

Lessons from the Road

For Disciples and Friends

Volume Five

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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*The
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**Readers interested in the subject matter of this book are invited
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CHAPTER NINE

Idaho/Traveling Northwest

July 23, 1987
Salt Lake City, Utah

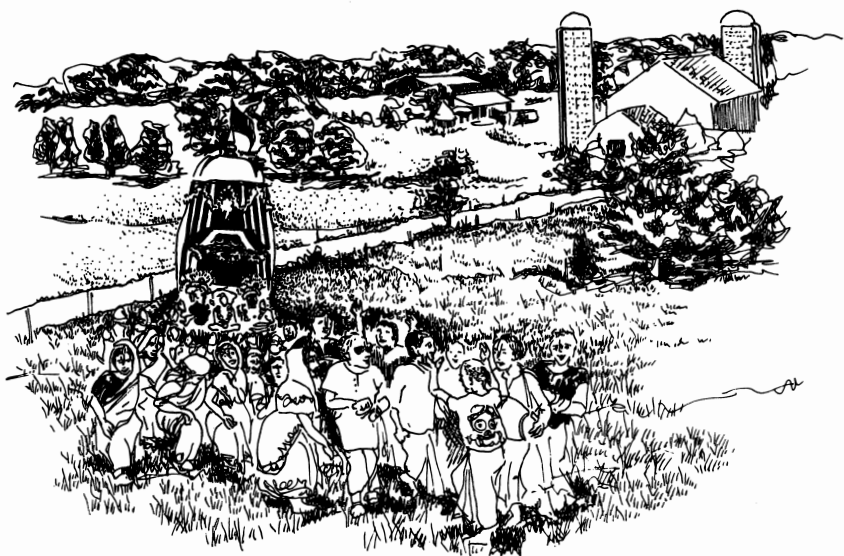
My dear disciples,

Please accept my blessings. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Since many of you are gathered in one place at the Gītā-nāgarī Rātha-yātrā, and since I will not be physically present, I wish to take the opportunity of addressing you briefly.

I trust that the auspicious occasion of Rātha-yātrā will rejuvenate everyone who takes part. It is certainly a magical formula to mix the Jagannātha procession with the environment of Gītā-nāgarī in the summertime. I will never forget the wonderful feeling of pulling the ropes of Lord Jagannātha's cart, climbing up "Govardhana Hill" while the cows move alongside, and all the devotees singing *kīrtana*. . . .

It seems ironic that on the very day of the festival at Gītā-nāgarī I am heading for such a small preaching engagement at Boise, Idaho. In fact, that engagement isn't until tomorrow. Today our assignment is to cover most of the three hundred and fifty miles between Salt Lake City and Boise. But that's all right.



Last night I became involved in management, schedule, and travel—poring over the atlas, talking with Haryāśva, asking Madhu, “Do we have enough money?” . . . What if the Kāmadhuk gets another flat tire? What if we can’t get permission to drive the motorhome across the Canadian border? And so on. Haryāśva smiled, “It’s exciting this way. We never know what’s going to happen. It makes you depend more on Kṛṣṇa.”

In addition to the variables, I wonder, *Is this the best service for me?, What else?* Introspection is valid but not if it becomes a constant dissatisfaction. For example, once we are on the road to Boise, there is no profit in thinking I should have gone to Gītā-nāgarī Rātha-yātrā or San Francisco. Just go on and make the best of it. As a result of my past decisions, today I get Highway 84 West. Today’s travel is my nectar, my Jagannātha procession, my communion with devotees and Kṛṣṇa. Why complain of the road you have chosen? And I see by the map that one of the towns on the way

is bliss—Bliss, Idaho. No matter where I am, there is full opportunity. Also wherever I am I have to fight my old enemies, *rāga*, *bhaya*, and *krodha*. There is plenty to do.

Travel Notes

The silvery city before sunrise—in the valley, the lit-up Mormon temple.

Outside the cities, many fields of wild sunflowers with yellow petals and deep brown eyes. Barren flats, barren hills. I go on dictating letters to devotees and friends.

The Chevron man in Snowville, Utah, assures us that the “Check EGR” light on our dashboard means smog control and it’s nothing to worry about.

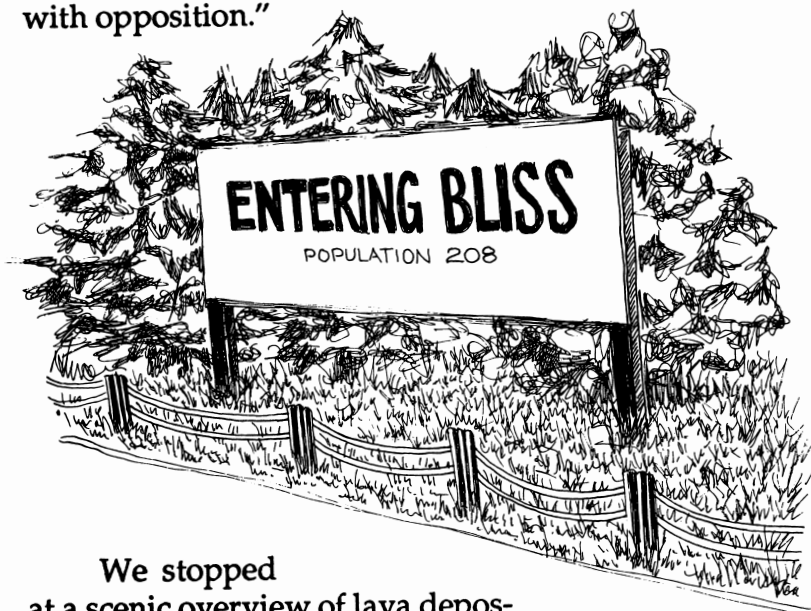
As we enter Idaho, we are greeted by a picture of a baked potato. The prairie is greener with shrubs. Flats and mountains.

Not much talking, either about Kṛṣṇa or the mundane. Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, wind whipping, and the van engine vibrating . . .

Further into Idaho, vast stretches of short hay-crop. The towns are Burley, Heyburn, Eden, and winding through them is the Snake River. More flats. The map says “lava beds.” Later, more farming, green crops, arches of water from irrigation pipes. Roadside stacks of wire-bound hay. Now the land is no longer so foreboding; it doesn’t create the feeling that we are small and lonely in an impersonal universe. Varuṇa reads aloud



from the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, where Prabhupāda writes, "The atmosphere is surcharged with opposition."



We stopped at a scenic overview of lava deposits where the sign claimed that geologists have found zebra and pelican fossils from 3,400,000 years ago. Now a river flows through a wide gorge (Maldan Gorge) with green and fertile land on one side and barren hills on the other. Ancient black rocks of lava are piled up on the hillside. We shared the wonder like ordinary tourists but with the added knowledge from the *Vedas* that time goes back much further than we can imagine. Seeing the geologic site gave us a hint of the hand of Lord Brahmā and Lord Viṣṇu.

Creekside Camping, Hagerman, Idaho

A young boy came over to our campsite and asked, "What did you say to me before?" He was about ten years old, a tall blond all-American wearing a football jersey and blue pants.

"*Hari bol! Hare Kṛṣṇa!*"

"Yes, Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's it. Where are you from?
I'm from Arizona."

The boy's manner was friendly and curious.

Śarad-vihārī said, "We are traveling preachers
telling people about God."

"I've been baptized," the boy said, and then in a
lower, confidential voice, "My Mom saw you yesterday.
She said, 'What the hell is that?'"

Bhakta Kent began preaching: "No one is actually
their body; we are all servants of God."

I doubted whether the boy understood, but he
replied brightly, "Oh, you mean don't judge a book by
its cover?"

"Yes, exactly!" said Kent. "You're smarter than
ninety-five percent of the world. Everyone judges. If
you're green, blue, black, or white, people judge you by
outward appearance. That's wrong."

"I'm not green," said the boy.

"I know that, silly," said Kent. "Even if you were
green, you're not the green body. Everyone is God's
spirit soul."

"What are your names? I'm Matthew."

"I'm Kent."

"I'm Śarad."

"I'm Satsvarūpa. It's nice to meet you and talk with
you."

Matthew looked away, "I have to go now."

"When you see your Mom," said Śarad, "tell her
we are priests teaching people about God."

"And tell her," said Kent, "she shouldn't judge a
book by its cover."

We all laughed, and Matthew ran off toward
home.

Tattva-vit, who is visiting from New York, was the first one of our group to go out for book distribution in Idaho. He met a lady who had visited India to see the Taj Mahal twenty years ago. Now she runs the motel in Gooding.

"So you're one of the Hare Kṛṣṇas," she said. "I never met one of you before." She took a *Back to Godhead*.

At the same motel, Tattva-vit met a man who had attended Gonzago University, a Jesuit school. Tattva-vit told him that he was a Catholic, and the man took a *Back to Godhead*.

"Traveling with you," Tattva-vit said to me, "presents a wonderful opportunity to go out and preach."

Śrīla Prabhupāda on Travel

I can understand you are planning to go on a world tour, but I think there is no need for wasting your time on such a world tour. Better you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa sitting in one place, that is far better. What for you want to go on a world tour—people everywhere are doing the same thing, eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—each in some slightly different way, but the same substance is there. They are the same streets, same people, same cars, same trees. Everywhere, somewhere a hill, somewhere a sandy beach, somewhere some water, but what is the profit of seeing so much scenery? It is far better if you want to travel with our *saṅkīrtana* party if you like. They are presently here in Los Angeles, and they are making a program to go to London, then over to Europe, then eventually on to India, etc. So if you want to travel, I recommend that you travel with them, wherever you go. And you will profit by this sort of travel, whereas the other is a waste of time practically.

—Letter to Kris, dated November 13, 1968

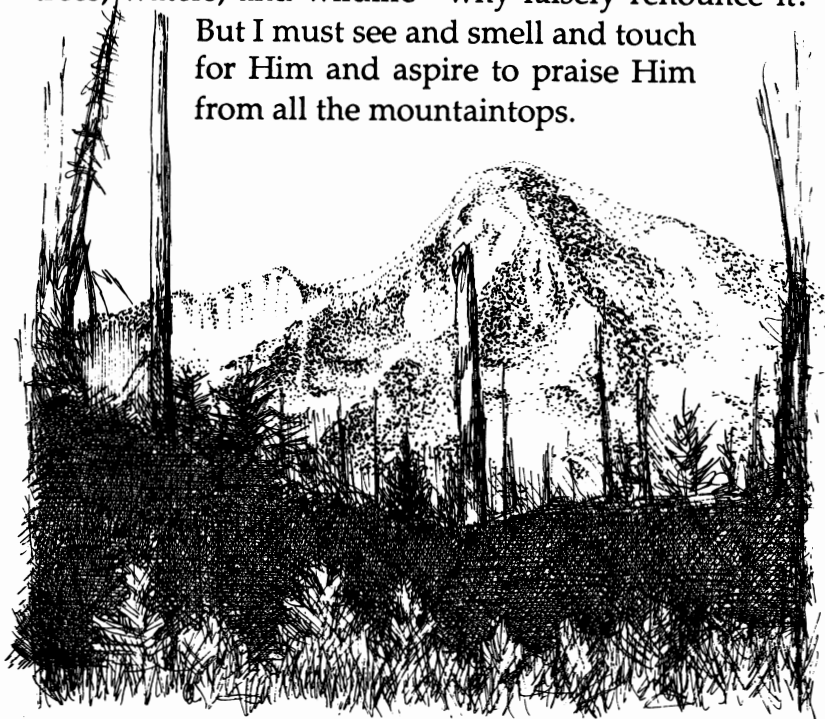
As I read this statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are preparing to enter some of the most scenic country

in the U.S.A.

Just yesterday I was looking at the map and in a lively way talking with devotees about the upcoming wonders of Washington state. In a few days we will be near the rain forests and clear-water, glacier-view wilderness of Mount Rainier Park. It sounds like a wonderful place to camp and write. But is it all *māyā*, as Prabhupāda wrote to Kris?

It depends on how we see it. Our main purpose is to visit the temples and the devotees. So if scenic roads lie in the way, why avoid them? As we accepted the desert stretches between Denver and Salt Lake, so we can accept other changes on our way to ISKCON Seattle and ISKCON Vancouver. And if certain lands actually inspire us to think and write of wonderful Kṛṣṇa whose spark of splendor sustains the universe of mountains, trees, waters, and wildlife—why falsely renounce it?

But I must see and smell and touch
for Him and aspire to praise Him
from all the mountaintops.



Of lights I am the radiant sun . . . and among the stars I am the moon . . . I am the chanting of the holy names . . . of purifiers I am the wind . . . I am inexhaustible time and the generating principle of all that is yet to be . . . of the splendid I am the splendor . . . I am adventure and I am the strength of the strong . . . Of secret things I am silence, and of the wise I am the wisdom . . . Know that all opulent, beautiful, and glorious creations spring from but a spark of My splendor.

—Bg. 10.21–41.

And Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The Lord tells Arjuna that there is no point in understanding how things exist in their separate opulence and grandeur. We should know that all things are existing due to Kṛṣṇa's entering them as Supersoul."

Going to Boise

While driving (still on 84 West) we talked about the Indian home program we attended at Salt Lake City. When it was time for *ārati*, the Indian *mātājī* took the lead and sang that *bhajana* with the refrain "*Oṃ Jaya Jagadīśa Hare*" while waving a flame and clapping with a one-beat rhythm. Today I asked Varuṇa the meaning of the *bhajana*. He said, "A Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee may take the *bhajana* as praise to the Parabrahman or Supersoul, but the impersonalists always sing it thinking of the Absolute Truth as the impersonal one." Varuṇa said the words include, "You are our father, mother, and our everything. We surrender everything to You." He said his family used to sing it every evening.

"What pictures were on your altar?"

"I don't remember," he said with a laugh. "There were so many! But it's funny, most Indians don't think of Kṛṣṇa as God. They tell the stories of His stealing

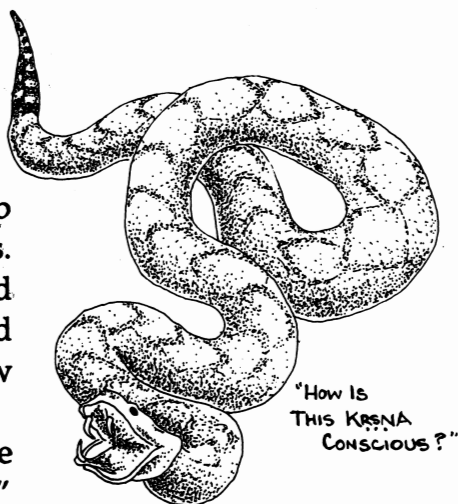
butter and everything, but they don't think of Him as God as they do Lord Rāma. When my sister first became a devotee and told me that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I argued with her for a long time. But then she showed me *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* where each time Kṛṣṇa speaks it says 'the Supreme Personality of Godhead says.' I didn't want to admit defeat to her face, but I thought to myself, this must be right."

The road from Hagerman to Boise was very barren. Except for a few irrigated valleys, it was all desert with juniper shrubs and sterile-looking hills that appeared condemned for previous impious acts. As we sped along, I thought about Prabhupāda's letter on the uselessness of changing scenery, "somewhere a hill, somewhere a sandy beach, somewhere some water, but what is the profit?" It made me wonder why I bother describing things as we travel. But it's such a rare opportunity; I don't want to forget it.

Rather than keep my doubts to myself, I brought up the subject with the devotees in the van—a good topic for keeping Śarad-vihārī awake at the wheel. I read out loud Prabhupāda's letter—travel is useless unless you go for the purpose of *saṅkīrtana*. Śarad-vihārī confessed that he and Bhakta Kent have been taking "adventuresome hikes."

"Kent is really into appreciating nature, and so am I," said Śarad-vihārī. "Years ago I was just about to move into the temple in San Diego, but a friend asked me to go hiking in the Rockies so I went. Sometimes when we're at a campground, Kent will ask me to go hiking. I told him that we have to dovetail such nature trips. Since I said that, Kent will regularly say, 'Let's go dovetail.'"

Śarad said the last time they went hiking at Rawlins, Wyoming, it was really hard to dovetail. They went up into the hot and arid hills. They could hear the sound of rattlesnakes, and Śarad kept trying to think, "How is this Kṛṣṇa conscious?"



"What about the spirit of adventure?"

Śarad asked. "Is that wrong? I mean, Kṛṣṇa was adventuresome, and we're His parts and parcels."

"The best adventure," I said, "is to go to new places to preach and meet challenges for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So what will you do the next time Kent asks you to go dovetail?"

"Okay!" said Śarad, "Let's go to the supermarket and distribute BTG's."

And it was right about here that we saw a rainbow in the sky and a mirage of water on the highway.

Ananta-rūpa lives in the suburbs a few blocks away from Boise State University. As we pulled up to his house, a blonde long-haired man wearing a white *dhōti* and *kūrta* greeted us with happy, excited looks. He shouted, "They're here!" As we got out of the van, he introduced himself as Bhakta Scott, an aspiring devotee who has become attracted by the preaching of Ananta-rūpa and his wife.

Ananta-rūpa is from Jaipur. He is about thirty-five years old, and is married to Arudha, who is from Allahabad. They have two small boys, Ravi Mohana and

Gopala. He was religious-minded as a youth and used to receive *darśana* of Govindajī in Jaipur, but he says "It was all blind faith." He got a *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* from a devotee at the St. Louis airport in 1971 but didn't read it. He married Arudha in 1980, and in 1982 when they were living in Chicago, she picked up the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* from their bookshelf and began reading it. "She didn't put it down for two days," he said. "She started visiting the ISKCON temple, even though I was a little annoyed that she did." Ananta-rūpa is a marketing manager, and he had to move for work to Los Angeles where he and his wife eventually received initiation.

Arudha used to be a journalist. She has the bright look of an ISKCON book distributor, and indeed I heard that she goes out every day with her children and distributes books on campus and holds her own *kīrtana* with harmonium. She has distributed fifteen hundred pieces of literature in the ten months since they moved to Boise.

Their temple room is a two-and-a-half-car garage, converted into a comfortable worship hall. There are three separate altars with Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti*, Gaura-Nitāi, and Jagannātha deities.

Ananta-rūpa is a real ISKCON man. In his fairly short devotional career he has already weathered many crises and controversies, and he remains staunch and enthusiastic. He told me about a devotee who came to Boise and heavily criticized ISKCON, confusing a few of the Boise congregation. When Ananta-rūpa finally asked the swami to leave, he was told, "If you do this, Prabhupāda will chastise you."

"That's okay," said Ananta-rūpa. "It's a privilege to be chastised by Śrīla Prabhupāda." Ananta-rūpa doesn't relish these controversies, but he impressed me

as a spunky, determined devotee.

Two American ISKCON initiates from Los Angeles are also joining Ananta-rūpa's household. They hope to eventually open a restaurant. So the Boise center isn't merely a faithful Indian family who are willing to receive traveling devotees. Boise is a vital, growing preaching center. This is what Prabhupāda wanted to see from his countrymen. As spoken by Lord Caitanya, *bhārata-bhūmite haila . . .*: "Indians have a special duty to help other people by distribution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

"You have an advantage," I said, "because you're Indians. It doesn't look like 'the cult' has moved to Boise."

"Exactly," he said. "My wife and I participated at the college's World Peace Day, representing India. No one turns us down in our requests for permission to distribute books and *prasādam* at the college or downtown, even though now they understand that we are members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

"When they see our bodies," said Ananta-rūpa, "and see that we are Indian persons, they accept that this is our religion. The people of Boise feel that they are culturally deprived, so they want cultural additions. The people here are nice, twenty percent are Mormons, and there are many, many Christian churches. They tend to be pious. But we also need American devotees here, because the Americans want to hear from them."

As for Bhakta Scott, he is thirty-three years old, a carpenter by trade. He was also a *haṭha-yoga* teacher until recently. A few months ago he went to a "Whole Art" exhibition where there were crystal balls, metaphysical readings, palmists, and other New Age adventures. A friend there mentioned Kṛṣṇa and said that

there was a Sunday program in Boise. So Scott came to Ananta-rūpa's house the next Sunday. According to Ananta-rūpa, the first time Scott saw the Deities, he looked at Them for fifteen minutes, "and he fell in love." He started going every morning and evening to the temple. Scott is divorced and lives with his daughter who is thirteen years old. Within a few months, he has learned how to cook *gulabjamuns*, read Sanskrit verses, and he fasts on Ekādaśīs. He is also a preacher and distributes books at the university. He said he would like to travel with our party, but he has responsibility for his daughter. His parents think devotees are all fanatics and drug addicts and that he is brainwashed. But Scott says, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is for me. There's no doubt about it. I am into it."

None of the *brahmacārīs* on our party thought of our visit to Boise as small-time preaching. It was a wonderful evening of sharing Kṛṣṇa consciousness with Sunday guests who liked *prasādam* and wanted to hear about Kṛṣṇa. I spoke privately with a couple who put me through intricate, demanding inquiries about the exact nature of the falldowns and schisms in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and raised questions of doubt from their association with Ekankar. They seemed to accept my explanations and grew more positive as we proceeded. According to Ekankar, they said, Kṛṣṇa died at the hands of His enemies, shot by arrows, and He is the sun-god. I cleared up those doubts by showing them the beautiful picture in the new *Back to Godhead* of four-handed Lord Kṛṣṇa along with His personified *cakra*, lotus, club, and disc, with the hunter bowing at His feet and the arrow in the ground.

"You can see He's God," I said, "and He's assuring the hunter, 'I am not a man you have wounded with

your arrow. I am four-armed Viṣṇu, and these are My expansions.' Kṛṣṇa had decided to leave His earthly pastime, so He chose this way, that's all."

"What about out-of-the-body experiences?"

"A yogī can do that, but it's temporary. It's not the same as going back to Godhead."

Camp, Outside Boise

This morning I continued the summary study of Raghunātha Gosvāmī's *Śrī Vraja-vilāsa-stava*. Just by repeating these pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, I felt myself uplifted to pure personalism, *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Even when I stopped writing and took up other activities, the relish continued. I chanted *japa* in the dawn light, walking back and forth with other devotees, and felt sweet lightness just by looking at the tents and vans of our party. But then I began to think of management. I wanted to remind Haryāśva to phone Nāgarāja in Philadelphia and ask him to mail me a package of *Back to Godhead* essays. But I checked myself in order to give Haryāśva some peace in *brāhma-muhūrta*. However, when I saw Jaya Baladeva start up the van engine, I couldn't resist. I went up to him and asked, "Are you taking care of the maintenance of this van?"

"It's overdue for an oil change," he said. "Madhu told me we don't have any money for it. The other vans are also overdue. If I could get the right wrench, I could do it myself."

We spoke a few minutes about vehicle maintenance, and then I went back to chanting and pacing. And it occurred to me: Taking care of these vans is also spiritual. Prabhupāda told us not to be impersonalists. Anything used in the service of Kṛṣṇa is spiritual; noth-

ing should be rejected. As I continued chanting and pacing, I began to understand better that all our regular activities, such as the early-morning dictation describing the affairs of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, as well as the plans for our oil change for our vans, are within Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Brother Tree, Sister Water

Question asked by a Franciscan seminarian: St. Francis of Assisi found God in the material world, and he used to address the aspects of the material world as brother and sister, "Brother Tree," "Sister Water," like that. What is your view of this?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is real God consciousness, real God consciousness. Not that I am God conscious and I kill the animals. That is not God consciousness. To accept the trees, plants, lower animals, insignificant ants as brothers. This is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*: *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṇṣati/samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu*. *Samaḥ* means "equal." Equal to *all* living entities. To see the spirit soul in everyone, it doesn't matter, either he is man or dog or tree or ant or insect—they're all parts and parcels of God. They are simply dressed differently. One has the dress of a tree, one has the dress of a king, and one has the dress of an insect. That is also explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *pañḍitāḥ samadarsinaḥ*. One who is *pañḍita*, learned, his vision is equal.

So if St. Francis was thinking like that, that is a higher standard of spiritual understanding. A similar expression is there in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: *sthāvara-jāṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūrti/ sarvatra haya nija iṣṭa-dēva-sphūrti* (Cc. *Madhya* 8.274). When a spiritually advanced devotee of the Lord sees the trees or the animals or the stones or anything he sees, he sees the energy of God. Just like your *mūrti* or my *mūrti*—*mūrti* means form—maybe a little different, but you are made of the same ingredients as I am. If your body is surgically operated, the same blood, bone, flesh is there.

Similarly, our outward covering is this material element but within is the spirit soul. Therefore, one who is advanced, he does not see that this is dog, this is cat, this is elephant, this is plant. . . . No. He sees the soul, part and parcel of God. That is his vision. *Paṇḍitaḥ sama-darśinaḥ*. God is supreme spirit, and His parts and parcels are the living entities. That is real vision.

—From a lecture at a Franciscan seminary,
Melbourne, 6/28/74

Śrīla Prabhupāda's answer to the question about St. Francis began with nonviolence to animals, a lesson most Christians have not learned. Śrīla Prabhupāda also acknowledged that there is a soul in each creature. The individual souls are everywhere (*sarva-gataḥ*), and the Supersoul is all-pervading. So there is *nothing but Kṛṣṇa*.

If scenic views in travel make you think of Kṛṣṇa, then the landscape is not material. Wherever you look, you see His energy, It is all His picture, His form. The Idaho-to-Oregon route will be a *darśana* of the Supreme. Of course, an alert devotee can see Kṛṣṇa even without traveling. But travel helps to wake us up. Especially when the great elements go beyond man, such as when we are out under the sky or where the elements themselves do the work, as in erupting volcanos, shifting riverbeds, moving clouds, the carving of stone by wind and rain over thousands of centuries—in the presence of these scenes we appreciate God's greatness more than when we pull into a Chevron station.

A topmost devotee sits in one place and directly links to Kṛṣṇa by hearing and chanting. But we admit that travel is refreshing to us, maybe because of our restlessness. Somehow it helps to move to a new place and chant there, looking out at "new" mountains or to

sit down with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in an unfamiliar place, knowing that your time is running out. . . .

Best of all is the ever-fresh opportunity to speak to new people. They find the traveler interesting, and they are willing to hear from him. That's the most rewarding part—seeing the alert faces and eyes of those who are curious to hear from you because you have traveled to see them.

Travel Notes

As we turned onto 84 West, we saw a billboard, "Enjoy Nevada's Greenery," with a close-up of a green gambling table. It was early morning, as dark as night, and Śarad-vihārī dāsa soon began to look sleepy-eyed. I reached for the spray bottle and washed his face. I put on a tape of a Kṛṣṇa book reading, but that didn't help. When Śarad dāsa gets sleepy, the only recourse is to involve him in direct conversation. So we began speaking about Āyur-Vedic diet.

In between our talk of *doṣas*, pies, and *parathas*, I tried noting the scenery. For a brief spell, the Snake River appeared close by, clear and rippling like a silver mirror for the sky. But then it was gone. Encouraged by recently hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda affirm Saint Francis' vision of "Sister Water" and "Brother Sky," I was prepared to see the whole creation as His parts and parcels. As we approached the Oregon border, the brother hills grew bigger.

"This is Big Foot country," said Śarad dāsa.

"What do you mean?"

"There's supposed to be an apeman, like an abominable snowman, who has been spotted in parts of Oregon, near Mount Hood."

Keeping up the conversation but changing its course, Varuṇa dāsa told of the campground owner who came last night to talk with the devotees. She stayed for two hours asking many interested questions about God consciousness.

Driving through Baker on the right side of the highway was the Oregon Meat Company; outside were the open stalls for the animals, inside was the slaughterhouse. Across the highway, a tent—"Home of Christian Assembly." Leaving Baker, we saw many herds of cattle grazing, flicking their tails as the morning sunshine poured down on the fields and hills.

Further into Oregon more cattle were grazing. The scene seemed pleasant. The cows and bulls were not tightly penned in, but were allowed ample space to wander over the hills. We saw them ambling along, twitching their ears, seeking out the best grasses, just as any living being who is looking for peaceful life. After passing a full-grown, dead deer by the highway Śarad remarked, "The animals are innocent. But man is so dissatisfied that he has to kill them."

"It's not just a matter of stray deer hit by accident," I said. "All these cows..." A truck passed us with cattle inside. The trucker had whimsically painted a small sign on the back, "The Last Ride."

Entering La Grand, a sign announced "Scenic Wayside." These are the same hills that we have been seeing since Utah, but suddenly they're filled with evergreens. And a quick-running stream alongside the highway.

On the route of the Oregon Trail, we passed through the Blue Mountains. The firs pressed in closely on both sides of the road. The tree nation. They stand

and watch, tall, straight, and silent. If the trees could walk, and if they had bigger brains, maybe they would kill us, just as we kill them and the cows, and whatever else we like.

When the highway entered the Umatilla Indian Reservation, we spoke about the native Americans and how they were pushed off by the Europeans. More reminders of rapacity. I looked for the Indian tribes, but saw only junk cars in a field, a satellite dish for TV, and an abandoned schoolbus on a hill. Exit 228, "Deadman's Pass," Exit 224, "Poverty Flat Road." Heading down a six percent decline, we saw a broad vista of the valley below, and in the distance, our day's destination, Pendleton, Oregon.

A Movable Feast

Prabhupāda is light,
encouraging me
even though I didn't wake him
exactly on time in the afternoon.

As I place him on his throne
his *praṇāma-mantras* spring
from my throat.

Circling the incense
before his Guru Mahārāja
and Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī
and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura,
my hand sails up to Pañca-tattva,
as sunlight filters
through their cream-colored backdrop.

Lord Jagannātha wears no cloth,
just His pure self,
because when it's hot
and when we travel all day,
we don't dress Them.

Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁha wear no jewels or crowns,
but They are perfect and confidential,
allowing my eyes to wander
into Their lines and curves.
And behind Them—
young Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa
on the shore of the Yamunā.

I thank Them
for the peace and power
of *arcana-siddhi*,
as I turn to other work.

Thoughts While Swimming in the Columbia River

We went for a swim in a near-perfect spot on the Columbia River. No one was around, except young children at a safe distance. I had seen a dozen large carp at another spot but none where we entered to swim. Three ducks quacked and moved aside as we took over their beach. On a small hill there was a chunk of solid lava about twenty feet high and twenty feet across which they say oozed up from the earth millions of years ago.

The water was cool and refreshing. But here is what I want to say: In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you don't completely surrender at any moment unless you can directly see Kṛṣṇa and devotional service there. I mean, everything was beautiful in this swimming spot—even

our van parked in the distance was sparkling metallic brown and waiting for us like a friend. And the trees were making that *whishing* sound. Not a cloud in the sky. Everything was agreeable, but I didn't fall for it. The setting wasn't false—it's Kṛṣṇa's—but my goal goes far beyond the tiny moment of exercise in the river.

The near-perfect spot and my reluctance to enjoy it also made me think of India's *tīrthas*, where you can more securely surrender, body, mind, and soul in a river or on the land. The West doesn't have that Vedic spirit.

I also thought how our Kṛṣṇa consciousness transcendentalism alienates us from most people. Our view is extreme. *They* are looking for the ideal swim. But I know it will never happen. We are saving our love for direct union with the Supreme.

While playing in the Columbia River, I noticed white butterflies and the late summer crumpling of the leaves on the trees. I also remember how I surrendered to natural surroundings when I lived at Gītā-nāgarī. I am often astonished at how far I took shelter there, resting in the lap of Mother Earth.

All right, break the spell—the sunshine and the cool water—the lure of the tree sounds which seem to say, "Stay here forever... drink it in now." We are doing that also, but only briefly. Go back now and hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Appreciating the Supreme in the Practical Field

The wonderful potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is bewildering even to the jugglers. That potential power is unknown even to the self-sufficient Lord, so it is certainly unknown to others.

—*Bhāg.* 3.6.39

Purport

The most wonderful puzzle for the mundane wranglers is that while they remain calculating the length and breadth of the unlimited potency of the Supreme Person, His faithful devotees are set free from the bondage of material engagement simply by appreciating the wonderful jugglery of the Supreme in the practical field. The devotees of the Lord see the wonderful dexterity in everything with which they come in contact in all circumstances of eating, sleeping, working, etc. A small banyan tree contains thousands of small seeds, and each seed holds the potency of another tree which again holds the potency of many millions of such fruits as causes and effects. So the trees and seeds engage the devotees in meditation about the activities of the Lord, while mundane wranglers waste time in dry speculation and mental concoction, which are fruitless in both this life and the next.

Travel Notes

On the practical side—"How do we get onto Highway 82?"

"It's tricky," said Kent, our driver for today. We crossed the Columbia River and entered Washington State. For the first hour, the road was mostly ours alone, the land empty. Big-business wheat crops—no farm houses or barns, just high-powered farm machinery parked around tall grain-storage buildings. And deserted hills.

Kent was well-equipped for staying awake. On the floor by his right hand, he kept a bag of raisins, a can of popcorn, "and if it gets down to it, I'll drink a soda."

Varuṇa and I took full advantage of Kent's confident driving, by pushing out our *mahā-mantra japa* without any other conversation. But too often I found

myself thinking, "When I finish these rounds, *then* we'll talk about Kṛṣṇa." The hills can't do it for me, and the sky is neutral; it's up to me to chant with attention.

We stopped for oil at Grand View, Washington. A black warehouse church announced with a movie marquee: "Anticipate the Inevitable Supernatural of God." Below that, a few feet forward, on a similar marquee:

24 Hour Deli

BBQ Beef 89¢

Hot Chicken Sand \$1.29

I watched from the van as Kent and Varuṇa, with shaven heads and *tīlaka*, caused a stir in the deli-gas station. As the devotees left the store, the cashier gestured to others, imitating with sign language our *tīlaka* and *sikhās*. The devotees approached me with beaming smiles, happy that they had at least aroused someone's consciousness of Kṛṣṇa.

"This reminds me," Varuṇa laughed, "of what happened yesterday in the laundromat. I put my laundry in the machine and when I came back it was finished, but someone had taken it out for me, put it in the drier, and paid a quarter. But they left a note, 'Jesus, the Son of God is the only way to the Father.'"

As our van entered another stretch of desert, Varuṇa mentioned that the gas was running too low. Then I heard that our treasurer, Madhu, had ordered that our two vehicles would meet at a rest-stop half-way to our destination. Because we have no money, his plan was that we could pay for both fill-ups with his Shell credit card. We anxiously watched as our gas meter slipped all the way down to "E." Kent assured us—but

then he is always optimistic—that we wouldn't run out before the rest stop. But he was surprised to note how quickly the gauge went down when pulling the trailer up hills.

We had entered a military firing range, a place so waterless that we couldn't even see any birds. I began to worry, measuring each uphill and wondering whether we would make it. No more *Nectar of Devotion* reading. No more playing the Kṛṣṇa book tape.

"Why didn't you tell me this before we started?" I complained. "I never would have allowed you to leave that last gas station without getting at least a few dollars' worth of gas."

"I was just following orders," said Kent.

Whenever there was a downhill, we coasted, but the red needle was already *below* the "E."

Kent apologized for playing it so close. I said, "Let's not talk about it." As we drove into the heart of the military firing range the land was vast and empty, just hills and skies and juniper sage. The spaces were so vast and panoramic that the highway authorities thought it was worth a "view point." But we weren't interested in desert sightseeing. We were looking for the reststop where we were supposed to meet. Suddenly, we saw the Kāmadhuk at the "view point," and so we stopped.

The men got out to talk with Madhu, who agreed to go down with the Kāmadhuk to get gas and also bring back a gallon so that we could make it.

"All right," I told myself, "right now, in the practical field, let's see you engage this situation in meditation of the Lord. You can do it, at least by intellectual connection." Here is my meditation:

The land is made by Kṛṣṇa.

In the spiritual world this would never happen.

Anyway, whatever happens I can think of Kṛṣṇa.

It doesn't require gasoline.

Here are the same violet wild flowers—they are a bit of Kṛṣṇa's beauty.

And there's a wind up here. "Of purifiers I am the wind."

Actually the composite of any situation, including this one, is Kṛṣṇa.

What about the "military firing range?" Yes, that also.

Everything. The soft, blowing weeds, the silhouette line of mountain range against the sky. Sunlight, shadow, the bird in the open distance . . .

And kṛṣṇa-prasādam for breakfast.

After the gasoline crisis, we were off again, further into Washington. Barns appeared, lakes, farm fields and beyond the hills, the Wenatchee Mountains. We listened to a tape of the prayers of Devakī, her anxiety to protect her child. Lord Kṛṣṇa said that Devakī and her husband Vasudeva appeared in a previous millennium, as Prṣṇi and Sutapā, and performed severe austerities for twelve thousand years of the demigods. They endured the worst of all the seasons, practiced *prāṇāyāma* and fasting, and worshiped the Supreme Lord with peaceful minds. As a benediction, the Lord appeared as their son, the incarnation of Prṣṇigarbha.

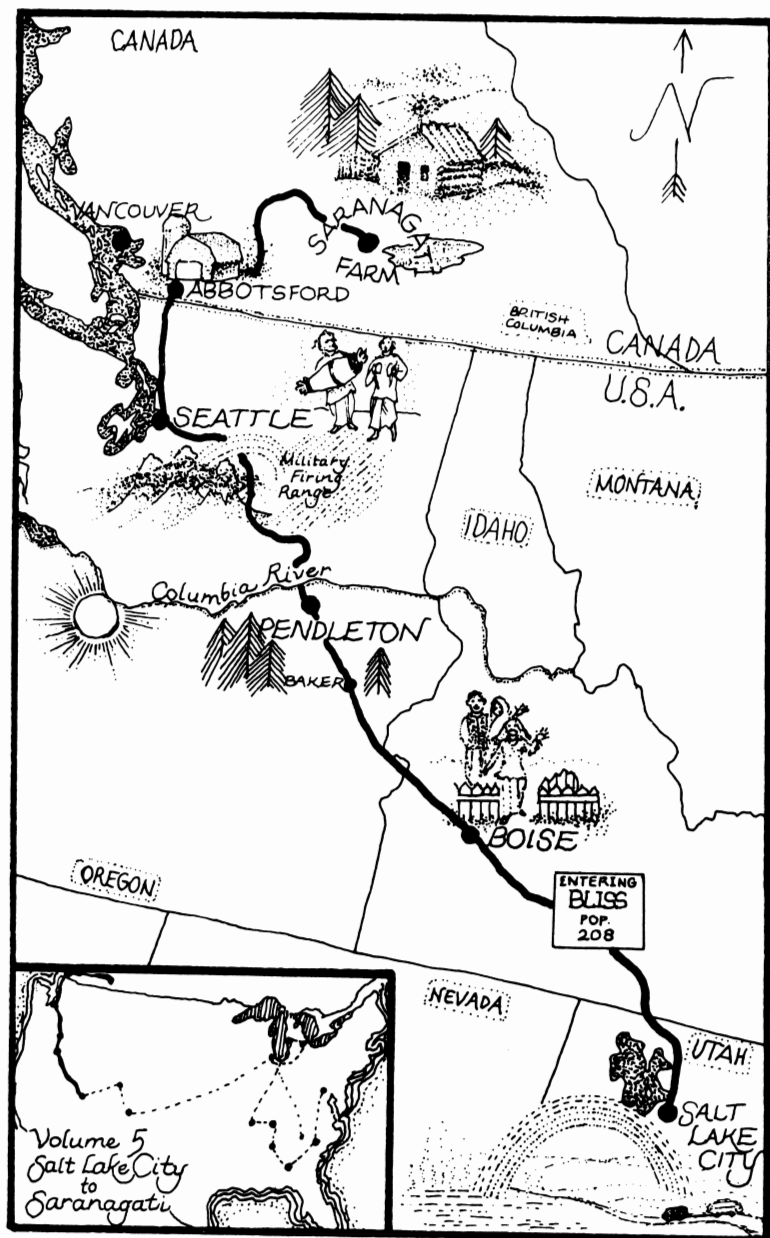
The further northwest we go, the more scenic it becomes. Above the beauty and power of earth, sky, and water, the subtle sound vibration delivered us.

As we entered Snoqualmie National Forest, a rainbow (Rāma's bow) appeared ahead. We drove under it, into the rain. Everything became dark, with smoky white clouds on the mountain peaks. We couldn't even see the peaks, except briefly when the clouds brushed by. Then they appeared suddenly, like tall mountains in Chinese paintings.

Kent wanted to talk. Our conversation wandered—what people mean when they say “God's country” . . . how most people can't understand even the universal form . . . how India is a special land . . . and monkeys! Monkeys of Vṛndāvana, monkeys of Jaipur, *Prabhupāda Nectar* monkey stories . . . Kent has never been to India, so Varuṇa filled him in (not only about monkeys).

“I can't wait to go!” he said.

Kent loves nature and wildlife (“Look there's some Canadian Geese!”) so I told him the example of “*mama-tejas*.” *Mama-tejas* is a phrase from the Tenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa declares that anything mighty or strong is actually Himself. The boys at Gītā-nāgarī used to exclaim, “*Mama-tejas!*” whenever they would see something *big*, like big carp in the creek. Kent liked that and began repeating to himself, “*Mama-tejas*.” He promised to show me the biggest trees in the world when we head back down the coast. For the last ten minutes I faded out in the back of the van and woke up only as we entered the Snoqualmie Campgrounds, forty-five minutes away from ISKCON Seattle.



CHAPTER TEN

Seattle/Entering Canada

Seattle ISKCON has gone through turmoil, especially in the years since Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance. About six years ago, the appointed leader claimed that the buildings no longer belonged to ISKCON. Some of us pooled our money to buy the temple back from ransom. And then the leader's followers went wild and tried to steal the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. Since those days it has been in a slump, with one different temple president after another, and I've heard that they have only three regular devotees maintaining the center. But as Prabhupāda said, "It is not so wonderful that someone leaves Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What is wonderful is that we are able to stay and serve Kṛṣṇa."

We arrived at the temple, and it's true, there are only three devotees living there. Rasa-kṛīda, his wife Pṛṣṇi, and Pātraka. Rasa-kṛīda said that about twenty-five to fifty people come on Sunday, but hardly anyone comes at other times. The temple building appears very nice, a neighborhood church with stained glass windows. But Rasa-kṛīda said that they may have to move out because they cannot afford the rent and overhead. Rasa-kṛīda is himself ready to move; he wants to go where his daughter can be raised in a *gurukula*. A Godbrother in Vṛndāvana, Vyāsapāda, has agreed to come and take the responsibility of temple president for Seattle.

While we are in Seattle, Bhakta Tom has allowed us to stay in his apartment. The *brahmacārīs* will live in the basement of the temple building. Rasa-krīda said we're all welcome to stay as long as we like.

The Seattle temple room is very attractive with a church-nave ceiling and the Deities of Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava.

At least twenty or thirty people showed up to hear the *Bhāgavatam* class. The wonderful verse by Prahlāda Mahārāja and purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda forced me to speak optimistically of every soul's opportunity to receive the causeless mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. After the class, one of the devotees thanked me and the men for visiting Seattle and for giving such an optimistic class. He said they have been hearing many pessimistic lectures. I replied that my own pessimism had been defeated by the optimism of the verse.

We sat in rows for the Sunday Feast. On either side of me sat men who wanted to talk. Within an hour I engaged in three thorough conversations, all on the same theme—householders speaking the burdens of *grhastha* life, and asking if there's any relief.

"In Kṛṣṇa consciousness you hear that householder life is a dark well," said Śukadeva dāsa, "and you don't really take it seriously. But when you are actually married and trying to raise children and pay the bills, then you know—*there is no enjoyment* except in chanting and hearing and being a devotee."

The dilemma is how to support one's family and yet maintain your Kṛṣṇa conscious practices. "Sure it's hard," said Śukadeva, "to get up early and chant and then go to work. But, hey, what's easy?"



The most beautiful Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava, Seattle

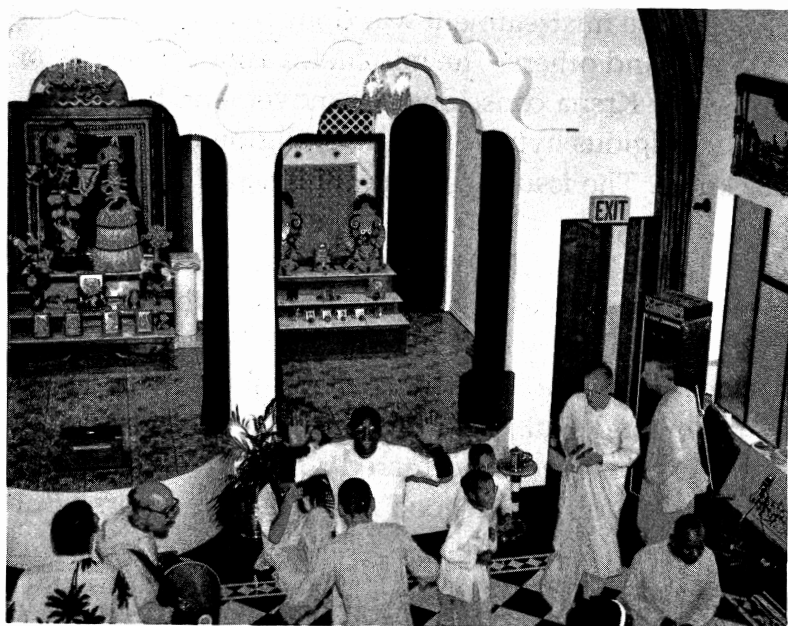
“When I lived in the temple,” said Damaghoṣa, “I used to go to the morning program and then sit and yuk it up with the boys. But now I’ve got to get serious about responsibilities. The children are growing up and I have to find schools for them, and pay taxes and bills.”

It is also a very common phenomenon that the children of devotees do not want to be devotees themselves. At least, not in their teenage years. After the feast, I discussed with my disciples Svāyambhuva Manu and his wife Gāndhārī these and related problems. They say that now they want to prepare their children with skills so that they can earn when they themselves become householders. So even if a teenage devotee is satisfied with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their parents often guide them to outside schools to learn skills because ISKCON has no schools for anything except devotional service. Gāndhārī admitted, however, that the public or even private schools are dangerous for a young devotee’s devotional creeper.

“No matter how much Kṛṣṇa consciousness we give them at home,” she said, “every day they’re at school from eight till three.” ISKCON requires householders to get jobs, and therefore the parents cannot allow their children to be trained merely as *brāhmaṇas* or preachers who learn only Sanskrit and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. But the process of becoming equipped for the material world is also risky.

What do I have to contribute to this dilemma? I thought of it this morning while dancing in the temple with the *brahmacārīs* on our party. At least this is one solution, although not intended for all: Remain *brahmacārī*, chant and dance.

Jayadvaita Mahārāja commented on this subject in his latest letter to me: “In Spain over the last ten days I



Dancing in the Seattle Temple

read about three years' worth of Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters. What I see as a synthesis is this: Better to live as a preacher, but it's quite all right to live outside. But in any case the *essential* thing is to stick strictly to the principles of spiritual life—chanting sixteen rounds, following the four rules, rising early for *māṅgala-ārati*, class, and so on. Then everything is all right."

But as the children grow up beyond the eighth-grade level, and as ISKCON faces economic realities, we have to study more thoroughly what Prabhupāda meant. The answer to all these questions may be covered by one word, "*varṇāśrama*." But the best minds of ISKCON are struggling to unpack that one word.

I have been speaking with a very nice devotee who has left the shelter of ISKCON because of being mis-

treated. The mistreatment was done by hypocrites, her husband and others. The mischief was not the work of the whole Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, but the effect of religious hypocrisy is that religion itself gets the black eye. The issues become confused. I had to hear heavy charges.

I said, "Not all devotees are bad." She admitted that there are wonderful, sweet persons who are devotees. But, contrary to what she had been told about nondevotees, she now finds that some of them are equally wonderful. "The only difference," she says, "is that devotees are God-centered. Otherwise, they have the same faults and good qualities as others. But devotees *think* they are better than everyone else."

She also criticized the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy. She said, "The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes these highly exalted qualities of devotees, right? But ordinary people who join ISKCON mistakenly think, 'Wow! I have achieved these qualities right away. I am honest, mild, clean, attached to the Absolute Truth, faultless, sober, expert, silent, and poetic.' And they think that *all* nondevotees are dogs, hogs, camels, and asses."

I replied, "I think it's good for people to hear that there is perfection for the human being and to know that the aggressive materialists are not the ideal. It is also encouraging to know that certain rare souls, such as Jesus Christ, and many great devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, such as Śukadeva Gosvāmī and many others, also attained these qualities. And I personally saw them in Śrīla Prabhupāda. So it's not the fault of the philosophy. But if devotees abuse these statements, I can't defend *that*."

"But why are so many people in this movement such rascals and so puffed-up?"

"Because they were like that before, and they continue that way even in ISKCON."

"But why doesn't Kṛṣṇa consciousness improve them if it's so pure and great?"

"It does improve many of them."

"But many it doesn't."

"At least some of them it improves very much. In fact, everyone who practices *bhakti-yoga*, even a little, receives great benefit. Like I said, you should read Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Lynn Ludwig in *The Science of Self-Realization*."

"I don't want to be told, 'You should read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books,' or any other books. I want to decide for myself."

"Okay, but eventually you can't really decide anything for yourself."

"And that's the real problem. That's got me confused! Who can you trust? Is there anyone who can answer that question?"

"I know someone you can trust. I trusted my spiritual master, and he is trustworthy. And the Supreme Lord, God, is trustworthy. But it's a fact that if many people who claimed to be devotees have actually cheated you, then you have to learn to trust yourself."

Our talk wasn't a debate; I heard her out, admitted some wrongs on behalf of "the movement" and also made a few indirect points in favor of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Hearing of wrongs committed by so-called devotees to other devotees has sobered me. I wonder about my optimistic portraits. At least in Śrīla Prabhupāda, we have one who can be fully trusted. And everyone should

trust the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As for material life, it may look good from a certain angle while we are young and inexperienced and when we come fresh from our disappointments with devotees, but actually the alternative to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is hallucination.

I hadn't seen a news magazine in months, so I looked at one today. In Washington, D. C., the Iran-contra investigation is winding down. People are sorry it's so inconclusive. Marine Lieutenant-Colonel Ollie North, who was at first seen by the public as an immoral renegade, has now become a popular hero for his stirring defence speech and his patriotic ways. This story and many others gave me the usual sad feeling.

Flickering heroes parade a while in the spotlight . . . the bloody corpse of a "protester" lies in the street, shot down by the Haitian police . . . The cars of the 1990's will be heavenly dreams of enjoyment and road safety . . . And for fifteen thousand dollars one can restore an appearance of youth by false hair, breast lift, and buttock fat removal . . . And Kṛṣṇa consciousness is completely ignored.

Then I turned to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. In Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport (in the section describing Lord Caitanya's civil disobedience) Prabhupāda calls for people all over the world to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and protest against the degraded governments. But it seems so unlikely that anything like that will happen soon. I think, *Let me read his purports, at least for solace*. And let me patiently guide the few sincere souls who have come to this movement. In this regard, Prabhupāda writes encouragingly (in a 1968 letter): "You've tried your best in the service of Lord Caitanya. This is sufficient. We do not calculate the so-

called success or failure, we are simply to discharge our duties in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa loudly."

Seattle Hari-nāma

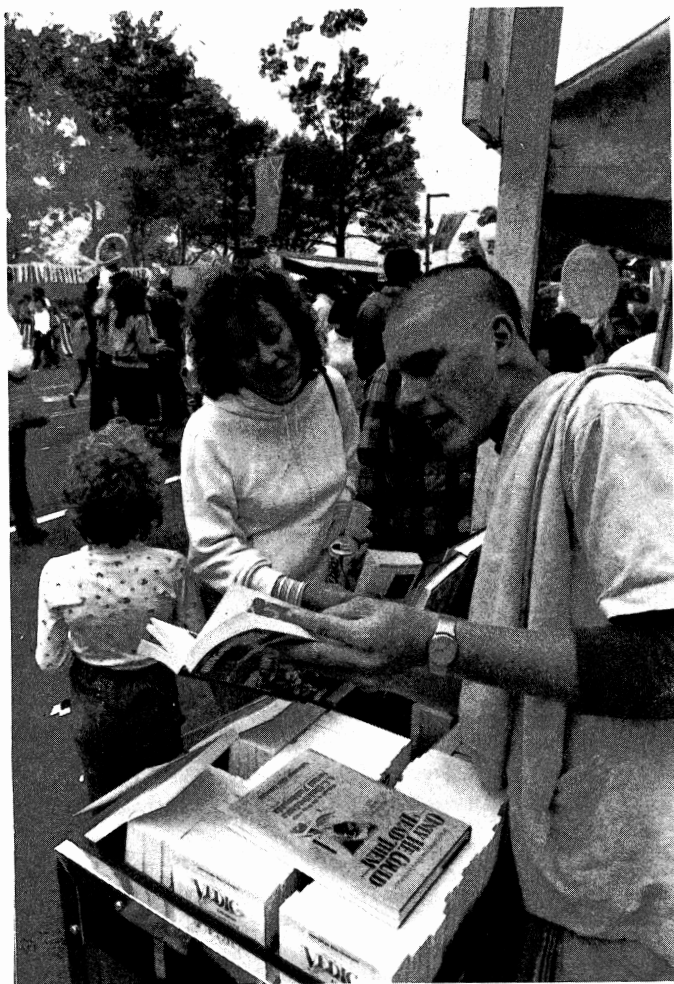
Just after *maṅgala-ārati* in the temple, I made an announcement: "Today we plan to go on *hari-nāma*. If you see any congregational members of Seattle, you can invite them to join us. Don't intimidate them, invite them."

We went to University Way, a good place for troubadours and Hare Nāmers. At first we were a bit stiff, but then we got better. It was a gray day, but as we became happier and freer in our chanting and dancing, they reciprocated more. I felt myself open up, and I thought, *They're just funny-looking and lost people, and we're also funny-looking and lost, but the chanting is a piece of free happiness and dance. Everyone can see!*

A professional black singer dressed up in a fancy suit had a sign, "Your applause, auditory and monetary is welcome." As we passed, we drowned him out, but he took it in stride and gave us a salute. The man and woman with the sign protesting "Khomeini's Oppression" were not so friendly; they ignored us as best they could.

I placed my toe into the ocean of love of God.

An older black lady driving a beat-up car was delighted to see us. She parked her car nearby, smiled, took a *Back to Godhead* magazine, and talked with Caitanya-Nitāi dāsa. "I love your music!" When she got out of her car, she appeared eccentric, wearing a hat with floppy red feathers. But she threw us more smiles of encouragement and handed me a hand-bound manu-



Caitanya-nitāi showing the *Bhāgavad-gīta*

script of her poems entitled *Loving Essence*.

Sometimes we filed along, and sometimes we stood in front of vacated stores. On one corner where we stopped, a group of hippies sat on the sidewalk. One of them was painting a scroll. After twenty minutes he finished it, a colorful abstract, and hung it on the street pole, his free gift to the city. He then stared into the gutter for quite a while, chewing on a bagel. He didn't seem to even notice our presence, despite two drums pounding and six pairs of *karatālas* crashing.

Only a few passers-by took magazines, and only a few took invitation cards, but the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* took everyone by force.

I led two of the chanting sessions. For a while, I forgot the age of my body and the time of the day. Then a middle-class-dressed woman suddenly fell at the feet of the *hari-nāma* devotees, my feet, making full obeisances. I felt embarrassed and made a face. But she was dead serious about it. She then stood up, without looking at us, and shyly walked away. After she was gone, I became happy over what she had done. Śrīla Prabhupāda has written that sincere *daṇḍavats* enter the hearts of those persons who receive them. I thought she must have been some kind of devotee. She was glad to see us out on the street chanting, and she wanted to show her respect to devotees. Her sincere act made me feel appreciated and more enthusiastic to chant.

But mostly people were grim, although there were some friendly encounters. A guy and a girl on a motorcycle stopped at a red light in front of us and looked with amused, condescending looks at our motley group. But as the red light persisted, their superior mood relaxed and they agreed to take a magazine. Two happy guys

came by in a car shouting, "All right!" They laughed at our antics and asked for a magazine as if it were a joke and a dare.

"All right," we shouted back, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

One Indian man watched from a distance for several minutes. Another elderly Hindu passed by, averting his eyes and veering away. But when Tattva-vit handed him a card, he couldn't refuse.

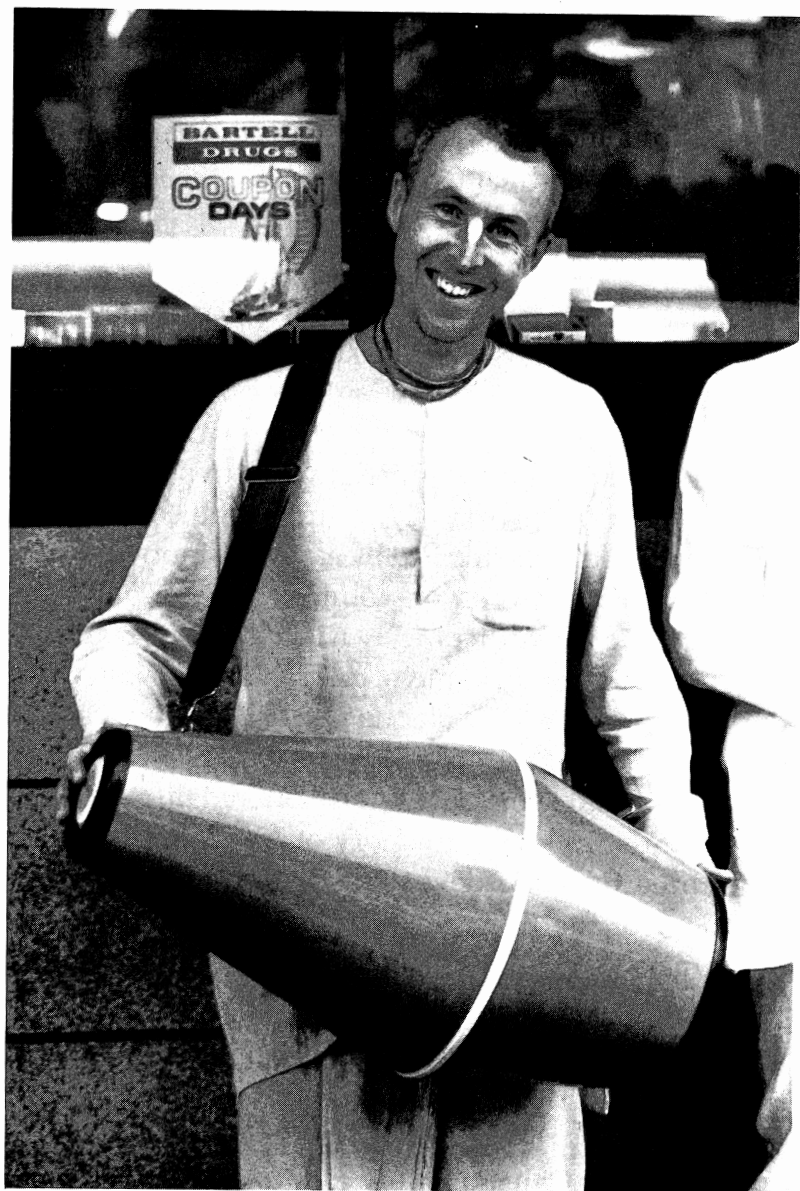
When Rasa-kṛīḍa's four-year-old daughter spontaneously began giving out cards, people were pleased to see her little dance steps.

And when it was time to leave the streets, we all felt reluctant.

Last Day in Seattle

A few days ago, Bhakta Kent pointed out a nest of baby barn swallows lodged just over the doorway in the house where I am staying. They recently hatched, and now with each day we see them growing up. The mother sits alertly on the telephone wire and regularly darts over to feed the babies. If we get too close, she swoops near to warn us. It's a little drama of pitiful attempts at house building and family raising, a lesson straight from the *Bhāgavatam*. Today, we kept looking and wondering which will happen first—our departure from Seattle or the baby birds' departure from the nest?

Devotees here are waiting for a new temple president. We have given some additional enthusiasm for the time being by our visit but no real solution. I can't donate men or become a manager. But we have conveyed our opinion that the temple is worth saving and that the householders should contribute to it. At least everyone should keep his personal *sādhana*—chant,



Madhu-mangala on a Seattle sidewalk

and read and remain a devotee.

The charming church building is just the right size and is very tastefully decorated. I hope they don't lose it for lack of funds. The Lord Jagannātha Deities are the original ones Prabhupāda saw when he was here in Seattle for a month in 1968. Devotees of Seattle should step forward and help.

Seattle Footnotes

Rasa-kṛīḍa makes good *halavā*. Damaghoṣa and his wife are enthusiastic to supply the temple with zinnias, stace, snapdragons, and more from their abundant garden. During my visit I always had a full vase of flowers on my desk. They also gave me fresh vegetables daily. The *tulasī* plant in this temple is a healthy green bush. A taxi-driver stopped by early one morning, paid sixty dollars for the seven-volume set of *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, and drove off quickly without giving his name. The temple store sells spices, *dāls*, and rice to the Seattle Indian community. A plaque inside the temple states, "This Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava Mandira painted as a gift to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, offered through Lord Jesus Christ in loving memory of Irma L. Poterfield." The three full-time devotees here are fully occupied cooking for the Deities and offering *āratis*. From our apartment we heard the conchshell blowing throughout the day. A few of the householders who live outside occasionally go downtown and distribute books.

To the Border

Entering Canada is very easy for U.S. tourists, but devotees have caused themselves problems by taking over books, paintings, and stickers. I don't want to go

incognito because if they question you it becomes ridiculous. I used to think it's none of their business what my religion is. But in our case, religion is everything. The identity of a devotee of Kṛṣṇa is first and foremost "a devotee of Kṛṣṇa." At least a *sannyāsī* shouldn't become "an editor for a New Age magazine," or "an English teacher in a boys' school," and *not* a *sannyāsī*.

On the advice of Kālakanṭha, the Vancouver temple president, our driver will wear a cap and ordinary clothes, just so the border men don't get the initial shock of seeing a shaven head and *tilaka*. But we'll be "devotees going to visit our temple for a festival."

I rode with Bhakta Kent and Bhakta Danny. Bhakta Kent is anxious about the border crossing because he wants to do everything right, not like last time when we almost ran out of gas in the desert. He has prepared what to say: "We're two aides of this man who is a lecturer. We're going to speak at a couple of churches and attend a festival." That sounded okay to me.

The morning fog hung over the Snohomish River, the mountains misty and ethereal. On the highway we saw the body of a dog or wolf smashed like red beef. I didn't start any conversation because I was thinking over some uneasy doubts. The last question I was asked in the last class in Seattle was a shocker. The verse and purport described the greatness of Kṛṣṇa spread throughout the universe. But the question was, "How are we to understand an ex-devotee who turns completely against Kṛṣṇa and sincerely thinks that he should save other devotees by destroying their faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" I replied, "Don't believe him." From doubts like these expressed by others as well as my own ongoing struggle for spiritual survival, I have

become more aware lately of the dangers of doubt. We have to fight to keep our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Māyā* is testing us. Demons attack a *bhakta's śraddha*. We have to protect our devotion toward our worshipable masters, Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

At the Border

We approached the border at a very small town on our way to a Sikh farm. Just before the border we assured each other how easy it would be. Kent put on his white painter's cap. I fastened the top button on my *kurta*.

We breezed right over with a minimum of questions. Kent said we were going for a lecture.

The officer perked up, "Lecture?" Kent pointed to me.

"Got any alcohol? Firearms?"

But the Kāmādhuk was stopped until 8:00 A.M. when the immigration office opens. They wanted to check on Madhu's Irish passport. Once in Canada, the morning became anti-climactic. At last, we were in "Beautiful British Columbia," but everything was the same. We got lost, and I started to get a headache.

At a rest stop picnic bench in Abbotsford, British Columbia: Rather than think any more of doubts, I opened the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Come slowly back*, under the discipline of Vedic sound, read Śrīla Prabhupāda where all speculation is rejected.

This simple act of reading with devotion for the Supreme Lord is abhorred by academicians. And enemies think we are mentally disordered because of our exclusive devotion to God. But I cannot care what they think. I am distracted enough on my own without

making it worse by the doubts of others. Let me hear carefully and protect my mind and heart.

For the pure devotee of the Lord there is nothing beyond the lotus feet of the Lord, and the Lord knows that such devotees do not wish anything more than that . . . The next question is why people are against such auspicious activities as chanting and hearing the glories and pastimes of the Lord which can bring total freedom from the cares and anxieties of material existence. The only answer to this question is that they're unfortunate because of supernatural control due to their offensive activities performed simply for the sake of sense gratification.

—*Bhāg.* 3.9.5., purport

We arrived at the Sandhu family farm, and the owners have kindly allowed us to park our trailer in the back yard, in the middle of an apple orchard. They don't know us, and we don't know them, except that we are all friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa. We had been told to come here on our way to the ISKCON farm in British Columbia because tomorrow night there will be a *kīrtana* and lecture here. The message we received from Vancouver was that the farm owner is a well-to-do Sikh man who makes donations to the Vancouver ISKCON temple. I've never heard of a Sikh person becoming a devotee of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but why not? It's not less likely than an Italian-Irish-American devotee.

So we are parked, and occasionally an apple thuds to the ground. Indian ladies with white plastic buckets are picking zucchinis in a nearby field.

The only thing missing for a nice two-day camp stay is the Kāmadhuk and Madhu, Śarad, and the boys. Somehow, they never made it over the border. So the three of us will have to make-do with the Ram and the



Coachmen trailer. I've got my essential books, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.2 and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The lady here said tonight she will cook for us "something you have never had."

Three hours late, the Kāmadhuk lumbered into the apple orchard. The cause of the delay was that one of the devotees was turned back at the border because of past traffic violations. But the "Dhuk" and the rest of the men are a welcome sight. Now I can sit in my favorite seat.

Mr. Sandhu came by the Kāmadhuk to talk and, sure enough, he's a Kṛṣṇa devotee. One can't tell by appearance that Mr. Sandhu is a Sikh. He doesn't wear Sikh hairdo or dress, but in white T-shirt, old pants, and

rubber boots, he looks like a Punjabi-Canadian farmer. He said that when he was a young boy in Punjab he met a *yogī* who was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. The *yogī* could make things smaller and bigger and "Kṛṣṇa was always around him." So by the *yogī's* association, Mr. Sandhu became a lifetime Kṛṣṇa devotee. When he met ISKCON devotees in 1983 at the Vancouver temple opening, he was naturally attracted.

He is farming on eighteen hundred acres, all vegetables, and he hires nine hundred employees. "I don't do it, Kṛṣṇa does. It's all His."

I asked him if he was a member of the Sikh community.

"Yes, but I worship Kṛṣṇa, even when I go to the Sikh temple for weddings and things. Sometimes other Sikhs ask me. But Kṛṣṇa is my God. Whoever you believe in, you should stick to that. One God is enough." Mr. Sandhu told me of dreams he sometimes has of Kṛṣṇa. One time a huge wall of ocean was heading toward him, and he knew he would be killed. But he began to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, and the ocean flattened out.

"You have to depend on Kṛṣṇa," I said, "for the weather, don't you?"

"Yes, but I don't pray for good weather," said Mr. Sandhu. "I may need rain, but you don't pray for that. I leave it up to Kṛṣṇa. If I pray, it's just for my interest. So I let Him decide. I've been running the farm that way for twenty years. Kṛṣṇa can take care of it."

This sounded almost too good to be true, but it was pleasing to hear.

"The important thing is to be peaceful," said Mr. Sandhu. "I may have eighteen hundred acres, but if I walk through them feeling miserable because there is

not enough wind, then what's the use of it? We just do our farming and depend on Kṛṣṇa."

He also told me that tonight his wife would make us cornbread *capātīs* with broccoli and sour cream. He said once Kṛṣṇa ate a simple preparation at the home of His devotee instead of going to eat at the Kaurava's place where there were thirty-six preparations offered. When Kṛṣṇa was asked by the Kauravas why He ate in the humble cottage, He replied that the food there was made with love. "So you're a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa," said Mr. Sandhu. "We will see how much you like this food tonight."

"I'm a servant of a pure devotee."

Two young Sandhu sons and their two cousins, all with lollipops, agreed to come aboard the motorhome. I bowed before the altar, and they did too.

"Your dad has lots of pictures of Kṛṣṇa in his room. So here also is one of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the cows. And this is Lord Jagannātha. Have you seen the Rāthayātrā parade?"

"I did," said Amitji.

"I didn't," said his cousin.

"Well, you should see it. In two weeks they're going to hold it in Vancouver. There's a parade, and everyone pulls the ropes on the carts, and they go to the park with *kīrtana*, and then there's a big feast."

"I am going," said Amitji.

"This is our motorhome," I said. "It's a little house. I sit here and I write and read at my desk."

"Are you going to give a lecture tonight?"

"Yes. At six. And here is a bed for resting, and there's the kitchen where we cook. And that's a fan to keep it cool."

The boys lingered, looking around. The air filled with the scent of their lollipops.

"I have a picture like that," one boy pointed to the Deity of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.

"Okay, guys," said Madhu, and he ushered them out.

Early in the morning Mr. Sandhu loaded us up with cartons of corn, broccoli, carrots, potatoes, and a carton of mangoes. I met him in the pepper field. He was wearing pajamas, and his wife was with him wearing pants and a scarf like the Sikh women I've seen in India.

"That was a very nice function last night," I said. "The room was filled with devotees."

"Yes," said Mr. Sandhu, "I don't get to see devotees much, so I feel fortunate that you came."

"I heard that your brother is in a Sikh sect that follows the same regulations that we do and that they chant the name of God. I heard that your brother is in a Sikh sect that follows the same regulations that we do and that they chant the name of God. I heard their *guru* likes Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. It's the Nāma-dhari sect?"

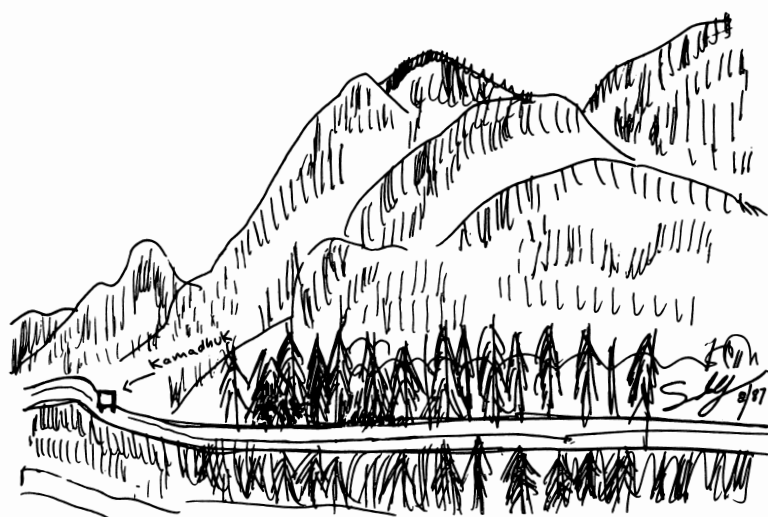
"Yes. Nāma-dhari," Mr. Sandhu said. "Their *guru* asked me to join that religion but I said I'll stay with Kṛṣṇa. This one lifetime, let me give it to Kṛṣṇa."

"Yes. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that too. Even if you take it as a gamble—you have given so many past lives to other causes, so give this one life to Kṛṣṇa."

As we pulled out of the driveway, Mr. Sandhu's wife and boys and puppy came out to say good-bye. She doesn't speak much English, but often says "Kṛṣṇa" as a catch-all expression.

"Thank you for the feast last night."

"Kṛṣṇa!"



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Śaraṇāgati Farm

Quote from Śrīla Prabhupāda:

You can write! You can write volumes of books on this table, if you are intelligent enough. You can make research work on the table. But in your research work conclude that Kṛṣṇa is the origin. A carpenter can write about Kṛṣṇa if he's thoughtful. Anyone. Therefore, it is said, *yad-uttamaśloka-guṇānuvarṇanam*: Whatever your profession is, know the original cause is Kṛṣṇa. Now make research work and find out how Kṛṣṇa is the original cause. That is education.

—From a lecture given in Vṛndāvana, August 3, 1974

A three-hour drive to Śaraṇāgati. Thick forests right down to the roadside, summertime mountains covered with green. Because we know where we are, we keep thinking, "This is Canada." And actually it is cleaner, bigger, less populated. Water gushing down from the mountain. More access to God as the cause.

We began talking about politics in ISKCON temples, but I wanted to see Kṛṣṇa in the Fraser River.

Passing the Fraser Canyon, we stopped and heard the river. Cables on steel towers cross right over the mountain top. Tunnels through solid stone. Railroad through rock. Canyon alpine. Caribou wagon trail. Snow on a mountain.

After two hours, it became somewhat boring. "How much more to go?"

"Looks a little bleak around here," said Madhu.

Our eyes focused on the left-hand side of the highway, where we were told to look for a wooden sign.

"There it is!"

Śaraṇāgati

Once off the highway, we drove a while on a public access road until we reached a fence with another sign "Śaraṇāgati Farm." We passed another fence and a wooden arch leading into the center of the community. From here we could see three yurt tents, a trailer, and a few small buildings. A van came out to meet us. It was Gauracandra. He was wearing a straw sun-helmet and his hands were covered with plastic bags.

"What happened?" I asked.

"I burned my hands in a fire. I just got out of the hospital yesterday."

"Will you get back the full use of your hands?"

"Oh yes, completely. It's Kṛṣṇa's mercy," he said. "I've always been looking for an excuse to read. But I've been too busy. But now I am forced." He still seemed too busy getting into his van and steering despite the bags on his hands.

He led us to a clearing in the woods, our campsite for the Kāmadhuk and trailer. It was rough for our vehicles, and sometimes the bottoms scraped. As we passed a patch with many stumps of large trees, I asked, "What's this?"

"The loggers," said Jaya Gauracandra. He sounded disappointed.

"You mean we still don't have logging rights on our own land?"

"No, you buy land, but you don't even own the trees on it. We were supposed to buy back the rights, but

at the last minute we couldn't come up with the payment without jeopardizing our mortgage payments." He said that the logging company has rights to over three hundred acres out of the total of seventeen hundred.

So we are parked at a tilt, but it's open-air country, no sounds of civilization, just the wind in the trees and clear sky. As we settled in, Muktavandya, (who is visiting from Boston) cooked *sabji*, *halavā*, *purīs*, and a honey-based drink to celebrate the appearance of Lord Balarāma. I read from "Lord Balarāma visits Vṛndāvana." During that visit, Balarāma drank *varuṇī* until He became intoxicated and threatened to scrape the Yamunā. I described the types of drunkenness, according to *The Nectar of Devotion*: "A low class person uses vulgar language and staggers around, but a gentleman lies down quietly to rest."

Serving *prasādam* to Tattva-vit, Muktavandya, Madhu-maṅgala, Bhakta Kent, and Bhakta Danny, I persisted until they repeatedly refused to take any more food or *varuṇī*. Then we all laid down quietly to rest.



Śaraṇāgati Sequence

Melon, *sabjī*, *halavā*,
brightened
by sky and hunger.

In a birch grove.
Some are big enough
for the loggers.

Waking at night,
not disappointed—
wind in the trees.

Work Song

We're chanting and hearing,
and sometimes it's dry.

We're working
and preaching, and
no one seems to care.

We reading
and hoping
for the Golden Age.

But it seems like a long exile.

Building homes
in Śaraṇāgati hills,
we didn't know it would cost so much.

The temple room is within a trailer. Plastic, stapled storm windows. Two stained-glass panels of lotus flowers. Small Jagannātha Deities and Gaura-Nitāi. We began the *ārati* at 7:00 A.M., then a class with lively discussion. On leaving the room, Yamala-Arjuna asked me if I had time to see his woodcarving. I glanced into a side room and saw a face of Lord Jagannātha carved within a tree trunk and surrounded with branches. It looked like a piece of avant-garde art.

At least half the appeal of the carvings is to hear Yamala-Arjuna's explanation.

Yamala-Arjuna: "This one here is called 'Knot in the Heart.' It's a living entity. His mouth is open, and all the knot-holes around his face are knocked out to stand for knots in the heart that he's removed. His mouth is open to show that he is feeling the pain of removing another knot in the heart. As devotees, we feel these pains of purification in relationship with one another or when we have to do something that we don't want to do for our purification. So this is a graphic representation of a soul going through that."

SDG: "Who is this?"

YA: "He is the Lantern Man. It's an old Coleman stove that no one was using and I thought it should be used in Kṛṣṇa's service. So I carved out a little grotesque head and put it inside. He is the living entity burning in the fire of lust. When you start the stove, you pump it up to build pressure to get it lit. So when a person is lusty, that's what happens to him. The more he gets into it, the more he pumps into material life, and the more he's inflamed and maddened by lust. I tried to make him look like a madman or lunatic. So people will become frightened. It shakes them out of their slumber."

SDG: "This Lord Jagannātha looks like a real *dāru-*

brahman, the Deity of the forest."

YA: "He is the first one I did, but I wondered if it was all right. I didn't want to make an offense to Lord Jagannātha by carving Him. But I wanted to make a Śaraṇāgati Lord Jagannātha, to fit the mood here. All around Śaraṇāgati there are so many pieces of wood with moss on them. But this piece is solid, it's not rotten. It's part of a tree that was hit by lightning. So I wanted to have Lord Jagannātha in the mood of the forest here. Lord Jagannātha is the most wonderful, purifying personality, so if people can see His eyes, they'll be able, sooner or later, to enter Goloka Vṛndāvana. At least that's what I'm attempting."

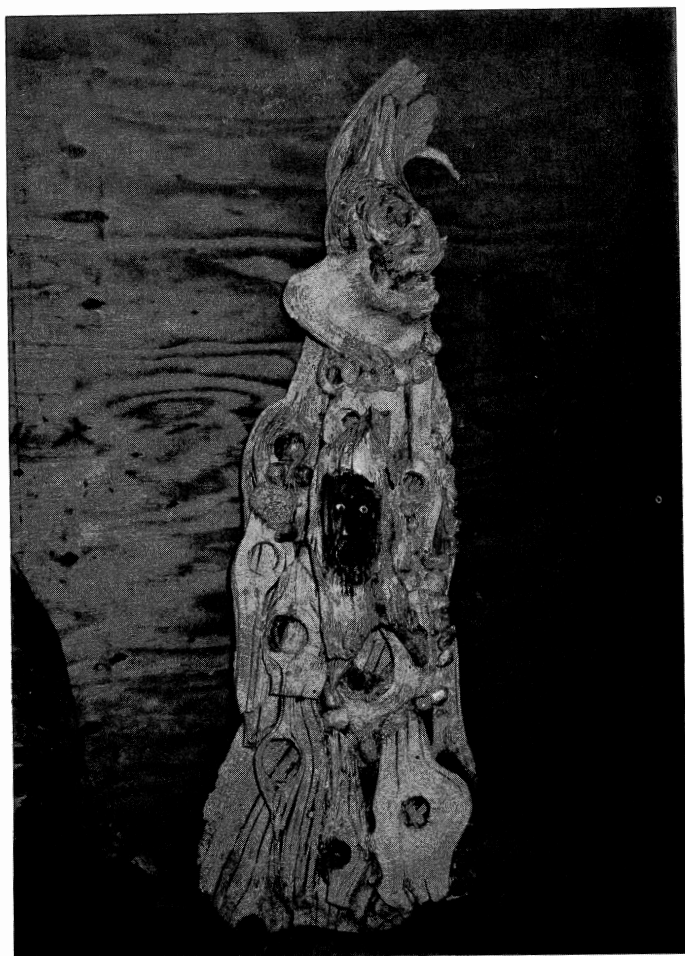
SDG: "This piece is beautiful."

YA: "It's an old root, uplifted from the ground by the loggers. To me it's like the banyan tree of material life described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, a rotting, transitory place. The living entity carved here is a devotee using the human form of life. He has reached the top and so he's chanting. As a human being he's not supposed to stay and rot with the wood or become bleached white."

SDG: "I like what you're doing. Some of this reminds me of Picasso sculpture. He once took a bicycle seat and its handlebars and put them together to make a long-horned oxen. When you look at it, it's brilliant and yet you want to say, 'I could have done that!' If you can see these Kṛṣṇa conscious lessons in nature and bring them out . . ."

YA: "Yes, I mostly like to leave it the way nature gives it and just add some touch without spoiling it. I've been doing this only for two months, but in my own neophyte way, I'm really absorbed in it. Now, wherever I go on the land, I can feel Kṛṣṇa's presence and feel satisfied and happy. I'm getting reciprocation and

pleasing others. Otherwise, if I'm just up here as a family man, then the mercy is withdrawn. I want to do something, like this art, to help other living entities change their hearts. Also, I think it will encourage devotees and guests if they see that there's something happening at the temple, so many different activities. The more that's taking place, the more people will feel comfortable and they also can fit into place."



Saraṇāgati consists of seventeen hundred acres of land owned by a corporation of individual shareholders who meet once a month; they are not a legal part of ISKCON. A family pays about six thousand dollars and gets five acres as well as rights to use other areas. Each family builds their own house at their own expense, usually somewhere between ten and twenty thousand dollars. During our visit only about six or seven devotees were present, but another twenty are out earning money at various jobs in order to make their land payments or to raise money for building. Eventually the corporation hopes to attract more families.

Saraṇāgati is isolated from the anxiety of the cities. Once a devotee overcomes the initial financial burdens of buying land and housing, his costs will be very low. There are hardly any neighbors to speak of, just trees and hills and Indian reservations. Even the logging companies will lose their rights after 1990. The devotees here seem to get along quite well together and help each other to build houses. They share what they have, while also maintaining individual family identities.

I went on a tour of the houses. Jaya Gauracandra's place is a modified A-frame located on a hill with a view of a lake. He has a garage and a workshop area underneath the house, big rooms on the first floor, two porches, and a second floor with two bedrooms.

"Who helped you build it?" I asked.

"Kṛṣṇa and yourself," he said. And that is the amazing feature of his cedar-stained, solid house. He did it all alone. Jaya Gauracandra's wife's sister and husband were visiting today, and they liked what they saw.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee automatically

preaches by whatever he does, and Jaya Gauracandra's family produces good preaching. He said that while building he thought, "This is just my house. How is this devotional service?" But it is. His house has become a temple by the addition of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Deities. If a householder can live here and take the opportunity to read and chant and encourage others, then house-building is also devotional service.

Their two-year-old son, Caitanya dāsa, is living evidence of the good effects of country life on the body and mind of a growing child. Jaya Gauracandra insists that the next time I visit I should take the house for a week, for a writing session.

Next, we visited Madana-Mohana's cabin-in-progress. Jaya Gauracandra praised Madana-Mohana as a very humble and dedicated devotee, especially in his determination to implement self-sufficiency at Śaraṇāgati. Madana-Mohana has brought a few old farm machines, a potato planter, and a corn planter, and he is about to purchase a horse. He'll be the first to introduce farming here. He has decided not to use any electricity in his house. It is a rougher-looking place than Jaya Gauracandra's. It took a tremendous amount of labor to cut down the trees, drag them to this spot, cut them at the sawmill, and fit them in place. Dyutidhāra Swami and Madana-Mohana worked together on it all through the winter. It's not even half finished, but Madana-Mohana has to spend time nowadays earning money to pay for the rest of it.

It's so quiet here, I think it would take me days and even weeks before I could relax enough to hear the natural sounds. The silence is not a vacuum of all sound, but the variations are subtle, unlike the noises we're

used to. As I calm my mind and senses and tune in, I hear a steady cricket hum and a deeper vibration almost like *om*. It makes me think of the phrase “the music of the galaxies.” This is Kṛṣṇa without the racket of men and machines. A good place to chant. And everywhere, evergreens.

Yamala-Arjuna and Līlāmṛta’s house is being built quickly with wood purchased from the lumberyard and work by hired devotees. It’s a two-story house with many rooms. His idea is to have numerous guest quarters so he can invite friends to Śaraṇāgati. This is typical of Yamala-Arjuna’s preaching spirit. For years he has operated the downtown Vancouver yoga center, where he has become friends with many punk rockers. Even his move to the country is inspired with the preaching idea—a place for new *bhaktas* and guests.

When we arrived at Yamala-Arjuna’s house, Vaiṣṇava dāsa was hammering away, putting in window frames. Jaya Gaura said that Dyutidhāra Swami did most of the work on this house. Dyutidhāra Swami is now in Vancouver where he is reconstructing the Rātha-yātrā cart, but usually he works at building houses. He’s a unique *sannyāsī*; by building, he sets the example of body, mind, and words in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Dyutidhāra Swami takes a salary for his house labors and is using it to purchase tools and his own land.

Nearby Yamala-Arjuna’s house is Rādhikā dāśī’s house, which is mostly finished and quite small. Its shape and the hand-split wood shingles on the roof reminded me of Thoreau’s Walden house, except Thoreau’s was even smaller. Her place is made of fir and pine boards. It looks like she’s planning for austere, happy, single living, with a minimum of amenities.

There is an open deck running around the outside of the one-room structure. While I sat there, big ants crawled by and chipmunks played hide-and-seek in the wood chips. There's a lake quite near by. A log fence surrounds her five acres to keep out the neighbor's beef cows.

A house like this reminds me of the concept of *bhajana-kuṭīr*. In Vaiṣṇava tradition, devotees look forward to old age with thoughts of finishing their days in a small one-room meditation hut, perhaps here in the mountains. We all have to leave life sooner or later, and neither can we say whether the older person will die before the younger. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, no one actually dies, but we have to take another body. *Where* we go is what is most important, and that is determined by our thoughts at death; our state at death is determined by our thoughts during life. Every house should be a *bhajana-kuṭīr*, a place for serving Kṛṣṇa. During the younger part of life, the "*bhajana-kuṭīr*" may be filled with growing children in different rooms and may



expand with business plans—and preaching plans also, such as Yamala-Arjuna's. Toward the very end of one's days, one may think of the *bhajana-kuṭīr* in the traditional sense. Śaraṇāgati is ready for all concepts.

The last plot of land we saw today belongs to Dyutidhāra Swami. He lives right on the shore of the lake, a spot that made me think it must have been just like this thousands of years ago, big stretches of flat grassland and tall evergreen hills. It's a silent, timeless place where you can think deeply just by walking. Dyutidhāra Swami's mobile sawmill is here, and a blue schoolbus that he has fitted out for simple *sannyāsa* living. His plan is to eventually build a house and start an *āśrama* for *brahmacārīs* and older *gurukula* boys.

As we drove back to our campsite, Jaya Gauracandra pointed out half a dozen other plots of land where no one has built yet, but where devotees have already staked a claim.

August 13, 1987
Śaraṇāgati Farm, B.C.

Dear disciples,

Please accept my blessings. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Here I am parked in a clearing in the woods in British Columbia. Far away from you? But where are you? When I think of you, my disciples, should I think only of Gītā-nāgarī or Vancouver? No, I have to think of you all, wherever you are. That is my obligation. You are in many places, and my obligation is to be with you and guide you. That means I must travel to the city where you are serving. But that is only part of it.

I also have to come before you with honor. I have to face you, give *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, and know that I am clean. And I want to inspire you.

There has been much adjustment in ISKCON, some of it groping, in the attempt to find out the true relationship of *guru* to disciple. Although the relationship between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his initiated disciples seems perfectly clear, even that has been questioned. Some disciples think they need different kinds of supplementation to the original relationship they enjoyed with Prabhupāda when he was here.

As for the relationship of myself with my disciples, one might say that it has undergone revolutionary changes. Some of our former practices we may now deem as wrong, such as my trying to do *whatever* I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda do. But I think even our mistakes were right in the sense that they were all attempts to make a meaningful relationship. What was wrong is being corrected, but the main thing is to keep our relationship

alive and to work at it without resentment. We cannot reject the relationship of *guru* and disciple.

From the beginning, I have been convinced that writing to you is important. In the course of time some of my disciples have accepted it as sustaining. To those of you who don't see how my travel reports or other books are relevant in helping you in your daily struggles, I can try to explain it. But if you don't understand it by now, perhaps you won't even if I try further.

I am assured, though, by the responses I have heard from devotees who draw considerable strength from my journals, poems, and lessons. But one may ask, "How are these impressions of traveling through the deserts and mountains of the American West helpful to a disciple in his or her daily affairs in Puerto Rico or Philadelphia or New Delhi?" I think part of my writing's appeal for my disciples is that it is something different from the daily work. Our communication is a sacred, private place where we exchange without any politics or pressure. I don't mean to say that your home base is in any way impure or less important. Rather, it is the real and practical field where you carry out the order of your *gurus* and where you serve Lord Kṛṣṇa. But my writing is a space that we share—to help you go on with all your other work, *which I also support*.

How do I support you and your temple authorities in your service to Prabhupāda? I support you mostly in an individual way, encouraging you to chant and to hear and to continue the good fight. I assure you that continuing is worthwhile and that there is really no alternative for a devotee. I ask you to remain a devotee. As I continue, you should also. I suggest how you may appreciate nature, and I overcome doubts, so you may

also. What I heard today from a lecture tape by Śrīla Prabhupāda I share with you, as friend to friend.

And now I am bringing you some news of ISKCON around the world. You may hear how a devotee named Yamala-Arjuna makes Kṛṣṇa conscious art from the woods of Śaraṇāgati, and how I don't think it's wrong or "off." You may hear from me that they keep a big black dog here, named Choṭa, who chases bears. Choṭa is so affectionate that he whines and cries when devotees come near and he offers *daṇḍavats* to them. Choṭa is bored and lonely at having to be a dog, and he wants the devotees to pet him unlimitedly. Of course, we only pet him for a few moments, because he's just a dog, not a human, but everyone likes him. So how is it valuable for you to hear about Choṭa from me? I really shouldn't have to explain it. Prabhupāda once said, "When you love someone, you want to hear from him." Look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters. They're filled with personal accounts. And we cherished his sharing them with us as much as we cherished the philosophical instructions. By this personal love for Prabhupāda, his disciples endured hardships and pioneered the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

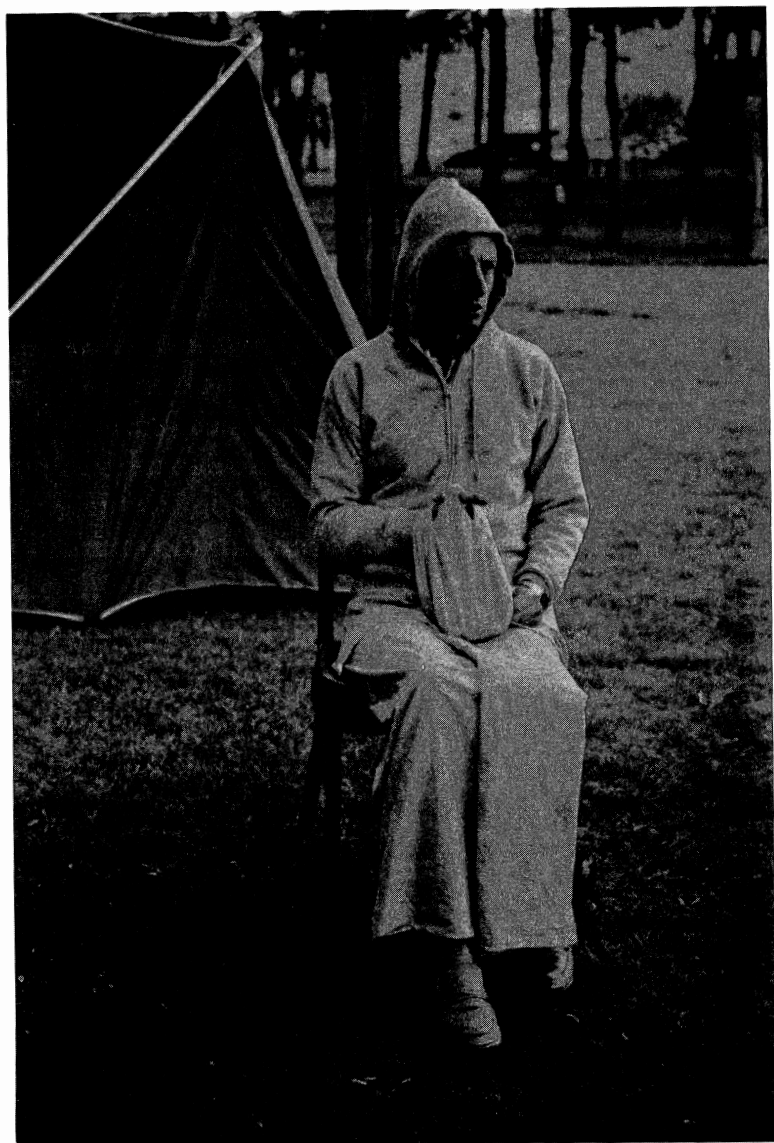
Prabhupāda once wrote to a disciple who had sewn and sent him a *swami* hat: "When I put on the hat sent by you on my head, everyone says that it is brilliant, and because one has to dress according to the taste of friends this hat has become an important factor of my dressing. Thank you very much."

Sentimental? Outsiders may think so. But the applicable principle is *guru-sevā*. One should always be eager to serve and inquire from the spiritual master, and a genuine disciple takes great pleasure in the loving

exchanges based on this service. Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda really saw himself as the servant, friend, and well-wisher of his disciples.

I am traveling for different reasons, but the fact that I can share it all with you gives me the most substantial satisfaction. If I couldn't write it down and give it to you, I don't know if I would continue to travel. I can't trust my memory to stay fresh for the few and often restricted, meetings that I might be able to share with you when I visit your temple. This is Kali-yuga, and so we depend on writing and books. Is that wrong? I don't think so, just as long as I end my refrain with "Surrender to Kṛṣṇa: follow Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Yours in the service of Prabhupāda,
Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



Satsvarūpa Maharāja,
at *japa* during *brahma-muhūrta*.

Brāhma-muhūrta in the Mountains

We were getting used to
open-windowed ease,
now a cold-water bath
is *tapasya*.

Arati aboard the motorhome,
the altar shakes
as the men climb on board.
Singing *saṁsāra*,
the *ghee* lamp shines
on Deities and men.

In first dawn light,
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa . . .
Being near each other helps.

Big Enough

(To Rādhikā-devī dāsī)

Your house is bigger
than Thoreau's at Walden,
and more enlightened
by the holy names.
It's big enough
to chant in.
You have no room
for family or TV,
so it's a fit place
for going back to Godhead
if you're peaceful there
and don't desire more.

From Under a Leaky Roof

It's pouring rain. The rain is chilly, dripping through the roof. I hope the road doesn't turn so muddy that we get stuck here.

Four or five devotees are getting ready to leave the party and they are passing me farewell notes, changes in plans, etc. Two men in our group have become so attracted to Śaraṇāgati that they have decided to stay, earn money for land, and build. Mahā-mantra dāsa asked me to stay here also, and he suggested that Bhakta Kent should stay. I wish them all well in their decision. I may also eventually have no choice but to stop . . . if we run out of gas money. If fuel stops coming from the Mideast. If nuclear war comes, as they predict.

Baladeva is leaving to go work in the office at Gītā-nāgarī Press. Varuṇa is leaving for Philadelphia, and Nārada Ṛṣi is going to join the temple in New York. Our traveling party is whittled down. But as long as our bald tires don't pop, and as long as we get another donation to tide us over, and as long as devotees in different places keep encouraging us to visit, we will keep moving. It's best for me. At least for now, I couldn't be satisfied settling in one place.

Birds at Śaraṇāgati

"Varieties of birds are indications of His masterful artistic sense" (*Bhāg.* 2.1.36).

We can appreciate these simple creatures as part of Kṛṣṇa's body. And the way in which they live out their destiny without complaint and without perversion is exemplary. It helps us to see that Kṛṣṇa's plan is working and everyone is His servant. Only the human species has become unnatural and rebellious.

On our way to the temple or on a *japa* walk, when we come upon a bird or animal, we think, "At least they're doing what they're supposed to." Even the predators are taking only their quota; they're not dropping bombs. They're too "unintelligent" for that. They just eat, mate, sleep, and defend in strict conformity to God's law. (We shouldn't interfere with them). And even while working within the severe limits of animal consciousness, they exhibit flashes of His beauty. They remind us that we are always in the presence of God.

In the evening, while lying down to rest, we heard the *whirr, whirr* of the common night hawk. In the morning we again saw the hawks with white spotted wings and a flight pattern that resembles a butterfly's. In the early morning each day we saw fifty to a hundred ducks soaring through the sky on their way from the lake to the river.



I saw a white and black hairy woodpecker climbing up the pine. Throughout the day I heard the cries of the stellar's jay, but I never saw one while here. An Audobon warbler blended in with the mountains, except for his yellow bottom. One hopped lightly from branch to branch, then flew out of sight. But the mountain chickadees were inquisitive and not much afraid of us. While coming back from the temple one afternoon, I saw a marsh hawk flying very low over the fields, looking for prey. Six grouse "chickens," reputed to be very shy, came right into our camp where they clucked and cooed for ten minutes before walking back into the bushes.

After living for a week in the country, I know it's going to be a bit difficult to go into the city. Why do people insist on living so clogged together, so that if you cough or play a drum, you disturb your neighbor? Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter, "In my apartment I had the experience that one day there was playing of the *mṛdaṅga* and immediately there was an objection."

Therefore, the magnet of Śaraṇāgati. Devotees here see into the future—war and the collapse of the Kali-yuga economies. It is predicted in *śāstra* also that because of drought and heavy taxes, the citizens will flee the cities and go live in the mountains. Devotees at Śaraṇāgati are picking out their plots, and building before it's too late.

You can breathe fresh air here. You can make friends with the trees and wildlife. You can become enlivened simply by the sight of the white-spotted night hawks as they flutter in the air above. And whenever you look up from your labors, you see the hills and you think, "The trees are the hairs of His body, the mountains are the stacks of His bones."

But I will trade it all for the road. Tomorrow we leave Śaraṇāgati for the Vancouver festivals, and then head south.

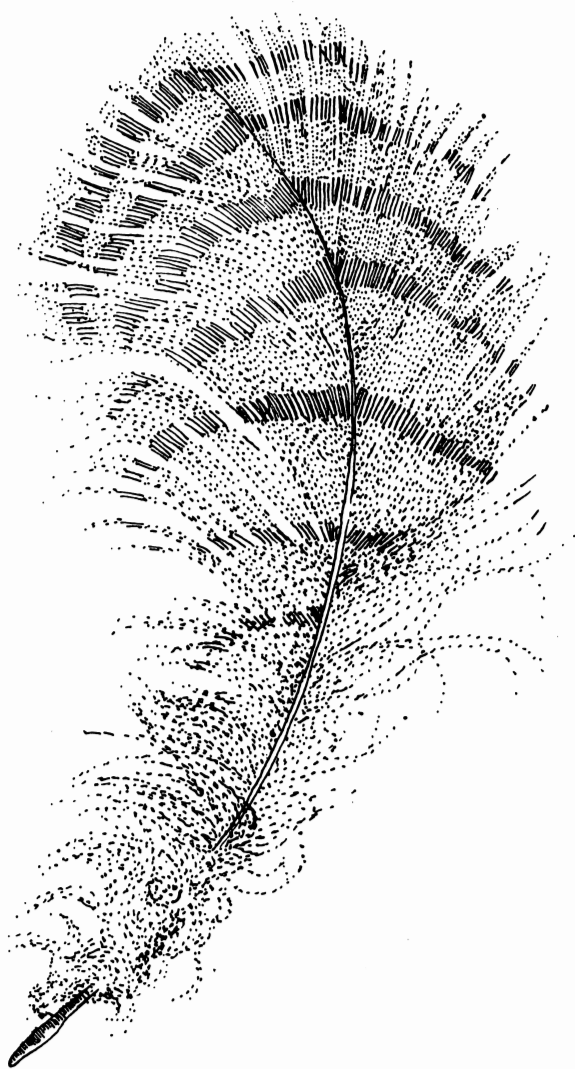
LESSONS FROM THE ROAD
Seeing Kāmadhuk as a Person

Kāmadhuk, as you are parked
 on the road,
 your profile against the mountains
 inspired my praises.
 I know they'll say it's silly
 to love a truck.
 But you're not an ordinary object.
 You are dull-silver
 with a brown-orange stripe
 just like any Barth RV, but
 your stop lights flash for Kṛṣṇa
 and the road you ride
 leads to ISKCON.
 Unlike other trucks,
 for you, tomorrow is Janmāṣṭamī.



The Kāmadhuk, a bhajan-kuṭīr on wheels.

Appendix



Summary Study
of
Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's
ŚRĪ VRAJA-VILĀSA-STAVA

Based on the translation by Kuśakratha dāsa
by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

(Part Two, beginning with verse 37)

In four consecutive verses, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī describes the personal servants of Kṛṣṇa and the maidservants of Rādhārāṇī. The boys are referred to as *dāsa*s or *gopas*, and the girls are *dāsīs* or *gopī-mañjarīs*. They all assist the main actors, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Their topmost exchange of *mādhurya-līlā*. We cannot properly call such service "menial," especially when we consider the noun describing menial as "a person who has a servile or low nature." The personal servants of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are far more exalted than any king or queen of the heavenly planets, and yet they have no personal desire for palaces, love affairs, followers, or decorations of wealth. Their pure desire is to assist their master and mistress in the groves of Vṛndāvana.

With great enthusiasm, Kṛṣṇa's servants, who are much like His friends, serve Him and please Him by

bringing the flute, *vīṇā*, water, betel nuts, and other articles. *Patrī* is their leader. The *dāsīs* of Rādhārāṇī bring Her betel nuts, massage Her feet, bring Her water, and arrange for Her secret meeting with Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are not at all shy in the presence of the great *gopīs* for whom Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is more dear than their own life. Śrīmatī Rūpa-maṇjarī is their leader. As we hear Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī speak of the *rūpa-maṇjarīs*, we recall that, according to the *Gaura-gaṇodeśa-dīpikā*, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was formerly the *gopī* known as Rasa-maṇjarī, but he joined in Lord Caitanya's pastimes as Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

The wonderful mentality of Lord Kṛṣṇa's personal associates is that they consider their own happiness as insignificant, and they strive wholly to make Him always happy. Similarly, when Rādhārāṇī becomes happy, the *gopī-maṇjarīs* are pleased. If they cannot see Rādhārāṇī for a moment, they become so distraught that they appear almost dead. They love Her much more than their own lives.

The unique loving feature of the *gopī-maṇjarīs* is also described by Lord Caitanya in His talks with Rāmananda Raya, as recorded in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Lord Caitanya states that pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are self-effulgent, happiness personified, unlimited, and all-powerful. Even so, the spiritual humors of the pastimes are never complete without the *gopīs*, the Lord's personal friends. This is because the Supreme Personality of Godhead is never complete without His spiritual potencies. And if anyone aspires to the company of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, it can only be done by taking shelter of the *gopī-maṇjarīs*. Any other interest in Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is a pretension.

Lord Caitanya states, "There is an inexplicable fact about the natural inclinations of the *gopīs*. The *gopīs* never want to enjoy themselves with Kṛṣṇa personally. The happiness of the *gopīs* increases ten million times when they serve to engage Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their transcendental pastimes. By nature, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is just like a creeper of love of Godhead, and the *gopīs* are the twigs, flowers, and leaves of that creeper. When the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is sprinkled on that creeper, the happiness derived by the twigs, flowers, and leaves is ten million times greater than that derived by the creeper itself" (Cc. *Madhya-līla*, 8.207-210).

Here the example of the creeper solves the riddle of the "indirect" pleasure of the *gopī-mañjarīs*. When we sprinkle water on a root of a creeper, the twigs, flowers, and leaves indirectly receive the benefit of the creeper itself. If one were to water the twigs and leaves directly, it would not be as effective as the water sprinkled at the creeper's root. Similarly, the *gopīs* are not as pleased when they directly mix with Kṛṣṇa as when they serve to unite Rādhārāṇī with Kṛṣṇa. Their transcendental pleasure is in uniting Them.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī also takes the greatest pleasure in "indirect" union with Kṛṣṇa by sometimes inducing Kṛṣṇa to enjoy Himself with some of Rādhārāṇī's friends. As stated in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, "Presenting various pleas for the *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī sometimes sends the *gopīs* to Kṛṣṇa just to enable them to associate with Him directly. At such times, She enjoys a happiness ten million times greater than that enjoyed by direct association" (Cc. *Madhya-līla*, 8.213).

We cannot even imagine how to imitate these pastimes, yet the psychology of trying to please Kṛṣṇa

by taking satisfaction when Kṛṣṇa enjoys with His devotees is a very important lesson even for neophyte devotees. Instead of being envious when we see devotees please their spiritual master or please Lord Kṛṣṇa, we should follow the example of Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* who take pleasure in engaging other *gopīs* in the service of the Lord. The differences between *prema*, or love of Godhead, and material lust, is that material lust cannot be engaged in the service of the Lord, for it is applicable to materialists, not to Kṛṣṇa. When we feel envy toward a devotee of the Lord, we should understand that this is not the spirit of Vṛndāvana. This same spirit of spiritual happiness was expressed by Lord Caitanya when He said He was not a *brāhmaṇa* or a *sannyāsī* but the servant of the servant of the servant—a hundred times removed—of the servant of those who serve the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī worships the exalted servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa and declares their happiness is much greater than the happiness of many millions of universes.

In a series of four verses, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī describes the cows, bulls, and calves of Vṛndāvana. The *surabhi* cows are decorated with sapphires, their horns are studded with gold, and “their white cheeks have crippled the pride of the snow-capped mountain peaks.” Devotee-scholars have analyzed that Kṛṣṇa’s pet animals relate to Him in the *śānta* rasa of neutrality. But in the absolute world, each and every liberated soul, fully partakes in the nectar of loving exchanges with the Supreme Lord. Just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa often embraces Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*, so He embraces the cows. He is, indeed, always intimate and

affectionate with the *surabhis*, and they reciprocate by giving constant milk, so much that the pasturing ground is muddy from their dripping udders. And the *surabhis'* milk is not material but is filled with spiritual nourishment. As described by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: "*Kāma-dhenus* (cows yielding the fulfillment of desire) give milk when they are milked, but the *kāma-dhenus* of Goloka pour forth oceans of milk in the shape of the fountain of love showering transcendental bliss that does away with the hunger and thirst of all pure devotees" (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.29, purport).

The cows also exchange with Śrī Kṛṣṇa by becoming stunned in ecstasy when He plays His flute. In almost every authorized painting we see of Kṛṣṇaloka the cows and calves are present. We cannot conceive of Vṛndāvana pastimes without thinking of Kṛṣṇa walking from His village early in the morning with the cows, protecting them all day even while He exchanges in other pastimes of killing demons or playing with the boys, and returning home at night surrounded by limitless numbers of joyful *surabhis*. With His body further beautified by the dust raised from their hooves, Śrī Kṛṣṇa daily enjoys a great festival of protecting and milking the cows.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has a special pet bull named Padmagandha whose horns are covered with golden jewels, whose hooves are decorated with sapphires and whose neck is decorated with a swinging garland of fresh flowers. Although Kṛṣṇa is the son of the king of Vraja, He personally tends to the cows and does not merely delegate these dealings to others. Sometimes He feeds the calves placing small bunches of tender fresh grass in their mouths, and sometimes He carefully massages their limbs. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa worship the *surabhi*

cows because of their place in Vṛndāvana-līlā. And Kṛṣṇa intends that even the cows in this material world, the descendants of the *surabhi* cows, should be given special protection by the *vaiśya* class of men.

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