

Lessons from the Road

Volume Thirteen

February-March 1988, Brazil



Nova Gokula Dhāma

Śatsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Lessons from the Road

But you are a *sannyāsī*, and *sannyāsī's* duty is different: travel widely and preach. That is *sannyāsa*. So I'm very happy to hear that you are doing that; now go on vigorously preaching and distributing books....

—Letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda, 5 November 1972

People who read this will say to themselves that this kind of stuff is very poor. But the passenger produced it with a good deal of difficulty and thought it pretty good; so they should stop whispering such cruel things about it.

—from the *Tosa Diary*, a ninth century travel diary by Kī No Tsurayuki

Other Books by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

- Readings in Vedic Literature*
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Lessons from the Road (Vols. 1-12)

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Volume Thirteen

Brazil

February — March 1988

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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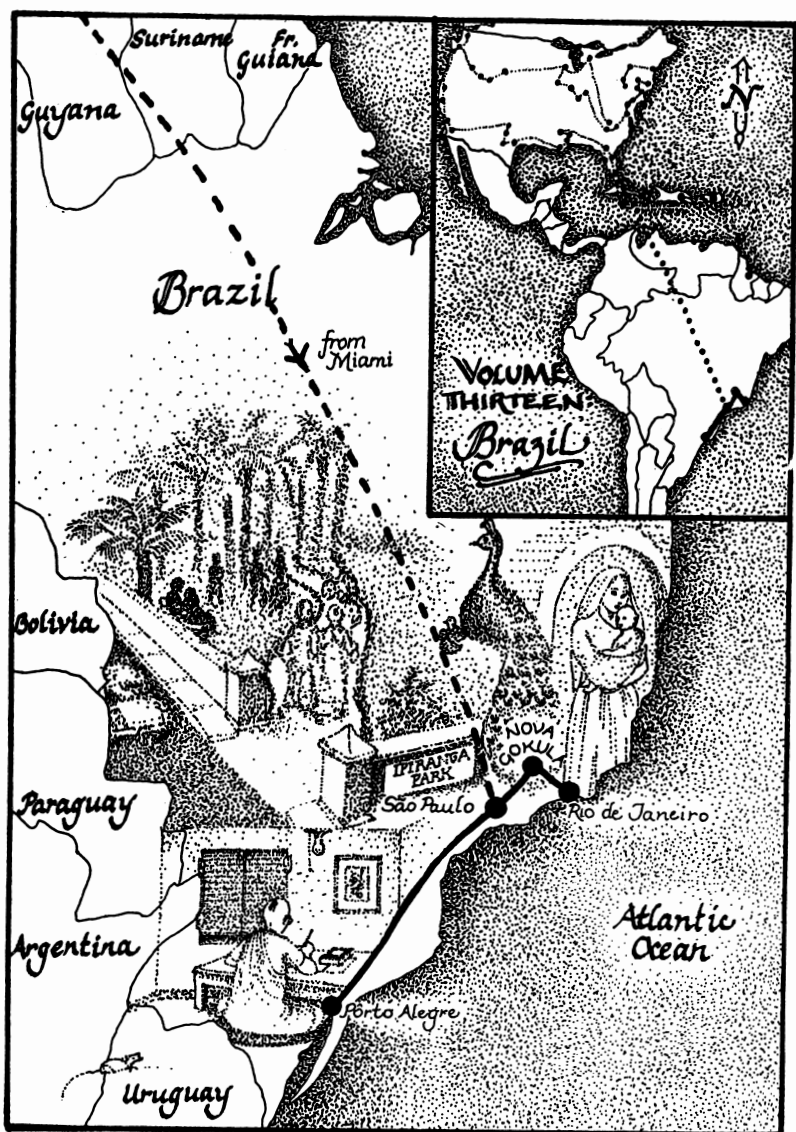
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CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

São Paulo / Pôrto Alegre

February 16

For years, Hridayānanda Goswami has been inviting me to visit Brazil. He would always tell me that the Brazilian devotees were among the top leaders in distributing Prabhupāda's books. They're also staunch supporters of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*: the first foreign language translation of the multi-volume set was into Portuguese. Brazilian devotees have also translated and widely distributed *Readings in Vedic Literature*. There are over twenty centers in the country and hundreds of devotees, and they have a very beautiful farm, Nova Gokula.

But it always seemed so far away, and I had other duties. If Brazil was flourishing, what purpose could I serve there? Last year when Hridayānanda Goswami invited me again, he said, "If you really want *guru* reform, you have to visit." In other words, if we say that devotees of a particular area should have a chance to hear from more than one *guru* or preacher, and yet if none of us visit, then our complaints amount to just armchair talk. But I'm not going there to initiate disciples. Then why? Because I thought it was time I left North America. If your program is constant travel, Brazil is a likely place.

Jñāna-śakti drove us to the Miami airport in his van.

"You have a long trip?" he asked.

"A ten-and-a-half-hour flight overnight," said Madhu.

"I was thinking," said Jñāna-śakti, "that I have my place I'm planning for, my land in Canada, and my family. But a *sannyāsī* has no place. It must take courage. You have to surrender to Kṛṣṇa at every step."

But at almost every step we have the help and association of devotees. This is Śrīla Prabhupāda's grace. For example, we have just spent three days at the apartment of our affectionate Godbrother, Īśa Prabhu. And Jñāna-śakti is taking us to the airport and helping us carry our bags. And we expect devotees will be waiting for us at the airport in São Paulo, Brazil.

So it is relatively easy. But we are homeless. We are asking to share the curse of Nārada Muni. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "I have also been cursed. Although I have many centers that would be suitable places of residence, I cannot stay anywhere, for I have been cursed by the parents of my young disciples.... 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" (*Bhāg.* 6.5.43 purport).

Jñāna-śakti's wife, Bhānutanayā dāsī, was also there to see us off.

São Paulo / Pôrto Alegre

My dear disciple,
of what use are long-stemmed roses
for a *sannyāsa* journey?

At the gate to our flight, I was surprised to see women wearing very large earrings, as big as bracelets. And the sound of Portuguese, with not a drop of English, reminded us that we were now suddenly *foreigners*, those pitiful, ignorant people who cannot speak even a simple sentence.

In the Pan Am aisle
a bearded hippie smiles:
"I once saw Prabhupāda."

Wednesday, February 17

The immigration man checked out my name by computer, without even looking at my face. He asked me nothing at all, just stamped, and didn't even say "welcome" or "hello" in Portuguese—just gestured for me to take two pamphlets on AIDS prevention.

Devotees were waiting for us, smiling and waving. Īśvara Swami and Paravyoma Prabhu, two English-speaking Brazilian devotees, were there, and my own disciple, Nārāyaṇa-jvara dāsa, who lives in Brazil, and a few smiling young *gurukulis*. They whisked me into their car, apologizing for the summer-end rain.

"I'm sorry, Mahārāja," said Īśvara Swami, "but we have to take you into the São Paulo traffic." After confinement in the plane, the heavy drops of clear

water from the warm sky seemed delicious, like an invitation to a bath. The traffic wasn't as bad as in New York City, and the sun soon came out again.

"You missed a lot of preaching in Rio during the Carnival," said Īśvara Swami. "But on the other hand, it's good that you missed it because it's so degraded. A whole chartered plane of homosexuals came from the U.S.A.!"

Paravyoma said that he had been up all night driving fourteen hours from Pôrto Alegre. He came just to invite me to visit that center. It is only an hour plane ride, so how can I refuse?

Last night I was too tired from the overnight flight to go into the temple room for *ārati* or class. But I heard the crashing of *karatālas*, and joyful singing of men and women in *kīrtana*, the ISKCON universal tongue.

He said, "It was fired-up."

And, "the fired-up *saṅkīrtana* leader is here."

"They're all fired-up."

Maybe I can't

fire them any further

because I'm not so fired-up,

but I'll try in the morning

slowly singing *saṁsāra dāvā*.

All I can speak is from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

My job is

not to fake it.



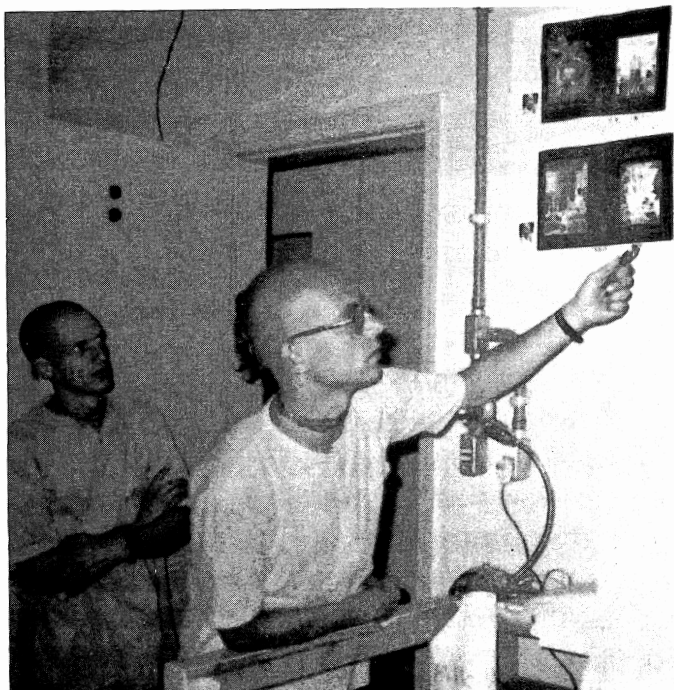
Īśvara Swami took me on a tour of the temple grounds and buildings. The place was built in the 1920s as a residence of a very wealthy family. Some of the rooms are reminiscent of the Fisher mansion, with heavy layers of decorated plaster molding, big pillars, arches, dramatic stairways, statues, bas reliefs, and large stained-glass windows. But in the 1940s the whole place was turned into a hospital, which ruined much of the atmosphere. The hospital people remodeled and subdivided and put a bathroom into each room. It proved unprofitable, and so the hospital closed. The devotees were therefore able to rent an unused, decaying building at a low rate.

"We live poor," said Īśvara Swami. "We buy books, sell them, and buy books again. We just live

on whatever's left." I could tell by the way he said this that voluntary poverty is an established way of life for them. There's no scope in such thinking for dropping the book sales in order to *buy* a big house or even to pour tons of money into remodeling the one they have. Therefore there were quite a few broken windows and unfinished projects, such as a plan to extend the size of the temple room, which are on hold "until we get some more money."

"It's better this way," I said.

The BBT of Brazil is also housed in São Paulo in a decent building which was built by the hospital. I saw editors and composers at work translating Śrīla Prabhupāda's English *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* into Portu-



Īśvara Swami, head of Brazilian BBT

guese. So far they've published four cantos, and they're going ahead with the translating, even though there are no plans right now for further publication. The final two volumes of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* are also awaiting better financial times. But the BBT continues to print and distribute small books in Portuguese, such as *Elevacao a Conciencia de Kṛṣṇa*, *Gusto Superior*, *Filosofia Védica*, and many other titles, at the rate of a million pieces per year.

Several times Īśvara Swami mentioned devotees who have gone away. For example, an artist started a mural of Kṛṣṇa, but it remains half finished, because "he went away." So I asked about the turnover rate of initiated devotees.

"They join easily," he said. "Because they're simple, but they're not very philosophical, so they leave easily. But those devotees who stay are very good."

"I've always heard," I said, "that devotees in Brazil are simple, not political or critical."

Īśvara Swami smiled. "That's coming here too," he said. "A little. It's *everywhere*!" He mentioned doubts regarding how a *grhastha* should live.

As for the *guru* reforms, Hridayānanda Goswami wants to introduce at least two Brazilian devotees into the GBC, and Īśvara Swami said that they know that eventually they will have to take up initiating guru-ship.

"Indradyumna Swami spent three months here," said Īśvara Mahārāja. "And you're spending three weeks. That's nice. But before that, no one came."

"There's no cheap or easy route here," I said.

"But more should come," he said. "We're very isolated. And yet the preaching is good all over Brazil."

We went for a walk in a park next to the temple, near a big museum. There were boys doing tricks on skateboards. One of them leaped down a three-foot step, landed successfully, and rode up to us.

"Uncle," he said, "what's that marking on your forehead?" (Nārāyaṇa-jvara informed us that the boy had used a polite expression equivalent to "uncle.") In the park we also encountered a young couple kissing and necking. We had to pass close by them. I looked at them one more time than was necessary, and as a result I had to think of it several times afterwards.

The city of São Paulo was in the distance, and I had no desire to enter it. I just wanted to walk, to think a bit, to decide what text I'd read for the devotees tonight. Uncle, why have you come here? To share *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. As I told them this morning, "I'm here to purify myself and taste the nectar." *I hope I can contribute.*

February 19

After two days in São Paulo temple, I feel like I've been here a long time.

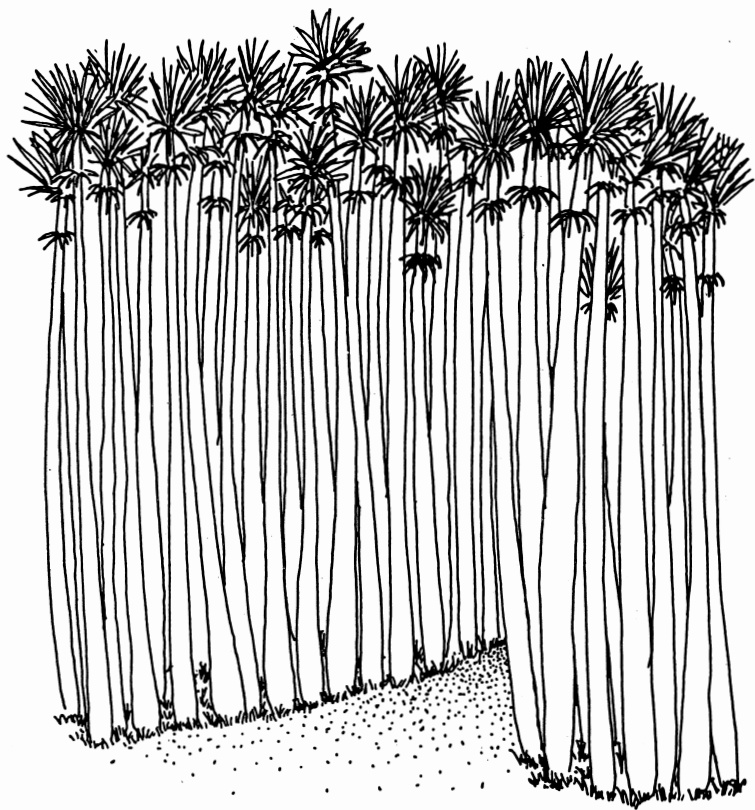
I spoke for an hour with Īśvara Swami, whom I like very much. We spoke about zonal *ācāryas*, GBC, new men becoming *gurus*, whether our society is an *ācārya* system (with one person in charge who becomes *guru* and boss) or an institutional system (run by bylaws) or a community governed by love and trust or by committee. Is management in conflict with spiritual life? We also spoke on the balance between the demands of preaching and the needs of individuals—until I started to shrivel from the neck

up. No one can solve these problems, but they have to be discussed. The warm, heavy air didn't help.

"Sorry to disturb you," he said. There was one further question I didn't ask. It was too late and he was heading out the door and I didn't want to make it a mere afterthought, but—*Do you find time to read Prabhupāda's books?*

"Hellish São Paulo," he said. "Maybe you should go to the farm."

"But I want to see the different places."



Going within, Ipiranga Park

Big palmyra trees with large fernlike leaves. Ants, kids on bikes, and loud cars beyond the park-wall. We found a good place to sit, but there were more necking couples. It's their place, I know. They're "lovers." So are we.

Walking into the woods I thought, "This is like walking inside life, the inner truth."

Go deeper within, the truth is ... this morning's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

I was ready to speak, I opened the book. It came out, the *paramparā*. I can always count on it. That is why I have come to Brazil. That is my contribution. Otherwise....

This morning it was a purport about the life duration of *manvantaras*. "Not much philosophy," I thought. "Mostly technical: how many *manvantaras* appear in one day of Brahma, and the names of each of them." But an idea came and you started talking, that we are all on a journey, life after life. You repeated basic, heavy facts you've heard from Śrīla Prabhupāda. To lecture, you have to let go of the desire to talk according to your own personality. Deliver the information.

It's very important. It doesn't matter that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has been heard many times. Life after life is a journey, and we go sometimes as a king, sometimes as an insect, gradually a king again. The brilliant analysis, *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *bhaktas*—the same examples Prabhupāda has given hundreds of times. They're the best. While speaking I noticed bored, sleeping faces, mostly the women. Never mind. I can't change the philosophy to wake them up. The talk came out more like a Sunday lecture to a

group of students: life after death, service in duty or love, in separation or association. Live for the future and attain your link of eternal, loving service to Kṛṣṇa now. Then it doesn't matter whether you go to Goloka or wherever. As Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, let me be born as an insect in the family of devotees where I can hear their pure talks of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. I would rather this than to be the controller of the universe.

That was this morning. Now we're doing something else. Tomorrow morning I'll do it again, turn to another verse. We can talk of it later and think of Him always. It's simple, what Kṛṣṇa wants us to do.

In the park, we transcended by recalling the morning class. But now I'm fighting ants, distracted by kids on bikes. And the cars! Doesn't the law require mufflers in São Paulo?

*Thoughts Before Giving
a Kṛṣṇa Conscious Lecture*

Keep following this trail
that leads to the spiritual world;
the *ācāryas* have marked the way,
now it's up to you
with your God-given brain,
now your faith is tested,
speak what you can.

February 20, São Paulo preaching

Every morning after *maṅgala-ārati*, the *pūjārī* keeps the curtains open, and while the large, stocky figures of Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā beam toward the devotees, the *saṅkīrtana* leader reads out yesterday's book distribution scores. He starts by announcing the tenth best performer and one by one moves up until he announces the number one book distributor and how many book points he earned.

Out of the sixty or seventy devotees in the temple, about half go out every day, some in devotional clothes and some in *karmī* clothes, to distribute Prabhupāda's books in the huge city (population 10 million). For years now they've been boarding the city buses to distribute books. As the bus begins to pull out from the stop, a devotee stands and announces, "I'm a student of philosophy ... we're from a spiritual community ... we're making a campaign for funds." He then quickly gives a small book to everyone on the bus and then returns to each person and asks for a donation. About half of the people give. "The weekends are nice," said Rāma-avatāra dāsa (through a translator), "people have more money."

Hari-nāma is performed every Wednesday night, along with free distribution of *halavā*. It's become so popular that people approach devotees in the street and ask for *halavā*. Repeatedly I've heard devotees say that the people in Brazil are very receptive: "They like the *hari-nāma*, they like the *mahā-mantra*."

One amazing result of their preaching is the regular appearance on TV of a fictional Hare Kṛṣṇa character. Every Wednesday night at 7 P.M. São Paulo



views "Mandala," a TV series about young people leaving home and doing what they want. One of the main heroes is a *saṅkīrtana* devotee who is always giving out Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. "The people love him," said Rāma-avatāra. "And they love us because of the series. They are very friendly. Devotees are part of the way of life here."

Devotees have also been appearing recently in a TV commercial. A supermarket called *Se* boasts of its low prices and closes with the line, "If you come and buy at *Se*, you'll save just enough left over to buy a book and some incense." The commercial then shows the figure of a devotee with *sikhā* holding forward a copy of *Introducio a Filosofia Vedica*.

As a result of this publicity, and in response to invitation cards given out by *saṅkīrtana* devotees, and also because of an ornate sign—"Bhaktivedanta Foundation Hare Kṛṣṇa"—on the arch outside the front gate, people drop by regularly to the reception room and the temple. The devotees give them free *prasādam* and show videos and slides throughout the day. Every time I pass the reception rooms I see at least one or two people sitting down and reading books, looking through the photo album, or listening to tapes. I think of Īśvara Swami's remark, "In Brazil it's very easy to make devotees. But they leave very easily too."

February 21

At 2:30 A.M. Sunday morning, I hear angry, drunken shouting outside the wall of the temple grounds. A man is accusing a woman, the woman is accusing him back. Growls and hoots by human beings, and cars roaming even at this hour. We are

fifty people on the other side of the wall in São Paulo, rising from simple bunks, bathing, soberly preparing to gather before Lord Jagannātha. Some may call this life "insular," but it's best. It's *sat-saṅga*, living together to protect the goal of human life in an age when that goal is unknown and rejected by 99.9 percent of the people. Why should we not band together to preserve our sanity and protect our Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Why should we not avoid the Saturday night carnival and the early Sunday morning shouts of sickness, the roaming nowhere in loud cars and motorbikes, the running from the police?

Looking at the *Bhāgavatam* verse I must speak from: see all living entities as equal. Disregard the bodily covering and see within, to the individual soul and Supersoul. Therefore you don't kill any living entity. In his purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "This gratitude and love for God are exhibited by a pure devotee, who knows that the Lord lives in every living entity. As such, temple worship necessarily includes distribution of *prasāda*.... One should exhibit his compassion for ignorant living entities by distributing *prasāda*." So that's what we're here to do. "... a learned person sees everyone equally on a spiritual basis, and he wants to see everyone developed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Unintentional Service

From outside the temple,
someone shouts "Harry!"
from a passing car.

Sunday noon

This is our fifth day in São Paulo, which is longer than I intended to stay. But Īśvara Swami wanted us to give the Sunday feast lecture. They usually get two hundred guests, and many are new people. So the lecture is the focus of my concentration. What will I speak on? "You're not this body"? "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa"? I'm confident that words will come when I'm actually perched on the small *āsana* with Īśvara Swami beside me on a pillow, speaking into the microphone his instant, expert translations, allowing me the thoughtful pause as he translates a phrase at a time. But one should pick a verse in advance and have some outline in mind. We've stayed extra days just for this. What do I really know of "You're not this body"? Even Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated, as printed in *Beyond Birth and Death*, "It is not simply a matter of saying 'I am not this body', but of actually realizing it. This is not as simple as it may seem at first."

I can tell them "You're not this body," but then why do I think so much of eating breakfast, and then after breakfast, why do I look forward to lunch, and why am I concerned with constipation and a million other workings of this mere covering of the real self? I'll *tell* them the real self is the soul because at least I follow the *sādhana*. I believe it, and I follow my master who has realized it. We're not these bodies. We just get attached to them, out of fear and lust.

As for chanting, I will certainly advise them to do it, as we do it. Like this morning, because the temple room was too stuffy, we all chanted in the big open hallway which looks up to a ceiling two stories above,

its walls elaborately decorated, and we walked back and forth chanting together, like soldiers of the holy name. We worked up until we reached our quota of sixteen, and then we quit. So I can tell them, "You should chant." Most of the guests don't chant at all, and if they do chant sincerely, I know they'll get great relief. If someone can change from nondevotee to devotee, or even to a well-wisher of the devotees, it is a complete revolution of consciousness. Whoever comes to the Sunday feast and gets attracted to the *prasādam* or the chanting or the philosophy can completely change his life. That much we know.

Walking in the park, I chose *Bhagavad-gītā* verse 2.29 for my Sunday lecture: "Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all." This is a good verse for the Sunday lecture because it anticipates the skepticism and ignorance of ordinary people when confronted with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It may also disarm an audience so they will think, "I'm not like that; I can understand the soul." In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Illusioned by the material energy, people are so engrossed in subject matters of sense gratification that they have very little time to understand the question of self-understanding, even though it is a fact that without this self-understanding all activities result in ultimate defeat in the struggle for existence. Perhaps they have no idea that one must think of the soul, and thus make a solution to the material miseries."

Prabhupāda also anticipates that some people may have actually shown interest in spiritual life, attended lectures, read about it, but they have only an impersonal concept of the supreme spirit. He advises us to accept the statements of *Bhagavad-gītā* and learn from the greatest authority, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

8 P.M. Sunday

Everyone who lectures knows that when you sincerely represent the *paramparā*, using your body, mind, and words, you are consumed in the service. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "The consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature." This is the perfect state of consciousness, not the hesitation and doubt before and afterwards. After the questions and answers, we went into a blissful *kīrtana* in the packed hall, perspiring till *kurtās* were soaked, knots came unloose on *dhotīs*, throats cracked from singing as loud as they could, and Lord Jagannātha beamed on. He smiled as if to say, "Let's see you dance! Go on, dance, even if you think you look foolish. I want to see you smile and dance."

Travel day to Pôrto Alegre

Seeing us off at the airport, Īśvara Swami asked me what I had expected of ISKCON Brazil.

"I'm not sure what I expected," I said.

"I expected you," he said, "to be more polemical." I replied that I want to be more like Nārada as described in this morning's *Bhāgavatam* purport.

The great sage Nārada travels everywhere.... Although there is perpetual animosity between the demons and demigods, Nārada Muni is welcomed everywhere.... A perfect Vaiṣṇava's position should be just like Nārada Muni's, completely independent and unbiased.

—*Bhāg.* 4.31.3 purport

Īśvara Swami said, "Yes, just like a *sādhū*." But he added that in ISKCON we have to take strong stands about different issues. Yet the unbiased mood I am thinking of, although I have not attained it, would not be an impotent neutrality. It would be the self-satisfaction (*ātmārāma*) of a devotee who has nothing to gain. It would be the courage to refrain from any attempt at crowd-pleasing. Just be plain and simple, Kṛṣṇa conscious. Nārada or the six Gosvāmīs cannot be imitated, but they are the ideal. Everyone had confidence that such Vaiṣṇavas would not attempt to cheat them. Even the demons, although they could not follow the instructions of Nārada, respected him and were aware that he bore no ill to them; he sought their topmost welfare.

Pôrto Alegre, February 22

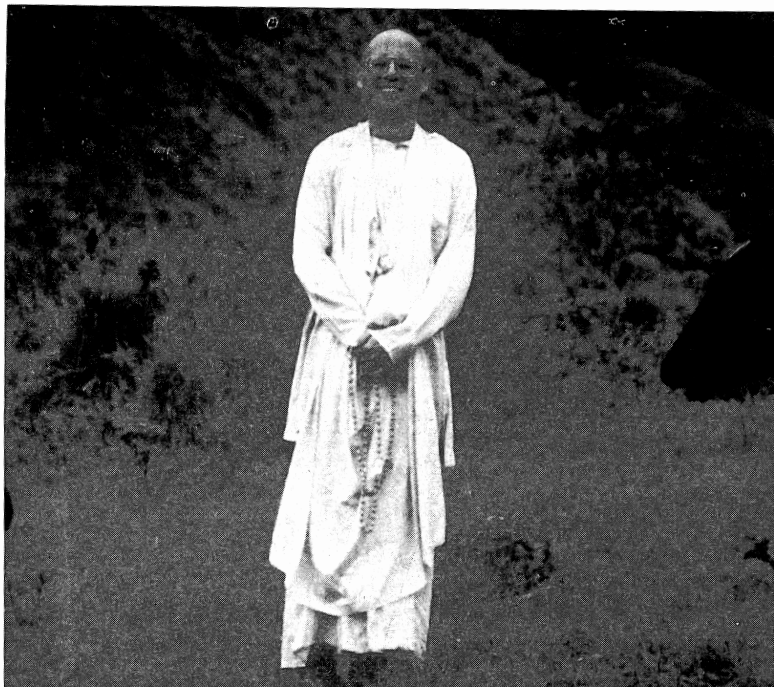
The one thing I anticipated is bearing true so far, that these Brazilian centers are less agitated by the ISKCON changes. They definitely feel the changes, such as the fact that now more *gurus* are initiating here. For the first time in Brazil, devotees are approaching some of the native Brazilian devotees and asking for initiation. There are at least ten devotees who want to be initiated by Īśvara Swami.

But these things seem to be happening more mildly than in North America.

Another thing I anticipated was that I would feel a relief from the anti-cult atmosphere of North America. There doesn't seem to be such a polarity between devotees and nondevotees in Brazil. This may be my subjective experience, but when I'm with my countrymen, the Americans, I feel more hurt and rejected. I'm also more sensitive and aware of their words and glances, whereas in Brazil I'm not even able to understand what people say, and I miss the subtle ways they relate to us. But this is also nice because it allows me to just be what I am, a Kṛṣṇa conscious monk, without paranoia about what the man on the street thinks. I think the people in this country actually are less critical, less affronted by the presence of a devotee, and also as an expatriate, I am able to shed another aspect of false ego, my national identity, and that provides relief too. As I walk through the streets, seeing the cars and the commercial signs, I feel less threatened by it all. I suppose this is the freedom and detachment of being a traveler.

But my predominant mood is shelter in ISKCON. This affords me a rare opportunity to travel all over the world and speak to eager audiences. It is the reward which any senior devotee may take and enjoy. Our enjoyment should not be to look for comfortable lodging and free meals, but to be able to preach freely in many places.

As I write this I'm seated in a small guest room of the temple at Pôrto Alegre. On the walls there are many pictures cut out from *Back to Godhead* magazine and some from Prabhupāda's books, the same pictures you'll see in many ISKCON temples. There



are also many pictures of Hridayānanda Goswami who is the *guru* for ninety-nine percent of the devotees here. There is also a framed poster they made honoring the five-hundredth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance. The climate here is much warmer than in São Paulo, and they have a permanent outdoor *paṇḍāl* in their backyard. From the window I see one of the devotees, who's wearing only a pair of shorts, putting up the blackboard with the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse for tonight. They recently sprayed the ground with water, so it looks cool and fresh. I'm in the grips of my old complaint due to too much activity and tension this morning—a lecture in São Paulo, an intense talk in the car on the way to the airport, talking on the airplane—so I won't be able to give a full class. But I've agreed to at least go down and stay for five or ten minutes instead of being completely absent.

Paravyoma Prabhu announced that I had a *dor de cabeça* (Portuguese for headache) and that I would only speak for about five minutes. But an hour later I was still there answering questions. The audience and the place was such a pot of nectar that I could not remove myself.

February 23

I'm simply a result of my influences. For example, I have heard that the devotees in Brazil are enthusiastic about book distribution, and so I see that and I say that. I've heard that the people are more like Europeans and Americans than Latin Americans, and so I see that. I've heard the Brazilian expression *todo ben*, "that's OK," which means they're easygoing, and so I see that. And what I see that contradicts what I've heard I do not notice much.

Or I notice, but I don't know how to fit it in. So since I am bound to be conditioned from what I've heard, it's better I think and speak from the influence of perfect knowledge—*sāstra* and Prabhupāda.

In Brazil, I'm praying to go beyond my ego. Brazil is a world of illusory names and forms. (They lent me a towel in colors like the flag, blue, green, and yellow, which has the word "Brasil!" printed on it ten times.) In Brazil this body is like a dew drop on a lotus leaf; the life-air could exit right here in Brazil. But in Brazil you can think of Kṛṣṇa. To be safe from the bad association in Brazil, I call on the name of Prabhupāda.

In Brazil last night a devotee asked me, "Say something about *saṅkīrtana*. We want to be enlivened." So I remembered what Prabhupāda said.

I'm enjoying the pause while the translator repeats my words. There is no mail for me. It's hot. There is no need of socks here. I don't know the names of birds. They have *maṅgala-ārati* at 4 A.M.! It's nice, it's ISKCON.

I could die in Brazil,
but I'm not prepared.
To be saved from the thieves
of bad association in Brazil,
I call on the name of the Protector.
In Brazil, a rat
crawled onto my bed;
I had better read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books
while I'm here
or I'll get into trouble.
Without devotees,
Brazil is hell.

Japa Sequence, Pôrto Alegre

In a small park,
at predawn:
chanting before a stone tiger.

Japa walkers—
the early-bird *karmī*
is overwhelmed.

February 23, 10:30 P.M.

Reasons I can't sleep:

I have tightly shut all the doors and windows so the rat won't come in, but that has made it stuffy. I have a *dor de cabeça*; mosquitoes have taken a few bites at my feet. Although this is all minor, I called out "Kṛṣṇa!" and sat up and turned on the light. They say the worst thing about insomnia is the worry. Similarly, when we suffer we have a choice: whether to feel self-pity or turn instead to auspicious thoughts of Kṛṣṇa.

Better turn to Kṛṣṇa. Remember? We read the *Bhagavad-gītā* earlier tonight. Verse 6.36; control the mind. I also referred in my lecture to *Bhagavad-gītā* 17.16; austerities of the mind: serenity, satisfaction, gravity ... remember now and be peaceful.

My Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Pôrto Alegre, 11 P.M.

February 23, 1988

My Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Please accept my eternal humble obeisances at Your lotus feet. All glories to Your servants and devotees, especially my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

I know I have no right to directly address You, since I have so little realization of my personal relationship with You. But I desire to write to Your Lordship, fool that I am. As You know, I am a literary fool, and so even my attempt to address You in the form of a letter is tainted with the sense of literary exercise. But I am writing to You with my problem.

So many living entities are suffering, and we human beings who at least know something about the Supreme Lord are meant to work for the welfare of all the suffering living entities. I want to do that, although I am not able to do it much.

I wish I could pray. To be able to address You is itself a great fortune and solace, and yet I waste it in this unworthy way with an unworthy letter.

Please accept my miserably tiny offering of devotional service at Your feet. Please protect all the followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and please help us to correct ourselves; please right us so that we can better serve our master. Please engage us in Your service.

I know You are the Lord, and yet I don't know anything at all. Please grant me *bhakti* to serve my spiritual master, and let me remember to chant Your holy name with devotion.

I'm a great fool. If I could chant Your name nicely, then I think I could distribute it nicely. But I can't do anything at all, unless You are pleased.

I pray to remove my doubts and my reluctance to perform austerities on behalf of my master who has dragged me out of the ocean of vicious sharks and placed me on board the ship of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Please grant me *bhakti*, and allow me to suffer the lot that is due to me without complaint and to become a nonenvious servant of Your *saṅkīrtana* devotees.

Your eternal son, the direct servant and disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda—although I am a dog proud of his own bark,



Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

P.S. All glories to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*! All glories to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Nectar of Devotion*! All glories to all the Vaiṣṇava literatures, which are dear to You. All glories to the Vaiṣṇavas "who are just like desire trees and are full of compassion for the fallen souls."

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Nova Gokula / Rio de Janeiro

February 24, Nova Gokula Farm

To get here we had to fly back to São Paulo and then drive north. We got stuck in a traffic jam outside of the city, and so the car journey took four hours. During this time I recalled the saying that material happiness is but a temporary relief from the usual sufferings—it was “blissful” when we were released from the traffic jam. (But that produced another anxiety, as the cars began speeding to make up for lost time.) In the farm neighborhood when I was able to stop and pass urine in a roadside forest, I felt another material happiness, as testified by the Bengali jester, Gopāla Bhan, who said to the king, “Frankly, at this moment, I feel very happy after passing stool.”

The travel austerities faded away once we arrived at Nova Gokula. It's like entering a pastoral heaven where walkways meander up to cottage doorways. We are staying in “the *sannyāsī's* house,” which overlooks a small lake within sight and sound of a waterfall. On the other side of the lake are cottages and a steep green hill. There are purple flowering trees called *quaresmeiras*, meaning “Lent tree” because it blooms before Easter. Welcome to paradise!

One of the first things I did here was to revise my schedule. Instead of visiting many different ISKCON

centers in Brazil, which is proving too exhausting, we will stay on for eight days at Nova Gokula and leave the day after Gaura-pūrṇimā.

February 25, 2:30 A.M.

I woke up with a ballad tune in my head and the words were "thinking of you." I thought, "Write like this, in love—incorporate the wild sentiments, the seeking and longing and crying, within your Kṛṣṇa consciousness." This is actually what Lord Caitanya did on the highest level: *a love affair with God*. It can't be imitated, but that's what it leads to. We're after that. Now practice and keep praying, trying to avoid the ten offenses.



Thinking of You

I want to love God
with my body, mind, and words.

Do I dare to?
I fear the critics,
and would it be pretense?
"Dear God, Dear Kṛṣṇa,
You actually are my friend
Your love fills me."

In this world they are taking lust as love,
and we restrain from that,
but why am I afraid to love You?
Why can't I do it?
Fear of pain?
Fear of ridicule?

At least I like to hear
the lives of Vaiṣṇava saints,
because they love You.

A simple love poem
to my God,
like the Negro spirituals;
people laugh at them,
but You accept their love.

I don't want to show a picture of You
that others would laugh at,
like a clumsy painting of the Lord,
yet we have to speak
and we want to share,
I wrote this to Kṛṣṇa,
because I love Him.

Love in *japa*, in *kīrtana*,
in repeating the *paramparā*,
love for a child in *gurukula*.
As Śrīla Prabhupāda said
to that *yogī* in New York,
"Yes, and I love *you* too.
But not this body love."

And love for enemies.
In the face of opposition
love
pure, eternal,
and topmost is Kṛṣṇa's love
in separation.

As I try to write,
I hear the sudden blast
of a conchshell-horn.
I'm late for *maṅgala-ārati*!
Hurry up—
put love in practice.

A new temple is under construction, and so the Deities of Nova Gokula are in a temporary situation. We gathered outside, and only when the *pūjārī* blew the conchshell were we allowed to enter the doors. The whole congregation entered within the Deities' room. There we saw on a shelf-altar the beautiful Rādhā-Gokulānanda. Śrī Gokulānanda is whitish but tinged slightly blue and appears very happy beside Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. There are brass Sītā-Rāma Deities and tall Gaura-Nitāi also. A full-sized Śrīla Prabhu-pāda *mūrti* sits on a *vyāsāsana*, and all these *arcā-vigrahas* are assembled in rather close quarters. The devotees mingle in close beside Them, only a couple of feet away from Rādhā-Gokulānanda.

After *maṅgala-ārati* we walked to the new temple which is still under construction. It is a very beautiful building, with a very large *kīrtana* hall and high ceiling. Here we observed the *tulasī-pūjā*, morning *Bhāgavatam* class, and *japa*. The large glass windows afford a wonderful view of the natural surroundings. I could see numerous peahens with their little chicks. The peacocks here are not just one or two pets, but flocks. The combination of the beautiful land and trees as seen through the temple windows, and the temple room itself, and the mixture of the two elements, transcendental and natural, provides many moments of aesthetic pleasure. In that sense, Nova Gokula is a very opulent and beautiful place.

Today's purport, from the Purañjana story of the Fourth Canto, also gave a description of a very beautiful scenic spot and compared it to the body of the human male. Thus, the young man, within the beau-

tiful "park" of his body, becomes attracted by the atmosphere. According to the allegory, the beautiful park is like being attracted to a beautiful girl, who is seen within a natural setting. But in the case of Nova Gokula, its natural setting is being used in the service of Kṛṣṇa, and so the sights and sounds produce a sublime effect which is not lust, but transcendental pleasure. I could imagine, however, that if one were to live here, he would have to keep very busy in service, and not merely enjoy the surroundings in the name of spiritual retirement. Yet, when everything beautiful is used in the service of Kṛṣṇa, the serpents of the senses may be allowed to play.

How I long to see
among dawn flowers,
the face of God.

—Basho

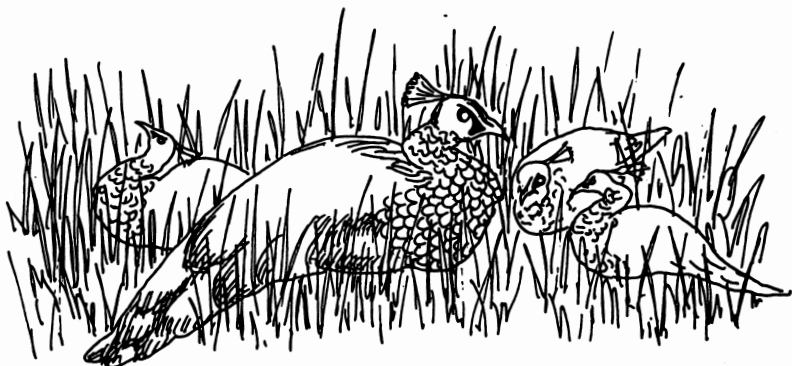
Twirling the scythe
by the gurgling stream,
a garden worker starts
at 6:00 A.M.,
stripped to the waist.
They say he does his *japa* later,
and in fact I often see
men chanting at dusk
on the bridge over the lake
and in the bamboo forest.

Peacocks

A peahen with baby chicks
is pecking at my ball of *tilaka*
drying in the sun.

They keep away the mice;
they turn their stiff necks
and give you a look.

If I were a lover of Kṛṣṇa,
like Murāri Gupta was,
these rainbow birds
would make me swoon
as they jump
toward the gathering clouds.



Hotel Fazenda

The "country hotel" is run by Rūpa Gosvāmī dāsa and his wife. They have fifteen rooms in three quaint buildings. Guests fill them up during the weekends, seeking the peace and quiet of Nova Gokula. When I entered the hotel and heard more about it, I could better understand other parts of Nova Gokula: the landscaping, the jungle groves, the bamboo forest path, waterfalls, ponds, gazebos—all these are like places of pilgrimage for the hotel guests.

"We get upper-middle-class guests," said Rūpa Gosvāmī. "Preaching to them is nice. They're full of questions."

He sat me down in the hotel lobby, gave me a cup of Goiaba juice with wild lemon and honey (all home products of Nova Gokula), and showed me his newest project—building houses for *grhasthas*. Rūpa has started a construction business and has already sold five small houses, which he will begin building next week. The plans call for roofs made of asbestos sheets and hardwood, homemade bricks from river mud for the walls, and the whole thing costs the equivalent of thirteen hundred U.S. dollars. Rūpa is also in charge of the organic garden, the intention of which is to provide all food for the devotees as well as financial profits. Rūpa doesn't just plan things but he works. He told me, for example, of the great effort it took to excavate the large pond in front of the hotel.

"First we dug it up," he said, "then weeds kept growing up. So one day we decided, 'This is it, no more weeds.' We went into the empty pond to pull up every plant by the roots. But we sunk up to our waists in the mud. Sometimes we'd start sinking even deeper, and to get out we'd have to lie on our bellies and crawl out like crocodiles."



Now one looks out from the hotel lobby at the gentle, rippling pond and doesn't think of the step-by-step labor. Everything here in Nova Gokula is like that, a history of gradual building up, gradual planting, occasional dismantling and starting again, and much of the work is done without big construction machines or tractors. Most Brazilian devotees aren't lazy.

Rūpa Gosvāmī dāsa is from Panama, where he was studying to be a lawyer. Eventually he dropped out of law school and decided to search for the absolute truth. Friends would come over and invite him to go to parties and bars and he would say, "No. If you can help me, let me know what is the absolute truth." Then, while passing through the Chicago airport in 1977, a devotee gave him one of Prabhupāda's books. He read it and took it seriously. When the first ISKCON devotees arrived in Panama, Rūpa received

more books and soon surrendered to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Eventually he became the initiated disciple of Hridayānanda Goswami.

"I wanted to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "and when the devotees told me that he had just passed away, it really struck me."

"You felt you were too late," I said.

"Yes. I'll always feel like that. But more, I think that Śrīla Prabhupāda is actually here. He's always here. I feel a strong connection with him as my *śikṣā guru*."

February 27

Bowing to Deities
is not a mere ritual,
you are trying
to go beyond:
*don't doubt you have covered
some distance
on the path.*

Gurukula

Dhanvantari Swami is the *gurukula* director.

He first met devotees in 1973 when he was a student of dentistry at the University of Bahia in northeast Brazil. "A devotee from Hawaii came without Śrīla Prabhupāda's permission, and from him I got some books."

"I wrote a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda," he said, "asking for his help. I asked him to please send a

devotee to follow up on my first contact with Prabhupāda's books. Prabhupāda answered the letter saying that he was sending Hridayānanda Goswami to open Brazil, and that I should help him."

Dhanvantari Swami has been director of the *gurukula* for five years now, and he plans to make it his life's career.

"I don't have any qualifications to do this service," he said. "But because Prabhupāda called it 'a very important service,' so Kṛṣṇa is giving His mercy. I am here and I plan to stay here."

Dhanvantari Mahārāja says that their *gurukula* has had no big scandals, no misbehaving teachers and no child abuse. It's an old-fashioned, full-time *āśrama* school, based on the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. They don't have government recognition yet, but they're trying for it. Last year, however, devotee-parents removed twenty-two children from the school. Now only twenty-nine remain. Dhanvantari Mahārāja said the exodus is because the parents lack confidence in their children's future. They've heard a lot about ISKCON teenagers and how they lose interest in devotional life. So many Brazilian parents, after talking with one another, became fearful that in the future the teenagers won't want to be devotees and won't be able to get a full university education. Dhanvantari Mahārāja asked my opinion. I advised him to be patient and go on with their pure and simple program as Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted. One feels more inspired to support the *gurukula* here, since the situation is favorable. How can a Kṛṣṇa conscious parent find a better school? If their devotee-child decides later he or she doesn't want to be a full-time ISKCON *bhakta*, what's the problem? The child can take the equivalency test, and then get a high school diploma and, if he likes, go on to college or business.

Why consider a blissful childhood in Nova Gokula school as a handicap?

We visited the main *gurukula* building on the hill where I saw five classrooms in action. Since I'm even less than a kindergarten student in Portuguese, it was hard for me to develop rapport with the teachers and students. They showed me their books and lessons. They are very conscientiously developing their syllabus from an array of available books in mathematics, geography, social science, Portuguese and English, and they also teach Latin, because one of the *gurukula* teachers has twenty years' experience in it. The children looked bright and cheerful, like children in other *gurukulas* I've seen.



SDG visiting Nova Gokula's *gurukula*

In the kindergarten, through Dhanvantari Mahārāja's translation, I talked about Kṛṣṇa.

"One day," I said, "Kṛṣṇa's mother said, 'I heard You've been eating dirt.' So what did Kṛṣṇa say?"

"He said, 'No, I haven't.' "

"Then what did Mother Yaśodā say?"

" 'Let me see Your mouth.' "

"When Kṛṣṇa opened His mouth, what did she see?"

"Many things!"

"Yes, the whole universe! Why? Because Kṛṣṇa is God. If you look in my mouth or if I look in your mouth we won't see such things. Will we?"

One boy piped up, "*So dentes a lingua.*" ("Only teeth and tongue.")

"And when Kṛṣṇa stole the butter, who did He give it to?"

All: "*Macacos!*"

Each classroom had a written welcome message on the blackboard, "Jaya Mahārāja." But when we entered the kindergarten class, they burst into an enthusiastic chant, "Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja!" I received colorful drawings of *avatāras*, the boys specializing in battles with arrows flying, and the girls producing varieties of a male personality and his consort seated together, such as "Yudhiṣṭhira and his wife," "Rāma and Sītā," and Kṛṣṇa and His queens.

As I left, all the students and teachers came out to see me. I heard some of the boys mimicking my English, "All right, all right, all right."

Driving down the hill Dhanvantari Mahārāja said, "I lament for those twenty children who left. It's hard to be detached."

"It's the work of *māyā* that they left," I said.

"I like to think," he said, "that maybe some of these *gurukula* children will do some important service for Śrīla Prabhupāda one day."

Note from Dhanvantari Swami:

Since you are asking me about my service at Nova Gokula, I wanted to mention about my relationship with the Deities, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda. I'm a very fallen person to have any relationship with Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda, but somehow I have one, and it is very important for me. I spent thirty years of my life living in big cities like São Paulo, Brasília, and Salvador. Five years ago I came to N. Gokula to manage the *gurukula* here, but it was very difficult for me to control my passion. Daily I had to pray to Rādhā-Gokulānanda to give me so much occupation that the peaceful life and mood here would not act against my city-man nature. They gave me so much service that I had to come again asking for Their mercy to help me how to do it. And again They manifested Their mercy, sending me nice and intelligent devotees to help me in Their service. Therefore I could live here for those five years preaching and managing in association with many persons and worshipping Their Lordships. Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda ki Jaya!

Sunday, February 28, Āmalakī Ekādaśī, 6 P.M.

It's dusk and the cows have moved downhill quite close to this house. I see their brindled backs and heads moving, and hear them ripping and chewing the plentiful grasses. I'm nearing completion of the sixty-four-round quota, and quietly subduing the body's demands.

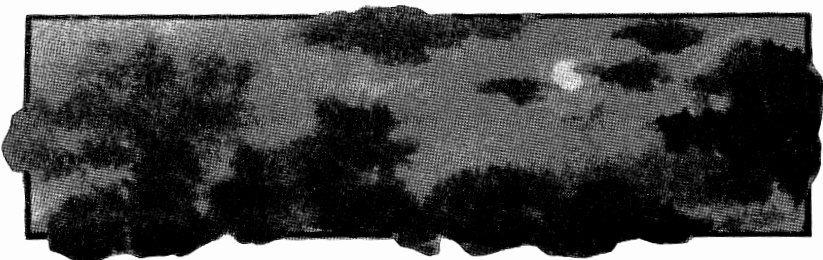
The heat of the day has passed; now it's just a few minutes before the mosquitoes begin their cruising. The biggest disappointment of the day has also passed. It's quite possible that I may go on chanting

sixty-four rounds for many years or lifetimes, and not reach the goal, because of offenses against the holy names. I do it mechanically. I don't know how to cry out for Kṛṣṇa. But evening is coming and this *dhāma* is too beautiful for me to complain in. There is so much simple, spiritual happiness here, the rushing stream, the Lent trees coloring the sharp green hills, the peacocks roosting—and an evening schedule ahead, *Bhagavad-gītā* class in the temple, *bhajan*as in our room, all night awake.

Dusk:
the peahen's chicks
hide under her wings.

Shooting one last arrow,
walking home:
gurukula boy.

Ekādaśī-vrata:
walking to *maṅgala-ārati*,
the moon has cleared the clouds.



February 29, Where the grass is greener

We went to the *goṣāllā* and saw what we could. On one white-washed wall was a simple mural of Kṛṣṇa embracing a cow. The men there, Guru dāsa and Jaya Prabhupāda dāsa, don't speak English, and so Nārāyaṇa-jvara helped by talking with Guru dāsa in Portuguese, while Madhu practiced French with Jaya Prabhupāda.

They have twelve cows, and they are milking seven. They use the Indian system of bringing the calf beside the cow. The cows are fat from natural pasturing. They also grow a green plant which they grind down in the *goṣāllā* with a hand-cranked machine like the ones that grind sugar cane.

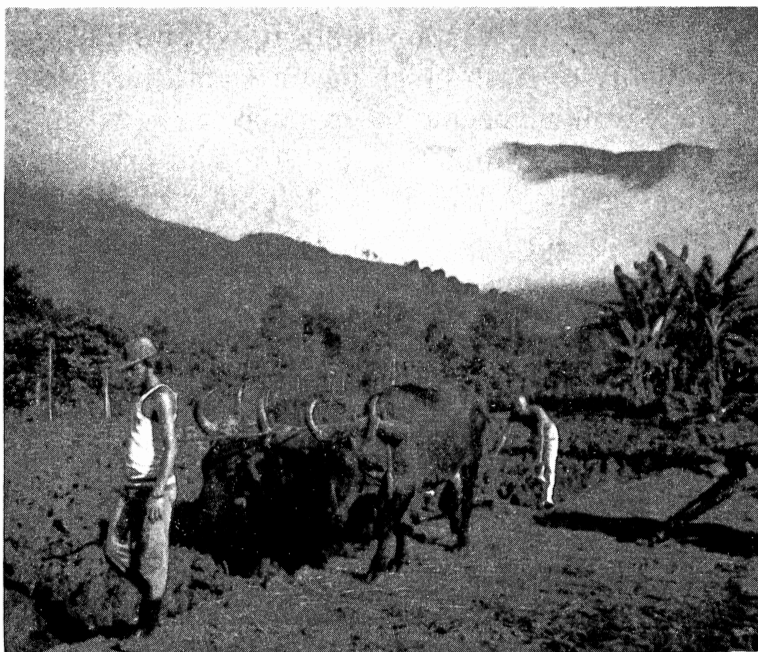
Jaya Prabhupāda dāsa, a burly cowherd man, went to the calf pen and singled out the calf he wanted. As he opened the gate, all the calves surged forward, but he shouted, "Pṛthu! Pṛthu! No Dāmodara, no Dhruva. Pṛthu!" Out came Pṛthu, who raced for his mother's big udder. After allowing the calf to suck at each of the teats of his mother, the cow man pulled the calf away and tied it up facing the opposite direction. Then within a few minutes of milking by hand, the bucket filled up with foamy white liquid.

I asked Guru dāsa how he became a servant of cow protection. From what I could gather from Nārāyaṇa-jvara's version—from French to Portuguese into English—it hasn't always been easy for Guru dāsa. He's been asked to take on different services over the years. First his *guru* asked him to develop the garden and landscaping, which he did for several years. Then when no other qualified man was available, he was asked to be the temple president of

Nova Gokula. Now more recently, he's been asked to take care of the cows.

I asked him how he responds to devotees' doubts about the importance of taking care of cows, in a movement which emphasizes book distribution. That is no problem here, he said. The devotees of Brazil all recognize Nova Gokula as a national project, and they know cows are the basis of the farming.

I asked him if he had any trouble keeping up his *sādhana*, along with so many farm duties. Nārāyaṇa-jvara said that Guru dāsa admitted he has been feeling some weakness. When he was temple president of the entire Nova Gokula, he neglected both the cows and his *sādhana*, such as chanting rounds. He's still trying to recover from that.



Jaya Prabhupāda dāsa at the ox plow

Guru dāsa asked me if there were any programs at Gītā-nāgarī that I could tell him about. I mentioned the importance, to Paramānanda and others, of working oxen. Guru dāsa was already aware of ox power. They work six oxen here, which is sufficient for all their garden plowing. He said some of the devotees wanted to buy a tractor, but he's completely against it. They also have two bulls for breeding. He says he is letting the herd grow in a natural way here, and they already have far more land than they need for pasturing. As we tried to talk, I also thought of Gītā-nāgarī. Since they are decentralizing at Gītā-nāgarī, there are few men to work the oxen. The last I heard only two persons, Rasāla dāsa and his wife, Sītā, were working full-time with the oxen. They would be encouraged to see this simple operation in Brazil, where the weather is always warm, the cows have plenty of fresh green pasture, and the ox men are daily walking behind the ox-pulled plow.

It's easy to think that the grass is greener in another pasture. Although I didn't put many probing questions to Guru dāsa, I did get the impression that there are problems, even in Brazil. Nothing's easy. Therefore, wherever in the world one can manage to train up a few oxen and work them, the devotees should be satisfied and determined to continue it. Hearing that others are having success with the same oxen program—and that others are also struggling with personal difficulties of surrender as well as difficulties inherent with the climate and geography of each place—should be sources of inspiration. Anyone doing *anything* positive in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is actually setting an example for the whole world. Sincere acts never go in vain. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

"...a transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activity does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good, My friend, is never overcome by evil" (Bg. 6.40).

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda

... Deity worship is essential for spiritual progress.... By regulated, faithful worship one gradually understands that the Deity is completely non-different from the Supreme Lord Himself.

—*Bhāg.* 11.27.48, purport

The cool, wet floor feels good as we make prostrated obeisances in the Deity room. Now the *pūjārī* is offering the Deities a pink rose, and ringing the bell with his left hand. They have a constant abundance of fresh flowers here, especially the fragrant *lirio do brejo* ("lily of the marsh," although it resembles a magnolia), which grows profusely like weeds in the rough.

The Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti* seems relaxed and pleased. The present arrangement isn't ideal, and it may be two years before the big temple is fully complete. But then it will be wonderful. They plan to move the Deities there at least by Janmāṣṭamī 1988.

But even now Śrīla Prabhupāda receives fresh flower garlands daily. I spy his toe sticking out from under the *dhotī*. Gaura-Nitāi also have fresh garlands with plenty of marigolds. Their eyes are very long, almost to the ears. They smile with a slight turning up of the corners of Their mouths. Small *vijaya-vigraha* forms of Gaura-Nitāi are here. They will go out in two days for Gaura-pūrṇimā circumambulation. The left altar also holds a young *tulasī* plant, the pot



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda

wrapped in gold cloth. From here you can hear the steady “hum” or rush of the river. You think, “this is pleasant for the Deities.”

Rādhā-Gokulānanda wear white and maroon today. Their flower garlands are of similar colors, white *lirio do brejo* and pink roses. Today silver is a sub-theme color—silver silk *lamé cādars* for Gaura-Nitāi and Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī wears a silver blouse and silvery trim. There is a rusty-colored Govardhana-śilā on the main altar; He looks freckle-faced with the *candana* dots and although a smile is drawn on His face, He seems somber in His large, silver turban. There are also small brass Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhā-Gokulānanda is smiling and looking not straight ahead but toward the right of His audience. His smile is very nice and the *pūjārīs* are all pleased about it. They are proud to serve the Lord with His enchanting smile. “... My devotees always see the smiling face of My form, with eyes like the rising morning sun. They like to see My various transcendental forms, which are all benevolent, and they also talk favorably with Me” (*Bhāg.* 3.25.35).

On the right altar is Lord Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa, all golden forms, and a white Hanumān. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa hold bows of cedar in Their left hands, and in Their right hands They hold a feathered arrow pointed downward. They look ready to pick up the bow, insert the arrow, and pull the string back to Their eyes. Mother Sītā is protected and blessing us, a *tulasī* leaf stuck to the palm of Her right hand. There is also a sandalwood *mūrti* of Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha.

The devotees have shared with me some of their realizations of the Deities. They often dream of Them in a way that is connected to practical Deity service.

Guru dāsa said (translated by Nārāyaṇa-jvara), “One time Kṛṣṇa called me in my sleep at 1:00 A.M., and I ran to the temple to see what was going on, and I saw that the curtains were flapping in His face due to a big storm that had opened the windows.”

Kuntī-devī dāsī was making Rādhāṣṭamī outfits for the Deities, and although she was working sleepless nights at a marathon pace, it seemed that she wasn’t going to get done on time. One night she fell asleep and dreamt that Kṛṣṇa appeared on Rādhāṣṭamī day outside the curtain without clothes, and the *sannyāsī* in charge was very angry with Kuntī-devī dāsī. She rose up from that dream and kept sewing until the outfit was ready. They also dream of His pastimes on the altar. One of the *pūjārīs*, Rāma-parśva, says, “After I see Him at greeting the Deities, I cannot understand how Kṛṣṇa manifests so much beauty and I realize that I am only His instrument. When I see His lotus eyes and smile and His position, it attracts my mind so much that I cannot forget Him all day long and I feel enthusiastic.”

Kuntī-devī dāsī told this story:

It was on the eve of the Govardhana Hill festival when Jaya Gaurī and me, we decided to ask the *pūjārī* to let us dress up Rādhā-Gokulānanda for the festival. The *pūjārī* was very cold toward us, and he said that he could authorize only with the permission of the president. So we went to the president, and it was already nine o’clock at night, and he was tired, and he was harsh toward us, saying, “Nobody can touch Rādhā-Gokulānanda, only the *pūjārī*. Not even I could touch the Deities what to say of you.” So we went back to our homes completely devastated, but recognizing that we were very fallen and very contaminated, and we deserved all those answers. In my desperation I went to bed, and forty minutes later a devotee started

calling me, yelling "Urgent! Urgent!" I was to go immediately to the temple because the *pūjārī* just had a very strong pain in the stomach, and he had left the Deities alone, and at that moment only I could take care of Them. I was naturally very happy, and I was thanking so much Rādhā-Gokulānanda while I was getting ready to take care of Them. So when I arrived at the altar there They were, Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi, Sītā-Rāma, already dressed up and Rādhā-Gokulānanda with Their clothes on the lower shelf still to be put on. To Rādhā-Gokulānanda I offered my repeated obeisances to Their lotus feet for all the causeless mercy that They have given to this mediocre and fallen servant.

As I sit here writing in the Deity room, suddenly a door slams from the wind. Big blue clouds are filling the sky from top to bottom. Maybe it's a sudden rainstorm, or maybe it will pass. We were going to go swimming in the pond, but now I don't know. At any rate, it's time to leave the Deity room. Rādhā-Gokulānanda, You are Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, please bless me with the ability to describe at least a tiny part of Your glories. As I leave Your Lordships, I'm looking forward to gathering in this room again when all the devotees come to see You, a packed-in family. Until then, let me not behave in a way unbecoming of a servant of the servant of the Lord.

March 2

I met with Dhanvantari Mahārāja and about twelve *gurukula* teachers. I started by stating that I haven't worked with *gurukula* in many years and that I don't have a solution to such problems as Kṛṣṇa conscious teenagers and whether to insist on Kṛṣṇa conscious boarding schools or to allow for day school. But the devotees here have a simple gratefulness.

They know I can't solve all the problems, but they at least wanted to talk about them with an older devotee. They made me feel free to do something I usually wouldn't do: reiterate many principles that Prabhupāda taught us at the first *gurukula* in Dallas. I even gave Prabhupāda's examples about discipline and how he said the teacher could show a stick to the students, although he shouldn't use it. Many of the things I said were new to them. One might say there was a certain naivete on their part, but I find that preferable to the attitude of defeatism and cynicism. So we struggled together for an hour and a half, thinking of ways to educate and inspire children to grow up in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One teacher asked, "We've heard many stories of bad things that have happened in *gurukula*. Do you have any examples of success?"



Leaders of the Nova Gokula *gurukula*

I told them how when I visited Los Angeles a young *brahmacārī* approached me and said, "I'm Raghunātha, do you remember me?" Raghunātha used to be a *gurukula* boy, and now he is a real *brahmacārī*, surrendered on his own will to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In fact, he is one of the leading preachers in the Los Angeles temple. I also thought of young Śyāma dāsa in Miami who writes a newsletter to alumni of the Bhaktivedanta Swami Gurukula of Vṛndāvana. More than half of the boys on the mailing list could be categorized as "in *māyā*," but Śyāma keeps everyone in touch with the activities of the "old gang," and in an easygoing way he suggests that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is best. Śyāma dāsa himself has the fortune of having good Kṛṣṇa conscious parents, and he is a fully engaged *brahmacārī*. I also gave the example of Bahulāśva in Jamaica, "boy of the year," intent on going to college and becoming a devotee-lawyer, dedicating his life to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Jamaica.

What to do when teenage boys get infatuated with the girls? Is it necessary to consult astrologers before marriage? Should girls have to live in the *āśramas*, or can they stay at home and attend day school? What are some techniques we can use when children don't respond to discipline? What do you do when teenagers say they're bored with the scriptures? Is it all right for young children to select and begin worshipping a *guru*?

We discussed it. They wanted another opinion, based on what Prabhupāda has taught. After the session with them, I feel more confident in venturing an opinion. I advocate, for parents and children, the Kṛṣṇa conscious school.

Getting Ready to Leave Nova Gokula

On the scaffolding
of the unfinished temple tower
six peacocks sit
as it begins to rain.

Indoors, Madhu's singing
a Hare Kṛṣṇa tune,
his voice pumping like the bellows
of a good harmonium,
and I'm out here, pacing, chanting
noticing the peak they call
"Mount Kṛṣṇa."

A frog hops away,
in the last light,
on the night before
Gaura-pūrṇimā.

I've little devotion,
but I'm peaceful here.
To go back into the city
will be a good shock.

Gaura-pūrṇimā, March 3, morning class

In celebration of Gaura-pūrṇimā, I read from two different sections. In the Eleventh Canto, the sage Karabhājana Muni describes the *avatāra* for Kali-yuga, *kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam*. And in a similar passage in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Lord Caitanya taught Sanātana Gosvāmī the personal characteristics and activities of the Kali-yuga *avatāra*.

In the *Bhāgavatam* purport by Hridayānanda Goswami, he elaborates on the word *tīrthāspadam*, which means that Lord Caitanya is the equivalent of all the places of *tīrtha*. Hridayānanda Mahārāja gives assurance to devotees in “poor, third-world countries” for whom it is very difficult to visit holy places in India. He assures them that they can receive the benefit of having visited the supreme holy place, the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, just by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I also mentioned that by observing Gaura-pūrṇimā in a wonderful project like Nova Gokula and by developing this project, we can also worship Lord Caitanya to our hearts’ content, without feeling left out. Surely Prabhupāda would be pleased to know, that even while his international festival is held in Māyāpur, devotees in Brazil (and many other countries) are holding happy celebrations in their *prabhu-datta deśa*.

After the class Anantadeva asked if one could give up all other services and just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This was a follow-up to the Eleventh Canto verse which described Lord Caitanya as *dhyeyam sadā* or “always to be meditated upon.” In Kali-yuga the authorized process is to chant the holy names of the Lord, especially the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Hridayānanda

Goswami wrote, "This process is to be executed constantly and always (*sadā*).... Normally there are strict regulations governing the time, season, place, conditions, etc., under which one may execute a particular Vedic ceremony or chant a particular *mantra*. However, one should chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa everywhere and at all times, twenty-four hours a day."

But I replied that Prabhupāda specifically warned us against attempting to retire to a secluded place, give up all other services, and simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is the activity of a liberated soul, such as Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and we can't imitate it. We should work hard to serve the spiritual master in different occupational duties. Thus I gave the standard, authorized reply. But then I had an idea. I said, "If you're inspired by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and by this purport which encourages us to chant twenty-four hours a day, then who can stop you? Even while you do your particular duty you can go on chanting. We must chant at least sixteen rounds, but throughout the day, wherever you are working, you can find some time and chant more rounds. And even when not on beads, you can speak the holy name. This was also implied in the purport by a quote from the *Skanda Purāṇa*: 'The name of the Lord need not be chanted with regard to place, time, circumstantial conditions ... or other factors.' There are no hard and fast rules. No one can stop you. And even if someone stops you, you can chant in your mind. What do you think?"

Anantadeva said, "*Boa proposta*" (good proposal). And I replied, "I think I'll try to follow that proposal myself."

Meeting with saṅkīrtana devotees

There are several preaching centers which support Nova Gokula farm and also fifteen traveling devotees. They all attended the one-day festival, and I got a chance to talk with them. I learned that the *saṅkīrtana* here is free of undercover tactics or devious approaches. Most of the devotees distribute books, but along with that they sell incense. Thus, the television commercial, "If you buy here you'll save enough money to buy a book and incense." All the devotees go out wearing either *dhotī* or *sārī*, and they say their rapport with the people is congenial. Jaya Gokula dāsa, the *saṅkīrtana* leader, said, "*Saṅkīrtana* in Brazil is like going to a party. The people like devotees."

So when some of the devotees here complained about the poor national economy, or about the fact that they cannot distribute as many books as in other parts of the country, because of their commitment to Nova Gokula, I suggested that they count their blessings and not complain. I hinted at the sad state of *saṅkīrtana* in America. Each country has its own set of austerities, and although there is still more money flowing in the U.S.A., no supermarket will advertise, "Save money here and give it to the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees." So far in Brazil they have distributed eleven million books. It was nice to talk about this on Gaura-pūrṇimā and to try to assist the *saṅkīrtaneros*. One of Prabhupāda's letters which I read from gave the example of the railway company which had the motto, "keep the wheels moving." This can also be our motto:

... I saw one bulletin of Indian Railways in which it was specifically advised that every railway servant should see to it that the wheel of the carriages or vehicles must be moving always, which means that the railway is going nicely. Similarly all of us should see that our literatures are profusely distributed. That means that our missionary work is going on nicely. Otherwise we are simply sleeping and eating. The literature we have already designated as *brihat mridunga*. So distribution of literature means great Sankirtan.

—letter of October 9, 1971, to Karandhara

At 4:00 P.M. we gathered outside the open door to the Deity room. The *ārati* was brief, and then the *choṭa* Gaura-Nitāi Deities were placed onto a small palanquin. The large Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti* also rode on a big comfortable palanquin. Prabhupāda took his sandalwood cane with him, and he looked very satisfied. He wore light-colored saffron light silk, and even without being tied down, he rode safely as two men carried him Indian-style. The surrounding mountains and white mist took on a new aspect—nature receiving the *darśana* of Prabhupāda and Gaura-Nitāi. The Deities shone golden, carried by Dhanvantari Swami, who walked barefoot. A light sprinkling of rain began, and Rūpa Gosvāmī dāsa held a large umbrella over Prabhupāda. We passed devotees along the way, like so many villagers who came out and bowed down before the procession.

As we reached the temple building the palanquins fit easily through the wide open doors. A three-year-old boy was so excited that he ran into the temple still wearing his racing shoes. A *vyāsāsana* was set up for Prabhupāda as well as a table with many liquids

ready for *abhiṣeka*, and a fire *yajña* arena. But first—a *gurukula* dramatic skit.

“JAGĀI-MĀDHĀI!” They staggered into the temple room, the two strongest and tallest *gurukula* boys, intent and unembarrassed. They shouted their lines back and forth, greatly enjoying their moments as drunken louts in *caitanya-līlā*. Their bodies bore artificial marks of big scars, and they passed a plastic bottle back and forth and caroused around, quickly spitting out their lines of menacing Portuguese. A group of about half a dozen very young girls in *sārīs* came onstage giggling and were sent off screaming in fear by Jagāi and Mādhāi. A five-year-old “old man” with a white cotton beard came on leaning heavily on a cane and nursing his aching back. Within a few moments Jagāi and Mādhāi attacked him, knocked him to the ground, and kicked him. Then a beautiful Kṛṣṇacaraṇa dāsa, playing the part of Lord Nityānanda, came on with Haridāsa Ṭhākura. The boys were noticeably slimmer than the two drunkards, but unafraid. Nityānanda was especially effulgent. Act one ended as Jagāi and Mādhāi chased everyone offstage, including the little old man, who picked up his cane and skipped out like a five-year-old.

Act two: The drunkards caroused and sat down to play cards and drink. Again Nityānanda and Haridāsa entered, with *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*. The Portuguese was rapid and strong, back and forth. No one was stumbling over lines or shy. Nityānanda matched Jagāi’s violent sounds with strong but compassionate rhetoric. Jagāi threatened with body language, and Nityānanda implored him, gesturing, and inviting him to please chant the holy names of God. Nityānanda meant no ill toward the brothers, but simply wished to save them. Jagāi and Mādhāi had had enough sermonizing. Lakṣmaṇa dāsa, the bigger boy,

reached under his *dhotī* and pulled out a facsimile of a broken pot. With booming tones of anger he threw back his arm and smashed the pot against Nityānanda's head. Nityānanda seemed to be actually hurt, and there was a shock of silence in the audience. Then he dropped his *mṛdaṅga* (Los Angeles manufactured) which made a big noise. Red wounds appeared on his forehead and arm.

Although it was just a childrens' skit, still it was no joke. This is the history of the world: the demons versus the devotees. A boy ran out crying "Caitanya!" Within seconds, a plain-looking Caitanya, with just a *brahmacārī's* yellow *dhotī*, came in. He had no prop in his hand, but by the indication of his finger we could understand he was readying the *cakra*. Lord Caitanya took command of the stage by delivering a strong speech to the brothers, who were silent. He was considerably slighter in build than Jagāi and Mādhāi, yet we could understand that he had a mystic weapon. His speech completed, Lord Caitanya moved forward and cried, "*Cakra! Cakra!*" (Then I remembered hearing the boys crying "*Cakra!*" this morning during rehearsal.) Lord Nityānanda moved quickly to intervene with more rapid speech, not a word of which I could understand—but it was all drama. Soon the brothers relented and bowed at the feet of Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda. Nityānanda burst into a merry boy's smile, beaming with the joy of *gurukula* ecstasy. We won! "*Śrī kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtana ki jaya!*" He picked up the *mṛdaṅga* and led the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and the whole group, including the little old man in the white cotton beard and the coterie of little girls, exited.

Outside, a heavy rain began, and we commenced the Deity *abhiṣeka*.

March 4, travel day

To the traveler:
May Lord Nārāyaṇa protect
your feet in the car
may He protect your head
from bumping against the roof
may the Lord of intelligence
protect your thoughts
may the Lord of *bhakti* bless you
to follow the *boa proposta*,
to always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa
even when you've finished
the minimum *japa* quota
and even while sitting
in the "*āsana*" of the car.

The road to Rio

May Lord Nārāyaṇa bless our aggressive car driver. We are parked outside a luncheonette in a rainy season downpour. I wish I had at least achieved attentive chanting of this morning's sixteen rounds. In this way each day passes.



In Vista Alegre
there's a luncheonette without seats
and here the people eye us,
while they're eating
and while their radio plays
George Harrison's
"My Sweet Lord."
*I really want to see you, Lord,
but it takes so long,
Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa ...*
If the people would just listen
they'd hear it too,
but it takes so long ...

ISKCON Rio de Janeiro

From the room where I'm staying I can see (when the weather is clear) the famous Rio statue of Jesus Christ The Redeemer. He is standing on the top of a cliff which overlooks the city, his arms spread out perpendicularly, blessing or embracing the world. On entering the city, I was surprised to notice several advertisements on billboards in direct mockery of this Christ statue. One billboard showed a used car dealer posed in a caricature of Christ The Redeemer with a little cartoon halo over his head. In another caricature the "Christ" wore a sweater and looked angry, saying something about "Banco." Of course, they do this in America with the Statue of Liberty, but I expected more reverence for the form of Christ in Catholic Rio.

In this neighborhood the buildings are packed in closely, tiled roofs at different heights. The devotees have their own walled-in world, but the material world surrounds them tightly on all sides. On my first day here, I still can't figure out which roofs belong to the temple. Very nearby I hear a loud, coarse voice of a woman which I don't think is coming from ISKCON quarters. The nearest windows from the next-door building that look down on my room are inhabited by nondevotee neighbors. After a week in Nova Gokula, I had come to believe that even the trees and birds are pious residents engaging in *bhakti-yoga*. In Nova Gokula, for as far as you can see, there are no activities except those of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. But in Rio we are a tiny "Śvetadvīpa" within a universe of *māyā*.

ISKCON Rio is a three-story rented building, but nothing ornate as in São Paulo. One of the senior disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Loka Sākṣī, teaches a government sponsored course in *Āyurveda*, and there is a room with school desks and chalkboard for this purpose. Another devotee teaches a course in palmistry, and another in philosophy. They aim to develop this into a Bhaktivedanta Institute. Devotees also run a daily dinner program in a room that's outfitted with tables and chairs.

When we arrived they happily showed us the newspaper which had just come out with a front-page photo and story on the ISKCON Rio Gaura-pūrṇimā festival. Five hundred guests attended, even though it was a Thursday evening. And that's without any Hindu population in town.

There's a nice outdoor stone patio, and a small wedge of a park. I also saw mango and coconut trees, all within the rented compound.

The temple's immediate neighbor is a fortlike Catholic church in honor of the Virgin Mary, *Nossa Senhora de Gloria*. After touring the temple, we walked outside and almost immediately stepped onto the church grounds. The devotees said that Gaurapūrṇimā coincided this year with a Catholic holiday in honor of the holy name. We saw workers dismantling an outdoor stage or altar. I wandered into the church and was impressed by the larger-than-life-sized statue of Our Lady of Gloria who was on a shelf, high above the main altar. She was dressed in blue robes and her face was not merely stylized art, but very personal and humanlike. She held the large infant Jesus in her arms. There were two other statues of saints on the sides of the church, old pews, and the usual stone water fountain in the rear.

"What is this?" Nārāyaṇa-jvara asked. "Is this some kind of devotion?"

"Yes," I said. "We recognize it as God consciousness."

We walked outside again and chanted *japa* while circumambulating the church. From here we could also see the bay of Rio de Janeiro.

"In the early morning," Nārāyaṇa-jvara said, "it's very peaceful here. If you want you can come to chant."

Yes, I want to chant always—in the little garden within the ISKCON park, around the church of *Nossa Senhora* and by the bay, in my room, in my words, because Kṛṣṇa's name is the only way out of this world of sorrows.

Saturday, March 5

As the city moves around me and roars with car traffic and occasional human shrieks, I am looking for references to this morning's *Bhāgavatam* class.

The verse (3.27.17) is a statement by Śrīmatī Devahūti to Lord Kapila: "My dear *brāhmaṇa*, does material nature ever give release to the spirit soul?" Some devotee will probably raise his hand and ask the question, "But I thought we're not supposed to be interested in liberation?" There appears to be a contradiction: many statements advise us to work for liberation, and yet we hear that the Vaiṣṇava doesn't care for *mukti*. Śrīla Prabhupāda succinctly answered this question in a letter from 1972:

You inquire why, if the devotee is struggling very hard to be free of the clutches of *māyā*, then how can he not be interested in such liberation? That is a contradiction. The devotee is not interested in liberation, but in serving; as such, the devotee is already liberated. So liberation is not very important business—it doesn't matter if he is liberated or nonliberated. The idea is that nobody should serve Kṛṣṇa with motive, even up to liberation, he should serve for service sake. Liberation from *māyā* means engaging himself in the service of the Lord. So one should strive to become the servant of the supreme, and in that position he is automatically liberated and free from the clutches of *māyā*. So when it is said that one should strive to be free of the clutches of *māyā*, it is simply another way of saying one should strive to be a servant of the Lord, not that being free from *māyā* is the goal of striving, but that the serving is the goal of striving. Liberation is the constitutional position of the living entity: the Lord is great and the living entity is subordinate and servant of the Lord. So one should try to extricate himself from the clutches of *māyā* in order to regain his healthy, normal condition

as a servant of Kṛṣṇa, not just to get himself liberated.
But once in His service, he is liberated already.

—February 27, 1972, to Mohanananda

Also, Śrīla Prabhupāda has written in a Third Canto purport that a devotee has “given up that sort of hope”—the hope of liberation. He doesn’t think himself qualified. He knows that he’s committed many acts of willful disobedience in lifetimes previous to this one. So how can he expect to be one hundred percent free? Therefore, in humility he doesn’t expect liberation, but he prays to be situated as the servant of the Supreme Lord in this life and the next. Lord Kṛṣṇa is so pleased by such a devotee that He brings him back to Godhead. Kṛṣṇa Himself liberates His humble servant, even if the devotee cannot perceive how he is becoming liberated.

The perfect desire of a pure devotee is expressed by Lord Caitanya, “All I want is to have Your causeless devotional service in my life, birth after birth.”

A few verses after this morning’s verse by Deva-hūti, Lord Kapila gives His conclusive reply: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: One can get liberation by seriously discharging devotional service unto Me and thereby hearing for a long time about Me or from Me. By thus executing one’s prescribed duties, there will be no reaction, and one will be freed from the contamination of matter” (*Bhāg.* 3.27.21).

The Christ statue

At 2 A.M. he was lit up by electric light beams, a golden form over the city of sin. (Rio has the highest crime rate in the world. We always hear of murders.) During the day he gives brief *darśanas* and then is enveloped in seaside mist and clouds. You see him for five minutes, then he's gone for an hour. He has become a commonplace symbol.

Bliss and work

When an audience is sitting on the floor, listening attentively, and I have a good translator, *that's* blissful service.

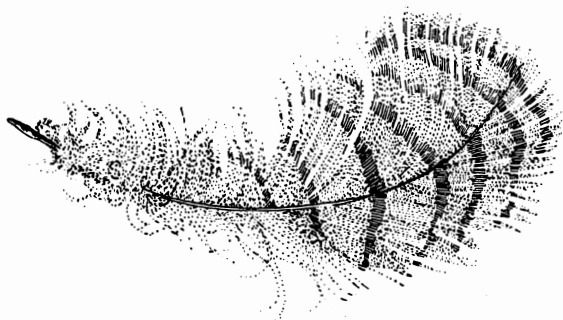
Also, there is the *work* of chanting *japa* with the devotees. Will they see the author of *Manual de Reforma Japa* nodding asleep? No! Get up, walk back and forth with them, on this outdoor patio.

Surrounding the patio are four large trees, a carambola, a sapoti, a mango, and an avocado tree, situated like four legs of a giant elephant. The tree trunks are whitewashed, and during the *japa* hours devotees walk back and forth under the cover of branches and thick leaves. The floor here is made of inlaid rectangles of gray stone. Everything has an old, unpolished appearance, but at least it's not plastic. In the far distance we can see Christ's golden silhouette against the sky. After an hour of *japa*, we suddenly heard what sounded like mechanical water sprinklers. Devotees say they're *cigarras* (cicadas).

Walking back and forth, *this is it*. Don't take this time and place and association for granted. This is the cream of the human population of this country. And

when I travel to another continent and go to an ISKCON place, there also will be a *japa* period and again I can walk back and forth with the best flowers of the youth of that population. To stay in their company all you have to do is remain awake and chant and join the flow—you're bound to catch your own rascal mind by the *mahā-mantra*. Maybe we have earned the right to do this by austerities in past lives, or *ajñāta sukṛti*, and certainly by Prabhupāda's mercy—but now it's easy. Just walk or sit and chant. I don't even have to speak the local language. No one will interrupt us. For at least an hour and a half, stay with them. This is also recommended by Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura in *Hari-nāma Cintāmaṇi* as the remedy to inattentive chanting:

If indifference or lack of attraction for the Name is present, one should take association of Vaiṣṇavas who are properly chanting in some place sheltered from the material influence. By chanting in that situation his absorption in material things will be reduced; and inspired by the conduct of the Vaiṣṇavas he will give up that fault. Gradually the heart will get attraction for the Name, and will be anxious for the nectar of the Name. The advanced devotees have recommended that one live in a place where Kṛṣṇa has His pastimes, near Tulasī, in the company of the Vaiṣṇavas, and gradually increase the period of chanting.



We cancelled the visit to a downtown church, because—why go? I have not come to South America as a connoisseur of Roman Catholic churches. Neither will we go to the beach, although he said, “Everyone who comes to Rio visits the beach.” Then, shall I stay in my room? Yes, unless I can go out for a Kṛṣṇa conscious meeting. When there’s no opportunity for preaching outside or for chanting the holy name in public, better to stay indoors, even if it’s a sweaty room with noisy neighbors. This opportunity to turn from a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* volume to a *Gītā* reference, or to write down a Kṛṣṇa conscious thought, or to pace and chant a few more rounds is real opulence. Preparing for an evening *Bhagavad-gītā* class is not an insignificant thing. They are inviting the congregation tonight. It is a matter of fixing one’s concentration on the Supreme.

Tonight’s class is on the Universal Form. I’ll speak of the superiority of the original form of Kṛṣṇa whom only fools deride. Tomorrow morning’s class is about those who speculate that they have attained liberation, but who haven’t actually removed the cause of their bondage, namely envy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. So there is no shortage of topics to study. And I have not exhausted even a single verse. Śrīla Prabhupāda will be pleased with me if I study and speak. Yes I’m inward, and yes I could do much more preaching. And yet, if I could enter within a single *Bhagavad-gītā* verse (like verse 4.9), I could meet Kṛṣṇa face to face and completely forget the material world. *Then*, when I spoke, people would listen.

Congregational preaching

The ISKCON devotees of Rio de Janeiro seem to have a healthy respect for what they call an "external devotee." They know that they depend on their congregation and the congregation depends on the festivals and programs at the temple. They don't have a derogatory attitude towards "fringy" devotees, even though many of the congregation members are initiated and were once living in the temple. Recently, when the temple devotees were discussing whether to serve non-Ekādaśī preparations when Ekādaśī fell on a Sunday, the congregation members objected. Some said, "Are we devotees or not?" They certainly didn't want to take non-Ekādaśī preparations on Ekādaśī. And similarly, they don't like it when the temple observes Gaura-pūrnīmā or another Vaiṣṇava holiday on a Sunday even though the holiday actually takes place during the week. They want to come, at least in the evening, and observe the holiday on the day it actually occurs. From what I have heard of the devotees of Rio, they sound a bit like Californians. Although I couldn't speak their language, they were alert during the evening *Bhagavad-gītā* class, and we shared knowing smiles.

Sunday, March 6

There was tremendous noise almost all night long. It sounded like workmen dragging metal barrels. It was very nearby, with the workmen yelling back and forth as they dragged the mighty weights.

I missed regular sleep, but couldn't figure out exactly what the noise was. I think it has something to do with the church of Our Lady next door. It seems

that another building which is nestled very intimately beside the ISKCON temple is a part of Our Lady's church. Now today there is more noise as one of the workers is stacking up metal chairs in anticipation of a big meeting. Also, some of the "*pūjārīs*" have been arranging flowers. They take a bunch of white blossoms and group them around some leaves with a stiff board behind them. They have been making these all morning and carrying them into Our Lady's church. The family who is making them, a middle-aged man and his wife, could hardly be called priests, or *pūjārīs*, in the strict sense. They are workers, and yet it is church work. The flowers and leaves are already wilting even as they bring them into the church.

The church was busy from around 11 A.M. to 12. It is a bright sunny day with a clear blue sky, and many families have come. The men are dressed up in Western suits, even fashionable cream-colored summer suits. Most of the men are elderly, but the younger generation is also present. Our Lady's temple is like a fort with many sides, and everyone congregated outside, either before or after the mass. Young mothers held up their babies for a group photo. When I saw what looked like a young niece kissing her uncle, it reminded me of our old family visits to the relatives in Queens, New York. It's all very social and familial, grouped around the worship of *La Senhora de Glorias*. And the interesting part is that these two churches, ISKCON and the Catholic, are so inter-linked in terms of the physical buildings, that you can hardly separate the ISKCON garage from the Catholic driveway. Forms of God are being worshiped in both buildings, and sometimes you can't tell whether the singing you hear is a devotee chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, or someone from next door.

I asked *Iṣāna dāsa*, the temple president, about his relation with the church people. "It's not bad, it's not good," he said. "We have normal relations like with any neighbor."

"Do you ever talk with them?" I asked.

"Not really," he said. "When we meet the priest we say hello, he smiles. He asks us to move our car. We ask him to have his parishoners move their cars. That's it."

I was trying to guess which Lenten festival was held yesterday, with all the flowers and crowds. Now I've learned it was a wedding.

Hari-nāma in Rio

We got out of our car by a park with a big Mahatma Gandhi statue. Then we plunged into the city. It was like Manhattan, a big-time city, and not just a few blocks of it, but unending streams of people, big stores, little stores, juice stands, beggars, wealthy, police guards, everyone....

A flashing sign indicated the temperature, ninety degrees Fahrenheit. You could feel the heat beating against your body. As a result, people move slower than they do in the North—to see someone rushing is the exception. The slower motions seem to give people more time to notice and to enjoy the *hari-nāma*.

You could almost smell the cheap pulp reeking from the newstands. The magazines and store posters of Rio have more nudity, in more varieties and in larger sizes, than anywhere we've been so far. At first I was like a curious animal released in a new place, exploring the type of sidewalk material (acres of inlaid mosaics and designs), looking up at the architecture, and sensing the people's attitudes. But gradually I accepted that it was like a South American New York City, and then it seemed less strange.

But the people were entirely receptive! I didn't notice a single disgusted look, and I'm good at noticing that. Mostly people went about their business with an easygoing "live and let live." And many showed pleasure in seeing us.

Īśāna dāsa and two other *brahmacārīs* shared the lead singing so that both lead and response were loud. Īśāna is young, enthusiastic, a *brahmacārī* of the new generation. He and his men varied the tunes in a wonderful, entertaining pace, and coaxed us to sing louder and raise our arms. The party was about fifteen strong. The devotees were soon perspiring and beaming happily. We danced in a triple file and although I was in the first rank, I simply followed Īśāna's signals. With a flick of his finger he showed the way, and we plunged down another congested market lane, another "Broadway," another street packed with shoppers and business people. Sometimes we had to penetrate through solid walls of people. Whether they were standing on queue or waiting for a bus, I could never tell, but when we dove into their ranks they easily parted and we came through, regrouping and going on.

March 7

On board the airplane at 11 P.M., ready to leave Rio de Janeiro.

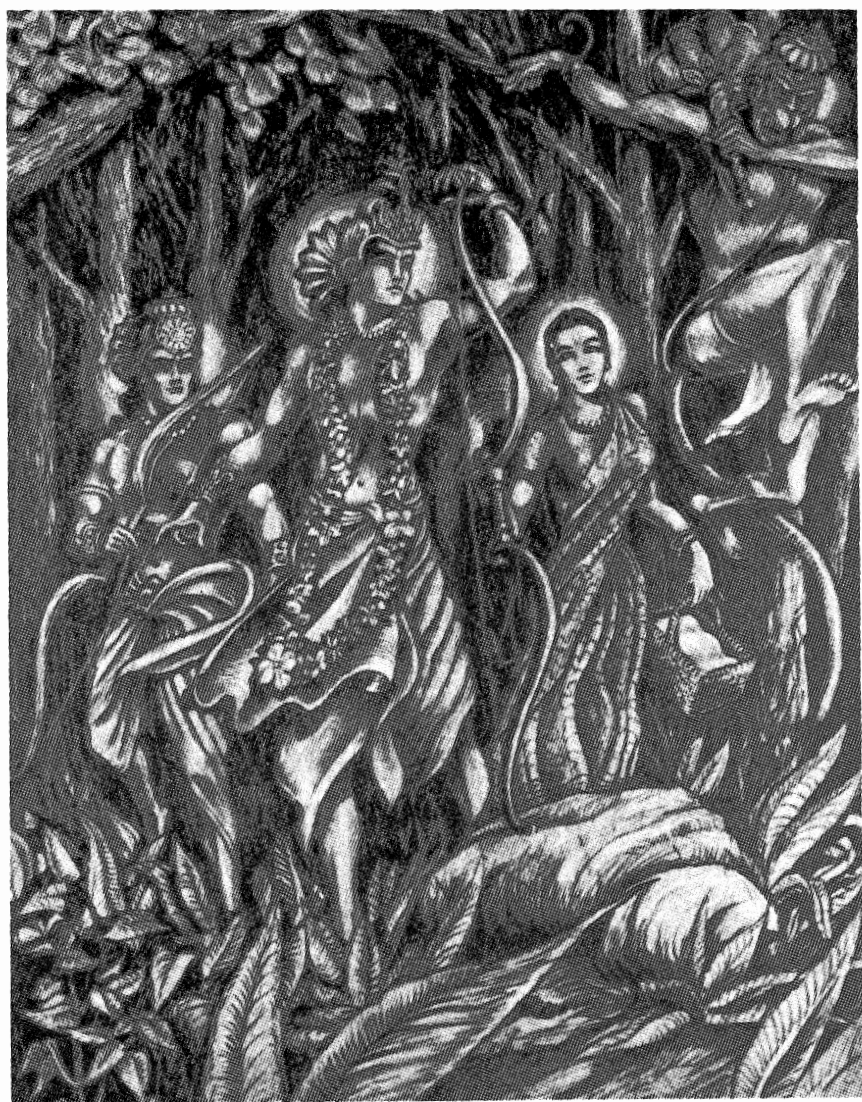
The flight time is passing by easily listening to Amala-bhakta dāsa's rendition of *Rāmāyaṇa*. Thank you dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, thank you Śrīla Prabhupāda, for letting us travel around the world preaching *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Please make us worthy; please protect us from falldown.

Comparing Oneself to Rāmāyaṇa Heroes

When I heard *Rāmāyaṇa*
 I thought,
 who can compare to Hanumān's
 strength and courage?
 Yet I also have a *tiny* talent
 for service to Kṛṣṇa.
 And when I heard of Sītā's
 beauty and chastity
 I thought,
 "I also have a God-blessed
 quality to serve."
 Is it wrong
 to think like that?

I don't rank myself
 with the heroes and heroines
 of *rāma-līlā*, but
 is it wrong *to think of myself at all?*
 Śrīla Prabhupāda told me,
 "That feeling you have '*I am something*'
 is not wrong, but who are you?
 You're a servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Hearing *Rāmāyaṇa* I choose
 the God conscious way,
 following the *guru*
 as his tiny servant.
 Spider to Hanumān,
 unworthy to even think of Sītā,
 I'm a speck of dust,
 but a sentient one,
 hearing and chanting.



APPENDIXES

Poems from the Road

Calling out to Śrīla Prabhupāda III

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, who stands bravely between his devotees and death, may we not desert our places in the phalanx of Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* army, where you have placed us;

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, the waves of Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* were spread by you much further than the waves made directly by Gaura-Nitāi, although you are simply extending Their mercy, and your mercy is also the personified grace of Bhaktivinoda Thākura and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī;

O true teacher, who never invented theories to surpass the original truth, but who handed the delicate and delicious mango-truth of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and passed it into the hands of thousands of hungry followers;

O transplanter of the *tulasī* of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, your personal work continues now and will grow in importance into the twenty-first century and beyond that, as willed by Lord Caitanya;

O Prabhupāda, you are the representative of all *bhaktivedantas*, but you are an individual, rare soul. You kindly came to the Lower East Side of New York and acted humbly as if it were something not impossible, and yet you performed *kīrtana* and cooked and spoke as no one before or since has done;

O Prabhupāda, where is there purity such as yours? Where is there dedication to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa such as yours? Where is there an example of humility and daring such as yours? Where is there an example of such a benefactor as you? O Prabhupāda, in your absence what can we do? Please enlighten us again, take us by the hand and lead us through the dark of Kali-yuga.

O Prabhupāda, whose followers never tire of praising him because he is their life-breath;

O Prabhupāda, who is like the cow that protects the devotee-calves, and who is like a policeman to catch the Māyāvādī thieves by the throats—all glories to your actions in this world;

O master, whose instructions bind us to the regulative principles of devotional service, whose timely presence in our lives has saved us from descending to painful lower species of life, who reinforces the teachings of the previous *ācāryas*, and who says "No!" to illicit desires;

O Prabhupāda, who invites us to the Sunday *prasādam* feast of many excellent preparations such as spiced *sabjīs*, tender *purīs*, sweet rice, and *halavā*, all prepared personally by him and his servants, and who induces us to "Take more!" until we forget all our wayward desires, being satisfied with Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*;

O Prabhupāda, who leads us from event to event, like the gracious host of a festival, who points the way as the leading explorer on the expedition, and who waits for us at the destination in Kṛṣṇaloka—may we never lose connection to you.

O Prabhupāda, who appeared as the saintly, elderly *guru* of the younger generation, who wore simple *sannyāsī* clothes but accepted gifts like wool sweaters, inexpensive shoes, a gold ring, a watch, but who soon gave away these few possessions to his followers who treasure the remnants as *mahā-prasādam*;

O Prabhupāda, who went to England to teach what they had forgotten—which is God, the prime importance of God consciousness, the knowledge of *how* God is great, and the knowledge of the *Bhagavad-gītā*—and who revealed that God is the all-attractive Supreme Person Kṛṣṇa;

O Prabhupāda, who revealed the hidden *avatāra*, Lord Caitanya, and His covered Vṛndāvana, Śrīdhāma Māyāpur, and who continues to reveal to us the way to fulfill the innermost desires of our hearts—our intimate loving exchange with Śrī Kṛṣṇa;

O master of the esoteric arts of *bhakti*, O practical provider of our daily needs, O *guru*, who is always the master and whose followers know that they are always the foolish disciples, please don't let us drift away from you, your books, and your Kṛṣṇa conscious society of devotees.

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, whom we think of day and night;

O Prabhupāda, who came to America with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as his only means, and who sold volumes to bookstores in order to pay for groceries, and who thought in the beginning, "They will never accept this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, but let me try";

O Prabhupāda, who happily endured the austerities of New York winters on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa, O master, who years later made thousands of disciples and had many houses to reside in but who said, "I was happier in the beginning in New York because I had no one to depend on but Kṛṣṇa";

O Prabhupāda, who favored New York City by opening his first ISKCON center there and by singing in Tompkins Square Park, who beat the one-headed drum hours at a time and sang strongly, who braved all the rudeness and strangeness just to deliver us from birth and death by giving us the holy names of Kṛṣṇa;

O Prabhupāda, whose preaching was guided by Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose preaching was "to go in like a needle and come out like a plow," whose preaching was pure, and who stayed to do it, who fulfilled all the qualities of a saint such as tolerance, mercy, friend to all, and fixed in the absolute truth;

O Prabhupāda, who loved his disciples and nurtured them like a mother cares for her children, and who, like a father, imparted to his sons and daughters the gift of courage to stand and fight; O Prabhupāda, please live vibrantly in our thoughts and actions.

Go On Writing

Blissful vocation—
 a Kṛṣṇa conscious writing life
 in my own language!
 But some say, "It's already been done,
 by great, *pure* devotees!"

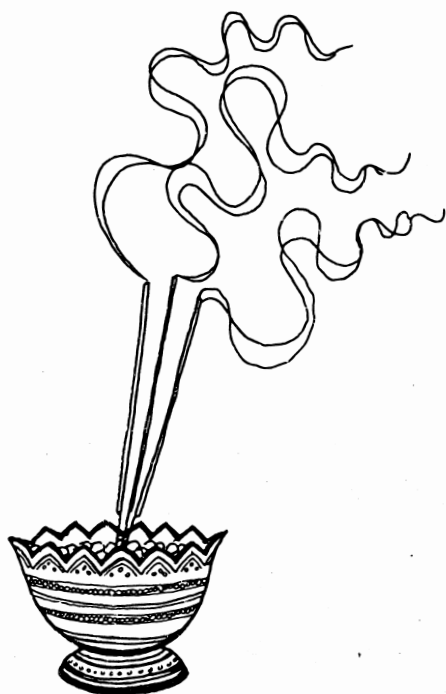
"Yet every group," I say,
 "has its own men and women
 who must reaffirm and reshape the vital truths
 and share them with the group."
 "Well, we've got Vyāsa and Prabhupāda," the
 say,
 "and that's good enough for us."

"Vyāsa is the source," I say
 "the highest standard,
 but we are living now.
 As Vyāsa lives in sound,
 so I want to make him more popular!"

"If you want to make him known," some say,
 "then go sell Prabhupāda's books.
 You want to speak?
 Then talk with folks about the *perfect* book
 Do it in *that* way."

"Fair enough" I say.
 It's a writer's bind—
 devotees won't read it
 'cause you're not liberated
 and the nondevotees scorn
 'cause "you're not a true artist."

But Prabhupāda is with us writers:
"Please continue in your writing
of songs and poems for Kṛṣṇa
because singing Kṛṣṇa's praises
is the highest type of spiritual activity
and will give Him great enjoyment.
In the midst of your heavy duties
go on writing something
glorifying the Lord
and put our philosophy into words;
this writing is necessary for everyone."



Excerpts from Recent Letters

After all the talk

I have to admit that the things you say are true, about mismanagement and hypocrisy within ISKCON. But after all the talk and the admitting, what shall we do? I think it is best to rectify rather than to give up the ship of ISKCON. So now all around the ISKCON world there is an attempt, I think, at rectification and being humble again.

No other hope for happiness

I am sorry to hear your anxiety, feelings of inferiority, etc. But it seems that simply by praying to the Deity, reading Prabhupāda's books, and other basic programs, you are getting some relief. Actually that is the only relief. We can never find any peace in this material world by different adjustments. Even if someone becomes successful, confident, prosperous, happy, well-liked, it will all end in one kind of disaster or another. The only hope for happiness is in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The devotee can always come back to the Lord

You are crying out from within the material energy and advising other devotees that they should not become "lost" like you, but should cling to the instructions of the spiritual master. But by the very

nature of your expression it seems that you have gained valuable realizations.

So are you really so stuck in the academic world? Have you had your fill of the academic studies yet? It doesn't matter. You can serve Kṛṣṇa anywhere, whether in the academic community or outside. If you thought there was enjoyment in certain material pursuits, and if you have found out that those wells are still dry and poisonous, then you can rejoice at having learned that lesson. The fact is that we cannot just follow spiritual life superficially, even by living in the temple or dressing as a devotee or saying the prayers. We have to actually desire Kṛṣṇa and be rid of the material *anarthas*. If you have become rid of your material *anarthas*, it is a cause for rejoicing, no matter how you had to become free of them.

I don't think I ever said that I would never completely trust a fallen devotee. At least I don't think like that now. Everyone has equal chance, no matter what they have done, to come back to Kṛṣṇa again. We are all like prodigal sons and daughters. And Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *api cet su-durācāro....* So the devotee can always return to the Lord if he is repentant.

How Kṛṣṇa protects His devotee

Regarding whether a devotee can be killed, yes, I think Prabhānu gave the right interpretation. A devotee is protected by Kṛṣṇa in terms of consciousness. Very often the Lord gives protection to the devotee's physical situation in this material world. But that is not an absolute protection, compared to the absolute promise that Kṛṣṇa will protect the consciousness. Otherwise, a devotee might have loss of

faith, thinking, "Why didn't Kṛṣṇa protect me?" when there was some physical harm or even death. Sometimes Christians are puzzled by Lord Jesus' saying at the cross, "O Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But whatever it means, we can't think that a devotee expects God to uphold him in all the physical circumstances. That would be a fanatical demand on the part of the devotee.

"Do I have to get initiated?"

You have asked what is the benefit of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa for one who is not initiated in the Kṛṣṇa conscious *sampradāya*. I think even this answer has to be applied in individual cases. But the general philosophy is that immense good can be gained by anyone chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa provided he receives it and practices it in the right way. So although you may not be initiated, you are getting the holy names in disciplic succession. Already you have adopted much of the Kṛṣṇa conscious way of life. If you read Prabhupāda's books, associate with his devotees, avoid the four sinful activities, and chant with a quota, as you are doing, and if you accept the philosophy, at least theoretically, that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then you are certainly, for most practical purposes, within the Kṛṣṇa *sampradāya*. (I believe that Śrīla Prabhupāda also said your Guru Nanak of the Sikh community actually recognized Kṛṣṇa, or Govinda, as the Supreme Truth and recommended chanting His names. So in that sense Guru Nanak is also within the Kṛṣṇa *sampradāya*.) If all these things are considered, you may consider that you are already within the Kṛṣṇa *sampradāya*.

As for formal initiation, it is the natural conclusion for one engaged in these practices. It links one to the *sampradāya* and solidifies the vows that one makes to the *guru* for a lifetime commitment regarding the four rules and the sixteen rounds and other service. Sooner or later formal initiation is necessary. In your own case, I would just encourage you to go on chanting without immediately thinking of the necessity of initiation. Don't think that unless you get initiated all your practices are going for nothing. Rather, Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that even a small service done in *bhakti-yoga* never suffers loss or diminution, and it can save one from the greatest fear, falling down to the lower species at the time of death through *samsāra*. I think the more you chant and practice, Kṛṣṇa in the heart will reveal to you more about what you should do regarding initiation.

Be a grhastha or brahmacārī

So your Godbrother told you that householder life isn't worth it. Well, he is right. But everyone has to learn that for himself. Even advanced persons sometimes get married. It is hard to say what is best for certain people. If you study Prabhupāda's letters, he usually reciprocates with the person's attitude. If someone feels determined to remain a *brahmacārī*, Prabhupāda may tell him that actually that is the best thing and that household life is entangling. But if someone has made his resolve to get married and writes Prabhupāda about that, he may bless him fully and sincerely, and tell him that that is the best thing to do. Objectively speaking, the *brahmacārī* life is better, provided you can actually follow it strictly. But to be a

wishy-washy, nonsense *brahmacārī* would not be better than a resolved, humble, and determined *grhastha*. You are right, all those extras that have to be done as a *grhastha*—taking care of the wife, etc., etc.—life is much simpler without it.

How is Prabhupāda present in ISKCON?

You have asked to what extent is Prabhupāda present in ISKCON. I don't have any esoteric or mysterious answer, other than what you have also mentioned in your letter: "He is present in his books, in his *mūrti*, and in the hearts of his devotees." You ask to what extent is he present in ISKCON? Perhaps we should also ask, what is ISKCON? In one sense ISKCON is wherever there is a sincere follower of Prabhupāda who accepts his mission and who is worshipping him, reading his books, and following his instructions. So Prabhupāda is certainly present there. He is present also in a GBC meeting when the members are working sincerely on his behalf. I think the very expression you used, "to what extent," helps us to understand this. Kṛṣṇa says as they approach Me so I reciprocate, thus it is with Prabhupāda also. To the extent that we follow his instructions he is more or less present. Deity worship gives us some hint of this also. A statue, or *mūrti*, of Kṛṣṇa if it is not worshiped does not manifest the presence of Kṛṣṇa as much as a Deity which is very much loved by the worshipers. Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with the worshipers. So Prabhupāda is in ISKCON to the extent that there is an ISKCON that wants Prabhupāda.

For a more philosophical understanding you can consult the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja

tells the three ways that Lord Caitanya is present. He is present in His direct manifest *līlā*, as during the time when He was there in India. He is present in different empowered devotees, and one is mentioned, Nṛsimhānanda Brahmācārī. He is present sometimes in very special ways, such as when He comes (invisibly) and takes the *prasādam* which is offered by His mother, or when He appears in the *kīrtana* as performed by Lord Nityānanda, although others cannot see Him. This gives you some other understandings of how a great soul or the Lord is present even when He's not on the planet in His personal form.

Introspection and psychological counselling

You have asked whether introspection in itself is helpful. Of course it is, as we try to actually understand who we are and how much we are taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Just to give you examples, say somebody is a *brahmācārī*, and yet within himself he is really not practicing strictly; or even if he is practicing externally, he has a strong desire to get married; or someone is doing some other service, and he is receiving praise for it, but he is very dissatisfied. In examples like this, introspection is needed to understand who one really is and what to do to come to grips with himself, even if it involves acknowledging his lack of surrender. To acknowledge one's shortcomings does not necessarily mean to indulge in them. So introspection in these ways can be very positive. Of course, like any good thing, it can be used in the wrong way. If introspection becomes a feverish habit of always examining oneself instead of paying

attention to the Deity and to the chanting, etc., then it can become counter-productive. But you have also raised the point that introspection has to be supplemented by advice from other quarters. Yes, we can't merely listen to the "inner voice." We have to consult *guru* and *sāstra* as well. I agree that the spiritual master is a kind of psychotherapist for the devotee.

I also know, especially in America, that devotees are actually seeing licensed professional psychologists and psychiatrists. It has been a matter of concern for me, because I have actually seen in extreme cases where devotees have been helped, and yet I know that most of these psychiatrists do not really know the purpose of spiritual life, and so they can be detrimental. Therefore, the only real safe psychotherapist is a devotee. But a devotee has to have time to really hear people out. And there has to be a very confidential relationship. Often devotees don't get the protection of complete confidentiality when they speak to another devotee. That would be necessary if we were to have something like psychological counseling from a senior devotee to another devotee. But I don't think the senior devotee would necessarily have to have the professional skills from the different mundane schools of psychology.

Psychology is such an influential science nowadays that we have to come to grips with it in one way or another. We could reject it completely, but then we have to give sound reasons why we can do so and offer "pure psychology," which is not naive but actually addresses people's problems. Or if we use any of the principles of the schools of psychology, we would have to be very, very careful not to become contaminated by their speculations.

Appreciating Kṛṣṇa book

Regarding your difficulty in appreciating the *Kṛṣṇa* book, I wouldn't worry about it too much. As long as you have attraction for other books, just go on reading them. However, I do remember a letter exchange between Prabhupāda and one of the senior women devotees. She wrote Prabhupāda that she had trouble with the *Kṛṣṇa* book because the stories seemed fantastic. Prabhupāda advised her to actually read the *Kṛṣṇa* book as an antidote to that doubt. The *Kṛṣṇa* book is not simply stories because Prabhupāda weaves in purports or explanations, just as he gives purports in other books. If you read those purports carefully, you won't think the stories are fantastic, but you will understand they are displays of the inconceivable energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And you may come to enjoy them.

So I wouldn't avoid the *Kṛṣṇa* book, but if in your limited reading time, you are now more attracted to the other books, go on with them. I am sure that eventually you will be attracted to the all-attractive Personality of Godhead in His *Kṛṣṇa* book form. We must remember also that the *Kṛṣṇa* book is the Tenth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, so it is not unusual that we reach it and appreciate it only after we have read the preliminary literatures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and the earlier cantos.

Miscellaneous advice

In your relationship with me as your spiritual master you should not be afraid, because the spiritual

master is the friend of the disciple. And yet I must admit that I have always maintained a kind of fear of Śrīla Prabhupāda, which in a sense is healthy. It is not that I am afraid of him as a bad person or that he will punish me. But his spiritual position is so awesome, and it is a fact that if I do something wrong, if he gets displeased, *that* is a cause of fear for me. But I think this “relaxed” feeling that you feel in exchanging letters with me is nice, especially since you say you feel this is going to improve your spiritual life.

You speak of your own spiritual life in demeaning tones, sometimes harshly describing your own downfall and position. It is good to be humble, but we shouldn’t overdo self-demeaning attitudes. Those who actually experienced that have a *full realization of it*. Once Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja said that he was lower than a worm in stool. He says that out of a very deep and thorough conviction. This is also based on his very high attraction for Kṛṣṇa. Until we are very, very attached to Kṛṣṇa, we may not be able to have such true humility. But it is good that you are not proud and are trying to curb such tendencies. You are fortunate that your husband is a senior disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and knows much of his instructions and examples. So he can help you. And you can also help to encourage him to increase his service within ISKCON. But your encouragement has to be more indirect, since you are the wife and the husband doesn’t like the wife acting as the *guru*. I hope that you and he can solve your financial worries without much aggravation or extra economic development.

Don't be hopeless

Reflecting on the disappointments in current day ISKCON, you reflect that perhaps the whole *guru-paramparā* is in similar ways infested. What you say is true in part, that there have no doubt been past faults and discrepancies. For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda has informed us of these things as they existed after the disappearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. That is the history of the Gauḍīya Math in India. Similarly, soon after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya, discrepancies started to appear in that *sampradāya* by the *prākṛta-sahajiyā* sect who introduced bogus things into the *sampradāya*. That was later rejuvenated and purified by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa also admits that the message that He brings into the world breaks down in time and has to be fixed. Kṛṣṇa Himself comes into the world to do this, and thus He says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He is starting the *paramparā* anew with Arjuna.

By these examples I think you should admit that not only is there a history of discrepancies but also there is a history of rejuvenation. Why admit only one side of it? Although there is a tendency in persons to cheat, there is also the tendency of reform, and if we believe at all in divine intervention, we must believe that Kṛṣṇa appears Himself, sends His incarnations, and comes in the forms of powerful representatives just to purify the atmosphere. You can read this in the opening verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s Fourth Chapter. Not to accept this would be cynical to the point of agnosticism or atheism.

We have to have some faith in truly spiritual persons. I have no doubts about Prabhupāda. I accept

what he says and I also saw in his example that there was no cheating. He also taught us right from wrong. So I don't think we should generalize from some current bad examples and distrust the whole *sampradāya*. If you do that, who will you turn to?

I remember Prabhupāda once answered a question from a very doubtful person. The person said that it appears so hard to take to spiritual life and to trust in the *guru* that it seems hopeless. Prabhupāda replied that is hopeless for you but not for everyone. So for the person who cannot accept anyone as *guru*, who cannot depend on *sāstra* and *sādhu*, it becomes a hopeless situation. The situation in itself is not hopeless, but some people become too skeptical to be helped.

Prabhupāda gave the example that some person came home and found his house had been robbed and all his dishes were gone. So he decided on the spot never to use kitchen utensils or dishes again. This is a radical and unreasonable conclusion. One has to pick up what has been broken and live again as best one can, using dishes again. There is a risk, but one can learn from bad experiences and try to find persons one can actually trust.

If you think the condition is so bad that you can't trust anyone, then at least you should trust the scriptures and the great *ācāryas* like Śrīla Vyāsadeva, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and the more modern *ācāryas* whose commentaries guide the whole *sampradāya*. The only persons who oppose such faultless *ācāryas* are themselves bogus persons. So study the thing carefully with your intelligence, but don't remain perpetually skeptical of all spiritual help.

Study Notes

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

From the purport to the First Canto, second chapter, text six

“Material existence is temporary, illusory, and full of miseries. There is no happiness at all. There is just the futile attempt to get rid of the miseries, and temporary cessation of misery is falsely called happiness.”

I can see material happiness as illusion. You may claim that it is happiness, but it is very meager happiness. And even that certainly becomes vanquished. We do anything, risk sin and our place in the next life, risk our reputation and our family, just to taste a bit of sense pleasure. We pay any price for it, because the basic material routine is empty and doesn't satisfy the self.

The atheists try to convince us that there is no next life and so no other happiness. The stubborn hedonist doesn't want to accept the facts of life, either in this life or the next. A devotee humbly tries to preach, and should also try to experience *brahma-saukhyam*, so he can attest, “Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sufficient....”

First Canto, chapter three, verse 44, regarding hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam with rapt attention as the way to see Kṛṣṇa

Prabhupāda states that Kṛṣṇa is definitely available in His *darśana* of the *Bhāgavatam*, but we have to hear with rapt attention. For that, we need a pure mind. A pure mind is based on pure action. Pure action is defined as purity in eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating. We cannot come to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with a distraught mind or a life of sinfulness and expect to understand Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It *may* be possible to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in any condition, but we should build our life in such a way that we can hear it properly. Regularly hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the solution to ISKCON problems, and will give us wisdom to live in a dangerous material world.

Yet, simply the desire to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* isn't enough. We have to practice that desire. We should not be stopped by shame or embarrassment when we discover that we are not a very good reader. We simply have to read a great deal and try to improve. At first we may not read with rapt attention, yet we should continue. Any devotee who follows this *sādhana* has a good basis for approaching *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and bringing his attention to the worthy subject matter.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā, chapter 4, 138-158

Lord Kṛṣṇa descended as Lord Caitanya in order to know the sweetness of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes.

Prabhupāda states that we also can see Lord Kṛṣṇa always, just as the *gopis* do, if we develop love of God. That is the practical test of our study of *Śrīmad-*

Bhāgavatam. We are successful when we're able to sit and simply relish the verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja quotes, regarding the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. If we cannot appreciate the beauty of Kṛṣṇa, as stated in these verses, then we are impractical dullards. In addition to hearing, we must perform laborious activities for the spiritual master to prove our love. And the reward of such service will be to relish the hearing of verses describing Kṛṣṇa.

Adi-līlā, chapter 5, 13-22, description of Kṛṣṇaloka

The purport to text 18 contains strong paragraphs describing modern man's inability to receive scriptures. Nevertheless, scriptures are the authorized sources of knowledge. It is always valuable for me to read these purports by Prabhupāda, to protect myself from the onslaught of atheism and agnosticism. Prabhupāda gives examples: wonderful things are happening even within our view, such as a seed containing the potency to produce a banyan tree. The very fact that man is trying to explore outer space gives us the example that there are many, many planets of which we don't know much. Unexplainable phenomena indicate that the truth is only revealed by proper persons.

In text 22 of the fifth chapter there is a six-and-a-half page purport wherein Prabhupāda gives direct and specific information on the looks and the nature of persons who live in Vaikuṇṭha, what their airplanes are like, the absence of material qualities there, and how the *yogis* can travel to Vaikuṇṭha or other planets in the material world.

Practical application of this section: read with faith the discussions of the spiritual world, and go there.

*Comparative Study of Bhagavad-gītā**Śaṅkara's commentary on 2.23*

Śaṅkara's version of the text is itself a commentary: "Him weapons cut not, Him fire burns not, and Him water wets not; Him wind dries not."

He then writes, "Him, i.e., the embodied Self, of whom we are speaking, weapons, such as swords, do not cut." But as Śrīla Prabhupāda remarks in his purport, how can the Supreme Self be "embodied," or conditioned? If we say that the body is a product of ignorance, then how has ignorance covered the Supreme Self? And yet Śaṅkara admits that the Self is embodied. This is an inconsistency.

Śaṅkara is also inconsistent in that he sometimes refers to the Supreme Self as Him, indicating person. It seems that the Māyāvādī sometimes argues in different ways, speaking as if God were a person, for the sake of argument or convenience. To describe the Supreme Truth as impersonal is so untenable, that even Śaṅkara has to use the personal description.

Lord Kṛṣṇa explains later in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.7) that the self is indissoluble, because it is already existing in the form of parts and parcels. The spirit souls cannot be further reduced. But the Absolute Truth does consist of a whole and parts, and these two actually constitute a total Absolute Truth. If the One Self is so all-powerful and completely aloof from matter, and can never be broken up into parts by any weapons, then how can it become subjected to the covering of the mayic material body?

Śaṅkara's comment on 2.24

Here Śaṅkara makes the admirable point that there is no unnecessary repetition in what Lord Kṛṣṇa states in this verse, and in verses such as 20-24. Because the Self is a thing very difficult to understand, "the Lord Vāsudeva again and again introduces the subject and describes the same theme in other words, so that in some way or other the truth may be grasped by the intellect of the mortals, and thus the cessation of their *saṁsāra* may be brought about." Prabhupāda states the same point in a later purport in this second chapter.

Śaṅkara's comment on 2.25

For the word *acintya*, Śaṅkara translates, "unthinkable." He also describes the word *avyakta* as invisible or unmanifest. But the Vaiṣṇava meaning for unmanifest does not indicate that under all conditions the truth is unmanifest. When Lord Kṛṣṇa describes the spiritual world, He says that it is *avyakta*, unmanifest. But this means it is unmanifest for the impure soul only. For something to be unmanifest implies that it has a manifest situation. Śaṅkara describes the Self by so many negative propositions, so that it seems to be non-existent.

The fact is that the Absolute Truth is inaccessible to the senses in our present situation. This is stated in the *śāstra*, *atah śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi....* One cannot know Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Self, with these blunt senses, but He becomes manifest through pure devotional service. Similarly, the self is unthinkable, or not open to

material experiment. But if we hear about him from the *sāstra*, we can know him to some extent.

If, as Śaṅkara says, the Self is completely unthinkable, then there is no point in reading Śaṅkara's commentaries and trying to think about them. If the Self were completely unmanifest and unthinkable, even in a liberated stage, then what is the purpose of striving as a *sannyāsī* or *jñāna-yogi*? As we read Śaṅkara's statements, we get a better understanding of the descriptive phrase for Māyāvādisim as "covered Buddhism." We have heard that the Buddhist thinkers ultimately reject all scriptures, as they try to banish all thinking from their mind. Similarly, Śaṅkara's *nirguṇa brahman* sounds more like *nirguṇa* than *brahman*.

Jaiva-dharma

Synopsis

Chapter 8, eternal religion and conduct of life

While the Vaiṣṇavas were gathered in Godruma, a Vaiṣṇava from Baḍagāchi came and questioned the elderly Haridāsa, who is one of Paramahansa Bābājī's followers. He asked, "How should those who have taken shelter in Vaiṣṇava religion (which is eternal religion) behave with others?"

Haridāsa replied that everyone is a servant of Kṛṣṇa, whether he admits it or not. He then described three classes of devotees, according to the *Bhāgavatam*, Eleventh Canto, second chapter. He described the third class devotee as one who worships the Deity but can't recognize the Lord in others. The third class devotee doesn't really worship the name but only the semblance of the name. "Vaiṣṇavas who utter true divine names are the only Vaiṣṇavas who deserve service."

The second class should have mercy on the third class devotee. The first class devotee is characterized by seeing love of God in all creatures.

On the matter of judging others, Haridāsa said, "Whether a certain Vaiṣṇava is good or better should not be judged. Only a first class Vaiṣṇava has a right to judge in such a way. If a second class Vaiṣṇava judges in this way, he will commit offense."

The narration continues with another question and answer session. A group of Vaiṣṇavas came to visit the devotees at Godruma. This time the inquirer was one Nityānanda dāsa. He asked the devotees to please tell him what category of Vaiṣṇava he's in. Is he first, second, or third? Haridāsa asked him to first tell of his history. Nityānanda told how he had become a devotee, and then Vaiṣṇava dāsa concluded that he was a second class Vaiṣṇava. Nityānanda dāsa then admitted that he was sometimes seeking fame and honor. Haridāsa Bābājī replied, "That hope of honor and fame dies hard. In fact, a drop of real emotion is far better than an ocean of semblance of emotion." Nityānanda dāsa then surrendered to them in ecstasy. He went on to ask a number of questions of Haridāsa, who stressed the importance of association with saints.

Nityānanda dāsa asked, "How should a Vaiṣṇava behave with persons professing other religions?"

Haridāsa replied that there is no other religion except Vaiṣṇava. Religions leading to it are paid respect. Others should not be spoken of maliciously.

Nityānanda dāsa asked, "Is it our duty to preach Vaiṣṇavism?"

Haridāsa replied, "Yes, by all means." And he then quoted Lord Caitanya from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādilīlā*, chapter 9, verses 34-36, how Lord Caitanya was a gardener and commanded others to help Him distribute the fruits.

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