



Here is

Śrīla Prabhupāda

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



Here Is
SriLa Praḥhupada

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Maha

Here Is
SRIĀ PRAḬHUPADA

SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI

GN Press, Inc.

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Preface

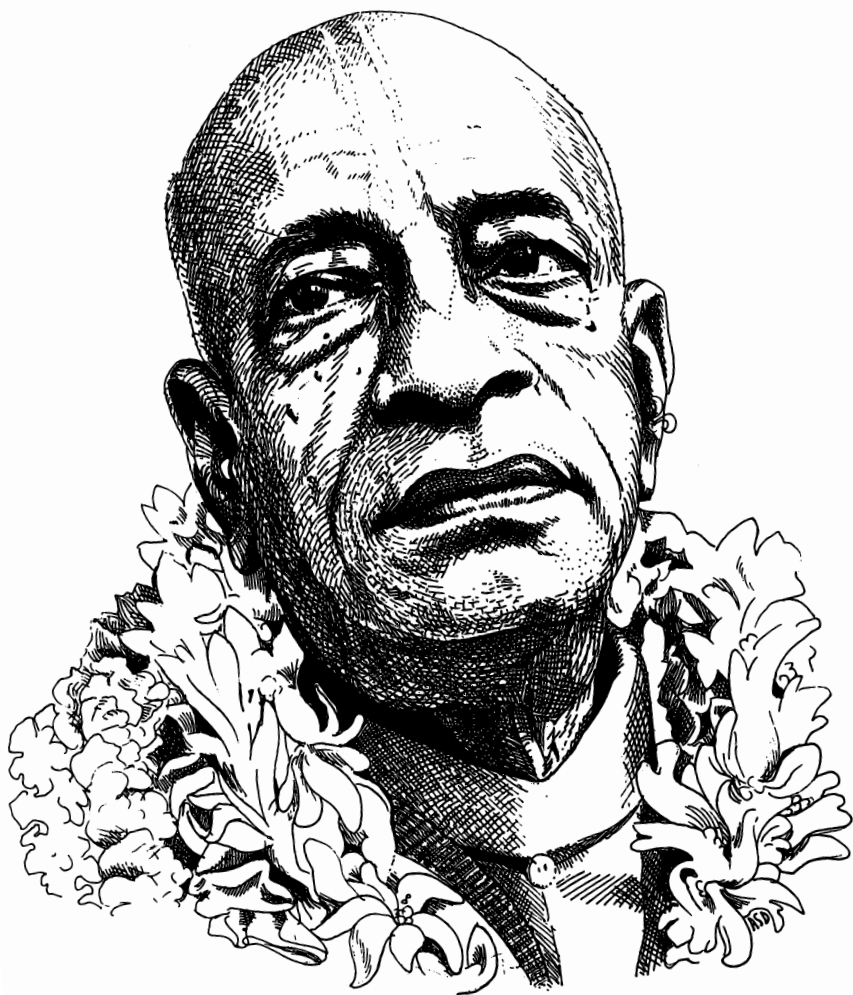
Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda was written using the “free-writing” technique. (I also used this method in writing *Shack Notes*.) Free-writing is a method by which the writer gets past his or her internal editor and just records everything that comes to mind. By not stopping the flow of surface concerns, the writer soon finds himself delving below the surface into deeper areas of himself.

I use free-writing in my devotional service as part of my *sādhana*. It is a way for me to enter those realms of myself where only honesty matters; free-writing enables me to reach deeper levels of realization by my repeated attempt to “tell the truth quickly.” Free-writing takes me past polished prose. It takes me past literary effect. It takes me past the need to *present* something and allows me to just get down and say it. From the viewpoint of a writer, this dropping of all pretense is desirable.

Although the “vow” of the free-writer is to record everything that comes to mind, he is also aware that much of what comes out will not ultimately be printed. Therefore, a Kṛṣṇa conscious “free-writer,” while giving himself permission to write down everything that comes to mind, also goes through an extensive editing process to prepare a Kṛṣṇa conscious book.

I hope that the readers of *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda* will find some benefit in its pages and will discover their own methods to come closer to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Week One



August 6, 1991,
Wicklow, Ireland

I am looking for a way to start remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda again. I feel apart from him, with no way to connect.

In the Antwerp temple this morning, I found my way back to him. During the *tulasī-ārati*, the *pūjārī* finished offering the ghee wick to Tulasī and handed it to a *gr̥hastha* who was standing nearby. The devotee hesitated for a split second, then turned and offered the flame to me. I knew the flame should first be offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda, but I reached out and touched it anyway. I didn't want to embarrass the devotee because he didn't follow the proper etiquette. But I *should* have said something. The flame *should* have first been offered to Prabhupāda.

So here I am, beginning another book about Prabhupāda with a feeling of regret. Prabhupāda should be the center of my life, but I continue to take his place. Still, I am hopeful. I vow to improve.



The Antwerp temple worships a painting of the Pañca-tattva as their main Deity. To the right of it, they have placed a small photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He is sitting, relaxed, in a chair, wearing a red cable knit sweater. His garland is made of fragrant gardenias. Prabhupāda is clapping his hands and holding them forward. When the lighting is focused right on the photo, Prabhupāda's hands look like they are coming right out of the picture. It gives the photo an amazingly life-like effect. Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes are shining and he seems pleased, thoughtful, and grateful at the same time. I think he was looking out at a gathering of his disciples when the photo was taken. He looks deeply moved at how these fallen Westerners have been transformed into the servants of the Vaiṣṇavas by Lord Caitanya's mercy.

The photo was distributed to the temples in this zone during the Prabhupāda Marathon last year. It has a printed statement at the bottom: "If you want to please me, distribute my books." I think, "Oh, this photo was put together with that statement to create some propaganda about book distribution," and I find myself losing touch with Prabhupāda in the photo and becoming distanced by the mood it was distributed in. But then I realize I am sorry I

to finish, hoping I don't get a headache—Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't know about my headaches. But maybe he does know about them and he will say, "You get headaches?" It would be a big relief just to hear him acknowledge them.

"Yes, sometimes, Śrīla Prabhupāda. It's temporary though. Something to tolerate." I philosophize, but he is kind and personal.

He says, "I too would have pains. Headaches too."

I feel that my headaches are "approved" by Śrīla Prabhupāda's remark. Not that I should go on having headaches and think it's okay. But he says he knows and he has pains too. It's not just a psychosomatic trip. Not hypochondria.

I want to say, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, the headaches, when they were bad, taught me to accept things. I learned something about myself. I learned to be alone. I started writing more." But I don't say that. I don't have to. I glance at my watch. I'm getting tired. I've been doing his back for fifteen minutes. It could easily go another fifteen or twenty minutes. Should I ask him something as I used to? Is this the time to do it? Or should I wait? Remember, Śrīla Prabhupāda probably knows all about ISKCON. He didn't come today to learn basic news, but more to hear how you, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, feel about it. He wants to make you right and strong. So don't tell him what he already knows.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is rocking slightly under the movement of my hands as I massage his back. The strong smell of mustard oil in my nostrils, the

Śrīla Prabhupāda is sitting in his room wearing only a *gamchā*. He comments as I enter his room and offer my obeisances that the arrangements in the house are nice. I am also wearing a *gamchā*. I set out a straw mat on the rug, so as not to spill any mustard oil on it. Śrīla Prabhupāda wants it that way. He sits down, in the half lotus position. I kneel, facing him.

I start by putting a few drops of mustard oil in my palm and rubbing my palms together. Śrīla Prabhupāda watches. I know he will comment if I use too much oil and he won't like it if I spill even a drop. I rub his scalp with a quick "pinching" movement of my fingers. It's as if we've both stepped into a groove of past association. I know what to do and he accepts my service. This is symbolic of our entire relationship, if I can only let its meaning permeate my entire being: *I know what to do and he accepts my service*. At this rate, Śrīla Prabhupāda won't have to even speak to me. I'll learn the lessons he has come back to teach me: "Serve me as when I was here. Be a simple devotee. Be certain that I am with you receiving your service. Don't demand any special recognition. Do the needful. But be ready for me to correct you. Be ready to accept it."

Prabhupāda signals that I should stop massaging his head and do his back. I move behind him and start the heavy exertion of rubbing his entire back up and down.

"Harder," he says, "massage harder."

I'm sweating by now, hoping I have the stamina

cook their own favorites today—grilled cheese over potatoes and lots of whipped cream. No, soft, tender *cāpatīs*. Do they know how? I haven't cooked a full meal in many years. I can't experiment today. The *cāpatīs* have to be tender and thin. We better invite some Indian *mātājīs*. They know how to do everything—*dāl*, rice *cāpatīs*, *sabji*, and *samosās* if they're done expertly. *Sandēśa*, *rasagullā*. Maybe an apple pie with an Irish touch, whipped cream. He sometimes likes a surprise, as long as the main preparations are there.

Oh, do we have enough flowers for garlands? We'll need several of them during the day. And someone to wash and iron his clothes.

How much time before he takes lunch? "I'll clean the rice." I look at the recipe book again to get the right proportion of rice to water, then set it to boil. I ask the cooks, "What do you need?" I wash the vegetables and start cutting them, but then Prabhupāda's secretary comes in and says Prabhupāda wants me to give him his massage! I get someone to clean the stove and run out of the kitchen. Half an hour until the massage. I try to quiet down.

I'm afraid it will be such a whirlwind of "passionate" arrangements that Śrīla Prabhupāda will be here and gone before we have time to think much about it. So far, we seem to be mostly concerned that he is pleased with our arrangements for his personal conveniences. That's proper. But I have to keep a cool brain. After he has rested I have to go before him. In fact, I have to go now for the massage.

simple method you can become perfect and escape the horrible effects of Kali-yuga and repeated birth and death."

He asks the young men and women present to take part in preaching. He hesitates to call the place we are in a temple. I speak up and say it is a house we procured for his visit, but in Ireland, there are three permanent centers. He accepts the information. It seems to be what he wanted to hear. Yes, there are regular centers in Ireland. So we can live there and serve, or one can practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness in one's home. Try to tell others about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whoever you meet. In this way you may all become gurus.

"I thank you for this invitation . . . I shall talk with Satsvarūpa, and if there is time . . . " He looks to me again and to his secretary. We don't want to dictate to him what his schedule is. He wants to extend himself to others. We want him to do whatever he wants. But for now, we suggest he go to his room, take his massage and bath. We are preparing his lunch.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then leaves the room, first bowing down to a picture of Pañca-tattva. It is a reproduction of the Bengali painting he brought to America in 1966. Everyone prostrates themselves, sincerely saying, "*Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda.*"



Who will cook lunch? Who is expert enough? Perhaps some of the Irish women, but they can't

few from Belfast, and two new Irish lads who helped us prepare the house. They are ruddy-cheeked and amazed to see Śrīla Prabhupāda in person. Some ladies are here too, including a few new ones. In fact, I am the only one in the room who knew Śrīla Prabhupāda before 1977. So Śrīla Prabhupāda sees this as an opportunity to speak, a short arrival address.

He recites *prema-dhvani* prayers and *maṅgalā-carāṇa* prayers. "My dear boys and girls," he begins, "I thank you very much . . . " He mentions my name, "My disciple, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami . . . " He says that these young Irish devotees are also his disciples, as long as they follow. He speaks of the *paramparā* from Lord Caitanya. He speaks of his unfinished work. He talks of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the great need for it. It is needed now more than when he was present. He refers to corruption that has occurred in ISKCON since his disappearance. The references are indirect, but we feel the weight of them. We are inspired to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his words. Yes, that sensation comes—this is the same Śrīla Prabhupāda as on his tapes and in his books. We are never without him. Now he has come back to update us and correct us. This afternoon is specifically for working on me. What will he say when we are alone? Listen now, he's glorifying the holy name.

"I have nothing new to declare . . . " Śrīla Prabhupāda says. "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." It is the same mantra he introduced to us in 1966. It hasn't changed. "It is Lord Caitanya's desire that by this

him. His secretary holds Prabhupāda's few belongings. Prabhupāda is now barefoot. The temperature in the room is perfectly comfortable and a window is open. Birds are chirping. He sits and looks at a big, framed picture of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura on the wall, and gorgeous paintings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya in Their *līlās*. We start an *ārati* and the devotees sing *Śrī Guro-aṣṭaka* to a mellow tune, accompanied by harmonium. Prabhupāda plays *karatālas*.

As I offer the *ārati* articles, I feel rushes of emotion. Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't have to read my mind; just by standing before him I am exposed. I see my activities since his disappearance—my attempt to become a guru and some of the excesses of that, my reading in Christian saints, my publishing my own books, my seeking lonely places, my hurts. He also sees my desire to serve him . . .

He glances over at me once or twice—inexpressible confirmations of love that smash my foolish pride. I'm shaking so much I think I'm going to drop the ghee lamp. Prabhupāda looks the other way. He looks within, lowers his eyes. "What about Kṛṣṇa?" I think. "What will I ask Śrīla Prabhupāda when I get the chance? Should I ask him to tell me what to do?"

The *ārati* comes to an end and Śrīla Prabhupāda looks up at me and asks, "What is next? Shall I speak?"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda. That would be nice." But there are only a half dozen devotees—some Wicklow men and women—Manu dāsa from Dublin, a

second floor entirely for his use. The big, modern kitchen is stocked with everything we need, according to what we know of Prabhupāda's tastes. There are fresh flowers in the vases. This will be a blessing for the old sod, which is so ripe for preaching. Prabhupāda never visited Ireland, so that's a good reason for him to come now.



Now Prabhupāda is arriving. He pulls up in a big, comfortable BMW. We run out and prostrate ourselves in the gravel driveway at his feet. It's Śrīla Prabhupāda back again after so many years. We just accept it. It's his mercy. He's wearing those saffron canvas shoes and a silk *dhoti*. He's smiling more radiantly than we have ever seen him smile. He is glowing with health. He is coming straight from the spiritual world, just as Nārada Muni does, and he will only be here for the day.

"Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda!" I suddenly feel embarrassed that I haven't gathered his leading disciples here and that there is no big reception. As I start to apologize, Prabhupāda gestures to me that it's all right. "I have come here for you," he says. I feel instantly better.

We usher him in the front door. The hallway is spotlessly clean and sunshine (!) is pouring in the windows. We have arranged a room for his reception, for foot-bathing and *ārati*. We bathe his feet with five kinds of milk products. He accepts it gracefully because he knows our desire to worship

drafty halls and scuffed floors. The whole place must be made nice for him.

I would tell about six devotees that Prabhupāda was coming so they could help fix up the house. We would set it up according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's needs. One room would have a low desk, a dictaphone, and his Sanskrit translation books. One room would be for work and interviews. The bedroom would need a bed and a rug so he could sit for his massage. We would put in a modern bathroom. Unfortunately, there isn't much sunshine in Ireland, but we would put in a skylight to capture whatever sunshine we could. The servant's quarters could be a separate building, apart from Prabhupāda, and there could be a car ready so someone could get whatever Prabhupāda needs.

Prabhupāda would come in late spring when the hills are a beautiful green. He would come in the spring on a day filled with soft sunshine and warm breezes. We would build a glassed-in veranda onto the back of the house so Prabhupāda could look out at the hills and the lake in the distance while he chanted *japa*. We could also plant colorful flowers in beds all around the house. (Śrīla Prabhupāda used to call them "Kṛṣṇa's smile.")

(The more I think of it, I worry about the Irish weather. He would look out at the gray skies and say something like, "Let's go to Māyāpura. It's very dreary here." Ireland is good for seclusion, but the weather is always terrible.)

When the house is ready, we can put attention into the finishing touches. Prabhupāda has the

rāja Nanda, Yaśodā and the *gopīs*. If we can simply follow in their footsteps, even to a minute proportion, our lives will surely become successful, and we will enter into the spiritual kingdom, Vaikuṇṭha.

—*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 2, p. 61

Prabhupāda is not bluffing. If we want to attain the result he is speaking of, then we have to practice what he says.

Actually, it is very encouraging. Even though we are drowsy sometimes, there are moments when we hear with pure mind. Similarly, at the end of life there will be many physical and mental distractions. (Even now, I lose my happy attentiveness as soon as I feel a little pressure in my head.) All the non-Kṛṣṇa conscious things I have gathered over the years will visit me at the time when I least want them, because I am distracted by my mind and body. But Śrīla Prabhupāda assures us that if we practice hearing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes throughout our lives, "We will have every possibility" of entering pure mind and remembering Kṛṣṇa at least some of the time—and Kṛṣṇa will save us.



Sometimes I imagine Prabhupāda has come back for only one day and he has agreed to see me. I imagine inviting him to a secluded place in Ireland. Ireland isn't an opulent place, but we could find a modern house here—no peat-burning hovel with

11:00 A.M.

The readers and hearers were drowsy again today during the *Kṛṣṇa* book reading. We began the chapter, "Uddhava Visits Vṛndāvana." I said, "It's not possible for me to make comments on this chapter. We can say something in an analytical way, but we don't even have a drop of the *bhāva* felt by Nanda Mahārāja and Mother Yaśodā. While Nanda described Kṛṣṇa's uncommon activities to Uddhava, Nanda Mahārāja gradually became overwhelmed and could no longer speak. As for Mother Yaśodā, she sat by the side of her husband listening, not saying anything. Tears poured from her eyes and milk ran from her breast. So how can we speak glibly about this from the lecturer's point of view? Fortunately, Śrīla Prabhupāda comes to our rescue by preaching to us who are trying to hear this exalted section of *Kṛṣṇa* book.

Uddhava then glorifies Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. He says that one can go back to Godhead by remembering Kṛṣṇa in pure mind "even for a moment" at the time of one's death. Prabhupāda comments:

This is the result of Kṛṣṇa conscious practice.

If we practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this present body while we are in a healthy condition and in good mind, simply by chanting the holy *mahā-mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, we will have every possibility of fixing our mind upon Kṛṣṇa at the time of death. . . . Therefore, to remain always absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness was the standard of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, as exhibited by Mahā-

Wise devotees see Kṛṣṇa
 in a gnarled tree trunk,
 in the nude body of a tree,
 the moving dress of leaves,
 in the thin cloud layers.
 A white chimney, a sheep's pasture plot,
 you name it, He is there . . . A rock,
 a barbed wire, sunshine on a portion of hill.
 This is the world.
 And then there is another world, eternal.
 This one comes from that one.

I space out and almost
 fall into the typewriter.
 What was it you saw?
 Come back to this world
 of fresh senses—you see,
 I cannot avoid this world.
 I have to stay awake in it.
 If I daydream I simply space out.
 So let me see this "Universal Form"—
 A rose bush leaning against a white-washed
 wall,
 stomach hankering for breakfast,
 the world in the body, let me use it
 as service to the Lord
 who comes to this world
 to accept our service.
 After resting, we will hear His book.
 Kṛṣṇa will appear
 in the words of *vrajavāsīs*,
 Kṛṣṇa will appear.

was when He responded to it by kidnapping her, lifting her onto the chariot and making her His eternal wife.

Writing gives us *darśana* with the rare and advanced souls of the past. How else could we know Rūpa Gosvāmī's heart? He writes, "Although I have not the dimmest shadow of pure devotion, which is the only way to attain You, still, because You are the master of playful transcendental pastimes, please be merciful to me."

Lord Caitanya has been very kind to arrange for these great devotees like Rūpa Gosvāmī, Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda to leave us the fruit of their devotional research and realization in the written word. Reading the writing of such great souls is so moving that it is no wonder that even Śrīla Prabhupāda's typist gets it into his head to try to write something Kṛṣṇa conscious too. "All of you write."



See heaven or Viraja as you call it.
It's the horizon, like an old Chinese print
or a flatland Wordsworth might see.
It's *nirvāṇa*, the morning mist
not mixed with carbon monoxide.
The Creator is not far away—
if you want to know Him.
His hand has caused all that you see,
indirectly through His energy.

their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.”

But again, the *Bhagavad-gītā* doesn’t specifically mention me, Satsvarūpa dāsa. My case is included in those eternal instructions, and I am not an exception to those rules of *bhakti*. But where do I stand? I don’t seem to know. I can’t seem to realize it to my satisfaction. Is Kṛṣṇa helping me? Am I doing something wrong?

To get this information, I simply have to read the map. Although my specific case with Śrīla Prabhupāda may not be delineated, the map points out exactly: “You are here.” With this information, I can then advance in my relationship with my spiritual master.



Two hours a day with Prabhupāda’s books is not enough.



Writing can be a deeper communication than we usually get in person. The symbols on the page don’t convey less than spoken words. They convey more because they are shorn of ambiguous and confusing bodily gestures and undue emphasis given to things that happen when we speak face to face.

But writing cannot replace spoken words. Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī wrote a letter to Kṛṣṇa, but the best part

a bona fide spiritual master, accept initiation from him, and receive instruction in Kṛṣṇa consciousness while serving him with faith and confidence. But even Rūpa Gosvāmī admits that he is speaking only basic principles. Prabhupāda comments, "For example, a basic principle is that one has to accept a spiritual master. *Exactly how one follows the instructions of his spiritual master is considered a detail*" (*Nectar of Devotion*, Chap. 6, p.53, emphasis added).

In a sense, my relationship with my spiritual master is not mentioned in the scriptures. It is uncharted territory. The details have been left up to Śrīla Prabhupāda and me. The outcome is still waiting for further development. Will I surrender completely? Will I receive more grace? Without the authorized books I would not know how to conduct myself, but the books cannot cultivate my relationship with Prabhupāda for me. I have to make the attempt myself every day. I have to choose good association, control my senses and mind, do the work which is fit for me as approved by Śrīla Prabhupāda. There is much work to do in my individual case. This is true for every disciple.

Another dynamic factor: Kṛṣṇa helps the sincere disciple from within the heart. He promises to help the sincere devotee: "To those who worship Me with love, I give the intelligence by which they can come to Me." If I cannot take full advantage of my guru's instructions and the direction of the spiritual institution, then Kṛṣṇa will enlighten me in my heart. Kṛṣṇa guarantees this in the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse: "To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in

August 13, 1:30 A.M.

Prabhupāda's books teach us about the spiritual relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master. Prabhupāda's books are like the map, but I still have to undertake the journey myself. I study the symbols on the page. They refer to a situation like my own, describing what is required of me as a disciple in giving my whole life to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The map marks out hazard areas—don't be whimsical, don't disrespect the spiritual master, pray to him, inquire from him . . . But it remains general.

Each of us has to make our own journey guided by the map of the *śāstra*. The journey is meant to be long; one has to pass through all phases of life in this body while he traverses the path. But still, the *śāstras* give us only general guidelines. The *Nectar of Devotion* states that one should accept the shelter of

everything will be done just as it is in India. Kṛṣṇa consciousness will have its Western flare:

Sometimes our Indian friends, puffed up with concocted notions, criticize, "This has not been done. That has not been done." But they forget this instruction of Nārada Muni to one of the greatest Vaiṣṇavas, Dhruva Mahārāja. One has to consider the particular time, country and conveniences. What is convenient in India may not be convenient in the Western countries. Those who are not actually in the line of *ācāryas*, or who personally have no knowledge of how to act in the role of *ācārya*, unnecessarily criticize the activities of the ISKCON movement in countries outside of India. The fact is that such critics cannot do anything personally to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If someone does go and preach, taking all risks and allowing all considerations for time and place, it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to *śāstra*. . . . The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them Vaiṣṇavas.

—*Bhāg.* 4.8.54, purport

Oh, those crazy dancers!
 Staid devotees leave the *kīrtana* hall
 as the young ones stomp.
 My writing is like that, a wild dance,
 with happiness expended
 and energies expended
 in service of the Lord before His altar,
 with guitar and Western drum,
 leaping as high as I can.



I have seen photos of Śrīla Prabhupāda smiling at the antics of his Western disciples. In one picture it looks like he almost wants to refrain from smiling. His teeth aren't showing, but he can't help but be amused, and his eyes show that he is pleased to see that the devotees are at least enthusiastic. He permits them to sing and dance in their own way, as long as it's within bounds. They work hard, so if they look a little strange and don't dance exactly like Gandharvas, and if their Sanskrit is sometimes wrong, pronouncing "*goru*" (cow) instead of "*guru*" (spiritual master), Śrīla Prabhupāda overlooks it. He says, "I am guru, not a cow, but I realize they don't mean it wrongly. They cannot always pronounce the Sanskrit correctly, that's all."

And sometimes we ate too much, some of us. We had lots of faults. We're working them out. We know we need to be more cultured. And we want to increase our family members. As the movement grows in many countries, we cannot expect that

suffered from palsy. These years before old age are the most crucial. The light will fade. Write as much as you can.

Tomorrow I'll rise early and come here to write. Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are stacked on the desk and maybe they will speak to me. I was going to say, "They're on the desk and I can reach out to them." But it's more like they'll reach out to me.



Prabhupāda, your devotees live all over the world. Sometimes they get in car accidents and they die. They want to think of you and Lord Kṛṣṇa. You've taught us what to do in life and at death, "Whoever thinks of Me at the end of life—he comes to Me." You have taught us what we need to know, but we need you to stand by us, to come to us. "Everything is there," you said. No one is excluded. Let us serve you.



My crazy dance,
my *kīrtana* dance.
I whirl around
like a young man, happy.
In the center for awhile,
and then another *bhakta* spins in,
and I stand on the edge clapping
before the Deities and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs* visited Abhay's home. The aged Gour Mohan De mistook them for Māyāvādīs and was unfriendly. When Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Swami started to speak, Gour Mohan De realized his mistake, "Oh you are Vaiṣṇavas!" he exclaimed, and bowed at their feet.

Gaṅga said, "Prabhupāda's father set a good example for his son to follow." The chapter ends with a description of the photo of Abhay with shaved head, observing his father's passing away: "There is a mysterious, spiritual air about him, as one might expect in a meditating saint . . . He looks as if he is and always was a *sādhū* and he has suddenly been revealed as such on this day."

There is so much to learn about Prabhupāda. Gaṅga added, "I have seen some deaths and killed animals. I've also read about the passing away of Vaiṣṇavas. But the Vaiṣṇavas' passing away is quite different. They do not suffer like the others." After he said that we were all quiet. This Wicklow house is very peaceful, so it was a real silence—no wind or birds, no cars or planes or people. I waited in that silence, wondering about death. But then I thought, "There's still time for me to work. Let me go to the porch and write."



7:00 p.m.

According to the photo, when Gour Mohan De got very old, his eyes dimmed and he might have

"Did Śrīla Prabhupāda ever say anything about Ireland? It rains here almost all the time."

"There's a letter to Prabhaviṣṇu who went traveling around Ireland and who sent a good report. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that if preaching is not good in one place, you can keep traveling and go to places like Ireland. But he never went there himself."

"He spoke in Rome with the Irish poet, Desmond O'Grady. He told him, 'You Irish are always fighting.'"

"And now we are here preaching on Prabhupāda's behalf. His books are being distributed, his *mūrti* is being worshiped. So he is here. He's here in Ireland and it's raining."



6:00 p.m.

This evening we read the chapter about Abhay's business and family life in Allahabad. Madhu said he appreciated hearing how Śrīla Prabhupāda applied himself to his duties in making money. Prabhupāda employed his money-making ability later as founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. We followed the thread of spiritual life through Prabhupāda's business days as he traveled and opened his pharmacy in Prayag.

Two charming scenes: When the Gaudiya Math *sannyāsīs* come to Abhay's Prayag pharmacy, he was joyful to see them again. At another time, Gauḍīya

Another devotee said, "Kṛṣṇa sends the rain at night so it won't disturb the farmer's day, but the ungrateful man wakes in the morning and complains that it didn't rain enough. That's in the *Kṛṣṇa* book, 'Description of Autumn.'"

"Isn't there something about the demigods raining down the benefits that people want?"

"Demigods shower flowers from the sky."

"Rain is one of the elements, water."

"Rain comes from *yajña*."

Playing this game during *prasādam* always left us with a nice feeling for each other. It was better than fighting among ourselves or talking *prajalpa*.

Let's play it now. Can you think of anything connected to Prabhupāda and rain?

"One time Prabhupāda walked outside in the rain without an umbrella. Govinda dāśī took the shower curtain off the shower and ran out and covered Śrīla Prabhupāda with it."

"When it was raining one day at the time he usually took his morning walk, Prabhupāda said, 'Today we shall take our walk sitting down.' Karandhara drove him around Beverly Hills in the rain while Śrīla Prabhupāda closed his eyes and rested."

"He walked in the snow in Manhattan in 1965."

"He told us about Kṛṣṇa who held up Govardhana Hill in the rain. And he told us that Kṛṣṇa went to collect wood for His guru and the rains came."

"He said that ISKCON *saṅkīrtana* in India stopped the drought."

it takes practice to know how to use them properly, how to understand their subtleties. It can only be taught by a master.



Prabhupāda loved to write because it was an effective way to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He got good results from his writing. He also communed deeply with the previous *ācāryas* when he wrote. He felt their power, even when his essays weren't being read. Writing seemed to be his *dharma*. Even his spiritual master encouraged him to write. So Śrīla Prabhupāda became occupied with writing books and he saw temple construction as not important for him, especially in the years before he first came to America. He saw himself as following his guru's example and his order, "If you ever get money, print books." Prabhupāda said the first duty of a *sannyāsī* is to write books.



We are like children trying to remember the spiritual master. In the old Boston temple, sometimes we played a game during *prasādam*. One day it was raining outside so I said, "Think of something Kṛṣṇa conscious connected to rain."

Someone said, "When it rains, Kṛṣṇa and His friends sit in a cave and have lunch there, talking until the rain stops."

neatly and just right. He knows exactly how to do it; it's another art that should be done the right way. In the third photo, Śrīla Prabhupāda has the *cādar* and Śrutakīrti is watching. I imagine Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Not like that. Give it to me." Prabhupāda is meditative, absorbed in the moment of *cādar* folding. I love Prabhupāda in that mood.

Prabhupāda is always the instructor for his disciples. There is usually an edge of chiding in his voice, but it's still gentle and loving. Of the disciple Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, " . . . a disciple cannot disobey the order of his spiritual master. That is the relationship between a disciple and his master." He gives the example of Arjuna who surrendered to Kṛṣṇa "without any vanity regarding his own erudition, and without any reservation." If you relax your defenses and allow him to instruct you, even in how to fold a *cādar*, then your relationship will be smooth. You will not become aggravated and neither will he become displeased; you will quickly learn how to do things his way. The spiritual master is supposed to train you to be expert in spiritual activities, including the details of how to fold a *cādar*. As soon as you resist, thinking you know how to do something or that he is too demanding, then there will be trouble.



Words like "lover," "disciple," "guru," "service"—these are strong words. One has to know how to use them. They have specific meanings and

that I am spiritually immature *and* that I might die at any moment. One who thinks like this will utilize his remaining days and hours to become more mature. Make some progress, make a contribution. Don't be caught sleeping.



When "Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda"
Comes to Despair

I love Prabhupāda. I'm always defending myself. It is not necessary. I love him.

"Goshes"—a comic strip character used to say that. I guess it's pseudo-cute. Maybe it was Dondi, that Korean refugee boy who appeared in the New York Daily News. Instead of "gosh" he said "goshes," and I'm saying it now.

"Goshes, Mr. Dugan, I really did want to paint portraits of Śrīla Prabhupāda even while looking at the Wicklow hills."



4:00 p.m.

I have a series of three photos—Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrutakīrti are folding Prabhupāda's *cādar*. First, Śrutakīrti holds it while Śrīla Prabhupāda folds it. Then Śrutakīrti folds it while Prabhupāda watches. Śrīla Prabhupāda is attentive. He wants it done

stacked together. I can't tell for sure. The photo has a wonderful, old quality to it, like a Nineteenth Century daguerreotype. The space behind him on his right side is black. His arms are so thin I can see his veins. He stopped for a moment and posed at the photographer's request. I could tell it was a warm day in Calcutta when the photo was taken—Śrīla Prabhupāda wears no shirt, just the *sannyāsa* top cloth and *dhotī*. He looks noncommittal—it's hard to see what he's thinking.



11:00 A.M.

Gaṅga dāsa surprised us with potato pancakes (decorated with cheese and tomatoes) for breakfast. As a result, we all drowsed off during the 10:00 A.M. *Kṛṣṇa* book reading. Unfortunately, it was one of the most emotional scenes—the *gopīs* protest as Akrūra takes Kṛṣṇa away from Vṛndāvana.

At least I have Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Kṛṣṇa* book dictation tapes. Although he dictated them just for typing, his narrations are full of the *gopīs'* feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa, protesting cruel Akrūra. Saved again by Prabhupāda.



Time is precious and it is quickly running out. Śrīla Prabhupāda told me once that I should never think I was mature. He said I should always think

Truths are given to me as axioms
 of the *Vedas*. I'm glad for that.
 As Prabhupāda said, "Should I listen
 to Kṛṣṇa when He says
I eat, or should I listen
 to a loafer like you?"
 I repeat the axioms,
 and this is my footnote to prove
 that I'm alive—I see
 a black plastic garbage pail outdoors,
 next to a grass-covered stone wall,
 mist moving in like smoke,
 the bend of the path going down hill,
 Gaṅga's kitchen noises and
 my hope of breakfast and rest,
Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda,
 while swallows wing out across the meadow.



7:00 A.M., The captured moment

There is pus in my gums, but that's not so
 important. The smell of ink emanates from the
 pen. I have a photo on my desk of Śrīla Prabhupāda
 sitting in a chair in India. Behind him, a calendar,
 "Calcutta Trading," with a picture of Lord Viṣṇu
 surrounded by Śeṣa's many hoods. Where was this
 photo taken? It appears to be someone's house or
 office. The garland Śrīla Prabhupāda wears could be
 rose petals, or it might be cut pieces of leaves

cannot enter deeply into pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda through book distribution. It is not *just* propaganda. This is a way to please Prabhupāda. And yet . . . you, dear reader, and I too—we *can* please Śrīla Prabhupāda. We can distribute his books. We can read his books. We can please Śrīla Prabhupāda by the simple devotional acts we perform under his direction. Śrīla Prabhupāda is glancing compassionately at all of us from this photo—*because he is pleased by our offering*. We should never doubt this.



Śrīla Prabhupāda, I accept this method you have offered me to resume meditation on your lotus feet, through the regret I feel for having taken the flame before you. Nevertheless, I have confidence that I will rectify my wrongs. And I have confidence that this service of writing you have given me will help. You said, "Keep on with this business of writing articles . . . go on writing something glorifying the Lord and put our philosophy into words. Writing means to express oneself, how he is understanding this philosophy. So this writing is necessary for everyone." Let me write the true story of coming to you each day despite the distractions and forgetfulness and poverty in my heart. Let me glorify you.

of Prabhupāda, or our understanding of his instructions, or even our feelings toward him, are permanent and will never change. But they do. Our perceptions change and we change. We have to be sensitive to those changes in our approach to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

All of Prabhupāda's disciples want to be true to him, yet each of Prabhupāda's disciples has a slightly different vision of what being true to him means. Therefore, we have to discover for ourselves *what Śrīla Prabhupāda means to me*.

There is a danger of creating an illusory Prabhupāda. It is all too easy to worship a malleable Prabhupāda, one who changes his orders to suit our own needs and deviations. We can tell ourselves that we are pleasing Prabhupāda without even knowing what Prabhupāda wants from us.

We tend to love the features in Prabhupāda that are easy for us to relate to. But who is the *real* Prabhupāda? Where can we find him? Do we find the real Prabhupāda in the letters he wrote during the 1970s? Yes, he is present there, but he still has to be approached within the context of the situations he was facing. He is also in his *Bhāgavatam* purports. Ultimately, we can only find the real Prabhupāda by surrendering to him and asking him to reveal himself to us. It takes constant, gradual surrender.



Occasionally I look at a random paragraph about Prabhupāda in one of my own published books. Sometimes it looks wrong. Not quite wrong, but too colored by my own view of Prabhupāda. I always regret seeing these things in print, but ultimately, I have to trust that Prabhupāda's followers will look everywhere they can to find out who Prabhupāda is. He is not something one person can possess in his entirety. He means different things to different people. I do not have a monopoly on Prabhupāda-realization. Prabhupāda is unlimited.



I have to repeatedly approach difficult topics. One neat paragraph on "Illusory Prabhupāda" doesn't free me from the danger of false worship.



Nothing is perfect, and nothing I can ever say will be perfect. If one says that he has taken the perfect breath and there is no longer any need to breathe, then he will die within minutes. The last breath is your dying breath. So I am not claiming perfection. As Lord Brahmā says, "As long as there is sunshine within this material world, kindly accept my humble obeisances." I am no Lord Brahmā, but as long as my seasons endure, I offer my prayers and I use writing as a means to stay alive and to improve.

11:00 A.M.

Prabhupāda consciousness should come naturally. It should be like an explosion that floods my mind with the presence of my spiritual master. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness is dependent on Prabhu-pāda.

Just before I wrote this, Madhu and I were reading and discussing Kṛṣṇa book. We talked of feeling separated from Kṛṣṇa. Suddenly, there was a loud knock on the door. Madhu went to answer while I sat there blinking, trying to keep a wisp of a hold on Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

It was a member of the Irish Army. He wanted to know if the owner of the cottage had any objections to the Irish Army performing maneuvers on his land.

The demanding world appears to be so real. It comes right up to your door and bangs the big brass knocker. Talks of Kṛṣṇa sometimes seem evanescent, like mist after the sun comes out. But the material world is temporary, no matter how real it seems now. Kṛṣṇa is eternal, even if it is difficult to concentrate on Him.

How does all this relate to *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda*? Prabhupāda wants us to understand the difference between the temporary, material world and the eternal, blissful world of Goloka Vṛndāvana. This is the life work that Prabhupāda wants from us, to somehow fill our minds with more and more Kṛṣṇa and less and less *māyā*. And Prabhupāda is

with us in our attempts to hear about Kṛṣṇa. It is the basis of our relationship with him. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke specifically of Kṛṣṇa. He described His flute and the feelings of separation the *gopīs* experienced. Prabhupāda was fully absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. He wrote in *Kṛṣṇa* book, "The spiritual masters should enrich the devotees to the highest devotional perfection. Feeling constant separation while engaged in the service of the Lord is the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, p. 231).

I cannot expect Śrīla Prabhupāda to again come to where I am in the material world. He expects us to love him enough now to go to him. That's how it should be—the disciple should go to his *guru* and render service and hear from him. For now I'm doing that by reading his *Kṛṣṇa* book. But the day will again come when I can sit at his lotus feet and hear him speak of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* or any number of other transcendental topics. It will just take time and conscious endeavor, by Prabhupāda's grace.



Prabhupāda, you are not a play thing. You are the solemn director of my life, the boss I report to. More than that, you are my angel-guide, the representative of Supersoul—my only access to inconceivable Kṛṣṇa.

You are the one who will meet me at the end. I am trying to limit my baggage so that I can rush to your lotus feet unencumbered.



One should go to the guru not with nonsense, but to surrender. The *śāstras* state, "Who needs a guru? That person seeking the Absolute Truth."

Yet even the seeker of the Absolute Truth has problems. He doesn't want to take his problems and dump them at the feet of the guru, but where else will he put them? He has to be honest, not just the picture-perfect disciple who puts on neat *tilaka* and bows down reciting properly enunciated *praṇāmas*. The disciple has to let the guru get at his heart.

My point is, *I just want to find as many ways as possible to enter Prabhupāda consciousness and to break through the barriers that prevent me from loving, surrendering to him, enjoying his books, and serving him twenty-four hours a day.*



Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are the best teacher
of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
You explain it all nicely
in words we can understand.
You know Kṛṣṇa and love Him.
You went for Kṛṣṇa's mission to the Western world
where no Vaiṣṇavas had ever made an impression.
Your gift of Kṛṣṇa's *Bhagavad-gītā* in 1968
and *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* in 1968,
your gift of *Kṛṣṇa* book in 1969
and *Nectar of Devotion* in 1970
and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from 1960–1977—
are unexcelled Kṛṣṇa conscious acts.
The Lord is known because of you.

I thank you again and
I plan to read your books
many more times in this lifetime.
Please grant me the mercy to relish them fully.
If you make me fit
to relish your books then I'll be able
to give the same to others.
I'm asking Lord Kṛṣṇa for this boon,
but it's through you our prayers must go
reaching the Lord in *paramparā*.
In any case, I praise you
for giving Kṛṣṇa in ready, clear ways
to whoever will accept the best thing.
All glories to His pure devotee.

4:00 p.m.

This writing project is new for me; I don't know much about it yet. How can it transform the men and women who read it into lovers of my spiritual master? Why should I want to turn everyone and everything in his direction? What voice within me is saying, "You can't put everything into a book about Prabhupāda. There's a point where Śrīla Prabhupāda ends and the rest of the world begins." Who is that voice?



Śrīla Prabhupāda, I want to tell you some things. Prabhupāda, I love you, although sometimes your voice seems harsh and your tone heavy, and it scares me a little. I know you are inconceivable and cannot be judged by ordinary standards. You cannot be judged at all. But I want to peel off a few more layers of my official understanding of you and face some truths. I am not trying to ruin the insides, my solid, *paramparā* worship of you. I just want to make sure that the person underneath all the layers is awake and alive to you, that he is responding to you in a real way and not mechanically, like a telephone answering service.



The two things I fear most in living for Śrīla Prabhupāda: (1.) To offend him by any minimizing or blasphemous thoughts, and (2.) to praise and obey him only out of habit, or out of fear, or only as a response to the institutionalism of ISKCON.

I have heard devotees who reject their discipleship say they feel release by letting go of Prabhupāda. I want to feel release in my obedience to him. I want to sigh with relief as I discover my surrender is well-founded.

It's not Prabhupāda who is being tested or exposed here, it's me.



6:00 p.m.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances.

Madhumaṅgala and I were just reading your *Kṛṣṇa* book, the chapter on the *gopīs* feelings of separation by the *gopīs*. We thank you for presenting this. Madhu says you give us details about Kṛṣṇa in a way we can understand, such as when you say, "When He plays [on His flute], the clouds stop their loud thundering, out of fear of Him. Rather than disturb the vibration of His flute, they respond with mild thunder and so congratulate Kṛṣṇa, their friend" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, p. 233).

Prabhupāda, this *Kṛṣṇa* book is you. It is what you want us to hear as much as possible. That is why you wrote it as early as you could. I love the fact

that you want us to hear *Kṛṣṇa* book. You preach strongly to chase away demons that may disturb us in our hearing of *Kṛṣṇa* book. You wanted the whole world to have this book and therefore you asked George Harrison for \$19,000 to publish it with the color illustrations painted by your young disciples. You write, "If you simply read *Kṛṣṇa* book, although it looks like stories, yet you will become delivered from the clutches of repetition of birth of death. It is so nice because you will understand what is *Kṛṣṇa*."

The sweetness of *Kṛṣṇa* is also your sweetness, Prabhupāda. And His propensity to kill demons is also your own desire to fight His enemies. As I have failed to love *Kṛṣṇa*, so I am failing to love you. Sometimes I think, "This description of *Kṛṣṇa*'s jewelry or ornaments doesn't attract me." In a similar way, sometimes I fail to appreciate something you say. But like the cloud over *Kṛṣṇa*'s head, I am afraid of offending a great personality, so I apply myself in your service. Surely, one day I will be cleansed of this dirt.

Your eternal servant.

August 8, 1:30 A.M.

In *Shack Notes*, I dialogued with inner critics who doubted the value of my writing. *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda* will prompt me to dialogue with voices who doubt my service to Prabhupāda. Those voices want to open a chasm at my feet—make my body tremble with feelings of unsunder. They want me to be miserable because I am unsundered. What's needed, they tell me, is to give up my present activities—my style of writing and preaching. They say these activities are useless concoctions and products of a self-indulgent madness. They prescribe hard and unreasonable ways. The result is depression and inertia. That's the sum-up of the dialogue as I see it, so I am trying to avoid them.



I used to think I was a special devotee, but now I know I am not. Śrīla Prabhupāda once said that we should not crave to be recognized by the spiritual master. We should not advertise ourselves. We should be silent workers. One thinks, "If Śrīla Prabhupāda were to recognize me, he would see what a nonsense I am. Why demand his attention and favor?"

Prabhupāda has changed my life, given me purpose and duty. Why should I demand that he continually pat me on the back and flatter me into thinking I am special? I should be more satisfied and grateful in his service; I should worship and serve him, and be content and confident in my connection to him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said of himself that he was a tiny servant not worthy of direct service for many lifetimes, yet he was a confident preacher. (He has asked me to preach, although I am not so confident of myself in that service. At least not confident in the way Prabhupāda was confident.) I shouldn't clamor for special mercy from him, but should simply serve him—cook for him, write for him, travel and preach; think of him, inspire others by speaking of his greatness . . . If I am grateful, I will do this without seeking to be noticed by him.



During the rainy season, all living entities, in the land, sky and water, become very refreshed, exactly like one who engages in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. We have practical ex-

perience of this with our students in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Before becoming students, they were dirty-looking, although they had naturally beautiful personal features; but due to having no information of Kṛṣṇa consciousness they appeared very dirty and wretched. Since they have taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their health has improved, and by following the rules and regulations, their bodily luster has increased. When they are dressed with saffron-colored cloth, with *tilaka* on their foreheads and beads in their hands and on their necks, they look exactly as if they come directly from Vaikuṇṭha.

—Kṛṣṇa, Vol. 1, p. 139



Prabhupāda, my inner censors tell me you are far away and I can't reach you. I wanted to dream of you last night but I couldn't, or I can't remember if I did. They say I displease you too much and therefore I can't know you. They claim that a special meeting with you is taking place but I am not allowed to attend. They say I can't even think of you. Is this so? Why are you so far away?

O Prabhupāda, please let me think of you. You are everyone's friend; you are my friend. Soon I will hear you again on tape. I'm listening to your lectures. Everything you write and say is infused with truth and can save us.

Prabhupāda, where are you now? Am I being impertinent by asking that question? I am only asking you this because I want to be with you.

I know one answer to that question: you are in my heart. We are still together at 26 Second Avenue like in the old days of ISKCON. I still have my duties assigned by you—I still have garbage to empty and dishes to wash, guests to talk to and devotees to counsel. And I still have my writing and reading. My service to you is ongoing. You haven't cut me off. You are with us if we want you to be. There is no need to feel apart.

Prabhupāda, I want to serve you with love, not just out of duty. Please teach me to give myself to you.



Low Flame

Prabhupāda with his cane is walking in my mind and walking across this *padayātrā* T-shirt.

I also take a quote by him to support self-expressive writing. And the book distributors quote, "If you really want to please me . . . distribute my books."

We are running after Prabhupāda
 who is walking with his cane.
 I talked about him on my walk, big words.
 Now I'm on Pragoṣa's porch.
 With an hour to go before breakfast,
 trying not to fall asleep,
 pushing myself to write.

Don't go inside to talk to Madhu, don't look
 at automobile manuals, recipes,
 or what's written on boxes of soap powder.
 But go inside yourself.
 I'd recommend reading *Kṛṣṇa* book
 but at this hour of the morning
 you are likely to fall asleep.
 Although forces are trying to squelch you out,
 keep the flame burning.
 Prabhupāda with his cane is walking in my mind.



7:00 A.M.

Do you know what we mean by "jack-in-the-box writing"? When you write a topical article, you first explain a problem in the world, such as the Mideast politics or the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Then suddenly, you introduce *Bhagavad-gītā* as the solution to the problem. When it's done awkwardly, the preaching pops out of the essay like a jack-in-the-box. This happens when the preacher does not integrate the material and spiritual worlds.

He doesn't apply the *Gītā's* teachings or think out how it can actually work—he just smooths texts over the problem and calls it fixed.

I thought my Prabhupāda consciousness might be a species of “jack-in-the-box” thinking. I start by saying I feel sleepy. Then I say, “Prabhupāda is the answer.” Or I start with the Irish countryside—the long streaks of clouds, the chill air in August, the sheep looking at me as if I'm crazy—and suddenly I say, “This reminds me of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.”

I want to improve in the way I cross over from anything to Prabhupāda. Sometimes I fail to cross over at all, or I cross abruptly, as if suddenly slapping myself, “Don't think that! You're supposed to be thinking of your spiritual master.” It would be nice to demonstrate smooth, integrated transitions—to prove the harmony and all-pervasiveness of Prabhupāda consciousness for a disciple of Prabhupāda. But I guess my abrupt turnings to Prabhupāda are also real moments, like the sleepy driver suddenly jerking the steering wheel to keep from going off the road.

If I catch myself wandering from Prabhupāda's shelter, I will have to come back as fast as I can, even if that return is like popping out of a jack-in-the-box. Sorry about that rough transition folks, our pilot just spaced out for a few moments.

I am just a tiny bug in Prabhupāda's hand. From his hand, I move to his field and back again. I explore the vast cosmos on a forty minute walk. I come back singing his name. Veering off and returning.

The fact is, I still don't know what to make of the cosmic manifestation, or at least the little bit of it I can perceive with my senses. I can see sheep in a field and start lecturing how cruel it is to kill them, how karma results from animal slaughter. Prabhupāda taught us this. But when I first encounter the sheep, the cosmos, the world—sky, field, air, and myself as someone (I don't know who) in a body (of which I know little except that it's working)—when I encounter the morning and my place in it, I can't figure it out. I am not that Kṛṣṇa conscious. I start to think with moral sense, "Is this Kṛṣṇa conscious? Is this *māyā*?" I want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious and think in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way, but gradually I pop out like a limp jack-in-the-box, slowly, hanging over like a bent flower on a broken stem.



7:15 A.M.

Here are some recent dreams in which Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared. I was in a room with Prabhupāda, helping to serve him. I went to wash my hands in a sink that was filled with water. Prabhupāda saw it and said, "No, not there. That's dirty water. Use clean water." So I left the room to find clean water.

In another dream, I was in a room filled with devotees. A rocking chair had been placed at the front of the room for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Most of the

devotees sat on the floor, but I had a rocking chair for myself near Śrīla Prabhupāda. There was also another empty rocking chair. When Prabhupāda entered, he indicated (without words) that I should have been with him as a servant and accompanied him to this room, rather than be waiting for him with the others. (Did this mean he had to come here alone?)

Then I was looking out a window and I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda being massaged on the roof of a tenement building. I tried to see who was massaging him but couldn't tell. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda no longer looked exactly like himself; he was someone else. When I noticed this I felt some relief. If I couldn't massage him, at least no one else was doing it.

Earlier in the dream, I was talking either with Śrīla Prabhupāda or with devotees. I told them that Prabhupāda's presence among us is very rare, and therefore we should take advantage of any personal service we can offer. I also saw devotees on another rooftop chanting, and I understood that it was because of Prabhupāda's preaching that they were practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I think my envy was manifesting in the dream when I was glad to see that the person being massaged was no longer Prabhupāda. If I'm not the one doing it, then better there is no pastime. I don't like to see that attitude in myself, but I can't deny I have those feelings. Why didn't I take care of Śrīla Prabhupāda as his servant in the dream? Is this a replay of my 1974 period as Śrīla Prabhupāda's ser-

vant? Am I feeling regret that I left him? I am grateful Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared in my dream, but when I analyze it, I see mostly my own *anarthas*. What else could the rocking chairs mean except that I still desire to be seen as a special disciple? Is this why I abandoned being his servant—although that is the most special service of all?

The appearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda in dreams is a shaky kind of evidence. They cannot always be held as absolutely true, free of all symbolism or mental concoction. I often don't like to hear other people's dreams about Prabhupāda, especially when they claim that they are literally true. If Prabhupāda appears in a dream and says, "There's going to be a world war. You should immediately go to South Italy"—it may mean many things. It may not be a literal order from Prabhupāda himself.

Still, dreams are worth pursuing. Much of my conscious life is spent trying to capture Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence, but so much time is spent in sleep. If one can dream of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, then that time will not be wasted. And in fact, dreaming of Prabhupāda or Kṛṣṇa may be a good sign that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is finally infiltrating one's heart. Also, forgetting all one's dreams is like losing a third of one's life, or spending that third in unconsciousness. My own dreams of Śrīla Prabhupāda are only a small percentage of my total dream life, so when they come, I often wake excited and tell myself, "It was Prabhupāda! Write it down."

What do I get out of my dreams about Prabhupāda? They are usually shrouded in mystery and

often have an aura of not being the real Śrīla Prabhupāda. Still, he is present. He was present in my dream last night, but then he faded like vapor. Then he appeared to be someone other than Prabhupāda. This indicates that my receptive mind is uncertain, or that Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes appears and then chooses to disappear. He is not subject to my desires. When the authentic presence of Prabhupāda disappears, I cling to a false one, but then I realize it isn't real.

Prabhupāda wants me to serve him in a personal way. This theme has come to me in repeated dreams. I'm offered the opportunity but somehow I fail, just as I failed in 1974. I didn't like being so domestic, cramped in his back room and carrying his *karatālas* and spectacles, listening to him lecture for many hours daily. I wanted to go out and preach on his behalf in the expanded *saṅkīrtana* field of 1974. Perhaps these recent dreams are a re-visiting of that situation.

I like to think of it as Prabhupāda coming to order me to serve him now, giving me another chance. But can I serve him personally like I did in 1974 now that he has disappeared? Can I only serve him in his *mūrti* form? Should I go to his Rādhā-Dāmodara room and take up some service there? Should I write? Will it be revealed to me in future dreams? One who craves to be with him will accept whatever he can get, even infrequent, inconclusive dreams.

You cannot associate with Prabhupāda by attempting to lord it over him or trying to consume him as a subject to write about. You have to approach him humbly.



Sea gulls screaming overhead. The farmer next door is roaring around on his tractor. Gaṅga dāsa is coming to join us today, so there will be three of us in the reading sessions. Baladeva phoned to say, "Consider reading *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* instead of *Kṛṣṇa* book." But the phrase "instead of *Kṛṣṇa* book" doesn't sound right. How can we dispense with this precious *Vṛndāvana-līlā*?

Today Madhu and I were more inattentive, even a bit drowsy, but it was still wonderful. Aristāsura was so gigantic that clouds hovered over his hump, thinking it to be a mountain top. I lost attention when Kṛṣṇa started to fight with him. How did He actually kill him? I did hear that all the cows fled the village in fear. The residents of Vṛndāvana called to Kṛṣṇa for help. How can we give up reading about Kṛṣṇa? Yet if we want to keep *Śrīla Prabhupāda* more in mind, maybe hearing *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* is also good.



I feel like I'm writing my way into the unknown. Prabhupāda is unknown in dreams, but neither can I claim to know him in my conscious, waking life.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is unknown to me, as is existence itself. We don't know how our bodies work, how our hair grows or how our hearts beat in that steady rhythm. We don't know the extent of the universe or even the extent of this planet. The scientists don't know, the psychologists can't tell us, and the philosophers can only philosophize about the unknown. Even the pure devotees cannot know Kṛṣṇa in full, although they know more than anyone else. Only Kṛṣṇa knows everything.

So it's fitting that I write my way into the unknown. I can draw the analogy of the long tunnel leading to Jambavān's cave. Kṛṣṇa knew what He would find there, and He was not bewildered by the strange sounds or creatures in the tunnel. But the people who accompanied Him from Dvārakā did not know, so they waited outside the entrance of the cave in fear. Kṛṣṇa had to come out and tell them what was in the tunnel. Lord Brahmā was brave enough to climb down the length of his lotus stem "until he reached the end of his time." He wanted to know the unknowable. But still he couldn't determine his origin. He had to perform *tapasya* and so do we. If Kṛṣṇa is pleased, He will reveal the truth.

We can start anywhere and still reach Śrīla Prabhupāda. We are strongly connected with him; Prabhupāda will guide us to himself. He is an unknown quantity, but we don't need to fear him because we don't know him. He can change us to make us fit to approach him. We have to be prepared for that.

I like to imagine I am starting somewhere to approach Prabhupāda. I see myself begging him to accept me, to allow me to serve him. I hope writing will be the key for me. In fact, I had a dream recently where I saw a pair of keys on a table and they were keys to Śrīla Prabhupāda's room. I imagine I am taking those keys and opening the door. This writing-key can bring me into his association.



4:00 p.m.

Whenever people ask me, "Are you ever afraid of your spiritual master?" I always admit that I am. Fearing Prabhupāda is like fearing God. It has its place in the life of every disciple, as long as it isn't overdone. Perhaps there is an advanced stage where one becomes friendly with the spiritual master and doesn't fear his displeasure, but at this point, I know my relationship with him is so crucial to my spiritual life that if I harmed it in any way, or risked his kicking me away, it would be suicidal.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was not whimsical. His show of anger toward a disciple was always for correction and was never a sign of his rejection. He showed annoyance for the same reasons he voiced encouragement—simply to teach the disciple how to behave. Prabhupāda's sarcasm or gestures of displeasure always battered the false ego, but by accepting them, one became more closely aligned as his *śiṣya*.

I know my fear of Prabhupāda is exaggerated. It will gradually clear. The bottom line is obedience to his order. It's just so hard to determine exactly what his order is for all situations, in all times, and for all people. To know that, we can only pray that he reveal himself to us and again give us his words of encouragement or his little gestures of disapproval. In that knowledge of what he wants from us, we can pass beyond fear.



"Don't come back to this nonsense world. Go to Kṛṣṇa." I remember the way he said it in his strong, assured voice. I also remember that voice as he wrote his books, dictating them into his Uher dictaphone.



6:00 p.m.

We listened to *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Volume One, the opening chapter. First we meditated, relaxed, and patiently listened to the reading. The *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* seemed to open up! I used to find the opening section tedious with its detailed description of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on Harrison road in Calcutta. But today I heard every word of it. Imagine Śrīla Prabhupāda as a child! I almost always think of him as seventy or eighty years old. Hearing Prabhupāda's life is like hearing about the

lives of Uddhava and Mahārāja Parikṣit. How simple and profound his statement, "We were happy. Not that because we did not have a motorcar we were unhappy."



Bright sunlight glints through the window. Gaṅga dāsa has arrived. He is unloading his notebooks, tapes, and clothes while Madhu tinkers in the van. The sun is brighter now. You don't see the sun often in Ireland; it is a pleasant change.

I am trying to meditate on Prabhupāda as a child. I picture a small toddler riding in a pram on his way to see Rādhā-Govinda. He told us, "I used to watch the Deity for hours."

Who can I turn to for advice about how to increase my awareness of Prabhupāda in my life? Or should I just take a walk in the hills and look for what I need to do? But it is not a matter of "ideas." Prabhupāda is what he is and I have to learn to adjust myself to him in order to know him better. I feel close to his life and teachings, I feel within them in fact. Perhaps I just need to allow a little more time to pass until I find the proper expression. Perhaps I need to allow Prabhupāda to guide me more.

August 9, 1:30 A.M.

Deep fears, deep doubts . . . One wakes from them, grateful to be a student in the institution. The picture of Kṛṣṇa conscious monastery life is described by Śrīla Prabhupāda in *Kṛṣṇa* Book:

After the first rainfall, when there is a thundering sound in the clouds, all the frogs begin to croak, like students engaged in reading their studies. Students are generally supposed to rise early in the morning. They do not usually arise of their own accord, however, but only when there is a bell sounded in the temple or in the cultural institution. By the order of the spiritual master they immediately rise, and after finishing their morning duties, they sit down to study the *Vedas* or chant Vedic mantras. Everyone is sleeping in the darkness of Kali-yuga, but when there is a great *ācārya*, by his calling only, everyone takes to the study of the *Vedas* to acquire actual knowledge.

—*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, pp. 138–39

Our institutional life is routine and quiet. Don't miss the opportunity to savor the holy names and bow your head, and to perform your devotional service by "scheduled measurement." We can improve. It is not our duty to figure everything out. We just have to be simple and hear and chant God's names. And we have to pray for devotional service.



A Prabhupāda Recall Walk

The clear consciousness I seek
appears sometimes.
I could have walked in the wild hills,
you almost get lost up there,
the inverted bowl shape,
and overcast sky,
nothing else in sight.
But I chose the tarmac road
because there is less to distract me
from thinking and talking.
You start out admitting defeat.
But quickly new hope;
I haven't exhausted Prabhupāda meditations,
I have barely begun.

Walk over a little bridge, water loud in the creek,
 no one in sight, keep talking . . .
 Prabhupāda comes to me, I declare it out loud,
 "Remembering him is an emotional need."
 His importance for all of us becomes obvious,
 I grasp it like a rock or
 fresh air to breathe.
 Keep walking until you're tired and sweating.
 You can't come up with
 even a single memory,
 only brief and vague ellipses . . .
 But that's all right, you tried.
 It's starting to rain on your eyeglasses,
 your limbs are aching. It worked again—
 it never fails—he blesses us when we endeavor.



11:00 A.M.

I'm happy to be able to put time in on meaningful Prabhupāda recall "sessions." One touches the value of his association. These are magic moments.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our *Kṛṣṇa* book reading session this morning. In one sense, the reading was not *Kṛṣṇa* nectar, it was the scene where Nārada talks to Kāṁsa, telling him the whereabouts of *Kṛṣṇa*. Then we read of Kāṁsa's meeting with Akrūra—scenes revealing the murderous mentality of a political dictator. But we took part anyway,

visualizing and enjoying the drama. We could see how Śrīla Prabhupāda must have also visualized the pastimes as he translated his summary studies; thus he created subtle elaborations beyond the literal translation. When questioned about this, Prabhupāda said, "Summary study means I can do what I want."

The scene with Kāṁsa and Akrūra also signals that the *Vraja-līlā* is nearing its end. When Akrūra goes to Vṛndāvana to fetch Kṛṣṇa, there is no danger for Kṛṣṇa's life, but apparently it will end the *Vṛndāvana-līlā* with Kṛṣṇa, the *gopas*, and *gopīs*. We will have to find other sections to read in other books if we want to keep hearing about Vṛndāvana.



Why are we reading this book? We are living with our spiritual father.



Buttercups and milkweeds and delicate green shoots grow on top of the small stone wall at the edge of Pragoṣa's property. Far in the distance, the Viraja River flows, although the eye cannot discern it. Pragoṣa, who has been away, will be returning later today and this cottage will become a little busier. This is my tiny news.

Prabhupāda expands in each of our hearts. He is present simultaneously with many of his followers as they worship him in his *mūrti* or read his books,

and when they remember his exchanges, his intense desire to preach, his book distribution or the way he took *prasādam*. If we panic when Prabhupāda seems distant, then that is meant to be an impetus to propel us forward in our remembrance of him. There are so many ways to be with Prabhupāda. We should be grateful to him that he has made himself so available to us. Prabhupāda, please relieve me of my forgetfulness.



I offer my obeisances to His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. He is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. His goal was to absorb the minds and hearts of his disciples in love of God, and in this, he represented the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I know you and you know me. I want to know you with all my senses and in this way, get beyond the skeptical mind.



What are your deepest dreams?

I hope that Prabhupāda will recognize me—and that all his devotees will recognize him. I hope his devotees will dramatically improve their relations with one another, that we will each find within the ISKCON society some particularly close friends. I hope the leaders will encourage these friendships

and that this will increase the love and trust within the movement. The movement will then flourish and the preaching will automatically increase.

This is a dream, but it is possible if we center our relationships on Prabhupāda.

When Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself into the boys and cows and calves, the residents of Vṛndāvana found themselves loving their children more than they did previously, although they did not know why. Similarly, if Prabhupāda is shining in each of our hearts, we will automatically love each other more. As a result, people will be drawn to take part in this mystic *saṅga*, which will increase tenfold when we chant and hear together. Prabhupāda will be approving us and we will all feel accepted and purified in his presence.

I hope to realize that Prabhupāda is approving our *saṅga* now and to be a part of the reformation of ISKCON.



A flock of distant birds in the white, rainy sky. The coarse texture of the blue-gray Donegal wool sweater. A damp woolly smell. When Harikeśa Swami visited Moscow recently, a thousand devotees met him at the airport. Good news dribbles in while I hear of the less victorious things too: the temples in America are thinned out, the staffs stripped down to practically nothing. We will get through. We are guided by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Ravi Prabhu wrote an article in a newsletter about the scientific phenomenon of “critical mass.” When someone achieves a breakthrough in some field, the same accomplishment becomes easier for others. At least that’s how the theory goes. So Ravi Prabhu speculated that if devotees could achieve pure chanting, then the masses would follow us. The analogy seems right. Anyone who purely calls to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda can bring about significant changes in the world. Let us continue adding our straws to the fire.

There is a buttercup growing on top of the wall. I’m putting in my time, meditating on Prabhupāda and accepting whatever comes. I pray timidly, but I hope for the “critical mass” theory to take effect, both in my heart and in the population at large. If we can only add one more ounce of devotion, perhaps it will be enough to trigger the avalanche of Lord Caitanya’s golden age to descend on the darkening Kali-yuga world.



4:00 p.m.

I like to think that if I can learn more about myself, and if I can learn to love and accept myself, then that will help me in my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I want to communicate openly with Śrīla Prabhupāda; I want to be his surrendered servant.

I cannot become a surrendered servant by pounding myself into the ground like a wooden peg. And neither can another person pound me into loving surrender. I have to meet my needs. I need to serve my spiritual master. And I need to do it with self-knowledge.

I remember things that Śrīla Prabhupāda said to me and to others which seem to touch on these issues. When I admitted to him that I took credit for achievements in the Boston center and this made me feel vain, he replied, "That feeling you have that 'I am somebody is *not wrong*. But you have a wrong concept of self. You have to learn who you are—you are the servant of Kṛṣṇa."

I haven't realized the full import of that statement, although I have always appreciated it. Prabhupāda was acknowledging self-esteem. I *like* being a devotee of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa. I *like* being who I am. I'm happy, and therefore I can appear happy before Śrīla Prabhupāda. He wanted us to be "happies," not "hippies."

When Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "If you love me, then I will love you," he was speaking of the need for communication. I still haven't learned this lesson. *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda* is meant to help me learn the secrets of loving exchange with Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Statisticians estimate that the average person accomplishes only ten percent of his promises, is open to only ten percent of his emotions, and his heart is only ten percent alive with love. It is frightening to consider that I will miss out on so

much in life. I have the greatest fortune to be linked to the Supreme Lord and to His best devotees, but if I give only ten percent of my love, that is the greatest misfortune.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is about love. It is the art and science of love, not just ordinary love, but supreme love—love of God. Kṛṣṇa loves us and He wants us to love Him, “Offer Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit . . . ” But I am not immersed in love. Therefore, my relationship with Kṛṣṇa takes place through my connection with my spiritual master. I need to learn how to love Śrīla Prabhupāda. When I know how to love him, then he will teach me how to love Kṛṣṇa. I am groping towards this end.



Life goes on in a distracted way. I’m trying to write over someone’s telephone conversation in the next room. You are encased in a life of service to your spiritual master.



As I write this morning, this line from Hamlet came to mind. It’s from the play within the play. A man is leaving home and his wife is telling him again and again that she loves him. Hamlet asks his mother, who is watching, what she thinks of his wife’s effusive statements. She replies, “Methinks the lady doth protest too much.” In other words,

the lady is tiresome in her repeated protestations of love for her husband, and she has become suspect. Probably she doesn't love her husband, so she has to cover up her lack of affection by making profuse statements of love.

Perhaps I write "too many" books in praise of my guru. A person who writes a lot is also held suspect. Norman Mailer criticized William Faulkner, "Anyone who writes so many books must not have much experience of life." The disciple may be staying to praise his guru rather than collecting alms or preaching on the guru's behalf. Or he may think, "I don't really love my guru, at least not deeply, but let me keep speaking to talk myself into it."

Guru: Where is that disciple of mine?

Answer: He's in his room writing your praises.

Guru: Oh, are they nice?

Answer from another disciple: They're nice . . . but sometimes he feels he doesn't love you enough, so he writes about that. It gets psychological. He seems to think you are far away and yet near, like the *Īśopaniṣad* verse, "He is far away, yet very near."

Guru: Anyway, ask him to come and see me.



Who can understand the relationship between guru and disciple? Is it subject to the same laws of love as our other relationships? What does it mean to say that it is a father/child relationship, but it is completely spiritual? What if the disciple is not completely spiritual? Or the guru, for that matter?

The perfect guru-disciple relationship can only be understood from the śāstric viewpoint and from the experience of sincere gurus and their disciples. The guru is the representative of Kṛṣṇa. The disciple is a conditioned soul seeking release from the material world through *bhakti-yoga*. I know the guru of whom I write, my own spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, is in the topmost category of powerful *ācāryas* and is capable of delivering conditioned souls. He can engage us in Kṛṣṇa conscious work; if we follow him, we can become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious and go back to Godhead.

Whatever doubts I may still have in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are not about Prabhupāda's spiritual caliber or about his disposition toward me. I doubt only my ability to respond to him. I doubt myself. Śrīla Prabhupāda once said that even if we have the most expert *guru*, we may still fail unless we help ourselves.

Nevertheless, the guru is demanding of the disciple and Śrīla Prabhupāda is no exception. Unfortunately, I cannot always measure up to his demands. I know he is not unreasonable in his requests. He wants us to be perfect, to render pure, unmotivated service to guru and Kṛṣṇa. He knows that *bhakti* must be unconditional, and his duty is to train us to perform that unconditional service. But my service to Prabhupāda is still conditional, and this is what is producing all the anxiety in my relationship with him.

Anxiety is not always bad. When a devotee asked Śrīla Prabhupāda how we can please Kṛṣṇa and

make our service perfect, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "By your anxiety." He meant that we should be anxious in our desire to please Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, we will not be able to please the infinite Supreme Person by our offering of food, art, money, work and so on. Kṛṣṇa wants to see our *bhakti*. So be anxious to do better.

But we shouldn't feel unworthy in a neurotic sense. Don't confuse the gem of humility with the hang-up of low self-worth. In the conditioned state, it may be difficult to separate the two. We tend to measure our success in pleasing the guru by how many pats on the back he gives us. He has already given me so many pats. But the relationship of teacher and student requires that the guru also point out his student's faults. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Even if you don't have any, I have to find your faults."

A real disciple loves his guru through thick and thin. Lord Kṛṣṇa, as a disciple of Sāṅdīpani Muni, never resented that his guru sent Him with Sudāma into the forest to collect wood even though the boys became lost and had to spend the entire night in a forest rainstorm. A disciple is meant to lead a life of self-sacrifice and austerity. He should thrive on it. He should have deep appreciation for what his spiritual master has given him, as is summed up in this verse, "I was standing in darkness with my eyes shut and my spiritual master came and opened my eyes with the torchlight of knowledge. Therefore I offer him my repeated obeisances."

The guru-disciple relationship is beyond transactional analysis. It is purely spiritual. So when you see me slapping myself, berating myself, moaning that my guru is far away, do not too quickly judge me or think that I “protest too much.” To understand my complaints, you have to understand the goal of pure love of guru.



I am trying to compensate with words what I lack in valiant action.



I don’t think I can “capture” Śrīla Prabhupāda by persuasive words or dedication to writing. But it helps me to communicate. Communication is necessary for love.



In ten minutes I will go and hear *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. We are hearing about Prabhupāda’s early life. Hear the music of Abhay Charan’s life.



6:00 p.m.

It's not a strain to praise.
 It doesn't have to be loud drums.
 And you know you'll be interrupted
 by questions and weather and someone
 will drive up in a little white car.
 But you will go on praising.
 You have just heard the music of his childhood—
 he rode on his bicycle
 down Harrison road to the Maidan,
 then back along the Hooghly River.
 The music of his childhood ended
 with the death of his mother
 when he was only 16 years old,
 and his father told him
 it has happened by Kṛṣṇa's will.

We listened with not much to say—
 a Muslim chased young Abhay with a knife.
 We listened in the quiet room.
 Now I'm on the porch facing rain,
 the trees are used to it.
 This present moment is somehow connected
 to those Calcutta times a hundred years ago.

No T.V. here, no ruckus times,
 but this nightly entertainment.
 It's not a strain to praise.

If we are to love Prabhupāda, we have to actually care about his interests as much as we care about our own. What does he want? He wants us to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. He wants us to cooperate with his other disciples, to maintain his movement and expand it by preaching. Loving Śrīla Prabhupāda means carrying out these aims even at the expense of some of our more personal aims. There is room for us to develop our interests in serving him. But our own aims should not be separate from his expressed desires; they have to fall within the parameters of his teachings.

This is at least a working definition of love for Śrīla Prabhupāda. One will be ready to forgo one's own conveniences, to invest one's own time, and even to risk one's own security to promote the desires of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Our love is not just a feeling, but feelings translated into action. Feelings are fickle. Sometimes they are deep and at other times they are distracted. It is the constant sacrifice for the sake of love that makes those feelings profound and steady.

It is impossible to love all the different people in our lives with equal intensity. The spiritual master has a special place and he is given special love. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "To be everyone's servant means you are no one's servant." We give him more respect, more credence, more attention than anyone else we may have love for. And by loving Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa consciousness gets distributed and the love is spread around to all living entities. That is the special quality of loving a pure de-

votee—the love gets spread around. People can eternally benefit just by our loving Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I have chosen to love Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is a commitment I will always honor, and I have sealed that commitment at my initiation. We have a contract of love now. Although my love for Śrīla Prabhupāda may not yet be free of any material tinge, he is patient. And Prabhupāda himself has placed conditions on his love for his disciples. He expects them to follow him. Although he will still love a disobedient disciple, his love will not reach a disciple who rebels or disobeys his order and who blasphemes guru and Kṛṣṇa. The relationship between guru and disciple is meant to be based on honor.

I have heard people say that this “condition” Prabhupāda places on his love for us is not much different than the conditions some of our parents placed on us to win their love. Many people have been hurt by parents who sold their love for high grades in school or conformity to family rules, etc. There was no chance for people who grew up in these families to develop themselves as individuals or to feel self-worth despite their failings to meet their parents’ standards. They grew up only with conditions and have no experience of real love. Is Prabhupāda’s love for us like that? Is it a lesser kind of love because he places on it the condition of our obedience?

No, Prabhupāda will accept a fallen disciple. He does not reject anyone who fails to follow his standards. What he expects from his disciples is to maintain our honor. We have to try, and we have to be faithful to him, even if we do not always succeed. He wants at least that much reciprocation for the great gift he is giving us. Neither is his motivation for setting these standards based on false ego, as our parents' motivations were. Following the spiritual master is best for us. We have to follow the spiritual master in order to learn to love Kṛṣṇa. And this is the gift he so much wants to share with us, but he knows we have to be qualified first. Prabhupāda's conditions are not the same as so many mundane performance requirements. They are purely spiritual. Neither does he distinguish between race or sex or religion, he doesn't ask for money, and although he loves all living entities (he is *mahātmā*, great-hearted), he feels a special obligation to guide and nurture those who surrender and seek shelter from him as his disciples. It is a case of "if you love me, then I'll love you."

The pure devotee loves us in a much greater proportion than we can love him. We are simply beggars. All he is asking in return for his gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is our sincerity.

August 10, 1:30 A.M.

I dreamt of Śrīla Prabhupāda last night. In the beginning of the dream, I was standing at the bus stop on the corner of Hyland Boulevard and Nelson Avenue in Great Kills, Staten Island. A car went by and I hailed it. It was the number 114 bus. I got in and the driver explained that since few people used the bus, the company was saving money by utilizing a car to cover the route. The driver was quite cheerful about this arrangement which gave service to poor people but saved money for the bus company. When the car reached St. Clare's Church on Nelson Avenue, the driver stopped and got out to pick some Tulasī leaves from plants that were growing there. He began to do a *tulasī-pūjā* and I joined him. We saw a nun and I hoped she would not object to our using their property for our Vaiṣṇava service. I also changed my clothes there.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared. He was sitting on a lawn speaking to a group of devotees. One of them resembled Prahādānanda Swami except he was Indian and Jewish by birth. He was telling Śrīla Prabhupāda that he had been to Judea, which was his land of origin. He told Śrīla Prabhupāda that he had seen a devotee who was taking care of a ninety-year-old man and helping him to travel to holy places. "Prahādānanda" said that this devotee who was helping the old person was more dedicated than most other devotees. It was a very austere service, and Prahādānanda wanted to know what Śrīla Prabhupāda thought of it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was noncommittal, although he seemed pleased in general.

I then helped Śrīla Prabhupāda to cross the street to a house where he was staying. He sat down and started working with some drawings, almost like an artist or architect in front of a mounted canvas. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at me in a friendly way and asked, "Are you very, very sure about Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" I said, "Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda." He smiled, "Oh, very good." It was as if he were asking me if I had received a deep sign of my conviction from Kṛṣṇa.

I then said to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "I'm not sure how much the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will spread during my lifetime, but I am sure that I will stay with it." Śrīla Prabhupāda gave me some advice. He said, "Don't chew gum." I thought, "What does he mean? I *don't* chew gum." He smiled as if to say, "This is just some advice. I don't

know if it can apply to you, but just think about it." Then he said, "Don't read so many outside books. Hayagrīva is on a permanent vacation [in the way he reads so many books]." Śrīla Prabhupāda said this not in a heavy, absolute way, but more indicating, "*Just don't overdo it.*"

I thanked Śrīla Prabhupāda and offered my obeisances, and then I walked away. I could have asked him for more information but I thought I should leave him alone. After walking away a little, I thought of going back to ask him if he needed anything. Did he want a glass of water? But I didn't. I realized he had a servant who would take care of his needs, and if he didn't get what he needed immediately, he would just go in the house and get it himself. Then I walked away in the direction of the Great Kills village, toward my parents' home.

It was sweet to have been given some advice by Śrīla Prabhupāda and I felt that I wanted to follow it and become a better devotee. It wasn't so much the particular advice he gave, but the mood he spoke it in. "Just go on with your Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I know that you want some specific instructions to follow so I'll tell you these things. These are some things that Vaiṣṇava *sādhus* follow." I was impressed and thought, "Yes, I have to be very specifically a Vaiṣṇava devotee." Śrīla Prabhupāda exemplifies what I want to become.

Now, after the dream, I realize this is the value of getting personal instructions—you feel inspired to follow them because the spiritual master is following them and he is so pure. Like a child who in

faith follows his parents' instructions, you feel certain of the result.



Further comments after rising from bed: Śrīla Prabhupāda had a very easy-going nature in this dream which reminded me of the early days when he was not yet demanding our full obedience. I was enthusiastic to follow him in those days, but Prabhupāda was waiting for our own conviction and surrender. And yet in the dream, he asked me if I was fully convinced. That seemed to indicate to me that I wasn't at the beginning of my spiritual life, that I had known Prabhupāda longer.

Could this dream be indicative of my present attitude in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? It is now fourteen years after his disappearance, do I prefer to think of Śrīla Prabhupāda's acting toward me as he did in those early days, rather than the commanding figure he became in the seventies?

Of course, no dream can be taken as an entire analysis or as an accurate picture of my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is only one small dream visitation, given to me by my unconscious self. But it has value. I like the way Śrīla Prabhupāda offered me a few suggestions for improvement. He seemed to indicate that ultimately, one has to advance by his own application of the general instructions, but he was willing to offer me his personal advice on some things. And he was friendly toward me and saw me as sincere.

The way I left him to do his work was similar to how I would leave his room in the early days of ISKCON when I knew he wanted to write. Both then and in the dream, I got a glimpse of his private life, how he was self-sufficient and peaceful and absorbed in his own service to Kṛṣṇa. Although he was alone and quite elderly, he was self-confident.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, thank you for going easy on me. Thank you for being friendly and offering me personal advice. I thank you for being a genuine pure devotee whose example as a “nice saintly person” has deeply impressed me. I want to be like you. I want to follow you.

Thank you for coming to me as I am and not condemning me. Thank you for encouraging me to state that I am convinced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I know there is much more to you than this. And there’s much more I have to do to know you than get a few tips on Vaiṣṇava life while you sit down to your own work across the street from St. Clare’s Church. But it helps to know you are always with me. When I am ready for more, you will appear to me. I want to renew my loving relationship with you, so please appear in these dreams and let me think them over and be serious to make further advancement. I am just like a newcomer who requires gentle treatment, but I wish to be more useful to you.

Prabhupāda, I want to go back (in that dream) to where you were seated and say, “Śrīla Prabhupāda, surely there’s more I can do for you than give up reading outside books and not chew gum. After all,

I'm just a character roaming freely in a dream. I have nothing special to do that I can't give up. May I live with you here and assist you? You don't seem to have many assistants. *How may I serve you?* I'm ready to do full time service. I don't have to leave you and walk off in the direction of my childhood home. In this dream, I do not feel the suffering and anguish of my life, but I know it's there waiting for me around the corner, if the dream will only continue. So before that happens, let me take shelter of you. I'm able to see a little bit from your point of view what you are and what you are trying to accomplish. Let me act on your terms. If I can do this, then I will be able to make swift and complete advancement in the life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And you will be willing to instruct me with more than a few tips."



Since I favored the soft approach of Swamiji in the dream, let me consider why I fear the hard approach. Does Śrīla Prabhupāda really have an overbearing nature? No, I don't think so. I never felt that from him, although I may have felt it occasionally from some of his disciples. And even that is something I was able to tolerate for the sake of being a faithful follower of Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda himself told us that tolerating problematic devotees was our austerity. The way of spiritual life is never easy. Easy-going life and Kṛṣṇa consciousness don't go well together.

But we want to think that austerity and opposition are not coming from our beloved guru. It is not *he* who is mistreating us. Yet when he asks for surrender, he opposes us, or at least our false egos. When he says sternly, "No illicit sex," he creates opposition in the heart of one who is attached to illicit sex.

We have to understand that all Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders are given in a friendly spirit, as from our well-wisher. To be a disciple means to discipline yourself by the guru's order. You have to submit and serve in a menial way, and you shouldn't complain. Nārada states, "A student should practice completely controlling his senses. He should be submissive and should have an attitude of firm friendship for the spiritual master. With a great vow, the *brahmacārī* should live at the *gurukula*, only for the benefit of the guru" (*Bhāg.* 7.12.1). Do I think I have grown up and graduated from my guru's *āśrama*?

Being called by the spiritual master, the student should study the Vedic mantras regularly. Every day, before beginning his studies and at the end of his studies, the disciple should respectfully offer obeisances unto the spiritual master.

A *brahmacārī* should be quite well-behaved and gentle and should not eat or collect more than necessary. He must always be active and expert, fully believing in the instructions of the spiritual master and the *śāstra*. Fully controlling his senses, he should associate only as much as necessary with women or those controlled by women.

—*Bhāg.* 7.12.3, 7.12.6

Telling Secrets at a Bridge

I stopped at a bridge,
 remembered Prabhupāda and spoke with him
 as the flowing water hypnotized me.
 How nice, I thought later,
 to be hypnotized by flowing water and
 to face things and say difficult things
 that you have wanted to say for years.
 Now you have earned the right
 to walk back to the house.

Honor the canned memories,
 if not for an audience,
 at least for yourself.
 Open them and talk them out,
 you'll find they have more color
 than you imagined.
 See the yellow rice,
 feel Swamiji's bare feet.
 Feel at least that *it happened*.
 Now you've almost earned the right
 to go back to the house.

Indoors, think it over.
You can't see Viraja today,
it's all misted over.
Only the nearby hills and
your friends in the house.
They don't know what I say
when I walk outside,
but they are kind to me
and I like to think I'm working to my capacity.
So it's all right to give me breakfast,
hot cereal with a little milk.
Ten days or so more
of morning walks.



6:00 A.M.

Saw the newspaper this morning. A hostage was released in Beirut, but on the same day, another hostage was taken in the same city. The released hostage said he worked hard to keep up his spirits during his seven years in captivity. He said his captors were convinced they were doing good for their country by holding him. Asked why he had been kidnapped in the first place, he joked: "I had blonde hair . . . I was British. I was a Westerner. For years they said nothing to me. I asked them: 'Why? Why are you holding me?' They said, 'No.'"

Low clouds moving in. The magic of my morning walk seems distant. Newspapers don't help. But I'll be back at it in a few hours.

Prabhupāda, make me strong. Let me think of you and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. What about the hugely complicated affairs of war and terrorism? What should we be doing about it? The leader of the Irish Workers' Party stands with a sign, "30 million face starvation in Africa." He is protesting the government's cuts in foreign aid. What are we doing? You told us to draw attention to Kṛṣṇa. If people could only understand that everything comes from Him and thus accept their God-given quota "knowing well to whom it belongs," there could be peace. It sounds so utopian, but *everything* sounds impossible in the effort to stop world suffering.



11:00 A.M.

We read *Kṛṣṇa* book while the fire burned down in the fireplace. I confessed I battle constantly with doubts that *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is mythological. Being in the fellowship of faithful devotees gives me a respite. We just accept the Vedic scripture and hear our spiritual master's purports. Therefore, I am thankful for the association of devotees and I am willing to continue acting as surveillance scout against the doubts.

I also know that it is Śrīla Prabhupāda who leads the fight against doubt. He has given me a position

in the phalanx of his army. He says, "You sometimes have doubts, so stand here and fight them if they come. Here are your weapons. If you cannot handle the demons, then call me and I will send reinforcements."

In our readings, we are up to the last sections of *Vṛndāvana-līlā*. Nārada predicted to Kṛṣṇa, "In two days I will see You kill the wrestlers and Kāṁsa himself." Soon Kṛṣṇa will be leaving for Mathurā.

Prabhupāda, is it all right if we linger in the Vraja pastimes?

Thinking of Śrīla Prabhupāda means thinking of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*sevā*, and thinking of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa means thinking of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī will be pleased with us when we serve Her pure devotee.



From a psychology book: "There is universal agreement that the amount of affection in infancy determines, more than any other influence, the whole course and quality of a human life." Maybe I didn't do well on this account with my Irish-American mother who tended not to be too physical. But in my spiritual birth, I received much affection—real affection—from Swamiji.



Thousands of devotees who never had much personal exchange with Prabhupāda felt relief when, after his disappearance, there were no more secretaries to keep them out of his rooms or presence. Whoever wanted to could go into his room in Vṛndāvana or in Los Angeles, or go before his *mūrti* in any temple in the world, and just sit with him as disciple to *guru*, as friend to friend. I feel that way too.

We can't judge those days of protecting Prabhupāda's time too harshly though. ISKCON was bound to grow into an institution where we could no longer eat lunch with Prabhupāda. It's not anyone's fault; it was Prabhupāda's desire to preach that created the institution. But I'm glad I knew Prabhupāda in those days before ISKCON grew so large. I'm also glad I was able to grow up with Prabhupāda, from my youthful, naive, uncomplicated freshness in the beginning, to acceptance of service in separation.

"Only when the child knows that he is *loved* can he get that necessary truth about himself, that he is *lovable*. And only when he really believes that he is lovable will he then anticipate and expect friendliness and love from others during the course of his life" (from a book on psychology).



"Answering the call to love demands courage and determination because self-exposure always involves a risk of being seriously hurt. But without

transparency love is impossible and without love, human life is seriously incomplete."

The "depth psychologists" go on to say that the ultimate human love experience is for the opposite sex. They don't mention celibate monks. What I am exploring here, however, is not the male-female love. I am exploring love for God as it can be realized by love for the guru.

Although love between spiritual master and disciple is different than other mundane, human loves, I cannot claim that it has no human elements in it. Any kind of love has to be transparent. It has to be based on the reality of the other person, not an illusory mental image of him or her. And I cannot project myself onto the beloved and call love of "myself" love of another person. In the spiritual realm, love is mainly expressed through service.

As in any mundane relationship, it is possible to withdraw from the spiritual master. Approaching him in love brings feelings of renewal; withdrawing brings distance. The disciple is meant to come close to the guru (*upanīti*), even though that increased intimacy will be tested by greater austerity in service. The loving relationship between guru and disciple is actually based on service to Kṛṣṇa. They will serve Kṛṣṇa together in the spiritual world. If the disciple is approaching the guru for emotional satisfaction or so the guru can bolster his ego (or if the guru is accepting the disciple out of pride), the relationship will not develop in love and service to Kṛṣṇa will not be attained. Śrīla

Prabhupāda's only question to his *guru mahārāja* was, "How may I serve you?" Prabhupāda's spiritual master brought him close and told him how to please Kṛṣṇa. Then Prabhupāda was always happy as he carried out the mission of his spiritual master. He always felt the presence of his spiritual master in everything he did. I will feel the same happiness as Śrīla Prabhupāda accepts me and instructs me how to become a co-worker in Lord Caitanya's movement.

My relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda is life-long and solid, yet still I struggle with it, just as I struggle with my doubts about the *Kṛṣṇa* book stories. Although I am convinced that I love Prabhupāda, I still confuse him with the "authority figure" who forced me into the U.S. Navy and who thought writing poetry was for sissies. So *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda* is my battle ground. I am throwing off the demons.



We should not go to Prabhupāda with everything "hanging out." We go on our best behavior, not relaxed "as we are." Does this sound like an inferior, formal relationship after all my words about love and serving with the spiritual master? But I think the relationship can have those limits and still be called love. One "hangs out" with friends; when we go to the spiritual master, we go with our highest aspirations in the forefront. The spiritual master is our true friend because he sees

not only how we present ourselves, but down to the level of the soul. He sees through all our coverings and sees where our aspirations can take us. Thoreau said something like, "A friend should accept his friend not just as he is, but as he aspires to be." So the guru accepts the disciple as he aspires to be, although the guru also sees the actual nature and weaknesses of the disciple. The guru does not officiate over the disciple as an ecclesiastic, but he engages the disciple and loves the disciple enough that he helps him reach his full potential as a loving servitor of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

The disciple, out of gratitude, shows respect. We don't sit before the guru with our feet pointing at him. We don't belch in his presence, or talk foolishly or laugh loudly. When embraced by his guru, the disciple should not throw his arms around his guru like an equal. Once a year the guru will cook for his disciples, but usually, the disciple menially serves his spiritual master. There are so many details in etiquette by which we can define the guru-disciple relationship—these can make the relationship seem more formal than it is—but the real essence is father and child. It's love.



Prabhupāda, this attic room is small and crowded with my mattress, desk, my books and stuff. There's hardly enough room to walk around. I put my Deities in one corner. Prabhupāda, I worry some-

times that I may be purposely keeping you distant from me. Do you think it's true?



I like that painting in the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* of Abhay Charan as a householder businessman, writing at a desk, and looking off and thinking of "that nice saintly person" he met. He too was a disciple thinking of his guru wherever he went. Sometimes Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared in his dreams as Prabhupāda does in mine.



Śrīla Prabhupāda, you used to say, "What is the difficulty?" You said it a lot, as if you couldn't understand why we had so much difficulty in being sincere, in doing substantial work, in dealing honestly with each other. You didn't want us to use your movement to gain power over others. You wanted us all to be humble, to serve each other and to serve your mission. You wanted us to follow our initiation vows and to realize we would always be fools before you (but you didn't want us to actually *be* fools). You wanted us to read your books and not to neglect your instructions. You wanted us to maintain the Deity worship as you had given it to us, not to be lazy or to waste money or to be whimsical or frivolous. You would look at us and say, "What is the difficulty?"

I don't think we entirely disappointed you. You were pleased that "these European and American boys and girls" had taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was practical proof of Lord Caitanya's mercy and the potency of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. "All glories to the *saṅkīrtana* devotees," you often said.

Our foolishness continues and your instructions also continue. Please bless us to improve. Please help us.



I am always looking at my watch and running out of time. I think that means I don't have enough time to write, but actually, it means I will soon be dead. Another thirty minutes has gone by and I don't feel any closer.

Is there such a thing as a time warp where I can suddenly find myself with Prabhupāda on Allston Avenue again? Will I again get the opportunity to apologize to Prabhupāda for not meeting him at the airport, and then spill over my enthusiasm about how I spoke on his behalf at the lecture I had scheduled too early for him to give—"I spoke on the verse, 'No one is equal to Kṛṣṇa and no one is greater than Him'"?

What would he say? "That's all right. Sit here and listen." Will I again have the opportunity to snuggle in with the rest of the devotees, all of us united by his presence? It will be raining outside and Prabhupāda will have just come from Buffalo where he spoke to students. He will be in Boston

for one and a half weeks. Will anything like that ever happen again?



6:00 p.m.

Prabhupāda was well brought up by his father and mother. They loved him and showed him much affection. At Scottish Churches College he was untouched by Western culture and didn't convert to Christianity.

While hearing of his college days I remarked that Prabhupāda used English for his preaching. He was an English writer. We are both English writers, but he was different than me and my generation. Later, he became attracted to Gandhi's movement, "but my heart was not in it." He was waiting for Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to enter his life.

August 11, 1:00 A.M.

Prabhupāda was only with us for eleven years. I'm searching my heart for the feelings I want. I find things I don't want, unworthy things. "Do you love him?" I ask. I know I do, but my love surfaces slowly. Perhaps my deepest feelings don't want to be disturbed so early in the morning. I request them, "Please live in Śrīla Prabhupāda. Don't live only ten percent of your capacity."



Why do I feel blocked and inarticulate? Do I think it is "too sacred" to utter praises of Prabhupāda? A lover of the holy names always chants; he never runs dry.

Rise, spirit soul, you who have chosen to lead the life of a renunciate. You are leading this life to fully

devote yourself to telling us of your spiritual master.



Here is a photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda sitting on a yellow-clothed *vyāsāsana*. He is smiling with his mouth closed. He has a photo button of Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura pinned to his bead bag. He is surrounded by many eager devotees. "Why are they after me?" He used to ask. "I am a poor Indian. I have not bribed them. I am an old man."

We were after him because he loves Kṛṣṇa. And he convinced us that Kṛṣṇa loves us. We believed him because his heart shone through his eyes. We believed he could and would teach us his secrets of how to chant Kṛṣṇa's name and awaken our own loving propensities toward God. When people asked us, "But why an Indian God?" we would look to Prabhupāda. When we were with Prabhupāda, we never thought of an "Indian God," we only thought of Kṛṣṇa.



In another photo Prabhupāda plays the gong. Some of these pictures are not well produced. They're too gaudy, not like life itself. He wears a garland of big orange marigolds. They look harsh under the camera's flash. He wears the rings people have given him on his fingers.

I found this paragraph in one of Prabhupāda's early writings called *Message of Godhead*. It is from the Introduction:

At present, we are concerned primarily with two things: one, ourselves; and the other, the place where we live. In other words, we are concerned with two objects: namely, everything that is related to our gross and subtle bodies; and the world at large, with all its paraphernalia. But there are others above us, the transcendentalists, who are concerned not only with their bodies and minds and the world at large, but also with the transcendental subject, which is above the body and mind and the world at large. The transcendentalists are very much concerned with the Absolute Truth, and much less with relative truths.

Prabhupāda immediately transcended the limitations of the so-called leaders of the world. He sums up their concerns in one or two sentences and informs us that there are real transcendentalists who have spiritual concerns at heart. It impresses his readers to hear that the transcendentalists are not foolish or introverted or backward, but are "concerned" with a greater truth. He assures us they are willing to share it.

At the present moment the word *religion* is being sacrificed on the altar of materialistic tendencies. The human race is more concerned now with subject matters related to eating, sleeping, defending and gratifying the senses, much like the lower animals. The general tendency is to avoid

transcendental subjects as far as possible, or in any case, not to go into the details. Even the biggest political leaders have been heard to say that a hungry man or woman finds no meaning in God and religion. People in general, under the leadership of such materialistic men, are gradually descending to the status of lower animals, devoid of all transcendental realization, knowing nothing beyond their material bodies and the material world.

Thus the human race has descended to the status of the dogs, who are habituated to barking as soon as they come upon another set of dogs who happen to hail from another quarter. We cannot conceive of the greater degradation of the human being than when he raises a hue and cry as soon as he sees another human being who does not happen to belong to his quarter or his religious denomination. He raises this hue and cry as if he had been faced with a tiger or wolf. Without transcendental knowledge, the human race has actually become no more than the tigers and the wolves.

There you have it—the daily news. If religion is mentioned in the mundane newspapers, it is vague or incomprehensible. Neither do the religionists help things with their factionalism and ignorance. The world needed *someone* to show the glory and sense of religion. Someone had to show the world how to harmonize the factions. It seemed like an impossible task, but Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *mahātmā*. He wrote in this essay, "These transcendentalists (ordinarily known as saints, philosophers, reformers, messengers of God, and so forth) appear in various places at various times." They all teach the

higher nature of the human being, his capacity to know the truth beyond eating and mating. We should be concerned with what is beyond our two immediate concerns, as Śrīla Prabhupāda calls them. We should not be absorbed only in the body or the world. Prabhupāda is teaching spiritual knowledge to the people of the world, if only they would listen.

It is therefore necessary at the present moment to understand something about absolute knowledge if we want to bring the human race back to sanity. Thus intelligent leaders of men should not devote their energies only for worldly betterment in the matter of eating, sleeping, defending, and gratifying the material senses. Leaders who think a hungry man or woman has no use for God and religion should be told emphatically that no man or woman in the world is not spiritually hungry, and that it is precisely the spiritually hungry men and women who have to understand the meaning of God and religion, now more than ever . . . Therefore, if we want at all to rehabilitate the human race, which is shattered now more than ever, it is more necessary than ever to realize the all-important relationship of man with God.

We must respond to Śrīla Prabhupāda's call in this essay. He is telling us how to render service to humanity—we should make ourselves servants of the bona fide transcendentalist, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Practice the *yuga-dharma*, the chanting of the holy names. Distribute knowledge to the spiritually hungry men and women. Prabhupāda says, "Leaders

who think a hungry man or woman has no use for God and religion should be told emphatically that no man or woman in the world is *not* spiritually hungry, and that it is precisely the spiritually hungry men and women who have to understand the meaning of God and religion, now more than ever . . .” How will we help Śrīla Prabhupāda get this message across to the world’s leaders? How can we share in his urgency to fill the sensibilities of the spiritually hungry masses? This is the way we can serve and praise Śrīla Prabhupāda.

. . . If we keep our doors and windows shut when the sun rises in the morning, surely the rays of the sun cannot enter our somber room. Similarly, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His confidential servants manifest themselves and preach the message of Godhead, we must not shut the doors and windows of our body and mind; otherwise, the light emanating from the Lord and His servants shall not enter into us. The light that emanates from such transcendental sources generally enters into us by aural reception. So only if we are ready to offer submissive aural reception to the message of Godhead can we know Godhead as He is and our relationship with Him as it is. In that transcendental spirit this *Message of Godhead* is presented herewith for the benefit of people in general and real seekers of truth in particular. We do not know how far we shall be successful in our tiny attempt, and we apologize for our defects in this respect.



Later in *Message of Godhead*, Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to demonstrate that sense perception is limited and mistaken. Those in darkness need someone to shine a light; they need the preceptor gurus. This is my subject matter, the coming of the preceptor guru into my life, my getting to know him, my deep encounters with him, my continuing to live in his mission even after his disappearance. He is the main person in my life. I have forsaken all friends and family because they do not tally with the life prescribed by my spiritual preceptor. He has become everything for me, and he is the source of all my satisfaction—emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual. Śrīla Prabhupāda is not just giving me official teachings from an official institution. He is not handing out diplomas. He is giving us Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes of the importance of the guru, “We go forward on the path of knowledge by the mercy of our preceptor—from learning the alphabet up to completing our university career.” And to this we may add that we go forward on the paths of love, art, life, work, play—all by the mercy of the preceptors. It does not happen automatically.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am trying to open up the dark rooms in my heart to let your sunlight in. How can I improve? I know you can see my poor state of devotion. Kindly help me. I wish to serve you strongly and simply. I want to be with you in any capacity. Please give me your mercy to do this.

Last night I had this dream of Śrīla Prabhupāda: I am leaving a temple room. Śrīla Prabhupāda is sitting on the floor by the side of the room. He catches my eye and in a friendly way, recognizes me. "Where are you going?" he asks.

"I'm going to wash this cloth," I answer—referring to my *sannyāsa* top cloth which is white-cream color and made of coarse silk. Śrīla Prabhupāda wears a very similar piece of cloth. Mine has spots on it. His has a few spots also.

I ask, "Would you like me to wash your cloth?"

Prabhupāda looks at my top piece. Attached to my cloth is a psychology book which Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't notice.

"No," Śrīla Prabhupāda says.

"Yes, because if we wash it, it will get wet."

Śrīla Prabhupāda was very friendly. I then went back into the temple room to hear the lecture.

Comment on this some hours later:

The striking thing about this dream was that Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared so familiar. He was sitting unnoticed on one side of the room, without a *vyāsāsana*. But the dream doesn't make me feel he was being neglected. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda. I honored him in my heart in the dream, and that's what counts. I was thrilled to see him in the dream.

Prabhupāda's friendliness in the dream was most meaningful and precious to me. He was also friendly in the last dream I had of him. This dream seems to be only a detail, but symbolic and meaningful. Washing his cloth? White cloth? Śrīla Prabhupāda and I had the same cloth? I don't know what it all means, but I would be happy to dream of him every night.

This is My Work

I admitted while standing at the bridge
that I don't like austerity and that
you can't come close to Prabhupāda
unless you are austere.
So this is my poem:

He is speaking to each of us—
a devotee on *pada-yātrā* said that the
Prabhupāda *mūrti*
who travels in the ox cart
talks with them
as they wrap him against the cold
taking him on *parikrama*
as he wanted.

A lady in her dreams of him—
which seemed to me like extravagant tales—
says she saw Prabhupāda loving devotees
and leading the world.
If my version of him is
more conservative and cautious
does that mean he has to be
restricted by me?

A scholar hits the books, studies only Prabhupāda
with outlines, notes, memorizing.
Gets his own taste and says Prabhupāda
is a very organized and thorough author.

The temple manager who is overloaded
with no time for reading or “meditation,”
turns out the light in his office late at night
feeling assurance
that he’s Prabhupāda’s man.

The book distributor arrested,
the *harināma* devotee punched by a thug,
a mother in agony of childbirth naming
her child Bhaktivedanta dāsa,
each knows what they know.
And they know the quiet joy
of gathering it and sharing.



7:00 A.M.

The most important thing about Śrīla Prabhupāda is that he is a self-realized, pure devotee in *paramparā*. But where does that leave me? Do I have a place with him? Śrīla Prabhupāda is important to me. I need a pure devotee in *paramparā* to lead me out of the material world. I don’t want to be left behind, wandering in *māyā*. I need him.

Although I sometimes express doubts about my relationship with Prabhupāda, I usually feel quiet and assured about it. Certainly I am flawed, but I know he accepts me anyway. I have faith that he will help me now and always. Perhaps he will reprimand me, or perhaps he will give me something new to do for him. I'm not sure what to expect.

What I really doubt is whether I will respond to him as fully as I should or want to. Prabhupāda is a giant compared to me; he has something very great to give me, and he is just waiting for me to want it enough before he will give it to me.



When I think of my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I think the most crucial point is to always be able to turn to him. Perhaps that is why I prefer to remember him in the early days of ISKCON, when turning to Prabhupāda was as easy as walking into his room. Our guru-disciple contract is still valid, perhaps even more valid now than it was twenty years ago, and I have come to value more his transcendental intimacy with Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda let it be easy at the beginning. But now I aspire for that greater intimacy.

This *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda* project is my attempt to meet Prabhupāda again. I imagine I am walking on a tall, green mountain that is dotted with small villages and huge jungles. Prabhupāda is known by all the people on the mountain, but each village has a different understanding of him. I want to

meet him in these many different ways, but I have to climb through all the undergrowth to get to the next village. Once I am there, I can stay for days with the various people and their memories, but then off on my search again.



I fear Prabhupāda's displeasure. Pleasing the spiritual master is a delicate thing. As conditioned souls, we are so filled with our own desires. When we come under the discipline of the spiritual master, these desires are dovetailed by him in Kṛṣṇa's service.

What are my desires? I like to write for Prabhupāda and for Kṛṣṇa. I like to think my writing has preaching value and that it has some use in the ongoing mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But sometimes I worry, "What if Prabhupāda does not approve of my interest in writing, even though I am using it in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

Anyway, this fear isn't so big. What I mean by fearing his displeasure goes a little deeper than that. I am more afraid of losing touch with him—with him losing touch with me because I have deviated in some way. In that sense, I am more afraid of my own possible deviations—seeing him as an ordinary man, minimizing him in some abstract way, not reading his books, leaving his movement—than I am of Prabhupāda.

I don't want to ever lose Śrīla Prabhupāda's association. That is my unspeakable fear. But I don't

think it will ever happen. He is my eternal guru and I am his eternal disciple. He has been merciful enough to teach me to fear his displeasure.



Śrīla Prabhupāda told us many things about his relationship with his spiritual master. One time, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura reprimanded him when it appeared that Śrīla Prabhupāda had diverted his attention from his *guru mahārāja's* lecture. When they first met, Śrīla Prabhupāda debated with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī about India's independence. Prabhupāda told us, "I liked being defeated by my spiritual master." He dreamt of his spiritual master too, mostly that same serious dream in which Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī told Śrīla Prabhupāda to take *sannyāsa*.

His spiritual master praised him highly on a number of occasions for his attentive hearing and for his poetry and prose writings. He said, "Whatever he writes, publish it." When Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers asked Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī to make Śrīla Prabhupāda the president of the Bombay temple, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said, "It is better that he lives outside your company. He will do everything himself. You do not have to recommend him."

After their first meeting, Śrīla Prabhupāda had to travel away on business, but he often thought very fondly of his spiritual master. Of course, they had some personal meetings in which important things

were conveyed to our Śrīla Prabhupāda, especially his *guru mahārāja's* order, "If you ever get money, print books." Then near the end of his *guru mahārāja's* life, they exchanged letters. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked, "How may I serve you?" and his spiritual master replied, "You can explain in English our thoughts and arguments. This will do much good to yourself as well as to your audience. I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher if you serve the mission."

How do these things apply to my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda? I am happy to note the similarities: how his guru wanted him to be a writer in English, how he wanted him to express the age-old Vedic teachings in a new way, and how stress should be put on book publication. I also note that Prabhupāda was given a lot of freedom by his spiritual master to develop in his own way. But the best example I can take from these anecdotes is that Śrīla Prabhupāda molded his whole life to serve his guru's mission. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave all he had. In return, he was empowered by his guru's blessings and the mercy of Lord Caitanya. Prabhupāda was given the *śakti* to convince the fallen Westerners to become devotees and chanters of the holy name. Although I can take examples from his life with his spiritual master, I can't, of course, imitate it. The point is, how to give ourselves to his order just as he gave himself to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's order?

11:00 A.M.

Today we read of Akrūra's journey to Vṛndāvana. I particularly like that section of the *Kṛṣṇa* book because it shows us how to approach Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. It occurred to me that I go to Kṛṣṇa every day when I chant my *japa*, and that I can prepare in the same ways Akrūra prepared. But I also remember that Prabhupāda taught us not to approach Kṛṣṇa directly; we should go through our spiritual master.

A devotee must know how to render service unto Him and thus be recognized by Him. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is therefore explained that one should serve both the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa simultaneously and in that way make progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Service rendered to Kṛṣṇa under the direction of the spiritual master is bona fide service because the spiritual master is the manifested representative of Kṛṣṇa

—*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 2, p. 13

Śrīla Prabhupāda also makes it clear that he wants us to one day approach Kṛṣṇa directly and have our own meeting with Him, but first we have to become trained by the spiritual master in how to love and serve Kṛṣṇa. Even while the training is going on, however, we should simultaneously be serving Kṛṣṇa. We shouldn't say, "Don't think of Kṛṣṇa, just think of serving the guru." (In ISKCON, this has sometimes been even further reduced to, "Don't think of Kṛṣṇa, just follow the temple

commander." And then, "Just work, don't think or ask to read.") Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "One should serve both the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa *simultaneously*." If Prabhupāda didn't want us to think of Kṛṣṇa then why did he prepare the *Kṛṣṇa* book and *Bhagavad-gītā*? Why did he order us from the very beginning to chant Kṛṣṇa's names repeatedly for two or more hours a day? He thought that the transcendental activities, instructions, qualities, and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa will bring good fortune to the people in general.

The people can remain constantly in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by discussing the Lord's transcendental form, qualities, pastimes, and paraphernalia. By doing so, the whole universe can actually live auspiciously and advance peacefully. But without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, civilization is but a decoration for a dead body.

—*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 2, p. 11

Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to be absorbed in the mellows of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Without this absorption, civilization deteriorates into a "dead body" in which so-called humans inflict suffering and death upon one another in the name of sense gratification. A person must actually become Kṛṣṇa conscious and then try to help others to practice the same. This is another way to simultaneously serve Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.



I remember

I remember so many things not related to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I guess I can't change my past, but I hope that as that pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious past grows more and more distant from my present life, my memories of it will also fade.

I do have memories of Prabhupāda too now, although some of those are also a little faded. I remember being on a porch somewhere. I stood with Śrīla Prabhupāda, waiting to get into a car. He was supposed to meet with someone, but I can't remember who. I remember being outside temples with him, being in public with him, getting into cars. I remember coming into his room in Vṛndāvana. The room was dark and cold and he wore a big wool hat. Even in the dark I could see his eyes shining—he was so mystical in Vṛndāvana.

I remember him in rooms with bright lights too. He wore wool sweaters. Once, on a walk on a cold Australian winter morning, he wrapped his entire body in a gray wool *cādar* against the whipping wind. Another time, in a small room in Melbourne, I remember him greeting boisterous guests. Prabhupāda entertained them and I read out sections of his books. "Your Divine Grace," they said, "what about this and what about that?" He gave them each a *gulābjāmun* and asked that they eat it right away, "Don't save it for later."

I remember walking with him on Juhu Beach and talking with his disciples at Mishra's country estate—"Who is Swamiji? What is he?" No one

knew enough to answer that question. I remember signing ISKCON into existence under naked light-bulbs; I remember being with him when he started taking morning walks.

I don't remember all his sarcasms, loving gestures, important arguments against doubts, moments he hurt my pride, moments I was inspired and touched and deeply resolved to always be his disciple. I can't remember who was there and what they said. Did I go with him to a lecture in Italy or did I miss them all because of illness?

Śrīla Prabhupāda, big stretches of life with you are erased from my consciousness. I say I don't remember, and yet I do. A tiny spark lights up and I see the outline of our association together. It's separation—the years are making the details dimmer, so we cling to the few main points. I *do* remember to serve you every day; I don't forget that for a minute.



4:00 p.m. I am thinking

Late afternoons are often filled with drudgery. Your mind is dulled from the stress of the day and your thoughts come slowly.

I like to scan the titles of Prabhupāda's *Back to Godhead* essays written during the War: "Mr. Bernard Shaw's Wishful Desire" (referring to Shaw's desire that Gandhi's seventy-sixth birthday could

actually be his thirty-fifth birthday). Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "We heartily join with Mr. Shaw in his attempt to subtract 41 years from the present age of Mahatma Gandhi." But death does not respect our wishful desire. He called another essay, "Churchill's 'Humane World.'" (Churchill wanted to get rid of the "national frenzy of hate.") Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The frenzy of hatred is another side of the frenzy of love. . . . This position of equilibrium free from love and hatred is attained only when men are sufficiently educated."

He called other articles, "No Time, A Chronic Disease of The Common Man," and "Scholars Deluded," and so on. The *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* describes them: "His articles were shorter, this time displaying the flair of a news columnist, as with philosophical criticism, verve, and a touch of ironic humor he commented on world leaders and crises" (Vol. 1, p. 116).

Śrīla Prabhupāda seems so far away right now. I don't think I can understand who he was when he was still in India during the War. Remember when nineteen-year-old Rukmiṇī dāśī asked him, "When you are away from here, you seem very distant"? I'm trying to think of how he responded, but I can't recall it—it was something reassuring about *vāṇī*, no doubt. Think of the spiritual master and he will be with you. But Prabhupāda also recognized Rukmiṇī's tender, helpless emotion. It was a nice exchange. There's really no "answer" to cure feelings of separation.

August 12, 1:30 A.M.

I have confidence that I will meet Prabhupāda if I just go on writing. The encounter will take place. He's bound to appear in my life because he is the guide of my life.



A little child may walk somewhere without the supervision of his parents, but as soon as he bumps into trouble—or finds something delightful—he will call, "Help!" or, "Father, come look at this."

You never grow up in spiritual life to the point where you no longer need your father. It is delusion if you think you do. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to mature so we could relieve him of some of his management. In that sense, we do grow up, but we never replace the spiritual master. He never becomes redundant. He continues writing his books.

We relieve him of his managerial duties to free him for the higher work of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda wrote in one purport:

. . . now it is necessary that I stay in one place to finish another task—this translation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If my young disciples, especially those who have taken *sannyāsa*, take charge of traveling all over the world, it may be possible for me to transfer the curse of the parents to these young preachers. Then I may sit down conveniently in one place for the work of translation.

—*Bhāg.* 6.5.43, purport



Lord Kṛṣṇa demands that we present ourselves to Him as followers of Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda is our “passport” into the spiritual world.

. . . unless one gets the association of a devotee like Nārada Muni or his servant in the disciplic succession, one’s dormant spirit of renunciation cannot be awakened. It is not a fact that because material enjoyment involves so many painful conditions one will automatically become detached. One needs the blessings of a devotee like Nārada Muni. Then one can renounce his attachment for the material world. The young boys and girls of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have given up the spirit of material enjoyment not because of practice but by the mercy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His servants.

—*Bhāg.* 6.5.41, purport

Prabhupāda grants renunciation. He grants devotion. We work to achieve it, but it comes by his grace. Therefore, any disturbance to our relationship will be like a grating sound in your car's engine—something is wrong, something is going to break down. He has to be pleased.



Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his Introduction to *Message of Godhead*, "We apologize for our defects." Can I do that too?

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "I must admit my frailties in presenting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but still I am hopeful of its good reception." He said this on the strength of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.11—" . . . Such transcendental literatures, even though imperfectly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest." In his purport Prabhupāda wrote, "Our presenting this matter in adequate language, especially a foreign language, will certainly fail, and there will be so many literary discrepancies despite our honest attempt to present it in the proper way. But we are sure that with all our faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration, and the leaders of society will still accept this due to its being an honest attempt to glorify the Almighty God. . . . If the techniques of this great literature are understood by the people of the world, there will be success" (*Bhāg.* 1.5.11 purport).

In the very last verses written by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, he begins, "No matter whenever and wherever I happen to take birth, let my loving affection and attachment remain unshaken throughout each and every lifetime for the following things: for my divine spiritual master . . ." (*Śrī Śrī Sva-Niyama-Dvādaśakam*, verse 1). And he ends this final piece stating, "Always following behind his own *mañjarī-guru*, in his own spiritual body of a *mañjarī* also, he finally renders all kinds of variegated eternal services for the exclusive worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa" (verse 13).

I always want to be at your feet, Śrīla Prabhupāda. But when a devotee once said that to you, you chuckled, "That is not possible. My feet are always moving." Then let us keep your lotus feet in our minds and in our works and words. Your words flow from your books into us, and we regularly receive them and regain our lives. My own words—which I call original—and my own feelings—which I claim are unique—actually come from my association with you. How else could I feel love for Kṛṣṇa and disgust for illusion and sin, if not by your association? You said, "The guru doesn't create the disciple's spiritual life. It is dormant within each person. The guru awakens it." Yes, but you awaken it and then daily tend to the spindly creepers.

In a song by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, "*Nārada muni bājāya vīṇā*", he describes Nārada Muni singing and playing the *vīṇā*. As Nārada strokes the strings,

all the great devotees dance in ecstasy to the fullest extent of their satisfaction. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

One can spiritually advance if one actually follows the instructions of Nārada Muni. If one pleases Nārada Muni, then the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hṛṣīkeśa, is also pleased (*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*). The immediate spiritual master is the representative of Nārada Muni; there is no difference between the instructions of Nārada Muni and those of the present spiritual master. Both Nārada Muni and the present spiritual master speak the same teachings of Kṛṣṇa, who says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.65–66), “Always think of Me and become My devotee. . . .”

Bhāg. 6.5.22, purport



My Truths

In this glassed-in porch a wasp
is banging against the window.
In the kitchen, Gaṅga is kneading
dough or a cereal or a sweet—I didn’t
want to look at it before it was offered.
I can tell you
the mist is clearing in some parts
while it moves to cover other parts.
And I have my writing,
a book of Prabhupāda and whatever I can say.
That is my truth while it lasts.

shiny, dark hue of his back, the folds of skin at the nape of his neck, the hypnotic affect of it all. . . I'm back in my place.

Still, there are many things to think of. How can I improve my *japa*? I know the answer. But . . . and how should I proceed? Should I continue my writing life and the kind of preaching I do? What about my relationship with my Godbrothers?

Do I need to ask you anything?

Why do I aspire for something more when I can't even practice the preliminary stages? Can I ask questions of Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja when you're not here? *What do you want me to do?*

Do you know me now, who I am? Have I failed you? And if so, please tell me what I need to do so I can be pleasing to you again. Please give me the strength to serve you. You have written in your books that the spiritual master is always right; the genuine disciple follows his guru explicitly and implicitly.

August 14, 1:30 A.M.

It occurred to me that before I asked any questions of Prabhupāda, I would first like to thank him and offer him praise.

Then I would say, "Prabhupāda, I want to always be your devotee. I know I make many mistakes. You know that I made mistakes when you were present and maybe I make even more mistakes now. Some may think that I am deviating and my service is slowing down to an independent gesture, no longer in the spirit of surrender to your Kṛṣṇa conscious society. I don't agree with that. I think I'm doing what I can. I have to keep my spirits up and not be a defeatist. *But to you*, I must admit I don't know what is best. If I come before you in a self-defensive way, I'm not honoring your right to be my preceptor. As you wrote of your *guru mahārāja*, "You hold the mace, you have the right."

"I cannot speak for others, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I don't even know if I can speak for myself without repeating opinions I've picked up from others. Śrīla Prabhupāda, this is important to me, I beg you to hear: I've always been easily impressed and influenced by others. You may remember one time we boys lost \$5,000 dollars of ISKCON's money in 1967. You told me then not to listen to others but to follow you directly. As secretary of ISKCON, I should not sign any checks in favor of the fraudulent real estate man. I had your direct order, but when my Godbrothers persuaded me, I did as they thought best. Being easily influenced worked for my good sometimes too. I was a "team man" and did what one was supposed to do. But there are other mistakes where not having a strong mind of my own hurt my integrity. After your disappearance, I went along with the guru worship which our society now deems as a period of abuse to devotees and minimizing the central place of Your Divine Grace. It would have taken great conviction of purpose to keep a humble course in defiance or disagreement with others during those years, and I didn't have such conviction to stand alone. So nowadays I am trying—and I think successfully—to stand more on my own. I am, of course, subject to the authority of the GBC and its rules and customs of the society, but I'm acting more as I want to or as I think I should in obedience to my innermost drives to serve you.

"I have to decide on my own to serve you and how I will serve you, within the acceptable

definitions for ISKCON *sannyāsa*. It is risky, Śrīla Prabhupāda, because if weak-mindedness is a fault, so is doing one's own thing. Social pressure in ISKCON is, therefore, potentially good and bad.

"I know you haven't come today, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to hear me explain myself. When it was suggested that I ask you questions, I thought the first one I should ask is, 'Is there anything you wish to instruct me about?' I should leave it up to you. But now I've blurted out an explanation of my position. Please tell me what you think and want of me."



I stopped yesterday's meditation when I got to the point of asking Śrīla Prabhupāda questions. Again, I don't think I can fill in Prabhupāda's words in this imaginary dialogue. By writing out my own words to him, however, I feel even stronger that I know what I must do. I have to serve in the absence of Prabhupāda's direct words; that's how it actually is. That's what serving in separation is about. You remember the orders he gave you, both generally and specifically, you look constantly in your heart, you use your intelligence, and you consult with Godbrothers while being obedient to the society of devotees. There is no simple formula. You can't just "ask Śrīla Prabhupāda." Why should I have the privilege of asking him if others don't? We have to struggle. And he is with us, informing us, according to the degree of our surrender.

Even if we don't get a full, clear message from him, we have to act on whatever direction we do receive. And it is important *how* we act, how much devotion and effort and surrender we put into it. There is that *Mahābhārata* story of the low-born person who wanted to be Droṇācārya's disciple, but wasn't eligible. He made an image of his desired guru, followed his instructions, and became a great military student. Later the actual Droṇācārya came and made a heavy demand on that disciple, and he obeyed at once.



This is what I am up against when I think of what I would say to Śrīla Prabhupāda, what questions I would ask him. I feel impelled to explain the background of my questions. Am I afraid Śrīla Prabhupāda will respond in a way I don't like? More likely I am motivated by my desire to follow his reply wholeheartedly. I don't want to think he has incomplete information in my case. It is not wrong to give the spiritual master full and accurate data so that he can make a decision considering all the factors in our particular situation.

And I have seen how we tend to rationalize. Also, if we follow blindly what he says but doubt or are not satisfied in our minds, our following will be incomplete, and over the years, the unconscious, dissatisfied self will force us to stop serving his order.

I don't have the incredible will power required to follow an order without some inner confirmation. Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of this inner confirmation. He gave the example of George Harrison who he said was receiving some inner indications to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Inner confirmation shows up in the form of real enlivenment in our service.

I can't just throw a question like, "What do you want me to do?" at Śrīla Prabhupāda. I want Śrīla Prabhupāda to know that I already have an idea what I should do. I want him to know I am acting on my idea. But I also want him to know that I'm open to being disciplined by him, open to his changing my understanding of what I should be doing. "He has the right, he holds the mace."

If he orders something that seems as bitter as poison to me, I can ask him to explain why I must do it. When he explains, I will follow. When I wanted to quit my welfare job in 1966, I thought it was the right thing for spiritual advancement. He explained why it was better to keep the job. Mainly, he explained that *he wanted* me to keep the job and to donate money to the society. Later, when I was his personal servant, I explained that I wanted to do some other service. He said that I was being whimsical. That was a tough one.

All things considered, I want to please him and serve his purposes. I'm doing it to some degree, behaving according to *sannyāsa-dharma*, writing books for those I initiate in his name . . . but I know I can do a lot better. There is much more mercy I could be receiving from him.

So I ask him, in my conditioned way, "How may I serve you?" When Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his spiritual master that question, he got a direct response: "Become a preacher in English." That was a sufficiently broad reply; Prabhupāda had to fill it out with his own initiative. It took years for Śrīla Prabhupāda to prepare and find the opportunity to do it in the grand way he did. I needn't be afraid to ask.

That is my main question: "Is what I am doing pleasing to you? What do you want me to do? How can I best improve? What do you want me to do? Please awaken in me my original spirit to carry out your orders wholeheartedly. Please give me the strength to serve you."



Back with Prabhupāda
in the house in Ireland

Old emotions are returning—my desire to serve him, the difference between then and now, strong regret for my lack of surrender. If I am fortunate, I will cry tears of repentance. The experience is shattering my self-image, transforming me. There is no room for complacency when you are with Śrīla Prabhupāda. By seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda's own complete dedication to Lord Kṛṣṇa and his spiritual master, I am forced to recognize my own lacking.

The destruction of my self-image is like a building crashing to the ground.

(I can't guess what he would communicate and how I would respond, but I know it would be intense. The message would be, "You are not as Kṛṣṇa conscious as you think you are." The purpose would be to teach me humility and to bring me back to reality.)

My disciples who are present are seeing me go through changes in Śrīla Prabhupāda's association. Are they mature enough to deal with what they are seeing, their spiritual master as a *śiṣya* of his own spiritual master? If Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me to do something beyond their own level of comprehension, I would do it. "This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda wants," I would say. I know they would help me to carry out his order, whatever it was. And I would help them to receive Śrīla Prabhupāda's direct *darśana* in his room.

I feel grateful for Prabhupāda's one-day visit. But I am also mortified by his heaviness. Sometimes I feel elated, other times repentant. Prabhupāda is here to pick up the pieces of my shattered false self-image. He is a real spiritual master. Now I am feeling new determination to serve him.

This meditation is my attempt to imagine and intensify my experience of purification at receiving Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions in this life. I want to revive my awareness of Prabhupāda's presence and feel reformed by it. Although I can't recreate the actual emotions involved in reform by this literary

expression, it has put me back in touch with the importance of his *vāṇī*. I pray never to forget it.



I walk around with my finger to my lips making sure everyone is completely quiet—no banging doors, no pots banging in the kitchen, no one should even be running water. Everyone should get out of the house. And outside, no gatherings on the lawn. People don't realize how Śrīla Prabhupāda can hear even little noises from a distance and how he can look out his window and see idleness, or a man and woman talking by the pond. I then go to the servant's house to share our impressions.



I am surprised to see how he is glowing and radiant. I don't understand much about the nature of the spiritual world, but I recognize that he is present in his spiritual body.

He seems disappointed to see how I've become feeble. Maybe he didn't recognize me because I wear glasses now, I'm older. But he looked the same. I know he is seeing beyond my body; he looks right into my soul.

I felt like a young man again just by massaging him. Why haven't my *anarthas* left me after so many years? I thought he was conveying spiritual enthusiasm to me just by allowing me to massage him and be with him again. I know spiritual

science is taught by the exchange of questions and answers, and that those answers have to be based on *śāstra*, but the spiritual *presence* of a realized soul is the most potent. He can grant love of Kṛṣṇa. You can't get it any other way.



While Prabhupāda was resting, we chanted *japa* to catch up on our day's quota. My mind is prayerful as I chant, but my mind is also roaming about as usual. At least most of my thoughts had to do with serving Prabhupāda. "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa—do you have fresh milk for the evening? Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare—is the heater working in his room in case the central heating isn't sufficient? Hare Rāma Hare Rāma—did you say that Baladeva dāsa is flying into Dublin? Does he know how to get here? Rāma Rāma Hare Hare—how and when will I arrange for Śrīla Prabhupāda to speak to the devotees and guests in the evening? What do I most want to say to him? Don't forget to praise the spiritual master when you are in his presence!"

Even when he is here my rounds are not attentive. If he could teach us, by magic or blessing, how to read his books once and for all . . . Should I ask about *svārūpa-siddhi* and *rasa*? No, it's premature. The origin of the living entity? He already told us. *How may I serve you?* Keep it focused on that. Maybe ask a question you asked many years ago about taste. Also ask about memories of the spiritual master, if you have time. You have to wait for the

opportunity. Don't intrude on him. Still, a list of questions is not impertinent. He will appreciate it if you are efficient.

The time goes by quickly, a mere one and a half hours, and Prabhupāda is awake again. I don't feel ready to meet with him. I know Śrīla Prabhupāda is my best friend, but I am still a little apprehensive. After so many years of not seeing him, after having had to grow up on my own—suddenly I have to face him again. He can see in my face that I didn't turn out exactly like a pure devotee. Is it too late? I had hoped to be better by the next time I met him. Am I a stunted tree, or a tree that has grown in its own, twisted way? What can he do about that? They say the blind can see the stars by the grace of the guru. It all depends on Prabhupāda's mercy and my response to his instruction. Take courage. Go to him. There is no other way.



In the evening Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks. We have a good, blissful *kīrtana* in which devotees express their gratefulness to Śrīla Prabhupāda through the *harināma*.

(Oh, and before that, he met devotees in his room for over an hour and heard their names, and by the Lord's arrangement they were able to ask individual questions, be recognized, and have their desires fulfilled. I think of how we read in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that Lord Caitanya "bestowed various benedictions" on King Pratāparudra and he "blessed

each devotee according to his complete satisfaction." *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* doesn't go into the details of those moments, but you guess that Lord Caitanya touched that person's heart and fulfilled their unique propensity to love Him in a certain way. Whatever they desired in spiritual life was fulfilled, whatever was truly good for them. So Prabhupāda blessed the devotees that were present in the house like that. I've been going through the wringer emotionally. I am more resolved, I can say that for sure. I feel hopeful and my aspirations are renewed. I can't express it here, but I think that will be the natural outcome of this visit.)

We chant and cry out. We don't care how it looks. It's a *kīrtana* among devotees. We cry together, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, please bless us with a taste for the nectar of the holy name. This is the greatest gift. If we can carry on without your personal presence, but be aware of the power of the name, then it will be good for the whole world. Then we can serve you as we should." We are losing ourselves in the best *kīrtana*, the one taking place in the presence of the pure devotee spiritual master.

The *kīrtana* is over and Śrīla Prabhupāda is speaking Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, conferring boons on those who can hear his words. He is offering the same opportunity he has always been offering, but he is making it even more accessible. He has enabled us to hear it better, to stay awake while he speaks, to listen with real attention and devotion. It is only by his mercy that we can pay attention as he

describes Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and the residents of Vṛndāvana, then Lord Caitanya's *līlā*—all in reference to the present ambitions and work of the ISKCON *saṅkīrtana* movement. When a pure devotee speaks and people sincerely hear his words, everyone and even the place become purified.



After he finishes speaking the questions are good—all appropriate inquires for sincere spiritual aspirants. Questions on how to serve and love and appreciate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Questions about the actual nature of Vaiṣṇava life and how to go forward into the higher stages.

We open doors against the surprisingly warm evening; he opens the windows of the spiritual world by associating with us. He assures us that he is always with us and tells us exactly how to find him and Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is in the heart, in the Deity, in His name, in work done for Him. We have heard this before, but tonight it feels truer. We think, "I needed Prabhupāda's association so much. I have been living for years on the equivalent of a drop of water a day. Everything was just theory."

We take him to his room when he finishes speaking. I go into his bedroom with his milk, make last adjustments, close the curtains, answer some questions, reassuringly I hope, about his departure tomorrow. He asks, "Is everything all right, all questions answered?"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Everything."

His secretary and I each massage one of Prabhupāda's legs while he lies in bed. He speaks a few amazing things about the daily little happenings in Kṛṣṇaloka. He says it's village life there, Kṛṣṇa and His friends. Simple boys and girls and they all love Kṛṣṇa. While he speaks and drifts off, we are there with him. *Now* I'm satisfied. Whatever problems I haven't yet resolved in terms of how to get rid of tenacious *anarthas* and excess baggage and the vain glory of thinking myself a special devotee—I know it will all work out in my remaining days. Maybe I won't be going back to Kṛṣṇaloka at the end of this life, but I am satisfied that I have work to do for Prabhupāda. "I'm sorry, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that I'm not better than I am. But you have shown me the spiritual world and assured me that I will go there one day. I am satisfied." Prabhupāda is asleep.



Prabhupāda's departure is simple and loving. In the last hours, we are all living intensely in the present moment. We don't want it to end. Most of us are crying. How nice to be able to cry freely, without inhibitions. It's like a much needed bath. Prabhupāda is glad to see us cleansing ourselves. He's crying too. He feels so much compassion for these foolish disciples who have invited him to visit them in a house in the Irish countryside.

Another sunny day. "I heard that it is always raining here?" Prabhupāda asks.

"Not when you come, Śrīla Prabhupāda," Manu answers.

He invites us all to his room for a round of *japa*. This is a lesson we have been trying to learn for our whole lives; we have five minutes left. But it's not possible. We are too eager. He sees me just as eager as the younger students, free from pretension, begging him to teach me the ABCs again. He laughs. "You cannot conquer Kṛṣṇa," he says. We're being too demanding. I gesture to the devotees to calm down. Śrīla Prabhupāda will reveal things to us in due time.

He walks outside, preparing to leave. I'm trying to remember everything as it happens. His bright, pink saffron shines in the sunlight as do his skin and eyes. He leaves it up to me, although he gives guidelines. Did I indicate I wanted to be treated like that, rather than to be given specific orders? "But Śrīla Prabhupāda, I do want you to give me direct orders, to tell me where to go and how to surrender. . . "

I don't force the issue. In a few moments I will have to revert to living in separation from him and the bewildering-and-yet-not-bewildering process of figuring out "What does Śrīla Prabhupāda want?" The work at hand will still be surrender. I still have to earn his direct association, which includes his specific orders.

He's at the car door in the gravel driveway. We all bow down, this time sadly. "Goodbye, come back again if possible. Can we write to you?" Everyone is trying to restrain themselves from asking Prabhu-

pāda more questions and from showing their devotion. We want to leave him with a good impression. Everything seemed to go all right in terms of the cooking and the arrangements—and the weather was cooperative!

He closes his door. I'm not the only devotee in his world. His car drives away.



After writing this down, I feel meditative. I look at Madhu and Gaṅga and think, "We are still eating some of the remnants of Prabhupāda's *prasādam* and touching some of the same worshipable objects he left behind." We promise each other to be true to the experience.

I also sense that I need to meditate more like this. It's fantasy really, but it made me feel Prabhupāda's presence very strongly. It has value. It can help me cope with my life in separation. May these meditations bathe my parched heart and give some pleasure to the devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda moments should be shared.



4:00 p.m.

The kitchen is full of dirty dishes and leftovers. Madhu and Gaṅga have gone out to visit a devotee neighbor.

I don't even hear highway sounds here, it's so quiet. And I can always take a solitary morning walk—the good old late-sleeping Irish.

I am evolving, taking time to think of Prabhu-pāda.



It's hard to trust myself. So often I speak without conviction or feeling. I'm not in touch even with what I am feeling from moment to moment. Rather, we repeat our general convictions, as if we were always speaking before an audience with marginal interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But we should at least notice what is happening around us and assimilate it. If we can learn to express our honest feelings, even for a moment, even in a single sentence, that can drag us to a more specific, spontaneous level. We will be able to preach from the heart. Still, it's not easy to say, "I don't feel very inspired to talk about Kṛṣṇa today."

What we are looking for is *immediate* conviction. We wonder, "Why is such a penetrating and thrilling subject matter producing such boredom in me?" If we remain unaware of our own feelings and responses as they occur to us, then we will be unable to become absorbed in minute-to-minute Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I want to get off the false platform. Sometimes all I can do is laugh at myself and then turn my attention to something worthwhile, like picking

potatoes or carefully hearing the narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.



6:00 p.m.

Tonight we read of Abhay's initiation. I defended the *Līlāmṛta*'s presentation which only hints at the fact that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura recognized Śrīla Prabhupāda as an eternal, great, pure devotee, even in the early years of Abhay's household life. Gaṅga dāsa said when he heard of Abhay's meeting with his spiritual master in Kosi (when Prabhupāda joined with the *sannyāsī* disciples of his *guru mahārāja* and listened well), it reminded him of Lord Caitanya's visit to Gaya and His meeting with Īśvara Purī. Gaṅga's point was that a reader will make those connections himself; if a reader doesn't see the inner meanings, it shouldn't be forced on him.

"He likes to hear, I have marked him."

Our reading over, we walk outside where there's a fleeting bit of intense late sunlight. In Ireland, this is a special event. We sit on the stone wall conversing just before the inevitable clouds bring back the evening chill. I'm looking forward to one more full week here, with ever new proof that the soul wants to remember guru and Kṛṣṇa. The soul is like a hardy plant—give him a little sunshine and plenty of rain and he will grow, maybe a bit wild and weedy looking, but *bhakti-latā* nonetheless.



Week Two

August 15, 1:30 A.M.

I saw headlines about misery in a magazine. I am leading such a sheltered life in the West. But even Mother Theresa of Calcutta says that spiritual poverty is worse than material poverty. Devotees write for the spiritually impoverished.



My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, the *Vedas* proclaim Your glories. Devotees who receive even a drop of Your mercy also proclaim Your glories. They speak from their hearts what they have experienced. They chant and dance in ecstasy and tell others, although they sometimes think they should not. There is no end to the glories of great Kṛṣṇa conscious persons, and therefore one may be confident to write on and on of their influence in the world. "The pastimes of

Lord Caitanya are unlimited and endless. Even *sahasra-vadana* Lord Śeṣa, cannot reach the limits of His pastimes." Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja encourages us that even one who is not qualified may praise the Vaiṣṇavas, provided he is faithful to the *paramparā*. He describes himself humbly and also says that the authorized compiler of the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, "the incarnation of Vyāsadeva." Still, Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura did not describe all the incidents of Lord Caitanya's life. Therefore, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja writes, "Only upon his orders am I trying to chew the remnants of food that he has left" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya* 1.13).

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages his followers who have a writing propensity to use their energy in the service of the Lord. We should not be silenced by our sense of modesty and the estimation of our imperfectness when compared to the material and spiritual writing masters.

Although we are unable to offer prayers to the Lord in an adequate fashion, our duty is to make the attempt in order to purify ourselves. It is not that we should stop our glorification because demigods like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva cannot adequately glorify the Lord. Rather, as stated by Prahlāda Mahārāja, everyone should glorify the Lord according to his own ability. If we are serious and sincere devotees, the Lord will give us the intelligence to offer prayers properly.

—*Bhāg.4.16.2*, purport

The concept of guru-disciple is not foreign anywhere in the world. Credit is given to teachers and spiritual directors, but not with the emphasis found in the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. People think that too much dependence or praise of the guru is cultish, a kind of deification of an ordinary man. They look for feet of clay in all heroes and signs of exaggerated and sentimental dependency in the followers. So we strive to exemplify the real relationship. The spiritual master is praiseworthy and although we may be foolish, he is still able to lead us out of the material world to shelter in eternity, bliss, and knowledge. If the world leaders are not praising Śrīla Prabhupāda and the authorized *paramparā*, then “stand-ins” like me will have to do it until the world discovers that this is the real responsibility of writers and readers.



Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

You are a reservoir of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You pump fresh water into the parched population. You replenish your own resources in the cloudbank of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. His blessings flow down to us from the mountains of the previous *ācāryas*. The rain of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy runs down the mountainsides and deposits the rich loam of the *ācāryas’* realization directly into your own reservoir.

As we drink that water, our lives are sustained by it. Please don’t let us continue taking it for granted. Please let us always remember that we are living

only by your kindness. You are providing for us all the nourishment we need to advance in spiritual life. You are giving us the water of immortality. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.



The ground is always being cut out from under my feet. I have no laurels to rest on, no stock of praises to create complacency. Whatever encouragement I receive is immediately consumed by the hungry, temporary ego-self. He knows that he cannot live on praise—it gets him through today, but what about tomorrow? I am perpetually impoverished. Let me live the life of a *brāhmaṇa*. Whatever he gets in one day, he must give away in charity by night time. In that way, he starts each day fresh. His pockets are empty but his heart is clean. He knows Kṛṣṇa is maintaining him.

A proud person who lives in the world without personally recognizing God's will and his desires for us wastes the human form of life. Regardless of what our past karma has given us in this life, the material energy continues to deceive us and delivers us cruel blows of Fate. In the end, we are discarded, just like a plastic cup thrown onto the garbage heap by the consumer. Material nature is merciless.

No one knows how to end this decay and accumulation of garbage and waste known as human history. No one even knows what it is, although there is so much speculation. The Vedic directions

inform us how the destruction works, why it so happens that we live and dream a brief while and then are chucked aside. Vedic directions also inform us how to become free of bitterness, cruelty, and greed so that we stop torturing each other during our brief life in these bodies. Although the Vedic social model was recognized successfully in history for thousands of years, modern historians deny its authenticity and relegate the *Vedas* to the world of mythology. Without knowledge of the Vedic instructions, how can anyone become free from the cycle of birth, death, disease, and old age?

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the representative of Lord Caitanya. He specifically came to the West to teach us how to live properly and happily and in God consciousness. Therefore, he wrote many books to act as guides for social and spiritual order. He pushed his disciples to distribute his books widely so that as many people as possible would have an opportunity to hear the reality of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Again, we can only be grateful to Prabhupāda in the face of such an achievement. And we patiently serve and wait for the day when his books will become the law books for mankind.



A Talking Game

I travel so I don't see
 the same things everyday.
 And wherever I go
 I talk for all I'm worth,
 confident that it's better than nothing.
 I talk of my spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.
 I play a game, "You are
 far away from me."
 Although I know he is close
 I think maybe he'll reveal himself more,
 like that wild animal walking slowly
 out of the bushes onto the road,
 and back into the bushes,
 leaving me startled with fear and wonder.

Keep talking, pet,
 tell us about the mist—
 I know it will lead to him.
 Today I resolved to start
 writing him letters even though
 "You are far away from me
 and probably won't reply directly."



Hosanna

What can I say? "Hello, poems! Hosanna!"
 Those initial voices,
 you may call them mental chatter
 but they are mine, so I claim them.
 Now make way for something decent:

I walked for over an hour,
 talking Prabhupāda-*kathā*,
 ending up with a letter to him
 and now back here to celebrate
 by looking at the sunrise clouds.
 I won't be reading *Scientific American*
 although I peeked at an article
 by a Soviet scientist who laments
 that irrational cults and superstitions like yoga
 are exploding all over his Russia.
 I won't read of the misery—
 I can work against it with poems and essays
 reminding us of the great *ācārya*.
 By Kṛṣṇa's grace my life is as a visitor
 in the Wicklow mountains
 which are picturesque . . . I should do more—
 but at least I can share with you
 this tingling air of rural Eire
 and positive visions of one
 who is always protected by Lord Kṛṣṇa.
 He is beyond this world, inconceivable
 and always a person.
 He is most pleased with us when we
 spread His joyful teachings in the world.

Chanting *japa* is a contribution to the world. Don't fall asleep at the switch. When you do fall asleep during a time when you should be awake, prod yourself back into alertness. Just accept who you are and go with it. No use denying.

Finally, there will be death for everyone here. Who will look at all the faces of all the people? Who can provide for them? That one is Kṛṣṇa. If I can turn to Him, I'm accomplishing and making a solid contribution. Even a person in apparent obscurity can help in that way.



12:30 p.m.

Srīla Prabhupāda—you have to read his books to know him. Otherwise it's a bluff: "I love Śrīla Prabhupāda and I talk about him." Moment-to-moment, his association is available. Why don't you take it? What are the objections?

"He's too repetitious."

"It's too philosophical."

"My mind is too scattered."

"I'm not serious enough, what can I do?"



Write a single honest sentence dedicated to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—that's my challenge. It can be a simple little thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but honest and dedicated. Prabhupāda told us that a little faith is

worth tons of faithlessness. And sincere emotion in service is better than bombastic words.

And yet I tend to keep judging my devotion. Is it good enough, is it big enough? Why not look for whatever is there and accept it? Build from there.



3:15 p.m.

I'm hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion* lectures given in Vṛndāvana (*Kārttika* 1972). In one lecture you hear monkeys screeching and even growling a bit. Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't mention them, but just keeps lecturing. You can also hear live *kīrtana* in the background, probably from inside the temple courtyard. Śrīla Prabhupāda is lecturing outside in the courtyard by Rūpa Gosvāmī's place.

Pradyumna dāsa has just read the statement that Rūpa Gosvāmī wants to protect the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. He prays to his spiritual master, Sanātana Gosvāmī, for protection against those "argumentative logicians who unnecessarily meddle in the science of service to the Lord." He compares their arguments to volcanic eruptions that occur in the ocean but can do very little harm.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Let them do . . ." We may respect them, but we don't accept their conclusions. As I hear this tape, I automatically take down a few notes like a student, but I'm aware that I'm not feeling it deeply. I wasn't there in 1972.

Pradyumna reads aloud that Rūpa Gosvāmī is trying to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, although he thinks himself unfit for the work.

That should be the attitude of all preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, following in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. We never should never think of ourselves as great preachers, but should always consider that we are simply instrumental to the previous *ācāryas*, and simply by following in their footsteps we may be able to do something for the benefit of suffering humanity.

—*Nectar of Devotion* Introduction, p. xx

Suddenly Prabhupāda stops speaking. "Hut!" We don't hear the monkey, but then again, "HUT!" Devotees laugh and applaud, "Oh! *Haribol!*" It sounds like Śrīla Prabhupāda successfully chased the monkey away.

"Mmmm . . ." He begins again where he left off.

"This society is attempting to create a society of devotees all over the world without any discrimination of caste, creed, or color."

I don't like those monkeys at all. But I'm not going to write about them here. I want to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda and the devotees. *Tādera caraṇa-sebi-bhakta-sane bās/janame janame hoy ei abhilāṣ*

Turn your monkey mind back to the lecture. In just a five minute segment there's so much. Keep the argumentative logicians away. Worship and follow the humble attitude of Rūpa Gosvāmī, who wanted only to be an instrument for the previous

ācāryas. Be like your own spiritual master who is not afraid of monkeys but who shouted, "Hut!"

(I wish I could get out of the rut of listening to my monkey mind. Śrīla Prabhupāda, where are you to yell "hut" at my mind?)

I'm listening again. Prabhupāda said that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a society of devotees, and all are welcome, all over the world. "Our main business is to serve the *ācāryas*."

Prabhupāda then said that a so-called *jñānī* came to him and said, "The Christians and Muslims used to convert Hindus; now you are converting the Christians and Muslims to Hinduism. What is the difference between your preaching and the preaching of so many other proselytizers?" Śrīla Prabhupāda commented, "This fool doesn't know . . . I never said the Hindu religion is better than Christian . . . never said give up your religion . . . no . . . there are many of my old students here and they can tell you. Rather, when they asked if one can attain perfection by following the Christian religion I said, 'yes.'"

While listening to this, I can tell that again the monkey is coming close. Śrīla Prabhupāda stops a moment, clears his throat and goes on. "Our propaganda is to make everyone know this fact: everyone is eternally servant of Kṛṣṇa."



I don't think I could keep away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness even if I tried. It is like a hand on the

Ouija board, some power draws you to the mystical source. Prabhupāda has you under control and every hour you assent to it. As Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna, "I have told you the best, most confidential knowledge, quite complete. Now deliberate on it and do as you wish." Arjuna quickly replied, "I will do exactly as you say, Acyuta. My delusion is gone and I am ready to act."



Śrīla Prabhupāda describes Lord Brahmā's prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Brahmā: "I was presumptuous, Lord, and I offended You." Śrīla Prabhupāda comments that Lord Brahmā was undoubtedly a proven servant of the Lord, so Brahmā begs to be excused, just as a mother would excuse her unborn child when he kicks her. Lord Brahmā asks to be forgiven, makes great prayers, and knows that he does not belong in Kṛṣṇa's intimate *līlā*. I make no great prayer, but I wish to be included in the intimate *līlā*.



Śrīla Prabhupāda called Kṛṣṇa the "reservoir of all pleasure." Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī called Him the "cynosure of all eyes." Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī made a long list called "Kṛṣṇa is," and filled it in with statements from the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. "Kṛṣṇa is the Indwelling Guide. Kṛṣṇa is the destroyer of the worldly sojourn of His devotees."

Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that transcendentalists see beyond the temporary world to the truth eternal. That is real and not the birth, death, pain and lust, and the mad desire to be happy which goes on in the material world. Don't confuse Kṛṣṇa with the sufferings of the world. If you cannot figure out why bad things happen to good people, just accept that you don't know everything about people's past and present. Karma offers the only explanation. But if you are still bewildered, chant and pray to come clear. Kṛṣṇa is in control.

It is therefore necessary at the present moment to understand absolute knowledge if we want to bring the human race back to sanity. Thus intelligent leaders of men should not devote their energies only for worldly betterment in the matter of eating, sleeping, defending, and gratifying the material senses. Leaders who think a hungry man or woman has no use for God and religion should be told emphatically that no man or woman in the world is not spiritually hungry, and that it is precisely these spiritually hungry men and women who have to understand the meaning of God and religion, now more than ever.

—*Message of Godhead*, p. 3

6:00 p.m.

We read of Abhay establishing the Gaudiya Math branch in Bombay; he writes the essay and poem that pleased his spiritual master; they ask Abhay to join them, but Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says: "It is better that he not live in your company. He will do on his own . . ." Then Abhay and his spiritual master meet at Rādhā-kuṇḍa: "There will be fire in the Math. If you ever get money, print books."



Prabhupāda says, "We are trying to convince people, 'Your original position is servant of Kṛṣṇa. You revive that and you will be happy.'" It sounds like he is advocating a conversion from one religion to another, but that is not what he means. I can't grasp this point intellectually. It sounds like Śrīla Prabhupāda is saying we are not sectarian, yet somehow he seems to describe how we are sectarian.

I realize I have to be careful not to repeat every single word Prabhupāda says until I have the purity and vision to understand what he means. Who but Prabhupāda could say, "I kick on your head!" with such humility?



I am a tiny person, not a great thinker (intellectual) or great spiritual leader (mystic). My qualification in spiritual life is my connection to a great spiritual master. That's all, and that's plenty.



Imagined good fortune

1. All of a sudden I wake in the night and remember half a dozen incidents of times I was with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I get up immediately and start writing them down, disregarding all schedules. I keep at it until breakfast time. After that I rest for an hour.

2. I wake up in the middle of the night and admit that there are many little stories I could tell about my experiences in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I feel some urgency to write them down, so I write all night. When breakfast comes, I write down the first line of an additional dozen incidents like this, to be continued later.

3. I wake in the night and three stories are staring me in the face. I know I have to write them down. They are straight, Kṛṣṇa conscious tales. I tell these stories with my voice and experience. I begin the first one and I'm halfway through it by breakfast time. I pray to Kṛṣṇa that if He wants, I will dedicate myself to a story-telling vocation.

4. I wake in the night and Kṛṣṇa intimates to me that I can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in the way I have always claimed I wanted to chant. But I will have to

make sacrifices. Am I prepared to do it? Yes, I say. I sit up and begin chanting on my wonderful *japa* beads, renounced and fixed on the holy name. This experience becomes a permanent change in life.

5. I lose interest once and for all in non-devotee writers and poets. Even if offered a good book with likely poem forms, I'm not interested. I write in my own way, based on a private and bona fide understanding of my spiritual master's books.

6. Headaches go away. I get a late burst of health and use it without feeling pressured by external forces.

7. Kṛṣṇa lays a heavy order on me. I respond to it favorably, knowing that it is His will. I'm thankful to be firmly under His guidance. It makes me turn more to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

8. I follow the advice of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and with a humble heart, forgetting my own happiness, I go to preach *harināma*. I think I've finally become a *sannyāsa* preacher.

9. Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly tells me what I have to do. I do it.

August 16, 1:30 A.M.

Rising early in the morning is a prayer to “cease” the dreams of the night and to plan how to be present in a deeper self once the activities start unfolding.



“At least three times a day, I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master.”

It’s true, to see Śrīla Prabhupāda properly, one has to have eyes smeared with the ointment of love.

When he rode in an open carriage in the procession at Benares, he remained very grave. It wasn’t really his style to silently parade like that. He wanted to preach, to directly distribute Kṛṣṇa

consciousness by *kīrtana*. He wore the Western-style shirt Himavati had made him, the one with the pearl buttons down the front, and a turtleneck underneath. He doesn't look like he approves of what is going on. His group of preachers was only a small part of a Hindu parade.



I like to look at photos of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I have one where Prabhupāda is talking to a worker who is preparing the altar at Bhaktivedanta Manor. Śrīla Prabhupāda had such unique facial expressions. I can't really describe them. Sometimes when he was observing or listening to someone else, he would let his mouth fall open a bit. It seemed to aid his concentration on the other person.

He often seemed simultaneously amused and absorbed in what was going on. His powers of concentration were so great that we could feel his intelligence penetrating into the situation. In this photo, Prabhupāda was asking the devotee what was going on with the construction. I could tell from the photo that the construction was still in the early stages. The devotees took a long time to build that altar. Maybe Prabhupāda was seeing through their excuses.

In the photo, Śrīla Prabhupāda is surrounded by other devotees. All of them look amused, all small extensions of Prabhupāda's mood. It was easier to be in that position, tagging along, than to be the devotee-worker who was under Prabhupāda's

discerning gaze. But what mercy to be scrutinized by him, even if it meant he saw your faults.

No one could look as serious and grave as Śrīla Prabhupāda. You couldn't tell what he was thinking. The corners of his mouth turned down. He had so much to bear and his followers were always demanding that he look and act at the highest level of inspiration. He was naturally on that level, but still it was demanding. He was always giving himself for Kṛṣṇa's service.

I have another photo of Prabhupāda wearing a thick garland of roses. The microphone is a few inches from his mouth. What is he thinking? His face shines with a soft aura of dedication and inner absorption. He seems to be thinking of Kṛṣṇa's mission, and as always, he's pleased to see that devotees are coming forward to participate in the preaching. He will sustain them by speaking the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He will not concoct anything new. I have seen him look pleased and soft-hearted as he does in this photo many times, but at the next moment, another expression might pass over his face—his eyebrows might furrow in worry, or there might be a sudden sadness in his eyes. Was it compassion? Was he feeling an intense spiritual emotion? The gathered devotees were raw and weak; no one could understand his mind.

Another photo: Prabhupāda is wearing a different sweater than in the other photos. He stands with folded palms. It's a chilly morning inside the temple. He's always alert and cheerful, ready to do business for Kṛṣṇa. His beadbag is around his neck,

hanging in front. His hands are together as in prayer. He has come to worship with his children.

And another: he waits, seated in an airport lounge. His small white bag is by his side, his forearm resting on it. He has removed his shoes! He is taking a restful moment. His leg is crossed in front in a quarter lotus position. Where is he off to? We can tell the date of this photo by his bamboo cane, which was replaced in later years. His white bag only lasted until 1974.



Śrīla Prabhupāda, will you take me with you again?

He asks, "Do you want to come? Do you have faith? Can you pass the test or will you want to drop out later?"

Maybe it's better I stay just where I am and strive from here. I don't expect to suddenly rise up as if filled with helium to join you in the spiritual stratosphere. Everything is happening by destiny. At least I'm thinking of you, my spiritual master.

I was reading of the *gopīs*. Their dedication to the Lord is topmost. They thought of him *at every moment* with great intensity. Their pain in missing Kṛṣṇa led to the greatest happiness. They achieved the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by missing Kṛṣṇa. In His absence they had no choice but to think of Him. In this way, they reached a state even more Kṛṣṇa conscious than when He was present with them. They "captured" Kṛṣṇa. He had no

other way to repay them but to encourage them in their service to Him.

We are meant to follow the standard of the *gopīs*. We are meant to think of guru and Kṛṣṇa while serving their order, and we are meant to understand that everything depends on their mercy.



Don't be afraid to make your report,
as you walked it was dark and you heard
the bleating of many sheep.
It was early morning, looked like rain.
In the road ahead
you saw sheep blocking the way
and the major part of the flock
was heading for the road.
You saw no man,
but you turned back.

What is the purport?
 It seemed to predict peril for the planet.
 It was like a scene out of a dream
 or from a wild prophecy.
 It was too much for me to handle
 so I took my thoughts in the other direction.
 Soon I met a calf drawing milk from a cow.
 That was more to my liking.
 It reminded me of Prabhupāda.
 But the other scene is also in his teachings:
 in Kali-yuga the low-class men will conspire
 to kill the animals, and the sheep-like humans,
 and the sky will send floods for many years
 and fire from the mouths of Ananta
 will scorch the planet.
 Then everything will be dark and finished.
 It's your duty to report this
 not only here but by repeating
 the clear message of *Bhagavad-gītā*.
 The disasters of Time cannot be averted.
 But we can save ourselves and help others
 by moving under Kṛṣṇa's umbrella.



I want to link every moment to Kṛṣṇa. I just
 stopped on the road and saw a calf tugging at her
 mother's milk bag. (Is this what Robert Frost is
 getting at in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Even-
 ing"? Treasure the moments by making them
 Kṛṣṇa conscious.)

Ask yourself, "What was meaningful to me? What happened?" I walked down stairs this morning in the dark, holding on to the rail, stepping out with my foot to find that last step. "You are fifty-one," I said, "yet you feel quite young. Still, people die at sixty in an accident . . ." In the bathroom, I turned on a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Kṛṣṇa* book dictation, "Prayers of Lord Brahmā." Even the sound is liberating.

These are the innumerable little waves of time (I say they are innumerable but I know they are limited). I don't mean to relate every little incident as if everything that happens is important, I just mean that awareness of the present moment assures us that we are still alive; if we can learn to see those moments in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then they will have real value and our lives will not be wasted.

A moment: Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda's spectacle case. It is made of hard, crush-proof plastic, and covered in tan cloth with an embroidered figure of Lord Jagannātha on it. I used to take Śrīla Prabhupāda's spectacles out of such a box and hand them to him. Although at the time, I thought it was a bit tiresome to do this over and over again, I also know it was one of the best things I did. It required no taxing of the brain; I needed only to keep a menial attitude.



I suddenly remembered something that happened two years ago. Walking down the long, snaky mountain road in the Pyrenees to the telephone booth at the bottom. It takes half an hour to get there. We talk to Madhu on the phone. Madhu had gone to Ireland to purchase a small cottage for me so that I could live as a hermit, but I wanted to tell him not to get it; I had changed my mind. So Gaṅga and I walked down the mountainside to the phone booth and called Madhu: "Let's talk about it some more before you purchase anything; that plan is too radical." Gaṅga is with me again, although I am not at any major crossroad this time. We're both still trying to practice prayer, as we were learning to do in the Pyrenees two years ago. I'm still writing in a notebook to help myself, too.

"Do you remember?" Gaṅga asked as we walked down a Wicklow hill. In the Pyrenees, he told me, "I know it's very difficult to remain in an undecided state. It will be good if you can make up your mind." I was making pro and con cards for alternative plans. The balance swung when I read Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport saying that the times have changed. Sages should no longer live in cottages in seclusion, but should go out and preach.

Does writing this down enhance my connection with Prabhupāda? Yes, I think that as I acknowledge *life*, that receptivity will lead to moments with Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa that I've overlooked. Practice to regard life in its moments as notable. I can tack on the Kṛṣṇa conscious purport if I have to. In the beginning, it may have to be done like that,

crudely adding the “moral of the story.” But like anything, practice brings improvement. Please bear with me.



11:00 A.M.

As we began to hear Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's speech to the bumblebee, I was alert. But I realized it wouldn't be possible for me to comment on this pastime in my VIHE seminar. For our little gathering, however, I wanted to speak if only to keep myself attentive. I said that any sincere religionist can enjoy these passages as the most sublime expression of love of God. We are inspired to hear of saints and sages in God consciousness. From that point of view—even if we cannot enter the *mahā-bhāva* sentiment of Rādhārāṇī—all devotees can worship Rādhā's “mad” love for Kṛṣṇa. It is the most intense and intimate devotion that has ever been expressed.

Madhu dared to compare some things that Rādhārāṇī said to our own devotional service. He said that we come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness with an initial inkling that we will attain Kṛṣṇa, but then He seems to hide Himself from us. Just as Rādhārāṇī cannot leave Kṛṣṇa or stop thinking of Him, so we are “trapped” and cannot leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness—despite the fact that Kṛṣṇa does not reveal Himself to us. This reminded me of Śrīla Prabhupāda comparing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to drinking

hot molasses: it's so hot you want to stop drinking it, but it tastes so sweet you can't give it up. Śrīla Prabhupāda translates Lord Caitanya's prayers: "Kṛṣṇa, You are free and independent in all respects . . . You may make me broken-hearted by not letting me see You throughout my whole life, but You are my only object of love."

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī talked to the bee and went on accusing Kṛṣṇa. Uddhava was standing nearby, and as he heard Her, he was surprised to hear that She had become almost mad for Kṛṣṇa. Then Uddhava said that he had brought a letter from Kṛṣṇa.

As I was about to hear Kṛṣṇa's letter again I thought, "Oh, when the *gopīs* heard the speech, they said it was *jñāna-yoga* and they didn't like it." But when I heard it today I thought, "Oh good, this confirms what I'm trying to do in my writing. Kṛṣṇa is everywhere."

Uddhava began Kṛṣṇa's message: "My dear *gopīs*, My dear friends, please know that separation between ourselves is impossible at any time, at any place or under any circumstances, because I am all-pervading." The living entities are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa and the material elements, gross and subtle, are all His inferior energies. "Not only the *gopīs*, but all living entities are always inseparably connected with Kṛṣṇa in all circumstances." The *gopīs* are perfectly aware of this, whereas those in *māyā* forget Kṛṣṇa and think they have separate identities with no connection to Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda says it is not possible to think of anything outside Kṛṣṇa and His energies. Our minds are

always occupied and always within Kṛṣṇa. "One who knows this philosophical aspect of all thoughts is actually a wise man, and he surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa" (Kṛṣṇa, Vol. 2, pp. 70–1).

I know this doesn't condone thinking and writing whimsically and claiming, "Whatever I do is favorable Kṛṣṇa consciousness." But it is a fact that when I write a "captured moment," it is connected to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is, so to speak, just around the corner. He is nearby, no matter where *we* are and what we write. All it takes is the Kṛṣṇa conscious person with the right touch to manifest this truth. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Actually, any person who can think, feel, act, and will cannot be separated from Kṛṣṇa. But the stage in which he can understand his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

So I am writing in the right direction. He who says, "This writing is not connected to Kṛṣṇa" is mistaken. "Nothing is separate from Me. The whole cosmic manifestation is resting on Me, and is not separate from Me."

This philosophy of *bhakti* is intricate and I don't want to oversimplify it. For example, Kṛṣṇa is expanded into the material energy, and yet He is not perceived in the material energy. He is perceived in the spiritual energy. Since the devotees' eyes are spiritualized, they can see Kṛṣṇa everywhere. "Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere" (Bg. 6.29).

I am not giving myself a cheap *carte blanche* to write and do whatever I want in the name of

devotional service, but I am excited by these explanations. They do seem to endorse that I can write from the heart and still be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Indeed, I can practice seeing Kṛṣṇa everywhere by writing whatever I feel, act, and will—in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.



3:00 p.m.

Allow yourself to be poor with nothing to say except, "Kṛṣṇa, please help me."



6:00 p.m.

Shortly before the disappearance of his spiritual master, Abhay wrote him a letter: "Dear Guru Mahārāja, Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. You have got many disciples, and I am one of them . . . Is there any particular service I can do?" Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura replied, "I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher."

It was Kṛṣṇa's arrangement that Śrīla Prabhupāda was spared from the controversy and litigation within the Gaudiya Math. We get an interesting picture of him in the years that followed . . . his business diminishing, the move to Calcutta . . .

Gaudiya Math *sannyāsīs* moving into rooms rented from Abhay . . .

The wind is blowing hard outside. A neighbor kid walks by. I think of Abhay Charan De and how he lived in a "joint neighborhood family" with the Gangulis living in the back, the Mukerjees next door, and the Gaudiya Math *sannyāsīs* . . . Śrīla Prabhupāda would often go to them and talk about *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

"He was interested only in devotional activities and he did his business only to maintain the family . . . He would speak only of Kṛṣṇa."

This day is coming to an end. Kṛṣṇa will sustain us, I have no doubt. Or I should say, I know how to deal with doubts. There's some late sunshine; I can chant an extra round. Everything is going as it should. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme. Let me end here.

August 17, 1:30 A.M.

Last night I dreamt I had to stay overnight somewhere. I was informed that it was too dangerous to travel at night, and that I should wait until morning. Then a muscular black devotee arrived, then another and another until the room was filled with devotees. They were all dancers. They were fabulously proficient. They began a *kīrtana* with astounding dance steps. After this, they did more dances with elaborate settings. One depicted a city office at the beginning of the day and there were other themes.

I was in their midst, aware that my body was underdeveloped and that I could barely move. I was in their way, but it didn't seem to disturb them. They just let me be. They were highly accomplished. When they sang Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*, I understood that they were all devotees who worked during the day trying to get dance parts in Broadway

shows. This meeting was their own get-together and they offered artistic presentations in celebration of their mutual interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although they were highly talented, they were absorbed in their bodies. They were intensely in-shape athletes. I didn't want to be like them in that respect, but I was like a fly in the midst of these gorgeous machines, these dancing Gandharvas. They were almost unearthly in their capacity and talent, and in their scintillating choreography and stage settings.

I stood in the midst of them, but then fell to the floor asleep and breathing deeply. Eventually they all disappeared.

I wonder what these dancing devotees represent? Maybe the dream is telling me something about art and how it can lead to excesses. Also my own undeveloped body may mean that I need to develop in certain areas of my life. But mostly, it was hard to identify too closely with these dancers. It was almost like watching a Tchaikovsky ballet like *The Nutcracker Suite* when a room full of inert objects suddenly comes to life.

It struck me also that as Kṛṣṇa consciousness spreads, it is inevitable that people will come forward who are interested in developing their bodies and their art and who connect these things to Kṛṣṇa. A little, aging scholar like me will feel himself small and insignificant among them.

But now I'm awake and I survived another night filled with dreams. I wish I could dance for you, dear reader, with such grace and flashing rhythms

and fancy steps. But I know my limitations by now. There's no use trying to pretend. What I do want to give you requires crawling out of my body, out of this limited apartment, out of my timid false ego. I will point to the stars and moon and you and I will understand that we are meant to travel far beyond them, far beyond all the universal coverings and into the spiritual world where *real* dancing is going on. You and I are trying to go *there*. Our path is auspicious and it will be triumphant. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

If a person is fortunate enough to understand the spirit soul and to get a taste for transcendental knowledge, then even in the midst of worldly happiness and distress, which pertains to the body and mind, he will remain indifferent and relish transcendental peace . . . If, after a long time away from home, somebody embarks on a homeward journey, the pleasure of being homeward bound diminishes the accompanying distress of the journey. The inconveniences of traveling become subordinate to the pleasure of heading homeward. Similarly, for one who is headed back home, back to Godhead, by dint of transcendental knowledge, the material miseries of the body and mind are insignificant.

—*Message Of Godhead*, pp. 17-18



Prabhupāda smiles from the *vyāsāsana*, approving our song and dance. He plays on the brass gong, striking it with a wooden stick. We dance for him.

He goes to the bank of the Yamunā with his disciples. He squats and in his hands, takes water from Yamunā-devī and sprinkles it on his head. We follow his example, squatting down beside him. He looks off with a loving glance at the sweep of the river and the land and sky.

In the temple, he closes his eyes as the microphone is adjusted near his mouth.

Dressed in a long, nicely pressed *kūrta*, he walks down the many steps of a stone *ghat*. In his right hand he fingers his *japa-mālā*, in his left the cane steadies his steps. Neatly folded over his shoulder is a wool *cādar*. We follow close behind.

Sometimes the sun floods his room in Vṛndāvana, although usually it is cool and dark. His desk is covered with flower garlands. He wears a white sweater with a big collar. It's winter in Vṛndāvana. He sits with head raised and looks askance at the photographer as if to say, "What, still another picture?" We took the picture, Prabhupāda, because we want to be with you and remember you always.

He walked down tight alleys and streets in Vṛndāvana town, disciples close beside and behind him. His face was grave as he led his Western disciples into the holy places. He knew we couldn't really understand.

Often he smiled and beckoned to us. "Do as I am doing."



11:00 A.M.

Srila Prabhupāda encourages us to practice the meditation of separation which was practiced by the *gopīs*. We know we can't imitate the *gopīs'* conjugal love for Kṛṣṇa, and sometimes we shy away from them entirely. But Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Kṛṣṇa wanted to teach through the behavior of the *gopīs*." And then he writes, "Lord Caitanya taught to people in general the method of *vipralambha-sevā* which is the method of rendering service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the feeling of separation." This kind of meditation is not forbidden. The greatest teachers advice us to follow *vipralambha-sevā*, and we neophytes have a ready experience of separation from Kṛṣṇa. We do not relish chanting His holy names; therefore, He is apart from us. It is easy to relate to the statement, "When will that day be mine when by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, tears will flow from my eyes?" Although *vipralambha-sevā* is the topmost realization, devotees in the beginning stages can also have a connection with it. Any authorized service we perform which leaves us feeling, "I could not do it nicely, I did not attain Kṛṣṇa," has the potential to become *vipralambha-sevā*.

My attempt to always think of Prabhupāda seems doomed to failure. But my failures and my feeling that "I am not a good disciple"—these sentiments should not be dismissed or given up. With persistence and a little adjustment, these feelings of

unfulfillment can become “rendering service in the feelings of separation.”

The *gopīs* loved Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. When Kṛṣṇa left, they didn’t go with Him to Mathurā. They knew they were meant to love Him in His Vṛndāvana-*līlā*, even if He appeared to physically leave Vṛndāvana. Similarly, if I want to compose *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda*, then I must keep my home-base in ISKCON at Prabhupāda’s lotus feet. “Don’t leave,” Prabhupāda requested. Stay in the fellowship of devotees.



Uddhava asked the *gopīs* to close their eyes and recall the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. I was pleased to hear this because it is a method I have been following with my close friends.

It is stated by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura that Kṛṣṇa saved the cowherd boys from the blazing forest fire within a second, while their eyes were closed. Similarly, Uddhava advised the *gopīs* that they could be saved from the fire of separation by closing their eyes and meditating on the activities of Kṛṣṇa from the very beginning of their association with Him. From the outside, the *gopīs* could visualize all the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa by hearing the descriptions of Uddhava, and from inside they could remember those pastimes. From the instruction of Uddhava, the *gopīs* could understand that Kṛṣṇa was not separate from them.

—Kṛṣṇa, Vol. 2, p. 75

Uddhava also convinced the *gopīs* that as they were thinking of Kṛṣṇa from Vṛndāvana, so Kṛṣṇa was thinking of them at Mathurā.

Uddhava became the *śikṣā-guru* of the *gopīs* and in return, they worshiped him as they would worship Kṛṣṇa. This throws more light on the relationship of spiritual master and disciple. We know that Kṛṣṇa sent Uddhava to Vṛndāvana so that he could learn loving serving from the *gopīs*. If someone were to praise Uddhava as the guru of the *gopīs*, he might reply, "All I did was read them the message sent by Kṛṣṇa, and I asked them to remember Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, which they were already doing. I was simply serving the *gopīs*. They are my teachers in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every respect." Uddhava's imaginary response can help us understand the nature of the guru-disciple relationship: the guru serves his disciples by being a transparent carrier of Kṛṣṇa's message. He does not think of himself as a superior.

As we read today, Madhu expressed his interest in learning Kṛṣṇa consciousness by hearing about the *gopīs*. Up until now, he thought it was taboo to think in this way. But he is taking courage from several of Śrīla Prabhupāda's phrases. Prabhupāda writes, "Śukadeva Gosvāmī has recommended that anyone who hears from the right source about the dealings of the *gopīs* with Kṛṣṇa, and who follows the instructions, will be elevated to the topmost position of devotional service and be able to give up the lust of material enjoyment." Madhu said he

felt encouraged to do this in the company of a few trusted friends who are all willing to share inner impressions and intimate thoughts.

I said that appreciation of the *gopīs* by us is a very delicate thing. When we hear in the *Kṛṣṇa* book of kissing and embracing, we sometimes flinch because it reminds us of the material kissing and hugging we indulged in or hankered for with the opposite sex. But then how are we to get rid of lust? Śrīla Prabhupāda recommends that by hearing of the *gopīs*, the higher taste will banish the lower, perverted "*rasa*." At the same time, we must keep rigid vows not to begin new chapters of mundane conjugality.

Uddhava wished to take the dust of the *gopīs'* feet on his head. But he dared not ask them. So he prayed to take birth as a clump of grass or an herb growing where the *gopīs* ran as they hurried to hear Kṛṣṇa playing His flute.

When Uddhava left Vṛndāvana, the residents asked him for a benediction. They prayed to always be able to remember Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The method is very simple: to fix the mind always on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, to talk always of Kṛṣṇa without passing on to any other subject matter, and to engage the body in Kṛṣṇa's service constantly" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 2, p. 78–9).

Gaṅga dāsa told me he loves our daily readings. He apologized for not speaking more. "I cannot think quickly while you are reading," he said. "A few hours after you left I began talking it over with Madhu. My mind works slowly." Today, Gaṅga

again said nothing. But when the reading was over we smiled to each other—which is rare for him and me.



12:30 p.m.

My turning to Śrīla Prabhupāda must be real. The more I want to praise Prabhupāda and make prayers to him, write letters to Prabhupāda and speak of separation from him—the more the pressure increases to be truthful. Prabhupāda often made reference to “professional reciters.” They don’t actually love Kṛṣṇa or render practical service under a guru in *paramparā*; they make a business of reciting the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in seven days. And they leap to the Tenth Canto descriptions of the *rāsa* dance as soon as possible.

So what is real in my relationship with my spiritual master? My *japa* beads are one link. My awareness of many of Prabhupāda’s statements is another. I have accumulated biographical data and know where many things occur in his books. These links will stay with me even beyond death. The inhabitants of Vṛndāvana pray, “By the will of the supreme authority and according to the results of our own work, we may take our birth anywhere. It doesn’t matter where we are born, but our only prayer is that we may simply be engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness” (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 2, p. 79).



What are the barriers preventing me from loving service to Śrīla Prabhupāda? For a pure devotee, even death is not a barrier, but I am not a pure devotee.

One barrier is the resistance I've built up against reading his books. It's just a bad habit. In order to be regulated at it, it takes deliberate planning on my part. I remember when we stayed a couple of weeks in Kerry near the Skelligs Rocks. I read a solid hour every day in the Fourth Canto (the Kumāras speaking to Mahārāja Pṛthu). I sat on the floor, back straight, book on a box in front of me. It required a touch of Spartan discipline to fight against sleepiness. Eventually I did it though.

A few summers ago, also in Kerry, I was reading Prabhupāda's books for three and a half hours daily. I kept track of it in a log. I have to make a deliberate *yajña* like that. It's also better for me that I don't read just to write about it. I need to read for the sake of reading. It's the most basic way to fill up the empty tank of the spirit soul. The BBT likes to quote Śrīla Prabhupāda, "If you really want to please me . . . distribute my books." Prabhupāda also said, "If you really want to know me, read my books."

By performing basic, Prabhupāda-given *sādhana*, like reading and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with full attention, the barriers to my pure association with Prabhupāda will fall away. There are no short cuts to following his order.



4:00 p.m.

Message of Godhead was written by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1955, before he came to America. It remained unpublished until the BBT first printed it in 1990 (200,000 copies). His writing had a different flavor then. There is a certain charm to his handwritten prose that is different than the way his writing came out when he used a dictaphone. Here is a sample:

In general, we are very proud of our two small eyes, and puffed-up with vanity, we are always enthusiastic to see everything with them . . . It is not a fact that we can see everything as it is simply by applying our ocular power to it. Every morning when the sun rises, we see that vast mass of matter as if it were just a small disc. Of course, the sun is much larger than the earth on which we live, and thus every morning of every day our self-reliant ocular vanity is put to the test and reduced to absurdity (p. 7).

Because we are always very busy in the discharge of our worldly duties, generally we do not wish to understand any philosophy except our mundane philosophy of the stomach and allied subjects. We have extended many branches and sub-branches of this philosophy of the belly in various directions, and thus we hardly have any time for understanding the philosophy of gaining eternal life—for which we are perpetually struggling, life after life (p. 10).

This eternal truth is summarized in the *Vedas* in the aphorism *brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā*: "Spirit is fact; the world is a false shadow." By "false shadow" one should understand that the

world is temporary, existing only for the time being. But one should not make the mistake of thinking the world has no existence at all. We really possess our temporary material bodies and minds, and we must not make ourselves a laughingstock by denying the existence of our bodies and minds (p. 22).

Message of Godhead is addressed to the world just after World War II: "A Hitler, a Mussolini, or any other leader of that materialistic persuasion may offer his followers the mental concoction of doing good together . . . " Śrīla Prabhupāda offers stable peace on the solid platform of eternal knowledge. Speaking of India's responsibility he wrote, "But it would be sheer stupidity if Indian people attempted to do good to others without first themselves attaining transcendental knowledge."

In *Message*, I see Śrīla Prabhupāda putting Lord Kṛṣṇa's message in his own words. He accepts *sāstra* as Absolute Truth—and as urgently needed. Mainly Prabhupāda insists that knowledge of the self as eternal is the most important knowledge. If people, especially leaders, will accept this, it can solve a whole range of worldly problems.

Today the whole world is mad after the culture of knowledge in relation to temporary arrangements for the gross material body and the subtle material mind. But more important than the body and mind is the spirit, which has been set aside without any proper culture of knowledge. As a result, the darkness of nescience has overshadowed the world and brought about great unrest, disturbance and distress.

Material scientists have made much advancement all over the world, but regrettably, these advanced scientists have made no attempt to understand the living spark, the spirit, which is always the most important subject. This is their gross ignorance. This is their helplessness.

—*Message of Godhead*, pp. 23–4

Śrīla Prabhupāda applies his intelligence, education, humor, and whatever he can to argue on Kṛṣṇa's behalf. He is always gentlemanly, but strongly convinced in a cool-headed way. This is Kṛṣṇa conscious writing.



An Uncaptured Moment

It's the summer of 1966. I'm at 26 Second Avenue and I'm dancing, wearing my aquamarine shirt, black pants, and no socks. Swamiji is leading us by his voice. The boys are there. Cars rush by on Second Avenue.

Prabhupāda, you led us. I can't go back right now and remember you in the storefront. I see too clearly the faces of the devotees in 1991 begging to be allowed to enter your 1966 pastimes. It's too disparate for me to remember my impressions of you when I was wearing that aquamarine shirt and thought wearing no socks was cool. It's 1991 now. You are still leading us with your voice, cars still rush by on Second Avenue, but I'm no longer there to hear them. I'm here now, in a little cottage in the

Wicklow hills, trying to recapture a moment with you.



6:00 p.m.

Even as a businessman, Abhay was spirited. After the war, he started *Back to Godhead*, although he had to fight the government to print it. They wouldn't let him buy newsprint because of the paper shortage. Abhay went to their offices and explained the importance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and convinced them to "sacrifice a few reams of paper in the midst of many wastages . . . for the sake of humanity and Godhead." An early instance of what Prabhupāda would do repeatedly, and the example his disciples would be inspired to follow: when you go to preach, don't let the opposition stop you. Explain to people calmly and logically that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is important. Permission should be given for God conscious activities because that is the ultimate responsibility of the government.

Prabhupāda was so spirited that when he was still a *gṛhastha*, he tried to convince the neighboring Gaudiya Math *sannyāsīs* to go with him and charge Gandhi and Nehru with not following the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā*. When Abhay tried to start his own factory, not one of his family members would help him with the work, and neither were they interested in devotional service.

I can imagine how a letter might arrive at his address in Calcutta in answer to one of his preaching missives. He would read it and maybe sit down on the bed thinking it over. But there were no family members to share it with. He must have kept files for his letters. If the latest reply provoked him, he might immediately start typing or writing a counter-reply, filled with the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and always ending with practical suggestions of how to apply devotional service. For example, he suggested that *harināma* and *prasādam* distribution would be the best way to rehabilitate Calcutta after the Hindu-Muslims riots of 1947. In reply to that suggestion, a chairman of the rehabilitation committee replied, "I'm afraid I'm not interested . . . nor my committee, and therefore there is no necessity of your meeting with me." But Abhay was undaunted.

August 18, 1:30 A.M.

Another photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda: He is sitting before a microphone. A flower garland has been placed around his neck. He's in a public place—you can tell because there is a large portrait of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa beside him. The picture has been garlanded. It looks like a public hall.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes are lowered. He appears pleased, like when he hears his followers having *kīrtana*. Perhaps he has just finished singing, "*Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava*" and he's preparing to speak the message of Śrīla Vyāsadeva and Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

This picture has been printed in Prabhupāda's *Vyāsa-pūjā* book. The editors placed it next to the homage from the devotees in Seoul, Korea. They begin, "All of humanity is indebted to you for the gifts you have given . . . On the auspicious day of

your divine appearance, we fervently pray for your blessings as we begin to establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Korea, a land of dog-eaters. As a new twig on the *bhakti* tree of Lord Caitanya, we are depending on you for our sustenance, strength and inspiration." The homage is signed, "Jaya Baladeva dāsa/Ācārya dāsa /Bhakta Jay Young Park/Bhakta In Suk Oh."

On another page there is a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda on a morning walk in a park in India. Śyāmasundara dāsa is right behind him with his young daughter, "little Sarasvatī," riding piggy-back on his shoulders. In the background there is a park statue of a large, prehistoric reptile, maybe a brontosaurus. Indians stroll behind them. It's pleasing to see Śrīla Prabhupāda in public like this, retaining his devotional composure. After reading about his younger years in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I am amazed at how Śrīla Prabhupāda moved in the world. He is like a father to humanity. He has so much to offer the world, even though so few are aware of his greatness. Maybe some day it will be different, but even now we can take inspiration from seeing our spiritual master and remembering that he too walked in the morning, enjoyed the flowers and trees, and said, "Good morning" to passersby. And he compassionately gave Kṛṣṇa consciousness to his grateful disciples. The picture of Prabhupāda in the park accompanies the Vyāsa-*pūjā* homage by devotees in Göteborg, Sweden:

Prabhupāda, protect us; Kali-yuga is in full swing.

Kali is preaching too, with his malicious smile:

“Forget the books and rest for awhile.” . . .

But there again, Prabhupāda, you raise your divine mace:

“Go out and preach! They all suffer in their gratification race.”

Even our endeavors are bearing but a small result,

What else is there to do in this lifetime but to preach and chant?

You saved us so many times by spreading your wing.



Śrīla Prabhupāda’s movement is one of self-sacrifice and the following of authority—the previous *ācāryas*, the *śāstra*, and present leaders. Therefore, the mention of personal expression sometimes sounds unsundered. As one grows older though, the desire for self-expression and self-honesty seems to grow stronger. You tend to lose interest in pretenses and to become more focused on your desire to attain pure devotional service

regardless of how it looks to others. You ask yourself in the mood of self-scrutiny, "What am I actually getting out of my practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

Results are not always perceptible, but you continue in your duty. Yet unless you reach the point of asking, "Who am I?" it becomes more and more difficult to simply cooperate with the mission of the spiritual master and stifle all other feelings and thoughts. Kṛṣṇa consciousness has to be moving to the heart. How else can you continue preaching to newcomers year after year about the process of pure devotional service if you are not even able to see progress in your own life? And how can you stand before the assembly of already practicing devotees with the same unconscious, self-protective stance you had twenty years ago? It wouldn't be very encouraging.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is an evolution. My relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda is part of that evolution, the most important part of my evolution. I *need* to express it aloud, to write about it, to digest it and assimilate it. Although the writing medium is usually considered a place for settled, perfected presentations, writing can be used as a tool in my evolution; it's like having an informal talk with myself.

It takes time to break down the barriers created against self-exploration by formal, structured thought. I often compare it to when Prabhupāda would continue to speak in his room after giving the evening lecture. As the evening got later, fewer guests would stay and sit with him. As each person left, the talk became more personal. Finally, we would be alone with him. We could ask him our

11:00 A.M.

Today we read the last section in the *Kṛṣṇa* book where Kṛṣṇa and the residents of Vṛndāvana meet at Kurukṣetra. "Because of Their filial affection for Nanda and Yaśodā, both Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma became choked up, and for a few seconds They could not speak. . . . As far as the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana were concerned, from the very beginning of their lives, they did not know anything beyond Kṛṣṇa. . . . No one can even imagine how anxious the *gopīs* were to see Kṛṣṇa again" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 3, pp. 89, 90). Lord Kṛṣṇa went to a secluded place to meet the *gopīs*. He spoke to them more of what He had written in His letter delivered by Uddhava. He said that everything is a manifestation of His energy and therefore He is existing everywhere. "My dear *gopīs*, I request that instead of being so afflicted, you try to accept everything with a philosophical attitude. Then you will understand that you are always with Me and that there is no cause of lamentation in our being separated from one another" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 3, p. 92).

Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it clear that these passages are not out of our reach. He writes, "This important instruction by Lord Kṛṣṇa's to the *gopīs* can be utilized by all devotees engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

The *gopīs* reply to Kṛṣṇa, "Dear Kṛṣṇa, we are always busy in our family affairs. We therefore request that You remain within our hearts as the rising sun." When we read these passages, we

cannot deny that we are included in the loving affairs of Kṛṣṇa. But still, we are far away from realizing it in our own lives. Our feelings are sublime during the reading, but we cannot sustain our meditation on it throughout the day. As soon as I leave the room, Madhu and Gaṅga burst out laughing. On the porch I write a little summary of what we have read, but then I gaze absently at the Wicklow hills.

We are thankful to Śrīla Prabhupāda for giving us regular work within the domain of *bhakti*. Madhu walks quickly out to the Renault van where he *always* has more construction or secretarial work. Gaṅga starts cooking lunch. Madhu and Gaṅga are assistants at this "writing retreat," and my job is to write. Similarly, devotees in ISKCON all over the world have tasks. Prabhupāda set it up this way so that we would always be busily engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He writes, "One has to follow the rules and regulations prescribed by the *ācāryas*, and thus, under superior guidance, Kṛṣṇa-realization is fully possible, even in this material existence" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 3, p. 93).



12:00 Noon

Prabhupāda's books are filled with "shoulds."

One who is twice born . . . should reside in the *gurukula* under the care of the spiritual master.

false. "None of you, neither your friends nor yourself, know this truth." Prabhupāda could do this because he knew Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. And Prabhupāda had the right; a *sādhū* is one who is not supposed to flatter but to cut. He destroys illusion.

He advised Gandhi to engage himself cent per cent in preaching the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Gandhi's problem, according to Abhay, was that "You never accepted a guru in the disciplic succession, although Kṛṣṇa recommends it in the *Bhagavad-gītā*." Gandhi was well known for listening to his inner voice and extracting ideas from various writers. He also underwent severe penances, which could have been avoided if he had approached a guru in disciplic succession. Abhay asked Gandhi to retire for at least one month for discussing the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but of course he never heeded.

Prabhupāda wrote many letters during these years in India. He wrote to all the leading politicians and to anyone he thought would listen. In one sense, the letters had little effect. But one effect it did have was to enable Prabhupāda to focus all his energies as a preacher. It helped him to form practical plans of action, and to seek out interested persons through correspondence. He was repeatedly turned down, but he never felt discouraged; he always anticipated finding a sympathizer. He kept copies of all his letters and their replies. Through the letter-writing, Prabhupāda developed a keen sense of dedication to Lord Caitanya's mission with-

out getting entangled in the quarrels of the Gaudiya Math.

It is inspiring to look back and consider Prabhupāda's intense preaching practices through the medium of correspondence. Devotees nowadays can preach in a similar way, based on Prabhupāda's example. Sometimes devotees think that because they are householders or not in association with the local temple administration, they are not able to preach, but Prabhupāda has shown how a person can preach in any situation. You can buy a newspaper or magazine, pick up on any article or any person's name, and write to them. Then you can keep copies of any replies you receive and develop a whole network of persons interested in corresponding about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if the responses are predominantly negative, you will be training yourself as a preacher and writer, and you will have the satisfaction of following in Prabhupāda's footsteps.



7:00 p.m.

This is the last page of another notebook and the last thing I will write today. Soon I will have to swing into meetings with devotees in the mornings and afternoons, answer mail, attend a Ratha-yātrā, install a Prabhupāda *mūrti* in Dublin, do an initiation . . . Then off to France, Germany, India. Only

chanting every day, but some of it is readily perceivable. We are freer now from material life, have less interest in sense gratification, and are inspired to share our realization with others.



I want to *taste* the chanting. If millions of people were happily chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, maybe their momentum would propel me to the higher stages. An old-time practitioner from 1966 ought to be getting a lot of nectar out of his *harināma* practice. I would like to be able to make a better report if people inquired from me. It's embarrassing. What use is my attraction to truthfulness if all I can do is admit my *anarthas*, especially the *anartha* called *pramāda*, inattentive chanting?

The one remedy for poor chanting recommended in the *Padma Purāṇa* and other scriptures is to *chant constantly*. Prabhupāda didn't encourage us to drop all other engagements and simply chant, except as an emergency measure for an acute condition. He described full-time chanting as the practice of a liberated soul like Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and warned us not to imitate it. In general, Śrīla Prabhupāda preferred a healthy balance. But still . . .



You have to be sober to appreciate Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Even such a small book as *Message of Godhead* takes sobriety to understand.

I noticed something interesting while reading *Message of Godhead* today: Śrīla Prabhupāda is not afraid of repeating himself. This is not a defect, but evidence of his faith. He is not trying to come up with something new, he is trying to preach. Although he wrote with style and grace, it did not embarrass him to use the same examples and analogies over and over again. He does not feel the artist's compulsion to invent something new or to express the never-before-expressed thought. Prabhupāda used to quote a Bengali saying, "Walk on your hands, do anything crazy—but do something new!"

In *Message*, he repeats the same teachings about work and reaction that Kṛṣṇa gives in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He informs us that *karma-yoga* solves the dilemma. If a person works, he will get reactions which cause him to suffer in repeated lifetimes. If he stops working, he will not be able to sustain himself. Prabhupāda solves the dilemma by saying that one should continue working but should sacrifice the results to Viṣṇu. Only then will one become free of karma. By 1947, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written this basic instruction in many forms, and he continued to write it throughout his life. Because the solution to the dilemma of work and karma is Kṛṣṇa's explanation, and because it is largely ignored by thinkers in the world, preachers make it their life's work to propagate these teachings throughout the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda did this with infinite patience and love.

Your wristwatch tells you
 it's time to go home.
 Your sack is filled with poems.
 Take that up-slope road,
 it's raining harder.
 At this rate
 I'll never run out of things to say.
 The Prabhupāda recalls come of themselves,
 all you have to do is accept them
 with confident devotion.



11:00 A.M.

I don't want to say that we've "finished" reading *Kṛṣṇa* book. At the end of *Kṛṣṇa* book Prabhupāda writes, "The description of the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa is so attractive that automatically it gives us an impetus to study repeatedly, and the more we study the pastimes of the Lord, the more we become attached to Him. This very attachment to Kṛṣṇa makes one eligible to be transferred to His abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana" (*Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 3, p. 248). For now, we have switched over to reading *Nectar of Devotion* to enhance our meditation by hearing the sixty-four qualities of Kṛṣṇa.

The first thing I noticed was that many of these qualities focus on Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form:

How wonderful is the personal feature of Lord Kṛṣṇa!
 How His neck is just like a conchshell! His eyes are

so beautiful, as though they themselves were encountering the beauty of a lotus flower. His body is just like the *tamāla* tree, very blackish. . . . By such beautiful bodily features, the enemy of the demon Madhu has appeared so pleasing that He can bestow upon me transcendental bliss simply by my seeing His transcendental qualities.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, Ch. 21, p. 155

When Kṛṣṇa's nonphysical qualities were described, I began to see myself trying to create a flattering image that I too am gentle, liberal, and shy. Thinking of ourselves instead of Kṛṣṇa is the reason why we continue to suffer in the material world: "Why worship Lord Kṛṣṇa? I'm as good as Kṛṣṇa."

Madhumaṅgala admitted that he has always found it difficult to concentrate on *Nectar of Devotion* because it's so technical. But he likes to meditate on Kṛṣṇa's characteristics as he finds them in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Now he wants to try again with *Nectar of Devotion* and think of them at different times of the day—how Kṛṣṇa is strong, how He is truthful, how He is highly learned, and so on.

I also have experienced obstacles in trying to hear Kṛṣṇa's qualities from *Nectar of Devotion*. I tend to judge the poetic metaphors rather than just hear and accept them. "His arms are like two pillars . . . His chest is like a doorway, His hips are dens, and the middle of His body is a terrace."

It's revealing that the residents of Vṛndāvana prefer to meditate on Kṛṣṇa's bodily form. In the neophyte stage of devotional service, we tend to see bodily beauty as dangerous. Certainly a beautiful

woman is seen as a representation of *māyā*, because we still desire material sense gratification. But a woman's beauty is not in itself *māyā*, and neither is the woman herself *māyā*; it is our desire to enjoy her that is causing the illusion. A more advanced devotee can see things properly.

The worshipers of Kṛṣṇa are definitely attracted to His bodily beauty. Their attraction is not based on mundane sexuality; Kṛṣṇa's body is *sat-cit-ānanda*. Therefore, His devotees' attraction to His beauty is nondifferent than their attraction to His other attributes. It is based on *bhāva*, pure spiritual bliss. A *jñānī*, for example, is more attracted to Kṛṣṇa's omniscience and omnipotence, and an impersonalist is only attracted by Kṛṣṇa's bodily rays. The pure devotees of Vṛndāvana love to see that beautiful boy with the bluish hue coming home from the pasturing grounds in the evening. If I can overcome my lack of appreciation for the poetic metaphors the *ācāryas* have used to describe Kṛṣṇa's beauty, then I too will one day appreciate seeing Kṛṣṇa returning home after a day on Govardhana Hill. And in the meantime, it will help me see Kṛṣṇa in the descriptions of the *Kṛṣṇa* book and *Nectar of Devotion*.

Gaṅga dāsa said that in one of the seminars on *Nectar of Devotion*, devotees compared the first fifty qualities of Kṛṣṇa with the qualities of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"But what about the descriptions of youthful physical beauty?" I asked. "How can they be compared to Śrīla Prabhupāda's old age?"

Madhu replied that youthfulness does not only have to be expressed physically; youthfulness is also an attitude. A youthful attitude was certainly possessed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we could experience it in his idealism, and his enthusiasm and energy.

This reminded me that I was attracted to Śrīla Prabhupāda from the first time I saw him, not only because of his words but his whole being. Prabhupāda was elderly. I liked the way he carried his body and the grace with which he moved. His age signified to us that he had wisdom and maturity. One of Kṛṣṇa's qualities is *rucira*, "Beautiful bodily features which automatically attract the eyes." In his own way, Prabhupāda displayed a poise and grace that attracted hundreds of devotees.

Rucira also refers to Kṛṣṇa's pleasing dress. As a humble *sannyāsī*, Śrīla Prabhupāda never wore bright colors or any kind of ornamentation. He never wore silk scarves or fancy shoes or turbans, but his dress was definitely attractive to us in its simplicity. Everyone else wore the same factory-made jeans and dresses; Prabhupāda wore timeless saffron—it was a relief for our jaded, Western eyes.

We also spoke today about how to respond to physical beauty when we see it in this world. One thing is to always see a person as a potential servant of God, and to understand, at least theoretically, that Kṛṣṇa dwells in everyone's heart. No one has been placed on this earth as an object for our sense gratification.

Also, beauty is always incomplete until it is engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. Kṛṣṇa says that He is the strength of a man when the man is "devoid of passion." We may become affected by the first "shock wave" when we see a woman "dressed to kill." But on second glance, we are not interested in becoming entrapped by her physical features. Beautiful men and women, like flowers or birds, are tiny manifestations of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful features, and we can appreciate them in that context.

My main feeling from the *Nectar of Devotion* is to have new hope for hearing properly and learning to appreciate Kṛṣṇa's bodily beauty. There is overwhelming evidence in *Nectar of Devotion* that this is the mood of one who is actually a follower of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

It is said that the transcendental body of Kṛṣṇa resembles the lotus flower in eight parts—namely His face, His two eyes, His two hands, His navel and His two feet. The *gopīs* and inhabitants of Vṛndāvana used to see the luster of lotus flowers everywhere, and they could hardly withdraw their eyes from such a vision.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, Chap. 21, p. 159



4:00 p.m.

Someone even asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Why is there *anything*?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Because *ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt*." There is anything (existence) because Kṛṣṇa wants pleasure. We too want pleasure. Kṛṣṇa wants to exchange with us in loving devotional service. And He wants His devotees to enlighten one another by conversing about Him.



In *Message of Godhead*, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that people's root disease is atheism. If the leaders of the world show a superficial sympathy for the symptoms of this disease, then they cannot bring any benefit at all to suffering humanity. Prabhupāda recommends "a diet of the remnants of food offered to Godhead and medicines which include hearing and chanting and remembering the glories of Godhead, and worshiping His transcendental form (offering Him devotional service in nine kinds of categories)."

Speaking of those who are trying to bring a Godly atmosphere into the world, Prabhupāda mentions "the veteran leader, Mahatma Gandhi." Prabhupāda says that Gandhi is preaching "restraint, toleration, and moral principles," but he is not teaching God consciousness by the method authorized by the Supreme. "Although he chants the name of Rāma, he is not aware of the transcendental science of the name. He is a worshiper of the impersonal Godhead . . . When the Absolute Truth is not credited with having any transcendental senses or sensory activities, certainly He is

thought to be powerless. And a powerless Godhead, of course, cannot hear the prayers of His devotees, nor can he ameliorate the distress of the universe" (*Message of Godhead*, p. 38).

We want to remember what Prabhupāda has written and repeat it to audiences wherever we go. His teachings are memorable truths. Other writers may dazzle us with their presentations, but we don't want to memorize them. Their so-called truths are not worth repeating. Śrīla Prabhupāda's writing *is* powerful truth, and because it is powerful, he can utter it with calmness, restraint, and simplicity. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself is a modest person, but he carries the mantle of the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

Even one paragraph of Śrīla Prabhupāda's writing is worth studying and restudying. Often just a small section of a paragraph will expose the complicated waste and misuse of energy that the non-devotees engage in. His writing cannot be read with complacency if one wants to get the full effect of his preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda is too dynamic a writer to read him in a casual way:

The material scientists—the modern quasi-priests who invoke such material activities—invent many objects to gratify the material senses, including the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, and ultimately the mind, and in this way the scientists create a field of unnecessary competition for enhancement of material happiness, which leads the whole world into the whirlpool of uncalled-for clashes. The net result is scarcity all over the world, so much so that even the bare

necessities of life, namely, food, shelter, and clothing, become objects of contention and control. And so there arise all sorts of obstacles to the traditional, God-given life of plain living and high thinking.

—*Message of Godhead*, p. 39

If we take the time to read with submissive aural reception, we will find gems like this studded throughout Prabhupāda's pages. Prabhupāda is solid and brilliant at every step. He never slows down—he is always faithfully repeating Kṛṣṇa's message with heartfelt conviction. If we fail to get nourishment from Prabhupāda's writing, we can understand that we are lacking. One way to remedy this is to slow down when we read—take each sentence by itself, then look at it in its context. For his disciples, Prabhupāda's writing is the essence of our lives. It is where we find our link to Kṛṣṇa and become spiritually revived.



6:00 p.m.

Tonight we read about Prabhupāda in Jhansi. This was the first time in his life that he could be what he was—a full-time preacher. The people of Jhansi didn't see him with his family or as a businessman, but as a preacher.

I like to think of Prabhupāda at Dr. Sastri's clinic where he would sometimes sit and talk with the patients, "occasionally recommending medicines,

but mostly preaching." He sat with Mr. Ramcharan Mitra, the shopkeeper-poet, at his utensils shop and read *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to a group gathered there. And he gave lectures, sometimes several a day, at various temples, the Theosophical Society, and in people's homes.

Prabhupāda was an experienced preacher. He had no illusions about the people of Jhansi and how far they were prepared to be influenced by him. He saw their shallow devotion and their tendency toward sentimentality. They had invited him to lecture, but they weren't prepared to facilitate a League of Devotees. Dr. Sastri was sometimes annoyed that Abhay kept him up at night. Prabhupāda said to Mr. Mitra, "The whole world is waiting, Mr. Mitra, for our spiritual revolution." His ambition was to make the whole city of Jhansi alive with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And from Jhansi, he could reach out with a worldwide movement.

We are reading this and I am putting it in my book, my two week report of my attempts to remember Prabhupāda. We don't have to do what Prabhupāda did and start a worldwide society of devotees; we already have ISKCON. But it's worth noting: We can do what we are doing in ISKCON because our founder-*ācārya* left his family and business and went alone to Jhansi. Because he tried to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, despite the discouragement of others, and because he persisted, we can now call ourselves devotees. We can now claim to be part of the *saṅkīrtana* spirit that moved Śrīla Prabhupāda to pick us up in the first place, that

same spirit that was operating in him even in those early days in Jhansi. If Prabhupāda had not come, probably I would have died or gone crazy. Or at least my life would have been totally useless.



7:00 p.m.

Night is falling. Simple and peaceful.

Prabhupāda, like Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, “doesn’t care for” those who reject Lord Caitanya. They are “rascals,” “dogs, camels, hogs, and asses.”

Prabhupāda is a tough, seasoned holy man. He carries his beadbag as devotees walk close behind him.

He can also be the most delicate *sādhū*, folding his hands before the Deity or his spiritual master.

He sits dictating his translation in a small room in Brooklyn. I am with him.

He is walking on a dirty street, untouched. I can see he wants to help me, help everyone. I have to choose between the dogs and hogs and him. There’s not much time and I don’t hesitate. “I’m with the Swami.” Then I chase rascals from the doorway of the storefront, “You can’t come in here.”

He walks in the cold wearing a black coat someone gave him and his swami hat.

We watch him closely. He is our hero, our dauntless leader who is leading the preaching charge.

August 20, 1:30 A.M.

I will confide to Śrīla Prabhupāda what it's like to be a spiritual master after him.

I used to feel more the conflict between trying to be his disciple and trying to be a guru. That was because there were excesses in the way we received grand worship befitting only Śrīla Prabhupāda. I sometimes saw him as my rival. Still, I sometimes feel a twinge of jealousy when one of my disciples speaks on and on about all the realizations he is getting from his direct relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. In the old days (1978–1986) we used to tell them, “Don't jump over your spiritual master. You cannot have a direct relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. You have to go through us.” Now I encourage them differently, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

There shouldn't be a conflict, and yet a neophyte devotee is always in conflict with himself, trying to be humble against his tendency for pride.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, sometimes I think I would rather just write books and keep up correspondence with whoever wants to hear from me. I would rather just be their *śikṣā-guru*, because once I initiate them, there is such a sense of permanent obligation on both sides, especially concerning the promise to follow the four rules and sixteen rounds, and to keep in touch with each other. Of course, I am disappointed when a disciple stops chanting or stops following the regulative principles. And I always feel betrayed when someone decides to make a clean break with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So I think, "Why bother? Why be betrayed in the end by such a high percentage of those I accept for initiation?" But I keep doing it, Śrīla Prabhupāda, out of my desire to serve you.

Despite the arguments by those who say that us nobodies can't be gurus, ISKCON is committed to continuing the *paramparā* of *dīkṣā-gurus*. It appears that this is supported by guru, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*. We just have to somehow come up with the right attitude in doing it.

I don't see that I would necessarily be a better disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda by not bearing the burden of disciples. I can't even imagine giving up the responsibility I owe to those I have already initiated. I took those disciples on behalf of ISKCON, as a servant of the movement. It keeps me in the camp.

There are advantages to taking disciples, although these same advantages can become curses if they are not treated in the right way. The guru is the representative of Kṛṣṇa to the disciples. There-

fore, they want to please him and they do this by offering service and money. This service attitude based on the desire to please the spiritual master is meant to generate auspicious energy for serving Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are the perfect example of how this works. Simply on your inspiration, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has spread all over the world. You used to say, "It is not my credit. It is your credit, you European and American boys and girls." We might have acted as your legs, Śrīla Prabhupāda, but we couldn't have done it without you. Together we published and distributed books, built temples, spread the movement "like wildfire." Śrīla Prabhupāda, you didn't exploit us or the resources we offered you in faith. You said you were like a cow giving milk in whatever pasture you found yourself.

It was a nice experience living in our guru-disciple relationship. The pure devotee brings the disciple back to Godhead. The disciple lives to please him. This is the version of all the scriptures and *ācāryas*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, it didn't work when I tried to imitate you, when I tried to be for my disciples what you were for me in 1966. Now I've adjusted myself within the general reform in ISKCON. I also tried to bring about that reform. I now try to strike the profile of servant and friend to my disciples. I don't try to tell them how to spend their money, what service they should do, whom they should marry. They will do what they want anyway. When I was the GBC of Potomac ISKCON, I called some of my

grhastha disciples to come and work there. I used the full force of my influence as the representative of Kṛṣṇa. It was to be an exciting adventure, "just like when Śrīla Prabhupāda sent the first householder couples to London." When they came to join me at the under-nourished temple, they were in high spirits for a few days. But when we could not improve the living facilities (no private toilets) and when money ran out, the project continued to sink into the mud. One by one those disciples left and went back to where they came from, regardless of my continued request that they stay and work in Potomac. The same thing happened when I used my force to order everyone to distribute *Back to Godhead* en masse. It worked, but only for awhile.

I regret those days of hype. Now I recognize that each of us has to seek an honest level in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I'm happy to stay with those who want to include me in their lives. ISKCON is going through a more honest period. I am too.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I said I was going to confide all this to you, but I know you already know all this. You know my heart. I don't stand in the way of my disciples in their relationship with you. I write books about you and try to speak as your loyal son. They listen to me and then learn to follow you.



Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "One should always think himself helpless and should consider Kṛṣṇa

the only basis for his progress in life" (Bg. 18.66, purport).



Madhu says that the British forced the Irishmen to build these low stone walls. But some were built by farmers for their own use. Now they are covered with moss and grass, and I walk between them down the hill.

Grateful, leaning toward India, filling last days with notes—that's the story of your life. From Baltinglass to Dublin, the bus goes twice a day. We are leaving this place in four days. Pragoṣa let us stay in his house, moved out his wife and two young boys just so we could have it alone. Gaṅga dāsa has been cooking his thick, charred *cāpatīs*, *cumin*-floating *dāl*. Madhu's been tinkering and re-organizing and I've been writing what comes.



A Neophyte's Personal Prayer

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, please have mercy on
this sinner
who has black ink on his right hand writing fingers.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
I repeat Your name with little realization,
I respect Your right not to reveal Yourself
to a selfish fool.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
books like *Nectar of Devotion* tell us
Your qualities, I listen to them carefully
and hope to know the spiritual form.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
Your devotees love You and I'm obedient
and happy to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda.
Please consider this when it is time
to judge me.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
You have an effulgent smile,
You have *gopīs*, parents and cowherd friends.
You let me eat today—
Your energies range everywhere.
I want to take Your guidance
and worship the best part, Yourself.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I am warming up
to pure descriptions of Your pastimes.
I consider myself fortunate when I say
Your name. I don't like to hear Your
name abused.
(But I know they can't touch You.)

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,
will *BTG* magazine fold up again?
Or will they get enough subscribers?
Can there be peace on earth
or is it too far gone?

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, thank You
 for a morning's work;
 I'm looking forward to more.
 I want to rise to You,
 not think I can bring You down to me.
 But You are kind, in my heart.
 You are beyond understanding.
 I call You dear Lord Kṛṣṇa
 because You are.
 Please accept my obeisances.
 O Lord of the universe,
 I will be with You all day;
 please let me hear Your pastimes.



11:00 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda arrives at a temple and relaxes.
 He bathes and puts on new clothes. Devotees apply
 sandalwood paste to his forehead. He sits behind
 the low desk and leans against the back bolster,
 pulling his knee up. His hand rests on his knee as
 he listens to what his young disciples are saying.

Prabhupāda has his own inner feelings and he
 doesn't always express them. But everyone can see
 that he has come to give us Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
 He sits in his room. Everyone tries to arrange
 things for his pleasure.



Prabhupāda is at Bhaktivedanta Manor. He sits in his room facing a guest who wears a black suit and long hair like George Harrison. Prabhupāda's right elbow rests on the table and his fingers are raised in *jñāna-mudra*. I can tell you all the articles on his desk; I can tell you there's a white sheet over the rug. It's nothing you can't see in the photo, but I want to take you on a tour of Śrīla Prabhupāda's moments. Don't ask me why. No one asks the gardener why he grows more flowers. He will tell you, "I'm growing them for the Deities." I'll tell you, "These Prabhupāda moments are for the devotees."



Śrīla Prabhupāda is on a walk in London. He has stopped to look at a plaque cemented into a building. Subhaga dāsa is behind him reading it aloud: "The Swedenborg Society/Reference and Lending Library." Śrīla Prabhupāda's head is slightly tilted, questioning, one hand in his beadbag, the other holding his bamboo cane. Everyone is interested in the plaque because he is. What will he say about Swedenborg?



Prabhupāda is walking, wearing his full-length devotee-made coat with "fur" hood. He wears gloves. He's not speaking. A solid line of disciples seem to be charging forward, reckless, eager, stomp-

ing behind him. Śrīla Prabhupāda is in a world of his own, but he knows they are there, waiting for him to speak.



Prajāpati dāsa is thrilled to be able to touch a carnation to Śrīla Prabhupāda's forehead, smearing his forehead with sandalwood paste. Śrīla Prabhupāda accepts his service, patiently holding still. His lotus foot is extended. It's the New Dvārakā pageantry, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *guru-pūjā*. Then he will give class, filling everyone with hope.



Prabhupāda in Māyāpura. Each *vyāsāsana* is different. In this one he sinks down. It's like sitting in a box with high walls. This seat has big bolster pillows on both sides and in the back, and is trimmed in marble. Behind him are larger-than-life size paintings of his *guru mahārāja*, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. They are garlanded with flowers from the Māyāpura gardens, as he is. His eyes are closed and he sings over a ringing microphone to hundreds of young men and women who are ready to do anything he asks.



Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda conducting a simple ceremony in the European storefront in 1969. He looks blissful and absorbed, just as he was when the ceremonies were better attended and more elaborate.

Your budget is limited? Stick some gladioluses in a jar. Get a few stainless steel bowls. You only have one? All right, but then get some other bowls—any kind, glass, porcelain. If that's all you have, what can be done? Break up some wood from an orange crate. What are these bits of newspaper for?

"We thought you might want to start the fire with it, Prabhupāda."

"That's all right."

Prabhupāda takes the ladle in his hand and demonstrates to the temple president how to mix the yogurt with the ghee. Now take a ladle and mix the ghee-yogurt mixture in the bowl of milk. Keep mixing them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sits on a thin pillow on the floor. That's all they had to offer him. "It's all right," he says. Maybe his *kūrta* isn't a perfect fit, but someone made it for him.

Be careful those gladioluses don't fall over, that vase doesn't look steady.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is careful and intent, leading the initiation *yajña*. It's coming down from Vyāsa-deva through him. Śrīla Prabhupāda's *tilaka* is long and neat, his skin smooth and clear. A fine fuzz of hair is growing in. Everyone watches what he's doing, although few understand. He's ready to initiate some devotees. If only they can keep their vows

for the rest of their lives! Śrīla Prabhupāda is taking the chance. How else can this movement spread?

The light shines softly on his head. It is an intimate scene, the early days of ISKCON Hamburg. Devotees could bow down at his feet as he looked at them. They could ask, "Is it all right to do this?" And, "How can we do it better?" And, "What if not many people come to our program?"



Where is this? Why have they put big stiff leaves on the garland for my spiritual master? Can't they see it's scratching his neck? He doesn't seem to notice. He is speaking the *Bhāgavatam* into the main microphone and a tape recorder mike is tied around it with a rubber band. Clean shaved head, long earlobes, the upper lip shaped like the top of a heart. His eyes are closed like those of the *yogīs* who live within.



1:25 p.m.

He is playing the *mṛdaṅga* in the San Francisco storefront. The wall behind him is covered in a madras with what appears to be rubric script and flower designs all over it. Some tall weeds stand next to him in a jar. Beside him is a group photo of Prabhupāda with his West Coast disciples. It is winter in the storefront and Prabhupāda is wrapped

in a large top piece of *khadi*. Another inward moment, eyes closed as he feels the rhythms, the *mṛdaṅga* in his lap. Then he will speak.

I and many others follow you and call you “master.” Is it sentimental nowadays to remember those hippie days with so much fondness?

I was going to pass this photo up. But it is as vintage as you can get. You can almost hear the *mṛdaṅga* beats he played. The next moment his eyes will open wide and look out, as if he has just returned from Kṛṣṇaloka to see who is here in San Francisco in 1967. Is he astonished to see the young Americans with their extravagant dances and beads and bells and long hair? Prabhupāda’s own followers are among them—Jayānanda, Mukunda, Govinda dāśi and Gaurasundara . . .



In *Message of Godhead*, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the *karma-yogī* as a kind of preacher. His example of working for Kṛṣṇa is a powerful suggestion to ordinary workers. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives an interpretive translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, verse 3.26: “O descendant of Bharata, better you continue to perform work like an attached materialist who is not conversant with transcendental knowledge. In this way you can recruit men to the path of *karma-yoga*.” Furthermore, the proprietors and managers of big *karmī* institutions should introduce *kīrtana* into the work place. Let the workers taste *mahā-prasādam*:

It is desired most earnestly that the proprietors and managers of big mills, factories, hospitals, universities, hotels and various other institutions install a temple for worshipping any of these transcendental forms of Viṣṇu. This will transform all the workers in these institutions into *karma-yogīs*.

—*Message of Godhead*, p. 41

A temple in the factory? *Kīrtana* in the employees' lounge? Why not? (I have seen this on a small scale in the work place of the furniture designer, Matsya-avatāra Prabhu in Italy.) If a *karma-yogī* works for Kṛṣṇa and extends this opportunity to his colleagues, he becomes a true benefactor. "And the *karma-yogī* renders this immense benefit to the ordinary living entities, who are entirely addicted to mundane activities, without disturbing them in their ordinary engagements" (*Message of Godhead*, p. 44)

Karma-yogīs are learned, and they don't work like worldly-minded people. The advanced transcendentalist labors in the spiritual energy despite his circumstantial occupation. Ordinary workers who would never dream of renouncing work and the desire for results, nevertheless take the inspiring tip offered by their fellow workers who happen to be *karma-yogīs*.

Therefore, without disturbing such foolish mundaners in the performance of their general activities, the learned *karma-yogīs* tactfully engages them in the respective works for which they have special attachments—but in relation with

Kṛṣṇa. For this purpose only the learned and liberated souls who are eternal servitors of Kṛṣṇa sometimes remain in the midst of ordinary activities, just to attract the foolish mundaners to the process of *karma-yoga*.

—*Message of Godhead*, p. 45

Karma-yogīs of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.



6:00 p.m.

Now we are reading about Abhay in his most difficult years. He was evicted from Jhansi. He had no money, no business, no family responsibilities. But his Godbrothers competed for his service as editor and writer of their Gaudiya Math magazines. He went to work for the *Sajjana Tosani* in New Delhi. They asked him to settle the petty quarreling in the Math, and to write and edit in his spare time without a typewriter. The Godbrother in charge wanted only five hundred copies a month. But Prabhupāda couldn't take writing and editing as a perfunctory duty. He saw it as an absorbing meditation. Abhay found a way to print a thousand copies a month at the same price they were paying for five hundred. He rented his own typewriter and envisioned the magazine becoming as popular as *Time* or *Life*. But his Godbrother dismissed him

because he didn't agree with Abhay's ambitious plans.

What next? "In terms of food, clothing, and shelter, these were the most difficult times he had ever gone through." He moved around Delhi from week to week, sometimes staying at a temple, sometimes in a room . . . but he wasn't striving to solve his material problems. He was preaching, getting appointments with leading citizens, showing them the manuscript that he had written and wanted to publish with his plans for a world-wide movement.

People's impressions of him were often like this: "He had a smiling demeanor. The main thing was his humility. He could talk with affection and confidence, and he knew we were discussing things dear to God. So every talk with him would sublimite us."

During a time when most people would have been scheming how to get out of a near desperate situation—no income, nowhere to live, and no regular meals—Abhay was thinking of something else: How to publish.

Writing articles was no problem. By the grace of his spiritual master, he was neither short of ideas nor unable to set them down. Translating and commenting on the Vaiṣṇava scriptures, his pen flowed freely. He was inspired by the miracle of the press, the *bṛhat-mṛdaṅga*. The work of writing his message down and printing it a thousand times—with the awareness and urgency of speaking directly to everyone, not just people in Delhi or India but *everyone*—put Abhay into an ecstatic meditation. He would contemplate how

copies of *Back to Godhead* could reach thoughtful people who might read them gratefully.

—*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Volume 1, p. 183



Madhu was so wide awake and eager in reading tonight that I had to ask him to stop when he went over the hour. He liked hearing how Prabhupāda was expert in dealing with people like the printers and the influential citizens, how he impressed them as humble and pleasant and how . . .



Bumblebees are dull. They get trapped inside although the door is open to the outside. Just thinking of Prabhupāda in Delhi in the 1950s inspires me to want to do something. What can I do within my present circumstances?



Śrīla Prabhupāda, in your left hand are quick-wilting dandelions. In your right you hold a big cardboard drinking cup. You are sipping water from it. The devotees have placed your *vyāsāsana* outside, and it looks like you are about to speak at the end of a Ratha-yātrā parade. I think it's San Francisco, 1969 or '70.

A man with a wild beard and mustache is staring at you, while another bearded man eyes you with equal intensity. Near them is a pre-teen hippie with

an unusually wide-brimmed hat. There are no guards or secretaries to keep people away from you yet. Your *śannyāsa* top piece, with the large knot, has slipped from your shoulder. You sip water, preparing to speak to them, to assure them of your sympathy for their displaced lives. You invite them to "hear philosophy and to chant with us and take *prasādam*."

In another photo you are walking with your head held high. A thick garland decorates your neck. You were always busy, always going somewhere with these baby-faced young men filled with idealism trailing after you.

It was very prestigious to be one of your leading disciples and be allowed to stand near you. Leaders instruct the others in what Śrīla Prabhupāda wants. Almost all the photos show you wearing big garlands, addressing crowds in public or in a crowded temple room full of your followers. It's all quite different from what we just read of your life in New Delhi in the 1950s. But this is what you were thinking about in those difficult days, Śrīla Prabhupāda—Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America and Europe.

Your dream has come to pass but not without difficulty. You have to manage it and protect it, keep pushing it to grow. You are the same Śrīla Prabhupāda the judges met in New Delhi, "The main thing was his humility"—and we add, his expertise, his intelligence, and his conversations "sublimate" us.

August 21, 1:30 A.M.

I open a 1985 Vyāsa-pūjā book at random and see this line: "All this wonderful association with Your Divine Grace should melt any steel-framed heart, but I am still a hard-core case." I looked at the name of the person who wrote it; she has since ceased to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It happens. She even wrote, "I pray that my service to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, will become unbreakable, and that I will never swerve even one degree off the *paramparā* course."

Better to have swerved and stayed.

Sometimes we write things we think we're supposed to, things that will look good in the book. Someone may tell us, "You're supposed to love Prabhupāda's books and love to distribute them. If you say that and act on it, I will like you too. You will be respected among the other devotees." It is inevitable that peer pressure will make up at least

part of our motivation to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda. Neither is it entirely wrong. But if we allow ourselves to be motivated *only* in this way, what will happen to us when the leader who likes us leaves Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

We have to love Prabhupāda because we feel devotion in our own hearts. Here is a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda pouring a golden liquid onto the helmeted head of a Kṛṣṇa Deity. The Deity is wrapped in cloth from the neck down. The devotees in the room are singing and everyone is looking at the Lord's head, and to Śrīla Prabhupāda as he performs the *abhiṣekha*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is poised and controlled as he pours the liquid over Kṛṣṇa's head. It reminds me of that picture of him on the London street looking at the Swedenborg plaque. Devotees such as Pradyumna, Revatī-nandana, and Mandākinī dāsī, and some others I don't recognize are gathered closely around him in the temple room. Śrīla Prabhupāda is leading us calmly into another world.



Śrīla Prabhupāda's books lead us into spiritual consciousness. In *Message of Godhead*, he states that we are prevented from transcendental knowledge by "the process of bodily self-consciousness." This has been his theme from the beginning of *Message*: we are primarily concerned with two things, ourselves and the place we live in. But trans-

cendentalists are more concerned with the Absolute Truth, the reality beyond our bodies, and the world.

Hard-core materialists see these kinds of statements as empty words. They say that there is nothing beyond the misery and happiness of this body and this world. Transcendentalists strike them as escapists who flee the real world seeking utopian ideas. Prabhupāda defeats them in his writing. "Who shall we believe, Kṛṣṇa or a loafer like you?"

Disintegration of my material identity begins with self-realization. "The false ego created by material contact is then gradually vanquished, and this dismantling of false egoism causes liberation from all material designations and renewed awareness of our relationship with the Absolute Truth. This is called liberation in life" (*Message of Godhead*, p. 49).

Spiritual life does not really begin until we reawaken our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda, please let me read this with faith. Please prepare me to fight the demons—those who reside in my mind and those who attack from the outside. Just because demons attack, it doesn't prove them right. Śrīla Prabhupāda, please protect us.



5:00 A.M.

Every day since I've been here in Wicklow, I've come out early in the morning to walk and talk. The mornings have been getting darker; summer is

ending. Instead of going on the tarmac road this morning, I decided to walk in the other direction, up into the wild hills. They say walking up hills can have a positive psychological effect, like getting above your problems and ascending to a higher state of consciousness.

Sages sit on top of hills too, although if I think too much like that it will just seem like a cliché to me. Brahmānanda once asked Prabhupāda, "Is it better to live in the mountains? It seems that all the great sages live on mountain tops." Prabhupāda scoffed at the idea that the top of a mountain had a more spiritual atmosphere just because of its elevation.

O Prabhupāda, I thought by coming out here and walking in these hills it would be somehow easier to focus on you. Meditation on you is elusive. It's not that *you* are elusive, but my honest devotion for you seems to ebb and flow. I continue serving you out of duty, but I am hankering to serve you out of a steady love.

I know ultimately, duty is performed out of love too. That's *vaidhī-bhakti*. I get out of bed early in the morning not out of spontaneous love, but because I want to please you. I try to surrender my intelligence to you because I trust you to lead me forward in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You are not forcing me, I am forcing myself. But, Śrīla Prabhupāda, isn't this a sign that I love you?

I am searching for you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, just as the Six Gosvāmīs searched for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. You told us that the Gosvāmīs were never fulfilled

in their search for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. They never felt that they had finally seen Them and the goal had been achieved. But rather, they were always thinking, "Where is Kṛṣṇa, where is Rādhārāṇī? Are they over on Govardhana? Are they by the river Yamunā?" In intense anticipation they were always crying out, "Kṛṣṇa, Rādhē!"

I am not saying that my feelings are the same as the Six Gosvāmīs', but at least I can recognize that they are spiritual. They are feelings of separation. Sometimes my feelings of separation take the form of feeling separate not only from the beloved person, but from my feelings about the beloved person. I mean, sometimes my groping is actually out of forgetfulness of the true love and the true connection that I do have with you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I can see with regret that I have chased yet another illusion rather than pursuing my love for you.

Prabhupāda, I was thinking when I started this walk that this would be a place I would want to take you. But it's a rough hill and difficult walking. I doubt you would like it. You didn't like places that were uncultivated or overgrown—you called them "jungles" if they didn't have nice paths in them.

I remember in the days you were present how before you came to a new place, some of us would go out and look for different parks and walking areas to find you a nice place to take your morning walk. It was always so special to be walking on that path before you came, seeing whether it would be suitable for you. It was part of our preparation for

your visit—we would prepare the house, prepare a walk, and in doing these things, we would try to prepare our hearts.

Now I am walking up this hill on your behalf. Although I'm alone, I am trying to find you in my heart to learn how to serve you better. I am trying to strengthen my connection with you even as I walk in this place you wouldn't go. If you were still in this world, I doubt I would be wandering around the wild hills of Wicklow, Ireland. But things have changed so much.



I've gained some altitude. It's certainly beautiful here, and rugged. This morning's dawn is gentle, not the usual bright, glaring yellow rising of the sun, but silver blue on the horizon. It's clear only for a short distance. Beyond that is the usual pile of clouds. Most of the clouds are dark gray, rain clouds, but the bottom of the cloud bank is tinged with pink. I know this is similar to Kṛṣṇa's bodily hue—fresh rain clouds tinged with pink. It's a good place to be alone and to talk. I'm looking for clarity in my meditation on you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I want to come back from this walk with at least a little more insight.



The grasses on this hill are lush and uncut. I often fear that I am in danger of not experiencing

life. A writer can think so much of writing that he misses out on actual experiencing. As soon as he faces life, he thinks about how to write about it, and sometimes he attempts to arrange his life so that it will be something to write about.

I remember reading the biography of Samuel Johnson by Boswell. Boswell was so obsessed not only with Johnson himself, but with *writing* about Johnson. Boswell arranged his association with Johnson to bring out the most literary experiences, good writing material. He was arranging for good material for his biography rather than writing the actual story. In this case we see the biography became more important than the person he was writing about, or life itself. It is a distortion of reality to do that, even dishonest. I don't want to fall prey to that in my meditation on Śrīla Prabhupāda. You can't write about love without feeling love. First you have to feel it, *then* you can write about it.

Prabhupāda himself provides the checks and balances against this. Prabhupāda is always bringing me back to actually live in an ISKCON temple, to meet people and hear their problems. The other duties he has given me tend to snap me out of the "dream" of always being a writer. On the other hand, when *gr̥hasthas* relate their problems to me, or when I enter into the realm of ISKCON management on Prabhupāda's behalf, I know it's not the absolute reality. Rather, it makes me appreciate that the writing life is itself true. Prabhupāda balances me in this way, letting me serve in the

ISKCON mission as a preacher, and allowing me time to write. And writing about Prabhupāda *is* reality, although there are many realities to Prabhupāda outside my attempts to capture my experience of him in words.



It's getting lighter. I'm still in the hills. I can just make out the color of the gorse blossoms and the heather. Madhu brought some of this purple heather back from his walk yesterday, and put the blossoms in vases on our Deity altar.

The literary mind would like to make a nice simile comparing the rising dawn with enlightened thoughts about Prabhupāda. But enlightenment doesn't come on demand. This brings me to the point of why I am trying to write this book. Writing is not just something an author does to create entertainment for people. It's not a matter of rhyming lines and making up verses or prose. It is used by an author like a machete to cut down the undergrowth that is making progress difficult in his consciousness. Writing helps you think in ways you couldn't (or wouldn't) think otherwise; the commitment to writing stimulates new thoughts. Writing engages more senses. For example, thinking about Kṛṣṇa silently isn't as easy as thinking of Him while hearing and chanting His names and pastimes. Writing is a little bit like that—it forces you to wake up and concentrate on who you are,

where you're going, why you're going there, and what you want to achieve while you're there.

Sincerely writing down a line like, "Prabhupāda, where are you?" Or, "Prabhupāda, I want to be with you. You know I want to realize myself under all the falseness and manipulations and forces acting upon me in this world. I want to do this as an offering to you"—when you address Prabhupāda like that in writing, it becomes real for you. The idea might have been in your mind, but if it wasn't expressed, it might not have been clear or *felt*. Feeling something deeply can help you make solid progress. We want to feel things.

Writing in the service of Kṛṣṇa can transform us into pure devotees. And if Kṛṣṇa agrees, He can appear in the written words of His devotees and enlighten others in this way. Or, He can help a devotee find himself and his relationship with Prabhupāda, if He desires.

A writer prays not to write empty words or write out of pride or vanity. He prays that his writing can be accepted as service. That means, in a very practical sense, his writing has to be serviceable; it has to be in *paramparā*.



6:30 A.M.

It's wonderfully refreshing here now that the sun is up. In Vaikuṇṭha, everyone remembers Kṛṣṇa and that's what makes life free of all cares

and blissful beyond anything you can know on earth. So train yourself for that.



From the hill
 I saw a little more of the terrain,
 the inner map
 of self in relation to my spiritual master.
 I saw the distances between points
 and what I have to travel over.
 I also saw myself as never apart from him.
 When my boots sank into deep grass,
 a hidden hole up to my waist,
 I thought of him sharply.
 You don't believe me?
 Is it another literary lie?
 I must search and learn—
 more microscopic honesty,
 so that you can see the difference
 between Prabhupāda's actual presence
 and my literary game.



11:00 A.M.

Srila Prabhupāda looks over his shoulder. He is seated in a plastic seat in an airport waiting lounge. It is one of those chairs that are attached to six other chairs. He wears sandalwood paste across his forehead. He doesn't care that it's not fashionable in

America. He does wear a fashionable turtleneck sweater and an attractive white shawl. But Prabhupāda didn't think much about things like Western fashions, although he liked people to dress neatly. He wears *dhoti*, *kūrta*, and *tilaka* because he is a Vaiṣṇava and is "not ashamed."

He looks over his shoulder to see what the devotees are arranging. Are his tickets in order? Is the plane on time? His hands rest on his bamboo cane. The fingernails of his left thumb and right pointing finger are touching. I want to say, "It's all right, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We've got the tickets and the plane will leave on time." But we cannot guarantee it.

What is Śrīla Prabhupāda looking back here to see? Are his devotees gossiping among themselves? Are the men and women talking too loosely? What is Śrīla Prabhupāda looking at? Is he displeased?

This photo appears in the 1987 *Vyāsa-pūjā* book. On the facing page is this line: "Please do not abandon us in this hour of *your* ISKCON's faltering. Keep up the command to become thoroughly pure, to represent your good name with its deserved praise and dignity. Loving sons and daughters can strive for no less."

In another photo of the same sequence, Prabhupāda is smiling graciously. He was like that, grave and then smiling, "Everything is all right." We watched the passing emotions on his face like persons afraid of cloudy skies, anxious to feel the warm sunshine.

Another devotee writes in his homage, "I am sorry, really sorry, and in this mood I am turning to you for shelter. You can easily pick me up if you desire. Please do think of me sometimes."

Here's the famous picture of Swamiji smiling when Janakī dāsī took his plane ticket. She was joking that she wouldn't let him have it. This is in San Francisco airport, April 1967. Swamiji is heading back to New York City. Okay, give him back the ticket, Janakī. It's a naughty, outrageous trick, and only you would dare. Don't press your luck too far. He's smiling now. But give it back, I say. Here Swamiji, it was just an expression of affection, the devotees don't want you to leave.

Swamiji's hair is just a bit grown out, and his neck and shoulders are all wrapped up in his saffron top piece. It's a beautiful moment because of his smile.

And on the facing page, "As hard as a thunderbolt and yet soft as a rose, that is how we knew you . . . even though we may have differences, for the betterment of the movement they have to be resolved and put aside in deference to the greater principle—ISKCON. Of course the difficulties faced by our movement have not been easy to overcome. But if we have faith in Prabhupāda and stay loyal to his orders, then all problems can be overcome in due time."



4:00 p.m.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is sitting on a pillow on the rough lawn. Śrutakīrti is reading aloud to him. Śrīla Prabhupāda's hand is in his beadbag. He wears a fancy *cādar* with a border. He looks to one side thoughtfully. His face is beautiful, although aged. This is the human beauty of a compassionate sage.

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda with a garland of gardenias around a black coat with big buttons. He's wearing his swami hat against the London cold. Taking his morning walk, amused, poetic, strong-minded against the agnostics. Someone has written, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, please keep me engaged in the service of your servants and allow me to achieve the benediction you offered a small group of conditioned souls on the day of our initiation at Bury Place temple in London in August 1971: 'If you simply chant sixteen rounds a day and follow the four regulative principles, then there's nothing that can keep you from going back to Godhead in this lifetime. And that is a fact.'"

Śrīla Prabhupāda is playing a harmonium. He looks as if he is all alone in the world. He looks down with a fond expression at the harmonium and the music it issues forth, making new praises of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda is always thinking of Him and pleasing Him at every moment. His hands are delicate—the thumb of his left hand is at the edge of the harmonium and his fingers pump the bellows, while his right fingers press down the keys, the pinky extended. He's wearing one of those

old crew-neck sweaters, leaning against a fat bolster pillow, listening to the first notes . . .

On the facing page, "Thank you for saving me from a hellish life."



6:00 p.m.

We have been hearing more of Prabhupāda's struggle to leave India for America. It is a poignant drama: the preparation, the delay, the difficulties he had to undergo. It is particularly poignant for we who became his disciples. What if something happened to prevent him from coming to us? Or as Prabhupāda always pointed out, no one expected such an old man to embark on such an enterprise. Everyone retires at that age. Kṛṣṇa and Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura could have been sufficiently pleased by the path Prabhupāda had already chosen, renouncing family and social life for the full-time service of the Lord. And yet if Prabhupāda hadn't come, what would have become of us?

We heard how he wrote and struggled to get donations to publish *Back to Godhead* in Delhi. Then he chose to reside in a little room in the Vamśī-Gopāla temple in Vrndāvana. There he immerses himself in pure devotional service in the holy *dhāma*. But he thought, "Why shouldn't people all over the world have the peace they are actually hankering for?" He rarely received visitors,

but stayed alone writing. He walked to visit the temples in the evening.

From Vṛndāvana he commuted to Delhi where he sought donations and distributed *BTG*. "They were very hard days," Śrīla Prabhupāda later told us. He ran out of money and had to stop printing *BTG*. But he went on writing.

The climax of this reading is to hear how Prabhupāda took *sannyāsa* in his sixty-third year. His spiritual master came to him in a dream, as he had come several times before. His *guru mahārāja* beckoned to him and called, "Come, become a *sannyāsi*." He responded this time, for preaching. He approached his Godbrother in the Caitanya Math in Calcutta. His Godbrother said, "Join our Math and then we can decide later if you are fit." He then turned to Bhaktiprajña-Keśava Mahārāja who encouraged him and said, "Yes, Bhaktivedanta Prabhū, you must do it."

The *sannyāsa* initiation took place in the Śrī Keśavajī Math in Mathurā. ISKCON devotees still gather there on that date and hear how Prabhupāda took *sannyāsa*. They sat before the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked to speak and he knew, although most persons present spoke Hindi, that he would have to speak in English. *The Gauḍīya-Patrika* published an article describing the event:

Seeing his enthusiasm and ability to write articles in Hindi, English, and Bengali, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja gave him the instruction to take *tridaṇḍi sannyāsa*. . . . In the

month of Bhadra . . . Bhaktivedanta Swami at the Śrī Keśavajī Gaudiya Math accepted *sannyāsa* from the founder of the Vedānta Samiti, Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja. Seeing him accept his *āśrama* of renunciation, seeing this pastime for accepting the renounced order of life, we have attained great affection and enthusiasm.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 1, p. 230-1



7:00 p.m.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes that the *mercy* of the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya and His great associates, including the Six Gosvāmīs, is his spiritual master. " . . . and my words are my disciples that I have made dance in various ways. Seeing the fatigue of the disciples, the spiritual master has stopped making them dance, and because that mercy no longer makes them dance, my words now sit silently. My inexperienced words do not know how to dance by themselves . . . " (C.c. *Antya*, 20.147-9).

August 22, 1:30 A.M.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda and all the previous *ācāryas*,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and all His eternal associates, headed by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

I dare to address you because I have already been serving you. I wish to acknowledge clearly that I cannot write anything spiritual without your authorization. Sometimes we see in the "acknowledgements" section of a book the author's statement, "I thank all these persons; if there are any mistakes in this work however, I must take the responsibility for that." Similarly, any mistake (and there are plenty) in my attempting to free-write my way through a book—any mistakes are my own.

Although we have heard that Vaiṣṇava literature should not contain any mistakes, we also read

Nārada Muni's statement, quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda, that even if there are mistakes in the presentation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—mistakes in composition or rhetoric or grammar—the literature will be accepted by those who are thoroughly honest, by the devotees. It seems some kinds of mistakes are permissible while others are not.

I do not know for certain about the kinds of mistakes you will find in this book. The whole nature of my presentation is to come before the reader with honest but tentative intentions, expressing thoughts which are usually kept to one's self until one has them perfectly composed. I thought there would be benefit in this unrehearsed writing, so I have allowed the mistakes to remain. The main "mistake" is that I am still groping to express myself as a devotee-writer, although I am not spontaneously on that platform.

What I wish to say this morning is that any good that appears in anything I write is all by the permission of my spiritual master. As my God-brother Bir Kṛṣṇa Goswami wrote in his *Vyāsa-pūjā* homage, "I may be a guru, temple president, GBC, or other authority, but I cannot make any activity spiritual by my authorization. It must have the authorization of you, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Bir Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja also wrote, "At every minute we should be questioning ourselves, 'What would Śrīla Prabhupāda say about this? Would he approve? What would he want me to do?' Then we will make the correct decision in every instance ... " When I ask myself this question, "Does Prabhu-

pāda approve," I do it with trepidation. How will I know for sure? But in my more optimistic moments I know, "Śrīla Prabhupāda will approve of my sincere attempt to serve him. He is the savior of my life and of the lives of all living beings. Despite the excesses and deficiencies in what I write, he will be pleased if it encourages people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

If I am wrong in this, Śrīla Prabhupāda, then tell me what to do to rectify it. It is my intention to please you, according to your desire.



Another photo: Śrīla Prabhupāda is being greeted by disciples as he exits from a new, white car. It is a Ratha-yātrā and there is a big crowd across the street trying to get a look at the arriving celebrity. You are that celebrity, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Everyone wants to see you, at least for a moment, as you execute your devotional service on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In this picture you smile and put your hands together, but you do not touch your palms because your right hand is in the beadbag and your left hand grips the bamboo cane. You are modest, but still, everyone wants to see you. "There he is, the person who started the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. He came to America just a few years ago with no money and followers."

"He must be great, he's a holy man."

On the page facing this photo: "By your kindness you have accepted me as your disciple, now it is my

duty to do something for you, but I am devoid of all good qualities. Therefore, please give me some tangible service so that I can please you and develop a real taste for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa."



Śrīla Prabhupāda is wearing a dark *cādar*. He looks serious; Brahmānanda stands behind him. They are standing outdoors. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you appear as if you are sizing up the situation. You did this so many times, and you taught us to do it too, to see the good and bad in a situation and to decide what to do for Kṛṣṇa. You compared this to Duryodhana's attempt, at the beginning of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, to see the strength and weakness of the enemy. We wait for your decision and then we go into action on your order. Now you ask us to make our own on-the-scene decisions, but we must act as your representatives. You encourage us that the Lord in the heart will guide us because we are sincere. Nevertheless, we are afraid. Please accept our small attempts at serving you.



Śrīla Prabhupāda is arriving. A young man opens the door for you. You are smiling enthusiastically, eager to see the service done by your disciples and to take part by speaking Kṛṣṇa's message and guiding us in all ways. You never shirk your responsibility or take a day off; that attitude is

unknown to you. Never lazy or cowardly in any way, never tired or depressed. No wonder we want to emulate you, although we cannot. The devotees have shaved their heads, with *śikhās* tied neatly in the back. They dress like you. They are blissful to receive you, as if they are all saying, "Please make us dance, Śrīla Prabhupāda."



A candid moment: His lips are sucked in so that his mouth appears to be a thin line. He looks as if he is expressing sense control by this gesture. A disciple says she saw you do this once when you stepped on a tack. Some devotees do this in imitation of you, and I do it too. With me, there are times when I'm unnerved and overwhelmed. This gesture helps, although it's not everything. It's also a gesture we can make to remind ourselves not to speak if we are going to say something unkind. Thank you for showing us this, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Whatever you do is worshipable. I know the nondevotees cannot understand our worship of you, but I'm not writing for them.



Prabhupāda, I love you and the devotees love you. Sometimes we say this but then act as if we don't. That's imperfection. But we keep trying—by writing our homages, making promises, and acting in your service. Our good fortune may run out, but

as long as we can, we want to praise and serve with confidence. We are helpless now and in the future.

As I write this morning, it's dark outside. A strong wind whips the trees. Let it roar. This may be my last moment to write in devotional service.



Here is the picture I have of Śrīla Prabhupāda in my mind. He forgives me. He says it's all right. He welcomes me and explains what he wants me to do, some simple service. He enlightens me in the nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I suddenly realize how much I have been mistaken—and how Kṛṣṇa consciousness was always right in front to me if I only had the humility and purity to accept it. Śrīla Prabhupāda laughs at my foolishness. Now in his presence, I take up reading of his books. "See?" he says. "How much of what you did was unnecessary. So much worry and diversion. Now here is your service."

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda going on a walk and I catch up with him and his followers.

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda in an unmanifest-yet-tangible form appearing to me as I take a walk alone. He tells me what to do.

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda riding in the back seat of a car and I am beside him. He is silent at first, absorbed in his *japa* and thoughts. I don't know where we are going but I know it is right. I pray to gather all my resolve to do whatever he says. But in the beginning, I'm afraid because I know he will

expose huge areas of falsity in me. I fear that I won't feel deep regret—like the time I omitted to give him pieces of ginger at breakfast. When he pointed it out, I spoke as if I meant, "What's the big deal? So I forgot." I'm afraid of that offense, yet also afraid of the flood of tears in repentance. But better the tears, if they may come without my checking them. How else can I face the wrongs?

Here is a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Where? I don't see him. I only see his followers. Yes, *they* are a form of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Seek him among them. Whatever good you would express before him, whatever humility and resolve to serve, do it with them. You have wronged them also, and you need to apologize. Enter this picture.

And here is a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda . . .



5:00 A.M.

This writing is coming from the blessing of feeling close to Prabhupāda, although I am also far away.



Leave nothingness to the voidist philosophers. We can always do *something*. We can always open one of Prabhupāda's books.

"But on some days I feel so empty, even if I open the book I still feel blank."

When that happens, I have no choice but to get over that slump. That much is in my power. I have to take hold of myself and say, "*Prabhupāda* is here in this book. Why do I think I can't get anything out of it?" At least I can go to the stone wall and say, "*Prabhupāda*, please help me. What have I done that now your mercy seems withheld from me?" *Prabhupāda* will answer.

We shouldn't think that approaching *Prabhupāda* is completely mystical or even unattainable. Approaching *Prabhupāda* in deeper and deeper ways requires deeper and deeper prayer and service, an intensification of the whole consciousness, and then *Prabhupāda* will reciprocate. But the question is always there, "Do you really want to be with him?"

If you want to be with him, you will have to examine the things that keep you away from him. *Prabhupāda* is not keeping away from us; we may be pushing him away due to lack of clarity in our desire. Once we get some of the direct power of *Prabhupāda's* association, then all our negative thought patterns fall into place. We understand that they are like scratches that will continue to bother us until we are liberated. They are not important; rather, they are bothersome. In no way do they stop us from our main activity of loving *Prabhupāda* wholeheartedly.



In the confidentiality of our exchange I ask you, "Who is Kṛṣṇa? How can we find Him?" The answer is that He is found in the Vedic literatures, and by devotional service He will be revealed to us. This leads us to another question, "How can we find the patience to go on with regular service and always have confidence that this gradual pace is best?" The answer is that we have to be patient. There is no other way.

Prabhupāda really is available to us. We are never devoid of his association. All we need is a little faith. We don't have to give up our regular duties in Prabhupāda's service to go off and look for Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda (and Kṛṣṇa) reveal themselves through our service. Although we speak of patience, we don't have to wait ten thousand years before we receive any revelation; all we have to do is look around us.

We all hanker for ecstasy. Prabhupāda translates Lord Caitanya's words as, "The nectar for which we are always anxious." We want nectar because we are *ānanda-mayo 'bhyāsāt*, our very nature is *ānanda*. We are entitled to ecstasy, but due to mis-behavior, we have forgotten where to find the nectar. We keep looking for ecstasy in illicit acts or in places where our pleasure causes pain to others. Prabhupāda has taught us that with humility and contrition, we can seek the path of nectar in service to Kṛṣṇa. He also teaches us to be patient with the dryness that comes due to all of our offenses.

We still have doubts. How do we know that the nectar of our service is actually the nectar of Kṛṣṇa

consciousness and not the usual folly of the conditioned soul? We have to consult. Now we are back to the point of this book: We have to consult our hearts, pray to Kṛṣṇa, and especially consult with the spiritual master.



Hare Kṛṣṇa Mantra is the Main Thing

He's making fun of me
before I even begin.
I wanted to say goodbye to Wicklow
but he ruined it—
"Say 'bye-bye,' Stevie."
Let me take a new field
before he gets there.
I'll say hello to the magpies
as they glide onto wet grass.
Hail to the all-gray solid sky—
I know where it comes from.
Hello to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

There are so many folks blabbering
here on earth—
we get the wrong impression,
thinking there's nothing else
or no meaning to anything.
But the *Vedas* make it clear—
Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the main thing.

I know why
 there is a chimney on a house,
 and gulls fly.
 I know whom to be thankful to
 for a roof over the head
 and how to turn to Him
 when it's bad.
 Marking this place
 as already traversed
 I pack my blue bag
 and get ready for Dublin.
 Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the main thing.

11:00 A.M.

Prabhupāda is at the dock. Is it Hamburg? He wears that warm black hat they gave him in London, a frayed sweater, a borrowed coat. He looks aristocratic. He has been to so many places I'm not aware of.

It is good to learn of our spiritual master. The same face, reserved and grave. Going somewhere for Kṛṣṇa's cause. Is he about to take a boat, or is this a morning walk? You want to tell whoever is with him, "Be careful, the water on that deck looks slippery. I hope you're not asking Śrīla Prabhupāda to go out there. Why don't you take him back to the temple room?"

One could keep a photo like this in his room even in a country where preaching is not allowed. There is no sign of *tilaka* on his face and you can't see below his waist to his *dhoti*—all you see is a

black hat, a frayed sweater, and a stylish black overcoat. If someone asked, you could say, "This is a picture of my grandfather," and leave it on the bureau to bow down to.

I feel bankrupt, but that doesn't mean I can't write. Devotional offerings are free. All you require is devotion. But if you don't have it, don't know it, can't taste it, still you can take the leaf or fruit or water and your *desire* to offer it. Guru and Kṛṣṇa will help you.



Prabhupāda is at the Family Dog auditorium in San Francisco. He sits high up on a *vyāsāsana*, on an altar the devotees built on top of the "Dog" stage. Prabhupāda is surrounded by paintings—Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Nṛsiṃha, Pañca-tattva, Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—all in the style of 1969. A small group of shaven-headed devotees face him, looking up as he lectures. Behind them, the long-haired audience, like shaggy dogs . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda looks like the Prabhupāda *mūrti* we have now. I recall one of those early Ratha-yātrā speeches, how he invited the young people—"those who are disillusioned by society." I think he said, "I have all sympathy for you." And when they began to walk out on his lecture, he said this is proof that the chanting is more attractive, because it held ten thousand people together walking, whereas lecturing is causing them to disperse.

Here is a wonderful picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda bending over from behind his desk at Bhaktivedanta Manor: His hands are touching gift wrappings, big ribbons and cellophane-covered flowers, a letter of congratulations from another admirer. Śrīla Prabhupāda is not looking at the letter but glancing over to someone or something else in the room. It's a candid moment behind the scenes.

Prabhupāda, you seem comfortable in your Manor room. You have come to England to preach. Sunshine lightens the back of your head. A harmonium is in view. Four pieces of fruit on your table. I would say whoever or whatever you are glancing out at is receiving your mercy.

In the 1985 Vyāsa-*pūjā* homage from New Māyāpura, France, Ayodhyāpati dāsa longs for "those moments in which our eyes would meet your penetrating glance, which would slice through all our pretentious coverings . . . revealed us as we really were . . . awkward and ashamed. . . . Or the times when all the devotees in the temple would gather around the envelope marked 'Tridandi Goswami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami,' and close their eyes in an attempt to catch each drop of the nectar of your instructions as the letter was read. 'Preaching is expanding . . . Be pure in heart, be free from duplicity or the desire for fame and honor. Go on sacrificing for Lord Caitanya and at the moment of death He will appear within your mind and take you back to Godhead.' Because these moments filled us with such a burning zeal to love you and serve you, feeling the intimacy of your association,

we cry out that they will never slip from our recollections into the oblivion of forgetfulness.”



6:00 p.m.

We read the last episodes of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Volume 1, up until Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure for America in August 1965. Madhu-maṅgala was fired-up and read for over an hour. Gaṅga was silent but alert, and I was a bit under the weather, but hearing.

After he took *sannyāsa*, Bhaktivedanta Swami had the same problems—no money to publish books and general disinterest from the people of India. When several friends suggested that he print books instead of throw-away newspapers, he took it as the desire of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

As a dependent servant constantly meditating on the desires of his transcendental master and seeking his guidance, Bhaktivedanta Swami felt his spiritual master's reciprocal blessings and personal presence. More and more he was feeling confidential contact with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and now he was feeling an inspiration to write books.

—*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Vol. 1, p. 234

He started translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, a massive work projected for sixty volumes. This was the English preaching his spiritual master had

requested. It could one day change the hearts of the entire world. If he could publish even a few volumes, he could go abroad and not appear empty-handed.

He moved to the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. He also secured a permanent office in the Chippiwada section of New Delhi. As a kind of warm-up, he wrote *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. Then in the summer of 1962, he settled down to serious writing in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, the ideal place to gain spiritual strength to write.

We heard the step-by-step struggle whereby Prabhupāda actually produced the first book. He did it all by himself: He would write, then go to Delhi and see "big men" to ask for donations, then purchase paper and have the paper transported to the printer. He could only afford a little bit of paper at a time, so the book was produced piecemeal. As the large sheets of paper got printed "four book pages twice on a side," he would take them to his office and proofread them. Then they would be reprinted, and he would read them again. Then they would be reprinted. After many months, the first volume was completed.

He went alone to sell his books. Institutional sales were brisk but then they stopped and he had to spend much time selling just a few volumes. There wasn't enough time for one person to translate and write, to collect, to oversee the printing and proofreading, and to sell—at this rate he wouldn't live long enough to finish the job.

Prabhupāda's first volume got prestigious reviews in India.

As we read the reviews tonight, Gaṅga dāsa interjected, "The scholars in India gave nice reviews saying that Prabhupāda's book benefited mankind, but they couldn't imagine that one day these books would be distributed by the *millions*!"

Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to his rooms at Rādhā-Dāmodara for intensive writing on Volume Two. He went through the same painstaking steps to get it printed in New Delhi. Finally, in 1964, he got a donation from Sumati Morarji which enabled him to also print Volume Three.

Three volumes—the First Canto—meant that he was now ready to go to America. He returned to Sumati Morarji. Her secretary reported to her, "The Swami from Vṛndāvana is back. He has published his books on your donation. He has a sponsor, and he wants to go to America. He wants you to send him on a Scindia Ship."

"No," she said. "You are too old. You are not healthy and it is too cold there. Americans are not cooperative." She wanted him to stay in India and complete the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Why go to the States? Finish the job here.

But Swamiji insisted that she give him a ticket, and finally she agreed. "All right, get your P-form and I will make an arrangement to send you by our ship."

. . . he was dangerously old and not in strong health. . . . in America it would be different. He would be no one, a foreigner. And there was no

tradition of *sādhus*, no temples, no free *āśramas*. But when he thought of the books he was bringing—transcendental knowledge in English—he became confident.

The black cargo ship, small and weathered, was moored at dockside. . . . Indian merchant sailors curiously eyed the elderly saffron-dressed *sādhū* as he spoke last words to his companion in a taxi and then left him and walked determinedly toward the boat.

—*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Vol. 1, pp. 287–89

Madhu closed the book and looked up beaming, "That's fabulous!" Gaṅga dāsa was smiling too. The best story, the very real and human story of Śrīla Prabhupāda.



7:00 p.m.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is sitting at a tea-stall in New Delhi. He has his right hand on a stack of *Back to Godhead* magazines. He is holding one copy, offering it to a man who is about to sip a glass of tea. Prabhupāda is surrounded by other tea-drinkers. He looks like a *sādhū*, a friend, a determined scholar, a saint. We didn't know him then.

Now he is in the grimy little printing shop. Crumpled up pages litter the floor. Prabhupāda has a proof in his hand, a large sheet of printed paper. He is looking at the printer who is explaining why he's so slow. Prabhupāda doesn't accept his excuses. Prabhupāda is expert in business. Some say a *sannyāsī* should stay in Vṛndāvana and not move

among the printers. But unless Prabhupāda did this, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* would never have come out.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is posing with Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri in New Delhi, 1964. It's just a brief moment, a cultural symbol of *sādhu* and ruler. Previously, Prabhupāda had met with the Vice President, who had asked, "How can love of God actually solve man's problems?" Prabhupāda had gone home and written a long letter answering the leader's questions.

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda looking stern, sitting in the sunshine outside his room in Chippiwada. He has his three completed volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in front of him. He is "no nonsense."

Here is the photo of Prabhupāda from the cover of the Scindia pamphlet, "India's Message of Peace and Goodwill," which he had printed up to accompany him on his trip to America. Prabhupāda stares out from this pamphlet with an extremely grave look. We on the Lower East Side had never seen such a person. He seems to be beyond male and female, beyond happy and unhappy. He is staring right through the universe. He is staring right through me.



Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda laughing that I am a nonsense. Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda grave about ISKCON. He explains that we never should have deviated in any way. Did he ever deviate from the

orders of his *guru mahārāja*? Never. Why do we? The instructions are clear. Deviation means we are foolish rascals with desires other than service to guru. He means me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda reprimands me. But that also means he claims me. He brings me close with an angry look: "You should not have done this. You are an old student. I expected you to uphold the standard. Why did you do wrong? Why now you still don't understand? Do you want to help me spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

Yes, I do, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Then do as I say. This is not good, this deviation."

I always said I wanted his attention. So now I have his mercy. But I must rectify.



Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda . . .

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank everyone who made this writing *yajña*, *Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda*, possible.

Immediately, I think of Pragoṣa Prabhu and his family, who moved out of their cozy cottage in Wicklow so I could have a place to write. I can't imagine what inconveniences were caused by his having to move with his wife—and the rambunctious four year old Shanky and the littler one—in with the neighbors. But Pragoṣa tells me that when he moves in with his neighbor, who is his God-brother Uddhava Prabhu, it's like they're all part of one joint family. I hope this writing will itself be a sign of reciprocation for their inconveniences, for which I thank them. And I thank them even more

for their sincere desire that I have whatever I need to write. I hope I can reciprocate not only with writings but by being there for them in whatever way suits them best.

I also wish to thank all the devotees who helped turn my scrawly penmanship into readable books. The process began when I dictated the handwritten pages into the dictaphone, and then Madhu-maṅgala carefully recorded copies of the tapes, and in this case, mailed them to the typist in America. On the other end, they were received by Kaiśorī and Lalitāmṛta Prabhus who are never disturbed if I send many tapes, but are rather disturbed if I don't send them at all. And I thank all the other artists and production workers and members of Gītā-nāgarī Press. I want to especially mention Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa dāsa, who made frequent phone calls from America just to give me the encouragement that I sought and to give timely suggestions so that the *yajña* could go on nicely. No one knows as well as Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa what it is for me to go through this writing, and I'm thankful that Kṛṣṇa has sent him to accompany me on the journey.

These are my immediate benefactors. But I should not think of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhu-pāda as distant. They are always with us, and if it were not so, we could not live a day or a moment in devotional service. One might say that even without Kṛṣṇa we could live outside of devotional service and do what we want. But that kind of "life"—where one flaps around in a dead body for a few years, thinking that eating, mating, sleeping,

and defending is all there is, is not the quality of human life. The meaning of human life is to engage the soul in service to Kṛṣṇa, and it's to Śrīla Prabhupāda that we are grateful because he has taught us this. He has taught us that happiness comes only when we regain our original position as servants of the servants of the servants of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda assures us, and we are experiencing it ourselves as truth, that there is no better work and satisfaction than that which is performed as favorable service to the all-attractive Lord Kṛṣṇa. We pray to realize this more consciously and deeply, becoming free of all unwanted habits, so that eventually we can attain the goal—joining the eternal blissful pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their entourage.

Special thanks to Nitāi-Gaurasundara dāsa and Matsya-devī dāsī for their kind donation to print this book.

I feel like I am writing my way into the unknown. Prabhupada is unknown . . . Krsna consciousness is unknown to me, as is existence itself. . . . We don't know the extent of the universe or even the extent of this planet. The scientists don't know, the psychologists can't tell us, and the philosophers can only philosophize about the unknown. Even the pure devotees cannot know Krsna in full, although they know him more than anyone else. . . .

We can start anywhere and still reach Srila Prabhupada. We are strongly connected to him; Prabhupada will guide us to himself. Prabhupada can change us to make us fit to approach him. We have to be prepared for that.