find no one knows Krishna
unless he has read these books.
Common men become rare souls,
led by his purports into comprehension—
Krishna is the Supreme.

He knew these books were like gold.
They are also very grave, he said,
not everyone can understand,
but more than ever before
he was making it possible,
and as soon as he would write it,
it would be rushed—but carefully—
into print, and rushed,
sometimes not so carefully—
into the hands of conditioned souls.
Even Jagai and Madhai could be saved
at least by the touch,
and if he could read a single page . . .

5

Devanagari script, romanized spelling,
word-for-word synonyms, English text,
elaborate purport,
what he had begun in India in 1960
became his life's method,
a complete tradition unto itself.

Were we pleased to be there
when he produced them,
or are we pleased to hear of it now?
Are we pleased to hear how they were sold?
But now we have to do it,
read them and distribute.
That is a life's work also
for whoever is his follower.

The reading—every day—
is the best way to remember him.
He said so—to hear him
resonant in your mind and thinking,
creates faith anew,
builds strong the fibers of conviction,
or as he said, “protects us against
the onslaught of the atheist.”
We will see Krishna in *Srimad-Bhagwatam*
and know He is everywhere, always with us.
The careful reading daily
will also put us transcendental
to the constant tricks of fate and illusion
that try to plague us and harass us.
We will be safe and sound,
even in calamity,
when we remember Krishna
in the pages of the *Bhagwat*-book
from the purports of the *Bhagwat*-person,
and from that regular reading,
we will go back to Godhead.

The distribution—also every day
the best engagement for a devotee,
and Krishna says he is the best servant.
The honesty of living obedient—
“That you have received this knowledge
is not enough; you must
distribute it to others.”
How? Where?
Wherever people are,
for sale or gift,
by persuasion, or by mail,
to the passing crowds,
to people in their homes,
in classrooms—or if you know
a better way, then do it,
figure it out, but give them out.
And when you see someone reading,
who before knew nothing
and when later you see him
becoming a Krishnaite,
then you know, this is the potency.
This is why Prabhupada
stayed up all night,
and why we were so happy
to be with him
as he produced his priceless books.



THE BENEDICTION

I

Leaving writing for traveling,
he returned in triumph,
“ten years later”
to Manhattan.

As Jayananda drove the car
past spanning Brooklyn Bridge,
it brought out memories in Prabhupada.
No devotees knew him then,
when he wandered around Manhattan,
sometimes sitting near the water
waiting to go back to India.
He came there helpless
—like Prahlad was helpless.
And with nothing else
but brave devotion,
he became like Arjuna—
the instrument of victory.

2

Ten years later
his spiritual family was much expanded,
“and we must expand unlimitedly.”

Those days are fragments of memory now—
Fifth Avenue parade, three tall carts,
how he mounted Subhadra’s cart at Thirty-fourth Street,
and the police captain said,
“I knew by the way your people looked at him
that he was something special, the Swami.”

Three sailing carts downtown . . .
Prabhupada was unsmiling from ill health;
at Washington Square on a stage he spoke,
and a "Christian" heckler with megaphone fell
into the pond, to cheers!
For the devotees,
these were euphoric weeks
until he went suddenly
off to London.

3

I felt left out the whole time
you were in New York City, Srila Prabhupada,
because there were so many leaders
more distinguished than me
and I couldn't get close
unless I pushed,
and I wasn't doing anything marvelous
or important for you to call me—
except one time in your room,
you asked me to sit close, and afterwards
I told you the library party
had pretty much covered America
and now wanted to embark on Europe.
You smiled so big and pleased
I knew you really wanted it,
and that smile was our send-off
to deliver books to the Continent.

So these are fragments of recall,
otherwise it is all the past,

details forgotten.
But the main instruction and impression
is you
leaving to preach
despite illness;
you wouldn't stay and rest,
and I heard that you said,
"I want the benediction
to go on fighting for Krishna.
Just like Arjuna."
I heard you said it and I believe it,
because you always went on.
And it is you
who are giving us
that benediction.



HIS RESPONSE TO THE MENACE

I

In his last year on earth
a conspiracy moved against him:
*"Hare Krishna mantra is insidious brainwashing,
mind control which destroys the brain,
and the Indian Cult Leader is
exploiting them for his profits;
he deprives them of their sleep,
forbids healthy meat-eating,
imprisons them in his temples,
takes away their sex enjoyment
and therefore all the devotees
should be kidnapped and deprogrammed
or at least thrown into jail!"*

Prabhupada noted while walking on Juhu Beach,
“They are determined to cut us down.”

In a New York court case
the assistant district attorney charged
that an army of zombies was readying
to march on the Capitol and overthrow the government.

The devotees were alarmed:
would people really believe this?
In Kali-yuga anything is possible.
“Bewildered by false ego, strength,
pride, lust, and anger,
the demon becomes envious
of the Supreme Personality of Godhead
. . . and blasphemes against the real religion.”
Maybe they could do it
as with previous persecutions,
big lies and witch hunts in America,
an unholy alliance of
fanatical parents, hired thugs,
anti-spiritual psychiatrists,
prejudiced law officials,
and sensational media
who lumped “the Krishnas” in with every concocted cult—
could they stop the onward thrust
of the Krishna Consciousness Movement?

Prabhupada’s first response
to the dangerous New York case
was like a conchshell blast of courage
bringing comfort to the minds and hearts
of those who stood in battle.

He urged them to bring his books into court,
convince the judge and jury to read them.
Tell them—"Our books are older than the Bible."
And—"In India there are millions of Krishna temples."

"Now they are feeling the weight of this movement,"
Prabhupada wrote in his call-to-arms letter,
"They thought 'these people will come and go,'
but they see we are staying.
Now we have set fire.
It will go on. It cannot be stopped.
You can bring the big fire brigades,
but the fire will act.
The brainwash books are already there.
Even if they stop externally
internally it will go on.
Our first campaign is book distribution.
Go house to house. The real fighting is now.
Krishna will give you all protection.
So chant Hare Krishna and fight."

2

And when devotees from the West arrived
with latest news of the fight,
Prabhupada assured them,
"It is so much mercy from Krishna."
People will at least chant and hear
"Hare Krishna" and as He becomes more famous
the truth of His movement will come out.
"Even the Lord was not exempt:
as a six-months-old Child

on the lap of His mother
the demon Putana had come to kill.
Krishna Himself became important
not simply lying in His mother's lap,
but by killing the demons
He established Himself."

Who else could see the danger that way?
Others might speak of it,
but only Prabhupada could give
the absolute viewpoint to all his followers—
no matter what happened, Krishna would be true:
"My devotee is never vanquished."

"Yashoda wants to save Him,
Putana wants to kill Him,
but both became liberated souls.
And that is the beauty of Vrindaban,
where everyone is thinking of Krishna.
When He fell into the River Yamuna
and fought in the coils of the snake,
it was very bad news for the residents
who cried that their life was lost,
and yet Krishna was the center of their distress.
So they may talk against Krishna
but when Krishna is the center
it is everyone's gain."

Thus Prabhupada gave us
indomitable will.



HIS TRANSCENDENTAL LECTURES

Despite crises he continued
regular, outward preaching;
as when struggling for the Bombay land,
he would worry all day with careful tactics,
but at 7 P.M., glancing at his watch,
“It is time for the lecture.”

Then mounting the temple *vyasasana*
as if flying direct to Vaikuntha,
he would speak conclusive *Bhagwatam*
coming to grips with all problems
from the viewpoint of the Absolute.

He condemned everyone
who was not a devotee of Krishna,
yet with no personal malice.
Pure enthusiasm for Krishna's words
made each lecture sincere and unique;
except for him, maybe in the whole world
no one had more than a vague idea of God.
He simply spoke on Krishna, and
it will take a careful devotee
to deeply appreciate
how much he was giving us
through *Srimad-Bhagwatam* lectures.

KUMBHA-MELA

To give his *Bhagwat* discourses,
although Dr. Patel advised against it,
Prabhupada went to Kumbha-mela.
Too much crowds, cold and disease the doctor said.
He even joked that the Mela had no value.
No, Prabhupada said, they gather for *sadhu-sanga*.

If he went there to preach
then the Mela would be fulfilled;
in cold and sickness he endured
staying awake all night
in coat, scarf, and hat, within the freezing tent,
finally he relented to his disciples' pleas,
"Please, Prabhupada, here you can't write your books,
and that is a bigger preaching
than freezing, few people at your lecture,
and your health impaired."
He agreed, but not before igniting the Mela
with an explosion of Krishna's mercy:
over ten thousand Hindi books
distributed in two days
through the *sadhu-sanga* efforts of his men.



PRABHUPADA IN BHUBANESWAR

I

Prabhupada in Bhubaneswar was a lesson
in self-satisfaction.
He praised the simple

strawroofed one-room hut,
preferring it to a palace.
And he praised the simple Indian style
of passing stool outdoors in the field
and washing with a *lota*.
India's original culture he praised
as superior to all others,
but now it was degraded
by the nation's misleaders.
The government was building
its army and heavy industry,
but Krishna had stressed, "Grow grains."

Seeing the plight of the poor,
Prabhupada gave away each night
as much *kichari* as he could gather.
"I know," he said, "they are coming here
because they are hungry."
When a big leader announced
with banners in the town
his campaign against illiteracy,
Prabhupada scoffed, "They may learn
to read, but without sufficient cows and grains
what good will it do the people?"

When he spoke before the Oriyans,
one man challenged, "What is God?"
And the next night another asked,
"What is Krishna?"
Prabhupada looked astonished—
"What is this? You are from India
and you do not know what is God?"

Our people of India have become so fallen,
that you ask, 'What is Krishna?'
Therefore we are a beggar nation."

2

In Bhubaneswar Prabhupada
was like a combat general in the field.
One morning in predawn dark
he began translation of Canto Ten
and we heard him from the next room:
"Demonic rulers are increasing their might,
but Krishna will appear
in the Hare Krishna Movement
just to diminish the burden of the world.
People must take it seriously
for man-made devices and plans
can never bring peace on earth."

Taking his massage in the warm sunshine,
he noted newgrown grass
and criticized the scientists
who cannot grow, as Nature does, but claim
to out-do and out-know God Himself.
"These rascals should be exposed!"

3

Although in physically remote Orissa,
he gave instruction for the fight
against the demons in America.
"Yes, we are brainwashing!" said Prabhupada,

“because your brains are full of garbage.
You live and eat with your best friend, the dog,
and so you are untouchable.
So we have come to scrub you clean!
Is it wrong to clean a dirty room?
Is it wrong to clean out garbage?
Tell them like this,” he said,
“and bring the books into court.
They must read every line
of over eighty volumes,
and show them
there is no brainwashing as they claim it,
but a cleansing of the filth of the mind
through authorized *bhakti-yoga*.”

4

In Bhubaneswar,
after the doubting guests had left,
he informed us confidentially
how Subash Chandra Bose
was the real hero of India's independence;
and Prabhupada said his own men
were an army of devotees
formed for a peaceful mission,
to help and not exploit.
“Now the demons are feeling our presence.
It is a fight and we have to defend.
We are not like Vrindaban *babajis*
who claim, ‘I never go out of Vrindaban,’
yet keep three dozen widows.”

Sitting with him
in that bare-ground hut,
we also preferred it
to any luxury setting of the West,
as we basked in the opulence
of Prabhupada's intimate speech.



JAGANNATH PURI WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS

I

He said he had come
to remove the offense
of restriction by the *pandits*.
All over the world
Prabhupada had introduced Jagannath Swami
in Ratha-yatra festivals.
In London, San Francisco,
Melbourne, Paris, New York,
millions of people had been blessed by Jagannath.
So why when they came to Puri
were devotees not allowed
to enter the temple of Jagannath?
This he said not to a few
but at a big public meeting
under lights at a *pandal*.
“Remove this restriction,”
he argued,
“because Jagannath means Lord of the universe,
not merely Lord of the people of Orissa.”

2

We didn't mind the restriction
 because we had our own Lord Jagannath
 and the presence of our spiritual master
 at whose lotus feet
 reside all the *tirthas*.

I particularly liked Puri
 because I got to be with him,
 and I asked about writing.
 Prabhupada said he didn't care for fiction
 but *parampara* essays, poems, or a piece like
 "How I Came to Krishna Consciousness"
 was good for preaching.
 In the future he would give us
 the translation of *Padma Purana*,
 and he invited me to help him in the editing.
 No disappointment for us at Puri,
 as Prabhupada entered the ocean
 and bathed with his men,
 and he shared his *prasadam*
 (although not what the doctor ordered)
 of *ghee*-cooked *sabjis* with fresh hot *puris*.

3

In Jagannath Puri he also stayed up at night
 ranging over subjects
 while we sat at his feet.
 "Don't expect a smooth path,"
 he said. "Be tolerant.
 You should accept the demon's fight

to make us more enthusiastic.
A pure devotee makes progress
in spite of checking.”
He spoke of his own three heart attacks.
“Do not expect smooth, happy going.”

Krishna never gave me a magic ash
said Prabhupada,
as some modern *gurus* claim to possess,
nor did Arjuna ask for magic.
“We have to face things as they are
and go on with our duty.”

We sobered to hear
what we have to expect,
and pray to remember it
in times of trial.
But for the time we were with him
in Jagannath Puri
there was no restriction;
it was smooth, happy going
in the presence of our spiritual guide.

4

Now I can realize,
surrounded by buffets
to the Krishna Consciousness Movement,
what we need is Prabhupada.
He can make smooth going
even in a place of prejudice and restriction;
he can turn the material world

into pure devotional service.
By his grace the lame can cross the mountain
and the blind can see stars in the sky.

As Arjuna chose wisely—Krishna—
while Duryodhana chose numbers of troops,
and yet Arjuna was the victor,
so all we need is Prabhupada.
And he is offering us his *vani*.



WE DIDN'T KNOW,
Mayapur festival, 1977

I

We didn't know it was his last year
with us in Mayapur,
although there was some prediction.
A man with numbers had said
every eleven years something special happens.
Like in '22 he met his Guru Maharaja,
in '33 it was initiation,
in '44 he started *Back to Godhead*,
and in '55 he left his family life.
In '66 he came to U.S.A.,
so 1977 was next.
“Maybe,” said Srila Prabhupada,
“this is the end.”

Whatever he said sped
through the marble verandas,
exactly repeated or changed.
Everything happened from his room

where he spoke and sat
as the soul is seated in the heart.

*We could see you,
golden Prabhupada,
you were not a machine
but a person,
guru to each of thousands.*

2

Prabhupada called me
to his room at 3 A.M.
and let me hear
the recorded sounds
of his latest purports:
Transmigration of the soul, he taught,
as spoken by Vasudeva to Kamsa.
He compared it to
the ignorance of our enemies
who do not know the soul
and therefore lack a brain.

He saw himself like Vasudeva
who worries over Krishna.
“I know Krishna is God,” he said,
“and yet I worry,
at any moment somewhere in the world
the demons may stop this Movement.”
He wanted me to write these thoughts
in *Back to Godhead* essays,
to fight the *asuras*,
and enlighten the innocent.

3

“Even if I die,” he said,
 “everything will go on.”
 But most of us didn’t dare to think it,
 nor did we know
 this was his last year with us,
 while he stayed in his room
 and we chanted Hare Krishna
 learning to love the *dham*.

Or even if we accepted
 that 1977 might be
 the last year of Prabhupada on earth,
 yet we could not comprehend
 what the loss would mean.

And so we traveled away from Mayapur
 to our ISKCON centers,
 thinking, “Maybe we should stay with him,”
 but as servers in separation,
 we had no other choice,
 and it was actually our desire
 to return to our countries,
 where Prabhupada was present in his order.

4

He remained in Mayapur
 where word soon reached him—
 the judge in New York,
 on the first day of the trial,
 had decided in our favor—

“The Hare Krishna Movement is
a bona fide religion.”
Prabhupada was very pleased,
and declared the triumph widely
“Krishna is wonderful.”



BOMBAY

I

“How long do you want
to stay in Bombay?”
“Not stay,” said Prabhupada, “but work.”
“Then how long will you work there?”
“As long as possible.”
And he went for six weeks,
ending March, all of April and into May.
Our time with him
was running out.

He insisted to move
into new Bombay quarters
even while workers smeared the floor
and there was no toilet, doors, windows, or water.
“If I don’t move in now,
it will never be finished.”

These were the weeks
of the last, active *pandal*,
heaviest lectures of all,
although Prabhupada
was very thin

and his voice seemed weak.
People who visited asked,
“Are you feeling well?”
which he felt was useless talk—
“Can’t they see I am not well?
Don’t they know all health
is a mirage
since everybody dies?”—
but to upstarts at the *pandal* he replied,
“You are so foolish
you cannot understand.”

2

Fulfilling Giriraj’s prayers
that Prabhupada could stay
in his gorgeous top floor suite
and receive Bombay’s elite,
the victorious Janata men
came to talk of a brave new era;
but Prabhupada said it was
the same old thing,
unless the politicians stopped
mere posing with the *Gita*
and really surrendered unto Him.

He stopped morning walks
and temple lectures, but produced
large quantities dictating
his morning purport tapes.
He sat quietly for hours
amidst the pleasant breezes,

sounds of rustling palm leaves,
the sunshine entering his top floor rooms,
but sometimes he talked
of the end.

"You GBC men, don't spoil it,"
he said.

"Keep what I have given,
because I do not know
how long I will stay."

3

He sat erect at his
splendid desk,
in light saffron dress,
very gaunt he was,
and at midnight, with wry humor,
he said to Giriraj,
"I guess I must be liberated
since I no longer sleep, eat,
and there is no question of sex."
Giriraja, at least, could understand
the humble, human words
were true, but
in the higher sense of liberation,
as one who is entirely
absorbed in ecstatic
loving service unto Krishna.
Old age was but another
feature of his liberated life,
as step by step,

at every moment,
he always thought of Krishna
and how to spread His mercy.
That was always true,
regardless of the state of body.

Then one day he decided
to move to Hrsikesa
for the curing effects of the Ganges.



WHY WRITE FURTHER?

The disappearance of Lord Krishna
is not much told in *Bhagwatam*,
and in *Chaitanya-charitamrta*
there is nothing at all
about the parting of Gauranga
(although the parting of Haridas is there).
Prabhupada told us the Vaishnavas
do not like to hear it.
But in the biography
of Prabhupada I told up to the end
because devotees insisted,
and I also saw
the many lessons he imparted
while leaving the world,
including what we all must learn:
he taught us how to die.
And more:
he saved until the end

final, lasting lessons—
drawing out deepest love
from his anxious disciples.
Therefore, to at least
outline these teachings,
I write further.



THE MONTH OF MAY, 1977

If it were to take place,
he wanted to be in Vrindaban
seeing Krishna-Balaram,
but he also said
that no one dies and
there is nothing to lament.
In his room, black stone floor,
high dark ceiling,
and Indian style air-cooler,
tall windows with curtains,
but he mostly kept it dark.
To Vrindaban he had come for shelter,
and he lay on his bed.

He said to his secretary,
“Of two directions,
struggling to live,
or preparing for death,
I think I have to be ready
for the end.” At least
he wanted to finish all duties,

including a final will,
and so he called his GBC
from all over the world
to gather in Vrindaban.

It was sweet to be with him.
No matter what he did,
it couldn't be called death.

Feeble, I could not approach him,
across the distance
of the awesome relationship.
Others were bolder in love,
and I did not envy them,
but was humbled by what I saw;
how Tamal Krishna could reach across
the distance and caress Prabhupada's hand,
or Bhavananda saying it is
sad for us, Prabhupada, but at the
same time joyful that you will
leave this nasty material world
and rejoin Krishna,
and Kirtanananda's innocent prayer—
Could Prabhupada consider
exchanging his old age for our youth?
To which Prabhupada replied,
“No, your body is also mine,
so work with your youth.”

We all took turns,
by his bedside chanting,
or reading aloud from the *Bhagwatam*.

He wanted the real medicine,
to always hear *kirtan*.
This was in May
when Vrindaban was intensely hot.

He appeared to me like Ranti Deva,
the ascetic who fasted for months
then gave his break-fast food
to the demigods dressed as dogs.
Prabhupada's fasting
was his own pure desire,
and the will of Krishna.
His sharp, handsome profile
was exactly like before,
his face was wisdom and
transcendence.

No, he did not slip an inch
or falter in the least,
and his men were always with him.
“But don't think this won't happen to you.”
Sometimes he was silent for hours
hearing the chanting, or resting.
But once he woke to say,
“Don't leave me.”

Certainly the wolves
would attack in the future,
for that he was most concerned.
He secured his properties
in the names of his spiritual sons
and his ISKCON Movement.
Otherwise he was peaceful,

depending on Krishna and telling us
he liked our company
and would be glad to stay and preach,
but it was up to Him.

His health seemed slightly better,
but no, he said,
“Materially speaking
the symptoms are hopeless.”
Of course, whatever Krishna desires . . .
Maybe we should have stayed with him,
and simply chanted day and night,
but with his permission
we returned to our work zones,
and Vrindaban returned
to its quiet routine,
his daily dictation,
his taking massage,
as if it would always
continue that way.



IN JUNE

I

It remained very hot.
Usually he would hear
the temple bells, blowing of conchshells,
the singing of *Govindam*,
and the timely *aratika kirtans*,
all from his bed.
The day passed that way,

alone, or with a small
group of bedside chanters.

But in June he slightly improved,
and in the morning
Prabhupada asked to be carried
on a rocking chair palanquin
to go see the Deities.
He cried tears of ecstasy
as he beheld Gaura-Nitai,
Krishna-Balaram, and Radha-Syama.

Then at his request,
they moved his rocker to the courtyard
under the shade of the Tamal tree
directly facing Krishna-Balaram,
and there devotees gathered
to sing and dance Hare Krishna *kirtan*.
The Gurukula boys, two or four at a time,
stood before him, arms raised
and vigorously danced,
Hari Nama chadars flying,
and their innocence charming
guests who also gathered from Vrindaban,
for this daily *darshan*
of *kirtan* with Prabhupada
in front of Krishna-Balaram.

2

He also sat in his private garden
and spoke with one or two

while the fountain gently splashed,
and chipmunks ran across
the ten foot boundary wall.
If a monkey would come
he was chased away.
Sparrows and parrots all day
flew freely in and out
of the flowery vine-covered yard.

When Prabhupada chose to speak
his words flowed from his whole life
and from all the *sastras*,
like the soothing fountain.
He mentioned early days in Calcutta,
Vedic ceremonies for pregnancy observed
by his mother, and he gave sharp
criticism of modern-day abortion,
“They are two-legged animals.”
He recalled his horoscope
and how Krishna’s plan had unfolded.
“Krishna said, ‘You were
retired in Vrindaban,
and I asked you to leave.
Now you have come back.
But I will give you a better place.’
So He has given me a temple
a hundred times better
than any other place.”

Honorable, celebrated,
 subduer of evil forces,
 unretiring conqueror
 directing the battle
 from Vrindaban,
 he made it clear
 how his work must be carried on
 by those who vowed to follow.
 "I am thinking of so many things.
 But my life is ending.
 So keep these ideas."

To Swarupa Damodar,
 his scientist-disciple,
 Prabhupada spoke for hours at a time.
 They should defeat the atheists
 who foolishly claim life comes from matter.
 He also heard with pleasure
 letters from Ghanasyama
 how the people in East Europe
 were hungry for the Bhaktivedanta books.

On his palanquin he rode
 to inspect the new Gurukula
 where he chided and pushed them,
 "Bring at least 250 students!
 What kind of managers are you?"

Prabhupada confided
 he had prayed to Krishna
 to allow him enthusiasm

up until the very end:
“A soldier should die
fighting on the battlefield.”

This was in June
when it was very hot
and the Yamuna was shallow.



IN JULY

I

The rains came.
And it was a good time for writing.
On the roofless part of the second floor
sometimes he would be dictating
when a downpour came,
his men would rush him out of the rain,
to continue indoors.
He could hold the dictaphone microphone
only with difficulty now
and the sound of his speech was faint
but the purport came out as strong as ever
describing the Tenth Canto.

When Krishna gave to the monkeys
from Mother Yashoda's stock of yogurt,
the neighbor ladies complained,
Your Child is stealing at our houses,
sometimes pinching our children.
And one time He showed His mother
all the universes in His mouth,
“although she could not clearly ascertain the cause.”

Prabhupada wrote within the spiritual world,
conveying to all
reality beyond the wall of matter,
through unalloyed love of Krishna
as known by Mother Yashoda.

As the sacred Ganges was carried
down through the heavenly planets
by thousands of flying messengers,
so Prabhupada carried
the *lila* of Goloka
into this world
through thousands of printed books
entering through the station
of his Raman Reti house.
An old man could not have done it.

2

From undisturbed Goloka
he was brought down
to the violent world of Maya
when he heard the news—
an attack on his temple in Mayapur.
Three hundred Muslims had overrun the premises
breaking the hands of a Gurukula teacher,
cutting Nitai Chand's head in three places,
breaking lights and wires,
storming toward the temple room—
when Bhavananda Goswami fired a shotgun,
he was arrested
and with other devotees was now in jail.

The newspapers were playing it up
that a Hare Krishna person had fired a gun,
and they mentioned Prabhupada who
had not been present at the time.

Prabhupada's response was as certain
as Krishna's killing of Kamsa;
his men would soon turn out the victors
but he also lamented,
"The *gunda* (hoodlum) class of men
don't like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu."
Haridas Thakur's refusal to enjoy
a beautiful woman at the dead of night—
the whole modern world
will fail to understand.
They will say,
*"What is wrong with illicit sex?
What is wrong with intoxication?
What is wrong with slaughtering cows?"*

"They mentioned I wasn't present,
or they would have arrested me.
These are the people we are preaching to.
They say we are brainwashing!
How difficult it is!
But we have to push on."

And he cried thinking of
his Mayapur men,
Krishna would protect them
who were giving everything
to serve Him.

The terrible event
stayed on his mind,
but in ensuing days
the truth came out
and the people of Navadwip
turned against the *gundas*.

Another attack,
another storm weathered,
fair skies again
for the Bengal preaching—
but Prabhupada's health,
although not yet at the end,
improved not at all
through the end of July,
although his writing went well
through the month of rains
with more than half the year gone.



AUGUST

I

With Prabhupada
during Jhulan-yatra,
when villagers danced in the
courtyard of Krishna-Balaram temple,
I was also there.

The most shocking thing was his thinness.
Several times he said my name.
On a night watch

I got to rub his back,
sitting on his bed
under mosquito netting,
while dawn revealed
the temple domes.

All my hopes were fulfilled
just to serve him.
I had heard the leaders say
“Prabhupada is staying in the world
to draw out our love.”
But I was unable
to be with him
except to do my duties
in the Los Angeles office.
But for a week in August
there were a few moments
when I entered the caring,
loving mood.

Once he was silent,
and we were chanting before him.
My miserable, miserly heart
finally burst forth,
and I knew
that he was my beloved preceptor
and I glimpsed his kindness,
his action to save me.
I saw myself as I used to be,
as hopeless until he had come,
and I recognized him now
as the same saving person.

In dialogue with his secretary
 over a number of days,
 Prabhupada decided
 that he should go West again
 for psychological enthusiasm.
 Because staying in Vrindaban
 was "slow death."
 "Prabhupada, if you go West,"
 urged Tamal Krishna,
 "just seeing the devotees
 will give you new life."
 But there was an astrological warning
 that he should not travel
 until September had passed,
 and also his U.S. green card had expired.
 But when the papers came through
 he clapped his hands,
 applauding the chance.
 "No more discussion.
 I will go at once."

The night before going,
 his health relapsed
 and the trip became uncertain.
 But he was peaceful on his roof,
 and that was another farewell for me
 as he recalled my name,
 "You brought mangoes and fruit,"
 reminiscing of the days at 26 Second Avenue
 while frankincense poured

from a clay pot in Vrindaban,
and we each massaged his legs.

3

He didn't seem well enough to travel,
but it was happening—
in the middle of the night.
He was carried to the car,
laid down on a mattress in the back,
and driven slowly to New Delhi.

In the airport waiting room,
sitting on a wheelchair,
he silently acknowledged
his faithful disciples.
“No need to speak,” I thought,
“you have given me more than enough,
yet I always demand like a child.”
His nod was sufficient
in the last minutes
before his parting for London.

Like Ranti Deva in thinness,
but unmistakably Prabhupada,
he was carried to the London plane
with later plans for New York
and the Pennsylvania farm.
Better to die in battle was
his theme, and the hope was
that he wouldn't leave.

He also gave us a prayer,
 "My dear Lord Krishna, if You desire,
 please cure Srila Prabhupada."
 I said it as often as the *maha-mantra*
 usually not out loud,
 but uttered deep within,
 imploring and yet
 (as expertly worded by him),
 it was no demand on Krishna, but
 just letting Him know
 we dearly loved Prabhupada
 and needed him to stay.
 If Krishna desires . . .
 and if He does not. . . .
 In any case we prayed,
 as he had allowed us.



LAST JOURNEY TO LONDON

It was a shock for devotees
 to see Prabhupada in London
 extremely thin, in a wheelchair
 and wearing dark sunglasses.

But when they gathered in his
 Bhaktivedanta Manor room
 he and they felt at home.
 "Is everything all right?"

Every morning
with the slightest movement
of a finger or hand,
he sent a hundred dancers
leaping and singing,
and more privately
behind the dark glasses,
his tears ran
as he looked upon
Radha-Gokulananda.

He met with his European leaders
and made no criticisms,
all pure gratitude,
and many times throughout the day,
emotions of ecstasy ran unchecked.
Even at the mention
of America,
his voice choked up.
“I cannot forget my obligation to them.
I want to make them happy
and through them the whole world.”

But he had toured far enough West.
To come as far as London,
was itself an incredible feat
for a person with almost no body
for living in
but to go further, to New York,
was not the desire of Krishna.

Prabhupada was pulled back
by another crisis in health,
and now Bombay loomed in his vision
as the next possible chance—
that he should live long enough
to install the Deities
and open his grandest temple there.



LAST VISIT TO BOMBAY

In Bombay
the few disciples with him
served with spiritual love,
helping him sit,
helping him wash,
and at his request,
giving encouragement.
Only by their prayers
and desires was he living,
he said.

He was not eating
and his body,
which he had strained
in constant hard travel
and in constant acceptance
of disciples' *karma*,
which even a doctor had diagnosed as
"suffering from too much anxiety
over disciples and the Movement,"
could not go on that way.

He could not stay
five risky, noisy weeks
waiting in Bombay
for a possible temple opening,
but called his men together
for a decision.

Vrindaban was best,
they all agreed,
but with one objection,
expressed by Tamal Krishna:
in Bombay there is more to live for—
the temple opening date—
but to go to Vrindaban
may mean
“going there to die.”
Prabhupada said that was only sentiment.
Of course, he willed to live,
but he was waiting to see
what Krishna wanted to do with him,
whether to stay or go,
and for that decision of Krishna
the best place was Vrindaban.



OCTOBER—“LET ME LEAVE”

It was very pleasant weather,
but all things
pointed to the end.
The GBC was called again—

“Expect the worst.”

They traveled in sadness,
but always knew
no soul dies
and especially Prabhupada
will simply go to Krishnaloka.
As to this world he had come
in eternal service to his Lord,
so if he leaves the world
there is no question of death;
but life of eternal knowledge and bliss—
and the followers live with him.

On arriving in Vrindaban he had sung
the song by King Kulasekhar,
“Let me die now thinking of Krishna.”
But his men arrived,
each carrying some glad tidings,
the results of vigorous preaching,
they asked him not to leave, but to live.

Harikesa Swami produced new books,
which pleased and moved
the life and soul of Prabhupada.
“Now you have to get healthy,” Harikesa said.
“Healthy?” said Prabhupada,
“I have nothing to do with this body.”
*How do you say “get well”
to someone who is beyond all disease,
who says he wants to leave now
to answer the wish of his Beloved?*

He gave last instructions
to Brahmananda:
“Jointly organize Africa,
United Nations under Lord Chaitanya’s flag.”
And when Kirtanananda brought
gold, sapphire, and rubies
Prabhupada joked, “Why don’t you
find out some bride?”
And he gave back the gifts
for use in building New Vrindaban.
“It is you we want,” said Kirtanananda,
“Please come to live in your palace.”
“Let us see,” said Prabhupada,
“which palace I am going to.”

Giriraj, Paramananda, Atreya,
Lokanath, dozens more,
all came and exchanged with him
and ‘though sometimes tears ran,
he never wavered,
but he stopped calling doctors.
“Better you don’t pray to Krishna
to save me. Let me go now
and you continue singing.”

He didn’t want to eat or drink
but, “Let me drink just *Hari Nama*.
For diet and medicine
let me depend on these.”
He wanted to hear
what feast had been served
to devotees in Vrindaban.

“Everyone liked?”
But for himself,
he asked for only chanting.



“PLEASE STAY. WE NEED YOU.”

How he reversed,
I have told at length
in *Prabhupada-lilamrta*,
But here in brief:
he said, “I’m not drinking.”
and when Upendra replied,
“How can you not drink?”
“That you discuss,”
said Prabhupada.
He meant, “You can discuss
whether I should survive.”

Everyone was resigned,
four men at once massaging him,
a dozen at a time in *kirtan*.
If he spoke at all
they had to crowd around his bed,
inches away—to hear his voice.
He heard Hari-sauri crying,
but said, “You go on chanting.”

But then he opened his eyes,
and said, “The choice is mine.
Krishna has given me full freedom.”

That was a different mood,
but at first no one replied.
It took them all together,
while he was resting,
to come to the conclusion:
“We should assert ourselves
and ask Prabhupada to stay!”

When strongly they pleaded for his life,
admitting, crying out,
“Don’t go! We need you!”
he agreed, with a yawn,
in a casual-sounding way,
“All right,”
and he began to drink again,
and called for strawberries.
“This is real affection,” he said.

It was a test
and they had passed it.
He had brought them
to extreme distress
in love for him.
And they wrung it out,
imploing him to stay with them
because their lives were in his hands.

Now he agreed
to stay for the Bombay opening
and to visit the New Vrindaban Palace.
He was smiling
and they were laughing,

“All right,” he said,
“but chanting should not be stopped.
Things should go on naturally.”



BUT—

But the long term facts
were different.
Now in a deeper love-exchange,
the disciples were insisting
he had to stay,
but in a gentle way
they began to see
Prabhupada was willing,
yet there was something more.
While he had to teach them
how to love him
and while he had to stay to lead them,
yet sooner or later
he would have to leave,
thus teaching everyone how to leave.

And to learn the further lesson,
how to manage ISKCON on their own,
he had to leave the Movement in their hands.

“Nothing fanatical,”
was one of his expressions,
they should not expect him
to stay always in the world.

LAST LILAS

I

Thinking that now of his free will
Prabhupada would slowly get better,
most of the GBC left again,
while in the pleasant Karttika weather
Prabhupada remained in Vrindaban.
But his final *lila*
came to one more month.

2

He began again to translate
in the company of devotees,
Jayadwaita holding the microphone
as weak-sounding but glorious
devotional words came forth from his lips,
his final Tenth Canto ecstasies—
Krishna expanding into
the missing boys and cows.

3

In the very last days,
hearing of the bullock cart preaching
of Lokanath Swami, Prabhupada wanted
to make his own *parikram*.
At first he did it
on palanquin around the temple,
and then he said
he would like to go
on circumambulation of Vrindaban.

For Govardhan Puja
they could take him to Govardhan Hill,
and they could all camp together,
it would be “a good picnic.”
But the doctor said
his body could never take it—
“Then to die on *parikram*
is glorious.”

Some of his disciples agreed,
whatever Prabhupada asked should be given,
including a last bullock ride,
but his servants protested—
again the conflict of love,
“You cannot go Prabhupada!”
they cried in anxious grief.
“All right,” he said.
“I will not go,”
“You are making us crazy in love for you.”
“Yes, that is my duty.”



NOVEMBER 14, 1977

There was no last minute change.
In the center
of a roomful of devotees,
all singing the holy names,
he went back to Godhead.



SERVICE IN SEPARATION

Then there was grief
all over the world
for the devotees of Krishna.
In Africa they cried,
in America one devotee walked out of the house
and into the woods,
or they hung up the phone and they cried,
wherever there were devotees.

Yet the sincere
soon noticed. "Somehow we are living still,
our purpose is still strong,
our duties have not lessened,
and the need seems even greater—
to rescue the fallen souls.
There is still someone to please—
Srila Prabhupada is present!"

The day before he passed away
his disciples were Krishna conscious,
and the day after he left,
they were *still* Krishna conscious.
But if their lives depended on him
how was it possible
to live after he left?
The answer came clear:
this was service in separation.

What before they had read in books
as the mood of the *gopis*

they now found in themselves
as an ever-present strength.
As sure as the vital air,
as sure as the rising sun,
as sure as Krishna Himself—
Prabhupada was present in his order.

Service in separation
became union with him—
the books all confirmed it,
as even stronger
than his physical presence,
which had come and gone.
By service in separation
his presence became
an open love
to whoever was sincere.

Now from the smaller to the greatest
all can enter his presence—
whoever cares and serves.
Srla Prabhupada is still in charge
of the faithful heart,
he is still flowing nectar
to the river of his followers,
and his Movement won't collapse
because *parampara* is guided
by the Lord's own hand.



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