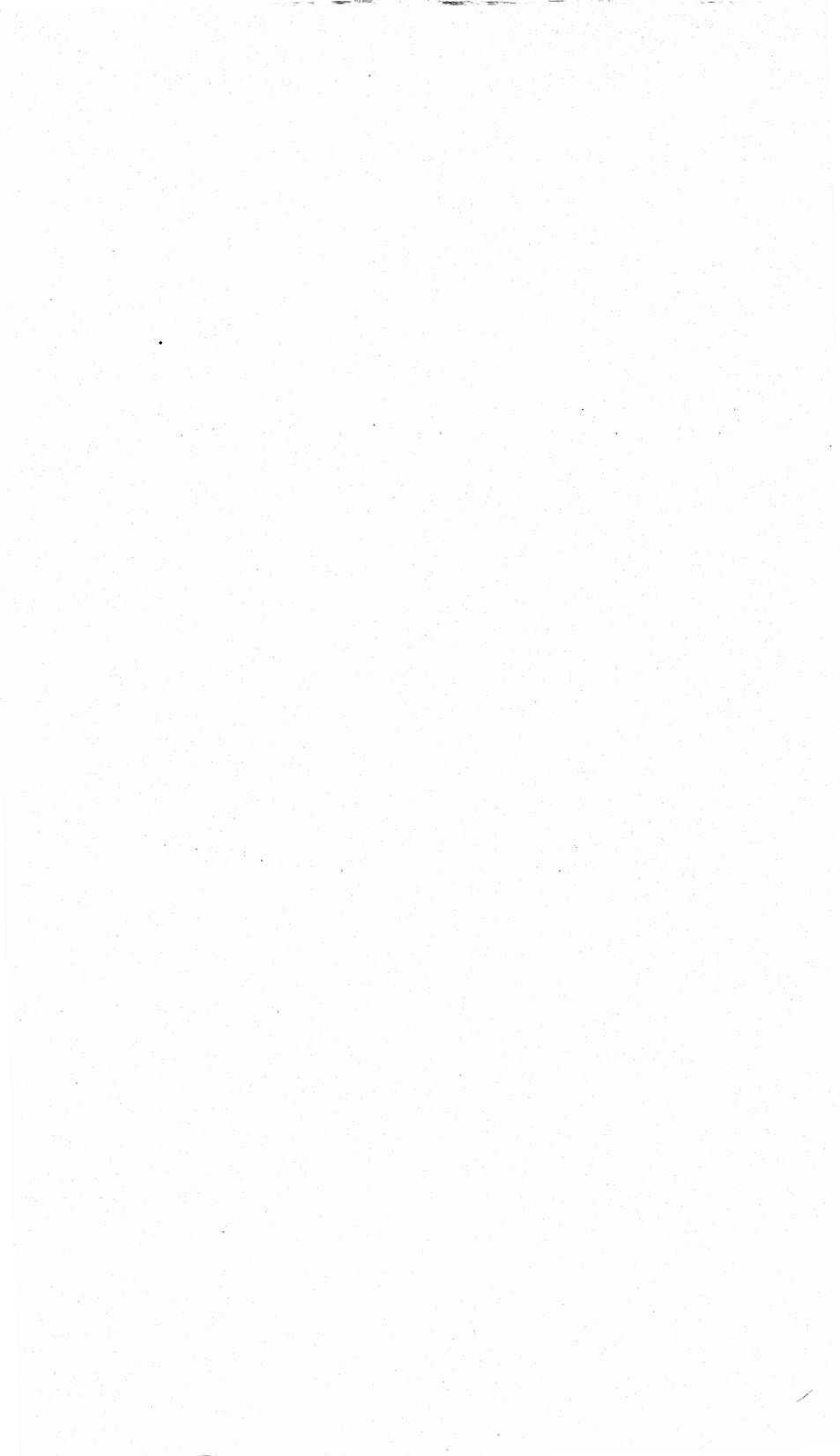


# Lessons from the Road

*Volume Three*

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



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*The  
Gītā-nāgārī Press  
Virginia Beach, VA*

Readers interested in the subject matter of this book are invited  
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The Gītā-nāgārī Press  
138 S. Rosemont Rd. #217  
Virginia Beach, VA 23452

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Printed in the United States of America  
Limited Edition: 1,000 copies



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# Chapter Five

## DETROIT

*June 16, on the way to Detroit*

In today's *Bhāgavatam* class we read Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport discussing freedom—the freedom of Kṛṣṇa and His liberated associates, the free will of the conditioned soul, and the freedom of devotional service. He also discussed Nārada Muni's freedom of movement: "We can just imagine the extent and unlimitedness of his freedom which is as good as that of the Supreme Lord. There is no reason or obligation for his traveling, and no one can stop him from his free movement" (*Bhāg.* 1.6.37). My conception of the *sannyāsīs'* freedom of travel is that no one should tell them where to go or what to do. On his own, the *sannyāsī* is surrendered to the order of his spiritual master, and no one else should interfere, give him assignments, or tell him what to say and when to say it. Only if he is left alone will the *parivrājakācārya* give the maximum service, just as a contented cow who roams freely in the pasture gives the most milk.

We are visiting each U. S. city in the spirit of a pilgrimage. Just as the *Pāda-yātrīs* in India are now

climbing to holy Badrinatha in the Himalayas, so we are going to Detroit. How can Motown be a pilgrimage? Because there is an ISKCON temple there. Ādi-rāja, the temple president, has already welcomed us over the phone. He said there is a spot where we can park the motorhome, and there are rooms where we can stay, if we prefer. I told the men in our party not to go into Detroit with a superior attitude, thinking, "We will fire them up with our *brahmacārī* chanting and dancing." But we should go in thinking that we will learn from them.

Vaiṣṇava poets  
are praising Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa  
in the groves of Vṛndāvana  
but I am still here  
sitting on a slope  
near Jackson, Michigan.

I have chanted my *japa*,  
and tonight I'll give a class.  
There is nothing to lament:  
I advocate the way  
of daily practice  
as an early stage  
of pure love of God.

We'll try again  
 tonight at six,  
 sharing the perfect book  
 beneath the shaggy oak,  
 entering the *saṅga*  
 of Vaiṣṇava souls—  
 Śrīla Vyāsadeva,  
 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja,  
 and Śrīla Prabhupāda.  
 All it takes is practice.

### *East Lansing Preaching Center*

When we arrived, Apūrva Prabhu was engaged in performing *pūjā* to his Deities of Gaura-Nitāi and to the foot impressions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We exchanged personal obeisances and then Apūrva returned to his *pūjā*, kneeling on the floor before the small altar. I sat down with other devotees and chanted *japa*, watching the *pūjā*. It was nice being "ignored" in favor of Gaura-Nitāi. It's also impressive to watch a man engaged in worshiping his Deities.

Immediately after the *pūjā*, we held a *gurv-aṣṭakam kīrtana* for Śrīla Prabhupāda and then we drove to the house of a neighbor, Mr. Sri Kumar Poddar. Mr. Poddar had invited me to hold the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class in his living room, and so our eight *brahmacārīs*, along with devotees from Lansing and the

Poddar household, gathered and heard Nārada's instructions to Vyāsadeva.

In Lansing I also met Pauline, who has donated a house for the devotees to use as temporary quarters. I also met a man named Bruce, who had previously sent me his poetry in the mail. Wherever devotees go and preach they gradually find a few sincere persons like Pauline and Bruce, and a congregation develops. What kind of person joins us and why? It's hard to figure out, but those who become friends of the devotees gradually become transformed; like us they take to *japa* and to reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I asked Baladeva if he thought there was a particular type of person who took to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He said, "Someone who's honest."

Sitting outdoors, Apūrva and Jagat Guru Prabhus began to talk about the Detroit temple and how it is understaffed and somewhat dispirited. As many as eighty *grhastha* devotees live in houses near the temple, but they visit infrequently. Even those who live in the temple find it difficult to attend the morning programs. Everyone has reasons for not participating. Jagat Guru Prabhu asked me, "What is the root cause for the diminishing attendance?" I said I didn't want to be simplistic, but maybe we could say the cause is Prabhupāda's disappearance and the complications that have followed from that. Jagat Guru said there were also good

things going on in Detroit—the restaurant is busy, and many tour groups visit the Fisher Museum and cultural center throughout the weekend.

They didn't even hint that they expected me to be able to change things by a short visit. Even without their mentioning it, I feel unable. Yet I know that I can carry simple, good news. I can tell them about Paramparā Prabhu in Tennessee with his "lean but mean" community. And Balabhadra with his "practical idealism" for book distribution. And Sura, joking but determined to continue in St. Louis. And if they'll listen, we can share Prabhupāda's books with their eternal message of hope for everyone.

### *En route from Lansing to Detroit*

It's right to feel helpless and dependent—and I do! But you have to surrender as much as you can before Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased at your helplessness.

When a headache came I said, "I can't travel." But as soon as it subsided I said, "Let's go."

I like my cockpit seat in the Ram van, strapped in and rattling over the highway, because I am headed for Kṛṣṇa's temple and for speaking there. Many towns in different states have the same names. Dansville, Jackson, Elkhart. . . . Much of American is déjà vu, like the white line down the highways. And yet although we are uttering the same *mahā-mantra*, it is not tiresome. And after twenty-one years I am again reading the

Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for maybe the fifteenth time and experiencing it as if for the first time. And I am finding even the American highway can be a new adventure.

*3:00 A.M., first morning in Detroit*

I have been repeating in my mind, "I can't solve the problems of Detroit." Admitting my inability keeps me from getting too quickly frustrated. Yet the problems of any temple can be solved. And I do not like to hear the version of malicious critics condemning the ISKCON effort in any city. If we are failing in some ways, that's our concern, and we have to apply the solution. The outsider—especially one who wishes us ill—has no role for improving things, except maybe to impel us to reform.

Devotees have asked me to speak about Prabhupāda's three visits to Detroit. In one sense Prabhupāda's relationship with American cities was generic, since he asked devotees in each place to carry out the same *saṅkīrtana* program. But each city also has its own unique tale of how Śrīla Prabhupāda gave them Kṛṣṇa's mercy and made their place into a *tīrtha*.

In Detroit, they have nicely preserved the room in which Prabhupāda stayed during his visit, with a very impressive *mūrti* of Prabhupāda in exactly the spot where he actually sat. Now just by sitting there we

remember . . . the visit by the president of Wayne State University who was attentive to Prabhupāda's words . . . the visit by a black Detroit politician to whom Prabhupāda said, "Our Kṛṣṇa is also of your community" . . . Lekhāśravantī dāśī's shyly presenting Prabhupāda a check for \$150,000 . . . And I remember my own meeting with Prabhupāda when he asked me to write a book, "Why things fail without Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

In that room Śrīla Prabhupāda also explained to some of us how the original owner of the building, Larry Fisher, had gained pious credits by building something that was now being used by Kṛṣṇa. Fisher had been pulled away from his pleasure palace by death, yet somehow the gorgeous building has now been accepted by Kṛṣṇa. Many of its artistic details, such as the three marble arches in the ballroom, were just suitable for the entrance of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. So although he had no intention of accommodating the Supreme Lord, the bewildered soul known as "body by Fisher," rendered service to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Ādi-rāja takes a positive view toward the fact that there are seventy to eighty devotees living near the Detroit temple. He counts sixteen devotees as core members who want to work full-time to maintain the preaching and who attend the temple program. He considers those who live nearby but don't attend or involve themselves very much to be community mem-



bers. He doesn't frustrate himself trying to get the community members to attend the temple programs, but he is happy to engage them in whatever way they want to participate in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus, the large congregation of devotees becomes an asset, not a cause of depression.

Besides, Ādi-rāja is not one to be easily depressed. He worked for twelve years in ISKCON Paris, and he has come back to the United States with his wife, looking for a place to serve at his favorite project, Food for Life. He chose Detroit because a half million people are on welfare and the city's programs are inadequate. He is also attracted to the Detroit temple's opulent preaching facilities.

They have two places where they distribute free food. They call them "Hare Kṛṣṇa community restaurants." The one nearest the temple is in a notorious cocaine-pushing neighborhood. I am sometimes skeptical whether Food for Life is actually *prasādam* distribution. So I asked Ādi-rāja if they offer the food before distributing it. He said that his wife daily cooks a hot vegetable preparation, a soup, a salad, a sweet and bread—and it's *all* offered on the main altar to Rādhā-Kuñjabihāri.

I went with Ādi-rāja to his "Hare Kṛṣṇa community restaurant" on pizza day. There was a crowd waiting and moving around outside. "Hey, Big Money!

How're you doin'?" Ādi-rāja said pizza day draws newcomers, and sometimes it gets a little rowdy. We carried in half a dozen large trays of pizza, along with fresh salad and juice. "My God!" a woman said. "Don't push! There is enough for everyone."

A boy said, "My God? Who is that?"

His mother said, "Donchà know?"

Ādi-rāja's custom is to go outside and blow the conch three times before serving, "to call everyone to lunch." He let me do it, three long blasts into the ghetto.

"Hey, he blows good!" A man slapped my hand and smiled in approval. Back inside, Ādi-rāja cut and handed out generous wedges. Some asked for two pieces but he told them to come back for seconds.

A man in the back called out, "Speed it up, man. It will be cold in a minute." Standing at the salad serve-out, I met the faces and T-shirts with the bottoms cut off: "Adidas," "World Champion Lakers," "Esprit," "This is Temporary."

Maybe the pop-rock tape of Hare Kṛṣṇa music was not their choice, but no one objected. Some fifty or more were seated with their *prasādam* plates, and another forty were still in line.

A muscular man with very dark glasses and a baseball cap turned backwards, his right hand wrapped in a big bandage, was more grave than the others. He said, "How are you this afternoon?" Another man came up and gestured to his friend at the table, "He didn't get



Ādi-rāja Prabhu distributing  
*Back to Godhead* magazine

his juice. Can I have one for him?"

I think this is just what we devotees all want, something real to do. Giving people *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. It forces you to think, "What am I doing to help people in the world of suffering?"

Hare Kṛṣṇa kitchen:  
blowing the white conch  
in the ghetto.

### *Tour of the Fisher Mansion*

I started the tour with a doubt: How does a mundane mansion tour turn into a transcendental experience? The cultural center director, Vrajendralāl dāsa, gave a hint. He said the less they tell visitors about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the more curious they become, so that by the end of the tour *they* ask who is Prabhupāda? and what is Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Inside the reception room are photos of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities on one wall and photos of the automobile baron, Larry Fisher, on another. One picture shows him in his younger years stepping onto a passenger train, looking mean and dandified.

And there is Kṛṣṇa—a full-wall mural of Govinda with the cowherd boys leading the cows to drink in the Yamunā.

The tour I was on had about fifteen people, mostly

middle-aged folks and senior citizens from the upper-class neighborhood of Grosse Point. Bhūmadeva guided the tour. I could see that the people were immediately impressed.

"This is gorgeous!"

"Isn't this beautiful?"

"Pretty good floor."

Unlike some professional tours, Bhūmadeva allowed the guests to touch the walls, doors, and furniture. He explained that the decoration was Hollywood vintage. The curtains were Spanish, windows French, tiles Italian.

"Gosh! What a conglomeration!"

One lady was particularly interested in the Vedic concept and the Kṛṣṇa conscious aspect of the mansion, but her husband was muttering under his breath.

"What is Sanskrit?" she asked.

Bhūmadeva replied, "Sanskrit is the oldest language known to mankind. The *Vedas* were written in Sanskrit. They dealt with every subject you can think of."

"Even the atoms?"

"Oh yes!" said Bhūmadeva. He went to the bookshelf, picked out a volume, opened it up, and showed the Sanskrit for "subatomic particles" (*paramāṇu*). She seemed impressed.

The same woman asked, "What kind of security do you have here?"

Bhūmadeva replied that they had two black-belt karate experts. "Besides," he joked, "no one gives us any trouble because they don't know what devotees do here, black magic or what." Then suddenly he interjected, "Did you know that all the men with pony tails are monks?" Some of the guests repeated this statement softly to themselves.

Next we went to the balcony that looks down into the temple room. Bhūmadeva explained that this was the ballroom, but it now serves as a temple room for the Kṛṣṇas. "All the monks gather here in the morning for prayers." As we looked, the curtains were closed, but he explained that at 4:15 P.M. there would be religious ceremony taking place that was the oldest in the world. A few people expressed that they wanted to see this ceremony.

"How many members do you have?" the favorable lady asked.

Bhūmadeva said that they had about a hundred and twenty full-time, plus a large congregation mostly of professional Indians.

This time I heard the favorable woman's husband mutter, "I don't want to hear that shit."

The last room in the tour is the master bedroom, which is Śrīla Prabhupāda's room. Bhūmadeva prepared everyone by saying that they would see a very lifelike statue of the spiritual master in this room. Despite his warning, one lady said, "I thought the man

was real.” Bhūmadeva explained a little about Prabhupāda’s history and how he rose so early to write. One man remarked, “Didn’t do much sleeping, did he?”

“How come some of the pictures have men with more than two arms?” Bhūmadeva replied that they came from different planets.

The last stop was the boat well. Bhūmadeva then invited everyone to see the FATE exhibit and theater. Or if they liked, they could attend the religious ceremony in the temple. Most people went to see the exhibition. That meant they received forty minutes of straight preaching from “Changing Bodies” to the “Rasa Dance,” with lights, dioramas, and music. But the favorable lady said that she wanted to see the ceremony first. Her husband started mumbling again. She said, “Don’t be such a jerk just because it’s the Kṛṣṇas. I want to see it.”

He replied, “Do what you want to do.”

I have heard devotees criticize the Fisher Mansion tours as “watered-down preaching.” But I think it is impressive, mature preaching. I think Śrīla Prabhupāda would be pleased with the way they are using the mansion. In earlier years, each of these super-lavish rooms was used as a dormitory, with *kaupīnas* hanging on lines, people sleeping on the floor, etc. The tour seems to be more what Prabhupāda had in mind—to impress people with the beauty and opulence of Kṛṣṇa conscious art, statues, and Deity worship within the attractive setting of a beautiful home.

*To Rādhā-Kuñjabihāri*

In the heart  
of the mansion  
is Rādhā-Kuñjabihāri,  
shiny black, bright white,  
clothed in rich patterns  
of finest cloth.

Smooth, opulent  
faces like full moons;  
Kṛṣṇa's upper body  
is inclined  
toward Rādhārāṇī.

Her hand of benediction  
is a welcome sight.

In the heart of  
the mansion,  
Rādhā-Kuñjabihāri,  
shiny black, bright white.



CAITANYA-CARITĀMṚTA:  
SEEING THE GOOD

He [Paṇḍita Haridāsa] always accepted the good qualities of Vaiṣṇavas and never found fault in them. He engaged his heart and soul only to satisfy the Vaiṣṇavas.

—Cc. *Ādi* 8.62

PURPORT

It is a qualification of a Vaiṣṇava that he is *adoṣa darśī*; he never sees others' faults. Of course, every human being has both good qualities and faults. Therefore, it is said *sajjanā guṇam icchanti doṣam icchanti pāmarāḥ*: "Everyone has a combination of faults and glories. But a Vaiṣṇava, a sober man, accepts only a man's glories and not his faults, for flies seek sores whereas honeybees seek honey." Haridāsa Paṇḍita never found fault with a Vaiṣṇava but considered only his good qualities.

Seeing the good is a discipline. When I meet with Godbrothers, they sometimes ask me what I think of the different temples I have visited. In response I think of the good. Some may be amused and think that I am sentimental, but Haridāsa Paṇḍita knew what it meant to see the good and so did Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. I am trying to follow in their footsteps.

Although I have seen temple populations shrunk down to a few devotees, I have also met strong, determined, good-humored Vaiṣṇavas who are dedicated to their *prabhu-datta-deśa*. If by someone's calculation, the weakness of a temple outweighs its strength, then I should think what can I do to help change it? At least I

should contribute to create the good—such as the extra long *kīrtana* this morning, led by Praghoṣa dāsa with Haryāśva inducing everyone to dance.

I spoke with Rohiṇinandana on a patch of backyard grass beside the Kāmadhuk. He mentioned that when he was trying to give out *Back to Godheads* downtown, most people shied away. We are strange to begin with, he said, and now they have read so many



Haryāśva dāsa brahmacāri, traveling party president

things about us. He went on to describe a favorable encounter with a man who had been to Govinda's restaurant. I asked Rohiṇī what he thought of the fact that most people react unfavorably. He thought about it for a moment and then, with his gentle British tone, he said, "It saddens me. We have such a pure life and philosophy. And many of their lives are shambles. Yet they won't take it."

He went on to see the bright side of this: We should take it as a challenge to get our act together and make our community pure and strong so that people will want to join.

I wanted to talk about studying Prabhupāda's books. Rohiṇīnandana holds a study class in the evening once a week where devotees work together to make concise summaries of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports until they have reduced each purport to a "*sūtra*." He had many other interesting ideas for studying and sharing Kṛṣṇa consciousness with Nāma-haṭṭa members and devotees. I asked, "What department do you work in in the temple?"

"I am the temple *brāhmaṇa*," he said. It was pleasing to hear, that he has full engagement with preaching and brahminical services. He does a weekly TV show on the *Bhagavad-gītā* in Lansing; he writes the thirty-page *Nāma Haṭṭa News: A newsletter for Vaiṣṇavas Liv-*



Rohiṇīnandana Prabhu playing *karatālas*

*ing in the Michigan Area*; he holds two study classes per week in the temple in addition to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes; he conducts retreats every few months, so that a small group of devotees who go to the Lansing center can study together intensively for two days; he runs a Sunday school for guests' children; he sits as a member of the temple board each week; he meets with devotees individually, etc.

Rohiṇinandana foresees that the temple core of devotees will become more austere, simple, engaged in studying and preaching and worshipping the Deity, and this will inspire the larger numbers of devotees who are living outside and entering business. The householders will then support the temple and seek out the association of devotees who live in the temple. Bhūrijana, who is visiting Detroit to teach a seminar in child rearing, expressed a similar viewpoint: "They need us and we need them."

I also spoke with Rohiṇinandana about memorizing Sanskrit *ślokas*. He said he knows about a thousand. He is mostly interested in reviewing them so that he can bring them forward instantly while speaking. We discussed how Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures are a series of Sanskrit references, brought out one after another in support of his philosophical points. Rohiṇi wants to arrange his *ślokas* more by topics so that when he thinks of "toleration" he will immediately think of "*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya . . .*"

Rohiṇinandana asked me about my health. When I explained it, he said I am like a person who is missing a limb or something like that.

"Talking with you," he said, "brings out a person's sensitivity not to talk too much or say something that may cause you a headache. We should *always* be aware that we may hurt whomever we are talking to, by saying something to make them ill or by disturbing them. We tend to treat people like punching bags."

(This is Śrīla Prabhupāda's definition of nonviolence: Give people Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everyone is yearning to be treated in this way. The Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you—give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness.")

As we parted, he said that in the time it would take him to ride his bicycle home he would recite the *Īsopaniṣad*. "If I don't go over *śloka*s for even one day, then I start to lose the taste and freshness. Even if it is just a minute, I do some every day."

### *Sunday Lecture*

Rohiṇinandana introduced me as "a *sannyāśī*, one who has no fixed residence and who has no association with women." I spoke about chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, especially, at the time of death. The example of the final exam is very apt. Often an entire course's grade is based to a large degree on the score one gets on the final exam. But a good student isn't threatened by the final exam.

I became aware that an uninitiated audience might find it strange that we lecture on death, but I persisted. I explained why it is glorious to achieve success at death. As I spoke, I envisioned the victory of a devotee at the time of death: After a lifetime of practicing *japa* and *kīrtana*, he turns to the Lord in the time of great distress, and he is carried back to Godhead.

While lecturing to the guests, perhaps we get elated beyond our actual realization. Or is it that we finally realize our true attachment to Kṛṣṇa through praising Him? In any case, we try to uplift the audience through śāstric proof and conviction: By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa we will leave this miserable abode and attain the lotus feet of the Lord.

The guests' questions seemed to indicate ways in which my talk was unbalanced. "You said that Kṛṣṇa doesn't give material rewards. But doesn't the *Gītā* say that you should worship Him even if you have material desires?"

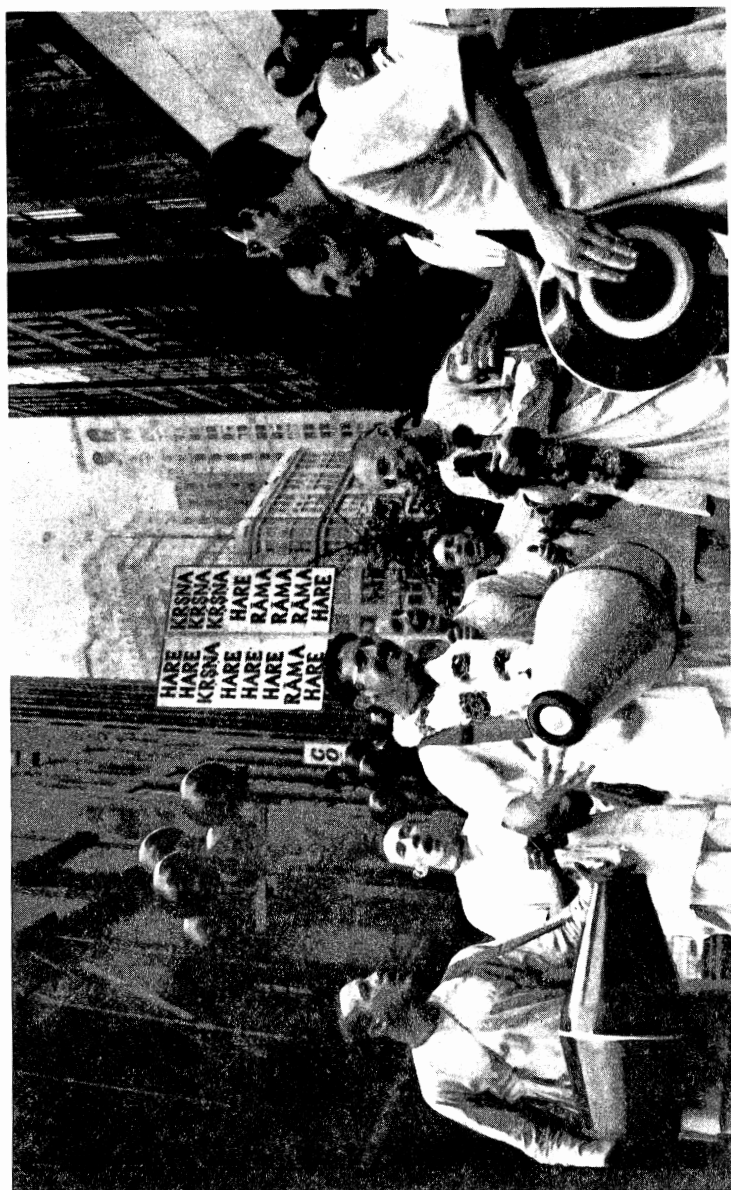
And, "What is the difference between a Christian aspiring for salvation and a devotee who wants to go back to Godhead?" As I replied, I tried to balance what I had said and to emphasize the *siddhānta*.

Best of all, the lecture allowed me to serve. All around me I saw signs of service. Someone had painted the picture of Lord Caitanya; someone was offering the *ārati* to Rādhā-Kuñjabihāri; someone had cooked the feast and others were serving it. And I was lecturing.

But to enter the essence of lecturing I had to shed my identity as "lecturer." I had to give up my arrogance as "advanced devotee among beginners" or "one of the oldest disciples." One may use seniority or *sannyāsa* identity for service, but my actual consciousness has to be that of a servant distributing the knowledge and the joy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even a nondevotee, if he is perceptive, will be able to see through my pretense. But if I am genuine, I will be able to plant the seed of devotion in his heart.

It was a gray Monday morning in downtown Detroit. The workers moved zombielike after the weekend. Praghoṣa was smiling blissfully, embarrassing me who cannot smile as much. But I sang and walked with twenty other devotees in double file. Our party was lively young men, women, and children, dressed brightly amid a very dead atmosphere. Ādi-rāja, Rohiṇinandana, Bhūmadeva, and some ladies went out to distribute BTG magazines. The rest of us sang and watched with satisfaction as workers accepted magazines and carried them into the buildings. Praghoṣa stopped in parks and plazas, and the devotees spread out to dance. When we saw that none of the office workers were going to sing or dance with us, or even pay much attention to us, we began to dance more for ourselves, and for Kṛṣṇa. Praghoṣa placed his hands around his mouth like a megaphone and shouted up





Praghoṣa Prabhu leading hari-nāma saṅkīrtana in downtown Detroit

toward the tall buildings and the people in them, as if to waken the dead.

Later Madhu-maṅgala remarked that Americans have a unique capacity to totally ignore the *hari-nāma* party, as if the twenty singing and jumping devotees didn't even exist. Madhu said, "It's as if they want to show us that they are not the slightest bit under our influence. It's like a game, the way they maintain their cool. In Europe they at least acknowledge our presence, and then they dismiss us." But Madhu also thinks Americans respond more to the devotees' happiness. Today, for example, there was the truck driver who tapped his hand against the truck cab in time with our *kīrtana* rhythm and who smiled and waved before he drove off.

### *Leaving Detroit*

I look out the window and see a light on in the van. The men are up, getting ready to shower and travel. Another early-hours trip, this time to reach a rest spot between Detroit and Chicago. The wealth and enjoyment of the *brāhmaṇa* is to spend time with Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, so I am looking forward to a couple of days of study. "If you do not do anything else but hear," Śrīla Prabhupāda told a Bombay audience, "if you simply come here and listen, I guarantee you will be liberated."

My own experience is not so dramatic with outward adventures, but ours is the Kṛṣṇa conscious commitment. And we believe it is the most valuable way of life in all the three worlds.

"But if it's so great, how come it doesn't make you happier?"

Because I am struggling to come out of the grips of the powerful material nature. For a long time I have agreed to be imprisoned by Mother Nature and she wants to be sure I am really sincere before she lets me go for good.

"You're still a prisoner?"

No, I am free, but not completely. My case looks very good, but relapse is also possible. I'm going forward.

# *Invitation to the Mind to Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa*

Work on this *mantra*  
with me, my friend.  
Utter it now  
as we ride.

Nectar's here,  
in the holy name,  
why don't you join us?

I know  
your pains and demands,  
but cling to this *mantra*.  
All else is doomed.

Lend us your strength,  
so Kṛṣṇa will hear  
our cries of devotion.

Let's fill the van  
with intense prayer.  
Join us  
or the road is dead.  
As we buckle up the body,  
our feet on the floor,  
and as our tongue vibrates *hari-nāma*

we request you,  
give up your dreams,  
ride on the wings  
of the holy name.

### *Campground between Detroit and Chicago*

My portraits of the temples are sketchy and I can't enlarge them, for different reasons. One reason is health. I had to cancel a radio show in Ann Arbor when a headache came, and for the same reason I can't stay up late or talk long with interesting persons, such as Bruce it Lansing. I only spoke to Bruce for thirty seconds as our van pulled out, yet he is an extremely rare soul, because he is attracted to Kṛṣṇa and he donates money every month. Also at Lansing I only briefly met with an Iranian student who says, "*Hari bol*," and who carries a beadbag. When I mentioned to Apūrva that some devotees were getting into insurance businesses, the Iranian student interjected, "Can they insure someone that he won't come back in his next life?" And then he laughed and sounded just like his fellow-Iranian, Atreya Ṛṣi Prabhu. But I could not talk much with this interesting student.

Aside from health reasons, there is also my reclusive nature. Also we don't stay very long at each center, three to five days, then move on. So I catch brief portraits, as from a passing train.

But I am sorry I didn't tell you more about Ādi-rāja.

Did you know that before becoming a devotee he traveled all over the world in search of a universal religion? He lived with Amish people, Mormons, Moonies, Zen monks in Japan, Christian monks in Greece; he saw Krishnamurti in India, Cardinal Sin in the Philippines; and finally—still unsatisfied—he met a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee while hitch-hiking at the border of Turkey and Iran. He received a *Bhagavad-gītā* and not long after that he joined the ISKCON temple in Geneva.

What I am trying to establish in *Lessons from the Road* is described by Śrīla Prabhupāda in a *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* purport:

Most of the devotees of Lord Caitanya lived in Bengal and Orissa. Thus they are celebrated as *oriyās* and *gaudīyas*. At present, however, by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, His cult is being propagated all over the world, and it is most probable that in the future history of Lord Caitanya's movement, Europeans, Americans, Canadians, Australians, South Americans, Asians and people from all over the world will be celebrated as devotees of Lord Caitanya.

—Cc. *Ādi* 10.122

I don't have the transcendental vision of Kavikarṇapūra, who knew which role in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* was previously played by the associates of Lord Caitanya. Maybe today's ISKCON devotees weren't there in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in a letter, "I

think some of you, like yourself, Satsvarūpa, Brahmānanda, Mukunda, Gargamuni, Acyutānanda and all of you had already cultivated this Kṛṣṇa consciousness in your past life. Now Lord Caitanya wants that this movement should be spread in the Western countries, so most probably in your previous births you were all Indians and cultivated this Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now Lord Caitanya has placed you in the Western part of the world so that you can now combine together and broadcast the holy message all over the world" (Letter of 5 May 1967).

I can see that the devotees are engaged as Prabhupādānugas, and this makes them wonderful. To describe their activities in the ISKCON centers is to continue the narration of Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana-līlā*. As Prabhupāda writes, "Our International Society for Krishna Consciousness is one of the branches of the Caitanya tree" (Cc. *Ādi* 9.18, purport).

I will try to tell more. But sometimes seeing the good means silence.

# Chapter Six

## CHICAGO/HINDU CONFERENCE

### *What we have heard about Chicago*

The temple is very large but there are not many devotees. They all go out every day right after the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on the streets. They are trying their best to cultivate the ten thousand Indians living in the city. During our visit there will be a big outdoor festival, "Taste of Chicago," and ISKCON will participate with *kīrtana*, as well as book and *prasādam* distribution.

### *Travel day*

This morning we were chanting *japa* in a solitary woods, where white-tailed deer ran away from us. Now, six hours later, the Kāmadhuk is parked in a tight, urban space behind the Chicago temple. Getting here was the usual haul, with one surprise—a flat tire.

Highway time is a good time to talk about Kṛṣṇa, especially since it's difficult to read a book. But pure



talking about Kṛṣṇa seems difficult for us. Today Varuṇa and I chanted our *japa*, then spoke occasionally to keep Baladeva from falling asleep at the wheel. As we drove through Battle Creek, Michigan, home of the Kelloggs cereal industry, my mind went off in a series of mundane association. I remembered, thirty-five years ago, sending away for trinkets and special offers advertised on the boxes of Kelloggs Cornflakes and Rice Crispies. I was about to speak about this, but then I thought that Baladeva and Varuṇa might come up with similar childhood memories. During the roadside stop for breakfast, I read a few *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purports aloud, and I was awestruck. Śrīla Prabhupāda's confidence in the *sanātana* nature seemed much more real—and certainly much more wonderful—than the existence of the Indiana truck stop.

As we pulled in front of the impressive ISKCON Chicago building, I recognized Gaṇapati Swami, a lean *sannyāsī* with sun glasses, standing out front. Immediately after our exchange of obeisances he said, "We are going to an engagement in Wisconsin. I hope we can recruit some of your men."

"Oh! The Grateful Dead concert?" I asked. "How far away is it?"

"Two hours," he said. "What would you like to do?"

I said I had to rest, but some of our men would like to go. Before he left, Gaṇapati Swami warned us that the

alley where the Kāmadhuk was parked was a very noisy spot on weekends.

"Especially if it gets warm at night," he smiled. "There are some bars on Clark Street, and they go wild." He said that if it got too bad we could drive to nearby Evanston and stay overnight there in a parking lot.

June 26, 1987

ISKCON Chicago

Dear Baladeva and Madhu-maṅgala,

Please accept my blessings. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I want to thank you both for taking so much trouble in caring for me, even though I remain in a somewhat dilapidated condition. As I attempt to move about and preach, you are always trying to minimize the likelihood of my headaches and when the inevitable pains come, you watch over me more tenderly than any mother, father, or nurse. Although we are all working together in service to Kṛṣṇa, I am personally obliged to you.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's last days, he expressed his gratitude to his personal secretary, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, who helped Prabhupāda move from Vṛndāvana to London, and then back to Vṛndāvana again, even though Prabhupāda was much more ill

(and infinitely more exalted) than I have ever been. But Prabhupāda also expressed that sense of obligation: "I must thank you that you took me to London and again brought me here without any difficulty. That is a great credit for you. For that I am thanking you. In this condition, a bundle of bones—still you did it. Kṛṣṇa will bless you."

While admitting my physical weakness and dependence, at the same time I wish to relate to you that I am feeling very positive about our travel and the writing of the travel book. I have also recently decided to trust more my subjective experience of the travel and the description of our adventures, rather than try to hide myself. The fact is that any valid experience of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is worth sharing. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes this in a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport:

As the unmixed sun ray is very forceful, and is therefore called *tīvra*, similarly unmixed *bhakti-yoga* of hearing, chanting, etc. may be performed by one and all, regardless of inner motive.

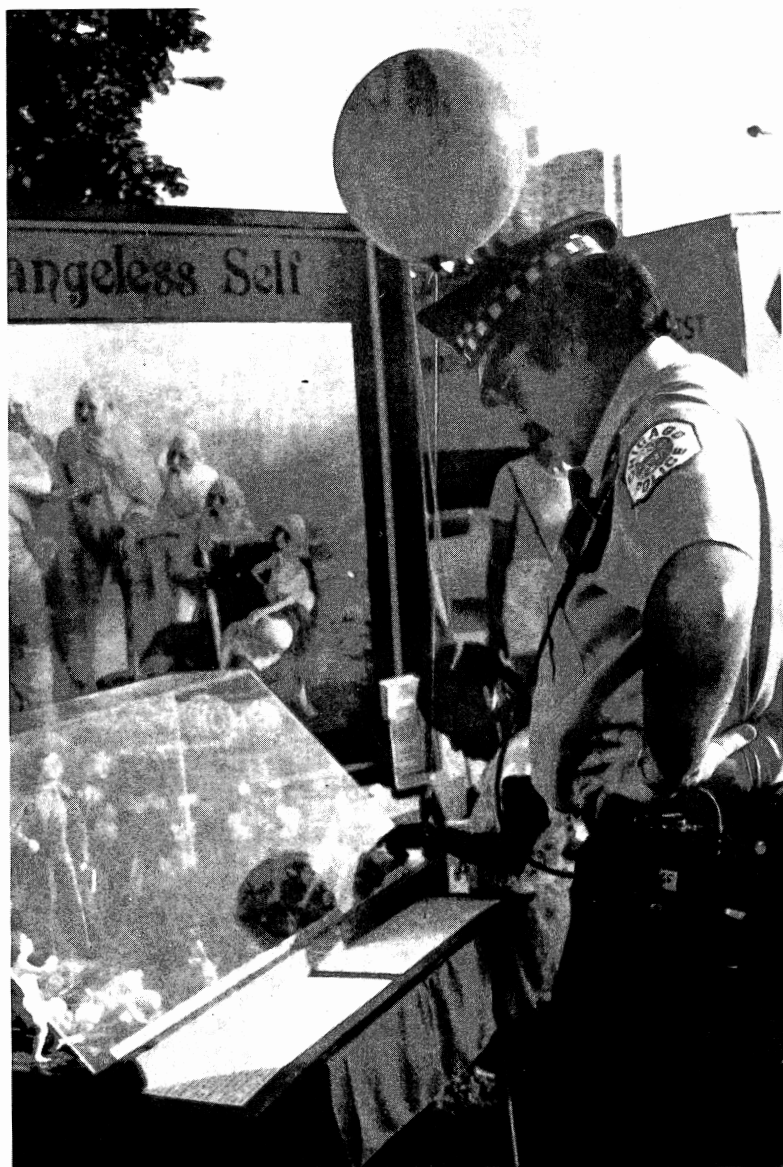
—*Bhāg.* 2.3.10

The Supreme Lord and His devotional service is praised in another *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse, where Śukadeva Gosvāmī declares that all races of men "and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the Supreme Power." Thus, *bhakti-yoga* is a great

wonder and is capable of transforming the whole world if only people will take to it. Of course, if my own taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness could be more complete and heroic, that would be best. But despite the fact that I am a very small servant of the Lord, I feel assertive and confident of the efficacy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and its powerful appearance even in my own life, "regardless of inner motive." So if you are willing, let us continue.

Yours in the service of Prabhupāda,  
Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Life in the back alley was subdued last night because of cool weather. But the city firemen across the street were shooting rockets at our building and setting off fire crackers until 10:00 P.M. Then, occasional groups of drunken passersby stopped to argue with one another and curse, while lingering outside our vehicles. After that, the alley cats started screeching, occasional motorcycles revved, and always the bright sodium lights of the parking lot shining through our windows. And when it was quiet, we anticipated that something or someone else would come by. This morning I asked Madhu-maṅgala if he had a good night's rest. He smiled and said, "It's an experience of real life back here." It's not real in the absolute sense (*sat*)—but it's real *māyā*, lower modes, bad illusion.



One of Chicago's finest  
arrested by a transcendental diorama

The Chicago temple hall is vast. Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kiśora-kīśorī are beautiful and majestic, reminding us that we worship Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa within Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The teakwood throne for Śrīla Prabhupāda is maybe the biggest and best in ISKCON, and there are six big panels with photos and text describing, "Who is Prabhupāda?"

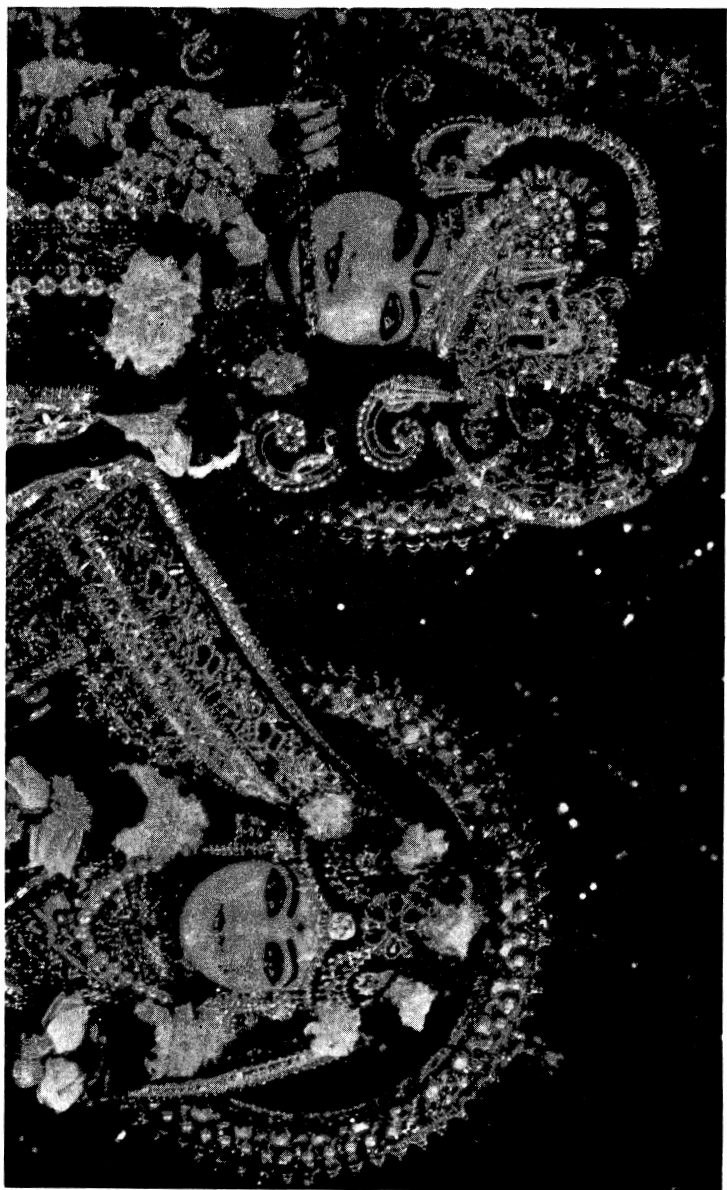
Gaṇapati Swami said he may not be able to meet with me while I am here because he is intensely involved in managing for the upcoming "Taste of Chicago." They have huge opportunities in the city and very few devo-



Mahā-mantra Prabhu preaching  
and distributing books

tees. At least our *brahmacārīs* will be able to help them by participating in the city festival as well as the rock concert. But even if we didn't help, they would do it themselves.

Yesterday, several devotees and I read aloud from Kuṣākratha dāsa's translation of two nectar books, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's *Śrī-Aiśvarya-kadambinī*, "The Monsoon of Lord Kṛṣṇa's Opulence," and Ragunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's *Śrī Vraja-vilāsa-stava*, "Prayers Glorifying the Lord's Pastimes in Braja." Afterward, a devotee remarked how these are the same pastimes of Kṛṣṇa that we have heard before, but just by the poet's grouping the *līlā* together in a condensed way it becomes relishable. He then asked if I could write more poems and prayers to Śrīla Prabhupāda. My first reaction was that I have already done it. But why not more? When devotees would ask Ragunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to speak about Lord Caitanya, did he say, "I have already done it?" Perhaps I hesitate because I don't want to expose myself as inferior in my Prabhupāda-appreciation. I have just stated that it is worthwhile to express even my own realization of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By the same logic, a grain of devotion to Śrīla Prabhupāda is worth tons of forgetfulness and indifference to him. By traveling, we are realizing Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement—and that is also a form of Śrīla Prabhupāda—through his followers and instructions (*vāṇī*).



Their Lordships Śrī-Śrī Kīśora-kīśorī, Chicago ISKCON



*Vāṇī* association is not lacking. In fact, the *śāstras* say that *vāṇī* is the best form. It is different from his personal form (*vapuḥ*), but *vāṇī* is also personal. By remembering relevant instructions from a Bhaktivedanta purport or from his letters and by serving with his followers, we are in constant touch with Śrīla Prabhupāda. We also chant his name and worship his *mūrti* form (which is a kind of *vapuḥ*-in-separation). Nothing is lacking, except my own devotion.

One might protest, "If Śrīla Prabhupāda was present, he would command more devotion and obedience. We are really missing his *vapuḥ*." And that's true also. There has to be *some* difference since his disappearance. But if it requires more obedience and enthusiasm from our side to make up for his *vapuḥ*-absence, then why should we be lacking? We should make up the difference by our devotion so that it may remain "different" but not "lacking." Why should we be so childish as to demand that Śrīla Prabhupāda has to be personally present and only then will we submit or understand what he wants?

In 1968, when Śrīla Prabhupāda heard that his three disciples in India had become scattered and dispirited, he wrote, "If I would have been there, I could manage, but I am here" (February 26, 1968). This indicates that Śrīla Prabhupāda had more potency when he was on the scene: "I could manage, but I am here." And yet, if a sincere disciple recalls his spiritual master's

orders and helps himself by discussing these orders with other Godbrothers, he should be able to think, "My dear spiritual master, I know your will and I will do the needful. Separation from you is a means for me to prove my obedience and devotion. I shall carry out your instructions for your pleasure."

The devotees who attended the Grateful Dead concert said that it was a very favorable atmosphere for *kīrtana* and distribution of books and *prasādam*. Some Grateful Dead fans have been following the band since the 1960's, and they recall Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearing

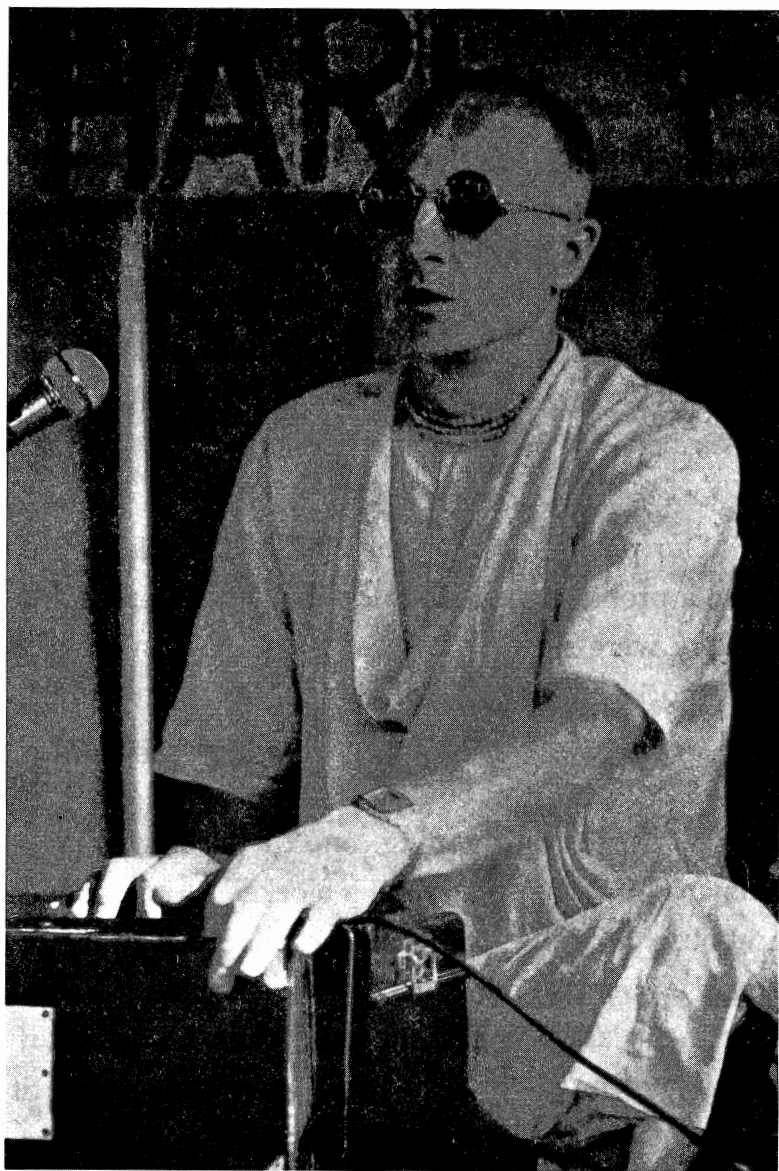


Dhanurdhara Mahārāja explains Kṛṣṇa consciousness

once with "The Dead" at a rock-*mantra* chant in San Francisco. They see Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees fitting favorably into their concept of peace, nonviolence, and vegetarianism. The newer followers of the band have picked up the same attitude toward the devotees, and devotees have kept up the good reputation, by constant distribution of *prasādam* at concerts.

For three days, at the scene of the concerts, Gaṇapati Swami personally led *kīrtanas*, singing four to five hours each day. Hundreds of people at a time gathered to watch and some chanted along. Dhannurdhara Swami spent his time mostly in one-to-one preaching conversations. Devotees also met a Bhakta Kent, who has been following the Grateful Dead concerts for a year and a half. He travels in an old school bus, along with about ten other friends. They distribute books and lots of *prasādam*. There is a whole "family" of people who travel with the Grateful Dead, and who make an income by selling hippie paraphernalia to the concert-goers. This entourage has also become favorable by the regular association of devotees. They like to sing Hare Kṛṣṇa and eat *prasādam*.

I had heard that two girls had come back from the Grateful Dead concert and stayed overnight in the temple. When I looked up from the lectern to give the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, I saw one of these girls, and she was an unusual sight. Her head was completely



Gaṇapati Mahārāja chanting with harmonium

shaved except for the equivalent of a *brahmacārī's śikhā*, but that was worn in the front of the head. She and her friend wore *sārīs* and both looked very young and innocent, despite the punk pose. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport I had to read described King Maruṭ's peak of solid gold in the Himalayas. Prabhupāda invited modern day adventurers to go and seek it. Thinking that this information might be difficult for the newcomers, I tried to make it understandable. But halfway through the lecture they walked out.

Our parking behind the Chicago temple has become a problem. Last night, young teenagers, aware that we were sleeping inside, came at midnight and threw rocks against our vehicles. Besides that, the fire-cracker-throwing increases each night as we get nearer to the Fourth of July. Some of the explosions were like bombs. And this morning, one of the householder women parked her car so that it blocked a lot where the firehouse employees keep their cars. For that, we received a flood of obscenities from the fire laddies until the *mātājī* was found and moved her car. Of course, if we hadn't been visiting, she would have had room to fit in without blocking the alley. Gaṇapati Swami has suggested that we move each night to a parking lot in Evanston and take our chances there. But it's not a legal spot for sleeping overnight, and so we are thinking to

move to the nearest trailer camp, an hour outside the city.

Despite their limited manpower, the Chicago devotees have nicely organized the participation of their Indian congregation. In the *mandir*, brass-inscribed plaques on the walls list the names of those who have performed "outstanding service." A special plaque has been erected for the family who donated the main Deity thrones, in honor of their parents. There is also a sign that lists the monthly expenses of the temple and concludes with the suggestion that three-hundred life members, paying only \$31 a month, could bear all expenses. Another sign gives suggested services, such as the purchase of daily garlands for the Deity and the fee for a potential donor. There is sufficient devotional paraphernalia and opulence in the room, so that these donation requests do not seem improper. Besides, just to attain the *darśana* of Kiśora-kiśorī is *everything*. Any time I went into the temple room, I always saw new donations, mostly food articles, that were placed in front of the altar, such as bags of wheat and rice and fruit. All day long, people come by and leave their offerings for the Deity.

Govinda Daṭṭa Prabhu is the life-member director, and he introduced me to some of their congregation members. I spoke with Dr. Subramaniam Sastri and his family, who live in St. Joseph, Michigan. They hold

weekly programs at their home in which they read Prabhupāda's books and have *kīrtana* and *prasādam*. I encouraged Dr. Sastri to learn the philosophy and speak it, but he humbly requested that the ISKCON devotees should come and speak. Upon his request I promised Dr. Sastri that in the future we would not drive past St. Joseph, but would stop to see him. If we continue to meet such friendly devotees, we will have dozens of stops outside of the temples themselves. This is an encouragement to continue traveling in America, although the call for wider travel is beckoning.

I also spoke with a man named Ram, who likes to read and distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and who is serious about participation in ISKCON. He wanted to talk about many things, including controversial "politics." He heard someone say that the terms *guru* and reform, as in my booklet *Guru Reform Notebook*, can never be brought together logically, because a *guru* is perfect. I replied that a *guru* is perfect to his disciples, but as a Godbrother, I should be willing to admit actual mistakes, if they are pointed out to me by a well-meaning Godbrother. And it is not impossible for a devotee who is acting as a spiritual master to do something imperfect. If one thinks that he is perfect, beyond any chance of improvement, that is pride. The Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy is perfect, and theoretically the *guru* is perfect because he is supposed to follow perfect authorities—*guru*, *śāstra*, and *sādhū*. But what hap-

pens when a well-intentioned *guru*-devotee makes a mistake? And we do! We can *still be guru*, but we have to be honest: admit to the wrong and rectify.

Ram said he knew he ought to become initiated but since there was so much change and controversy now in ISKCON, he wanted to wait and be very cautious. But someone had told him, "No, you should get initiated right away, before it is too late." I assured him that he had sufficient shelter in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and in the association of other devotees, so that he could go on safely making spiritual progress while he considered to whom he would actually surrender as his spiritual master. He should not feel rushed, and yet he should not attempt to alter the philosophy and think, "I don't need to become initiated."

Before giving the Sunday lecture, I recalled what Bir Kṛṣṇa Swami had told me, how he likes to always reaffirm in his Sunday lectures that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, since the Indians are prone to impersonalism and the worship of many gods. So I spoke from the *Bhagavad-gītā* Chapter Ten, verses 12–13, *param brahma param dhāma* . . . In the question period, an American boy in a white *kurtā* spoke in a challenging way against the violence advocated by Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. I defended the *Gītā*, but then a pert girl challenged in the same way. For a while they teamed up against me. Finally, I challenged them for considering to be better moralists than Kṛṣṇa.



I said, "Try as he might, the 'perfect' moralist, will continue to commit violence, at least unintentionally, and he will have to suffer the reaction." The only way to escape committing violence is to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme moralist. Otherwise, the material world is inevitably violent. Śrīla Prabhupāda has also stated that if one does not distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others that is another form of violence.

We drove north out of Chicago for over an hour to reach a campground. It was a scenic ride along Sheridan Drive, through local neighborhoods and towns, where we witnessed Americans at leisure on a Sunday summer evening. In wealthy communities like Deere Park and Highland Park the people were apparently more gentle and mellow than those in the city. Everyone was stylishly dressed, lounging in parks with families and friends, or playing golf and tennis, jogging, sitting in backyards, driving cars at reduced speed—at ease. We passed through it all, as impersonal observers, which is one of the features of rapid travel. Going through the many small towns was almost like seeing them from an airplane, so quickly did they come and go, and we remained distant from it all. We passed by shops and homes that were, for the people who lived there, the center of the universe, but for us it was just a moment's glance. But one soon becomes satiated by the sights, especially traffic directions and billboards—and the

names. Every town has a name, every shop, every auto, and all are proclaimed in painted letters. This brought to mind Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport on "the world of names."

The whole material creation is a *jugglery of names* only; in fact, it is nothing but a bewildering creation of matter like earth, water and fire. The buildings, furniture, cars, bungalows, mills, factories, industries, peace, war or even the highest perfection of material science, namely atomic energy and electronics, are all simply bewildering names of material elements with their concomitant reactions of the three modes. Since the devotee of the Lord knows them perfectly well, he is not interested in creating unwanted things for a situation which is not at all reality, but simply names of no more significance than the babble of sea waves.

—*Bhāg.* 2.2.3

The campground, situated in Illinois Beach State Park, gives us relief from the firemen's rockets and from the stone throwers. In exchange we get living space, soft breezes, and hordes of large, vicious mosquitoes.

June 30, 1987

Chicago, Illinois

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories unto your lotus feet.

My travel is underway, I don't know for how long.

I hope you approve. Just recently I wrote about following your *vānī*, and how we can personally associate with you in this way. I believe this is true, and like your many other followers, I realize its potency. You are with us, as much as we like.

In the back of your first *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* volume, it is stated about you, "Śrīla Prabhupāda's most significant contribution, however, is his books." And you have said, "If you want to know me, read my books." When we actually turn to your books we see that you are entirely made of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy—loving service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As we read submissively, we also become "infected." We just have to read and practice.

I still read your books, however, as a dutiful student, not as an advanced devotee, not like the sages at Naimaṣāraṇya who were rapt in ecstasy. Yet I wouldn't miss my regular study for anything. I realize more that one does have to *study* what you have written, otherwise we will tend to think it's "the same thing over and over again." By careful hearing, gradually the infinite variety of Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes revealed to us, and we become more attracted.

And we become stronger. As you wrote in the very beginning of the first volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

It is powerful reading matter in the Sanskrit language, and it is now rendered into English elaborately so that simply by a careful reading one will know God perfectly well, so

much so that the reader will be sufficiently educated to defend himself from the onslaught of atheists. Over and above this, the reader will be able to convert others to accepting God as a concrete principle. . . . The only qualification one needs to study this great book of transcendental knowledge is to proceed step by step cautiously and not jump forward haphazardly like an ordinary book. It should be gone through chapter by chapter, one after another.

That statement really sums it up. I keep confronting in myself, however, the basic challenge, "How can I believe all this which is beyond sense perception and which is rejected by most scientists and intellectuals of this world?" I have a built-in prejudice against receiving knowledge from the perfect source. But when you present convincing arguments about hearing from authority, I am satisfied. I need to keep hearing.

Reading your books and helping others to read them by distribution and education is a full-time engagement, and it is one of the few things that all of your followers should agree on, even though they disagree on many other points. Sometimes there is so much disagreement we become confused whether Kṛṣṇa consciousness is really possible. But then your books show us the clear *siddhānta*. At least one thing we can all do unitedly is to become open-minded students of your higher teachings.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am methodically going through each section of each chapter and trying to absorb what you say. In your purports you address all

the current issues of ISKCON, such as schisms, the *guru*-disciple relationship, and implementation of *varṇāśrama*. When I say open-mindedly, I mean reading and accepting just what you say, not looking through your books for ammunition for a particular point of view. I notice that sometimes your statements support one point of view in a controversy, and sometimes they support the opposite view. But I want to go on reading; the reading itself is the main goal. By hearing and studying we will become elevated, transcendental to belligerent debate.

Most important, from your books we can become pure devotees; we can obtain the *darśana* of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; and we can always be with you, our ever well-wisher. Life is short, and like Mahārāja Parīkṣit we must spend our last days in constant hearing of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. This is the real point of life, isn't it? To hear, to worship, and to remember. "The result of such hearing is detachment from worldliness. . . . Somehow or other if someone hears with rapt attention from the right person at the very beginning, one can assuredly see Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in person in the pages of *Bhāgavatam*."

Thank you Śrīla Prabhupāda, for the matchless gift of your books. Please allow me to stay in the shelter of your instructions and descriptions of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. In this way I will be able to serve you. Because if I become actually addicted to your books, and if my mind be-

comes truly engaged at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, only then will I be able to fully represent you. As stated by Sūta Gosvāmī: "Now I shall try to make you hear the very same thing as I learned it from him and as I have realized it" (*Bhāg.* 1.3.44).

Please allow me to be a teacher of your *Bhāgavatam*. I have very little qualification to do this, but it can occur by your mercy. I recall that once I admitted to you that I wanted to retain your wonderful instructions, but my memory always failed me. You laughed and said, "Go on reading."

Your eternal servant,  
Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Gaṇapati Swami, Yaśomatīnandana, and I shared heavy news of ISKCON, schisms and law cases. During the talk, it occurred to me that my tendency for seeing the good cannot be artificially light. You have to absorb bad news, and sometimes you must advocate heavy action to defend right causes. But nothing should be done in a mood of indulging in sense gratification. Gaṇapati Swami said he has noticed in recent years that devotees who have criticized others, even in the name of a righteous cause, became themselves weakened in spiritual life if their criticism was wrongly motivated or

overdone. The path of devotional service is like the razor's edge.

Six months ago I accepted an invitation to give two lectures at a conference of the Southeastern Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and now it is time to go there. I have to leave the Kāmadhuk and fly to Charlotte, North Carolina. Our group plan is that Baladeva and I will go to the Hindu meeting while the rest of the devotees drive the caravan out to our next ISKCON stop—Denver, Colorado.

*United Flight: from O'Hare to Charlotte, N.C.*

On the plane, we spoke about why devotees leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness in favor of business. I have a theory on the subject: Some devotees join Kṛṣṇa consciousness at a very young age, but after ten to fifteen years they think it would be a greater personal challenge to test their powers against the "real world." They think it is bolder and more dynamic to leave the temple. This feeling may be accelerated by the fact that ISKCON is going through a sluggish phase.

I don't criticize those who go into business, as long as they keep up their spiritual life. But I have to take a stand in favor of communal life. There must be a Kṛṣṇa conscious society of devotees.

"But when devotees are fully employed in responsible occupations as householders, *that* is also a society of devotees."

Yes, but can't some remain as full-time preachers?

"Well, of course you can."

The recent trend to leave temple communities and live outside, as well as the movement by "anticultists" to attack through legal and propaganda weapons, is testing the determination of those who would maintain a network of temples. What Śrīla Prabhupāda knew as ISKCON—can it survive? Our travel is meant to help with the reply, "Yes, it can."

Predictably the plane trip did me in. I spent all day lying on a mattress in the guest room of Mr. T. Topiwala's house, and cancelled an evening lecture.

Mr. Topiwala said there are five guest *swamis* here for the conference, and we are all expected to participate as much as possible. He said most of the people attending "will not be interested in deep philosophy such as *dvaita* and *advaita*, but in the general culture of Hinduism." There will be three audience divisions: adults, young people, and children. I will be speaking once to the adults and once to the youth group. Mr. T. said the youth group of Charlotte meets twice a month, with fairly good attendance. Their organization is not for spiritual purposes, but to socialize. For this special



occasion, however, they have agreed to hear philosophy from a *swami*.

Tonight we are supposed to go for an introductory get-together, and tomorrow the inauguration is at 9:00 A.M. He said my turn to speak will be at noon, and if possible I should stay and hear the other speakers. But it doesn't seem possible that I can do that much, since I have already had a full day of headache. I have also excused myself from going to watch the ladies dance in the evening, and from speaking to the 6–12 year olds.

Regarding my assigned lecture, "Relevancy of Vedic Literature in the Modern Age," I have decided to speak on Kali-yuga. This is certainly relevant: We are in the worst age, where everything good has diminished; the only hope is *sankīrtana*.

We held a *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class for the assembled devotees and guests in Mr. Topiwala's living room. He reiterated an opinion that the Indian masses are automatically attracted to devotional acts such as *darsana* of the temple Deities and chanting. The people also accept *swamis* of different philosophical viewpoints, whether they be impersonalists or Vaiṣṇavas. I caught the hint of what he said and replied that the *dvaita* versus *advaita* debates may often be over the heads of the common people and may therefore seem irrelevant. So the simple masses may be encouraged to

go on with their devotional practices in the temple, and at the same time they can be given direct lessons in *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. But those who are somewhat educated or intelligent will have to come to grips with the fact that the swamis of different missions are giving very different conclusions. If a Māyāvādī teacher says that the Deity is ultimately an idol and that Lord Kṛṣṇa is an ordinary man, then how can one accept that and at the same time go on with his devotional activities of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and worshiping the Supreme Lord? What is the value of worshiping Him if He is an idol or mere mortal? The serious worshiper will have to conclude that the remarks of the Māyāvādīs are offensive to the Supreme Lord and are a subtle form of atheism. If a common man cannot handle such controversies to reach a right conclusion, then he may be misled, as is happening all over the world under the influence of the Māyāvādīs.

*July 4, notes from within the conference hall, University of North Carolina*

My VHP identification badge introduces me as "Satswaroupi."

I should not be a smart aleck. An arrogant, superior attitude is not befitting a Vaiṣṇava. If there is a lack of Vedic *siddhānta* at the conference, that is not something for me to crow about. If someone else is confused,

it doesn't add to my credit. Prabhupāda has often taught us that a Vaiṣṇava should consider himself to be the most fallen, and he should offer all respects to others. Even in the midst of the Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs*, Lord Caitanya took a humble position, declaring Himself an inferior *sannyāsī*. But when it was time to speak on *Vedānta*, He strongly criticized the Māyāvādī interpretation.

My assigned topic "Vedic Literature in the Modern Age" should also be an occasion to stress ISKCON's book publication. If they want to strengthen *sanātana-dharma* worldwide and maintain their spiritual roots in Bhārata-varsa, then "books are the basis." Fortunately, we have a nice table display in the lobby: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*—and we are giving away *Bhagavad-gītā*s and *Back to Godheads*.

My seat on the stage is next to Sardar Shamsheer Singh. He immediately asked me about the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees in Russia. "They are being persecuted," I said. He said he had recently visited the USSR, and he raised this question to authorities there. He asked a mayor in Astoria. I think he said the mayor gave an insufficient reply. Mr. Singh said something about Russia's position being hypocritical, but I couldn't hear what he said.

The program started with group prayers in Hindi and Sanskrit. I felt quite ignorant as the audience responded while I sat dumb. I thought of how Śrīla Prabhupāda used to ask the Hindus to excuse his dis-

ciples for their lack of etiquette and knowledge.

Remarks from some of the speakers:

"We are holding our conference on the Fourth of July, which is the great birth of a great nation. Help us to establish and keep alive Hindu *dharma* in this nation."

"I am not here as a politician. I am here as a Hindu."

"Even a *nāstika* can be a Hindu."

"*Ātma* is not to be reached by too much talking. That is what I am doing. The Indians are a talkative people."

"There are scriptures, but don't depend too much on them."

One *swami* advised parents to teach their children that the stories of the *Vedas* are not myths. The gods are not wild fairy stories. But they should "explain" the stories in a symbolic way. I felt somewhat sickened to hear this. I thought, if I speak out against this will I gain disfavor? But if I silently accept it, then what would Prabhupāda think of me?

As each speaker began, he would first make a long "Om" sound and then thank and honor each of the *swamis* present. But no one referred to me as a *swami*, except for Swami Satyamitrananda who kindly referred to me as "the *swami* from Vṛndāvana."

I decided to speak about Śrīla Prabhupāda. The previous speakers had stated that Hinduism is univer-

sal and inclusive. They also spoke of spreading the *dharma*. But it was Śrīla Prabhupāda who did the most significant work in this way. What was Prabhupāda's special power? He was *bhaktivedānta*, very learned in the scriptures, yet he did not interpret them. He presented them directly. Westerners will not be attracted to very symbolic explanations of the *Vedas*. We already have enough symbolism, and we don't need more from Hinduism. We want spiritual life, substance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See text of Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami's lecture (page 99)

*Impressions from a Lecture to the Hindu  
Youth Group*

They were more polite  
than other Americans,  
but with the same disfavor:  
"Why should we live  
with a sense of reward by God?  
Why should He  
want to punish anyone?"

I tried to make it clear  
God is not to blame,  
it's you,  
your acts are stored  
as in a computer,  
and it all reads out  
at the time of death  
when the *ātma* moves on.

"I hope I am not disrespectful,"  
a pretty girl asked,  
"but are you just making up  
answers to fit our questions?"  
That raised good laughs,  
after which I replied.

"I'm not making it up,

## LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

it's in the scripture.  
Or how do you explain  
your present life?  
It is your *karma*.  
And it is the cause  
of present and future suffering.  
The *Vedas* teach us  
how to transcend it."

They listened and later  
the moderator said  
"You kept up their interest.  
They were bored and unruly  
in the previous class."  
At the door,  
the same girl who asked  
if I were concocting,  
stopped to inquire,  
"What does Hinduism say  
about homosexuality?"  
I hope what I said  
helps her on her way.  
Because whatever we do,  
the impressions stick,  
and we have very little chance  
in Kali-yuga to get free.

One more:

The neat, bespectacled boy  
who had argued against *karma*  
stopped by our book table,  
but his mother came to fetch him.

"He is very intelligent," I said.

"Too intelligent!" said Ma.

"It will get him into trouble.

He should listen to me!"

And she dragged him away  
from Prabhupāda's books.

Happy Birthday, America. On your Independence Day, I'm on a North Carolina campus, at a Hindu conference, where we celebrated without American flag-waving, hot dogs, baseball, or political speeches. There was some Hindu flag-waving, but we transcended, by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We are American transcendentalists, and even if most Americans reject us, we will go down in history as those Americans who switched from the pursuit of mundane liberty and happiness to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Personality of Godhead. Where Kṛṣṇa is, there is Vṛndāvana, the spiritual world. He transforms America. And we want to be with Him.

On America's birthday, let us remember and praise His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who loved this country for the facility it



gave him to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. America provided devotees, money, and freedom of religion. Now certain sections resent that even a few Americans have converted to the spiritual world, and they are trying to derail Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America. But it's too late—the American Vaiṣṇavas are established, the books have entered the system. In many homes and in many libraries, America now has the knowledge that can make men free.

America, the giant hedonist, the world policeman, the violent, self-righteous democratic lout. America, the lost, missile-stacked demon. America, big enough to include many gentle, brave souls, devotees of *sanātana-dharma*. The United States, where we happily served Śrīla Prabhupāda and helped him give spiritual guidance to those who have come from India to “the greatest nation,” even at the cost of their souls.

# Appendix

## POEMS FROM THE ROAD

### *Thoughts While Rising*

Up at 2:00 A.M.,  
looking at the clock.  
I don't know where I am.  
Is this New York?  
India? Detroit?  
Walking to morning ablutions,  
I think my life  
is flowing like a river  
to the sea.

But when will the day come  
when by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa  
tears will come to my eyes?

### *Thinking of a Friend*

We are only a phone call apart,  
yet we haven't spoken or written  
to each other in a year.

You used to be always eager  
for our meeting.  
We would talk of writing,  
and it was easy for us  
to turn to Prabhupāda's books.

Now you are occupied  
as a family man  
and I am wandering around  
with a group of *brahmacārīs*.  
I sent you a poem,  
but you are silent.

The cherries are ripe  
here in Michigan,  
and I am reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,  
Second Volume, part two.  
How are you?

*Quiet Days at Gītā-nāgarī*

On Ratha-yātrā day  
quiet regulations  
are put aside;  
you may not even chant  
sixteen good rounds.  
An enthusiastic worker asks,  
"How can I always  
be so intense?"

But I also like days  
when nothing happens  
except the routine.  
At *māṅgala-ārati*,  
you carefully observe  
as each article is offered  
to Rādhā-Dāmodara  
and the *gurukula* classes begin on time,  
the June corn grows imperceptibly,  
and you chant your rounds  
without interruption.

*Revival*

As I read Peter Jenkins'  
*A Walk Across America*,  
I enjoyed his youthful search,  
his love for his dog,  
his incredible austerities  
of hiking and camping,  
and his bravery in being open to attack.  
His living with black folks  
was good to hear.

So why was I disappointed  
when at a Christian revival  
Peter decided to repent  
to be saved in Jesus Christ?

I felt letdown  
because it was too easy,  
there was no education,  
no *guru* to guide him,  
and no real change afterward.

The evangelist claimed  
a direct line to God,  
but was everything accomplished  
by raising the hand?  
In one short prayer,  
was he saved forever?

I don't want to seem ungrateful  
to the mercy of Jesus Christ.  
I do believe he saves  
a soul surrendered to God,  
but I think these preachers  
have devised their own way.

A born-again preacher  
once asked me,  
Have *you* repented?  
Are you saved?  
When he threatened me that way,  
I just felt confident—  
maybe the same feeling he had—  
that *I have surrendered*  
*to the one God,*  
who is represented  
by His sons and preachers  
throughout the universe.

I chant His name,  
 I follow His pure devotee,  
 'tho I lament my lack  
 of boldness in His service,  
 and I lament that I cannot  
 pray with tears each day,  
 as Ragunātha Gosvāmī did.  
 But I do not need  
 a Christian revival.

After the revival night,  
 without a living *guru*  
 most of them wander back—  
 to basketball as the main passion,  
 family and wealth as the real field,  
 cow killing three times daily—  
 without a clue  
 that such acts are the very ignorance  
 and sin  
 for which they asked to be forgiven  
 when they surrendered to Christ.

I am not better than anyone  
 and *any* God consciousness  
 is good, is pious,  
 as declared by Śrī Kṛṣṇa,  
 but I want to speak straight  
 about revivals



to assure my disciples  
that *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*  
is *rāja-vidyā rāja guhyam*.

To make strong and true  
the emotion you feel  
when God's amazing grace  
descends on you,  
you really should inquire  
from a master of the science,  
who can answer your questions—  
why there's evil in the world,  
what is *karma*, what is transmigration,  
how do we know the existence of the soul,  
and how to act as a devotee  
even while engaged in worldly duties.

At least all should know,  
the "Bible" has many forms.  
And the *Bhagavad-gītā*  
is Christ-approved,  
raising us up  
to transcendental loving service  
unto the All-Attractive One.

## HOW TO TOLERATE

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example of a woman “who doesn’t hesitate to cook in the kitchen in the months of May and June, the hottest part of the summer season.” Similarly, those who observe the Vedic injunction to bathe early in the morning do not abandon the practice just because the weather becomes very cold. But how do we get the conviction to continue these and even more serious practices of spiritual life, even when it seems intolerable?

Some of the basic principles are as follows:

- (1) We are not the body; we are eternal spirit soul.
- (2) As long as we are in the material world, the inconveniences that we are trying to avoid cannot be completely alleviated.
- (3) We have a higher duty to perform, and we simply must do it, despite the difficulties.
- (4) By executing our duty, Lord Kṛṣṇa will be pleased with us.

Recently I noticed the quality of tolerance in a Godbrother. I was speaking in a room with Bhūrijana Prabhu. The temperature was over 90 degrees, and there was no fan. I felt inconvenienced for both of us and asked Bhūrijana if he would like to move somewhere else for our talk. "I am all right," he said. I thought, "The condition is not all right. Don't you notice?" Then I realized that he certainly must have noticed, but he was tolerating it so that we could talk about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in our limited time. If we had begun to look for adjustments to the heat, it might have become a considerable distraction. It also occurred to me that Bhūrijana must have attained to this tolerance by enduring the extremes of heat and cold in Vṛndāvana.

### "I Am Not This Body"

Another example occurred in one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's morning walk conversations with Dr. Patel and friends on Juhu Beach, Bombay. The doctor was speaking about the need for devotees in Hare Krishna Land to practice rules of hygiene. Prabhupāda agreed and asked the doctor to render some practical service to the devotees. But Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out that even if the mosquitoes bite the devotees they will think, "I am not this body," and they will go on with their duties.

### The Tolerant Preacher

Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated another type of tolerance when these same Juhu Beach gentlemen raised many objections to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although Prabhupāda would not tolerate the Māyāvādī point of view, and he strongly contested it, he tolerated the fact that people were very slow to accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This principle of tolerance is also expressed by Lord Rṣabhadeva in His teachings to His one hundred sons: "If a father is instructing his sons, a spiritual master instructing his disciples, or a king instructing his citizens, he must instruct them as I have advised. Without being angry, he should continue to give instructions, even if his disciple, son or citizen is sometimes unable to follow his order" (*Bhāg.* 5.5.15).

In discussing the quality of tolerance in Lord Kapiladeva's teachings, Prabhupāda combines the qualities of tolerance (*titikṣavaḥ*) and mercifulness (*kāruṇikāḥ*). These qualities are ideally combined in the preacher who tries to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others despite the obstacles. Prabhupāda writes, "While engaging in preaching work, he has to meet with so many opposing elements, and therefore the *sādhū*, or devotee of the Lord, has to be very tolerant" (*Bhāg.* 3.25.21, purport). The preacher learns to expect reverses, and he continues to fight them, even when the difficulties become extreme.

### Tolerating for a Higher Purpose

Since even a dog has to tolerate, a human being cannot escape the practice. So better we do it for the noble purpose of advancing in spiritual life. Prabhupāda writes:

Tolerance means that one should be practiced to bear insult and dishonor from others. If one is engaged in the advancement of spiritual knowledge, there will be so many insults and much dishonor from others. This is expected because material nature is so conditioned. Even a boy like Prahāda, who, only five years old, was engaged in cultivating spiritual knowledge, was endangered when his father became antagonistic to his devotion. The father tried to kill him in so many ways, but Prahāda tolerated him. So there may be many impediments to making advancement in spiritual knowledge, but we should be tolerant and continue our progress with determination.

—Bg. 13.12, purport

Śrīla Prabhupāda used to quote a Bengali proverb “Whatever the body practices, it gets used to it.” One should be confident that if we are determined to succeed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we will be successful. If an ordinary man can become successful in tolerating a deadening work routine, why should a devotee not become successful in controlling his senses and executing higher duties?

Even to do such a simple thing as chant Hare Kṛṣṇa each day we have to be very tolerant. Lord Caitanya stated that in order to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa successfully and constantly, one has to become more tolerant than the tree. We pray that our chanting quality will improve so

that we can taste the sweetness of the holy name, but until that day we have to tolerate our neophyte practices and go on executing them. When there is no cure, endure.

### Tolerating Others

Tolerating bodily difficulties or even tolerating the demands of one's mind sometimes seems relatively easy, compared to tolerating other people. Although a devotee chooses to leave the intolerable association of the nondevotees and materialists, he sometimes finds it hard to tolerate living with fellow devotees. He becomes disturbed by the false ego exchanges of others, becomes hurt by sharp words, feels that he is being exploited or treated unjustly. And so living with others in a cooperative way becomes a hardship. There are many suggestions given by the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* for how to improve our relationships with devotees. And there is much room for improvement, because devotees can at least agree that service to Kṛṣṇa is the goal of life. Despite our attempts, there is sometimes no alternative but to endure the pain of social and personal exchanges. In the midst of such temporary difficulties, let us be cheerful and try to think of Kṛṣṇa. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was faced with an unfortunate circumstance that had no easy solution, he would often say, "What can be done?" This is another way of saying, "We are tolerant."

### Tolerating Death

Of all difficult times, the time of death will demand the greatest tolerance. Practicing to remain tolerant in everyday situations will help to prepare us for the greatest test of toleration, the pain of the spirit soul leaving the body. Whenever we attain even-mindedness during mental and physical distress, we should consider it a great gain. As we live simply and make less demands for sense gratification, this also will make it easier for us to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and tolerate the lack of ideal situations.

## FROM RECENT LETTERS

June 24, Detroit

### *Utilizing Time in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness*

You have asked me for some tips about how to spend your time. Of course, there are material experts in organizing one's life and time schedule, and they have written books on these subjects, although I haven't read them. But I go about my day trying to get as much done for Kṛṣṇa as possible, and the day seems to organize itself in terms of the scheduled activities. I find that I can get more done when I am in the mode of goodness, or when I am in an undistracted state. So there are ideal times of day in which to do things. In writing, for example, I can get more done in the hour between 3:00 and 4:00 A.M., than I can in two or three hours later in the day. So part of the time schedule may be to find your peak performance time, and that also has to do with the times of the day, whether it is before eating, etc. By experiment you can find out your best times and when to put the best things in them. In other words, the spiritual program should be the highest priority, and it should be



given the best times. That is why Prabhupāda has given us the schedule in which early morning hours should be devoted to chanting *japa* and hearing scriptures, etc. Certainly it would not be appropriate to do business in the *brāhma-muhūrta* hour, would it? So by following the regular temple schedule or devotional schedule some of the problems are already answered. If you try to avoid a built-in devotional schedule, that may cause you problems.

You have also asked what things you should do because you have more things that you want to do than you have time for. I certainly think the things you are trying to do are all good for Kṛṣṇa consciousness such as reading Prabhupāda's books and my books, spending time with the family, exercising, associating with devotees, and doing temple work. Most of these programs suffer if you do not do them regularly. And reading also. Otherwise one gets out of condition to do these things. So at least to do a little bit of these things each day may be better than completely omitting one for the others. But if such elimination has to take place it should be for the most important spiritual things rather than things that are somewhat material. I just recently read a purport by Prabhupāda in which he gives credit to the benefits of exercise, but clearly states the priorities:

Diseases of the body take place due to derangement of air within the earthly body of the living beings. Mental diseases result from special derangement of the air within the

body, and as such, yogic exercise is especially beneficial to keep the air in order so that diseases of the body become almost nil by such exercises. When they are properly done the duration of life also increases, and one can have control over death also by such practices. A perfect *yogi* can have command over death and quit the body at the right moment, when he is competent to transfer himself to a suitable planet. The *bhakti-yogi*, however, surpasses all the *yogīs* because, by dint of his devotional service, he is promoted beyond the region of material sky and is placed in one of the planets in the spiritual sky by the supreme will of the Lord, the controller of everything.

—*Bhāg.* 2.5.29

So as beneficial as exercise is, reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* would be more important. The principles of how to use time are also mentioned in *The Nectar of Devotion* under the symptoms of *bhāva*. One of the symptoms is that a devotee in the advanced stage is very anxious that he utilizes time properly. So it is good that you are trying to think of the best way to use your time. Go on trying to figure it out. It may never be a perfect system, but whenever you have doubts, lean toward the spiritual side.



## JAPA REFLECTIONS

(Compiled in March 1987 in India)

...Following *bhāgavata-dharma* has been made extremely easy in this age of Kali. The *śāstra* says:

*harer nāma harer nāma  
harer nāmaiva kevalam  
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva  
nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

One need only chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Everyone engaged in the practice of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* will be completely cleansed, from the core of his heart, and be saved from the cycle of birth and death.

—*Bhāg.* 7.6.1, purport

*nāmnām akāri bahudāh nija-sarva-śaktis  
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smarāṇe na kālaḥ  
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi  
durdaivam idṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

... My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting.

—*Śikṣāṣṭaka*, Verse 2

Madhu-maṅgala said it is inspiring for my disciples when I chant *japa* with them. He said they have to chant attentively when I am present and not talk to one another. Group *japa* has the same beneficial effect for me. But chanting alone is also nice.

All *japa* is alone, individual, but we can protect each other's solitary *japa*. Group *japa* is sometimes helpful in that way.

Saint Teresa of Avila lived a life of interior prayer. She describes it as follows:

In my opinion it is nothing less than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. In order that love be true and the friendship endure, the wills of the friends must be in accord. . . . And if you do not yet love Him as He loves you because you have not reached the degree of conformity with His will, you will endure this pain of spending a long while with one who is so different from you when you see how much it benefits you to possess His friendship and how much He loves you.

I can "translate" this into Kṛṣṇa consciousness: If we spend time with Kṛṣṇa in His holy name, then even though we do not fully surrender to Him, the *nāmābāsa* will be purifying. This is also reminiscent of Rūpa Gosvāmī's metaphor about the sweetness of the holy name and how it tastes bitter to the jaundicelike neophyte. But the only remedy for this jaundice is to go on chanting the sweet holy name.

### Thinking About An Increase in Numerical Strength

Prabhupāda wants us to chant sixteen good rounds of *japa* and engage ourselves in active service. In one lecture he said that sixteen rounds is not much, and yet he found that his disciples were neglecting even that bare minimum.

If we chant only an hour a day, then even in that one hour we may be thinking of all the other things we do during the day. But the goal of life is to chant and hear and remember Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, if we can spend more time in practices of direct chanting and hearing of Kṛṣṇa and His name and pastimes, then even when we are doing other activities we will find ourselves chanting and remembering His pastimes and teachings. Wherever one invests his main energy he gets increasingly absorbed in that.

But can any of my present acts be sacrificed to make an increase in chanting and hearing? My reading of Prabhupāda's books is already reduced, so that cannot be minimized. And there is so much else to do to increase preaching, which is also a form of chanting. I think, somehow or other, if I want to improve my chanting, Kṛṣṇa will give me the opportunity I desire. Even if sometimes I am sick, or sometimes there are no free hours for solitude, there is always some time that can be found. And if the desire is strong enough, then even when there is no solitude *per se*, you can find a time

and space, out of love, and out of determination.

It is strange that I am thinking of increasing *japa*, exactly at a time when there is an increase in duties—as the annual ISKCON meeting approaches. But it is not contradictory or detrimental to concentrate on *japa* at a time like this. Isn't the point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to learn dependence on Kṛṣṇa?

### *Japa as Preaching*

I can encourage devotees by myself becoming an absorbed chanter. Sometimes I think I cannot do much else. If I had more personal conviction and experience in chanting, then I could share it and it would not be selfish. Prabhupāda speaks in a derogatory way of “licking up” Kṛṣṇa in a selfish way, attempting *japa* in seclusion. But sharing is a good thing. Prabhupāda told us to chant, now let me try more to improve it.

### Over the Minimum

I have just chanted a seventeenth round today. It mostly revealed the unhappy truth, that my chanting is permeated by other thoughts. But the presence of many heavy and distracting thoughts and events is a cause not to give up the attempt at thoughtful *japa*. Heavy tasks are reasons to turn to the names.

But I also heard Prabhupāda state (lecture in Vṛndāvana 1976) that one of the devotee's twenty-six qualities is *dakṣa*, expert. He is not callous to dealings

in the material world. Prabhupāda said that the devotees should not neglect the management of the estate—Krishna-Balarām Mandir—they should not allow thieving or breaking or dirtiness on the plea that “I am a Vaiṣṇava.” So I may work on my *japa*, but at the same time fully participate in regular services.

### Shelter

*What I Am Trying to Do Is Turn to the Shelter of the Holy Name*

I must go on attending to my regular devotional business, but as soon as I can, as often as I can, I turn to *japa*, my shelter. Talk to the Lord, “Please let me serve You.” Do it in addition to what you are doing now.

It is 7:30 P.M. and I have completed twenty-five rounds. Now I am protected.

### What Is This Striving?

It is not “ecstasy hunting,” but I am concerned with a desire to advance. I know that even my desires may be wrong; I may be masking some corrupt desires, claiming them to be spiritual virtues. But as I attempt to please Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa by chanting and hearing, the striving can be purified.

Don’t expect cheap results. Rūpa Gosvāmī states that *laulyam*, intense desire, is required to attain love of Kṛṣṇa—but that desire is very rare and even after many lifetimes of attempting for it, one may fail to attain it.



### Ajāmila—The Glory of the Holy Name

It will be explained that the Yamādūtas, the order carriers of Yamarāja, mistakenly considered Ajāmila sinful. They did not know that although he was sinful throughout his entire life, he was purified by constantly chanting the holy name of Nārāyaṇa.

—*Bhāg.* 6.1.36, purport

### Chanting at Odd Moments

I completed a twenty-fifth round in a taxi. You can chant even when physically uncomfortable. I am able to silently say a few Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantras* when I am waiting for a bucket of water to fill up or on similar occasions in between the main scenes of life. I want to find more occasions for chanting, rather than allow “other things” to intrude into the *mantra* meditation.

### Benefits of Increase

The simple premise is that the more I chant the more time there will be for attentive chanting. Maybe out of twenty-five rounds I will chant ten attentive ones. And there is a tendency to think more of the value of the holy name, to notice references to the holy name while reading Prabhupāda’s books. But the tendency for pride is so great that I am at once ready to consider myself better than others because of a tiny movement to improve. Lord Caitanya says we must be more humble than a blade of grass if we want to improve our chanting.

## *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Quotes on Chanting Constantly . . .

At the time of death one is certainly bewildered because his bodily functions are in disorder. At that time, even one who throughout his life has practiced chanting the holy name of the Lord may not be able to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* very distinctly. Nevertheless, such a person receives all the benefits of chanting the holy name. While the body is fit, therefore, why should we not chant the holy name of the Lord loudly and distinctly? If one does so, it is quite possible that even at the time of death he will be properly able to chant the holy name of the Lord with love and faith. The conclusion is that one who chants the holy name of the Lord constantly is guaranteed to return home, back to Godhead, without a doubt.

—*Bhāg.* 6.2.49, purport

One may very easily practice chanting and hearing the holy name of the Lord and thus become ecstatic in spiritual life. *Padma Purāṇa* states: Even if one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* offensively, one can avoid offenses by continuously chanting without deviation. One who becomes accustomed to this practice will always remain in a pure transcendental position, untouchable by sinful reactions.

—*Bhāg.* 6.3.32, purport

## . . . And distributing the Holy Name

This should be the standard of determination for all Kṛṣṇa conscious persons. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person should free himself from the clutches of *māyā*, and he should also be compassionate to all others suffering in those clutches. The activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are meant not only for oneself, but for others also. One who is interested in his own salvation is not as advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as one who feels compassion for others and therefore

propagates the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Such an advanced devotee will never fall down, for Kṛṣṇa will give him special protection . . . One should come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness to release oneself and also to release others.

—*Bhāg.* 6.2.37, purport

### Meditation on Kṛṣṇa

Since the Lord is Absolute, deep meditation upon Him is as good as yogic trance. . . . Although He is nondifferent from His name, form, quality, pastimes, entourage, and specific actions. . . . Lord Caitanya has therefore recommended constant chanting of the name of the Lord for protection from all contamination of the material world. The feeling of separation from the Lord is undoubtedly painful to the devotee, but because he is in connection with the Lord, it has a specific transcendental effect which pacifies the heart. Feelings of separation are also sources of transcendental bliss, and they are never comparable to contaminated material feelings of separation.

—*Bhāg.* 1.15.29, purport

I have been long habituated to thinking of other things and not concentrating on the holy names. Therefore, my increase in numerical strength is a plan to break the habit of inattention by sheer force of repetition. Otherwise, by keeping things as they are, I don't see how I will break out of the bad habits.

I should not complain about my lacks. Be ready for dryness in *japa-tapa*. Dryness is a fact, and my lack of devotion is a fact. So there is no need to make big complaints about them. The Supreme Lord's mercy is also a fact.

Without expecting any immediate results, but by being patient and humbly associating with the Lord as Nāmarūpa, I will be fixed. In a Bhaktivedanta purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa as follows: "He has explained that the word *niṣṭat* indicates Lord Caitanya's being rigidly fixed in chanting the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa" (Cc. *Ādi* 3.49).

EXCERPT FROM ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA LECTURE  
on *Bhagavad-gītā* 8.22–27,  
(Given October 1966 in New York)

...And you always remain in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is not very difficult. If you practice this Kṛṣṇa consciousness—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—then this practice will help you to remain. Because this Kṛṣṇa and His spiritual kingdom are not different, they are absolute. The sound vibration and Kṛṣṇa the original Personality of Godhead are the same. By sound vibration you can have Kṛṣṇa associated with you. Just like we are associating. We are sitting together, similarly you are walking on the street, if you are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, that means Kṛṣṇa is going with you. Just like while walking on the road you see up on the horizon, you will see the moon is going with you, the sun is going with you. I remember very long, it is about fifty years before when I was house-

holder, my second son, he was about four years old, was walking with me on the street and he was asking me, "Father, why the moon is going with us?" So as we find the moon is going with you, similarly the chanting, if the moon has got such power and it is a material thing, it can go with you, don't you think the Supreme Lord who is all-powerful He cannot remain with you? Yes, He can. By His potency He can remain with you, provided you are also qualified to keep His company. If you are a pure devotee and you are always merged in the thought of Kṛṣṇa, you should always remember that Kṛṣṇa is with you. Lord Caitanya has confirmed this absolute person in His prayer:

*nāmnām akāri bahudāḥ nija-sarva-śaktis  
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smarāṇe na kālāḥ  
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi  
durdaivam idṛśam ihājani nānurāgaḥ*

He is praying, My dear Kṛṣṇa, My dear Lord, Your name is always invested with all the potencies of Your person (nāmnām). You have got all the potencies and You have made it so easy that we can chant without any hard and fast rules and regulations. Suppose if you have to establish one temple of Kṛṣṇa, you have got to observe so many rules and regulations, you have to spend money, you have to deal with management, but here, by chanting, any man can have the same benefit of becom-

ing nearer or in company with Kṛṣṇa always and derive all the benefits of that. Of course, there is benefit when you are associated with Kṛṣṇa. Just like Arjuna is deriving the benefit being associated with Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, you can also derive the same benefit as being associated with Kṛṣṇa simply by chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

So Lord Caitanya says (it is not my manufacture), Lord Caitanya—who was realized soul, who is considered the authority and incarnation of Kṛṣṇa—says, My Lord, You have become so kind to these people of different material worlds, or this age especially, that they cannot have any facility for understanding God, but God has descended in the form, in the sound, transcendental sound form. Simply by vibrating you associate with God. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. It is so mercy, kindness of the Supreme Lord that He wants to associate with you. So you should receive it. This is not expensive. No loss on your part. Why don't you take this advantage? If there is any profit, why do you not care for it? Take this. Always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare.

*Tasmāt sarveṣu kālēṣu yoga-yuktaḥ bhavārjuna...* Therefore, my dear Arjuna, you should always be engaged in this yoga system. In this transcen-

dental form of *yoga* you haven't got to do anything—controlling your breathing system or some gymnastic system, nothing. You haven't got to acquire any specific qualification to chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa. Just like in your country this language is Sanskrit, and some of you do not know the meaning. Still it is so attractive when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in the park or any public place. All ladies, gentlemen, boys, and girls, they take part. So there is no rule, hard and fast rule, for chanting. You just take to it. As recommended by Kṛṣṇa here. *Sarveṣu kālēṣu*: always, twenty-four hours. And you will be completely safe even in this dangerous position. You remember, you should always know that this material world is always dangerous position. Just like you started the peace movement. Why? You are thinking the danger is coming. Danger is coming. Yes, at any moment there may be danger of war declaration and all these innocent young men may be called to fight. It is always. I might think that I am independent nation and this and that, you should always remember that this material world is full of danger. It is a dangerous plot. Therefore, those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious, who are devotees of Kṛṣṇa, for them this dangerous place is not suited. *Padam padam yad vipadām na teṣām. Padam padam*, in every state there is danger. This place is not suitable for the devotees of the Lord. They are not meant for remaining in this miserable, dangerous place. So we have got this nice body, human form of life with an

advanced consciousness. Let's merge into Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be happy. This is the sum and substance of this movement, to take advantage of, and be happy. Thank you.

**Question:** The function of the chanting. Because the chanting seems to serve a function, at least to me of—which may be my own individual weakness, but nevertheless—

**Prabhupāda:** The chanting process is just to cleanse your mind. You have got so many misunderstandings, about yourself, about this world, about God and about the interrelation between these things. We have got so many misgivings. We are in the position of complete ignorance. This chanting will help you to cleanse your mind. Then we will understand that this chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa. So in the beginning we have to chant, maybe in whatever position we are that doesn't matter. If you begin chanting then your first benefit will be *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. The mind will be clear of all dirty things. And then next stage will be *bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam*. The next stage will be that the suffering, the miseries of this material world will subside. We will make some progress stage after stage. But any stage you can adopt this name. Any stage. There is no necessity of preliminary qualification, that you have to come to this stage and then chant. From any stage you can chant.





SDG addresses the Southeastern Hindu Conference

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF VEDIC LITERATURE IN THE MODERN AGE

(Lecture given by Satsvarūpa dāsa  
Goswami at the Third Southeastern  
Hindu Conference organized by Vishwa  
Hindu Parishad of America, on July 4,  
1987, in Charlotte, North Carolina).

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya  
jñānāñjana-śalākayā  
cakṣur unmīlitam yena  
tasmai śrī-gurave namah*

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya  
prabhu nityānanda  
śrī-advaita gadādhara  
śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa  
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare  
hare rāma hare rāma  
rāma rāma hare hare*

I offer my respects to all the swamijis and spiritual leaders and workers of the Viswa Hindu Parishad and all ladies and gentlemen gathered. I am very thankful that Thakurbhai Topiwala introduced me first and foremost as a disciple of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Otherwise, I have no qualification to speak to those who have the pious qualification of being born into the heritage of Indian spirituality. But I may offer myself as a specimen, one of many thousands now, of Western devotees of *sanātana-dharma*. This is a very enlivening phenomenon for Hinduism or *sanātana-dharma*: the fact that *sanātana-*

*dharma* is being taken up by persons in all countries, races, and cultures of the world.

Many of the speakers today have mentioned that Hinduism is inclusive and universal. But that concept of universality should not remain theoretical. And it is the work of His Divine Grace Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda that has shown us the reality of this wonderful phenomenon which is also stated and predicted in the Vedic scriptures. For example, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.4.18) we read:

*kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśa*  
*ābhīra-śumbhā-yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ*  
*ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ*  
*sudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ*

This verse lists the names of many nations and peoples, some civilized and some uncivilized. The Sanskrit terms may be translated into different modern nations. *Hūṇa* encompasses East Germany and part of Russia. *Pulinda* means the Greeks. *Ābhīra* refers to countries on the other side of the Arabian Sea. *Yavanas* means Turkey, and *Khasa* means Chinese and others, including Mideastern, African and ultimately Western countries. All these cultures come from what we now call India.

India was once the world empire, but due to invasions and different political events, it has now become the subcontinent of Asia. And recently even that has become more subdivided. But actually the name of the planet was first *Ilāvṛta-varṣa*, and then *Bhārata-varṣa*, named after Mahārāja Bharata. So Hinduism is not the property of a people of a particular nation. All groups of peoples can become devotees of *sanātana-dharma*, devotees of the Lord—*prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ* —because of the power of *bhakti-yoga*. In other words, by practicing devotion to God, especially as taught in *Bhagavad-gītā*, all people can rejoin with their original culture—their spiritual identity as parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

There is another śāstric statement, among many, that encourages those persons who are actually born in *Bhārata-varṣa*. They have a particular responsibility, not only to preserve *sanātana-dharma* within their families and give it to their children, but to extend universal love and peace towards all. As followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we study His life and teachings in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. You will find there, in Bengali language, this statement:

*bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra  
janma sārthaka kari' para-upkāra*

—Cc. Ādi 9.41

*Bhārata-bhūmite* means the people who are born in India, or Bhārata. They have pious birth, and with it comes a special responsibility to do good to others. Their duty as welfare work is to give to others the spiritual culture that appeared in ancient India. And that is exactly what Śrīla Prabhupāda did and why he has attracted so many Westerners to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In Śrīla Prabhupada's example there is an open secret. He is telling us that Indians should try to give *sanātana-dharma* to all the persons in the world. Of course, he was an extraordinary person who had great compassion. He was *para duḥkha-duḥkhi*, a genuine Vaiṣṇava, who felt unhappy at the unhappiness of others. And he knew that the solution to misery is not material advancement but spiritual revival—revival of our eternal consciousness in relation to God. He was also confident that the Vedic teachings and techniques are the best way to give this to everyone.

When I received my assignment to speak on the Vedic literature in modern society, it occurred to me that the topic was a challenge: Are the ancient, spiritual Vedic literatures relevant in the modern age? This challenge is also placed before anyone who comes from India, especially when he settles in a non-Hindu environment. And the challenge also comes to us who have been brought into the *sanātana-dharma* by the grace of our spiritual master. We are also challenged by our own Western upbringing or by living in the Western envi-

ronment. By Western environment I mean the predominance of materialism and pride in the empirical method of knowledge-gathering. The Western type of science has brought so many scientific wonders that some think this system of knowledge should be the only system. Such people say that anything that does not conform to the scientific process of materialism cannot be taken seriously. So this is a challenge. But the Vedic literature can certainly face this challenge.

People may challenge, "Are the *Vedas* relevant in the modern age?" But the whole concept of a "modern" society is actually a false imposition. There is nowadays nothing modern in the sense of a new, improved, or enlightened state of being. The same problems that have faced mankind since the very dawn of creation have not been solved even after centuries of material progress through science or Western philosophical speculation. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.9), *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam*. This means the material miseries of birth, death, disease, and old age make the world a place of misery. Life is beset with miseries and it is temporary. So has science solved the problems of birth, death, disease, and old age? The answer is no. But any person who takes to the life of God consciousness as taught in Vedic knowledge will attain self-realization and become free of the material miseries. Such an enlightened person can, at the time of death, return to the eternal spiritual world. This is the actual

heart of *sanātana-dharma* philosophy.

One of the learned *swamis* today mentioned that Hinduism is not merely for keeping the community together, but it has the higher goal to become free of *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death. As soon as this spiritual goal is earnestly taken up in this lifetime, then the material problems also become alleviated. By simple life, devoted to spiritual ends, the material problems become reduced and finally they disappear.

So we should not be intimidated by the idea that the *Vedas* are now to be considered outdated or legendary. The attempt to describe the *Vedas* as myths was made in the Indian nation by the different invaders. During the time of the British Raj, it was taught that Western ideas were superior and the *Vedas* were mythological. The same propaganda continues in different ways, even if not so directly. Nowadays one does not openly attack another person's religion, rather it is done in a subtle—or not so subtle—way by emphasizing materialism over spiritualism.

If a Hindu is seen as too preoccupied with his scriptures, he may be criticized as old-fashioned. And the newer generations will be especially pressured to give up spiritual life in favor of hedonism, which is the unfortunate predominant mode in the Western world. But we should not yield to this.

I would like to mention again the work of Śrīla Prabhupāda in bringing Westerners to the shelter of



Vedic culture. How did he do it? He did it, as his name implies, because he was *bhaktivedānta*. The word *vedānta* means "conclusion of knowledge," and *bhakti* means "the process of devotion to God," which is taught as the ultimate stage in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Regarding *bhakti*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti  
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ  
tato mām tattvato jñātvā  
viśate tad-anantaram*

—Bg. 18.55

Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks as the Supreme Person and He says, "Only by *bhakti-yoga* can I be approached. He who always thinks of Me in that way will come to Me in the end." So the *bhakti* understanding of the *Vedas* is not a sentimental thing, when it is combined with philosophical realization, or *vedānta*. In this way, as shown by Prabhupāda in his books, we can be very proud of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the *Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Purāṇas*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and all the Vedic literatures. We should learn them and defend ourselves against the onslaught of atheism.

Today some suggestions have been given that we may understand the Vedic scriptures by a symbolic interpretation. But the symbolic or interpretive method of understanding religious scriptures is a materialistic

speculation. One can “explain away” the scriptures to such a degree that their substance is explained away. One may be satisfied with his symbolism yet he will have lost the actual essence. Someone may object and say, “We don’t want to be fundamentalists.” That is true, we don’t want to be fundamental in a dogmatic sense. But the Vedas are never dogmatic. The learned sages like Vyāsadeva and Nārada always explained and answered questions but they never said, “There is no person Kṛṣṇa, no real Śiva, no place such as Kṛṣṇaloka or Vaikuṇṭha.” They never thought like atheists. They rather proved that supernatural phenomena and eternal spiritual persons all exist.

This proof cannot be understood by material methods. Material methods are limited and subject to errors. There is a higher method and a superior consciousness, a *sanātana* nature. As stated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (8.20), *paras tasmāt tu bhāvo ’nyo ’vyakto ’vyaktāt sanātanaḥ*: “There is another nature and it is *sanātana*.” This spiritual nature can be known even today by any sincere practitioner of the Vedic way.

Therefore, we should follow the direct explanations of the Vedic knowledge. Sometimes mundane scholars explain the first verse of *Bhagavad-gītā*—*dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre*—and say that *kuru-kṣetre*, does not refer to a place. They say there was not actually a battle of Kurukṣetra and that the Pāṇḍavas refer to the five sense. This may be interesting speculation, but it is

not fact. There *is* a place Kurukṣetra—as you know, even today in India, Kurukṣetra is there—and there *was* a battle there. Mahābhārata is the *history* that tells of that battle, and the Pāṇḍavas were actually five brothers. So we must not lose the essence of faithful presentation, or the authoritative conclusion of Vedic knowledge. It is the direct, devotional approach that has attracted and continues to attract Westerners to join under the shelter of *sanātana-dharma*. And it is the learned and faithful approach that will also enable the new generations, who have come from India and who are growing up in the West, to face the challenge that “Vedic knowledge is outdated.”

If we give the new generation only a speculative interpretation of the scriptures eventually they will think, “I can interpret it in my own way.” Therefore, Kṛṣṇa said that the *Bhagavad-gītā* is a mystery that can be known only by his devotee: *bhakto 'si me sakhā ceti rahasyam hy etad uttamam* (Bg. 4.3). Arjuna became qualified, not because he was a *sannyāsī* or *brāhmaṇa* (he was a *kṣatriya* and a householder), but because he was a *bhakta*. “Therefore,” Kṛṣṇa said, “because you are My devotee and friend, you can learn the mystery of Vedic knowledge.”

I feel inferior and out of place in trying to advise you on these things, since they are so deeply a part of your culture. Please excuse me if I am speaking with false pride. But the pride that I do advocate is that we should

all be proud—those who have taken birth or taken spiritual shelter in *sanātana-dharma*—and we should practice it to the full, without any intimidation.

For example, although the Hindu spectrum is very broad and universal, *ahimsā* is followed by all, whether one is a Jain or Shakti follower, or Vaiṣṇava or Vedantist. That means there should not be any unnecessary slaughter of animals. The vegetarian diet means no slaughter, especially of the cows, and no eating of meat. To avoid eating meat is certainly against the main current of society today. But this is what our literature says, and the Vedas can explain not only the bad psychological effects and the devastating ill medical effects of eating meat but also the ultimate dharmic reason why there should be no violence. Killing innocent animals will give you bad karma individually and collectively. All these points are well explained in the *śāstras* and are upheld by all the *ācāryas*. But if a newcomer inquires from a Hindu today, “What are the *Vedas*?” “What is Rāma?” or “What is Kṛṣṇa ?” and gets an equivocal answer, or if the Hindu does not actually practice his culture, then we can hardly expect the spread of the *dharma*.

I have one final point to make regarding the modern application of Vedic knowledge. According to the Vedic literature and the Hindu calendar as well as astrology, the modern age is called the age of Kali. There are four millennia: Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali. For the last

five thousand years we have been living in the Kali-yuga. As stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.10), this is the bad age:

*prāyeṇālpāyusaḥ sabhya  
kalāv asmin yuge janāḥ  
mandāḥ sumandah-matayo  
manda-bhāgyā hy upadrutāḥ*

In the age of Kali people have a short duration of life, they tend to get cheated, and they are lazy and always disturbed. We should understand that we are surrounded with disadvantages in this age, and we should practice the *dharma* for this *yuga*. That is also stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (12.3.52):

*krte yad dhyāyato viṣṇum  
tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ  
dvāpare paricaryāyām  
kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt*

Each age is mentioned along with the right process for that age. In *Kṛta* or *Satya-yuga*, meditation was recommended. Then people lived a long time and the whole planet was in goodness. Then things diminished in the *Tretā-yuga*: *tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ*. At that time, however, there was still great wealth and expertise in priestly performances. So they performed *yajñas*,

*agnihotras*, and great *yajñas*, where they would give immense wealth of gold and grains. That is no longer possible. And neither is meditation possible the way it was in Satya-yuga. *Dvāpare paricaryāyām:* in Dvāpara-yuga there was temple worship. Also at the end of Dvāpara-yuga, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared. But the temple worship has also diminished. Now people are more interested in building airports or banks and not much interested in going to temples for God. And *kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt:* in the age of Kali the recommended process is *hari-kīrtana*. Swami Jyotimayananda has recommended very nicely that Indian families should have *kīrtana* and *sat-saṅga*. Especially *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* is recommended. It is also stated:

*kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann  
asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ  
kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya  
mukta-saṅgaḥ param vrajet*  
—*Bhāg.* 12.3.51

Here in the *Bhāgavatam* Śukadeva Gosvāmi tells Mahārāja Parīkṣit that this age of Kali is an ocean of vice, but there still is one good quality, and that is the *kīrtana* of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

So I will end my talk with that recommendation. As we meditate and worship in our homes, especially this *hari-kīrtana* of Hare Kṛṣṇa is recommended. In the

*mahā-mantra*, the name Kṛṣṇa is there, the name of Rāma is there, and Hari is there. It is an address to all the energies of God. By saying these sixteen names, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, everything is achieved. If we simply chant, that alone will give us shelter from the worst effects of the age of Kali. And this will not only preserve the Hindu culture but actually offer peace to mankind and the ultimate shelter of going back to Godhead. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Production—Ṭhākura Haridāsa dāsa,

Mukunda-daṭṭa dāsa

Editing—Bhaktin Nancy

Sanskrit—Prāṇada-devī dāsi

Composing—Jitaśakti-devī dāsi

Photography—Caitanya Nitāi dāsa

I would like to thank Dr. Vibhakar Modi for his kind donation to print this book.



