

# Lessons from the Road

Volume Twelve

Caribbean Tour

January - February 1988

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



## Lessons from the Road

I have noted your several complaints against the devotees, but it would be better to set the example rather than to criticize the defects of the devotees.... Try to reform the others not by criticizing but by friendly behavior. If sometimes there are any disagreements, we should try to forget such incidences and be always in friendship with each other.

—Letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda, 14 October 1971

Neither speak ill of others nor well of yourself.  
The moment you open  
your mouth to speak,  
the autumn wind stirs  
and chills your lips.

—Buson

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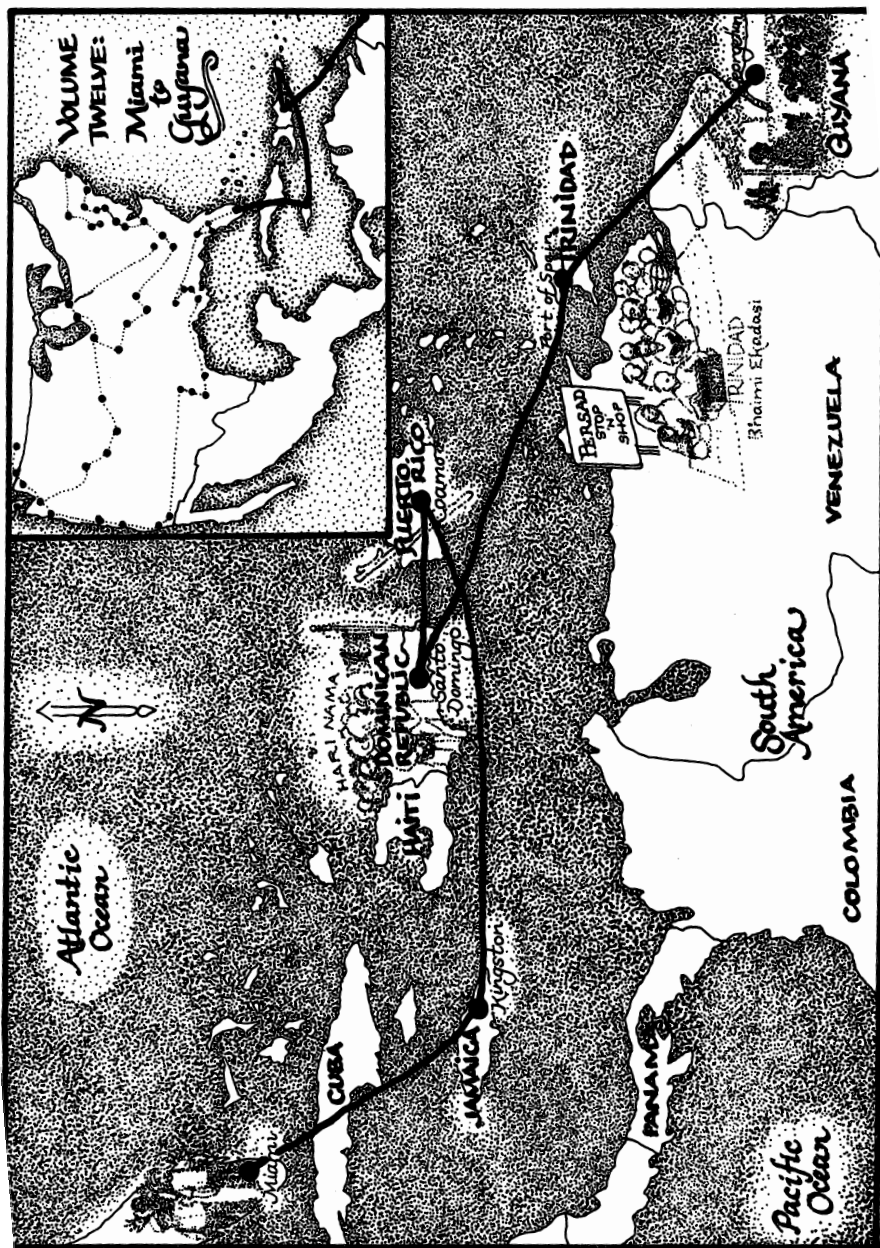
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## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### *Jamaica*

*January 12, Departure from Miami*

This was my first visit ever to Jamaica. I had heard contradictory reports. From early letters by Rkṣarāja, who did pioneer preaching in Jamaica, I received the impression that Jamaicans were hostile to devotees (especially devotees in white bodies). I heard of rowdies harassing us, even while we were in our temple building, and of fanatical Christians and Rastafarians interrupting *hari-nāma* on the street and insulting our women. But from other devotees who had gone to Jamaica, I had heard that the people were naturally philosophical (more so than Americans) and that even a simple farmer in Jamaica would be inclined to hear and inquire about *karma* and reincarnation and God. Also, Vijaya dāsa, who distributes books at Miami airport, said that he found the Jamaicans to be particularly sweet and that they often take books.

*First impressions, Kingston, Jamaica*

I'm not a *swami* with a lot to say. My uncle Jim used to call me Gary Cooper because all I would say was "Yup," like a taciturn cowboy, while Uncle Jim talked on and on. So in the backyard in Kingston I tried to pull sentences of conversation from myself, but after a few minutes I figured it was better to go inside. If a visiting "*sādhū*" has nothing special to say, he should remain silent.

But while I was out there, Bhāgavatānanda showed me the national fruit called “ackee,” which grows in their backyard. He said it tastes like cheese. Then his son Bahulāśva dāsa, who is seventeen years old, came out to see me. “Did you see that Vṛndāvana *gurukula* newsletter?” I asked. “While I’m here I’d like to talk with you.... Your father told me some of your plans....”

Bahulāśva brightened and said, “I was elected boy of the year at school.”

“For your class?”

“No, for the whole school. They interviewed me, and it was published in the *Gleaner*. They printed that I was trained at Bhaktivedanta Swami school in India. They asked me what are the greatest problems facing teenagers, and I said material and spiritual poverty. I said that the parents have to impart these spiritual values to the children.”

Bahulāśva looked great, now grown into a young man, boy of the year with a *śikhā* and smile.

I also met Mr. Hughes who drove us recklessly from the airport in an old Mercedes car. He was somewhat grey-haired, gentle (but not gentle in driving the car). He met Śrīla Prabhupāda in Miami in 1975. He’s the most loyal Jamaican ISKCON congregational member. Bhāgavatānanda kept referring to him as “Mr. Hughes,” even when we almost ran into the car in front of us, “Mr. Hughes! Mr. Hughes! Slow down!”

We’re staying in a nice airy apartment adjacent to the temple. No rug or fancy lamps or hot water, but mango and ackee trees in the backyard, and I sense an easygoing pace that’s to my liking. In such a simple, bare room the devotional pictures stand out

appealingly. Lord Caitanya is alone on a dirt road with His arms upraised; the *kīrtana* party stands far behind Him and ladies worship Him from the other side of the Yamunā; Gopāla Kṛṣṇa is sitting in the woods surrounded by affectionate animals in *sānta-rasa*; Śrīla Prabhupāda is seated on a pillow on the lawn at Bhaktivedanta Manor, chanting his *japa*; and a portrait of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa commands a whole wall with no other distractions, just His manly *tri-bhaṅga* stance and Her pure love for Him.

I asked Mr. Hughes about his meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda. He said that he had met some ISKCON devotees in Jamaica. One time they said that Prabhupāda was coming to Miami and Mr. Hughes should come and meet him. So he did. Abhirāma also arranged for a personal meeting. I wanted to ask Mr. Hughes about every little detail of his meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda, but I thought it might distract him, and so I concentrated on the questions and answers.

Mr. Hughes asked Śrīla Prabhupāda a question about the different religions in the world. Prabhupāda replied that there is one religion only, love of God, and it can be practiced within any religion that teaches about God.

Mr. Hughes asked a question about polygamy: "In some countries polygamy is allowed, and in some countries it's illegal...." Śrīla Prabhupāda answered this by saying, "Can you take care of more than one wife?" Mr. Hughes laughed recalling it. "That was the answer he gave," said Mr. Hughes, appreciating Prabhupāda's unique approach.

"I also asked Prabhupāda how Kṛṣṇa consciousness would develop in Jamaica," said Mr. Hughes. "Prabhupāda said, 'When these young men come to Jamaica, you should help them. Develop it in that way.' " Mr. Hughes laughed again. He was aware that by this answer Śrīla Prabhupāda had entangled him in the network of devotional service. "He gave me my order for life," said Mr. Hughes. And so he is taking it seriously, helping Bhāgavatānanda on an almost daily basis with Jamaican laws and customs and rendering many personal services. He's an insurance man but is always on call to help the cause of the devotees.

On short notice, Devakīnandana dāsī, Bhāgavatānanda's wife, made an engagement for us at Gaynstead high school. We arrived around ten o'clock, dropped off at the front gate by a taxi. The school is made up of old buildings on an unpaved lot. As we entered, it seemed like the whole school was gathered in the yard, and it was very intense to walk into their midst. The girls were dressed in yellow and blue dresses, the boys in khaki, and many of them gawked with amazement at our shaven heads and *tilaka*. Their reaction to us was restrained by the British decorum of the school, but still, it was a lesson in detachment, to find our way into the principal's office through the groups of Jamaican students.

The principal, Mr. Gaynor, who is also the founder of the school, was busy writing in a ledger, surrounded by teachers and assistants. He had an elderly, gentle, scholarly appearance. Bahulāśva is one of his prize students, and Devakīnandana dāsī is a

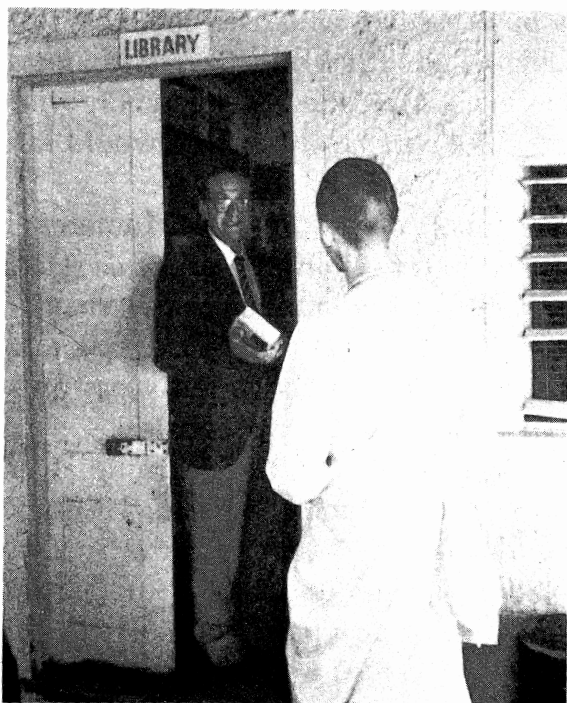


counselor at the school, so Mr. Gaynor has a good impression of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He shook hands with us, and we sat opposite him in the somewhat dilapidated room.

"What is your impression of Jamaica?" he asked.

"I find the people to be gentle," I said. "Not so violent as in America."

"But there's another side," said Mr. Gaynor. He told about "a spate of murders." Recently some religious preachers were shot down with machine guns, while they were innocently holding a meeting. "Be extremely cautious," said Mr. Gaynor, "during your stay here."



Principal Gaynor receives *Bhagavad-gītā* from SDG

He asked Madhu the same question about Jamaicans, and Madhu replied, "I know Jamaicans from London where I grew up. I found them to be happy and friendly."

"Yes" said Mr. Gaynor. "That is their nature. Jamaicans like fun. But—" he told us of the frustrations of Jamaicans due to unequal distribution of wealth. The businessmen are "exceedingly rich," but masses are confined to ghettos. He said that usually foreigners visit Jamaica but are just taken to the nice places. "You should go and see the ghettos."

Mr. Gaynor lamented that teachers are ill-paid. He said that teachers in America get fourteen times what a teacher gets in Jamaica. He said that sometimes he meets a businessman who used to be the slowest student in his school but who now passes him up on the road driving a Mercedes. Mr. Gaynor, who seemed like a poor *brāhmaṇa*, said that he would rather have knowledge than wealth.

Mr. Gaynor also expressed his interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, especially the *gurukula*. He had read Jagadīśa Goswami's handbook on *gurukula*. He particularly liked the concepts of discipline and separation of boys and girls above ten years old. He was also interested in the study of Sanskrit.

"I am in favor of children learning abstruse languages at an early age," he said. He said that by learning Greek one can know the roots of many words and thus better understand English.

Reverend Morris, a pastor of the Anglican Church of Jamaica, then came forward and took us to his class where we were to lecture.

It was a typical third-world school engagement in which the students behaved politely within school

discipline. But they couldn't help laughing when we began our *kīrtana* with harmonium, drums, and *karatālas*. It was quite a shock to their old school hall and such a change from the sounds they usually hear there. After the lecture they asked many questions. Finally, one of the girls stood up and made a formal speech of appreciation for our visit.

Before leaving, I returned to talk with Mr. Gaynor and gave him a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, which he was very pleased to receive.

## *Calling Out to the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa*

*January 15, Trispr̥śā Ekādaśī*

O holy name of Kṛṣṇa, please allow us to call on You and be with You, even though we chant only the shadow of the full name;

O holy name, whose glories are known to sincere chanters, whose potencies are repeatedly described in *sāstra*, You are the form of all-attractive Kṛṣṇa appearing in sound;

O holy name of Kṛṣṇa, You are the most compassionate of all of God's forms, and You are delivered by the compassionate spiritual master;

O holy name, coming straight from Kṛṣṇaloka, You are easy to call upon, but the full secret of Your qualities certainly eludes the offensive chanter who maintains material attachments, who doesn't have faith in the holy name;

O holy name, please never leave us; although we are foolish and unfaithful, we realize that You are our only hope for crossing the ocean of birth and death.

O holy name of Kṛṣṇa, You are always available, especially to those who have been duly initiated into *hari-nāma*;

O holy name of Kṛṣṇa, I prostrate myself before You and pray that my tongue may learn to utter the *mahā-mantra* constantly and not just to fulfill a quota;

O holy name, all glories to the Ekādaśī vow for allowing us to overflow our minimum quota;

O holy name, all glories to Your servant Śrīla Prabhupāda, who has induced us to chant at least sixteen rounds a day, without which we would be like pigs in sense gratification;

O holy name of Kṛṣṇa, especially for we who are too entangled in material desires cultivated from many sinful lifetimes, and who cannot yet comprehend the amorous pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, we pray that we may vibrate Your names increasingly—please grant us more numerical strength and—at last!—a taste for chanting.

### *How Bahulāśva dāsa came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness*

His father got a BTG at his job. At that time his father was a Rastafarian, with long dreadlocks down his back. He told his wife that they were going to visit the temple at 55th Street in Manhattan. And they took with them their son, Bob, who was only eight years old.

“I walked into this tall building,” Bahulāśva recalls, “and saw monks dressed in robes. We went to the restaurant. And then to the temple room. My parents stood in the back, but I just plunged into the *kīrtana*. The devotees encouraged me. I didn’t know the

words, but I enthusiastically danced, just as if I was one of them. After three or four visits, my father bought a full set of books and we got Deities of Nimāi-Nitāi. One night there was supposed to be a video of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but it wouldn't end until 11:00 P.M. My parents said we had to go because it was dangerous to travel on the subways late at night. But I said I wanted to stay and watch it. My mother said, 'But you've got to go to school. You can't stay here, and who's going to take care of you?' I said I could stay with the devotees, and the *bhakta* leader said, yes, he would look after me and make sure I brushed my teeth and went to school. My mother was real angry, but she didn't express her anger, and so my father agreed and just left me there. From that day I started going to school straight from the temple."

Bahulāśva is not only "boy of the year" but he is the captain of the debating team and is leading in many other academic committees and fields. His plan is to get further education and to become a lawyer. Even if he has to go away for education, he wants to come back and live in Jamaica. It isn't very hard for me to imagine the day when he could become a very prominent citizen, yet accepted as a Hare Kṛṣṇa man with *śikhā*. He says, "Wearing a *śikhā* gives me protection." Bahulāśva appreciates the fact that he was trained at Bhaktivedanta *gurukula* in Vṛndāvana. This has been a real solace for me to hear, since I've heard so much negativity from the other boys who speak of Vṛndāvana like Vietnam veterans telling about the war. Bahulāśva knows that Vṛndāvana *gurukula* has given him a considerable academic edge among the other boys, and he is also aware of his spiritual iden-

tity, and therefore he's not afraid of the typical teenage group pressure. He emanates something special, and the other boys admire him for it.

Bhāgavatānanda and family (his wife, Devakīnandana, Bahulāśva, and two young girls) are very enlivened about the preaching field of Jamaica. Devakīnandana dāsī has become a recognized *haṭha-yoga*



Bhāgavatānanda and family

teacher, with her own group of women students. She also regularly lectures as a member of the PTA of the local high school. Her recent lectures on topics such as chastity, crime, and self-esteem were very well received by students and faculty. She is also friendly with church leaders and is hoping to get ISKCON accepted on the council of churches for Jamaica, with opportunities for regular TV appearances. Jamaica is a small place (population two million), and these activities of Bhāgavatānanda's family are gaining them a wide reputation. The people of Jamaica don't see the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement as a cult. They see Mr. Mereday's (Bhāgavatānanda's) family. The family breaks the stereotype of ISKCON.

### *Last evening in Jamaica*

Gaura-Nitāi Deities were on the porch, and fifty people, almost all Hindus, were sitting on folding chairs on the front lawn. I described Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Truth and as the goal of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. I also asserted my right, although Western-born, to preach to Hindus, based on evidence from Vedic scriptures. Then came a "dramatic skit." Six bare-chested boys appeared, giggling as *gopas*. They played ring around the rosy, but then Bahulāśva beat the drum and Bhāgavatānanda came out as a huge Pralambāsura. With evil laughter, he joined the boys and took Balarāma on his back. After he was killed, there was mild applause. And when Bhāgavatānanda rose up from the floor, one of the Hindu-Jamaican boys said, "You're supposed to be dead, mon."

By now it was dark outdoors. Bhāgavatānanda made an announcement, a membership drive: "Whoever joins, gets free books."

Later, in my room, a few men came to see me. Soon I was left alone with Louie, a big muscular man. He asked me, "Who is Śrīla Prabhupāda? I mean what is Prabhupāda's spiritual identity?" And he asked, "Can we really aspire to go to the spiritual world?" And, "Why do we get depressed to think of the end of the temporary life?" I suspected a sentimental tinge to his inquiries, but who am I to judge hastily? The questions were good ones, and Louie expressed a very strong attraction to Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I think in the future," he said, "we will appreciate Śrīla Prabhupāda more and more and come to understand he is like Lord Caitanya." I confirmed that Śrīla Prabhupāda can be seen as *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, as stated in a *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* verse, *kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*. Louie took it in, and then left me alone contemplating with my cup of milk.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### *Puerto Rico*

We were delayed at customs when they wanted to cut open my *danda* because the agent thought it was green bamboo. It was a passionate scene as we tried to cut off the plastic surrounding the case with the custom man's knife. After five or ten minutes, when it still wouldn't come open, he asked me about our Sunday feast. Then he calmed down and understood—and I also calmed down and communicated. "The bamboo is a religious staff, I carry it all the time."

"You carry it all the time?" he asked emphatically. He apologized and let us go once he knew that it was not green bamboo. His change of attitude was also because he realized we were religious, and because he remembered something about our Sunday feasts at Gurabo.

At the customs check,  
on the order of the Puerto Rican agent,  
Madhu slashes with a knife  
at the plastic covering  
to my precious *tridanda*,  
which refuses to rip,  
and neither can the customs man  
cut it through or undo  
the tar baby of black bag and tape.  
"What is inside?"

"Three rods," I say,  
and I hold up three fingers,  
"they stand for body, mind, and words  
dedicated to God."



We should have been more open and simple and religious and said more and preached, because the customs man was *simpatico*. But while it was happening, all we could see was delay and hassle. I kept dreading the cutting open of the *danda* and was preparing myself to be resigned to it. But next time, unless the country is officially atheistic, I'll say, "Body, mind, and words dedicated to God."

January 17

In Gurabo, Puerto Rico, we are staying at Bhūtādi's house. In all my previous visits we stayed in a smaller cottage nestled on the hillside, closer to the trees and birds and with no nearby neighbors. But right outside Bhūtādi's, the workers are constructing a new sidewalk. At least they don't use pneumatic jackhammers. Neither are they working at a killing, passionate pace. Everywhere you see bananas growing on trees, and coconuts, even mangos. A man could live off that fruit. When you drive around the sharp corners of Trujillo Alto, you often come upon a group of six or ten people just standing there for no special reason.

The battered briefcase  
of Bhūtādi dāsa,  
regional secretary for Puerto Rico,  
bears a sticker of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with flute,  
"AMO TU SONRISA."

"Devotees aren't cooperating,"  
the temple president says,  
but I have to be impartial,  
and that's the best service  
I can render  
so devotees won't think  
"the authorities put him up to it."

This pillow's too big,  
the neighbors are too loud,  
the squash unspiced,  
a toe has a splinter,  
the body is too weak.

But I'm learning to love  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,  
 I want to chant,  
 and I'm duty-bound  
 to the spiritual master.

So this petty stuff—  
 "I have no time to myself,  
 people don't understand me,  
 there are too many to talk to,  
 or there's no one to talk to,  
 the water is too hot, too cold,  
 the diet is too strict—"  
 is to tolerate.

And today I found this line  
 of Rūpa Gosvāmī\*,  
 "O Lord, even though I have now come  
 to the time of life that brings  
 blindness and old age, Your  
 auspicious mercy has not yet  
 come to me."

In Puerto Rico ISKCON, in the temple on the Gurabo hill, Lord Balarāma leans and relaxes His arm on His brother's shoulder. Kṛṣṇa is smiling upon His devotees.

---

\* *Govinda-virudāvalī*, no. 46

*Requests from a Devotee Community  
to a Visiting Sannyāsī*

Can you help us to pay the rent?  
Do you know how we can stop quarreling?  
How can we have more faith in ISKCON?  
Can you revive our inspiration  
to go out daily and meet the nondevotees,  
to give them books, *prasādam*, and the holy name?  
Can you overcome the ennui?  
Do you know what's wrong with us?  
Can you impart some wisdom?

Do you have cures for rheumatism,  
or at least relief from boredom,  
relief from doubt and envy?  
Can you create a taste  
for reading the *śāstra*,  
Can you crash through the reluctance  
of laziness  
and the suspicion  
that if we work hard  
the others will remain lazy?  
Can you convince us—and not just  
by theoretical words of logic or  
by quoting scripture, and not just  
some momentary relief—but can you  
make change that will last,  
can you give us a new vision?

Can you bring back old days  
 when Kṛṣṇa consciousness was happy and fun  
 and we served without much thought for ourselves?  
 Can you lead ecstatic *kīrtanas*,  
 give inspiring classes?  
 Will you sit and share *prasādam* with us?  
 Can you stay with us?  
 Or are you also  
 part of the problem?

*January 22, reality in Puerto Rico*

For two consecutive nights I forced myself to give evening lectures even though I had headaches. As a reaction, I was forced to stay up each night listening to the clanging of the alarm system in my head. This was not an intended part of our visit to Puerto Rico. It also means that I will be cheated from going on *hari-nāma* today. Lesson: you often cannot do what you want, because of the limits of your body, but at least in every case you can choose to remain Kṛṣṇa conscious. And maybe, even by staying confined to this house on a busy corner of rural Gurabo, Puerto Rico, I may think of something worth sharing.

In travel writing there is a precedent for sharing disappointments on the road in Basho's *A Visit to the Kashima Shrine*. The poet tells us that he will make a journey because of an irresistible desire to see the rise of the full moon over the mountains of the Kashima Shrine. Poets of the past had celebrated the moonrise at this spot, and so Basho wanted to join the tradition. But when he went to Kashima Shrine, "It started to rain in the afternoon, and in no way could we see the rise of the full moon." Basho stayed up all night wait-

ing, looking to the clouds and listening to the sound of the rain. But the moon didn't show, and therefore he couldn't write any moon-viewing poems. He writes, "It was really regrettable that I had come such a long way only to look at the dark shadow of the moon, but I consoled myself by remembering the famous lady who had returned without composing a single poem from the long walk she had taken to hear a cuckoo." As readers of Bashō, we feel satisfied with the reality of his rainy night, and with the sharing of his disappointment, and we appreciate the honesty of the man. It was better that he share with us what actually happened at Kashima Shrine. On another occasion, Bashō wrote:

In a way  
It was fun  
Not to see Mount Fuji  
In foggy rain.

There is also the *Bhāgavatam* account of the prostitute Piṅgalā, who discovered that disappointment leads to the greatest happiness.

Facing reality, even after the disappointment of expectations, was also the theme of last evening's reading and lecture. I read from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* about Lord Caitanya's first meeting with Raghunātha dāsa. Raghunātha dāsa saw Lord Caitanya and was able to serve Him when the Lord visited Śāntipura. As a result, Raghunātha became mad with ecstatic love, and would run away from home trying to join Lord Caitanya. But Raghunātha's father assigned eleven people to keep constant guard over Raghunātha so that he would not run away. Finally,

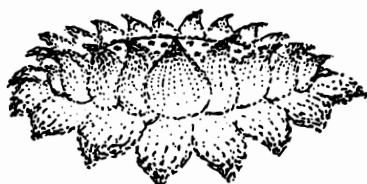
Raghunātha's father allowed his son to at least visit Lord Caitanya briefly. At that time, Lord Caitanya assured Raghunātha, "Be patient and return home. Don't be a crazy fellow. By and by you will be able to cross the ocean of material existence."

After this reading, the devotees asked many questions to distinguish between artificial and real renunciation, and we read further examples in Prabhupāda's purport, such as *markaṭa-vairāgya* (the "renunciation" of monkeys who live in the forest) and *śmaśāna-vairāgya* (the temporary sentiments of renunciation which arise in the mind of a man who goes to a crematorium *ghāṭa*) and *phalgu-vairāgya* (the shallow renunciation which only has an appearance of depth). These examples all prove that renunciation is not a cheap thing, but has to be pursued as a life-long plan. And within this plan, discretion is often the better part of valor. Lord Caitanya cautioned young Raghunātha that the ocean of material existence is very wide and not easily crossed. Just by impetuously jumping into the vast ocean and making a few mad strokes, we cannot expect to reach Kṛṣṇaloka.

So we won't be disappointed if our body prevents us from participating in a single afternoon of *hari-nāma*. There will be another chance, if not here, then in Santo Domingo or Trinidad. The moon will shine again over Kashima Shrine. Following Prabhupāda's intelligent plan for the long crossing, we will persist in swimming across the ocean of *samsāra*.



With diminishing of pain  
 I'm chirping again  
 like the coquies\* in the rain—  
 Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa.

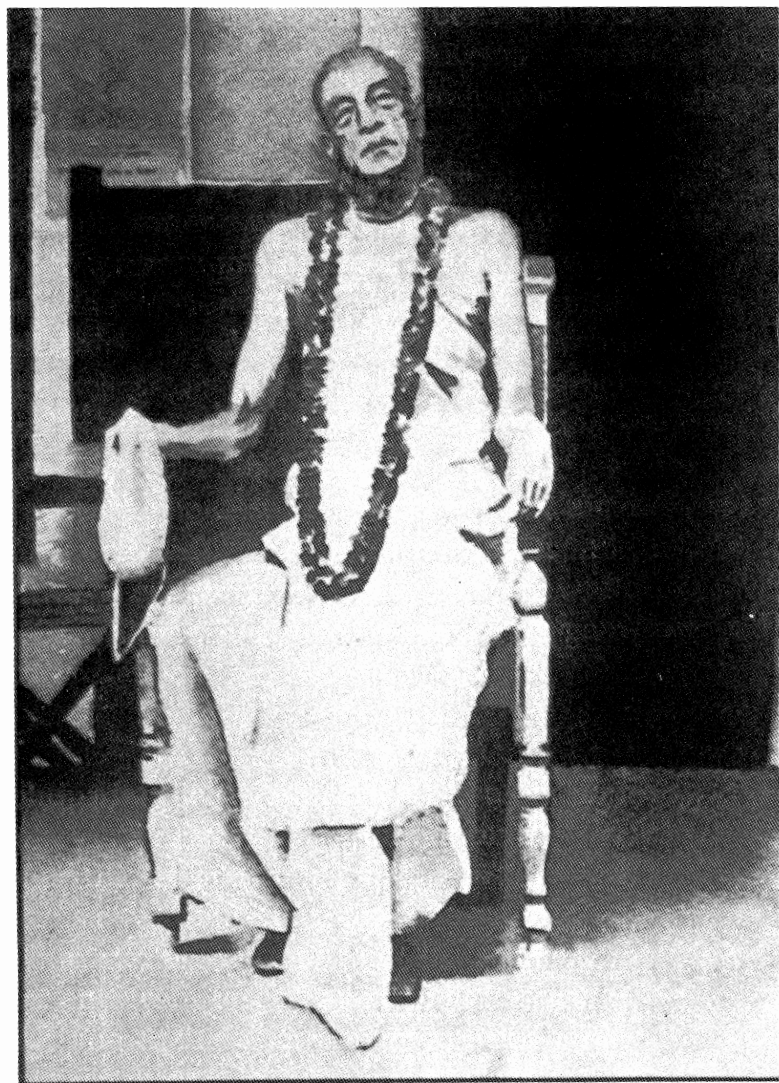


### *Waking Up*

Like children  
 waiting for me  
 to pick Them up,  
 my Jagannātha Deities are sleeping in bed.  
 In another bed, under the sheets  
 is the larger form  
 of Nṛsimhadeva at rest.  
 The Prabhupāda *mūrti*  
 is already awake,  
 sitting chanting *japa*,  
 occasionally shaking his beads,  
 looking to me  
 from his chair  
 just two feet away.

---

\* Spanish word for small frogs, whose chirping sound is heard constantly at night in Puerto Rico.



*Advice from a Sannyāsī  
to a Temple Community*

*Saṅkīrtana* is the *yajña*  
for the people of this age.  
We're the first to get the mercy,  
but as Prabhupāda taught,  
a devotee desires to share  
with the people in the market,  
on campus, at the airport—  
chanting and *prasādam*,  
giving out his books—  
by this performance of sacrifice  
Lord Hari is pleased.

You can't do it daily?  
Only once a month?  
You have to raise money?  
There are only a few of you?  
Ten Deities to worship?  
But *hari-nāma yajña*  
comes first.  
Aspire for it,  
like next week  
for seven straight days  
there is the Saint Blass festival  
in downtown Coamo.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### *Santo Domingo*

*January 23, travel day, to Santo Domingo*

As devotees, we don't see as much of a city or country as do other visitors, such as tourists and political and social workers. We don't go to the beaches, hotels, museums, and nightspots, nor do we inspect the housing for the poor or make political intrigue. But we do travel for the benefit of the people in each country, even if we don't meet them in an ordinary way. By performance of *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, we have faith that Kṛṣṇa will be pleased and supply necessities for all the living entities of the planet. We do mingle with people and go visit places, but in connection with our *hari-nāma*, lectures, and other Kṛṣṇa conscious *yajñas*. We meet people on the basis of presenting them Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and thus our exchange is in terms of their response to God consciousness. And we make quick and lasting friendships with the devotees in each country, on the basis of our relationship in the family of ISKCON.

We floated as U.S. citizens, with money, with caps on heads, without the soft, attractive saffron, "that cloth which is better than a king's."

In the airport, syrupy piano music pulling at your heart. A bubble-dream at the duty-free shop.... Here is a white-bearded fellow and a middle-aged wife and

here are two covered-up monks. (He's even got his *daṇḍa* in a fishing rod carrier.)

The Muzak is playing "Baubles, Bangles, and Beads."

Trying to say Gāyatrī  
while stewardesses  
talk like birds—  
on a short flight,  
and we're covered  
so they don't even know  
we are religiosos.

But I'm happy to be  
a God's man  
traveling for Viṣṇu  
in the service of His pure devotee.

Happiness is  
stopping at the gas station  
to change from *karmī* clothes to saffron,  
emerging in the same style Nārada wears,  
a little son of Prabhupāda, on the road  
to the Santo Domingo temple.

Happiness is  
hearing *kīrtana* at the airport,  
dancing with devotees,  
relaxed, as an elder,  
preaching through a translator,  
shaving off a three-week growth of head-hair  
ready for a cool bath  
in Dominican Republic.

Yesterday when I arrived at the Santo Domingo temple, I lectured about *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. I referred to passages in the Third Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, and from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Fourth Canto, "Pṛthu Mahārāja Milks the Earth Planet." Prabhupāda states that even to get material necessities, there must be *saṅkīrtana-yajña* to please the Lord. Therefore we can conclude that even the small *saṅkīrtana-yajña* which ISKCON is performing is offsetting the world's bad *karma*, in terms of world war and other holocausts. But if the devotees don't perform more *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, or if the people refuse to accept the offering of *saṅkīrtana*, the karmic reaction will come full force.

After my arrival lecture, I asked the devotees for questions, but there were none. Some questions might have been: How do you know that God is actually in control? How do you know that the real solution to suffering is to follow the laws of God?



How do you know that Kṛṣṇa is God and that *saṅkīrtana* is supplying man his necessities? How do you know that we are all spirit souls and that there is a spiritual world? I have faith in the answers to these questions as given in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. My faith is not so deeply realized or inspired, but I hope I am not just bluffing my way through life, saying these things just because they are the policies of my religion. I don't want to be like the followers of Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī who admitted to Lord Caitanya, "We're not really convinced of Śaṅkara's philosophy, but these are the policies of our sect, so we just repeat them."

I want to deepen my conviction of basic philosophical truths of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, with strength to think and speak in defiance of all philosophies which are in opposition to the *Bhāgavata* conclusion. I already have some debating adroitness in argument, but that is mostly intellectual. I want more heart conviction. When we say, "*Saṅkīrtana-yajña* is essential even to supply man's eatables," we should *know* it with our body, mind, and soul.

*January 24*

Sunday afternoon:  
a *brahmacārī* sewing  
on the sunlit porch.

Sunday festival:  
before the crowd comes,  
someone's singing *Gopīnātha*.



January 25

In Santo Domingo,  
the Gaura-Nitāi Deities  
are childlike.

No matter how I lead,  
the devotees respond  
with their own melodies.

*Hari-nāma, downtown Santo Domingo*

There was a drunk with a wine bottle. He kissed his crucifix, he lay on his back, he took off his camouflage shirt, he put the bottle between his legs, he sat up and glowered, he lay back again... harmless. Only a few people paid him any attention. Perhaps a hundred people formed a thick semicircle around us. To our backs was the wall surrounding the presidential palace. Although ISKCON Santo Domingo is rather poor, they have great *saṅkīrtana* equipment, a Honda generator, an amplifying system with two speakers, harmonium, rug, big bowl of cookies, ten young men and ten young women out for *hari-nāma*.

The Santo Dominicans were receptive, although they didn't seem to know much about us. A friend in the crowd, who drove us home in his car, said people kept asking, "What are they singing?"

They stood and watched. I guessed they were simple people, not prone to displays of cynicism or offense before a devotional group like ours. They saw us as offering something nice and interesting. That's how the interaction looked to me. And the fact that they ignored the wino. The show was ours, and they

felt we earned their audience, with our amplifiers, organ music, drums, dancing, bright faces, and whatever it was we were singing in varying tunes, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

At dusk a devotee turned to me and said, "We have to stop now while they lower the flag." To our right a group of soldiers in khaki uniforms and helmets stood in formation at the entrance to the presidential palace. A bugler played a tune like "taps." Our big audience stayed in place but looked over toward the flag lowering. The devotees also stood respectfully quiet, but the moment it was over we started again, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, and the crowd turned their attention back to the main show, *śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtana*, which liberates whoever hears.

Two girls join us  
singing the *mahā-mantra*  
from a *Kṛṣṇa* book,  
laughing shyly,  
for the time being,  
liberated.

In the crowd, a muscle man  
wearing *tulasī* neckbeads  
sways to the rhythm  
of *hari-nāma*,  
and tells his neighbor  
to put out the cigarette.

*January 26, Santo Domingo*

Disciples' meeting:  
Garuḍa dāsa with knife wounds,  
a woman wearing lipstick.

I felt like  
I could've preached all night  
through a translator.

*A Visit with Gobhaṭa Prabhu*  
*Santo Domingo, January 1988*

After the car accident  
he learned tolerance,  
three months in a total cast,  
now he can't feel from the neck down,  
but from the neck up he's all right.  
He laughs, his eyes wetting,  
"Because Prabhupāda was with me  
I was able to get through it."

He thought "This is death,"  
then he knew it wasn't,  
but that he would have to live  
in a body that can't move.  
All this he accepted without trauma  
within a few moments.  
"My chanting wasn't from the heart,  
but it helped calm me down."  
He still doesn't know  
how well he has adjusted:  
"I'm lonelier now."

Gobhaṭa was never one  
to accept service from others,  
but when you can't move....

He goes to the office now  
six hours daily,  
"I would still like to buy a farm,  
and form a Kṛṣṇa conscious community."

I was going to say,  
"Now you can concentrate on *bhajana*."  
But I didn't know what it's like  
when you can't finger beads.  
"You don't know what it's like," he said,  
"when you can't bow your head  
on the floor of the temple.  
I used to actually do it  
with feeling, sometimes,  
especially when I was feeling bad.  
Now I bow in my mind."

He can translate,  
so I spoke with his guests  
on the topic of nonsectarian religion,  
and he laughed at the funny parts.  
And when a devotee placed a glass of water  
on the floor beside him, as if he could reach down  
to pick it up, Gobhāṭa laughed, just as he used to.

He has reminded me  
that putting your hand into the beadbag  
and touching the beads  
is an enormous advantage for chanting,  
which he can't do now.  
But he chants within the moments and hours  
"And that has been very good.  
In many ways, nothing has changed  
But I really can't find words  
to explain it."

## CHAPTER THIRTY

# Trinidad

*January 27, Trinidad*

In order to save money we arrived in Trinidad late at night. The customs men here were very thorough, even though we were the last ones on the queue. The agent was a Trinidadian of Indian descent, and he became interested in our devotional paraphernalia.

"Have you got a *Bhagavad-gītā*?" he asked. When he saw the *Gītā* in its zippered case he said, "like a Bible!"

"Have you read the *Bhagavad-gītā*?" I asked.

"No. I can't read Hindi," he said.

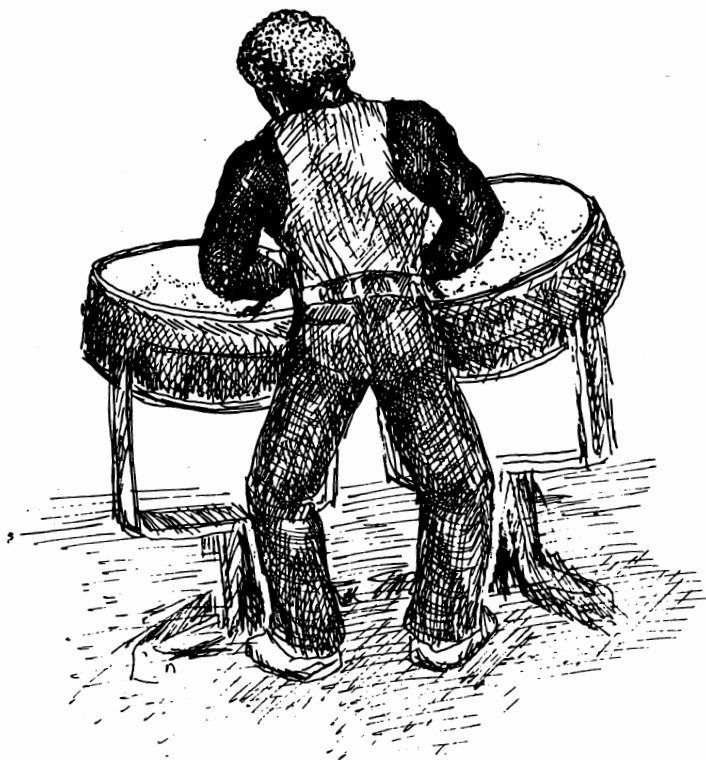
He asked to see the *daṇḍa* at close quarters. When Madhu told him it was a symbol for the "high priest" the agent said, "I won't touch it. If it's religious, I'll just look at it."

Madhu told him that I was the high priest connected to the *daṇḍa*. When the agent looked at me to confirm this I replied, "I am just a low priest. We're both priests." And so it went, as we identified *karatālas* and Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* and explained why a priest would want to use two microcassette recorders. When we asked him to visit the temple he replied, "If God will it, right?"



We stayed at a nearby ISKCON preaching center where we had planned to sleep in a little late. But as we arrived we heard live sessions of Trinidad pan music coming from two different buildings adjoining the preaching center.

"They're practicing for de carnival which is for de next two weeks," said Rājarṣi. It was amazing how the two bands produced such loud, rapid melodies right near each other. They were very fired-up by the upcoming carnival and were practicing to perfection. But between the pan music, the heavy car traffic, and my old complaint, we found very little rest on our first night. As I lay awake, Spanish phrases and rhythms of Santo Dominican speech passed through



my head, *palabra*, *afortunado*, *mejor*, etc., as well as fond memories of the submissiveness and attention during lectures of the Dominican devotees. I also recalled the pleasure of speaking philosophy through a translator, and how the pause after each sentence affords one a wonderful opportunity to think before speaking.

When we rose at about 5:00 A.M., my main concern was to get more rest during the day so that I would be fit for the next day's observance of Bhaimī Ekādaśī.

We set out at sunrise to drive to the ISKCON temple in South Trinidad, an hour from the preaching center. Once outside the congested city, one can appreciate how flat the land is, and the sky and air are very clear and fresh, even with morning clouds on the horizon.

"So this is your first visit to Trinidad?" I asked Madhu and Rkṣarāja.

"Yes."

"There is a game you can play," I said. "As you look at all the different names on signs and stores, see if you can spot the Sanskrit. There, see? 'Persad Stop and Shop.' So that's probably derived from *prasādam*." Soon we saw signs for "Chankar's Beer and Wine," "Johnny Mahavir Auto Mart," "B. Narine Barbecue."

But none of the men in the car took me up on my invitation to play games. Either they were more interested in their *japa* or silent for other reasons.

"See that?" I said, " 'Roti Highway Stand.' The roties are popular even with the native Trinidadians. Isn't that right, Bāla Kṛṣṇa?"

Bāla Kṛṣṇa, who was driving, said, "Yes. Everyone."

After a while, when I saw no one was interested in my game, I thought, "This isn't very important," and so I tried chanting more seriously.

But I couldn't resist commenting when I saw the tall towers of the Divine Life Hindu temple.

I asked Bāla Kṛṣṇa, "It's still not finished, is it?"

Bāla Kṛṣṇa explained that the temple construction began eight years ago, but people have lost faith in it and there have been personal squabbles and accusations of leaders taking money from the building project. The unfinished temple was a grand symbol of Hindu disunity. We partly took it as proof of the invalidity of hodgepodge philosophies, but also as an ominous sign. ISKCON in Trinidad has also been plagued by divisiveness among its own members.

## *Calling Out to the Holy Name*

*Bhaimī Ekādaśī, January 29*

O holy name, I have nothing to say aside from chanting; O holy name, I'm counting the quota; O holy name, this is *nāmābhāsa*, or worse; O holy name, at least I am not in illusion that I am at the highest stage; O holy name, unless You wish to embrace me, this day's *japa* is simply work; O holy name, I am ready to counterattack anyone who insults You;



O holy name, I know You are here; O holy name, I have been speaking of You to the devotees and guests; O holy name, Lord Caitanya several times avoided big crowds and chanted alone all morning, as in Āmli-talā, Vṛndāvana, and in the afternoon, when He allowed people to see Him, He spoke on the holy name; O holy name, please give me a drop of Your mercy;

O holy name, this Ekādaśī makes me aware how poor my chanting is; O holy name, I seem to be condemned to the lower stage; O holy name, even now as I chant towards sixty-four rounds quota, I cannot pray.

O holy name, it gets better as the day goes by and we keep on chanting; O holy name, I'm eager for more rounds; O holy name, I would have quit long ago if we were chanting "rose-rose" or "Mr. John"; O holy name, my teeth are falling out but I don't care; O holy name, I want to pronounce better, but I don't seem to know how to chant with reverence and attention to Your presence; O holy name, please educate me in the ways of chanting;

O holy name, nothing beats the actual experience of chanting; O holy name, even the hibiscus are looking better; O holy name, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that just as the moon seems to follow us as we walk down the street, so the holy name of Kṛṣṇa can follow us everywhere.

O holy name, please maintain our bodies and protect us while we chant; O holy name, I should stop

petitioning You for my personal benefit and start praying, begging as Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura does for the humility to distribute the holy name; O holy name, You know my best intention—to become fully absorbed in the sound of Kṛṣṇa's name, and *then* I can preach without the painful gap between theory and realization; O holy name, I'm going back to work.

Because I am not much practiced at it, staying up all night was still difficult. At 10:00 P.M. I told Madhu I was getting waves of nausea. But afterwards, I felt better. Twelve of us crowded into the little room and sang selections from *Songs of the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas*.

Observing the all-night vow:  
mosquitoes and barking dogs  
endure with us.

Up all night,  
we discover Bhakta Dennis  
plays harmonium well.

Two women join,  
high voices  
in *kīrtana*.

'Round midnight  
singing "Prayers to the Six Gosvāmīs,"  
forgetting all pains.

*January 31, Lord Nityānanda's appearance day*

The temple at Longdenville is in such serious debt that the building may be auctioned by the bank. The devotees in the South Trinidad temple have agreed that if the worst happens, they will accept and worship the Deities Rādhā-Gopīnātha and Gaura-Nitāi.

Rādhā-Gopīnātha,  
 You already know what will happen,  
 but You await our action.  
 I was the priest that evening  
 when we asked You to come  
 to live in Longdenville.  
 If we must ask You to leave,  
 at least we have to move You  
 for worship somewhere else,  
 and never let You fall  
 into the hands of the *mlecchas*.  
 Please help us to protect You,  
 spare us from the worst.

Despite financial threats and differences among devotees, we could not help but join in happy *kīrtanas* on the appearance day of Lord Nityānanda. In the morning devotees danced wildly, especially Ananta-śeṣa who puffs out his cheeks, bulges his eyes, and dances like an aquatic sporting in deep water, sometimes jumping clear from the ocean like a shiny porpoise! Compared to Ananta-śeṣa, all others were quiet, but even old Bhāgavata dāsa, who signs his letters to me, "Your toothless dog," moved into the center and turned round and round in internal



Ananta-sēsa preaching in Longdenville, Trinidad

bliss. This morning I led the singing. I felt like I could go on without effort, chanting chorus after chorus of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and then varying to “Nītāi-Gaurāṅga” and “Jaya Prabhupāda.” When I finally stopped, it was not from fatigue or boredom, but in order to follow the temple schedule.

At night we again joined for a rousing *kīrtana*. In this temple everyone sweats up fast, and the vigorous Trinidadian dancers and drummers raised all of us, Hindus and a few Americans, into more active participation. We couldn’t resist. Of course, we cannot solve all of our financial and personal problems by *kīrtana*, but it is a river of bliss that we can always enter, no matter what else is going on. There will always be problems, and always the relief of *kīrtana*. Maybe one day we will learn to leave the problems behind and stay submerged in the *kīrtana-rasa*.

February 1, 1988

A cock crows at 3:00 A.M.,  
In the alley,  
Ananta’s *japa*.



Shower again, *tilaka*,  
*darśana* of Rādhā-Gopīnātha:  
 these may be the last days.

The next-door neighbors of the Longdenville temple have had a long-standing feud with us. They “combat” the loud Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtanas* by playing even louder radio songs. At least in the morning hours, the neighbors fight back with good Christian tunes, black spiritual music. This morning while in my room, I heard a combination of *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* and “Sweet Jesus” tunes, and they sounded quite complementary.

*So many people doubt Him,  
 I can't live without Him,  
 That's why I love Him so  
 He's so real to me*

*It don't matter what you say  
 I'm going down on my knees to pray...*

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa

*Sweet Jesus, Sweet Jesus*

Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare

Once the morning is over, the ISKCON temple quietens, but the next-door neighbors go full-blast—reggae, calypso, and American rock.

In order to get a visa for Guyana, we had to spend half a day going to downtown Port of Spain. While passing the tallest building, a bank, I caught myself indulging in national pride. In American consciousness I was amused to see the inferior buildings of Trinidad. When I am "home," I take it for granted that every city will have solid, tall buildings. Although I don't even like the U.S. cities with their false splendor, yet when abroad, my inbred national attachment comes out, and I think "None of this is as good as in the U.S.A." When I filled out the visa I also wrote "U.S.A." with confidence that other people should be impressed with my citizenship. But all this is foolishness. According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it's Kṛṣṇa I should always think of, not me, mine, and America. Similarly, my Northeast dialect differs from Caribbean Pidgin English as dry stool differs from wet stool.

### February 2

Although the situation in Trinidad was critical and required decision making, I was anxious to leave. Many temples that we visit are in need of similar help, and they ask you to stay. But I don't want to become a meddler, making decisions which are actually the responsibility of the GBC man for that zone. It is not my responsibility to stay and manage. A responsible *sannyāsī* keeps the wheels moving on his own caravan.

I thought of Lord Caitanya who obeyed the requests of His devotees and stayed where they

wanted Him. But when He actually desired to travel to South India or to Vṛndāvana, He left in the middle of the night. Even when Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya or Gadādhara Paṇḍita fainted unconscious behind Him, Lord Caitanya kept walking.





Because we had a scheduled 6:00 A.M. flight to Guyana, we moved the night before to the airport hotel. As we checked in, they didn't mention there would be a full carnival concert held outdoors right next to the hotel. I noticed the street was blocked off and then trucks arrived with folding chairs. In the drawer of the hotel room desk we found an advertisement, "Mighty Sparrow's Young Brigade Calypso '88—a full night awaits you from 8:00 P.M." We changed rooms to gain distance from the concert, but wound up next to wilder neighbors. "Hey, Jaspah!" The first room also had a loud air-conditioner capable of drowning out other noise, but the new room had no protective noise. As I sought ways to avoid a bad night, Madhu laughed, "It's the material world!"

But when the Mighty Sparrow struck his first note the room shook from floor to ceiling, and we knew we had to leave. Luckily, we found a devotee's parents who would put us up for the night. In the room where we finally took rest, the walls were covered with photos of movie actresses. On the night table was a picture of Jesus Christ praying at Gethsemane. And just as the light went out I saw a poster of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

*A Devotee's Brother*

Sign in a teenage boy's bedroom:

"Away Sweet Away"

shows a rosy vision  
of the Open Road,  
gentle undulating hills,  
a highway meeting a sunset,  
and friendly clouds.

It's an image he can hold,  
like the pictures of the movie actresses;  
maybe someday he can get away  
from his father and mother  
and the island of Trinidad.

His older brother is a serious devotee  
serving Kṛṣṇa and *guru*,  
but Joey will have to learn for himself.  
Lord Kṛṣṇa is another friendly image,  
his family's God mixed in with Jesus,  
not as vivid and tempting  
as the 1980's actresses,  
but all that will pass,  
when he gets a wife and job,  
or he may wander for awhile,  
away sweet away....

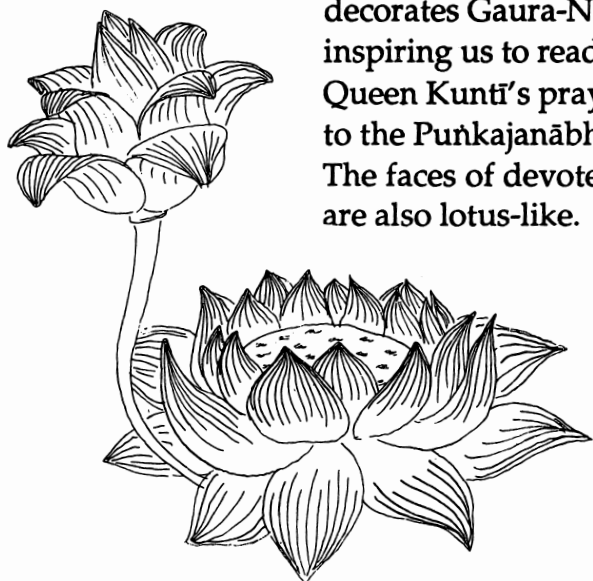
## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

### *Guyana*

*February 3*

On the plane to Guyana I couldn't resist telling Madhu and Ṛkṣarāja some animal stories from New Pānihāṭi, Guyana—the time a cougar jumped at the temple president's wife, but got caught in a barbed wire fence; the story of a six-foot alligator running in front of Agrāṇī Swami; the pain of the sand flies which makes you howl and jump; and the size of the roaches, as big as *samosās*. The devotees seemed to become somewhat apprehensive after I told them, and I sat back in my seat feeling petty and indulgent. I was only joking, but why so frivolous on what could be the last day of my life?

The pink lotus of Guyana  
decorates Gaura-Nitāi  
inspiring us to read  
Queen Kuntī's prayer  
to the Puṅkajanābhi Lord.  
The faces of devotees  
are also lotus-like.



In Guyana we attended a meeting with the mayor of Georgetown and his chamber members. Only while driving downtown did Rūpa Gosvāmī dāsa tell me that Agrāṇī Swami and the devotees had done the exact same program three months ago. When I heard that I lost enthusiasm and considered that I was being brought along just to go through a civil formality. But if my disciples wanted to present me to the mayor why should I complain? Should a preacher prefer to stay at home?

### *At City Hall*

In beret and sneakers  
a Guyanese *bhakta*  
sells BTG's.

In the parking lot  
*bhaktas* shaking hands  
with "big men."

"The mayor has urgent business."  
We wait one hour,  
the feast getting cool.

Before about fifty chamber members, I read verse 3.21 from the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Prabhupāda's purport was perfectly suited for the occasion: "A leader cannot teach the public to stop smoking if he himself smokes.... The king or the executive head of a state, the father, and the schoolteacher are all considered to be natural leaders of the innocent people in general.

All such natural leaders have a great responsibility to their dependents; therefore they must be conversant with standard books of moral and spiritual codes." By reading and speaking, my woes and cynical attitudes disappeared in the effort to say something right. Other devotees also spoke, as well as a Hindu leader and the assistant mayor. It was certainly more than a mere formality—we distributed fifty copies of the one-volume biography *Prabhupāda* and served a full course feast to the eager chamber members.

### *Rainy Season*

Can we go for *hari-nāma* tonight?  
Either way  
is all right with me.

A sudden rainstorm  
pours in the window  
near the picture of *ṣaḍbhuja*.

Devotee women washing plates,  
in the rain.

Downpour:  
the tied goat tries  
to pull his foot free.

### *February 5*

Last night I read from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* about the *Sānoḍiyā brāhmaṇa* who met Lord Caitanya in Mathurā. The *brāhmaṇa* said that only someone who had a relationship with Mādhavendra Purī could have

ecstatic symptoms of love of God as exhibited by Lord Caitanya. I commented to the temple audience that this is similar to our discovery of sincere followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda all around the world. We all share the ecstasy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, a unique tradition of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship and preaching, book distribution as taught by Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Although we recognize all Vaiṣṇavas and all genuine devotees of God, we find the international community of Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers to be the most fortunate company. We want to be with them.

In the midst of our *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* reading, the *pūjārī* opened the curtains and everyone bowed before Nītāi-Caitanyacandra. I said, "Now the reading of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* becomes perfect."

### *Deity Worship*

We realize that  
the form of Kṛṣṇa  
isn't always painted expertly.  
The original Kṛṣṇa is inconceivably beautiful,  
while some of the Indian prints  
are sentimental,  
and local artists often are clumsy;  
their cows look like big dogs,  
their trees are childish copies.

But certain artists approach it better,  
like Sharma's paintings in the Dallas temple,  
and some classic ISKCON pictures  
in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.



Nitai-Caitanyacandra

But it depends on your devotion;  
 if you love a Kṛṣṇa painting  
 if you serve an altar Deity,  
 He reveals through paint or metal;  
 He's actually there for you.

Here in Guyana  
 Gaura-Nitāi  
 have compassionate expressions,  
 well-shaped limbs, lotus feet,  
 the more you go to worship Them,  
 They reveal to you  
 what no critic can see.

The BWIA airline office of Georgetown told Madhu that they had no record of our ticket reservations. They closed at 2:00 P.M. and said we should come back and inquire the next day. So we were left in some anxiety. But our schedule continued—an evening lecture, one hour's drive away, at the home of a man named Viṣṇu.

Once again,  
 choosing to lecture  
 about the time of death.

*February 7*

After three days in Georgetown we traveled five hours by car and boat to New Pānihāṭi in Berbice, Guyana. Agrāṇī Swami's disciple, Dhruva, drove us in his car. We started out before dawn, and Dhruva was



very annoyed that the oncoming drivers wouldn't dim their headlights. He kept flicking his lights off and on to signal them, but very few responded with the standard road courtesy. It was hard on Dhruva's eyes, and he seemed equally frustrated by the fact that Guyana's drivers are ignorant or callous toward driving etiquette.

*Japa* on the road,  
 what else is there?  
 It's the way pure devotees  
 like to be with Him  
 and it's best for the offenders.

At the ferry terminal, a steel band was playing. Paramātmā dāsa said, "Guyana is a dangerous place," referring to the fact that you can easily get stuck here for weeks due to airline mismanagement and a "public be damned" attitude. They said that twice Agrāṇī Swami has gone to the airport with his reserved tickets and his name on the flight manifesto, only to be told there was no seat for him. You might as well relax and chant while it rains, and while the Uprising Steel Band of West Coast Demerara plays merrily during the long wait for a ferry.

At the Berbice temple, the road was overflowed and we had to take a small boat. "In Guyana everything is simple," said Rūpa Gosvāmī, as he paddled the boat down the "street" toward New Pānihāṭi *mandira*. I thought that I also would like to be simple—and happy like the devotees who greeted me at the gate. I felt some of that simplicity as they offered me garlands and brought me into the *darśana* of their



Rādhā-Gokulacandra. No need to be wry or bashful or worried that I may not speak the philosophy perfectly well. Just speak what you know. After all, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "A disciple of a bona fide spiritual master is supposed to know everything." At least a disciple can speak about the meaning of Gokula and *candra* and recite some verses. He should keep on speaking and be satisfied. And if Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa let you write something, won't that be nice?

Whistling winds,  
this remote *āśrama*  
is the abode of the Lord.

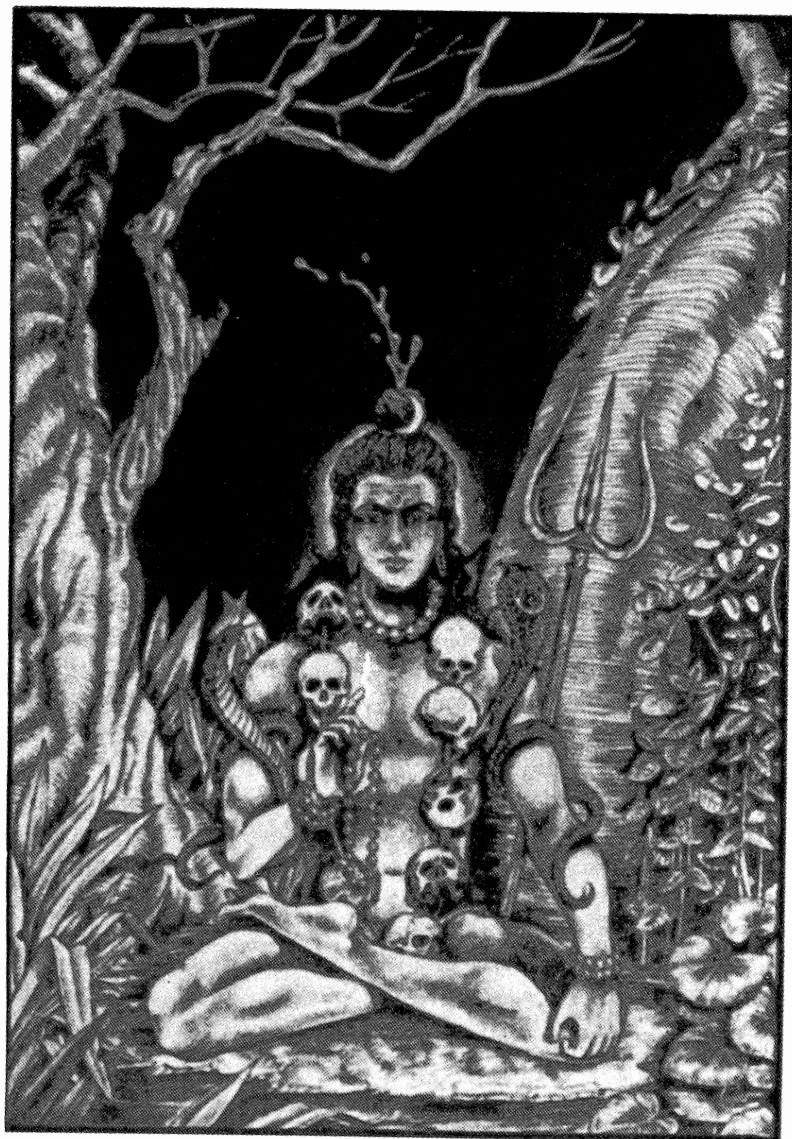
While pursuing my regular *Bhāgavatam* study, I came upon more statements to substantiate the Vaiṣṇavas' combined cultivation of preaching and solitude. I have recently pointed out Lord Caitanya's practice of avoiding crowds and seeking out a solitary

place, such as at Āmli-talā in Vṛndāvana. After chanting alone in the morning, Lord Caitanya would allow people to see Him in the afternoon, and He would tell them about the glories of the holy name.

There is a similar dual manifestation in the character of Lord Śiva, as described in the Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Chapter Two. When Prajāpati Dakṣa foolishly cursed Lord Śiva, the result was to deprive Śiva of his share in the oblations of Vedic sacrifices. But according to the commentary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, this curse saved Lord Śiva from "the calamity of taking part with other demigods.... The curse of Dakṣa was indirectly a blessing, for Śiva would not have to eat or sit with other demigods, who were too materialistic." Śrīla Prabhupāda then makes a further comment:

There is a practical example set for us by Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who used to sit on the side of a latrine to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Many materialistic persons used to come and bother him and disturb his daily routine of chanting, so to avoid their company he used to sit by the side of a latrine, where materialistic persons would not go because of the filth and the obnoxious smell. However, Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was so great that he was accepted as the spiritual master of such a great personality as His Divine Grace Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The conclusion is that Lord Śiva behaved in his own way to avoid materialistic persons who might disturb him in his prosecution of devotional service. .

—*Bhāg.* 4.2.18 purport



In the case of Lord Śiva, it is clear that he was not interested simply in retirement or avoidance of contact with materialistic persons. It is mentioned in an earlier purport that Lord Śiva is so kind that he gives shelter to persons in the lower modes of ignorance. Prabhupāda writes, "Thus by his association even such fallen souls can be elevated. Sometimes it is seen that great personalities meet with fallen souls, not for any personal interest but for the benefit of those souls." These examples show that even the most compassionate preachers, who willingly associate with materialistic persons, also like to be alone, so that they can chant or think of the Lord undisturbed. A balance of these two states creates auspiciousness for everyone.

Twelve miles from New Pānihāṭi is another ISKCON temple, New Kulīnagrāma. We went there by small boat and car to hold a late Sunday morning *kīrtana*, lecture, and feast. The hall was covered with a palm leaf roof ("guaranteed to last one year") with wood poles for sides. Inside were two covered altars, one with a solitary brass form of Kṛṣṇa and one with a big photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda. From the *āsana* I faced the open front door and a neighborhood cricket match at an intersection half a block away. I could also see more congregational members, wearing *sārīs* and *dhotīs*, carrying bead bags, walking towards the temple.

I spoke on the verse, "Living beings who are entangled in the complicated meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, which is

feared by fear personified" (*Bhāg.* 1.1.14). Even *nāmābhāsa*, or shadow chanting, eradicates all sins and grants the chanter liberation from birth and death. And offenseless chanting brings the ultimate goal of life, *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

The audience had no questions, but they were eager for more *kīrtana* and feast. Many of them will also attend our Sunday afternoon festival at New Pānihāṭi for more of the same.

Agrāṇī Swami, as active GBC man and initiating *guru* for Guyana, has made a deep impression on all the devotees and friends of Kṛṣṇa consciousness here. Since his example is in so many ways ideal—because he's always preaching, he's renounced in personal habits, he studies *śāstra* daily, etc.—I often ask, "Did Agrāṇī Swami do this?" before I attempt anything. They told me that when Agrāṇī Swami goes down for *maṅgala-ārati* at New Pānihāṭi, he completely covers his upper body with a *cādar*, leaving only his eyes peeking, so that the mosquitoes can't bite him. When I heard that, I did the same. When they said he sometimes kills mosquitoes in self defense, I did also. We also followed Agrāṇī Swami's example in buying the most inexpensive tickets for air travel, even though it means taking two days to travel in what could be done more expensively in one day.

On the morning of the appearance day of Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī, we held an initiation ceremony in the temple at New Pānihāṭi. Dina became Dīna-bandhu dāsa, and Chris became Kṛṣṇacandra dāsa.

During the lecture  
on the ten offenses  
a cow moos loudly.



Dīna-bandhu dāsa (left) and Kṛṣṇacandra dāsa (right)  
in *hari-nāma cādars* after initiation, New Pānihāṭi

One of the nicest things about Guyana is the simplicity of the devotees. They're satisfied with any little thing that you do, and they respond to any enthusiasm you can show in dancing or chanting. So in lecturing to groups here one doesn't worry whether they've heard it many times before, or whether one can remember enough verses; one simply relaxes and speaks with relish about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You know whatever you do will be well received. For example, if I were in a North American temple on the appearance day of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, I would tax my brain to think of a new relevant presentation. Through Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's mission

I would try to address some of the vital concerns of the devotees. But here, without preparation, I simply recited the many stories we've heard from Śrīla Prabhupāda about Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. And I spoke in a more relaxed way without fear of critics.

Of course, among the devotees some have been practicing and reading for over eight years, and so they know the philosophy. It's not that you can just say any nonsense and they'll be pleased. They want to hear about Kṛṣṇa, but they're not critical. There's no sharp division between those who live in the temples and those who are regular congregational members. The regular congregational members wear full devotional dress when they come to the temple, and they are very enthusiastic about *kīrtana*, hearing philosophy, honoring feasts. And especially since Śrīla Agrānī Swami's work here, they're all becoming determined preachers.

On the evening of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's appearance day, we went out on *hari-nāma* to a village named Whim. When we left the temple at 6:00 P.M., the sun was shining, and the air was sparkling clear. The street where New Pānihāṭi is located is particularly peaceful. Except for a few neighbors, who are also separated by considerable distance, it is completely secluded. And so we passed by the simple life on our street, the grazing of goats, cows, and horses, a child playing with a baby, men bathing in clear water of the stream up to their necks. "Hey Prabhu," one said, "come for a swim?"

"Later," I said, "we're going to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."



*In the village of Whim*

In the village of Whim  
the streets are earth,  
and the girls carry water cans on their heads.  
In the village of Whim  
we set up a stage with microphones,  
and as we started to chant,  
the neighbors at first kept their distance,  
although they had no TV.

In the village of Whim,  
as it grew darker, our stage lit up  
with fluorescent lights,  
and as we sang into microphones,  
a crowd began to gather.

In the village of Whim  
you can chant hour after hour,  
picking varied tunes,  
and no one complains, not the donkeys  
nor the people, nor the police.  
And the weather held up, although it was windy.

In the village of Whim they asked me to lecture  
("Agrāṇī Swami does it") so I recited from  
Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture:  
"Ask an old man what is his next life  
and like a dog he will bark 'Giaw! Giaw!' "

The crowd laughed at my imitation dog barks,  
and I asked them, "Please chant and dance with us,

and after we leave, remember  
to chant wherever you go."

In the village of Whim  
we rocked and swam in rhythm,  
we sang in lead and chorus, we gave  
out sweets, and the crowd kept growing.

When I left the village of Whim  
after a mere two hours, Dhruva complained,  
"Śrīla Agrāṇī Swami stays much longer,  
he has spoiled the people here."

But I left the village of Whim  
to write this down,  
because I wanted you to know  
there is a village called Whim  
where you can chant and dance,  
and the people will love you, and won't  
want you to leave.

### *Impressions at New Pāṇihāṭi*

When the wind blows  
the loose tin roof  
sounds like it's chanting.

I chased a small mouse  
away from the altar,  
twice he returned.

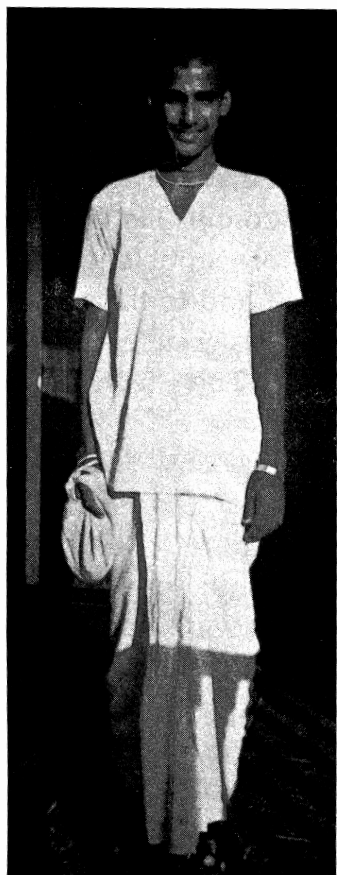
### *Recalling the Caribbean tour*

I remember that in each Caribbean temple I woke Lord Jagannātha in the morning and bathed Him, and sometimes when I looked upon Him more clearly, I appreciated His ever-present beauty. But mostly I can't remember where I was and what I did.

I remember Roberto, the man who drove us to the airport in Santo Domingo. He's a good friend of ISKCON, although he is also a disciple of a Swami Nārāyaṇa *guru*. When Roberto wrote to his *guru* in Gujarat and admitted that he is more attracted to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and to the activities of ISKCON in Santo Domingo, his *guru* conceded, "No problem. As long as it's Kṛṣṇa. There's only one God."

I remember Rāmānanda Rāya dāsa and Yadunandana dāsa from Santo Domingo. When Yadunandana joined me in the car from the airport (taking the privilege to do so, since he is the temple president) I didn't recognize him, although he is my disciple. I had to ask him his name. Although Yadunandana is a Spanish-speaking Dominican, he appears to be a typical, intelligent-looking Indian *sādhū*, thin, tan hue, bespectacled. Yadunandana dāsa is another evidence of Prabhupāda's assertion that by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and following the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness a person of any nation can become a full-time servant of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and even begin to look like an Indian *sādhū*, not only in dress and movement, but in action, words, and worship.

I also remember Baladeva dāsa from Trinidad. He was always humble with me and with the other men in our party, eagerly helping us in whatever we tried to accomplish. Someone may say, "Well, I know Baladeva dāsa, and he's not *completely* surrendered." Yet my memory isn't false. Admittedly, I'm after the honey. As the bee is.



Baladeva dāsa

I remember Govardhana dāsa in Guyana. I couldn't recognize him at first because he wore a beard. But after a few *kīrtanas* when I realized who he was, I requested, through another devotee, that he shave. Govardhana replied that he only had throw-away razor blades, and they weren't able to cut through his beard. But the next day he appeared with a clean-shaven face. He also wrote me a note saying that he was surprised that even though I was present in Guyana he couldn't have long, intimate talks with me.

From Guyana I also remember a pot-bellied man who wore a "Chant and Be Happy" T-shirt. He sometimes joined our *kīrtanas* and dancing, and he

wrote me a note how he had had headaches for twelve years and cured them by chewing gum.

I remember R̥ṣabhadeva dāsa's son. He must be about eleven years old now. When I first started visiting Guyana, he was about six years old. He's still very quiet whenever I see him, doesn't dance in *kīrtanas*, but he waves back when I wave to him. He was wearing a T-shirt with a big colored figure of Mickey Mouse standing shyly with his mouse hands behind his back. R̥ṣabhadeva's young son is another family member whom you remember when you start remembering everyone.

I remember nondevotee faces: the sullen, silent black man who waved the cars onto the ferry to New Amsterdam, and who gestured your car into its exact spot. His physique was awesomely powerful, his look menacing, but he did no more than his assigned ferry duties. What about him? He saw the devotees waving happily to me and heard our shouts back and forth, "Hari-bol! Hare Kṛṣṇa!" although it didn't seem to move him.

I remember the helpers at the New Pāṇihāṭi temple: the lady who works all day washing and cleaning on the *dhāma*, the man with the retarded look who hangs around the temple grounds, does little errands, and looks in the temple window.

And the temple mice—the mosquitoes, what about them? As Bhakta Eric used to ask, "Do they get liberated?" Lord Caitanya also asked Haridāsa Ṭhākura, "How will the *yavanas* be delivered? To my great unhappiness, I do not see any way. What will happen to the trees, plants, insects, and other living entities? How will they be delivered from material bondage?" To these inquiries, Haridāsa Ṭhākura

replied, "When loud chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is performed all over the world by those who follow in Your footsteps, all living entities, moving and nonmoving, dance in ecstatic devotional love. You have preached the loud chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and in this way freed all moving and nonmoving living entities from material bondage."

I remember Paramātmā dāsa, long-time manager of Kṛṣṇa's affairs in Guyana, who left his school-teacher's job to live in the *āśrama* with sand flies and alligators, who happily told me they have no debts now and are supporting all Guyana temples just by book distribution. His main concern was, "Will we lose our enthusiasm as has happened in ISKCON in America?"

Haridāsa is another leader, although he was misled in recent years. Who can trace out exactly how he became bewildered? Bad association and misuse of free will are the general causes. He's fixed-up again, introducing *Nāma Haṭṭa* to Guyana. By physical appearance he reminds me of Tripurāri Mahārāja, and I also remember *him*.

I remember a few old women who have always been in Guyana ISKCON ever since I've been coming, who sit and hear the lectures, slapping at mosquitoes, joining the *kīrtanas*, cooking, cleaning... and Mother Indirā dāśī, faithful widow for Kṛṣṇa in Trinidad, where she's been doing her "little" service for ten years now.

February 11

Departure from Guyana airport was the usual ordeal, consistent with my previous experiences. About a dozen devotees came to see us off. In their minibus in the parking lot, I asked them to keep their promises to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. If we keep our promises to Kṛṣṇa, then He promises to bring us back to Godhead. The devotees gave me two garlands, which included gardenias and lotuses. Then I went like the most ordinary person, which I am, onto the queue—the bifurcating, sliding queue, the queue that cheats and compresses, the crowd of nervous human bodies.

The best part was when the Indian agent took my papers. He wasn't satisfied that I had written my middle initial, and he wanted me to spell it out. He also wasn't satisfied that I had written merely "religious minister" under "occupation."

"What religion?" he asked.

"Hare Kṛṣṇa." I said it loud and clear, because his dialect was very different from mine. He heard what I said and knew what it was. As I peered over the wooden counter and looked down at my card, I saw him write "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

"Who are you staying with?" he asked. I thought he wanted the address of the temple, so I said, "Uitvlugt Front in West Demerara."

"No. *Who* are you staying with?"

"Oh! Rūpa Gosvāmī."

So he wrote down Rūpa Gosvāmī as well as Hare Kṛṣṇa. That was the best part.

After that, we waited. We became too dull to read, although it was useless to be anxious about *when* the plane will leave and *whether* it will leave. After two hours, a bit of Piṅgalā's disappointment seeped in.

Like me, Madhu looked sweaty and spaced out, but gradually he began to finger his beads and chant. Everyone was sweaty and waiting, so we didn't care so much what others thought. We chanted, in saffron.

After a two-hour delay, with no apologies, we were allowed on the plane. Then we began our day's journey, a fifty-minute flight to Trinidad.

There was a big reception at Port of Spain airport because it's carnival time. Rock-calypso music was turned up full-blast, and half a dozen persons came forward offering meat hors d'ouvres and cups of pineapple juice. The flags announced "Trinidad, land of limbo" and "The rainbow is real."

We entered the immigration area and found ourselves towards the end of long queues. Travelers beware! Don't get caught behind a plane of Guyanese entering into Trinidad!

While standing in line, a chubby woman with a short afro haircut and a red dress began speaking to me.

I thought she said, "Are you Arab?"

"Hare Kṛṣṇa," I replied.

She looked up to the ceiling laughing, as if to say, "This guy is impossible."

Then I thought she said, "Hare Rāma."

I leaned forward to hear her better while I said, "Yes, Hare Rāma."

The man behind her then became very helpful. He said, "She's asking whether you will carry her rum. She has four bottles and you're only allowed two."

"No!" I said. "In our religious order we don't drink liquor."

"But you can carry it," she said.



Madhu then waved his finger at her with mock admonishment, "You shouldn't drink rum either. And we're not going to carry your rum for you."

Time dragged on in the land of limbo, as the immigration men gave the third degree to each Guyanese. I wondered, Does the word "rum" pass for *nāmābhāsa*? After about an hour Baladeva dāsa's father, who works in the immigration department, came up beside us. He let us know that Baladeva dāsa was waiting, and that we should just go through the green line once we got into customs.

When we finally got out, both Baladeva and his father told us how Agraṇī Swami beats the line. He gets a seat in the airplane as close to the entrance as possible. When the plane lands he maneuvers himself by all endeavor towards the door. When the door opens, "the *swami* goes like a kite." He runs as fast as he can and is usually the first one to the immigration desk. Now we know, for the next time. As John Milton wrote, "They also serve, who only stand and wait."

*Waiting in Trinidad*

When de Hare Kṛṣṇa man  
wait in de line  
thas jes fine—  
'cause he chant.

Chanting Hare Rāma,  
though the woman in the next line  
is chanting rum oh rum.

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa  
but in the mind  
is de limbo.

Until dat time,  
Hare Kṛṣṇa man,  
chant all de time  
wid or widout  
spontaneous love.

Yas, Hare Kṛṣṇa man  
at least while in de line  
chant all de time!

## *APPENDIXES*

## *Poems from the Road*

### *Kṛṣṇa Conscious Bookstore*

Voracious readers,  
 every family and school has them,  
 who read what's scrawled on walls  
 who go through newspapers, magazines  
 who read highway signs, advertisements...  
 They love to listen to stories,  
 they go through *Mahābhārata*  
 and *Rāmāyaṇa* a dozen times,  
 they began *Kṛṣṇa* book at five years old,  
 they keep studying *Bhagavad-gītā* with new lights,  
 but they want more,  
 I mean voracious readers,  
 but they don't want non-*paramparā*.

And the writers,  
 devotees who follow and read  
 Prabhupāda as their life and soul,  
 who write formal essays, but who write more,  
 whose wrists keep moving, handwriting flowing  
 into words they have not spoken,  
 in essays, poems, and stories.

Won't we have our own bookstores?  
 Filled with novels, dramas  
 poems, diaries of pioneers,  
 women's studies, sociology—

and not just from the sympathetic outsider,  
but from practicing devotees—  
and from different points of view  
yet all within the acceptance of  
our Founder-*Ācārya*.

I imagine a big bookstore  
and readers browsing on a Saturday night,  
many devotees and curious friends in the aisles,  
saffron men crouching to look  
at books from the 1960's,  
a Prabhupāda-memoir section,  
the story of the anti-cult wars,  
GBC documents,  
a whole wall of cookbooks,  
a whole room for children,  
many photo books, art books,  
latest collections of poets,  
literary criticism, Sadāpūta science wars,  
the confrontation with Western philosophy,  
and if there is work by nondevotee  
scholars on ISKCON,  
or New Age support books on  
animal rights and other alliances,  
then intelligent devotees who  
follow their spiritual masters  
won't be misled.  
The cashier says,  
"We keep it for some customers."

At least in my vision  
it's a store for devotees,  
a living testimony that ISKCON  
has sent roots deep.

And Prabhupāda's books would be  
 in many editions and languages,  
 as the main attraction:  
 the original three volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*  
 produced in facsimile from the 1960's set,  
 the 1970's set from the BBT,  
 the classics of India set,  
 high- and low-priced editions,  
 and study guides for Prabhupāda scholars,  
 and big photos and paintings of Prabhupāda.  
 People line up at the cashier desk,  
 chanting *japa* while they wait.  
 The cashier says,  
 "Don't stay up too late reading, Prabhu,  
 so that you miss *maṅgala-ārati*."

## *Calling Out to Śrīla Prabhupāda II*

O Prabhupāda, whose pastimes and phrases of  
 speech decorate the lectures of all his learned follow-  
 ers; O Prabhupāda, whose disciples are always saying  
 "Prabhupāda said";

O Prabhupāda, who preached *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* for  
 many decades in India while carrying out the order of  
 Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as a *gṛhastha*; O Prabhu-  
 pāda, who then outshone all *sannyāsīs* by carrying  
 the message of Lord Caitanya to America, leading the  
 way with *kīrtana* in ISKCON;

O Prabhupāda, who took morning walks begin-  
 ning just before sunrise, who installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa  
 Deities around the world, and who led American and

European young men and women in blissful dancing and chanting in the parks and streets;

O Prabhupāda, whose activities are appreciated by demigods and by eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa; O Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa having taken shelter at the lotus feet of the transcendental Lord;

O Prabhupāda, who brought liberation and *bhakti* and *mahā-mantra* and Kṛṣṇa into the English language, and who brought *purīs* and *halavā* and *dāl* and *sabji* into the Western diet, and who didn't insist that his followers shave their heads and wear robes and *sārīs*, but whose disciples wanted to change their jeans for *dhotīs* and wanted to wear *tilaka* and *kantī-mālā* for pleasing you, Prabhupāda;

May we please you despite our many faults, may we please be included in your *saṅkīrtana* party, and may we always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, while completely disdaining illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, and intoxication.

O Prabhupāda, please appear before us in your pastimes and teachings as reward for our service;

O Prabhupāda, assure us that you are still with us and guiding us onward in Kṛṣṇa consciousness;

O Prabhupāda, protect us from quarreling with one another and from diseases like *prākṛta-sahajiyā*, Māyāvāda, pride, laziness, and many other *anarthas* only you can remove;

O Prabhupāda, who walked to the shore of the Ganges and splashed his head with her water, and who walked with a cane, striding with upright pos-

ture, and enjoyed philosophical debate as he walked with his men;

O Prabhupāda, who ordinary persons fail to appreciate, who is worshiped by all followers of Kṛṣṇa because he represents the epitome of Lord Kṛṣṇa's statement, "One who preaches to the devotees is the dearest, and there will never be one more dear than he";

O Prabhupāda, who kept close watch on financial accounts of ISKCON in India, and pushed his followers to work hard as he did, please appear in our minds in a lively way and keep us strictly under your charge;

O Prabhupāda, who knew how to convert all energy and activity throughout the whole universe into the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but who lamented that so few people were willing to surrender their false egos and to recognize Kṛṣṇa as the summum bonum;

O Prabhupāda, I am calling to you from a great distance, hoping to close the gap between us, calling upon you as a lost child looking for his parent, calling to keep myself from drowning in darkness and false ego madness. Only you can save me.

O Prabhupāda, I think of your devotees' worship of you, especially those who guide their lives by your books, who carefully keep your *mūrti* in their room, or those who live in an ISKCON temple and stand daily before your life-size *mūrti* and bow down flat before you and think of what you have said as appropriate instructions for every conceivable occasion—I think of those who are confident you can take them back to Godhead;



O Prabhupāda, you have made it clear to us by your repeated instructions and by your own realizations and dedication to Lord Kṛṣṇa that we are not the body, we are spirit souls, we are not impersonal, the Absolute is sentient, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Godhead, we should serve only Him, but you've also made it clear that it's not easy to give up *māyā*;

O Prabhupāda, you've shown us success, you have done it all, you've even shown the way to die surrounded by *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* in Vṛndāvana after a life of hard work, and inspired up to the last breath; O Prabhupāda, you were concerned always for all beings;

O Prabhupāda, we have your scarves, towels, *vyāsāsanas*, photos, memories, and more important we have transcendental feelings of separation for you and definite duties, and the *mahā-mantra*. You are always alive for us as long as we want you, we just have to tune in to Śrīla Prabhupāda;

O Prabhupāda, you have said life is short and one lifetime is but a flash on the soul's long journey, you have said even a little material desire will force us to come back again to birth and death, and you have said, "Distribute my books, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, 'live with the devotees'";

O Prabhupāda, what does it mean that we live forever with you? How will we know it? How can we throw off the shackles? Who can we trust in this world besides you?

O spiritual master, who created the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement on the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and who made a sweet-sounding tamboura by pick-

ing up discarded wires and an old gourd (the discarded youths of Western countries), and who played that tamboura all over the world to the words and tune of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*;

O Prabhupāda, who pleased Kṛṣṇa very much, and who assured us that if we sing the praises of the Supreme Lord, He will be very pleased with us;

O Prabhupāda, who taught us how to cook and clean up the kitchen, and who demonstrated on his hands and knees how to mop the floor with a wet rag; O Prabhupada, who bowed down before the Deity, and who pushed the button on his dictaphone and spoke immortal words into it at 1:00 A.M., and who received *caraṇāmṛta* in the soft open palm of his right hand, and who smiled and laughed with ecstasy in reciting the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa;

O Prabhupāda, who cleans the dirty minds of those who hear him, who lifts us up strongly, never to fall again; O protector, who advises us to carry out the direct order of the spiritual master and thus be saved from the clutches of *māyā*;

O Prabhupāda, who played shiny brass *karatālas* tied with saffron silk cloth, who allowed his disciples to cook and provide for him, and who said, "You are like little fathers and mothers";

O Prabhupāda, as we tolerate the token summary punishment for our many past offenses, may we remember your tolerance with us, and may we be peaceful and satisfied in any situation simply by knowing that we are serving you.

## *Excerpts from Recent Letters*

### *A devotee's life—inside or outside the temple*

If you think that you are living in the temple because of a need on your part, or even as a weakness, that is all right. That is a way of expressing it. If you honestly think that you live in the temple because you could not possibly maintain your Kṛṣṇa consciousness while keeping a job in the world, that puts you in a very nice dependence on the Lord. But if you say it that way, then mean it sincerely. Don't say that as a way to indirectly criticize those who move outside. Don't think, "I am too weak to live outside the temple, and those who try to live outside the temple are being presumptuous, because they are even weaker than I am." We should live in the temple for the right reasons, or live outside the temple for the right reasons.

And even if we analyze that it is superior to live inside the temple, there should be no attitude of holier than thou toward those who are less fortunate than we, or less surrendered than we. This is a time of change and trial, but we all have to try to be broadhearted. The temple has to be maintained, so those few workers who are willing to work for Rādhā-Madanamohana will be very dear to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. Because mostly he wanted this mission pushed forward by book distribution and temple worship. I hope that you and your husband will be willing to do this and continue. But you shouldn't be resentful of those who have to move out either

because they want to or feel they need to. It has to also be applied according to individual cases.

### *A report of consciousness*

You say the report you gave me was "a report of consciousness." Certainly the inner life of the devotee is the most important part. I could learn how you are making your money, a description of your house, your bodily activities, etc. And these are also important for persons who love each other. But even more important is the inner life, the life of consciousness.

So it is encouraging to hear how you are concentrating on the actual substance of your chanting, reading, association with devotees, etc. If we chant without attention, we only get a semblance of the name. If we chant with full consciousness, we come into direct contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and then we lose all material desires.

### *Pure and strong speaking*

Try not to be too affected by the so-called label that some have given you as a hardliner. Just go on preaching as you always would. Otherwise, they will intimidate you into a defensive posture, and you may start to feel obliged to speak in a harder way than you actually intend. It is not so good when the *Bhāgavatam* classes are *too much* in touch with community affairs in a particular temple. Some of it is inevitable, and it is also good to be relevant. But unfortunately it sometimes gets extreme so that people are not really listening carefully but simply want to hear about their own concerns, waiting for some

political remark, or trying to read in between the lines of philosophical statements. The *Bhāgavatam* class should be free of this.

### *Encouraging slack devotees*

I agree that we have to distinguish the serious devotees from the less serious devotees. You mention that devotees who become lax on Prabhupāda's teachings, although claiming still to be devotees, may in some ways be worse than the so-called Christians. It is lamentable when someone doesn't follow Prabhupāda's instructions. But maybe he can change and come back up to the standard. We have to always give them that encouragement and not think that they are rascals or doomed. Prabhupāda used to give the example of the rigid *brāhmaṇas* in India who, he said, actually ruined the Vedic culture by their rigidity. If someone was a *brāhmaṇa* and they fell from that standard, there was no way that they would be allowed back in. This rejection by the *brāhmaṇas* resulted in thousands of people converting to Mohammedanism, because they could not be brought back within the fold of Hinduism. But Lord Caitanya's philosophy is that even if someone falls away, he may be brought back by the devotees and by the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Lord Rṣabhadeva also advises his sons that they shouldn't become angry with disciples even if those disciples do not follow the rules and regulations.

*"Surpassing" the spiritual master*

You have asked an interesting question about the relationship of the spiritual master and the disciple. You give examples of disciples who appear to have surpassed their spiritual master in terms of quantity of preaching or learning, etc. So you ask, "What is the aspect of the spiritual master which establishes him always as the master and the disciple always as the servant or subordinate?" This is a matter of viewpoint from the genuine disciple. It is like the father and son. The father may have a B.A. degree, and his son may grow up and get a M.A. degree; so the son is, in a sense, more educated. But that doesn't mean he will look upon his father as junior or inferior. There is an abiding superiority in the fact that he is the father, and a good son will always relate to his father in that way. After all, he has a very personal relationship with the man who is his father. That man gave him life and upbringing in so many ways, so he is eternally grateful. Similarly, we understand that we were wandering in the material world and our spiritual master picked us up and gave us our connection to Kṛṣṇa. If by his grace we get some blessing of advancement, we should not think that now we have become his master or anything like that. Sometimes a pure devotee does things that even Kṛṣṇa "couldn't" do, but the devotee always understands it comes from Kṛṣṇa. The relationship remains that way in the mind of the sincere disciple. He never thinks now I am the master of my master.

*The mind as friend and enemy*

I know you are a sincere devotee and are trying to overcome your difficulties. You mentioned particularly the mind. The material mind is a curse on us for coming into this material world. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says it can be the worst enemy. But the same mind, if we use it to elevate ourselves, can be the best friend. You have had particular trouble with your mind, so you may make a study out of this in Prabhupāda's books. There are many, many references to the mind. The mind can be seen either materially or spiritually. When you can understand the distinction better, this may help you. Especially, you have to know the material mind as the enemy.

We have to learn to let go of what may be fantasies or fears not built on spiritual reality. The more we get fixed in spiritual conviction by chanting and hearing and by faithful service to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, we will dismiss the phantasmagoria which the material mind presents to us as reality. It is not that only you have trouble with the mind, but every living entity. Even the person who thinks he is most cool-headed, if he thinks that his family and nation and body are his self and extensions of his self, then he is carried away by the chariot of the mind.

*"My disease is that I cannot chant my rounds"*

I was shocked to hear that you are suffering so much and confined to bed due to complications and weakness arising from your pregnancy. Moreover, you say you fell twenty-eight days behind on your *japa*. This reminds me of Haridāsa Ṭhākura who was ill when Lord Caitanya visited him. Lord Caitanya

asked him what was the matter and Haridāsa replied, "I cannot chant my rounds." So this is the disease or the misfortune when we are sick, that we cannot do devotional activities.

I know you are sincere in trying your best. Now you can appreciate so much more what it was to be normally active and serving Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa can take away that ability from us at any moment. And not just you, but the strongest person. So in this reduced fashion, now you can be humble and try your best to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa somehow or other. You may remember that when I was in Puerto Rico a few years ago trying to recuperate from chronic headaches, I wrote a short poem about being ill. It went like this:

My list of things to do  
falls to the side.  
All I do is rest.  
But one cry to Kṛṣṇa  
is worth a hundred days  
of marching in pride.

I hope by the time you receive this letter there is some relief in your condition. Don't add to the trouble by feeling guilty about your rounds. Just chant what you can now and promise that when you are well that you will increase your chanting. Kṛṣṇa sees your good intent.





*Giving to beggars*

In most discussions of charity in Prabhupāda's books, he refers to the charity of giving people Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Otherwise, charity will implicate the giver in his next life. I will have to come back in another material body in order to receive back the gift this person owes me. I am not sure the exact context of the discussion which you mentioned in the Sixth Canto about a beggar. The beggar must be qualified, however. If the beggar is a *brāhmaṇa*, we should never refuse him. In this way, Bali Mahārāja could not refuse the "beggar" who happened to be the Supreme Lord Himself in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* boy. We are not obliged to give to an ordinary beggar, especially the money which we as renunciates are using in Kṛṣṇa's service. We actually have no money to give. We are not in a position to give charity because all our money belongs to Kṛṣṇa. It would certainly be foolish of us if we thought we were obliged to give away all our money to a person even if he were a nondevotee. Even to the nondevotee we can give the topmost charity of the holy name and give him some form of Kṛṣṇa consciousness such as *prasādam*, etc. We don't neglect the beggars.

*"The life of a sādḥaka"*

I will reply to your expressed doubts about my books in journal form. I don't know who was criticizing the books as you said. But the relationship of *guru* and disciple is very important, so why should somebody try to break it?

Just because Prabhupāda didn't write in diary form doesn't mean it can't be done. He did write

some diaries, however. Other Vaiṣṇavas have also kept diaries. Dayānanda Prabhu has mentioned this in the appendix to *Journal and Poems*, Volume Three, that the *ṭīkās* of Svarūpa Dāmodara and Murāri Gupta form the basis of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. I have found that this writing is a very good way to communicate with my disciples and other friends. I am not qualified to write scholarly Vaiṣṇava commentaries. I have already written a biography and other biographical works of Prabhupāda. So I have tried different forms. Although there may be a particular "form" to the writing, it is certainly the same teachings that Prabhupāda gave. As for the fact that I talk about myself, I have also explained this in the beginning of *Journal and Poems*, Volume One. I am not writing about myself in a materialistic or egoistic way. I am describing the struggle of one devotee to succeed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The success of my struggle is due to the power of Prabhupāda and the *bhakti* process. It is the process itself which I am trying to glorify. It is, "the life of a *sādhaka*." What is perhaps new is that I am writing more openly and honestly.

*Why does the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describe so much sexuality?*

You say that your daughter has asked why in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are sexually oriented pastimes. These pastimes are not meant to agitate the mind, and if we read them carefully, along with the purports, they will have an edifying effect. Thus, they are the opposite of pornography or literature about sex, which makes us inclined to sex. Often in the

*Bhāgavatam* a king is described as being attached to female beauty, but in the end he overcomes it and sees that it is illusion. Since male/female relationships take up the main emphasis of material life, naturally *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has to deal with it. Thus it is stated in the *Īsopaniṣad* that one should learn side by side *vidyā*, or knowledge leading to eternal truth, as well as *avidyā*, or ignorance. We learn about ignorance, or material illusion, from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and therefore we don't have to find it by foraging through the muck of the material world.

### *Teenagers and free will to serve Kṛṣṇa*

You ask how the teenagers can be asked to continue attending the morning program if the adults don't? The fact is, soon these teenagers will have to decide whether they want to attend the morning program, not by force but because they want to. That test is there for each of them. So to the best of our ability, we have to try to cultivate their voluntary desire to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Prabhupāda says that at age sixteen the son or daughter becomes a friend to the mother and father and is no longer just their subjugated charge. If at that point a child is willing to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, then you have been successful. So your whole work is a kind of selfless task in trying to bring them to their own voluntary taste of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It does not mean, however, that just because some people are not attending the temple program others who are able to go, and willing to go, will give it up. You have to explain it to them in that way.

# Ekādaśī Japa Log

*Vijayā Ekādaśī 1988*

When you have dreams of material desires, and then you wake to observe the twenty-four hour Ekādaśī *vrata*, you should not think that you are an advanced spiritual person. Did you think that by a mere twenty-four hours' *vrata*, you'll be free of all material desires? But it helps.

Last night we read from a little biography of Saint Anthony. Hearing of his fasts and prayer vigils and how the "Devil" tempted him also made me aware how soft, lazy, and tiny I am in my endeavors, and how persistent Māyā will be until we give her full proof of our determination. When Saint Anthony was waging war with the devil, the more he practiced austerity, the more he was tempted. "It seemed as if the devil fed on Anthony's empty stomach, quenched his thirst on Anthony's parched thirst, and found a strange repose in Anthony's sleepless nights."

So Ekādaśī is not just fasting, but the fasting is supposed to give us more time and scope for chanting (sixty-four rounds). And chanting is prayer, calling on the holy names. At least my previous night's materialistic dreams should show me how I must pray. "O dear holy name, although I appear to be hypocritical and sentimental in calling out to You, please find some grain of sincerity in my chanting. Please reciprocate so that I can be with You always and leave behind my material life of body and mind; let me enter the life of pure devotional service."

5:10 A.M. My first eight rounds were vigorously uttered, my movements and demeanor alert, but devoid of prayer-feeling; no real *attention*. Rather I hear my mind skating all over the world. Such chanting can't really endure or gain me intimate relationship with the holy name. So on Ekādaśī my hope is that I'll keep at it, pecking, pecking, pecking, and finally, maybe, I'll break through by persistence to a better quality of calling on Lord Kṛṣṇa.

6:15 A.M. Sixteen rounds done.

A first-dawn bird is chirping  
the street lights are still ablaze;  
if you want to know Kṛṣṇa,  
you'll have to live deeply,  
and if you want to live deeply,  
you can't be afraid.

Regarding the worth of a neophyte's *japa* reflections, the whole thing will have inspirational meaning if I can actually become victorious. We are *not* supposed to aspire to become an advanced devotee. The real secret is service itself. Chant the holy names all day long to serve the Lord.

Revival of the dormant affection or love of Godhead does not depend on the mechanical system of hearing and chanting, but it solely and wholly depends on the causeless mercy of the Lord. When the Lord is fully satisfied with the sincere efforts of the devotee, He may endow him with His loving transcendental service.

—*Bhāg.* 1.7.6, purport

8:00 A.M. Twenty-four rounds. Īśa Prabhu and I left his apartment for a walk. A few blocks away we encountered the busy highway and the overhead train. Īśa said he had been reading in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* how the sages meditated for thousands of years in peaceful solitude during Satya-yuga. Nowadays, in Kali-yuga, a devotee is usually expected to live amidst a demoniac civilization, in a lifetime of very short duration. But with the *mahā-mantra* we are able to attain the same concentration on the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as sages did in meditation. Even in Miami in 1988, we are thinking of Kṛṣṇa as we walk amidst illusions.

2:00 P.M. Now I am on round number forty-six, and everything has become slow and merely mechanical. I'm doing the Ekādaśī *ritual* of sixty-four rounds. But isn't this *niyamāgraha*, to follow the rules and regulations without being aware of the goal?

How do you pray?  
It's a cry  
from the core of the repentant heart.  
Or talking with Him  
whom you love very much,  
the child crying for the Mother.  
But when you are cut off from Him  
filled with mental stuff,  
how do you break  
from mere ritual  
to prayer?

Can you do it like a "method actor," just throw yourself into the role, *become* the sincere chanter of the holy name the way an actor becomes Hamlet?

6:45 P.M. Tired and weak, and it's chilly. Saint Anthony indeed.

There is nothing to say; it's all in the words of the Vaiṣṇava songbook.

10:30 P.M. Lively discussion of Ekādaśī with Hariścandra, Dharma dāsa, Iśa, and others who gathered here for two hours of *bhajan*as.

"It would be nice if everyone did it," said Jñāna-śakti. "There would be strength in numbers."

Hariścandra has been observing the full Ekādaśī vow for over a year, influenced by Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Swami. Now Hariścandra stays up all night and doesn't take any rest the next day. He goes through a full work routine until 9:00 P.M. the next night.

"I get much more work done on Ekādaśī," said Hariścandra. I confessed about my nausea and other pains. Dharma dāsa, who has also been doing the vow for a year, said that at first he found staying up all night to be unbearable.

"But the body undergoes a change," he said. "Eventually you can do it without ordeal."

Jñāna-śakti said, "I know a devotee who says that the *nirjalā* disturbs his mind so much that he can't concentrate on Kṛṣṇa."

No one should be forced to fast from water, but maybe one day we can observe *nirjalā* without being disturbed.

"We will be disturbed at the time of death," said Īśa. "And we'll have to think of Kṛṣṇa then. We might as well get used to it now."





# Study Notes

## *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

*First Canto, Chapter Two, verses 30–34:*

*How the Supersoul is Expanded*

We all have experience of the *caitya-guru*. We may not know Him fully or constantly, except as the form-direction of God, our own intelligence. But even on that basis, accepting the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s verse 10.10, we all experience that God is in the heart and is guiding us in devotional service. We should try to be pure and meditative to receive His directions.

I particularly appreciated Prabhupāda's use of language in his purport to text 31: "...the conditioned living entities, who are unfit for the spiritual kingdom, are strewn within the material world to enjoy matter to the fullest extent."

With repeated emphasis Prabhupāda states that hearing is the only method to realize the Lord as Supersoul: "The Lord can be realized through the aural reception of the transcendental message, and that is the only way to experience the transcendental subject.... The spiritual master can kindle the spiritual fire from the woodlike living entity by imparting spiritual messages injected into the receptive ear" (purport to 32).

Prabhupāda describes that the Lord is always transcendental even though He stays with the living entity. And yet in his purport to 33, Prabhupāda states that the Lord is also one with the living entity, and therefore in a certain sense He shares with him:

“In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the living beings in all varieties of bodies have been claimed by the Lord as His sons. The sufferings and enjoyments of the sons are indirectly the sufferings and enjoyments of the father.” This is a very thought-provoking concept and can be meditated on further—how the Lord is indirectly suffering and enjoying with the son, although not in any way affected.

### *More on hearing*

In verse 17 of this chapter, Sūta Gosvāmī states that the Lord in our heart cleanses material desires “from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages.” The Lord is the active agent here, yet the messages themselves are virtuous. When the heart is cleansed, we become more desirous to hear. We also can understand that when we continue to hear about Kṛṣṇa, the modes of nature will be broken up and the knots in the heart destroyed. And we will become happy. Another symptom of being enlivened by hearing in devotional service is that we gain positive scientific knowledge of the Personality of Godhead.

## *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*

### *Ādi-līlā, Chapter Four*

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja speaks of the secondary reason for Lord Caitanya’s appearance, and he hints that Lord Kṛṣṇa has a different main reason. The secondary reason for the Lord’s appearance is to propa-

gate *saṅkīrtana*. But this does not mean that *saṅkīrtana* is inferior. Spreading the holy name of God is superior to all other acts. And yet there's a confidential reason that can be further relished. The practical application of this is something that comes with full realization. It brings up the question whether there is a contradiction between *bhajana* and preaching. I know there is no contradiction.

There is a savoring of the high state of the Lord's love for Rādhā. But this can also be part of the science of God which we propagate. We cannot propagate this too early, or it will be an offense to the chanting of the holy name. But eventually one should know this, and it is part of the propagation. The subject matter of the Lord's primary reason for appearance as Lord Caitanya is in the very books which we distribute. We get a taste of bliss when we first come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and later as we continue to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. But eventually as we chant we approach the ecstasy that is described as confidential.

The Lord's desire to appear was for two reasons: to taste the essence of love of God and to propagate devotional service in the world. Thus He is known as supremely jubilant. And as most merciful.

Another way to look at the external and internal reasons of the Lord's appearance is as follows. When the Lord performed His *līlā* at Vrajabhūmi, He was demonstrating devotional service in the spontaneous stage. This was the internal reason: to taste love of God. And yet Kṛṣṇa was "preaching" by performing the *rāsa* dance and showing that this was the type of love of God most desired by Him. Although He teaches other forms of love of God, the *mādhurya-rasa* is His highest "teaching."

As aspiring and practicing devotees, we should know we are on the right path by following the rules and regulations. But we should also know that pure devotional service is the goal. In the mood of Narotama dāsa Ṭhākura we can pray to understand the literature of the Gosvāmīs and to someday understand the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. If we succeed, we will avoid the mistakes of the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* and come to realize truly that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa affairs are the topmost perfection.

### Comparative Study of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and other commentaries

#### Text 2.21

Śaṅkara has a long purport to this verse, and he goes to considerable pains to establish that Kṛṣṇa is teaching “denial of all action whatsoever in the cases of the enlightened.” He says, “Those acts which are enjoined by the scriptures are intended for the unenlightened.” He describes unenlightened people as those who follow *agni-hotra* rites, who think that they are the doers and have some duty. He raises theoretical objections and answers them to make it clear that an enlightened man does not do mental work or any work at all, although he is alive within the body. The enlightened should resort to *jñāna-yoga*.

In the sense that Śaṅkara refers to *karma*, we agree with this. We also agree that a man “should resort to *jñāna-yoga*, or devotion to knowledge.” But

what Śaṅkara does not admit, and what Kṛṣṇa clearly states, is that the topmost *jñāna-yoga* is *bhakti-yoga*. Śaṅkara stresses to the extreme degree, "He who has acquired knowledge of the self should resort to renunciation only, not to works." This makes us think that he is also trying to imply that *bhakti-yoga* is not for the enlightened.

There is no mention in these comments by Śaṅkara about the activities of the enlightened soul in *bhakti-yoga*. But neither is it clear exactly what is *jñāna-yoga*, or the nonaction state. It is clear that the Kṛṣṇa conscious person can do many acts in the liberated state. Therefore, Arjuna is certainly acting in *jñāna-yoga*, because he knows that the ultimate truth is Kṛṣṇa. If Arjuna "recognized" Kṛṣṇa but did no activity, that would not be a full recognition. Therefore, the Vaiṣṇava understands that *dāsyā-rasa*, the actions of the servant, are above *śānta-rasa*, which is the mere appreciation of a devotee for God. And *śānta-rasa*, or appreciation of the Supreme Person, is certainly above the *sāyujya*, or impersonal merging with the Supreme. If one attempts to merge only with the impersonal Brahman, he does not have topmost knowledge, or *jñāna-yoga*. And how can there be any *yoga*, unless there is connection between the individual self and the Supreme?

*Commentaries on Bhagavad-gītā 2.22*

"As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones."

Śaṅkara has little to say on this verse. His translation gives the same sense which is given by Śrīla

Prabhupāda, and which is obviously the clear, literal meaning. Śaṅkara glosses over the issue, saying that "the embodied Self abandons all bodies, and without undergoing any change, enters others which are new." But how could the Supreme Self alone be driven from one body to another? What is the force which drives the "Supreme" through this unfortunate *samsāra*? It appears by this interpretation that *māyā* and *karma* are greater forces than Brahman. The real answer is that the Supreme Self does go from one body to another, but only in order to accompany the individual self who goes, driven by his desires. Otherwise, there is no explanation how the Supreme Self continues to go through such a covered-up state.

In the *Upaniṣads* the existence of two souls is described in the analogy of the two birds in the same tree. Thus, it is possible for the Lord to dwell within the body and not experience the pleasures and pains connected with that body, which are the influence of good and evil deeds upon the *jīva*.

*Jaiva-dharma*

## Synopsis

*Chapter Seven, Eternal Duties and Domestic Life*

At this point, the novel introduces a new scene with new characters. We are introduced to Caṇḍī dāsa and his wife. They are rich merchants, but they are miserly and don't receive the Vaiṣṇavas at home. Their children turn out to be very envious and plot against them and finally steal their money. So Caṇḍī dāsa and his wife become renounced and take up living with the Vaiṣṇavas in Navadvīpa. One day they go with a friend to Pradyumna-kuṅja in Godruma, where Vaiṣṇava dāsa and the other devotees like Paramahansa Bābājī and Lahiri and Ananta dāsa live.

Caṇḍī dāsa wants to ask the question, "What is this world?" On hearing the sad story of Caṇḍī dāsa's life, Ananta dāsa says to Caṇḍī, "Yes, this is what is called the world." And he smiles. So to take rebirth in such a world is really pitiable. Caṇḍī dāsa became happy hearing these words. (It is also mentioned that while he was living in Navadvīpa, Caṇḍī dāsa had begun reading a book called *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vijaya* by Guṇarāja Khān.)

Caṇḍī dāsa's friend, Jādhava dāsa, wants to ask questions of the devotees. The Vaiṣṇavas decide that Ananta dāsa should speak at length in answering these questions. (Caṇḍī dāsa is there to hear. Although his wife, Damayantī, wanted to come, she was told to stay in a nearby village, because women are not allowed at Godruma.)

Anantadeva begins describing the world by saying how it is different from the eternal, liberated spiritual world. In the spiritual world there is only one

"ego," everyone is a servant of God. But in the material world, one has many, many identities and dualities, birth after birth. And there are many things that one thinks of as his own. "This huge paraphernalia of 'I's and 'mine's that loom large before our eyes for all time, is called 'the world.' "

Jādhava asks if the sense of "I" and "mine" exists in the free state. Ananta replies that yes, it does, although it is absolute.

Jādhava asks, "Then what's the harm, if there be varieties of 'I' and 'my' in the state of bondage?"

Ananta replies that in this world such identification is all unreal and transitory.

Jādhava asks, "Is the world of *māyā* absolutely false?"

Ananta replies, "No, but the identity of 'I' and 'my' is false."

The old man Caṇḍī dāsa then speaks up and says that he understands some things that are being said but not everything. Ananta dāsa refers him to Jagadānanda's book *Śrī Prema-vivarta*. Quoting from that book, Ananta says that we wander through different births, haunted by *Māyā*, with different identities, but when one finally comes to know his identity through the service of saints, he laments and says, "Why have I served *Māyā* so long? O Kṛṣṇa, I am Your servitor; I brought upon myself complete ruination when I left Your lotus feet." Ananta dāsa says that when a sincere soul calls Kṛṣṇa only once with this entreaty, Kṛṣṇa most mercifully helps him to renounce the world.

Ananta dāsa says, "Chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa in the association of saints—this is the be-all and end-all



of all life; and there is nothing else that can enable us to conquer the world."

Jādhava asks, "Aren't saints also afflicted with the elements of the world?" Ananta dāsa replies that saints are quite different from worldly persons. In this connection, Ananta dāsa praises the household devotees of Lord Caitanya.

The balance of the chapter describes discussions about renunciation and household life. The author advocates that upon renunciation one should become *bābājī* and live by begging. According to time and place, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura introduced the advanced concept that the Vaiṣṇava should not imitate *bābājī*, or the *paramahansa* stage, but should live as a *sannyāsī*. Neither is it forbidden for such a renounced person to start monasteries and engage in active preaching. Once again, we note some additions in the way of Vaiṣṇava life, according to time and place, which may appear different, in details, from the prescriptions given in *Jaiva-dharma*.

(To be continued.)

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