

Volume Three
IṢṬĀ-GOṢṬHĪ

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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IṢṬA-GOṢṬHĪ

Topics for Vaiṣṇava Discussion

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Persons interested in the subject matter of this book may correspond with Madhavendra Puri dāsa, care of Gita-nagari Press, P. O. Box 12380, Philadelphia, PA 19119.

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“I have made an ista-gosthi file, and I shall go on putting the reports there as you send them.”

Letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda to Brahmānanda
February 1, 1968

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A SANNYĀSĪ'S MATERIAL ATTACHMENTS

Religious people can be just as much attached to this world as materialists. While the materialist is attached grossly, an immature religious person may be attached even to his own saintliness. Śrīla Prabhupāda has written that a *sannyāsī* is sometimes attached to the temples and the few possessions of a *sannyāsī*.

There is also the danger of becoming "holier than thou." Prabhupāda writes, "The difficulty here is that when a living entity is situated in the mode of goodness, he becomes conditioned to feel that he is advanced in knowledge and is better than others. In this way he becomes conditioned" (purport *Bhagavad-gītā* 14.6).

A devotee can also become attached to his followers, his good reputation, and thereby develop a subtle sense gratification from his duties, rather than doing them for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. And so it is said that even on the royal road one can still have an accident.

How to give up these attachments? Lord Caitanya has advised us to think of ourselves as lower than the blade of grass. Humility is enhanced by preaching. The rude responses of the nondevotees is a test for us, whether we are serving Kṛṣṇa to be honored and respected or to serve Kṛṣṇa even if we get scorned for it.

It is even possible to become too much attached to lamenting about our inabilities. Prabhupāda once said that we should not be too anxious thinking that we are not qualified to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We may be suffering from abominable habits due to our past life, and we cannot get rid of them immediately. But Kṛṣṇa declares, "He is still a saintly person." So we should not overdo our self-lacerating attitude. Greater than our faults, and more worthy of our attention, is the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.

Lamentation can become a subtle form of self-centeredness. We are always thinking, "Isn't it amazing how fallen I am? Just see this latest indication of my duplicity! I am really uncanny in my ability to resist the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Listen to my expressions of humility!" Let us hear instead expressions about the glories of Kṛṣṇa and the humility of recognized devotees like Haridāsa Ṭhākura, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī. Not our two-cents humility.

To consider these things is scary. But when we criticize the faults of a religious person, it is not with the aim to condemn life in the temple or the *sannyāsa* order. Rather, it is a call for us to renounce these attachments. We shouldn't think we are saintly just because we wear saffron cloth and bathe three times a day, or because we know some verses of *śāstra* (whereas the nondevotees don't even know what the word "*śāstra*" means). If we persist in subtle attachments and feelings of superiority, we may lose our perspective. The fact is that we were very recently

nondevotees, but the glory of the Holy Name and the glory of the spiritual master has transformed us.

MEMORY IN THE SERVICE OF KṚṢṆA #1

Preface to a series

In *Living With the Scriptures*, I presented a verse and purport from Vedic *śāstra*, and followed it with an essay which began with my personal memories of how that verse was important in my own life. The essay then broadened into *paramparā* reflections. There are further ways to meditate on the scriptures in a personal way.

We may pick a verse from *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at random, since every single verse is absolute. As we read the verse, we invite memories from our own life. It may be a memory of when we were closer to KṚṣṇa consciousness than we are now, or a memory from our misguided, pre-KṚṣṇa conscious state. In either case, we may relive the memories for the purpose of becoming more closely linked to KṚṣṇa. After focusing on the memory for a few moments, we discuss how to apply it to prayer and loving service to KṚṣṇa. After the application, we make an actual prayer.

In the following series I have attempted this four-fold process: 1) quoting scripture; 2) allowing the scripture to evoke a personal memory; 3) applying the themes to prayer and devotional service, and 4) making a prayer-offering. I hope these pages will

help the readers to think of Kṛṣṇa and practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

WORKING FOR KṚṢṆA

“Regulated activities are prescribed in the *Vedas*, and the *Vedas* are directly manifested from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Consequently the all-pervading transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.15)

Purport:

Yajñārtha-karma, or the necessity of work for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa only, is more expressly stated in this verse. If we have to work for the satisfaction of the *yajña-purusa*, Viṣṇu, then we must find out the direction of work in Brahman, or the transcendental *Vedas*. . . . Anything performed without the direction of the *Vedas* is called *vikarma*, or unauthorized or sinful work.



I remember the welfare office on East 5th Street. There were at least two floors which were wide open areas the whole length and width of the building. These open floors were filled with rows of desks at which the caseworkers sat. There were two rows of caseworkers who would be assigned to a supervisor

and his desk was separate from theirs. This was the place where I performed my “*karma yoga*,” or work offered to Viṣṇu. When I think of that place and time (1966, New York City while Prabhupāda was beginning ISKCON) I am certain that I know what it means to “work for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa.”

Before I met Prabhupāda, I had the same job but it was completely different. I worked at the same desk, wore the same white shirt made of synthetic cloth which I washed and rinsed out and which dried overnight on the hanger; and I had the same supervisor, Mr. Rice, and the same co-workers. But before, it was just a “gig” to pay the rent, food, intoxicants and so on. After meeting Prabhupāda, I was “sanctified.”

The welfare office is a fond memory because Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa gave me—even in the initial dose—courage to overcome the whole material world. When I got my paycheck, rather than put most of it in the bank with the idea that I would spend a summer in Canada writing a short novel, I walked a few blocks down to 26 Second Avenue and turned “my” money over to Lord Kṛṣṇa's representative.

Karma yoga was something I had to hold onto closely and not let go for a minute. I was able to exist in an alien environment, and remain free from its contamination because I was working for Kṛṣṇa. The work place, the work desk, and the welfare folders filled with histories of welfare clients, all became paraphernalia for my *yoga* meditation. And I performed the *yoga*-work without much difficulty. This was poss-

ible because nearby, on a daily basis, I could go to Prabhupāda.



Sometimes devotees become doubtful whether their occupation is actually service for Kṛṣṇa. One may be a doctor or a lawyer or salesman, and he may have to keep a lot more than 50% for his family needs. So he gives a small percentage to a Kṛṣṇa conscious project. But then he wonders, how is my work an offering to Kṛṣṇa?

At the very least we should pray to Lord Viṣṇu in the heart to please consecrate our work actions. Even if it's not always clear how the work is connected to devotional service, and even if we can't give as much money as we would like to for propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we should pray to the Lord to please accept the efforts; please accept our intentions to purify ourselves through work.

In this way, going to daily work can be a consecrated activity. If, despite the difficulties of work and despite the temptations, we can keep the four rules and chant sixteen rounds—this is a solace.

If despite our efforts, we find almost no trace of prayer in our offering of work, then we should consider if there is a better way to work. Because work should be done “for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa only.”



My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
 My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,
 Please let us work for you.
 Give us a clear connection,
 so we know you are our employer.

Please accept our labor
 as an offering of love.
 Let us not shirk in the name of religion;
 let us work hard all day
 and only stop for rest at night,
 to work again the next day
 and the next.

We do not ask release from work,
 but the joy of work—
 that we may offer our efforts
 with confidence that you accept them,
 just as you accept the *pūjārī's āratī*
 or a garland of fresh flowers,
 for you and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Please be our boss;
 we want to work for Prabhupāda.

3

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION

The Alvars of South India
 praise Kṛṣṇa as “Kanna”
 in hundreds of verses
 and Tukaram too.
 But the Gauḍiya *bhaktas*
 know Him best
 as the lover of Rādhā,
 the Lord who revealed
 to His affectionate mother
 all universes within His mouth.

I too have heard of Kanna
 from the pure devotee,
 Śrīla Prabhupāda,
 and I have learnt to trust Him,
 rejecting the speculations
 of the nondevotee.

Now I request you,
 Śrīla Prabhupāda,
 don't let your work go in vain;
 please protect the investment
 of *bhakti* in me.
 Don't let me hear from
 the nondevotee or from he
 who is mad from sex pleasure.

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Keep me safe
from the dangers
of bad association.

4

COMMENTARY ON ŚIKṢĀṢṬAKA

Verse #1

These “supremely valuable prayers” are the only verses left by Lord Caitanya. He assigned the writing of His doctrine to His disciples, especially the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, Rūpa, Sanātana, and Jīva. But the eight verses, *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, reveal the entire mission and teachings of Lord Caitanya.

*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam
śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitarāṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varধানam prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

Glory to the *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*, which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years, and extinguishes the fire of conditional life of repeated birth and death. This *saṅkīrtana* movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. It is the life of all transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.

Lord Caitanya begins, “All glories to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa!”—*param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*. This first verse of *Śikṣāṣṭaka* states several reasons why *saṅkīrtana*, (congregational chanting of the holy

names,) should be glorified. The first reason is because it cleanses the heart of all the dust that's been there for many years. This refers to an internal cleansing process. If we neglect to clean a room, soon dust will appear on the furniture and under the bed. But the dirt which the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa cleans is the dirt of material desires within the heart. Whenever we desire something and forget the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that is a "dirty desire." Otherwise nothing is innately good or bad. But if we desire *anything* other than pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that is inauspicious.

Lord Caitanya has composed His verse with many poetic metaphors. The dirt which gathers within is like dust on a mirror. If we look into a dusty mirror we cannot see our face. Similarly, we cannot see our original self because of the dirty covering on the mirror of the mind. We cannot see our spiritual self. And unless we take action to clean this inner mirror, then our whole life will be in forgetfulness of God and our relationship to Him. We will continue to think that we are this body. We will think that we are a man or a woman or that we are born in a particular country and so on. We will try to seek our happiness in terms of the body. But the body can not give us happiness, and therefore we remain in ignorance trying to be happy. But if we can discover the spiritual self, then we will be happy.

The real self is comparable to a piece of valuable gold which is covered by a lump of dirt. Unless we wash away the dirt we cannot enjoy the benefit of the

original gold. So the chanting removes all the dirty coverings and reveals our original spiritual nature. That nature is full of bliss and eternity, and exists in a loving relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Caitanya also says that the chanting puts out a fire, *mahā-dāvāgni*. There is a large fire, like a forest fire, raging within us. This is the fire of birth and death. When we die, due to the dirty things in the heart, we have to take another material body. This process of dying and being born again is very painful to the living entity. We try to forget it, but actually we are always in anxiety, especially about our oncoming death. And according to Vedic knowledge, we do not die only once, but our desires lead us to take bodies again and again.

In another important Vaiṣṇava song, the *Gurvaṣṭam*, the same fire is mentioned. There it is stated by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, that just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, so the spiritual master delivers the material world by putting out the fire of material life.

When we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in *japa* and *kīrtana*, we can sometimes think of these metaphors which Lord Caitanya has used. It is true that our heart is being cleaned of dirt. And the chanting produces a very nice rain which is putting out the fire of birth and death. Thus Lord Caitanya praises the chanting not in sentimental terms, but based on the actual work that the holy name performs on the conditioned soul. It cleans the dirt, it brings the downpour of rain—and it is a blessing.

Lord Caitanya says that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is the best blessing because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. This refers to the phenomena of the waxing moon. At the beginning of a fortnight the moon starts very small and grows gradually to a full moon. Spiritual progress is like that. You begin from a little bit and it grows and grows as long as you practice.

The waxing moon of spiritual life is not only one person's private concern. When the chanting is widely distributed then the blessings go to everyone. Just as the blessing of the moon is appreciated by everyone in the world, so the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa can spread in the same way. Therefore sometimes a great *ācārya* is compared to the moon, because he distributes the holy name all over the world.

Lord Caitanya further says that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is the life of all transcendental knowledge. When a person is seeking spiritual information he consults *gurus*, sometimes goes on spiritual pilgrimages and performs austerities. But the essence of all this is to love God. Some spiritual processes conclude with an impersonal understanding of the Absolute. But that is not the life of transcendental knowledge; that is the death of transcendental knowledge. However, if we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, then the name of the Lord is present. And then there is no question of impersonalism.

Lord Caitanya finally says that by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa you get a taste for the nectar for which we are always anxious. He is well aware that we are all

looking for pleasure. Commercial advertisers are also aware everyone is seeking pleasure and so they play upon this desire, claiming "We have the taste," "The taste is here." But the tiny taste which sense gratification can give by stimulating the tongue or belly or genitals or ears, is not satisfying to the real self. The pleasure that the soul experiences is many times greater than any pleasure. It is the nectar for which we are always anxious.

*LETTER AND REPLY:
"WILL KRṢṆA FORCE US TO SURRENDER?"*

Dear Spiritual Master,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Prabhupada.

I recently saw a letter by Prabhupada that has set me to thinking and I want to ask you some questions about it. Here it is:

Yes, you can pray to Krishna—Krishna may be prayed that I am unwilling to become Krishna conscious, so you can force me to become so. You put me under certain circumstances so that I may be forced to accept Krishna consciousness. You can pray like that. It is Krishna's special favor and mercy that He sometimes forces the devotee to fully surrender to Him. (68-11-19)

My predicament is that after ten years of devotional service I am feeling dried up and just working mechanically. My tendency is to be lazy but I am hoping at least that Lord Caitanya will help me out. Nowadays no one seems to bother me and I don't bother anyone much. But I don't know if that's a good situation. It used to be that there was always someone around to tell you how to blow your nose. Now most of the "heavies" have moved out of the temple. I don't think I am on the level of Queen Kunti that I want to look forward to situations that force

me to surrender or think of Kṛṣṇa, but maybe that is what's necessary.

How can we tell if it's Kṛṣṇa trying to help us or the material energy just getting even, or if it's someone's trip when we are put into difficulty? Since I am a little rebellious by nature, whenever I think I am being forced to do something I back off and so I don't even know if I could put my heart into asking Krishna or one of His representatives for a kick to get me going. Do you think I should ask Krishna for a special arrangement? Does it always have to be a difficult situation before we surrender or can Krishna let us approach Him in some other way?

Your Servant,

A REPLY:

Dear "A little rebellious,"

Please accept Prabhupada's blessings from me. All glories to Prabhupada.

The prayer that Prabhupada suggests is a challenge to all of us. We sometimes think of prayer as a way to ask Krishna to make it easy for us: "My dear Lord, please give me everything, including pure love of God, but make it easy."

Krishna *has* made it easy. All we have to do is chant Hare Krishna and follow principles which are not very austere compared to former ages. But we still have to do something difficult. We have to give up our false attachments. We are attached to the body and to the family and to so many things. When

that attachment is threatened, we feel pain. We are afraid to give up our material identity.

We want to reach pure loving service, and that requires surrender to Krishna by voluntary will. We left Krishna out of misuse of free will, and now we have to come back by voluntary will. Lord Krishna won't put us under some kind of spiritual chloroform so that without our knowing it we enter into pure love of God. We have to take a few steps out of *maya* and enter into the shelter of Krishna. That is the painful part. Even though we are burning in a flaming house, we don't want to leave. For example, when Lord Indra was condemned to be a pig, he soon got so attached to the situation that he refused to leave and go back to heaven. Lord Brahma had to bring him to his senses by a violent means.

But we are lazy, and so we are waiting for "something to happen" before we cut our ties to this material world. Even after taking up the practices of Krishna consciousness, we sometimes try to keep our material attachments while at the same time practicing spiritual life. This is compared to building a fire and at the same time throwing water upon it.

Krishna will not force us to love Him, but He can force the situation to a point where, dull and stubborn as we are, we concede that our material attachments are simply making us miserable. That is the special mercy of Krishna which He gives only to the sincere devotee who shows that he wants to go back to Godhead but does not know how to cut off his ties. In effect Krishna says, "All right I'll cut off your ties

for you." That was what Lord Brahma did for Indra when he killed the piglets.

It is a brave prayer that Prabhupada is asking us to make, but a sensible one. We should ask Krishna to please make it clear to us that our *anarthas* are actually illusion. If Krishna does us this favor, that is His great mercy. The effect will be like the scene in the movies, when someone slaps his hysterical friend in the face and the person replies, "Thanks, I needed that."

But your worry is that you don't want somebody besides Krishna coming to kill your "piglets" or slap you in the face. But if something or someone breaks our unwanted attachments, be grateful, no matter how it happens. Take it as an act of providence.

I don't want to ask you to do something that I don't demand of myself as well. So speaking for both of us, let us not be complacent. Even if we can't make the full prayer of Queen Kunti, who asked the Lord to send calamities again and again, at least we may be intelligent enough to accept calamities when they come, and turn them into good account. Having surrendered to Krishna and the spiritual master, we are already under His charge. Therefore we should see the reverses that come as intended for our improvement. Krishna has His merciful eye on us. Our present position as students in *bhakti-yoga* is so auspicious that the only wrong thing we can do is to give up that practice, or try to avoid the responsibility for full dedication in Krishna consciousness.

PS. Here is another prayer like the one Prabhupada suggested, which carries the spirit of Queen Kunti's, although on a lesser scale: Dear Srila Prabhupada, dear Lord Krishna, please teach me to recognize what You want me to do and please grant me the strength and intelligence to carry out that will.

6

Found Poem of Śrila Prabhupāda

WHERE IS THAT THINKING?

A child is sent to school,
 just to teach him how to think correctly.
 Otherwise, he can think at home.
 And *this* is thinking—
 when you enquire, “Why am I unhappy?”

I want to be happy,
 but nature's process is to obstruct me.
 I want to live,
 why by the laws of nature am I put to death?
 This is thinking:
 how to get out of it?

I don't want something,
but it is forced on me,
and why is it so?
When this inquiry comes,
that is real thinking,
but where is that thinking?

—April 26, 1973, morning walk



USES OF A DIARY IN KRṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS #1

Catching the Mind

There are many reasons for keeping a diary in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Here is one: It helps you to catch the mind.

Arjuna says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the mind is *cāncala*, flickering, and very difficult to control. Lord Rṣabhadeva also states in the Fifth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that one should not trust the mind, just as one would not trust animals to voluntarily stay in a cage.

Often we become vaguely aware of an inauspicious change which occurs in our mental life. It affects our whole being, but we are not sure what happened and why. Are we depressed just because it's a rainy day, or was it something we ate, or something that someone said to us, or was it an old memory that just surfaced? Intuition tells us, "Something is wrong. I just went off. I feel like I am in *māyā*. What happened?" At times like this, if we take the time to write it out in a reflective way, it can be very helpful. In the process of thinking on paper, we will also let off some emotional steam, and that is also a gain.

Allow me to offer an example of this with an excerpt from my diary. In January, I had been working on several literary projects at once, and was making good progress. But suddenly one morning I felt

discontent and was no longer interested in working. I had a vague suspicion of what was wrong but could not put my finger on it, until I went and wrote in the diary:

Trying to track when and why my mind changed this morning. I've been steady and productive for about twenty days, produced sixteen Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture outlines, a few poems, and sixty pages of a fable. What happened?

I read some atheistic wise-cracks in poems by David Waggoner. He was praising the poet Richard Hugo and said, "He did without the jibberish of God." Then later he made another atheistic crack, or was it just his disgust against sentimental religion? You can't be sure with these subtle poets. Then I was thinking of other persons I imagined to be non-believers in God, Kowitz and Mednick (old buddies rediscovered). What will they think when they see my *Entering the Life of Prayer*? I looked at the book from their eyes and thought they might see it as "jibberish." My talk about praying and failing to gain revelation of Kṛṣṇa, and the absence of Kṛṣṇa. . . . The devotees know well what I am talking about. They appreciate the struggle to be Kṛṣṇa conscious and the honest statements of failing, and the actual position of a devotee who doesn't try to see Kṛṣṇa but acts in such a way that Kṛṣṇa sees him.

So am I saying that I was hurt by proximity to faithless and blasphemous words and minds? Yes, and also my mind said to me, "Okay maybe I shall take a different attitude toward what you are writing. Maybe

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we have worked enough in this writing retreat. Maybe no more of anything.”

By articulating my feelings on this occasion, I was able to clearly see how my mind turned away from its simple, happy producing mood. I was able to catch the mind and turn it back to where I wanted it to go. I considered this a significant gain and I thank the diary process for helping.

8

The "Little Way of Spiritual Childhood" is already existing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, especially as taught by Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I gave a talk on little sacrifices of charity as offered by Therese of Lisieux and how it could be applied to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now I am reading a book which describes her "complete" doctrine as "*the little way of spiritual childhood.*" None of it seems contrary to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In adopting or adapting it, we must consider what it means to us when they say Jesus Christ is the only way. To me it means that he is the pure devotee, the spiritual master. He comes from the Father and teaches love of God. But others also come as pure devotees and sons of God and do not oppose him, but teach *bhakti* in different lands to different people in different times with different terminology. Christian theologians are coming to recognize this.

The little way of spiritual childhood is the way of *bhakti-yoga*. One example St. Therese uses is of an elevator (or lift). Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the exact same example. He gave a similar analogy, that *bhakti-yoga* is like hitching your bicycle on to the back of a moving truck. You don't go on your own power but by the power of God.

Other "child" examples can be found: the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is like the cry of the child for the mother.

Once Śrīla Prabhupāda saw a child being lifted up by his father to put a letter in a mailbox and he said Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like that—without the help of the Father we cannot do it.



Humility, littleness, helplessness, *confidence* in God's love—are all parts of pure devotional service.

Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions “confidence of success” as an important favorable factor.

As for “short cut,” “an easy way,” and a special indication of God's love for weak and fallen souls (especially in the age of Kali), we have our own “hurricane of glory” or “shower of flowers”—or to use Kṛṣṇa conscious terms, Lord Caitanya's shower of mercy, as the most magnanimous incarnation—*by the simple process of chanting the Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa*.

More similarity: Therese says God's love “stoops” to pick up the little one who acknowledges his nothingness. Similarly, Lord Caitanya is Patita-pāvana; He came to help the most fallen.

If considering and adapting Therese of Lisieux's little way of spiritual childhood helps me to see these principles as already existing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—but as sometimes overlooked or not appreciated by me because of familiarity, then let me accept the mercy.

Of course Lord Caitanya taught the way of conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa as the most perfect state. Yet even there, helplessness, humility, confidence—and certainly abandonment in love of God—are required. The “little way” is primary, and *madhūrya* love in separation is the most advanced stage.

May the primary way help us to understand the advanced? It would seem so, because we are not to jump to the advanced stage. While Lord Caitanya personally tasted *madhūrya*, He taught *hari-nāma*.

MEMORY IN THE SERVICE OF KRṢṆA #2

Freedom in Kṛṣṇa

*teṣām satata-yuktānām
bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”

—*Bhagavad-gita* 10.10



I used to try by different methods to give up my attachment to sinful activity. But after a few weeks the cravings would develop again, and I had no moral uprightness to combat them. I was all alone against the forces of illusion. No one had taught me to call out to God. And so eventually I would weaken and take the ferry to Manhattan for folly. I remember just before I actually met Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time, I again tried to resist sinful activities. I made a personal resolution not to engage in bad habits, and as a “promise” or signal of my purpose, I placed a

record album in a prominent place, on a border which was high on the wall of my apartment room. It was a record album with a picture of the jazz trumpeter, Miles Davis. Whenever I would glance at it coming or going, it would signal to me the strength of my resolve not to indulge in nonsense. I had done this before, inventing tricks and mental aids. But as the saying goes, "The strongest vows are straws to the fire in the blood." I knew my gimmick with the Miles Davis album would not be able to last long, especially when I became weak again, alone, and aware of the futility of life.

But this time, my promise was to triumph. It was not due to the picture of Miles Davis, or to his abilities in jazz improvisation, or due to my mental intelligence. Neither was it due to whatever strength I had gained from my mother and father. What happened was, within a few days after that attempt to reform, I wandered into 26 Second Avenue and met His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupāda. By his grace I was able to take up the practice of chanting from the first night, and as I heard Prabhupāda's lectures and joined in the *kīrtanas*, I left behind the sinful activities of illicit activities.

I do not wish to recall now the details of the slum in which I was living on Suffolk Street. Suffice it to say that it was so bad that the landlord was not even attempting to collect the rent from the tenants. And friends who visited me complained that if I lived in such a dive, how could I expect them to come and see me? But that was the place in which I was living when

I met His Divine Grace who immediately rid me of the worst dirtiness of the heart. Within a month of my first meeting, I left that place, and also left behind my possessions, such as the record album placed in the corner of the room. It was obvious to me that I wouldn't need that good luck charm in order to sustain upliftment from vice. I had found new strength, and it was obvious to me that it was not a strength of my own doing. I did not even have to exert any strength. I had simply ceased to desire those sinful activities. What I could not do on my own, Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotee did and released me.



In the purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.10 Prabhupāda gives the assurance that, "A person may have a bona fide spiritual master, and may be attached to a spiritual organization, but still, if he is not intelligent enough to make progress, then Kṛṣṇa from within gives him instructions so that he may come to Him without difficulty." Lord Kṛṣṇa will help us once we know that He is the goal, and if we try to serve Him. This is called *buddhi-yoga*. Kṛṣṇa is in our hearts and He will help us to succeed, even when we seem to fail in following the representative of Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master, and "the spiritual organization."

But when I try to remember an example of this in my life, I cannot recall a time that Kṛṣṇa helped me

exclusively, or apart from the guidance of the spiritual master. Neither is the statement, "I give the understanding by which they can come to Me," meant to create a duality between the Lord and the spiritual master. We don't think, "Yes, now the spiritual master isn't so important. I always knew it was just me and Kṛṣṇa." Rather, by my guru's grace I gain confidence that the Supreme Lord is in my heart. When that happens it means I have successfully followed the teachings of my spiritual master. It is Kṛṣṇa who destroys the darkness of ignorance with the torchlight of knowledge. And while considering that I am the recipient of His direct mercy, I give thanks to His pure devotee. Thus when Lord Nṛsimha appeared before Prahlāda, Prahlāda thought of Nārada and said, "How could I forget him?"



My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
 my dear Śrīla Prabhupāda ,
 I address you together
 as the Lords in my heart.

It was you who saved me
 from addiction to sin.
 I heard your words
 from the pure devotee
 in the storefront temple,
 and when I walked away
 and returned to the slums
 you were with me
 in a new and effulgent way.

Please Lord, help all devotees
 to turn to you
 by remembering the words you speak
 and remembering the instructions
 of Śrīla Prabhupāda

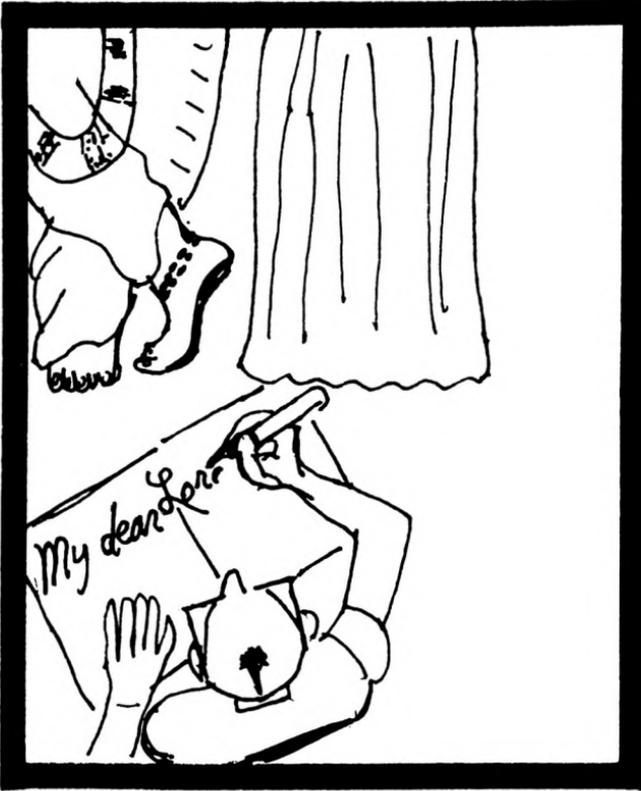
It is no gimmick,
 but your grace
 that moves me through my days and nights
 protected from the lures of illusion.
 I bow down and thank you
 again and again
 for giving me the grace of guru
 and your direct intelligence, *buddhi yogam*;
 freedom in Kṛṣṇa.

10

AS IF

dialogue #4

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please keep me close to you in all my thoughts; please draw me to you. To do this, I know I have to



be *much, much more* aware of my tininess and my need to be with you. You will not bring me close if I wish to remain a toy of Māyā. I am weak-hearted, afraid of austerities, attached to the body and to mental comforts. . . . But I do want to go past these things. I want to leave the world and for that I know I have to give up the self in all its false, temporary designations—*ahāṅkāra*—and enter pure self. Pure self means love for You and fully engaged in Your service. As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura prays, “O Gopinātha, You are the wisest person. Please find a way to bring me to You. Don't consider this servant an outsider.” I am a devotee of Śrīla Prabhupāda, recruited by him from a very fallen state and given the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Please engage me in Your service. What should I do?

AS IF Śrīla Prabhupāda: The main thing now is to preach and encourage devotees in following the rules and regulations. It is all right for the *grhasthas* to live in their own places, *but they should not forget the purpose of human life*. This should be your preaching. If you cannot fully understand *varṇāśrama-dharma* and how to *apply* it, and if as you say, it is controversial and there are personal disagreements to prevent the big communal approach for all devotees, then at least hear from others and support what seems positive to you. I know you are not a good manager and you don't want to do that. There are others who can do it. But go to the temples, and if you (or anyone) can

demonstrate genuine attachment to chanting and hearing, you can do wonders to improve the situation. Start with yourself.

Be kind to them. So in this way, you have much to do.

I understand your intentions for developing the inner life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In one sense there is no inner or outer. Just like with Kṛṣṇa, He is all inner, His form is all spiritual. So keep yourself in the fire of Kṛṣṇa conscious life, like the iron in the fire, and your "inner" and "outer" will become all fiery-inner, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You have my blessings in this endeavor. Be humble. Kṛṣṇa will help you.

PRAYER WHILE ON THE JOB

The *Kṛṣṇa* book is rich in references to prayer and constant remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. Devotees in Vṛn-dāvana are in the pure stage of thinking of Kṛṣṇa in separation. But Prabhupāda hints that even nowadays we may practice this. The *gopīs* thought of Kṛṣṇa even while doing their duties:

“The *gopīs* are so fortunate that they can see and think of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, beginning from their milking the cows or husking the paddy or churning the butter in the morning, while engaged in cleaning their houses and washing their floors, they are always absorbed in thought of Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* give a perfect example of how one can execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness even if he is in different types of material engagement.”

Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as Prabhupāda taught it, is active *samādhi*. Devotees don't sit down all day to think of Kṛṣṇa, but they render service to Him in many ways. A devotee may be speaking a lecture, distributing a book, working in the temple room, making money for Kṛṣṇa at his business, and while doing all these things he thinks of Kṛṣṇa. One might say that the act of praying or coming into the presence of Kṛṣṇa, is the “mental” side of the service. This mental life is certainly required. Without mental cultivation, what is the full meaning of the phrase “to serve Kṛṣṇa favorably?” We cannot serve Kṛṣṇa im-

personally or indifferently or mechanically and still be in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

When we analyze the actual services that we render to Kṛṣṇa, they are all insignificant compared to His glorious position. What counts is not the fruit or the flower we offer as much as the devotion with which it is offered. For most of us, there is no question of sitting down in a *yogi's* cave or sitting full-time in the temple room, so we must learn to pray to Kṛṣṇa in the midst of active service.

Women in Kṛṣṇa consciousness sometimes ask, "Now that I am married, how can I consider my household duties as service to Kṛṣṇa? I have to take care of my child, but how can I do this and not be distracted? It seems like I am not doing any devotional service now." The example of the *gopīs* should be encouraging for women in this predicament. The *gopīs* were washing the floors, cleaning their houses, taking care of their children, but they were always thinking of Kṛṣṇa because of their love. We also can think of Kṛṣṇa while working, if we practice the art. Let us not make the lame excuse, "I have no time to think of Kṛṣṇa, because I am so busy serving Him."

COMMENTARY ON ŚIKṢĀṢṬAKA

Verse #2

*nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitah smarāṇe na kālāh
etādṛṣī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ihājani nānurāgah*

O My Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus you have hundreds and millions of names, like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O My Lord, out of kindness you have enabled us to easily approach You by Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them.

Although the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* verses are Lord Caitanya's original composition, He has based His statements on authoritative Vedic scriptures. The *Vedas* teach many kinds of spiritual practices aside from *saṅkīrtana*. But in this age of Kali, only the chanting is recommended. As stated in the *Brihat Narada Purāṇa*, "Hari nāma hari nāma hari nāma eva kevalam kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatiḥ anyatah." Lord Caitanya chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and therefore we follow Him in that exact process. But He here recommends that there are many other names of God. Lord Caitanya's

mantra is the *mahā-mantra*, and is also recommended in the *Upaniṣads*. For example, in the *Kali-santaranya Upaniṣad* it is stated that if one simply chants Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, he can destroy all his sins. Kṛṣṇa has invested all His energies in the holy name, and therefore He is called *nāmāvatara* or the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in the sound of His name.

Whatever we wish to derive from associating personally with Kṛṣṇa, we can derive by chanting His holy names. If we want to be blessed by God, we will be blessed by His holy name. If we want to see His beauty, that can be derived through the sound of His name. And Lord Caitanya states that there are no hard and fast rules in chanting. Some spiritual processes require that one follow stringent rules and regulations. For example in Deity worship you have to be a *brāhmaṇa*, you have to bathe before you approach the altar, you have to wear the right cloth, and there are many other rules. But one can perform chanting wherever he is, at any time. For these reasons Lord Caitanya says, "You are very kind and therefore you have made Yourself so easy to approach."

Lord Kṛṣṇa makes Himself easy to approach because in Kali yuga we cannot do anything if it is difficult. Therefore it is foolish to take up practices of meditation and *yoga*, because to do them effectively is very difficult. Kṛṣṇa has made Himself easily approachable by His holy names. But after describing all the benefits of chanting, the mercy of Kṛṣṇa to come

in such an accessible way, and the ease of chanting, Lord Caitanya concludes, "But I am so unfortunate, I have no attraction for the holy name."

The reason one does not have a taste for the holy name is that he chants with offenses. There are ten offenses, as well as methods for avoiding them. For example, there is an offense of blaspheming devotees, and the offense of disobeying the order of the spiritual master, or minimizing the importance of chanting, or deliberately committing sinful activities and thinking you can offset it by chanting. Even if a person chants in an offensive way, he still makes progress, but it is very slow.

In the stage of improved chanting, the offenses are mostly removed. This is called *nama bhasa* or the shadow of the pure holy name. One is still not yet chanting the pure names of Kṛṣṇa. But in the stage of *nama bhasa*, the dirt is removed from the heart. If one goes on chanting in that way and tries to improve, then eventually the full moon of chanting comes, which is called *prema bhakti*, chanting in love for Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Caitanya describes Himself as being unable to appreciate a taste for chanting. But we read in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that when Lord Caitanya chanted he would manifest all symptoms of devotional ecstasy. Sometimes He would cry, laugh, dance and speak in madness of separation from Kṛṣṇa. He expresses Himself as unable to taste the chanting, as if He were a conditioned soul, for our benefit. If we chant and do not taste Hare Kṛṣṇa, as the nectar that

we are seeking, we should understand it is due to our incapacities.

As we study the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, and go on trying to chant in the mood as given by Lord Caitanya, then we can make progress. And that is the desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and all the spiritual masters in disciplic succession. In whatever stage of life we are working, the Lord encourages us to chant, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

13

Found Poems of Prabhupāda

SUBMIT TO SOMEONE

In England there is a proverb,
 "If I have to become a thief,
 why not plunder the government treasury?"
 If we have to submit to someone,
 why not to the best?

Is there anyone who does not submit?
 Find that anyone. Even if a man
 has no one to submit to,
 he brings a dog and submits to him.



The dog is passing stool
and the man is standing there.
He is submitting,
“Yes, pass your urine,
I’ll take care of you.”
If you do not submit to God,
then you have to submit to the dog;
you cannot avoid it.

—April 29, 1973, morning walk

14

*LORD KṚṢṆA AND ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA
ARE EVERYTHING;
I AM NOTHING*

My self interest will be achieved by surrendering to the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If I can lose my self-centered attention and simply be open to the flood of bliss which is Kṛṣṇa Himself, contemplation of His qualities and Name, as well as active service to these qualities and to the Lord, then I will be satisfied and delivered from anxieties. But in ignorance and by long habit I hesitate to give up my will, thinking it is too hard, too austere, or that annihilation of my false self will not make me happy.

It's illusion to be complacent about my present spiritual position. Yes, I'm fortunate to have received the link to the Lord from Śrīla Prabhupāda, but I am still ungrateful and unfortunate for not being transformed into a fixed up, brave devotee. I shouldn't compare myself to others and think I'm better. I am not.

Kṛṣṇa is great.

Prabhupāda is great.

My only fortunate is to associate with them. Without them I am nothing, all bad qualities.

These facts have to be lived, and I must strive by free will to serve Them and help others receive the mercy we all need.

USES OF A DIARY: #2

Surviving the Changes

As the diary may be used to catch the mind when it goes wayward, similarly the diary may be used to remind us of good acts and intentions so that they don't slip away from us. By this I don't mean that we should nag ourselves and complain that we don't do good acts that we used to do. Rather, as we keep an ongoing record of inner life, we learn that some changes are inevitable, and not all changes are bad.

When I found myself losing intensity on practices of prayer, I tried to encourage myself to return to former states, while at the same time acknowledging the inevitable changes. Here are some excerpts:

"I turned to prayer just now, but I am out of practice. I have no conviction. I seemed to think that I have told so many 'secrets' of my intentions and methods in prayer, and so used up whatever I sincerely realized, drained myself and that is why I can't pray now. But that is superficial. I am sure you can recover it. You will have to tolerate, however, going through very dry, rote prayers. Just do it anyway. 'My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa and dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,' one thinks, 'I am making this up, there is no connection at the other end.' One thinks, 'I am too busy, too dried out, can't concentrate.' This is the stuff you have to overcome. Now please do it.

“... Getting a haircut, hearing Amala Bhakta narrate *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, I utter a short, ‘Please let me hear this.’ Turn to Him, turn to the Lord in the heart; it’s not exactly the speech you make but the affectionate, prayerful turning, loving, desiring to be with your Protector. You (and all living entities) are already sheltered at His feet, but what you want is to personally turn to Him in loving service. What more is there to say of this?

“... Come on. Get down and do *dandavat* prayers. Are you a hypocrite or was your book a shallow thing?—‘Yeah, I was doin’ that for a few weeks and gave it up.’

“... Exhausted of those inner practices? Yet I still want to do them. I have to return to old ground and break new ground in prayer.

“... This kind of communion seems to change all the time, so maybe now it’s just a different experience, maybe Kṛṣṇa is testing whether I really want to go on talking to Him. I say, ‘Yes’, I want to continue it, yes I want to be Your devotee, I want to be tiny and pray. It’s okay that now I am broke, spiritually poor, anonymous, just walking on the street today with the *hari-nāma* and feeling nothing special. Kṛṣṇa’s will is being done, and He loves me whether I feel it or not. I’m going to find new inner, private, secret space; even if I have used up a former space, I’ll pray and read and chant and write and everything will be all right.”

MEMORY IN THE SERVICE OF KṚṢṆA #3

Search For Faith

*yajante sāt̥tvikā devān
 yakṣa-raksāmsi rājasāh
 pretān bhūta-gaṇāms̥ cānye
 yajante tāmasā janāh*

“Men in the mode of goodness worship the demigods; those in the mode of passion worship the demons; and those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits.”

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 17.4



When I was very young, my faith in my mother and father was so total that almost nothing else existed. According to Lord Kṛṣṇa's description in the seventeenth chapter, mine was a faith in mixed modes of nature. I can remember the cracking of that faith—as well as my trust in the truth and solidity of the American middle class way—when I first heard from the intellectuals, the college professors of my freshman year.

Soon after that I decided there was no God and stopped going to Sunday Mass (although my mother thought I was still going). I dared to ponder that maybe Jesus was an ordinary man, or even a myth. I was more interested in the image of myself as one who could ponder over centuries of thought, a skeptical, modern day thinker.

At different times, different faiths What was that dark faith that allowed us to throw all caution to the winds and take LSD again and again? Did it come from the same stuff which made up my faith in my father (so that when he said "Join the Navy," I docilely did so and signed my name)? How did I become faithful to different idols such as the rock n' roll disc jockey, Alan Freed, and the radio humorist Jean Shepherd? What was my faith in jazz that it became like a religious ritual to listen to my favorite artists? And if someone couldn't understand my faith or derided my idols, why was I hurt? It was a faith in mixed modes of nature. . . .

I believed in God and I believed in the Brooklyn Dodgers (the newspapers used to call Dodger fans "the flock" and "the faithful"). After my faith in home and family were shattered by the intellectuals, then I thought I had no faith at all. But soon I attached myself to literary heroes, with faith in the demigods (James Joyce, Franz Kafka), the demons (Jean Genêt, Celine, Allen Ginsberg), and the ghosts and spirits (marijuana and "sexual services also are considered to be in the mode of darkness").

Different faiths over the years. Finally I thought, “There is no ultimate truth. Whoever speaks best will dominate for a while, that’s all.” And one time, after writing a long, sincere letter to a friend, I sealed the envelope and wrote on the back, “And behind my soul, Blanksville.”

I looked into Taoism and Buddhism (via Mentor paperbacks) for a religion of no faith—because I needed *some religion*. I couldn’t place my faith in the scientists, who weren’t any better men than my father, or Father Hicks, the parish priest, or the politicians, men whom I could no longer look up to or trust.



It is hard for nondevotees to accept that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not just another type of faith. In a sense it *is* a type of faith, but it is transcendental. As Prabhupāda writes, “These different kinds of worship are not actually God worship. God worship is for persons who are transcendently situated in pure goodness. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.3.23) it is said *sattvaṁ viśuddham vasudeva-śabditam*: ‘When a man is situated in pure goodness, he worships Vāsudeva.’” I believe this. This is trust in something sublime. If you have to have faith, and that seems to be a fact, why not have faith in the all-good, all-pure Supreme Personality of Godhead? Transfer your shaky, mixed

faith to the pure devotee of the Lord, and to the work of devotional service. At least this much I can state with conviction: after changing faiths, and seeing them cracked one after another, the faith I have been granted in Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa consciousness has grown and strengthened over the years. (I may lack faith in my own abilities to follow, but that is a different thing.)

Faith also means to love; to love God's creation, to love the valley and the hills, and to love the messages of Godhead from the spiritual world. To invest your energy, to worship, to serve. It is not a blind faith. It is not sentimental. It is something that you have to work for everyday. You are thankful that your life has been made meaningful by faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And you are ready to give your life for it.

There will always be faith, and now we know the truth—that above all relative faiths is the faith of a person in pure goodness, who worships God, and prays to be His servant.



"I don't believe anymore.
Do you?
Bertrand Russell says
there is no God
and I believe *him*."

Yes, I believe
in the Vedic *śāstra*
and the pure devotee.
Have you heard
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam?
You don't have to believe it
but bring your logic,
and compare.

17

A VYĀSA-PŪJĀ DAY, 1988

Śrīla Prabhupāda,
 they are gathering
 to praise one of your little sons.
 They are treating him as a *guru*.
 He's ready to deflect the praise;
 he knows that it is due to you
 and that he should serve these devotees
 on your behalf.

But it is hard
 to avoid the superficial conclusion,
 that he is someone special
 as they come forward with gifts
 and as they cook for him.
 He will intercept their offerings
 and place them on your altar,
 and you will offer them to Jagannātha.

He will waver.
 He is afraid.
 But he must.
 On your behalf.

—12/5/88

18

AS IF

Dialogue #5

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, and dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. Although the nature of these written entries is to pray and hear from you, I don't want you to think that I expect so many direct answers. It is a method, my Lords, to try and awaken your will within me. Because that is the most important thing—to do your will, not mine.

To bargain or compromise with your direct will is not good.

Please Lord, now that I am in a new place (U.S.A.) and away from solitude, let me not lose the treasure of repeated prayer to you.

If I am to contribute mostly by example, pure intention and inner virtue, then please Lord, keep me regular in my reading and chanting. I must also enter the regular world of ISKCON and devotees' struggles against the material forces.

Please bless me with graces to carry out these intentions—and not to be proud of any good results.

AS IF Śrīla Prabhupāda: Your propaganda sounds nice. Depend on Kṛṣṇa. Live with devotees and preach and read and chant, yes. If you pray sincerely Kṛṣṇa will help, just as He helped the little bird who tried to empty the ocean with her beak. You are weak and helpless—everyone is. So we should turn to Kṛṣṇa for constant help.

19

PRAYING FOR THE NECTAR OF THE HOLY NAME

I recently read in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* chapter 8, about the glories of the Pañca-tattva mantra. There is also a discussion about offenses in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Two verses state that unless a person manifests symptoms of ecstasy, such as tears in the eyes when he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, it must be concluded that he is chanting with offenses. If he goes on chanting infested with offenses, he will not get the result of the chanting, which is *prema bhakti*.

On the one hand, I was glad to see these verses. Because I wanted to see the truth. I was glad to see the subject matter discussed so clearly and irrevocably. I was glad to hear the positive assertion that you should feel ecstasy and cry tears when you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I am always glad to see such strong assertions about the power of the Holy Name and how it's really the ultimate and easiest practice in this age. But on the other hand, the evidence of these verses is not encouraging, because if you go on chanting poorly you won't get the result.

By hearing these verses we should change our ways. In his purport, Prabhupāda lists the ten offenses to chanting with a brief commentary. His conclusion is quite simple: If you carefully avoid the offenses, then you will make success in love of Godhead by your chanting. If I want more information than this, I can turn to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Hari-nāma Cintāmaṇi* where the ten offenses are analyzed

minutely. The remedy to offensive chanting in *Hari-nāma Cintāmaṇi* is not much different than what Prabhupāda says—you have to associate with devotees who are chanting without offense, you have to be sorry for your offenses, and you have to humbly worship the Holy Name.

Prabhupāda also states that unless you stop your offensive chanting you won't understand that the name is the same as Kṛṣṇa. And in the context of the eighth chapter of the *Ādi-līlā*, we are advised to chant the Pañca-tattva mantra before chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I have heard all this before but it's hard. Just by reading it, I don't have my offenses removed. Therefore, if praying means to turn to God when you are in “the impossible” situation, then praying for improved chanting is a very good idea. The other bona fide remedy is to chant constantly.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, don't let me be lured away from the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. I know by now I can't trick You or make believe that I am making lots of progress or think that I am following an esoteric cult of my own. I can't fool anyone. Chanting has to be done humbly, in the “dark night of faith.” But let me find friends who will help me with this. And I place this prayer, “Alone I have no strength to chant the Holy Name of the Lord. Please give me a particle of Your mercy that I may chant the Holy Name and taste the liquid essence of the Holy Name. Please allow me to gain a humble heart so that I may propagate the Holy Name and taste the nectar of *hari-nāma*.”

20

PREPARING TO TEACH A COURSE IN
 "PRABHUPĀDA APPRECIATION"

"If we love someone, we focus on him endlessly, we have eyes only for him, all our thoughts are about him, our entire being is turned toward him, all our thoughts, words and actions refer to him, to his good, to his desires; that is love."

—Charles de Foucauld.

I have prayed an invocation
 to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa,
 for permission to make 24 lectures
 of appreciation for His Divine Grace.

It is not my *tour de force*
 but an invitation for loving discussion
 with the assembled devotees
 at Kṛṣṇa-Balarama Mandir.
 Now ten months in advance
 I must begin
 arranging for the feast.
 We have planned a month's study
 in a house in Puerto Rico
 just for this.

When I actually teach the course
I will be an instructor
but now for myself
I must seek out the roots
of my connection to you—
water them with devotion,
and remove offensive creepers.

Let my prayers be
seeking ways to glorify you
in solid lectures
and classroom discussion.
My daily reading
will support the thesis
that Prabhupāda is *jagad-guru*.

21

PRAYER BEFORE GIVING
ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM CLASS

One should pray, "I don't want to cheat."

Since I know nothing of realized knowledge, how can I presume to give it to others? But I have to give the class. Therefore, my dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, and dear Śrīla Prabhupāda I beg you to appear in my words. Of course your words are there in the purports, and I just have to repeat them. But if I repeat them without caring and without any realization, will the audience be willing to hear? Will I be able to move them, to wake them, to impress their wills to take up the sublime teachings and practices of *bhakti-yoga*? Only if You consent to speak through me.

Today's verse is specifically about *vijñāna*, realized knowledge. Prabhupāda and the *sāstras* say that it is rare to find one who is *kṛṣṇa tattva-vit*, or *vetti tattvata*, one who has realized knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. But we can receive that knowledge and realized wisdom directly from the Lord Himself or from His pure devotee when they write or speak.

Theoretical knowledge is not sufficient. By devotion to the Supreme Lord and spiritual master, the Lord grants a sincere devotee *vijñāna*, from within the heart. Conviction, actual transcendental experience, actual practice of rules and regs, *tapāsya*, devotion, detachment from sense gratification, symptoms of *bhāva* such as pridelessness, not wasting time, ex-

pecting the Lord's mercy, attachment to chanting, desire to live in a holy place, forbearance—these are symptoms of realized knowledge.

If I care, if I have compassion, and desire to serve the devotees, that will help qualify me. Then out of a deep sincerity, even a beginner devotee, can serve the *prasādam* of the Lord The *prasādam* is Your words We look at them together and try to understand. Let me not presume that I am actually a master or teacher of *Bhāgavatam*. I am trying to know it myself.

22

FOUND POEMS OF ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA Jagannātha Purī, 1-26-77

Kite Flying

My Guru Mahārāja used to give this example:
 A boy is flying a kite
 and he comes to the edge of the roof.
 He is going to fall down,
 and somebody says, "Hey!
 what are you doing this for?"
 "Why are you checking me?"
 "You'll fall down."
 "Never mind. That is my business.
 Why are you checking me?
 My kite is flying in the sky."

What gentleman will not save him
when he is falling down next moment?
But if you introduce this,
they will accuse you, like madmen.
And still you have to. . . .
That is preaching.
You cannot expect very smooth life.



*ASPIRATION TO GIVE UP PLANS
FOR GREAT, EXCELLING WORKS*

I used to think I was someone special and would accomplish something rare, excelling beyond all others. "There is something actually great about me," I would think. This kind of thinking magnified when I became A Big Guru.

Now I'm leveled. But still I have repute. I survived the guru reform partly by taking part in it.

"I can still realize my potential," I think, "and those hopes and intuitions that I am meant to excel. Since my field is the holy life, I can hope to become a saint." So I think as I look in the mirror while shaving. "But how will it occur? Will Kṛṣṇa reveal to me how it will happen that I shall fulfill a destiny of excelling?"

Into these vain musings came a grain of good sense. I thought, "Maybe just the opposite. Maybe my chosen destiny is to become ordinary, very small."

This is best and this is my hope—to give up the striving for repute as a saint—I've done that more than enough in this lifetime, received praise and honor as someone special.

I want to give up such striving, which I sometimes attempt by writing and publishing, or by acting as if I am "a saintly humble guru." Instead, let me gradually, annihilate self and let Kṛṣṇa's glories be fully

known through me. By that I don't mean that *I* will be the cause of His mission being widely spread. That does not seem likely. I take too much credit for myself, and also I'm very weak-hearted and ease-loving—not austere—so I lack courage for great works.

It's not clear yet. But that “grain of sense” or intuition occurred. . . . As I checked my vain egoistic musing, “I am great, so how will my greatness manifest itself—in what literary project or new exploit?”

And I thought of a deliberate plan for giving up such hopes, taking instead a position by which I can actually please the Lord as lower than a blade of grass.

The Lord is placing this aspiration in my heart.

USES OF A DIARY #3

Accepting joy, being your own friend

Sometimes we turn to the diary with savage self-criticisms. The diary becomes a kind of whipping boy. People have even been known to slam their diaries to the floor or burn them as if to exorcise the demons within. The ability to criticize your own actions is healthy, but it's also healthy to be aware of simple joys of life, and to be a friend to your self. The act of writing for yourself can also function in this way, to make note of Kṛṣṇa's kindness in your own life, and to stand by yourself as a reassuring friend, despite your disqualifications. Here are some samples from my diary which may serve as helpful suggestions for your own:

"Writing retreat in Puerto Rico: So busy, happy here these brief days writing and preparing for the Śrīla Prabhupāda course. Got a second table in the room—I hope to write poems there. Delightful breakfasts, yoghurt, honey, papaya, fresh grapefruit, pineapple, Baladeva's cooking at lunch. Madhu quiet, humble, studying the *Gītā*. My prayers are tepid, but anyway. . . I thank the Lord for material comforts. . . .

". . . Stuck sometimes. Like now on the Prabhupāda course. Okay, pray, not for magic, but for strength and tolerance to get through what you must while developing love and faith in Kṛṣṇa. Don't be

lazy in a stuck time. Keep trying *something*. Like now I think I'll read *Prabhupāda Nectar*. And I came here to the diary also, to admit this.

". . . I see the picture of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. I want to truly worship Them, but as yet I only "see" Their forms with an abstract reverence. At least I have that reverence, and I am prepared to argue why and how the Absolute Truth does appear as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

". . . Thank You, Lord, for the nectar of this period and delights. (I have to admit I find it delightful to eat *prasādam*.) Now please stamp me into the shape that pleases You. I am writing on my exam for life.

*CALLING OUT TO KṚṢṆA
WITHOUT COMPLAINING*

“Some people complain that when they pray to God they do not feel His presence. We should know that this is due to our incapacities, not God's. We can touch Kṛṣṇa immediately by sound vibration; therefore we should give more stress to the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master—then we will feel happy and won't feel separation.”

—EKC, 57-58

I promise not to complain so much, my Lord, but still I ask You to put up with my calling out to You. My Godbrother says it is especially good to ask for Your mercy so that we can chant the Holy Name properly. I think this is right but I find it very difficult to ask You, “Please have mercy! Please let me chant nicely.” I don't know why I am so stubborn as to not call out to You. I find it easier to thank You for the chanting. I thank You for at least a little bit of pure chanting that comes down to me despite my offenses. I thank You for the great boon of chanting which has saved my life. But I know my chanting is poor and therefore I need Your help and I need to call out. Please therefore don't take my calling out as complaining. But my dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, and dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please help me to be convinced and to do it, to call, “Please help me to chant!”

Alone I find I have no strength to chant the Holy Name of Lord Hari. I beg You, therefore, please be merciful and with a particle of faith, give me the great treasure of the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is Yours. You are able to give Him to me, for such is Your power. I am indeed wretched and simply run after you crying "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!"

—Bhaktivinoda Thākura

My Lord, if I just cry, "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!" You will know what I mean. I mean, "Please, Lord Kṛṣṇa, help me to chant." Everything is expressed in the one word Kṛṣṇa, my imploring to You. O Holy Name, O deliverer of the Holy Name, O benedictor to the sincere devotee, please give me faith in the Holy Name.

MEMORY IN THE SERVICE OF KRṢṆA #4

Right and Wrong

*āhāras tv api sarvasya
tri-vidho bhavati priyah
yajñas tapas tathā dānam
teṣāṁ bhedaṁ imam śrṇu*

“Even food of which all partake is of three kinds, according to the three modes of material nature. The same is true of sacrifices, austerities and charity. Listen and I shall tell you of the distinctions of these.”

—*Bhagavad-gita* 17.7*

From the purport

Those who can understand analytically what kind of performances are in what modes of material nature are actually wise; those who consider all kinds of sacrifices of food or charity to be the same cannot, discriminate, and they are foolish. . . . There are missionary workers who advocate that one can do whatever he likes and attain perfection. But these foolish guides are not acting according to the direction of the scripture. They are manufacturing ways and misleading the people in general.

* new translation



I sometimes had inklings of distinguishing right from wrong. Sometimes I would get an intense feeling that I shouldn't be in a certain place with certain persons, and so I would flee. But I could never be sure what that feeling was, except as an instinct so strong that I had to obey it. Maybe it was just self-preservation. One time while smoking with some friends, I got the impression that bombs were exploding behind their cynical words, and I had to run for my life. But they came after me and said, "What's wrong?"

One time I joined anti-war protestors on the steps of the Liberal Arts building at Brooklyn College. Sirens rang for an air-raid drill and everyone obeyed the orders, except a group of us. The dean came out and said he would take down our names and it would have a serious effect on our careers. I wasn't sure what was right or wrong.

I once asked my father was it wrong to eat meat since we had to kill the animals? It *seemed* wrong. He replied, over our juicy steaks, "If the humans didn't kill the animals, they would ruin the world by over-population." Was he right?

One night coming home from a tour of taverns with my friends, we set fire to an abandoned barn. I knew *that* was wrong.

It depended on who you followed and on circumstances. It was wrong to cheat on an exam mainly because you might get caught. Was it all right to enjoy sex outside of marriage since “everyone” did it? Was it wrong that America dropped the A-bomb on Japan? At first I thought it was right, because according to the TV series *Victory at Sea*, if the U.S. had not dropped the bombs, there would have been far more deaths when America attempted to invade Japan. But a few years later when I associated with a different group, I realized bombing Hiroshima was wrong.

My friends also said it was wrong to enforce capital punishment, but it was all right to kill and eat animals. When I grew up, homosexuality was wrong, but nowadays it's not as wrong. Using obscene words was wrong at home but right when you were out with the boys. Wrong notes were right in jazz. Whatever was right for the political rightists, was probably wrong—and so on and so on.

As Pontius Pilate said, “What is truth?”



Left on their own, many well-intentioned persons cannot figure out that it is wrong to eat meat and to indulge in sex pleasure outside of procreation. They can't figure out God's plan. They think they have a better plan, more liberal than Kṛṣṇa's. They don't know right from wrong.

But in Kṛṣṇa consciousness we have perfect codes and guides. This is not religious sentiment or speculation, but a phenomenal science. You can see it for yourself. If you act in the mode of ignorance, you get the result of madness; if you act in the mode of passion you get distress, and if you act in the mode of goodness you become purified. It works even in terms of hygiene and mental health. It also works in spiritual life, since the results of *bhakti yoga* can be directly perceived.

Considering just a few of the many expert analyses of material and spiritual life, we come to appreciate with awe, the wisdom of Vedic knowledge. For example, men can be divided into categories of *karmis*, *jñānis*, *yogīs* and *bhaktas*. How much wisdom is packed into that analysis! And there are three modes of nature, goodness, passion and ignorance, which interact in many mixtures. All human behavior can be detected according to these *guṇas*. We can learn from *Bhagavad-gītā* how austerity should be performed, how we should pursue happiness, how we should work, how we should be determined and how we should eat.

Whoever is without this Vedic direction is groping. Despite best intentions, one may commit serious mistakes, such as the mistake of thinking that animals have no soul and so there is no reaction to killing them. Or one many think that after he's read enough books, he can become a teacher and "advocate that one can do whatever he likes and attain perfection."

As a result of such teaching, a self-appointed *guru* paves his way to the worlds of darkness.



My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,
sometimes it's too hard
to know what I should do
to serve you.
But at least I know
basic right from wrong.

There is no excuse now,
I know what's right,
because I know your will
and I accept it
as my way.

You may punish me for wrongs,
as your erring servant,
but whatever you do,
I remain your devotee.
Please give me courage
to teach your way
to those "who do not know
what is to be done
and what is not to be done."
Please free me from the wrong
of complacency,
as if simply being "right" were enough.

27

PRAYER TO CHANT WELL

On this Ekādaśī I pray for the
 quality
 of submissive aural reception
 to the vibration of the Holy Name,
 made by the tongue
 of this body
 which is useless and
 detrimental to me, so long as
 I use it mistakenly
 for sense gratification—
 and *most* foolishly when I mistake this
 bag of mucus bile and air
 for my dear self!

Oh Holy Name,
 kindly appear here,
 I can't do it alone—
 please
 please
 Give me the nectar of the Name.

Please make me a servant of
 the sound
 of the prayer,
 Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

And let me not think
 "I am better than others because
 I am chanting."
 But melt my heart for helping
 others to give them the Name—
 after I give it to myself
 and become YOUR devotee.

28

PREACHING TO AN ATHEIST

Reading my own book,
Entering the Life of Prayer
 which I'm about to send
 to an atheist friend,
 I'm sure he'll note
 that I complain my prayers are dry.
 "Just see," he'll declare,
 "he's fretting over Nothing,
 talking to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda
 who never talk back."



Maybe he'll like the pictures,
the earnestness of those days
and details like the Pyrennes mountains.
My comments on the moon and weather
may make him stop and wonder.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, my dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am anticipating darsana of Rādhā-Dāmodara of Gītā-nāgarī, and pray to serve Them. This can happen only by your mercy.

I will continue my prayers during the day, but I want to make them pleasing to you. I realize the best prayer is to call out to you in utterance (or sometimes mental prayer) the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Everything is there.

Thank you, my Lord for bringing me here again to the shelter of Gītā-nāgarī.

Please allow me to accept the bitter as well as the sweet, as all your mercy. Please make me desire the transcendental life of Your service where material varieties of bitter and sweet are all subservient to the nectar of being situated as the eternal servant of your servants. Please guide me.

AS IF Lord Kṛṣṇa or Śrīla Prabhupāda: You are right to desire humility, but now you have to learn how to do it.

You have yet to learn how to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

You have to learn surrender to associate with devotees, and surrender to duties of preaching, and surrender to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission.

You have everything to learn and We can teach you everything.

Remember how Lord Caitanya considered Himself a fool before His spiritual master, and was told not to read Vedānta *śāstra*? Remember how He obeyed?

SDG: How shall I chant better?

AS IF Śrīla Prabhupāda: Like a child's cry for his mother. That is not imitation crying. Consider within that you are a lost child. Mother Harā will hear the sincere cry and bring you to the shelter of the Supreme Father, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

A FABLE: NIMĀI AND THE MOUSE

Chapter 4, Installment 3

The first few days after the attack by the tomcat, Choṭa dāsa remained in critical condition. Nimāi personally bathed him with a wet sponge, spoon fed him *prasādam* and encouraged him back to health. The mouse was tolerant. As the days went by, he wanted to walk and Nimāi fashioned two tiny splints for his broken legs. With hobbling steps, Choṭa would walk a few feet and then collapse in pain and exhaustion.

"Keep trying," Nimāi urged him. But sometimes he urged him to rest.

On the pretext of painting Gurudeva's house, Nimāi spent hours daily near Choṭa dāsa and oversaw his recuperation.

Nimāi calculated for Choṭa's benefit how soon it might be before he would be well enough to return to his home at the temple.

The mouse said, "If possible, I don't ever want to return there." He then confided to Nimāi about his family situation. Choṭa said there were no secrets in the mouse community, and so as soon as Nimāi had spoken with Choṭa, the other mice knew about it. Choṭa's parents were immediately disturbed when Choṭa told them that he had just spoken to a man. First of all, they refused to believe that it was possible for a man to speak to a mouse. And just the thought

that their son was on friendly terms with a human, was madness as far as they were concerned. Humans were the enemies of mice. They set steel traps and took pleasure in poisoning whole communities. They encouraged the cats. So how could he trust a human? When Choṭa had explained that this was not an ordinary human, but a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, the parents of the mouse laughed at the pitiful naïveté of their son. Neither could they understand what he was saying about "a devotee." Choṭa explained to Nimāi that in his family, there was a primitive form of religion, but the fame, form and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa were unknown to them. And when Choṭa had tried to sneak out from home for a rendezvous with Nimāi, he had increased their anger. Except for the fact that his parents were very attached to Choṭa, Choṭa said they would have completely disowned him. "You're as good as dead," his father had said.

"But my younger brother likes Kṛṣṇa," said Choṭa. His tiny eyes sparkled, "and also one younger cousin." Nimāi was fascinated with the accounts of life in the mouse society, but troubled to hear it. It was just a miniature version of human society, with the same sectarian prejudices. Nimāi had an idea of how to deal with the situation, but he didn't want to force his idea on Choṭa. "What do you think?" he asked the mouse.

"I would like to rescue my brother and cousin and bring them here," said Choṭa. Nimāi was thrilled with the bold spirit of his friend. He was just about to ask him if it was illegal, or if the mice in question were of

legal age. But then he thought, "Why should I subjugate myself to the laws of mice?" Nimāi had no scruples about acting, but again he didn't want to push his little friend beyond his faith. Yet it was Choṭa who was pushing for action. He wanted to go back as soon as possible, tell his friends that they had a new place where they could live in freedom and practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness without their parents' restraint. "Nimāi Prabhu, you can carry us all back to Guru-deva's cabin."

And so they hatched their plan in all detail and waited for Choṭa to recover enough so that he could play the leading role. Choṭa told Nimāi that on one occasion when his parents were chastising him, they threatened that they would get large rats to come and attack Nimāi at night. But both Nimāi and Choṭa doubted that the mice actually had any influence over the rats. "Anyway," said Nimāi, "whatever powers they may have, we will just act in the shelter of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says, 'My devotee will never be vanquished.'"

Only a month after he had been attacked, Choṭa dāsa, although still not fully recovered, insisted that they should go and rescue his friends. They chose daylight hours when the mice were more timid in their movements within the temple. Nimāi released Choṭa in the attic room and within a few minutes he had gone down into his old neighborhood and returned with the two "boys." They were bright-eyed, squealing fellows, full of young idealism. Nimāi was moved at how Kṛṣṇa consciousness had spread from

himself to Choṭa and from Choṭa to these others. With full trust, they allowed Nimāi to scoop them up and put them in a box. He then left the room and within minutes was back at Gurudeva's house where they established what Nimāi called "a *brahmacārī āśrama*."

Things were more lively now. Because of the increased numbers and the more ideal circumstances, Nimāi instituted the structure of a *sādhana* for the mice. He set a standard for early rising, practice of spiritual duties, and avoidance of unseemly behavior like passing stool anywhere and everywhere.

Of course Nimāi had established the *āśrama* without asking Gurudeva's permission. It was an emergency, and Gurudeva was now away on his tour. He definitely would inform Gurudeva about it, and if they had to move out, they would worry about that when the time came. But he hoped that Gurudeva would allow it. In fact, ever since that wonderful meeting where Gurudeva was consoling Nimāi and feeding the mouse, Nimāi had begun to hope that one day the mice would actually speak to Gurudeva and that he would give them his full blessings and authorization. That was Nimāi's fondest dream. Especially now that there had been success in his preaching, he began to harbor grand aspirations for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the animal kingdom. He shared some of these ideas with Choṭa dāsa and the new "*bhaktas*," and quoted the verse, "By the grace of the spiritual master, the blind man can see the stars in the sky, a lame man can cross the mountains and a

dumb man can speak. And," he added, "mice can become devotees."

They all cheered, "Haribol!"

These were happy days for Nimāi and his followers. He kept their activities carefully under cover and went on with his own duties, incurring a minimum of displeasure from his authorities.

But Nimāi dāsa had doubts. He worried that what he was doing was small time. It was certainly a miniature world that he was absorbed in. The mice were physically tiny (about 5 inches long including their tails, and no more than an ounce in weight), and also their service didn't seem to amount to much. He seemed to be mostly training them to clean up after themselves, to chant a very small amount of rounds daily, and to learn only the basic philosophy. And the two new mice, although they were sincere and happy to be living as *brahmacārīs*, were not of the same caliber as Choṭa. They were rather frivolous. So what was the preaching value of all these activities?

By contrast, the devotees at the temple were preparing themselves for the austerity of the Christmas marathon. Some of the men would be traveling for two months in a van, distributing books in the cities. And some of the householders were going out to sell paintings, trying to raise large amounts of money, both for their family needs, as well as for meeting the year-end temple expenses. Vibhu Prabhu had asked Nimāi to go on the book distribution party, but

Nimāi had refused. He hadn't accepted such austerities so far in his devotional career, and he didn't think he could begin now. Vibhu had then asked Nimāi to join with a householder couple to assist them in selling paintings, which would also require traveling for a couple of months. Again Nimāi had said he could not do it. He had agreed, however, to take on extra duties back at the temple while most of the devotees were on the road. Nimāi admired the men who went out to preach. He was disappointed with himself and his inability to surrender. Nimāi thought, "Am I training up Choṭa and the other mice in the same unsurrendered attitude that I have?" The small-time and inward nature of the mouse *āśrama* troubled Nimāi, and yet he did not see how he could express these thoughts to Choṭa. He didn't want the mouse to get an inferiority complex. Nimāi knew how depressing *that* could get.

Choṭa had become quite sensitive to the different moods of Nimāi. Sensing that something was troubling his teacher he inquired about it.

Nimāi confessed, "Sometimes I think I am not qualified to lead you. I am not a preacher. Beyond what I can teach you there is a whole realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness which is the bold missionary spirit. And this is the essence of Lord Caitanya and His disciplic succession. Nowadays there is also a pressure for devotees to take part in preaching if they want to please their spiritual masters. But since I can't take that pressure myself, I'm afraid to put it on you. The result is I am not so enlivened when I think how none

of us here are doing big service. Do you understand?"

"We mice are very little devotees," Choṭa said. "It's only your kindness that you are willing to put up with us. It's a fact that we can't do much. But there is another way to look at it."

Choṭa then began to tell Nimāi the inside story of a mouse's existence. He said that the life of mice is very fearful and precarious. They are always living in fear of a predator. House mice, who usually live in close association with human beings, can come out only at night time, and even then they risk their lives just to get their basic meals. They never know when they are going to be pounced upon by a cat, or when the next step they take will set off a snap trap that breaks their necks. And the most pleasing food, like oats or peanut butter, could often be mixed with deadly poison. If they manage to escape all these dangers, still they can only live for a few years.

"Even now," said Choṭa, "even though I have learned that life is meant for something more than eating, sleeping, mating and defending, what kind of service can I actually render in this condemned body? But by your grace, we have learnt the art of devotional service to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. Fortunately, from what you have taught—if I understand it correctly—it's not the bigness of the service that Kṛṣṇa appreciates, but the devotion in which it is done." Choṭa usually spoke in smaller bursts, and both he and Nimāi had been kneeling, but now

Nimāi sat back, as in the *Bhāgavatam* class, and listened with appreciation.

"Besides," said Choṭa, "by your words you have also instilled in us a preaching spirit. I simply repeated your words, and now two of my kinfolk have joined us, and other mice at the temple are also chanting and talking about Kṛṣṇa. Maybe you think three is small. But if you desire, you could also introduce us to more ambitious preaching programs. There are mice everywhere!" squeaked Choṭa. "In every house, restaurant, factory, warehouse, and barn, as well as in the grain fields and sand dunes, you'll find mice. They are at least as numerous as the human beings. Couldn't Kṛṣṇa consciousness be introduced everywhere?"

"I am not sure," said Nimāi. "I mean *yes*, we could expand our program. What you said about the spirit of devotion and the difficulties of devotional service in a mouse body—I never realized that. I think I have offended you by saying that you were small-time. Please accept my obeisances." Nimāi knelt down to make prostrated obeisances and the mice reciprocated.

"It is you to whom *we* must make obeisances," said Choṭa.

"Yes you delivered us," said Choṭa's brother. "We were living in a dark hole."

"We were three blind mice," said Choṭa's cousin.

"We are eternally indebted to you," said Choṭa. "At least *we* think your activities with us are definitely not 'small-time.'"

“It is *not* small-time,” said Nimāi. “That was just my foolishness. The service that we are doing right here in this *āśrama* is being seen and appreciated by Kṛṣṇa. There is no doubt about it! At the same time, we can also increase it.”

This discussion had a serious effect upon Nimāi. From that day on he began to appreciate more that the mice were undergoing rigorous austerities just to perform their basic *sādhana*. In his mind Nimāi began to liken them to the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees in Russia who risk their lives just to get together and chant or distribute Prabhupāda's books. Of course, the mice were nowhere as great as the human being devotees. But in their own way—just like the spider who worked for Lord Rāma—they could be very pleasing to the Lord. Nimāi sensed unlimited opportunity and benefit, both for the mice as well as for himself. He wanted to put aside his neurotic scruples and help them to the best of his ability. Their spunky spirit would help him to become more surrendered.

Nimāi changed not only in his dealings with the mice, but in his dealings with the devotees at the temple. He increased his efforts to surrender, at least in little ways that were within his power. When the teenage boys began to tease him and call him names, Nimāi thought of the bravery of the mice, and it enabled him to take this teasing as something sweet. By not becoming ruffled at the teasing, Nimāi could offer the *tapasya* to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Nimāi looked forward to opportunities where he could counter his pet peeves with an attitude of

acceptance and devotion. He took a more submissive approach in exchanges with Vibhu, and tried to see him as a representative of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. As the winter progressed and he had to sometimes work outside in freezing weather, he endured the cold as pleasurable, thinking, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, please accept my service."

As the Christmas marathon approached, Nimāi had to do the work of several other devotees, spending extra time cleaning in the kitchen, mopping the temple floor, and staying up late to tend to the furnace. He also had to drive into town to buy supplies and help with milking the cows in the barn. But he did it all without grumbling. "The mice have taught me a great secret," he thought, "if I can only remember it. Kṛṣṇa just wants our devotion."

CHAPTER 5

Vibhu Prabhu again asked Nimāi dāsa to go out on traveling *saṅkīrtana* for the Christmas marathon.

"If you could just be the driver of the van," Vibhu requested, "and do back-up services for the book distributors, that would be a great help. It would free one of the others *brahmacārīs* to do book distribution. You drive, and do things like purchase and prepare *prasādam* and be the treasurer and do the laundry. What do you think?"

In his new mood of surrender, Nimāi agreed to do it. "I have never lived outside of the temple," he thought, "but that's what boldness is—to just try."

"Let me think about it overnight," said Nimāi. "I'll tell you for sure tomorrow."

In the evening, while distributing hot milk in tiny *lotas* to the mice, Nimāi asked them what they thought of traveling *saṅkīrtana*. The two new *bhaktas* were goofing off, and spilling their milk. It was actually only to Choṭa dāsa that Nimāi had asked the serious question.

"It sounds exciting," said Choṭa looking up from his milk with a white-stained snout. "But what would we actually do?"

"Well I am supposed to be the driver," said Nimāi, "so most of the time we'd just be on our own. I suppose you'd have to all live in some kind of box or cage. I'll tell the other men that you are coming along as my pets."



From this initial description of traveling *saṅkīr-tana*, Choṭa's brother and cousin looked frightened.

Nimāi continued, "Sometimes we will park the van in a campground or a parking lot while the men are distributing books. I'll run errands during the day for them. And then sometimes we will stay at the homes of friends and life members of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"If we went to people's houses," said Choṭa, "then maybe I could visit the mouse communities there and tell them about Kṛṣṇa."

And so Choṭa and Nimāi discussed all the managerial details and spiritual implications of their going on traveling *saṅkīrtana*. They also asked the newcomers to honestly speak their minds whether they wanted to go. The brother and cousin of Choṭa said that it sounded a bit "heavy," but if Choṭa Prabhu thought that they could do it, they were willing to give it a try.

"Well, that's exactly how I feel about it," said Nimāi. "If it gets too much for me, or for any of you, then we can just come back. Although I don't think the other devotees will be so pleased with me for that."

On this occasion, the new mice asked Nimāi if he could give them devotee names.

"The names I give," said Nimāi, "are not your initiated names. They are just like spiritual nicknames. Because you both came together, and you seem to me like twins, I'll give you the names Yamala and Arjuna, which are names of twin trees that were directly

touched by Baby Kṛṣṇa." Nimāi and his group celebrated by drinking sweet milk, until the mice became intoxicated, and they all fell asleep.

Nimāi made a wooden box about 3 feet by 2 feet with caging and plenty of air holes for breathing, and he stuffed it with paper shredding, according to the directions of Choṭa. This was the traveling *āśrama* for the mice. "You'll be a bit cooped up," said Nimāi, "but the men will also be cooped up in the van. That's the austerity of travel."

Nimāi reported back to Vibhu and said that he was willing to be the *saṅkīrtana* driver, on the condition that he be permitted to take his pet mice with him in a box. Vibhu's eyes rolled when he heard that, but he was desperate to get another book distributor out on *saṅkīrtana*. If this was what it took to get Nimāi, then why not?

But some of the *brahmacārīs* strongly objected.

Vīra dāsa said, "It's bogus! They're filthy creatures. I hate mice! I am not going to sleep in the same van with them."

Dhṛṣṭaketu dāsa, who was the leading book distributor, also objected. "What if one of them gets out of the box?" he asked, "I don't want one of those things running along my leg at night! It's weird and has nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa consciousness!"

Bhīma dāsa was the second biggest book distributor. He also thought that the pet mice were *māyā*. But he shared Vibhu Prabhu's reasoning about doing the

needful, and he also had tolerance for Nimāi's eccentricities. Bhīma told the other men, "It takes all kinds of people to form a Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." He reminded them how Śrīla Prabhupāda had tolerated so much when he first came to America, sometimes abandoning strict rules and regulations of a *sannyāsī* just in order to preach. Prabhupāda had even lived for a while in an apartment with cats, and he had to put his *sattvic* food in the same refrigerator with meat. Why couldn't they also tolerate a little inconvenience in order to push on the *saṅkīrtana* movement?

"Tell that to the knucklehead," said Vīra dāsa. "Why should we adjust to his madness? He should just drive and give up his stupid attachment to rodents."

"Of course you are right," said Bhīma. "But devotional service is voluntary. Nimāi said he'll come with us *only* if his pets can also come."

Eventually Bhīma dāsa prevailed and the men accepted it for the ultimate sacrifice of *saṅkīrtana*. They were prepared to face hundreds of insults daily from the nondevotees when they attempted to give them Prabhupāda's books; they were already enduring freezing cold weather, threats of violence and police arrests, so they figured they could also tolerate Nimāi dāsa, who was after all, a kind of devotee.

And so the party of six men and three mice set out in the Dodge Ram van for a scheduled month and a half of *saṅkīrtana* on the road.

The first day away from the temple was difficult for the whole *saṅkīrtana* party, but Nimāi and the mice were particularly unaccustomed to it. They all slept overnight in the van at a national park. Early in the morning they took cold showers in an unheated bathroom, with the temperature below freezing. Bhima dāsa was in charge of the party, and he arranged a morning schedule that allowed two hours for *japa*, half an hour for a *Bhāgavatam* class, after which breakfast was to be immediately served, and then the men would go out for book distribution. Since Nimāi was the cook, he had to spend most of his *japa* time, as well as the class time preparing a full meal of *dal*, rice and *sabji* for six men. He had to do it outside of the van, setting the Coleman stove, vegetables, pots of water, etc., on a picnic table. Nimāi's mind was screaming to him, "I can't do this! This is too hard!" But he tried to control it. Ever since Nimāi had met Choṭa, he had been able to find solace in their talks, especially at difficult moments. But now that wasn't possible either.

Although the men had reluctantly agreed that the pet mice could come along for the ride, none of them realized that these mice were actually practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and that they often talked with Nimāi. It remained a mystery to both Nimāi and the mice, as to why communication could take place only between Nimāi and the mice and not with any other humans. For the most part Nimāi and the mice preferred it this way. But even if they had wanted to include the others, it was not possible. At least for

now, theirs was a confidential relationship, known only to themselves—and it was their fervent hope that their relationship was also known to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Because of the confidentiality of their friendship, Nimāi could not speak with the mice, either to help them out, or to derive benefit from their friendship. He was allowed to be with them only in ways that would not seem too outrageous to the other men. He could perform only minimal maintenance of their needs, and show minimum affection, or else he would risk incurring the disgust of devotees like Vira and Dhṛṣṭaketu dāsa. But when Dhṛṣṭaketu saw Nimāi cleaning out the mouse *āśrama* while singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, even he made a remark of begrudging approval.

“I guess they are not ordinary mice,” said Dhṛṣṭaketu. “Otherwise, how could they be hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa and taking Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*?”

“Yeah,” chuckled Vira, “maybe they were human devotees in their last life and they had some big fall-down.”

“You better be careful,” said Bhīma dāsa to Nimāi. “If you think too much about these mice, you will think of them at the time of death, like Mahārāja Bharata, and then you could come back as a mouse and go out on traveling *saṅkīrtana*.”

In this way, the men derived some comic relief from the otherwise ridiculous and inconvenient presence of the “mouse *āśrama*.” But as long as Nimāi performed his austerities along with them, they respected him, and did not push their teasing too far.

Nimāi had to exert his full capacity for surrender in order to prepare the breakfast meal outdoors. His fingers became so cold he could hardly feel them. The only way he could deal with his mind was to constantly beat it down, and turn instead to the tasks at hand. But he could not prevent himself from thinking, "I can do this for one or two days, but not for long."

The men appreciated Nimāi's simple but decent cooking, especially his hot buttered *capatīs* and strong spiced *dal*. He was happy to be with such highly qualified devotees and to be accepted by them. Although he was suffering, in another sense he was experiencing the highest state of Kṛṣṇa consciousness he could ever remember. The book distributors were very dear to Lord Caitanya, because they took all risks to carry the message to the conditioned souls, as desired by the Lord and His pure devotees. They were like front-line soldiers in the battle against *māyā*. Even when they were teasing him, or if they sometimes behaved not exactly like pure devotees, Nimāi always tried to remember their exalted position. He took great pleasure in serving them.

After breakfast everyone was very busy, and Bhima dāsa gave Nimāi a list of his duties for the day. It took Nimāi over an hour to wash all the pots and clean up from breakfast, and no sooner was that done when they had to immediately break camp and drive into the city. Nimāi had to drop each man off at his designated spot, either a busy parking lot, or in front of a supermarket or shopping mall, where they

would distribute books all day. Nimāi had to remember where each spot was because after dropping the men off he would have to come back in a few hours to see if they needed any books or any other assistance that he could provide. And then he would have to come back again and bring them a lunch of juice and fruits. Before noon he would also somehow have to find time to do bookkeeping, accounting for the distribution of Prabhupāda's books and counting the money, and he also had to wash everyone's clothes at the laundromat. Carried along in a swift current of his duties, Nimāi had no time to spend with the mice, and hardly even time or space to think of them.

Nimāi had hurriedly purchased groceries for the next morning's cooking and he was driving on a highway to deliver more books to the *saṅkīrtana* men, when he thought that he had better stop to see how the mice were doing. So he pulled the van off to a rest area, and opened their box. The little ones, Yamala and Arjuna were shivering together in a far corner. They seemed to have reverted to animal consciousness, and they cringed when Nimāi reached to touch them. Choṭa said, "Hare Kṛṣṇa," on seeing his friend, but he looked wan and cold. Only by Choṭa's talking to the other mice in their native mouse language, did Yamala and Arjuna gradually look up and assume a slightly receptive position for greeting Nimāi.

"How is it going?" he asked.

Choṭa admitted it was difficult, and Nimāi admitted that it was difficult for him too. They spoke of how they might improve things. Nimāi had bought some little woolen pouches in a store, to be used as sleeping bags. The mice laughed at the idea, since they were always used to accomodating themselves with whatever nature had provided. But maybe it would help. They especially liked the fact that Nimāi had thought of them. After all, their Kṛṣṇa consciousness depended on encouragement from Nimāi. He sensed once again the responsibility he had taken on in convincing these creatures to dedicate their lives to self-realization. At first he had thought that it would be a simple thing: convince them that they were not actually mice, but pure spirit souls, and then the rest was up to them. But since they were so limited, it seemed like he would have to guide them closely for a considerable while. "Sooner or later," thought Nimāi, "they will have to get fixed up to be able to serve on their own, in separation."

After reviving the mice by the warmth of his own Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that they were more cheerful and joking, Nimāi suddenly remembered his own difficulties.

"This is too much," he sighed. "I'm on the go all day long and I haven't even finished chanting my rounds. I don't think I can last. It's too much."

"Just keep trying," said Choṭa. "it's very important for you to do the back-up work for the *saṅkīrtana* party."

"Yeah," said Nimāi, "It's ecstatic. I finally feel like I'm part of Lord Caitanya's movement. Those book distributors are like great heroes. Do you realize that if somebody takes a book, Prabhupāda said that his life could become perfect by reading one page? I can see better now that the *karmīs* are just rushing back and forth completely in *māyā*. At any moment, somebody could die and then descend to a lower form of life."

"But how are we part of the *saṅkīrtana* movement?" asked Yamala dāsa. His question expressed doubt, but because it was the first thoughtful question he had ever asked Nimāi, Nimāi was very pleased.

"You are also part of *saṅkīrtana*. Don't you feel that Choṭa? Tell Yamala."

"Yes I do," said Choṭa. "By supporting the front-line preachers, Nimāi Prabhu feels that he is part of the *saṅkīrtana*. So if we can serve him, then we are also connected."

Arjuna who had seemed the most fearful of the three, moved into the midst of his brothers and asked, "But how are we serving you?"

"To be honest," said Nimāi, "I need your association. Especially Choṭa, he helps pick me up when I am about to go into *māyā*. It's a mutual loving exchange. And it's not that you have to serve *me*. I am just trying to help you to serve Kṛṣṇa. Your *tapasya* is to remain in higher consciousness, even when you are in the dark and the cold of this box, when there is

nothing else to do but to chant. So far you haven't been able to do that, have you?"

The mice all looked down shyly, admitting that they had seriously reverted to lower consciousness ever since they had come into the van. But they would try again. Nimāi had to cut their meeting short. He closed the box, drove back onto the highway and soon reached Lakṣmaṇa dāsa, although he was fifteen minutes late.



CHAPTER 6

By 7:00 p.m. Nimāi dāsa had picked up the last book distributor. He then drove the van out of the city to a national park. While the men sat close together on the wooden platform in the rear of the van, talking over the day's experiences, Nimāi carefully served each of them bread, *sabjī* and cups of hot milk. It was also Nimāi's duty to write down the amount of books distributed and the money that each man had collected. It had been a good day, especially for Dhr̥ṣṭaketu Prabhu who had distributed 50 *Bhagavad-gītās*, and 10 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams*.

"I met this far-out couple today," said Dhr̥ṣṭaketu. "It happened as soon as I got out there. I stacked about 10 *Bhāgavatams* on a newspaper stand outside the store and went to the bathroom in one of the restaurants. When I returned I saw a man and woman looking at one of the *Bhāgavatams*."

As soon as Dhr̥ṣṭaketu began talking, Nimāi reached below the platform, picked up the mouse *āśrama*, and moved it onto the platform.

"What are you doing?" said Dhr̥ṣṭaketu.

"Nothin'," said Nimāi, ignoring the fact that the mouse cage was now in the midst of the men.

"You're not going to let them out are you?" asked Vira dāsa.

"Of course not," said Nimāi.

"He just wants the mice to hear the *saṅkīrtana* nectar, right Nimāi?" said Bhīma.

Nimāi said, "According to Prabhupāda, even a cockroach in the wall of the temple can benefit by hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Bhīma Prabhu allowed Nimāi his whimsy, and the other men let it go.

Dhr̥ṣṭaketu resumed his story. "So this couple had actually taken up one of the books and had walked a distance away from the stand. The man was wearing a blue pin-striped three-piece suit and the woman was also wearing a business suit. They both were carrying briefcases. They looked like they were feeling a little guilty as to whether they should have picked up such nice hardbound books.

"So I approached them and said, 'The book you are holding in your hand is the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It's one of the first volumes in a sixty volume series.'

"Do you know anything about it?' the man asked me. And she was looking.

"I said, 'Yes, a little bit. This *Bhāgavatam* begins with Mahārāja Parikṣit who was at one time the emperor of the world. He got news that he was going to die in a week's time. So he approached a great saintly person, Śukadeva Gosvāmī and asked him, 'What is the duty of a person who is about to die?' I then showed them the picture of Mahārāja Parikṣit with his folded hands in front of Śukadeva Gosvāmī. 'And this *Bhāgavatam* is what Śukadeva spoke,' I said. 'He spoke continuously for seven days and it's all recorded here.'

"So then the woman asked me, 'And what did he say?'

“I told them, ‘Well, you would have to read it for yourself! But to cut it short, Śukadeva Gosvāmī told Parikṣit that the goal of life is to render devotional service unto God. And in these pages of the *Bhāgavatam* it is elaborately explained how to render service to God. It has been presented very nicely by the author, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. He is a renowned scholar.’

“Then they asked me who I was. I told them that I was a member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness which was founded by Śrīla Prabhupāda. I encouraged them to read the books, and if they had any questions they could write to me. I wrote my name and address on the inside of the book. They wanted to talk more but I knew they had to rush. Then the man said, ‘I hope you don't mind if I offer you something for this book.’ I said I didn't. And he said he wanted another copy.”

The men in the van were delighted. Nimāi was not only delighted, but thrilled to be in their company.

Dhr̥ṣṭaketu continued, “So I was about to go back to the newstand to get another book, but the guy beat me to it. In the meantime I was telling the lady how we live a monastic life and we have temples around the world and I asked her to visit one of the temples and showed her the addresses at the back of the book. The man returned and paid me for both books. Then before he left he said, ‘What do they call you?’

“I said, ‘My name is Dhr̥ṣṭaketu das.’

"He said, 'What is your title?'

"I was a little embarrassed but I said, 'His Grace.'"

Bhīma guffawed, "His Divine Grace! Srīman Dhr̥ṣṭaketu Prabhu!"

"So listen to this!" said Dhr̥ṣṭaketu. "The man took my hand and he bowed down from his waist a few times and said, 'Thank you, your Grace, thank you, your Grace.' And the woman did the same thing!"

"That sounds like one for the 'Believe it or not' book," said Bhīma dāsa.

Nimāi went around with second cups of milk and more bread, and everyone took.

Vira said, "I met three Catholic fathers today, dressed in their black robes with little white collars. They all seemed to be about 40 years old, but the short one in the middle seemed to be a little more hip. I greeted them like I usually do, 'How are you doing. I consider you to be gentlemen of God, servants of God,' and I folded my hands. Right away the middle one said, 'Yes, yes we are servants of God. What are you doing?' He was antagonistic from the beginning. I said, 'We are passing out our books. Are you familiar with it? This is the *Bhagavad-gītā*.' He said, 'Oh! You are Hare Kṛṣṇas? No, we don't want that.' But the father on the right said, 'Oh! *Bhagavad-gītā*? Yes, I am interested in that book. I have been interested to know what you believe in.' I said, 'As you know, God is the Supreme Person and we all have a relationship with Him. The *Bhagavad-gītā* explains how that relationship has to be taken up by everyone, whether he be Hindu, Muslim, Christian or

whatever. In this book, Kṛṣṇa is speaking to His pure devotee Arjuna and explaining to him how he is not this body but the soul within the body. The duty of every individual is to surrender to the Supreme and go back to the Kingdom of God.' The other two fathers walked off. They didn't want anything to do with it. But this one on the right side, he was quiet, so I was really just talking to him. But that short one was bitchy. He kept saying, 'No, no, we don't want that!'

"I concentrated on the quiet one and said, 'Different scholars have praised our books, and we simply try to encourage people to read them.'

"He said, 'Okay, thank you.'

"As you know we don't sell them. But we do take contributions so that we can continue selling our books."

Vira continued, "It was a difficult show because the one guy was really upset. I mentioned our regulative principles to the quiet one, and the short one snapped back, 'Well! We are celibate too!' But then he took out a cigarette and bit it defiantly. I couldn't believe it, right there he took out a cigarette! Any-way, the friendly one was smiling and he took the *Gītā* and gave a donation."

"Haribol!"

Nimāi glanced furtively to the cage behind him. They could say what they liked, he knew the mice were hearing. It wasn't the duty of the *saṅkīrtana* men to know or believe that the mice could actually hear and understand, and Nimāi didn't resent it. But at least they should give them the chance to hear.

Bhīma dāsa said, "A man approached me today and straight off asked me for a *Bhagavad-gītā*. I started explaining to him that it was the science of the soul and the relationship of the soul to God, who is the Supreme Soul. But he was in a real hurry. He was with two other business people, who were women. They were dressed very professionally. I was sad to think that he had shown some interest in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but he didn't have time to talk. In fact the two women were already walking ahead. he offered me ten dollars. And then he said, 'You know, I was a devotee years ago. My name is Nārāyaṇa. I want to present this *Bhagavad-gītā* to them. I am sorry I can't talk with you but good luck. Haribol.' Then he rushed back to the two women and while I looked on from a distance he presented the book to one of them, opening it and apparently explaining what it was about. It all happened so quickly. It made me think that devotional service never stops. Once our devotional spirit has been awakened, then no matter what we do, Kṛṣṇa makes arrangements for us to keep rendering service unto Him. I mean, what nondevotee would think of giving one of their friends the valuable gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? But this man still wanted to distribute books to his friends."

As soon as Bhīma dāsa finished, Rañcor Prabhu began talking. Nimāi served more helpings of *prasādam*, but most of them refused to take more. He kept trying until the men forcibly put their hands over their plates to stop him.

"I was standing in a busy corner of the shopping mall," said Rañcor, "distributing a book to an old soldier. Along comes this guy, I think he was a pilot or something. He looked official anyway, walking between another man and a woman. He just shouted out, 'Don't take that book! He is ripping you off!' I said, 'That's not true!' He said, 'He is not allowed to be here!' I said, 'That's another lie! I am not ripping him off, I am just presenting him with one of my books. How dare you stand and say that!' He said, 'I said that because I felt like saying it.' I said, 'Well, you are a liar!'"

"Wow!" said Dhr̥ṣṭaketu. "Fired up! You really let him have it."

"You are lucky he didn't punch you out for talking like that," said Bhīma.

"I couldn't help myself," said Rañcor. "The guy said, 'Anyway, you didn't make that sale.' I said, 'Actually you are afraid to see what's in these books.' He said, 'I know what's in those books. I have seen you guys ripping people off for years.' I said, 'No, actually you are afraid to see what's in these books. If you just stand there, I will tell you what's in these books.'

"So then this pilot or whatever he was said, 'You are just into it for the money!' That really got me mad and so I laid into him. I said, 'We are not just into it for money, but we are not shy to ask people for a donation. It costs us to print these books. But *you* are afraid to discuss these books because you are envious of what we are doing! But in spite of all that I am still willing to be your friend. Just take a moment and I

will tell you what's in these books.' So he said, 'Nah, I have to go.' He started to walk away. But before he left I asked, 'What is your name?' He said, 'My name is John.' And I said, 'My name is Hari.'

"Ten minutes later the same man came back, walking between two women. As he passed he called out to me, 'Hey Hari, did you get anymore books out?' 'Not yet,' I said, 'but it's going to happen. So are you ready to talk to me yet? Or are you still afraid?'"

Nimāi laughed with appreciation. He was trying to remain very quiet, but he couldn't help himself. "I didn't know you were so strong," he said to Rancor.

Rañcor continued, "So the lady says, 'Go on John, talk to him. Talk to him.' He says 'nah' and they walked on down the other way and into a bar. About half an hour later they came back by me again. John came over and said, 'Actually you know, I am sorry.' I said, 'I am sorry too. I didn't want to speak to you harshly, but I felt that what you were saying was wrong and if I didn't speak up you would just go on thinking the way you did without clearing up your doubts. But I can tell you are a nice person.' Then the lady came up and began asking me about Prabhupāda's books. I said, 'You have seen us around. We are here to tell people to become lovers of God. We believe in the simple truth that everyone is a servant of God and it's our duty to take it up. Whether we like it or not. That's the purpose of life. To reestablish our relationship with God. So I am going to stand on this corner and pass out these books to anyone who

will take them. If no one takes them I'll still be here because that's my duty.'

"Then the woman said, 'Let me see that book.' So I gave her a *Gītā*. Then John said, 'You know, I like what you guys are doing. I met a bad guy here once. But in general you don't give anyone trouble. I have been watching you. It's just been a bad day and I figured I would let off some steam.' She says, 'These pictures are beautiful John! I want this book!' The guy says, 'No, come on!' 'No,' she says, 'I want this book!' He said, 'Hari, can you believe it? She wants this book! What are you going to charge me for this book? I can't believe it. I can't buy this book!' I said, 'I can't sell you this book. I am glad she likes the book, but I can't sell this book to you. Even if you gave me a million.' He said, 'No, no, what do you get for these things? I see you ripping off the soldiers, what do you get, five? Ten?' I said, 'Well, we get a lot of tens.' He says, 'I will give you five.' "

"Haribol!"

Bhima ended the talking by 8:30. The only light was the dim interior bulb of the van. They sat on their sleeping bags and read silently. Nimāi placed the mouse cage back under the platform trying to avoid making the slightest noise. But just as he pushed the box out of sight, they could hear lively squeaking.

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