

# Lessons from the Road

*Volume Ten*

Northeastern United States  
November – December 1987

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

## Lessons from the Road

In the midst of your heavy duties go on writing something glorifying the Lord and put our philosophy into words.

—from a letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda, August 12, 1971

It seemed to me that the reader of a good travel-book is entitled not only to an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, but to an interior...which takes place side by side with the outer one.

—from *Abroad* by Paul Fussell



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*The*  
*Gitā-nāgarī Press*  
*Philadelphia, PA*

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### *Northeast*

#### *Arrival, Harrisburg*

I pumped Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa for news of Gītā-nāgarī, as he drove me from the airport to the farm. He's been at Gītā-nāgarī for nine years and quietly sees the changes. He works with the cows and with Paramānanda Prabhu. Now he's a married man.

"Every adult has to pay \$50 a month rent to help pay the total overhead," he said, "and \$37.50 for food. It's working out fine." Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa made me nervous by his steering the van with only his left hand.

"How is Uttarā dāsī doing?" I asked.

"Good," said Śrī Kṛṣṇa. "She previously sent you a long letter in which she said she was thinking of going to high school. But I didn't want it. She would have to stop being a devotee for a few years to do it." He said all the teenagers and adults also thought that the local high school was a good idea because of the learning they could gain. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa didn't like it for his wife. He prefers that she finish her education at home and get her equivalency diploma.

"She dresses Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Viśākhā, and Lalitā every morning," said Śrī Kṛṣṇa. "And yesterday the devotees brought her back her own little Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities from India. She stayed up all night to meet Them when They came in from New York, and now she's still up with the Deities."

"There are nine processes of devotional service," I said, "so she can become perfect just from *arcana*."

"Yeah, she's completely into the Deity worship."



"Yeah, he's decked out. Lives in a tent on Dhruva's land. He says he still chants thirty-two rounds in the morning."

"And Lowery?"

"He's doin' real nice. He works with Food for Life, and in the kitchen."

"I heard there was some bitter exchange," I said, "that some of the senior devotees are accusing the leaders of negligence."

"Oh yeah. I didn't hear too much about that. Yeah, it was real bad for a while."

Approaching Gītā-nāgarī I saw the entrance sign, "ISKCON FARM," standing strong, but it is a new edition with no picture of a cow. We drove past the entrance and on to Mathureśa's house, where I'll be staying.

### *Rādhā-Dāmodara*

When traveling away from Rādhā-Dāmodara we sometimes speak glibly, "Oh, Rādhā-Dāmodara are very spritely and mischievous." But when I saw Them yesterday, They inspired me with awe and reverence. The Deities are not a plaything for my whims, Their beauty is composed and pure. I can't approach Them with a sentimental feeling as if, "Let me catch this naughty boy and sport with Him."

*gurus* since Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure? Should we follow the same guides as you?" They already know I give them freedom to follow any teacher who inspires them with the same message I give them. If they get especially good results, they should also share it with me, for my benefit.

Do I have *śikṣā-gurus*? It's shameful to think that I need anyone but Śrīla Prabhupāda and his books. Actually I don't need others. But to dovetail my own *varṇāśrama* interests as a writer and as a person who is yet evolving (no, I am not a pure *nitya-siddha* or a completely perfected *sādhana-bhakta*), I have followed different instructors, perhaps somewhat like Arjuna, who followed a military instructor. I have learned valuable things from others, even though some of them are not even Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees, such as writers who possess a *śakti*, or a piety, like Oriental monks and poets as well as Western poets and transcendentalists. And sometimes I like to read Teresa of Avila just for the joy and fun of hearing her instruct her students in the life of prayer. And when I went with the GBC men to see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and Śrīdhara Mahārāja they told me some things that Śrīla Prabhupāda had already told, but at times when it helped me in my loneliness and weakness since his disappearance.



Now that I've admitted my own separate interests, will all hell break loose? But it's already broken loose. They are already absorbed in their families and computers and house-finding. And they are following different teachers, who are not all on the Gauḍīya path. SDG and Śrīla Prabhupāda aren't always their all-in-all. I don't think my confession will start a stampede to Haiku or Walden Pond or Catholic mysticism.

But I'm being open about it. Having come out with this, I will try to set a decent example of dovetailing all interests in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as soon as possible and as thoroughly as possible. Yes, let's be honest about our needs, but let's start ejecting the excess baggage.

Isn't it embarrassing? Why can't we be simpler? All right, if we must be more complex or more imperfect than we wish we could be right now, let us at least keep the basics. No John Kṛṣṇa. No resentment against ISKCON. No giving up of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as our religion. No giving up of our spiritual master and devotional service. Grow hair if you need to, but don't forget Kṛṣṇa is your supreme worshipable Deity. Make new friends if that's your way, but tell them about Kṛṣṇa, don't ever hide the fact that you have received this most fortunate link to the spiritual world. Move out of the *brahmacārī-āśrama* into your own house, but then keep a temple room for worship, as our Indian disciples do, and try to serve the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. And there are some things you don't ever need. Some "*śikṣā-gurus*" should never be followed. Always allow Prabhupāda to influence you back to the straight and narrow. Keep the *Bhāgavatams* in your home. Honor your husband or wife as a devotee of the Lord. Give



possess anything. He is satisfied with whatever is obtained by God's grace. He is not at all attached to improving his social status or improving the status of education of his children. He is not neglectful—he is dutiful—but he does not spend too much time on the upliftment of temporary household or social life. He fully engages in the service of the Lord, and for other affairs he simply spares as much time as absolutely necessary (*yathārham upayunñjataḥ*). Such a pure devotee does not care for what is going to happen in the next life or in this life; he does not care even for family, children, or society. He fully engages in the service of the Lord in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

—Bhāg. 3.25.40, purport

### *Admitting Mistakes*

I am attending lengthy meetings with devotees here over problems and issues that divide the community. Gītā-nāgarī has decentralized. A sign of this is the row of more than twenty mailboxes where before there was one mailbox for everyone. Now everyone has to take care of himself or herself, both financially and spiritually. Still, it remains a small village, and it requires much cooperation to protect the cows, grow crops, worship the Deities, etc. So when personal or policy issues divide the members of the community, the atmosphere becomes disturbed.

It is not so wonderful or amazing to discover we have committed serious mistakes. Specific examples include our mismanagement of the *gurukula āśrama*, airport book distribution, and our methods of zonal guruship for the past nine years. But these are not a permanent shame. Even Lord Brahmā made big mistakes while creating the cosmos and populating it with living entities. For example, after he made vicious living entities, he gave up his body and attempted an improved creation. According to Śrīdhara Svāmī, Brahmā's "giving up of the body" meant that

*Leaving*

I wasn't able to enter the mood of the forest by the creek. We went there on bicycles for a quick visit. A few snowflakes were sailing down from blue clouds. But it was cold and my mind was filled with community interactions. I thought it would be irresponsible to spend much time alone in the woods. Yet if a visitor can appreciate the rural charm of Gītā-nāgarī and its relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and if he can say, "A special communion is immediately available here,"—that is also a service rendered to the Gītā-nāgarī residents. Devotees who live here know this, yet we all tend to forget.

As we were returning to Mathureśa's house, we met Guḍākeśa walking and chanting on his beads. "I took a walk in the woods up on the hill," he said. "It's real nice." He wanted to let us know. It's not antisocial to go for a walk alone, to find solace and to return to social living with more ability. Just a walk in the woods can do that. As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote of the *sannyāśī*, "I shall never be alone," one should think, "Even if I live in the darkest regions of a forest I shall be accompanied by Kṛṣṇa, and He will give me all protection."

*Travel Day*

Our Northeast schedule moves quickly, to *grhasthas'* homes in towns where there are no Kṛṣṇa temples, and to the cities, with two or three days in each place.

As we leave the farm, snowfall is shooting at us. The route toward Scranton is one of picturesque farms; it's "Kṛṣṇa's picture."

"Is this a snowflurry?" Kent asked.



admit that they weren't necessarily wrong in these decisions. Now everyone is more humble.

We are more apt now to encourage Kṛṣṇa consciousness wherever we find it. A temple in one's home is good. The family whose members follow the four rules and who all chant sixteen rounds is glorious. A person who, even in weak moments, doesn't indulge in sexual perversion, drug taking, and violence is well situated. But we have to develop further.

How does a person know when he should dedicate himself more wholeheartedly to serving his spiritual master? Will Kṛṣṇa tell him in answer to his own prayers? Or will the *guru* step forward (as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared in the dreams of Śrīla Prabhupāda) and order, "Now come out!"? Will Lord Kṛṣṇa make external arrangements to force us to surrender? Will it be a combination of unmistakable signs from providence, the Lord in the heart, the soul's aspiration, and the *guru's* approval? Yes—look for it, pray not to miss it. As Rūpa Gosvāmī states, "Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—that is, intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay."

I am not sure what to advise my Indian friend. I certainly wouldn't ask him to abandon his family and occupational duties. Nor could he do it if I asked. We both know he can do more. And I can do more. But we don't want farcical Nāradas.

We attended the evening *ārati* in Advaita Ācārya's home. We read from Kṛṣṇa book how Kṛṣṇa ex-



move toward Him. Prabhupāda said, "Be like the woman who does her household duties yet thinks of meeting her friend at night."

I sat at the rear of the room while Dr. Suseelan, a psychology professor, taught the *Rāmāyaṇa* to a group of Scranton children. Each child (their ages ranged from about four up to fifteen) read aloud ten minutes, and then Dr. Suseelan asked questions. I walked in during a heavy episode where Lord Rāma's brother, Bharata, arrives in Ayodhyā and hears the news of his father's death. The children sat around dressed in the latest American sweater-styles, some adorned with "Minnesota Vikings," "Most Popular," etc.

After about an hour of reading Dr. Suseelan began to ask questions. They knew almost all the answers. But when he asked, "Who wrote the *Rāmāyaṇa*?" someone said, "Kamala Subramaniam."

"No! The sage Vālmīki."

Dr. Suseelan took care to describe the positions of the *devatas*. "They are demigods, but not the Supreme. Who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead?" he asked.

"Lord Viṣṇu."

"Yes," said Dr. Suseelan, "Kṛṣṇa."

He also explained *karma*. If a person smokes cigarettes and gets disease, that is his *karma*.

"Why do we chant the *mahā-mantra*?" he asked.

"To make God happy."

The children were delivered to the class and picked up by their parents. None of the adults came in to take *darsana* of Rādhā-Rāsadvilāsī or to hear

above even Brahman and Paramātmā—he must have God’s grace.” Any devotee who accepts the version of the *mahājanas* and the scriptures and follows them receives the revealed truth from Lord Kṛṣṇa.

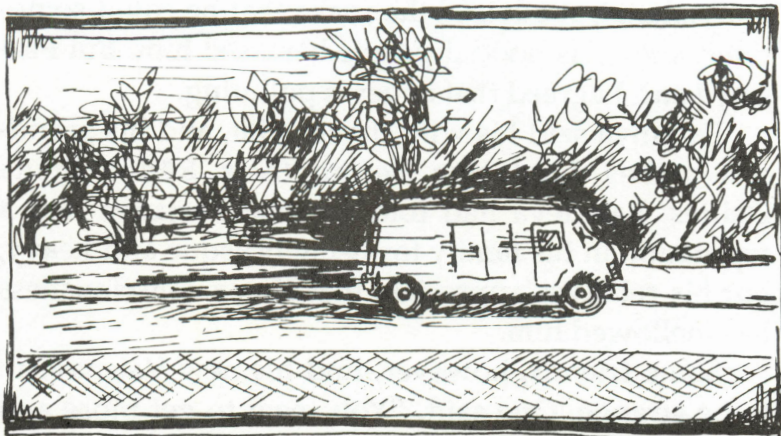
Most of the guests did not follow up on this theme. One asked why we don’t read other Vedic scriptures like the *Upaniṣads*. One asked why Kṛṣṇa requested Yudhiṣṭhira to tell a lie. One asked “Why doesn’t God repair the world?” And so I addressed Indian doubts on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śeṣa Prabhu attended the program, and we honored *prasādam* together. He expressed discouragement that the media have driven us underground by so many negative reports. I said that the recent news reports of crimes were of persons who really don’t represent Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śeṣa said, “But nevertheless it has an effect on the public. Or we have a paranoia that it has such an effect.” His point of view was the one I often take. But this time I was the reassuring friend. Friendship is like that—sometimes you’re anxious and go to your friend, and he calms you or inspires you, but sometimes your friend is anxious and comes to you, and you act as the undisturbed one. It’s like two people fording a creek; sometimes one slips and the other holds him up, and then he who just slipped becomes the protector of his friend. But to be a true friend, you have to be willing to give your strength to your friend. This earns you the right to count on him when you need *his* strength.

In the case of Kṛṣṇa conscious friendship, we are able to become transcendental to all misery. Sometimes one devotee remembers this better than an-





The morning sky was pink-blue. Hills like cups turned upside down. The road was peopled with monster-trucks flashing lights slowly uphill. A thin patch of snow bordered the highway on either side. Farm lands in the hills.

As we entered Syracuse we saw a sign "University Motel" with a picture of a football player. This is the motel run by Parjanya Mahārāja dāsa, where we are going.

Parjanya is fifty-five years old and very sincere about applying himself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He sees his main service as reading Prabhupāda's books, and earning money to donate to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He introduced me to his thirty-one-year-old son, who stayed a few moments then returned to the motel's front desk.

Parjanya confessed that he sometimes speaks harshly with customers who don't leave at checkout time. I quoted the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse, that there is imperfection in every work, and I told him the example of Nārada Muni who made a poisonous snake



ously because they see him as another businessman, not a renunciate.

Parjanya has been disappointed by leaders who left ISKCON. "At first it was very painful," he said, "but with time I am understanding, the philosophy is pure. And by reading Prabhupāda's letters to devotees, I understand it better."

After my meeting with Parjanya, I thought that maybe I was sometimes play-acting as *guru*. In a recent newspaper article, a reporter described a devotee as follows: "She smiles amiably and sometimes stares off with studied serenity." I want to get beyond this entirely. Simply the truth.

### *Prefecture notes*

In the newsletter for Indians of Syracuse, tonight's program is listed as "Lecture on the topic 'Chaitanya Charitamrit,' " but Cc. seems too advanced for a group of Hindus who haven't yet accepted Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead, I'll read the first three verses of the Fifteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, describing the banyan tree. I heard a professor was coming from the University of Syracuse. They'll all be attracted to the opening metaphor of the tree whose root is up but whose branches are down. It's very clear—this world we live in is a reflection of the real spiritual world. The branches, twigs, and leaves of the tree represent our entanglement in the senses and sense objects, and our existence in different species of life. One who knows the *Vedas* cuts the root of the banyan tree by detachment to matter and by attachment to Kṛṣṇa. The discussion of the banyan tree also leads naturally to discussing the Second Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the

had spent years together in the first Brooklyn temple, and so they reminisced. We also spoke of academic Hinduism and Vedic studies. Still, there remained something uncanny about the professor's double identity. He was a respectable academic and also a friendly Godbrother. Why it remained strange I'm not sure. More and more it will become acceptable, both to the world of the nondevotees as well as to the ISKCON community—a devotee can work in the world. As Professor Johnson said, "It's compatible to live a life of devotion, following the principles, as far as possible, and yet live outside."

His calling Prabhupāda "Bhaktivedanta" remained strange to our ears, but by the time we finished our first plates of *prasādam*, Santoṣ reverted to the more familiar use of "Prabhupāda." And even his "Bhaktivedanta" was also favorable, as a way of giving evidence that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami was a bona fide *ācārya*. We loaded the professor with *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* volumes and other books. He was missing only two volumes of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* from his full set of Prabhupāda's books.

Other Indian guests in the Syracuse area included quite a few "motel-Patels" and their families. Parjanya Mahārāja's son was present, but kept receiving phone calls during the lecture. He is quite absorbed in arrangements for purchasing two new motels.

Dear Parjanya Mahārāja, Goodbye for now. Prabhupāda will instruct you in his books. You seem to be well on the way to determined spiritual life. Prabhupāda saved you when you were held up at gun point late at night in the motel, while reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. You still have little idiosyncracies in your





ISKCON Boston

*Boston*

Nirañjana Swami was waiting outside the airport in his compact Toyota motorhome. We sat together and shared fruit and granola. Then he had to immediately drive five hundred miles for emergency GBC mediation. After that he will go out on the road with the *brahmacārī* book distributors.

In Boston ISKCON, the traveling book distribution party is the main thing. It's just as Bīr Kṛṣṇa Swami writes in his book *Encounters*, "All of our Hare Kṛṣṇa temples are thus managed with preaching in



Within a few minutes of my arrival in the Boston temple, I called Mādhava dāsa in to read to me. I wanted to hear the *Tattova-sandarbhā* by Jīva Gosvāmī.

"What Jīva Gosvāmī is defending here," I said, "is exactly what professor Hopkins objected to in the preface to *Readings from Vedic Literature*. The academic scholars consider the *Purāṇas* 'non-Vedic,' and they question the use of evidence from the *Purāṇas* to prove the Vedic authority of the *Purāṇas*. So Jīva Gosvāmī is speaking on exactly this point. Ultimately, we are satisfied to quote from the *Purāṇas*. Why should we not quote from them? *Ācāryas* like Madhva do it."

"Isn't it a matter of faith?" Mādhava asked, with an innocent look. He was sniffing with a cold, his white clothes stained from cooking in the kitchen. I recalled how years ago he had barely escaped a de-programming attempt by his father and brother, and how he served faithfully in Puerto Rico.

"Yes," I said, "it's a matter of faith but also one of understanding the scriptures." I repeated some examples given by Jīva Gosvāmī, that Vyāsadeva, who compiled the *Purāṇas*, was even more learned than Lord Brahmā, who compiled the original *Vedas*. Also, it is the *Purāṇas* that give us the fullest description of love of Kṛṣṇa. I spoke with the intention of instructing Mādhava, but the more I thought about it, his simple faith was more important than my additions.

Madhu-maṅgala dāsa and I went out walking in Boston Gardens Park with Jīva Gosvāmī dāsa. Jīva Gosvāmī breaks the stereotype of a devotee as a physically weak person. He's tall and broad chested, and when he wears his cap, he looks like a football

Fifty students a week attend Muktavandya's cooking class at M.I.T. They sit and hear from him and his wife, and sometimes they accept a free book.

And every night, from 6:00 to 7:00 P.M., there is the dinner program. All the austerities of living in a cold, damp, congested city are rewarded when devotees see ten or twenty people come every night to enjoy *sabji*, *samosās*, *halavā*, etc., and then stay for the evening *ārati*. And some linger on and hear Raghunātha Swami's *Bhagavad-gītā* class.

It's student report season, and every day one or two show up seeking information about the sect for their sociology or religions class. They note down information, hoping that their paper will be good enough for an A or B, and in the process maybe they imbibe a bit of *bhakti*. Professors and high-school teachers phone every week, "Can you send someone to speak to our class?" And four days a week, even in the cold, Raghunātha Swami escapes from his office and mans a book table outside Marsh Chapel at Boston University. He told me, "I really liked what you wrote in one of your books, about the naked desire to preach. I was in Vṛndāvana for about nine years, and I guess the desire just kept building up to go out and contact people directly and just tell them, 'Please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.'" Raghunātha Swami brings a "Changing Bodies" diorama out every day. He also brings back about ten or so students with him to the temple. He often stays up till 11:00 P.M., and some of the guests stay overnight.

Today, a student at B.U. came up to Raghunātha Swami and handed him a ripped piece of paper on which he had written the following poem:



Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. The walls of all the rooms were filled with Brījābāśī posters, mostly Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and some Rāmacandra. We chanted for over forty-five minutes.

In the question-and-answer period, one man asked, "Why no garlic and onions?"

"Because it's tamasic."

"That's for onions," he said, "But what about garlic?" He remained disappointed, but who can sanction such smelly stuff?

Another man said, "What about lunch at work? I eat in a restaurant, I don't eat meat, fish, or eggs. Is it all right to offer that to Kṛṣṇa?"

I suggested the tiffin system or brown bag. But I sensed that he still wanted the hot restaurant meal. You can't insist on surrender. We who consider ourselves more strict still have our own versions of sense gratification, our mental garlic, our attachments to old haunts. We ask our spiritual master, "Is it all right if I go here and offer this to Kṛṣṇa?" And when he replies, "Better to make it pure sattvic," then we turn our mouths down, hankering for *tamo-guṇa*.

Last night we renounced the whole city full of advertising billboards and Christmas shopping, and we avoided all rich foods as we drove home to keep early-to-bed hours. But then we dreamt that we were eating a big feast of cakes and ice cream. And we did not utter cries in our sleep, "Kṛṣṇa! Save me! Prabhupāda!" For such a person, will it help if he rises early and rushes off to another city to spread the holy name?

In response, a Bahai man and his family came for an open-minded talk.

Rūpānuga also spoke of the Potomac *dhāma*. He is impressed that the Indians are becoming more Kṛṣṇa conscious over the years, and he's encouraging them to take over more management and to develop a missionary spirit. Those who are more sectarian will satisfy themselves at the Hindu temples in Washington. But Rūpānuga is encouraging those who come to our temple to go beyond the bodily concept of Hindus, Americans, etc., and to become pure devotees.

Rūpānuga said that every few weeks he gets "fried" at Potomac because he has to manage intricate details, such as fuel supply, and "I have to put out toilet paper in the guests' bathroom before they arrive on Sunday, or it may not get done." But when he thinks beyond that, to building a classical temple here, and to how the people of D.C. are educated and how some are pious—and as he thinks of Śrīla Prabhupāda—he takes hope.

Rūpānuga suggested that I consider writing sections from the *Mahābhārata*, as I did in the old BTG article, "The Glories of Lord Rāma." I liked the idea, but if it meant stopping *Lessons* I would be reluctant.

After our talk and a cup of warm milk, I took rest and had a dream that Rūpānuga and I were directing a production of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.





Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madanamohana

Try again:

Starting with Madanamohana's lotus foot, He wore pearls around His ankle, then a gold cuff to His pants. His clothing was mostly red, with black borders and gold *jārī* weavings. The lighting on the Deities was a bit dim, but that only enhanced His bodily darkness. Sītā and Rāma reminded me of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. When we see Them, our hopes are revived, that one day, we may absorb ourselves in the *līlā* of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma.

Dr. Mody posted a letter in the temple, a request for congregational members to get together and support the temple. He listed "reasons for not attending the temple."

(1) The Sunday service conflicts with the Redskins football game.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### *Northeast Part II*

#### *Potomac*

Our Northeast tour moves quickly. The pace has advantages, but it also leaves less time for reflection and no protected schedule for reading Prabhupāda's books. The main action is to lecture to groups, speak with individuals, and move on.

Yesterday I met with devotees who have left ISKCON. They have their valid complaints against me. One said that in the past I didn't hear her side of the story but accepted the temple president's version. She accepted me as a perfect master, but now sees that I was a victim of a system, and therefore she was a victim of a victim. What to do about it now? How much do I care for them? The meeting went well, and one of them called it "a turning point."

#### *To a Critic*

You say  
we should write only  
of the pure devotee  
who elevates and inspires.

You say  
struggling  
is not for publication!

I say  
don't you sense victory  
in the struggle?



sciousness is more important than a summit conference.

Experts predict that the United States and Russia will sign an arms reduction pact. But is that good or bad? Does it mean peace or war? We look at the leaders and know we can't trust them. Whether the leaders agree or disagree, won't life go on as always?

The changes in ISKCON are more important to me than whether Haiti gets democracy, or whether the next U.S. President is a democrat or a republican. The goal of human life is to transcend miseries, attain love of God, and to go back to Godhead. By *bhakti-yoga*, one can achieve this. This is the big news of the day, and so we meditate and share concern, *what is happening to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement?*

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement appears to be exploding. It's not an explosion of extinction. But it's alarming how the old ways are quickly disappearing, while the new ways are uncertain. The changes are not within the control of any one person, and they are beyond the control of the GBC members. Now the basic meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings is in question: What is ISKCON? What is a devotee?

There are certainties—Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrīla Prabhupāda is His pure devotee. We must live in a society of devotees. But—is one a better devotee if he lives in a temple? Is it always better to follow temple authorities? Should children go to *gurukula* and live in the *āśrama* under the care of teachers? Is it wrong to get an education outside of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books? What about open-mindedness—can there be pure devotees of God in other spiritual paths? Are all ISKCON members superior to everyone else? Will the movement survive its financial problems? Is it going to keep changing radically like this, year after year?

ward the animal rights movement and wants to be a vegetarian, but he doesn't know if his wife can cook decent vegetarian meals. So Mr. S. has invited him to come tonight to our *kīrtana*, lecture, and feast. Angela's English teacher has also promised to come, and Venita's lab instructor may come with some students.

Before the lecture, Madhu and I went out for a walk. But there's no park here, only the suburban houses. This is a neighborhood where everything is all right if you fit in exactly and do what everyone else does. After tonight we'll move on to another house, where again we will be kept nicely in a room. And the next day we'll move to another, and then another.

How many houses can we go to like this? How much extra food can a *sannyāsī* eat without getting physical and moral indigestion? I feel like a cat who doesn't want to be petted. Give us a little milk and leave us alone.

I am vaguely discontent because of my lack of austerity. I keep unnecessary clothes and writing pens. In former times, *sādhus* would walk on foot and sleep on the road. This life is not austere, staying in houses with big beds, cushions, and family life. One of the Sankla girls explained me to the neighbors, "He's like the Pope." But it's hardly like that. Better say, "A *biksus* mendicant is staying at our house."

Will someone who hears the lecture tonight (taken from the teachings of Rṣabhadeva) become favorable?

### *A brief meeting on the road*

Girirāja Swami visited for an hour at the Sankla's house on his way from England to Los Angeles. He is





Baltimore Gurukula

*At the Gupta's house, Linthicum, Maryland*

One sleeps soundly in a Maryland basement, while Strategic Air Force jets roam the sky. Heat is pumped into the room for a winter night's rest. It's quiet, and in the morning all physical amenities will be available. The house creaks once in a while or a machine hums on and off. Don't forget what to do as you die.

tongues are chanting Your holy names!" The power of the holy name. Devotees like to hear it.

Sometimes I feel it's like I'm pretending to be a monk of the holy name, like the pilgrim who chanted the Jesus prayer. I imagine that I'm telling everyone the good news of God's holy name from my direct experience. It's not like that. But it's never wrong to glorify the name of God, even as a neophyte. Kṛṣṇa may bless me thinking, "This fellow often praises the chanting, although he himself doesn't yet know how to relish My name." Maybe He'll give me more direct knowledge of the nectar so that I can speak from the heart. Otherwise, I am willing to speak as a struggler, reciting the glories of the name from the *śāstra* and accepting my fate.

But while driving with Jaya Gaurasundara from the dentist today, I enjoyed chanting. I wasn't trying too hard, nor was I fixed on the numerical count. One symptom was that I wasn't anxious—whether we made time on the highway or got lost, whether or not we got home on time to eat, I chanted.

### *December 5, to Philadelphia*

Last night in Reisterstown, Maryland, the local group held their weekly *Bhagavad-gītā* class. The verse for the week was Thirteenth Chapter, verses 8–12. We went through each of the items of knowledge and Prabhupāda's five-page purport. For a week now, we've been having gatherings in the homes of different Indian members. It's usually the same audience of about fifty people: congregational families and ISKCON temple devotees of the Baltimore-Washington area. Not many new members. But there were a few, such as Bhaktin Lindsey and Bhakta Kent, although they are already quite serious. Our numbers



letter writers turn to me in dependence, while one or two accuse me as unqualified to help others or teach.



Srī Srī Rādhā-Śaradvihārī

After the morning lecture I asked, "Any questions and comments?" Jagadīśa dāsa, a devotee of Latin-American descent, raised a long comment. His point was that devotees in America are contaminated by arrogance. I agreed and added "mental speculation" and "sensual degradation" to the list of American weaknesses. Others raised their hands and defended the possibility of Americans becoming pure devotees.

Later in the morning, I read a letter from a woman describing how immature men misuse Vedic philosophy and "feel great pride in hitting, slapping, intimidating, or cursing down at their wives."

Now it's *japa* time, but, while chanting, the mind is running, not paying attention. I refrain and start to hear a bit better. It's a fact that many issues have to be thought out maturely to reach Kṛṣṇa conscious

Now that more householders are living outside and working at jobs the attendance at the morning program has diminished. The "outsiders" say that their new work schedules don't always allow them the luxury of attending. They resent devotees who give "hard-line" *Bhāgavatam* classes and demand that everyone attend the full program. Both sides in the controversy wanted me to address the issue.



"The Morning Program"

Today's verse described the nine processes of devotional service. In a purport Prabhupāda distinguished *karma-yoga* from the nine-fold *bhakti* process and said that *bhakti* begins only when one is prepared to surrender his actions for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. I



then we'll never be able to convince them to take it up again." Even teenagers who have valid complaints against their *gurukula* upbringing often maintain a deep conviction in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Ravīndra said that if these teenagers didn't have the bad experiences, their standing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness would be *very* strong. As it is, they have experienced hypocrisy from some teachers, but they still find nondevotees to be shallow and unattractive, compared to the devotees, and they continue to seek out a level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I too had picked up the doomsday mood and have written in recent letters, "The concensus seems to be that it is better not to have a *gurukula āśrama*. We can provide daily academic classes." But some staunch men still have hope that a combination of stronger family life *plus* a superior *gurukula āśrama* can still be maintained.

Adi-keśava and the devotees living near him in the country neighborhood of Emmaus are planning their own *gurukula*. Emmaus isn't listed as an ISKCON center, but it's as much mainstream as any city *mandira*. Householders are buying or building their own houses and working together in their own businesses. And now they're building a small temple so that they can gather for a morning program. As devotees work and worship and preach, forming Kṛṣṇa conscious neighborhoods throughout America, the movement spreads widely and deeply. It's attractive to the nondevotees who meet their Kṛṣṇa conscious neighbors and find them to be substantial, friendly people—but with a difference. Gradually the neighbors hear the philosophy and become friends of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and some become devotees themselves.

the human problems. And as evidence of this we have the Freudian model, the mechanistic model, the behavioristic model, the humanistic, and even the existential model. But it's not helping. How may we introduce a spiritual model without ignoring the common human problem? How can we incorporate into the clinical model without disrupting the process of teaching?

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami: The *Bhāgavata* model should be introduced. But they won't accept the *Bhāgavata* school because they see it as religious, sectarian. You may have heard the talk Prabhupāda had with a police officer in the Midwest. Prabhupāda asked for a facility to work with criminals. He asked the mayor of Evanstown for *kīrtana* and distribution of *prasādam*. So the Kṛṣṇa conscious or *Bhāgavata* model of helping people will certainly be helpful, if they will take it up.

When I was still working in social welfare I had some ideas, and at one point I invited some social workers for a meeting at our Boston temple. They said maybe they could use our temple as a referral place. A drug addict with a spiritual tendency could be sent to the Kṛṣṇa temple. And we would have some provision to receive them. The social workers were interested in this. But when I told Śrīla Prabhupāda he said that although we want to reach those persons, and serve them, our basic mission is to maintain a straight Kṛṣṇa conscious facility for everyone. That is our contribution to the problems you were mentioning: suicide, murder, family break-up, and mental breakdown.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't interested in changing it or tailoring it to interest the civic authorities, and he didn't want us to change it. At the same time he encouraged me that this is the topmost social work.



who has pure eyes of devotion, *premāñjana-cchurita*, sees the Lord even in a flower."

But did I ever see a flower and think, let me offer it to Kṛṣṇa? Did I ever see a building and think that would be a nice place for a temple? Do I see my face in the mirror and think, let me put on *tilaka*? And do you see people in the street and wish they were devotees? And does your spiritual master not give you the opportunity to speak? As he wrote in one of his letters: "Our movement is being carried by spiritual strength from chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* from the lips of pure devotees. Our disciples are pure, therefore the effect is that this movement is gaining in scope all over the world.... It will come about for certain if you kindly keep the standard set by me and see that others are similarly enthused to follow" (Letter of February 4, 1971).

### *Brothers and brothers*

Devotees are constantly passing through the Brooklyn temple on their way to further destinations. Today I crossed paths again with Girirāja Swami. Later in the morning I will go to Long Island to see Rūpa-vilāsa and Adarśī. Last night at the feast I spoke with Lakṣmī-nṛsimha, whom I hadn't seen in a long time, and Locanānanda, Lohitākṣa.... Who has such a family with *hundreds* of brothers with whom he can exchange in a familiar way? Wherever we go we meet and talk. It's great, but be careful you don't just tour on the brother circuit, engaging in light—or controversial—talk over meals, exchanging a few truisms and *Hari-bols*, and moving on to the next meeting place.

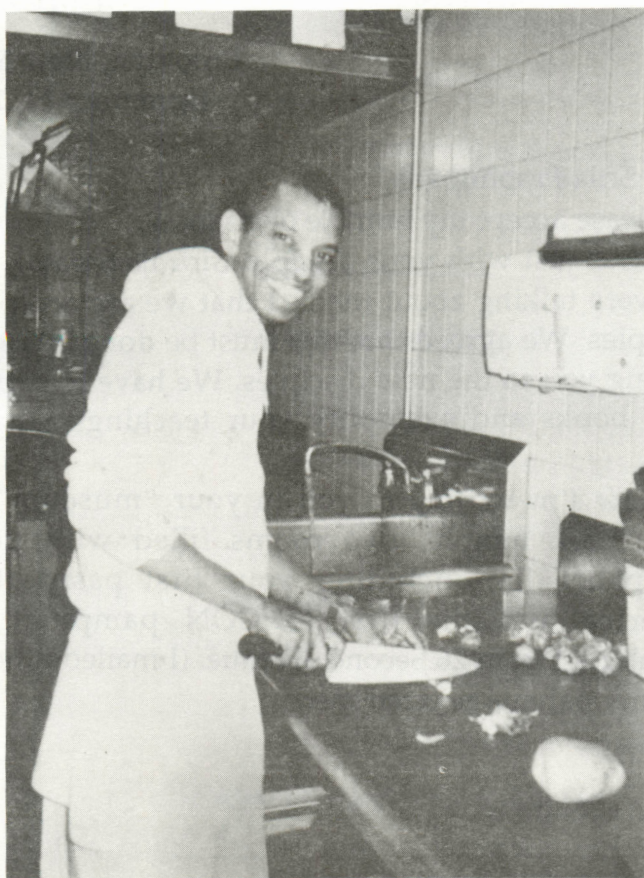
Out of many brothers it is not wrong that a few become your close friends. Otherwise, why do we



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda



hibits mystic power as the Supreme Lord within the material city.



Nārada Ṛṣi dāsa cooking for Rādhā-Govinda

Rādhā-Govinda are self-effulgent; They're top-most by Their own existence. And a bit of Their absolute supremacy is expressed in the lives of Their servitors. Some of Their servants live in the temple, and some live even in other cities, but they think of dedicating themselves to Rādhā-Govinda and Rādhā-Govinda *mandira* in New York. These points of view

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1966, Sri Sri Kailash Sanjay Kumar  
 of Haldwari, Calcutta 5 } <sup>Shri Chandra</sup>  
 Editor of Back to Godhead

From the notebook of Śrīla Prabhupāda, 1959

This is the city where you first came to preach. I pray to you to help me always be your disciple, just as you fixed me first in 1966. And I want to think in a positive way, that it will be successful.

When my parents rejected me, I truly became your son. This may be a negative way to look at it, but in these days I seek whatever assurance I can that



and Romapāda Swami is staying here. You know everything, Prabhupāda, so I'll just end by praying to you: please bless us with your mastership.

## *Appendixes*



## *Excerpts from Recent Letters*

### *Saints and meat-eating*

You have written me previously regarding your admiration for Saint Teresa of Avila, and I have replied. Now you have raised the question of whether a true saint can be a meat-eater, and so I am replying further.

In a biography of Saint Teresa, the author was explaining that even a saint is a product of his or her times. Supposedly, the sixteenth century in Spain was a very violent era. So the biographer was sympathizing that Saint Teresa occasionally recommended that a neurotic person might be hit in order to help them come to their senses. Thus the author concluded that things that Teresa might have taken for granted in her day and age would repel us today. In the back of my mind, I considered whether this might apply also to the accepted habit of sometimes eating meat. As you pointed out, Teresa usually refrained from eating meat, but only on the grounds of practicing austerity, not for sparing the animals. There are also descriptions of how barren a place Spain was at that time, and how poor everyone was, especially the nuns. I think Prabhupāda has sometimes mentioned that in the desert, it might have been necessary for Jesus to produce fish for people to eat.

But these attempts of mine to explain away meat-eating were rather dashed when I read later in this book about an incident in which Saint Teresa ate a partridge. The biographer states:

devotion to prayer, etc. Saint Teresa was very submissive to her church doctrines, and so she could only go as far as she was taught by them. We may not be offensive to these saintly persons, but we should be thankful that, fallen as we are, and weak as we are in renunciation and devotion, Prabhupāda has brought us onto the supreme path of *bhakti-yoga* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Now let us try to make ourselves worthy followers.

*"Turn this sorrow..."*

You have expressed yourself a bit morosely, sorry that you are not a more enthusiastic devotee. If you can turn this sorrow into a determination to improve, then it is a very good Vaiṣṇava quality. A devotee should think that he is not very advanced, and that is the only possible way we can actually advance. But don't become morose in the way of the modes of ignorance or inactivity. Accept yourself as a tiny, imperfect being and try to serve other devotees. When you feel happiness come from that service, don't deny it, rather accept it as the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. In this way, your humility will not be a way to express false pride, but will be the way to true Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*No excuses*

You mention a tendency you have of always making excuses and defending yourself. Sounds like another unwanted thing that will go away in time. Even if you can't stop yourself from blurting out these excuses, you know in your heart that actually you have no excuses for the wrongdoings, except your fallen nature. So for the time being, we have to accept that we are foolish in different ways. We will



*āśrama* you are in. Prabhupāda encouraged the devotees to take marriage. The main thing is to do it in a spiritual way.

### *Material curse*

Perhaps it seems like you are "cursed" to have trouble with basic material aspects of life. So try to keep your life simple. When Lord Caitanya was cursed by a *brāhmaṇa* not to have material happiness, He thanked the *brāhmaṇa* for that. Prabhupāda says that about the people of India in general. He says they are meant for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and for spiritual advancement. It comes naturally for them, but when they try to become materially successful, they become very unhappy and entangled. So you become an exception among the Indians of today, and put your energy into the spiritual side, which is your natural side.

### *New risks*

You asked how to surrender now that it appears that your service is less intense. I explained that even though we may be maturing or physically growing older, we have to appreciate our service with intensity. Before, perhaps intensity included being able to work very long hours on *saṅkīrtana* or doing things that we are just not able to do anymore. But we should take on new risks and new kinds of surrender for Kṛṣṇa appropriate to our age and *varṇa* and appropriate to the change of ISKCON, etc. There are always challenges, we just have to face them enthusiastically and depend on Kṛṣṇa.

as you and I are doing, we have to be broad-minded enough to realize that these persons are still devotees and that they are not falling down or blooping or anything like that. We have to show that we understand their financial situation, or even understand their material desires, but we assume that they will always remain devotees of Kṛṣṇa. We should take care of our own emotions and attitudes, and leave it up to them to reciprocate accordingly. Even if they remain somewhat cold, we should remain loving. Yes, you should not be puffed-up thinking you are better just because you go to the programs and live in the temple.

#### *Associating with devotees of Prabhupāda*

You have spoken longingly for association with the now small handful of Prabhupāda disciples. I agree with you on this point. But one additional point is that we might consider the term "Prabhupāda follower," instead of confining it to Prabhupāda disciple. Or perhaps we can think of Prabhupāda disciples as not simply those who were initiated by him, but also as those who are receiving his *śikṣā*. Even some of the initiated disciples of Prabhupāda did not have direct association with him. We read in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that Lord Caitanya was recognized by a certain Sundiyan *brāhmaṇa* because that *brāhmaṇa* saw signs of ecstasy in Lord Caitanya. The *brāhmaṇa* said that these ecstasies could only come to one who had associated with Mādhavendra Purī. The real point is that they were coming in the line of Mādhavendra Purī. So one who displays the signs of a Prabhupāda follower—the conviction that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the attachment for Prabhupāda's books, and the preaching spirit—we should like to be in his



# Study Notes

## Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

*Summary of the development of philosophical points, First Canto, Chapter One*

The entire *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* begins with obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva, as the cause of all causes. The prelude verses describe *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the ripened fruit of all Vedic knowledge, capable of giving the best taste of spiritual life.

The sages at Naimiṣāranya ask Sūta Gosvāmī relevant questions, and they praise his qualification for answering them as a bona fide representative of Vyāsadeva. They ask him to select from the *Vedas*' essential knowledge to benefit the people of Kali-yuga, wherein people suffer from so many disadvantages. They specifically ask him to explain Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His adventures in various incarnations. They praise the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, His devotees and *līlā*. In this way, by their eager and submissive hearing, they create this setting. The sages are qualified hearers, and they accept Sūta as a qualified representative of Vyāsa. By reading this opening chapter, one senses the auspiciousness of the *yajña* they are about to perform for all humanity. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* recitation will be the means to provide the direct shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, even after His disappearance from the earth.

### Chapter Two

Chapter Two cites the specific superiority of Lord Viṣṇu over the demigods. Clear direction is also given regarding *varṇāśrama* as the means to please the Lord,



## *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā, Chapter One, verses 65–78,  
Expansions of Godhead

These are somewhat technical descriptions of *prakhaṣa* and *vilāsa* expansions, but we should not avoid them simply because they are detailed. The details distinguish the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* from those who know God only vaguely, who have no idea of the different expansions of Godhead. We appreciate scholars like Rūpa Gosvāmī and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja who have brought together quotes and realizations from the different Vedic scriptures. This is the tradition of the six Gosvāmīs, to scrutinizingly study the scriptures and explain Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Truth.

In the beginning of ISKCON Prabhupāda said it wasn't necessary to memorize the different expansions, but he said we should learn it in due time. Sooner or later we should sit down and learn *prakhaṣa*, *vilāsa*, and some of the other features of Godhead. We want to be real scientists and learned persons in the philosophy. We should not consider, like the *sahajiyās* do, that such study is mental speculation or *jñāna-yoga*. Rather it is part of devotional service. True, one can simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and understand Kṛṣṇa nicely in that way. But to be learned in scriptures is also a mark of the devotee. A *brāhmaṇa* or senior devotee will be approached by newcomers, and if he can help them by teaching the complete science, they can look up to him as a leader. In this way we can fill our minds with Vedic knowledge rather than other knowledge. We can occupy our thoughts with Kṛṣṇa, in different divisions and by learned analysis.

## Comparative Study of *Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is and Other Commentaries

### *Bhagavad-gītā* verse 2.13

In Śaṅkara's commentary to this verse, he attempts to establish the eternality of the impersonal self. But this brings a problem in his interpretation of the analogy that is offered in the verse by Lord Kṛṣṇa. If we conceive of the self as impersonal Brahman, the practical use of the analogy breaks down. An analogy means that it is an example used to help us understand the Absolute Truth. Often it is an example of something that we can perceive even in our conditioned state and that helps us to see the Absolute, which comes down in the śāstric statement. In verse 2.13 the analogy of changing bodies is readily perceivable to all embodied persons; and a sober person should understand that he will continue to live after the demise of his body.

The analogy works because we have awareness of ourselves as individuals. Individual identity, even in ordinary consciousness, is kept permanent throughout life. But if you ask the reader or hearer to refer to a lifetime awareness of himself as an impersonal spirit, no one will have that experience, and the analogy will not be applicable.

In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda helps us to understand the analogy, not only in the ordinary sense, but also in the absolute sense. He thus describes that the individual soul changes his body throughout life, "yet the same spirit soul is there and does not undergo any change." Since we already know the individual self by ordinary consciousness, with Prabhupāda's suggestion, we can understand the individ-



## Jaiva-dharma

### Synopsis

#### Chapter Four, Eternal Religion—Vaiṣṇava Dharma

Lahiri moves in with the other devotees in the grove. But one day he finds a snake there and is afraid. Vaiṣṇava dāsa tells him not to be afraid and gives the example of Mahārāja Parīkṣit, who heard about Kṛṣṇa without being afraid. He said the only fear that we should have is of being bitten by the serpent in the shape of the want of discourse about God.

"How can the mind apply itself," asks Vaiṣṇava dāsa, "to the lotus feet of Śrī Hari if it is always agitated by such fears? It is certainly one's duty to give up the fear of serpents and the attempt to kill them through such fear." These words give solace to Lahiri.

Lahiri then inquires about pure Vaiṣṇava *dharma* and its relation to contaminated *dharma*. Vaiṣṇava dāsa explains the defect in *dharma* contaminated by *karma*, which makes Lord Viṣṇu subordinate to fruitive activity. He also distinguishes unadulterated Vaiṣṇavism from that effected by worship of Brahman or Paramātmā. The Brahman goal is to get free from the unhappy conditions of material life. He describes Paramātmā as the temptation for pleasure from *samādhi*, which is a subtle form of the pleasures of the flesh. These two *dharmas* are not eternal.

While hearing submissively from Vaiṣṇava dāsa, whom Lahiri now accepts as his *guru*, Lahiri has a doubt about his own situation.

"I have heard," Lahiri says, "that even if you are initiated by an unworthy teacher, you should get initiated afresh if you find a worthy teacher." Vaiṣṇava dāsa is embarrassed by this remark and says that he



dāsa, who tells how he formerly studied *Vedānta* but has now given it up. Devī dāsa asks to hear *Vedānta* from Vaiṣṇava dāsa, but Vaiṣṇava dāsa says that now he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa and he has no time for other works. But if one wants to study *Vedānta*, it can be done by seeing how Lord Caitanya taught Sārvabhauma.

Although Devī is impressed, he asks his father to come home, but his father says no.

(To be continued.)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Production*—Prāṇadā-devī dāsī

*Editing*—Nandimukhī-devī dāsī

*Proofreading*—Rkṣarāja dāsa; Aṣṭa-sakhī-devī dāsī

*Sanskrit*—Prāṇadā-devī dāsī

*Composing*—Bhakta Danny

*Layout*—Mukunda Daṭṭa dāsa

*Illustrations*—Līla-avatāra-devī dāsī (Lydia Mann)

*Map Illustration*—Jagannātha-devī dāsī

I would like to thank Rūpa Raghunātha dāsa and Śatarūpā-devī dāsī for their kind donation to print this book.