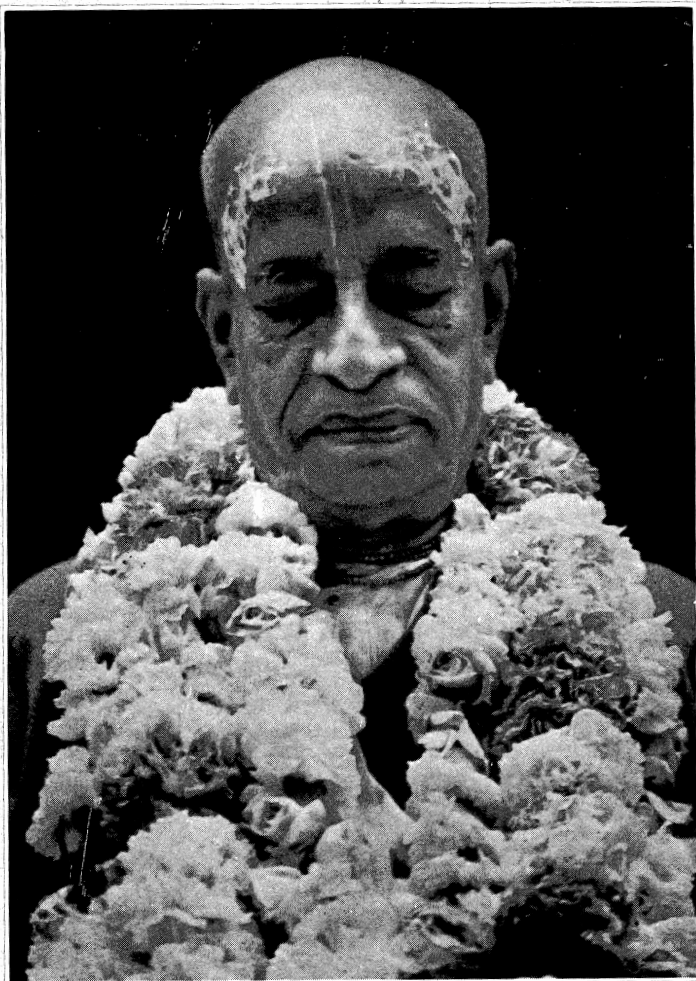


He Lives Forever



On Separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

He Lives Forever

*Seven Lectures
On Separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda*

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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To
His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
My Spiritual Master
The Founder-Ācārya of the
International Society for Krishna Consciousness

On the 2nd annual ceremony of his
Disappearance Day

He lives forever by his divine instructions
and
the follower lives with him

FOREWORD

I think every ISKCON devotee will always remember where he was and what he was doing at the precise moment he learned of Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure. At our Nairobi temple we were just about to begin *maṅgala āratī* when a call came from far away Los Angeles from Śrīla Rāmeśvara Mahārāja. It was probably as difficult for him to tell me the news as it was for me to accept it. I had always thought that Śrīla Prabhupāda would *never* die. Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda had been very ill for many months, but just as an ordinary person, blinded by material affection, thinks he won't die, so out of attachment for Śrīla Prabhupāda, I was imagining that he would never leave us, that he would get his health back soon, and that everything would then go on forever without any disturbance.

So I was shocked, and I tried to get myself together. Since someone had to give the morning *Bhāgavatam* class, I accepted. We were reading in the First Canto, the story of how Nārada Muni became a pure devotee. That morning's verse was a

statement by Nārada Muni: "Once only by their permission I took the remnants of their food, and by so doing all my sins were at once eradicated. Thus being engaged, I became purified in heart, and at that time the very nature of the transcendentalist became attractive to me." Nārada had been an ordinary boy from a *śūdra* family, but by associating with pure devotees, by hearing them chant and speak, and by eating the remnants from their plates, he became completely purified of all his sins and was converted to spiritual life. Simply by associating with these pure devotees, he became qualified to enter into pure devotional service.

So I read the purport to this verse, and as I was reading I came to the word "*bhaktivedāntas*." Several times these pure devotees were referred to as "*bhaktivedāntas*." And when I came to this word, I couldn't go on reading the purport aloud. I sobbed. Why this verse today? I thought about how this story of Nārada was the story of my life, the story of all of us—of how this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement began; and to be reminded of it in this way was very painful. We were also the sons of *śūdras*, ordinary American youths who had somehow or other come in contact with a Bhaktivedanta.

When I first met His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, he was living in a helpless, humble, but totally dedicated way, and he allowed us to associate intimately with him. We lived with him, we served him, we even nursed him; and by that association we became Kṛṣṇa conscious. Now suddenly he was gone—such a great personality, such a truly great personality. So it is a great fortune that we can turn to this present volume for understanding the passing of His Divine Grace Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't forced to die like an ordinary conditioned soul. He left this world by his own choice. And, as Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami points out, by doing so he helped us increase our love for him even more. Personally, I

was closely associated with Śrīla Prabhupāda from the very beginning, and naturally I feel very much the pain of being away from him for so long. But Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami's book has helped me cope with Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance by seeing it from the transcendental viewpoint of the scriptures; and this has given me an impetus to carry on with my work enthusiastically. I think that all devotees will welcome this book as an added impetus for remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda and keeping him the center of their Kṛṣṇa conscious life. Previously we had coined a phrase for this kind of attitude: "Prabhupāda consciousness." We cannot be Kṛṣṇa conscious without being Prabhupāda conscious. "Prabhupāda consciousness" means that, while performing some devotional practice, you think how wonderful it is that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given you this practice. For instance, if while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa you think of how wonderful it is that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given you Kṛṣṇa's name to chant, or if while worshipping the Deity you think of how kind Śrīla Prabhupāda was to have given you the Deity of Kṛṣṇa to worship, then that is Prabhupāda consciousness. It means to *appreciate* Śrīla Prabhupāda. And the present volume is important in helping us cultivate and deepen that appreciation.

He Lives Forever is a book for every devotee. Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami delivered these talks in Dallas, shortly after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance. Carefully, he explained about Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance so that there would be no chance for anyone to become disillusioned or bewildered. These were and continue to be very important instructions.

His Divine Grace Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami Mahārāja has also presented this book for his disciples. He wants his disciples to thoroughly understand all aspects of spiritual life—as is evidenced by his recently published *Handbook of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness*—and what aspect could be more important than the disappearance of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, who gave us Kṛṣṇa consciousness? It was Śrīla Prabhupāda who came alone to the Western world and founded the Kṛṣṇa con-

sciousness movement. It was he who traveled to India, Europe, Southeast Asia, South America, Australia, and Africa, preaching love of God, and all the while writing volume after volume on the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as well as conducting a massive correspondence—over eight thousand letters—to instruct, counsel, inspire, chastise, and forgive his disciples and to expand his movement. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda who supervised the construction of ISKCON projects in India and gave impetus to a full range of spiritual programs, including schools, farms, a research institute, profuse literature distribution, international food relief, and all aspects of art and culture. And it was His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda who empowered Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, and other leading disciples, to become spiritual masters themselves, to initiate disciples and bring them back to Godhead and thereby expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and fructify the work to which he had uncompromisingly given himself.

In this book, *He Lives Forever*, all the disciples of Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami now have the opportunity to thoroughly understand Śrīla Prabhupāda, their grand-guru, through their own guru, because Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami is made of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is to Śrīla Prabhupāda that Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami completely surrendered. And here in this present volume, he is inviting all of us to understand that truly great, rare spiritual personality, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda lives forever, and we can live with him if we follow his instructions. This is our chance to reunite with him within this very lifetime as well as in the next. Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions are nondifferent from his self. You cannot separate Śrīla Prabhupāda the person from Śrīla Prabhupāda's work—what he spoke and wrote. This is association in separation. By following completely with pure heart and without distraction the instructions he has given us, then we will go to Śrīla Prabhupāda again.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami to write many books, an order which he is assiduously carrying out. In presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda's authorized biography, he is helping us know Śrīla Prabhupāda more fully. He is carefully researching and recording Śrīla Prabhupāda's life and meditating on Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission, thus giving us the transcendental significance of the great soul who walked among us. Therefore, his writings are greatly appreciated by the international Vaiṣṇava community, and his disciples have fittingly honored him by offering their obeisances to their spiritual master with the following *mantra*:

*satsvarūpabhidham vande vinītam sādhu-bhūṣaṇam
bhakti-granthana-naipunyaṁ bhaktivedānta-śikṣitam*

"I offer my respectful obeisances to His Divine Grace Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami. He is very humble, and he is decorated with the ornaments of the *sādhu's* saintly qualities. He has been carefully trained by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, and he is expert in composing literary works glorifying the path of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa."

I am very happy to have the opportunity to request all devotees to take advantage of this important book. Personally, I am indebted to Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami because he is helping me understand my spiritual master by his words here presented and by his pure, undeviating devotional service rendered without any sense gratification to His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda *ki jaya*.

Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami *ki jaya*.

Guru-paramparā ki jaya.

Bhakta-vṛnda ki jaya.

Brahmānanda Swami

July 6, 1979

Rādhā-Govinda Mandir, New York City

PREFACE

My spiritual master came into this world to execute the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He executed it, and when it was required, he left this place and went to another place—to do the same business. It is called nitya-līlā. Just like the sun rises at six o'clock, and when it is seven o'clock here, it is six o'clock in another place, and it is eight o'clock in another place. So we have no reason to lament over his disappearance. We should simply remember his activities. That is required. Vaiṣṇavera kriyā mūḍha vijñe nā bhujhaya. We cannot understand the activities of the Vaiṣṇava. But a Vaiṣṇava comes for some particular mission. (From a lecture by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, delivered February 8, 1977, in Māyāpur, India, on the Appearance Day of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.)

This book has two purposes: to arouse our transcendental feelings of separation from a great personality, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and to encourage all sincere seekers of the Absolute

Truth to go forward like an army under the banner of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

The statements I have made herein are not my private opinions, but are, among Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, standard responses to His Divine Grace's disappearance; and they are in accord with the direction of the scriptures regarding how a disciple should behave upon the departure of his spiritual master. The scriptural references that form the basis for this collection of lectures are the same verses discussed by thousands of Prabhupāda's disciples at the time of his disappearance in November, 1977. At that time, as the painful news spread around the world, those who knew and loved Śrīla Prabhupāda were gripped by a fearful, unrestricted grief. "On that day, O my master, I made a cry of grief; I was not able to tolerate the absence of you, my *guru*."¹ At that time, we saw everything around us in the overwhelming atmosphere of separation from our spiritual master. As one Vaiṣṇava poet says, "My spiritual master has just left this world. Now when I visit *Rādhā-kuṇḍa*, it appears to me like the gaping jaws of some monster. And when I see Govardhana Hill, it appears to be rearing before me like a python." Even I, who consider myself a poor follower, could speak of no other topic in my morning lectures for the next month. This was the only thing that seemed to have any importance: *Prabhupāda is gone. What does it mean? What will we do now?*

Then the days of grief turned into the second week of December and the Christmas holidays, the time when ISKCON devotees all over the world dedicate themselves to distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in "marathon" efforts. Would we *not* have a marathon immediately after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance? Certainly we would. Our leading book distributors seized the opportunity to urge us more than ever: "Now, let us

¹ *Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā, Vaiṣṭyāṣṭakam* 1.1, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (Los Angeles: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1978), p. 20.

prove that in Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical absence we can follow his transcendental instructions." And that year saw the biggest wave ever in the history of our book distribution, as hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature, Prabhupāda's books, were distributed during the holidays. It was certain proof that although we were greatly distressed by Prabhupāda's disappearance, through his teachings we were revived, in his teachings he lived, and by following them we were with him. The waves of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have continued to increase and should go on increasing, because following Śrīla Prabhupāda's order in separation is the substance of our relationship with him.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that the world is now bereft of its greatest spiritual leader, and this is no small loss. The Vedic literature describes this present Age of Kali (quarrel and hypocrisy) as the most disturbed and degraded time, and anyone can see that the world situation is now critical. Potentially, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance is a world catastrophe, because without his guidance there will be no hope of peace and well-being—there can only be destruction. Although we have Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions—and if we follow them he is still there to guide us—if we deviate, he is no longer present to redirect us. It is now entirely the legacy of his disciples to strictly carry out his orders and to protect and enlarge his mission and turn the tide of the times.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions to me on June 21, 1974, in Melbourne, Australia, convey his vision for the future of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the world. I said to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Devotees sometimes think we are planning for the long-term future when we distribute our books to schools and libraries; but if everything is going to end in nuclear war. . . "

"Assure them," said Śrīla Prabhupāda, "that there will be no nuclear war if they take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And even if there is nuclear war, that is not going to end everything. Formerly there was the *brahmāstra* [a weapon of Vedic times similar to today's nuclear bomb]. Everything is under the

control of the Supreme Lord. We are not afraid of the nuclear bomb, because the soul cannot be killed by the atom bomb. Do you know that? Have you read it? So what do they want to do in fear of the nuclear bomb—to sit down and do nothing and cry?"

I said, "Well, we are asking people to invest in sixty volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but they might say, 'I don't want to make such a long-term investment in the future, because there is nuclear war ahead.'"

"Then why are they going to the University? Why don't they stop eating? Do they mean one should not go for an education and should not have any hope and should stop everything?"

"Yes," I said, "some think like that—that it is doom."

Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed concern for people's having been put into such a consciousness. Then he repeated that I should assure people that there will not be such a war if they become Kṛṣṇa conscious. "In fact, because of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, there will be no nuclear war. But if there is, the soul cannot be killed, so we are not afraid the bomb will kill the soul."²

So even though the world situation is bad and worsening because of the influence of the Age of Kali, we should know that Śrīla Prabhupāda had full faith in the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we follow him, certainly we will receive Kṛṣṇa's blessings, and the collision course of the world will be changed.

This book is intended for all thoughtful persons. It is not only for Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples and followers, but for anyone who is willing to hear the science of spiritual life. According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, unless a human being is eager to inquire into the Absolute Truth and take up devotional service under the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then he is no better than an animal. The reader of these lectures should

² Goswami, Satsvarūpa dāsa, *A Handbook for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness* (Philadelphia: Bala Books, 1979) p. 352.

approach His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda directly by reading his translations and commentaries of the Vedic literature: *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Nectar of Devotion*, and many other books (all published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust) and should understand further the eternal, blissful realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I gratefully acknowledge the enthusiasm of Yogeśvara dāsa, my Godbrother, who first encouraged me to print this little book. I also extend my thanks to Maṇḍaleśvara dāsa, whose editing has presented the lectures in a more literary form, and to his wife, Vimalā-devī dāsī, and the other workers of ISKCON Press who saw the manuscript through its stages of production.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!

SDG

July 6, 1979

Ekādaśī, beginning of *Cāturmāsya Vrata*

Gītā-nāgarī Farm Project

Port Royal, Pennsylvania

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda considered it significant that in the year of his birth (1896), the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness went to the West in the form of a small book by the great Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. A year later Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's book *The Life and Precepts of Lord Caitanya* gained a place in the library of McGill College, in Montreal, Canada. The volume foreshadowed the flood of love of God that would come seventy years later from Śrīla Prabhupāda's own publishing house, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

We cannot write the biography of a pure devotee from the mundane viewpoint. After all, the pure devotee is eternally liberated (*nitya-mukta*), and it is offensive for the disciple to think of his spiritual master as an ordinary person. Śrīla Prabhupāda took his birth in a Vaiṣṇava family, and his father was a pure devotee. So from the very beginning of his life, he was hearing about Kṛṣṇa. His dedication of the *Kṛṣṇa* book reads:

To my father, Gour Mohan De (1849-1930), a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, who raised me as a Kṛṣṇa conscious child from the beginning of my life. In my boyhood ages he instructed me how to play the *mṛdaṅga*. He gave me Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *vigraha* to worship, and he gave me Jagannātha-Ratha to duly observe the festival as my childhood play. He was kind to me, and I imbibed from him the ideas later on solidified by my spiritual master, the eternal father.

Śrīla Prabhupāda described his mother as always being concerned for his health and well-being. "If my mother were alive today, she would be happy just to see that I am living." Prabhupāda was named Abhay Charan De (a name of Kṛṣṇa which means that His lotus feet give protection from all fear). His father would say to *sādhus* who visited their home, "Please pray that my son, Abhay Charan, can become a pure devotee of Rādhārāṇī." Śrīla Prabhupāda described many boyhood activities such as asking his father to buy him two water pistols. ("Why two?" "Because I have two hands.") Also, as a small child he insisted on performing a six-day Ratha-yātrā festival in honor of Lord Kṛṣṇa and engaged both his young neighborhood friends and adults in cooking *prasāda* for the festival and marching in the parade. One of his early memories is of trying to fly a kite. When it would not take flight he and his sister ran with the kite and prayed, "Dear God, please let it fly." As a small boy he used to consult the train schedules and meditate on how he could save the fare to go from his native Calcutta to Vṛndāvana, the site of Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes. Our spiritual master once said, "I cannot remember a time when I was not Kṛṣṇa conscious." Śrīla Prabhupāda offered memories from his own life to illustrate the *Bhagavad-gītā* teaching that the self remains the same although the body changes from boyhood to youth (*dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā*). And so he remembered the time of a plague in Calcutta. In order to end the plague, a local *bābājī* organized a mass *kīrtana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda remembered that at the time he

was only half as tall as most adults, and he was trying to look out the window at the *harināma kīrtana* party. From boyhood to youth he was always Kṛṣṇa conscious.

The main influence of his early years was his father, a pure devotee, a loving guide, who arranged for his son's worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lord Jagannātha, *mṛdaṅga* playing for *kīrtanas*, and even a marriage which would be most beneficial for his son's Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda related that there were two girls being discussed as possibilities for his marriage. One girl was very beautiful looking, the other not so much. When Abhay Charan De heard that his father wanted him to marry the less beautiful girl he thought, "No, I don't want to marry her." But his father spoke to him and explained that if he married a wife who was very beautiful he would become too much attached to her and would never be able to leave her even later in life when a man is supposed to accept the renounced order. Gour Mohan De's parental dealings (and their results) show that he was a genius in preparing his son to become a great disciple of a great spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda attended Scottish Church College in Calcutta, which was taught by British professors. Once one such professor attempted to discredit the philosophy of *karma*, from the Christian viewpoint, by saying, "How could a person be awarded the results of all his activities in the form of *karma*? Many of our actions are not remembered or even witnessed by anyone. If in court there are no witnesses, no judgment can be given." Śrīla Prabhupāda said that at the time he did not make an argumentative reply, but he shows us that the challenge from his boyhood professor is certainly defeated when one understands the position of Supersoul, the expansion of the Supreme Lord who is within everyone's heart and who witnesses all by His all-pervading knowledge and who awards everyone his next life through the agency of material nature or *karma*. It is the Lord in the heart who witnesses all our actions, and He is completely competent to award us our next life based on what He has witnessed. Even hearing from his European

professor, there was no question of Śrīla Prabhupāda's being affected by materialistic ideas. To one who imbibes Vedic culture in an atmosphere of love, and who grasps the transcendental science with his intelligence, there is never doubt or a falldown from the truth.

Although in this period of growing up Śrīla Prabhupāda entered marriage and business and even made political affiliation—he relates that he never at any time in his life smoked cigarettes or even drank coffee or tea. Of course, more and more so-called Hindus do these illicit practices under the influence of the materialistic age, but Śrīla Prabhupāda was never such a "Hindu" but always a pure Vaiṣṇava, one who follows the essence of the original culture of India—love of Kṛṣṇa. According to Lord Caitanya, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that original culture (*Veda*) is not intended only for Indians, but is to be spread all over the world, especially by those persons fortunate enough to be born in the land of Bhārata-varṣa (India).

Abhay Charan graduated from college majoring in psychology and philosophy and entered a business occupation before he was hardly twenty years old. Through an intimate friend of the family, he was appointed a manager in the chemical firm of a well-known physician-chemist, Dr. Bhosh.

In 1922, as a "newly married young man, and one of the managers of Dr. Bhosh's laboratory in Calcutta," Abhay Charan "addicted to Gandhi's movement and dressed in white khāḍī," met the personality who was to become his spiritual master, by the arrangement of providence. A friend insisted that he visit the most learned Vaiṣṇava scholar and devotee of the age, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. At the first meeting Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, as an educated young man, to bring the spiritual knowledge of India's *Vedas*, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to the West. Abhay Charan objected, saying that first India must become politically independent before others will listen to her. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī pointed out that political dependence or supremacy was a

temporary thing of no importance compared to knowledge of the soul and God, which alone can solve all problems of humanity. Śrīla Prabhupāda relates that he was defeated by this argument and very much impressed with his future spiritual master's transcendental wisdom. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote,

I was convinced that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message is the only panacea for suffering humanity. I was also convinced that the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was then in the hands of a very expert devotee and that surely the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would spread all over the world.

Because of his immediate household engagements, Śrīla Prabhupāda could not at once take up the order given to him at their first meeting, but he relates that he always meditated on how he might do so. He would always remember the impression of meeting the saintly person who eventually became his spiritual master, and whose order became his life and soul. Śrīla Prabhupāda began his own business, selling medicinal products, and at the same time he assisted in the activities of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's preaching mission, the Gauḍīya Math. He was formally initiated by his spiritual master in 1933. Desiring to do more direct service for his *guru*, he wrote to him in 1936 asking what he could do, and received the same order given at his first meeting with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. In a letter dated just two weeks before his departure from this mortal world, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī once again implored, "Teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English-speaking people." Śrīla Prabhupāda began the fortnightly journal *Back to Godhead* in 1944.

Śrīla Prabhupāda met with his spiritual master no more than a dozen times. In the days Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was living in this world, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not one of the *san-nyāsīs* who lived with the spiritual master; thus it may not have been clear that, on the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, this disciple, out of all others, would do the most to spread pure

Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. But there were signs even in the beginning. Śrīla Prabhupāda was very much attached to hearing his spiritual master speak. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that although at first he could not understand him, he would listen attentively whenever his spiritual master spoke and would remain listening even after most others had left. "Because I was good at *śravaṇam* (hearing)," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "now I am good at *kīrtanam* (chanting or speaking Kṛṣṇa consciousness)." One time he wrote a poem which contained the couplet "Absolute is sentient thou hast proved / Impersonal calamity thou hast removed," and his spiritual master was very pleased with this and would show it to all his guests. In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated that he knew the mind of his spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was a very bold preacher who did not like his disciples to compromise—he wanted to defeat *Māyāvādī* impersonalism and establish the eternal truth of the soul in relation to Kṛṣṇa. In preaching he particularly stressed the writing, printing, and distributing of books. So from his first efforts with *Back to Godhead*, in 1944, Śrīla Prabhupāda showed he knew the real desire of his spiritual master.

In 1959, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted *sannyāsa*, the renounced order, and began living alone in Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndavāna and translating the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* into English. He managed to raise funds to publish three volumes and then in 1965 he decided to travel to the United States. A friend offered free passage on a ship. Now, at this time Śrīla Prabhupāda was seventy years old, retired from material activity and living in the sacred land of Vṛndāvana. After so many years, why would he decide to travel to America? What hope had he, as a lone *sannyāsī*, of creating any interest among the American people, who have always been fully immersed in what Vedic culture considers the four pillars of sinful life—meat eating, illicit sex, gambling and intoxication? Mundane biographers would like to speculate and present their psychological theories on the life of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda; why

he waited, prepared himself, and then left for America with virtually no support or much chance for success. But the movements of persons completely surrendered to the *guru* and Kṛṣṇa cannot be understood by such speculative methods. It is a fact that the Absolute Truth, Supreme Personality of Godhead, cannot be known by the material argument or sensual inspection, and similarly the servant of the Absolute Truth can also never be known by any means except devotion (*bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*).

*yānra citte kṛṣṇa-premā karaye udaya
tañra vākya, kriyā, mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya*

“Even the most learned man cannot understand the words, activities, and symptoms of a person situated in love of Godhead.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 23.39*)

Social historians have noted, however, that the arrival of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa consciousness to New York City in 1965 — just when the youth of America were experiencing a spiritual crisis, the “hip” search for meaning beyond matter — couldn’t have been better timed. In other words, even from the mundane historical point of view, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s coming to America in 1965 seemed truly providential; it was Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement for inaugurating the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the Western world.

During the two-week voyage to America, Śrīla Prabhupāda cooked for himself aboard the *Jaladuta*. He became seasick, however, and wrote in his diary that only by reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* did he feel solace. The ship arrived in Boston harbor, Commonwealth Pier, on September 17, 1965, for a short stop en route to New York. Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed his helpless dependence on the will of Kṛṣṇa in a poem he wrote while in the Boston harbor. Although feeling insignificant, he had courage and absolute confidence that the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* would appeal even to persons here in America, a land of demoniac living. Because everyone is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda was convinced

that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would clean the Americans' hearts and appeal to their original spiritual nature. He arrived in New York with only forty rupees (approximately five dollars). Śrīla Prabhupāda said that coming off the ship, he did not know where to go, whether to turn left or right. He did have a patron whom he had never met, a Mr. Agarwal of Pennsylvania, whose invitation had enabled him to visit the United States. So Śrīla Prabhupāda took a bus to Butler, Pennsylvania, the home of his patron. In the first Western-world news release about Śrīla Prabhupāda, the *Butler Eagle* printed this article, entitled "Ambassador of Bhakti-yoga":

A slightly brown man in faded orange drapes wearing white bathing shoes stepped out of a compact car yesterday and into the Butler YMCA to attend a meeting. He is A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swamiji, a messenger from India to the peoples of the West.

'My mission is to revive people's God-consciousness,' says the Swamiji. 'God is the Father of all living beings, in thousands of different forms,' he explains. 'Human life is a stage of perfection in evolution; if we miss the message, back we go through the process again.'

He believes that the highest possible state will be to go to God, or eternal life.

After staying in Butler, Śrīla Prabhupāda was invited to stay at the New York country-*āśrama* of a Westernized Indian *guru*. This *guru* had been in the United States for some time, and he had a small following. He informed Śrīla Prabhupāda that in order to live in the West one had to take to Western habits—meat-eating, drinking liquor, dressing the Western way. He even attempted to show Śrīla Prabhupāda how to eat with a knife and fork. But rather than take to the Western habits, Śrīla Prabhupāda cooked the Vedic way (*dahl*, rice, and *capātīs*), offered the food to Kṛṣṇa, and distributed it to the *āśrama*

members, who were all very pleased. They had never before tasted Kṛṣṇa *prasāda*. Even the Westernized *guru* admitted that he became healthy only when he ate the food prepared by Prabhupāda.

Still without any secure position, Śrīla Prabhupāda moved to a small apartment in upper Manhattan and supported himself by whatever books he could sell. He had brought with him a number of three-volume sets of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and by occasional sales of these books he managed to push on. But one day all his belongings, including a donated typewriter and tape recorder, were stolen from his room.

Next, a young man invited him to share his loft located on the Bowery. A storekeeper who had made Śrīla Prabhupāda's acquaintance heard of his proposed move and objected, "No, Swami, you can't go to the Bowery! It's the worst place!" But the pure devotee had no other invitations, so he moved into the Bowery loft and began holding classes in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda related that although there were usually derelicts lying on the street in front of his door, they would get up and clean a way for him when he came by and they greeted him in a gentlemanly way. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's host (a consumer of LSD) became crazy, and Śrīla Prabhupāda could no longer stay in the Bowery loft.

In July 1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda obtained a storefront with a rear apartment at 26 Second Avenue, on Manhattan's Lower East Side. A friend donated the first month's rent, and Śrīla Prabhupāda made the storefront into the first center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—ISKCON, Inc.—based on the principles of *bhakti-yoga* taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught classes every morning at 6:00 A.M. and Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7:00 P.M. Also, he introduced the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. A group of about a dozen young people, mostly boys, regularly attended. After a couple of months, he offered initiation, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's first American disciples were born.

In those days of ISKCON's infancy, Śrīla Prabhupāda personally managed all affairs. It was he who did the cooking for the devotees, he who played the drum and chanted, he who gave all the lectures, he who personally handled all petty cash expenditures, answered the phone, typed the manuscripts and letters, mailed the letters, cleaned, worshiped, etc. He worked with the strength of a young man. By material standards he overworked. His first students were mainly ex-hippies and knew nothing of Vedic culture and practices. Everything had to come gradually and Śrīla Prabhupāda tolerated all the ignorant offenses of his disciples. He only wanted to see that they were happy, engaging in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and serving the spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography from 1966 is inseparable from the life and growth of ISKCON and the publication of his books.

Thus the milestones in Śrīla Prabhupāda's life include these events: 1967—opening temples in San Francisco, Montreal, and Boston; 1968—opening centers in Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia, and other cities; 1968—the first Ratha-yātrā festival, in San Francisco. The most significant dates in his life are the publication dates of his books, which came in a steady stream, quickly increasing to a torrent: *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 1968; *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* 1968; *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead* 1970; *The Nectar of Devotion* 1970 (more and more books). For the past ten years, he had traveled around the world by jet many times, opening centers, visiting disciples, and managing the affairs of the society in person and by mail. Yet, wherever he was, he translated at night by speaking into a dictaphone. He usually took his evening rest at around 10 or 11 P.M. and then rose at 1 or 2 A.M. to translate the verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Wherever he went he took the dictaphone with him and translated, even if only a single page was done in a night. "Little drops of water wear away the stone," he said. "In this way I have written all these books." There are now almost a hundred established centers and fifty published volumes of books.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had also invested much energy in bringing Kṛṣṇa consciousness back to India. Some of his Western spiritual children, disciples of ISKCON, joined with Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1970 when he returned to India to revive the original Vedic culture. Especially in India he continued to personally manage the affairs of his institution, and with great struggle he began temples and centers in Māyāpur, Vṛndāvana, Bombay, etc. He had erected two pilgrimage sites with gorgeous temples capable of accommodating hundreds of devotees at Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana, so that his Western disciples can go at least yearly and receive the blessings of such holy sites. Śrīla Prabhupāda's plans for the future development of Māyāpur, the birthsite of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, included the construction of the largest temple in India and development of an entire Vedic city, which will include a planetarium, *kīrtana* stadium, village industries, and even an airport. In recent years he had spent most of his time traveling in India and, at least once a year, touring the United States and Europe.

Now we are engaged in writing Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography, and it is very difficult because *he has done so much!* Such a difficult task of researching his extensive traveling and preaching, his thousands of recorded lectures and conversations, thousands of letters and writings; interviewing the people who knew or met him (religious, business, scientific, political, and educational leaders, the press, his disciples, the common man); trying to fathom his greatness, his devotion to his Guru Mahārāja, his zeal in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his divine qualities like tolerance and compassion, his physical features; understanding his mission, his goals, his vision; and finally portraying him to the world in the pages of his biography—this can only be done by Śrīla Prabhupāda's causeless mercy. Just as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswami compiled an account of places Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited and the pastimes He displayed, similarly we want to research and carefully present the worshipful pastimes of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Under almost any conditions of climate, travel, or residence, Śrīla Prabhupāda managed to follow his simple, austere routine: translating with a dictaphone, morning walk, *darśana* in the temple, morning *Bhāgavatam* class, breakfast, and so forth. He traveled usually with only two or three assistants: his secretary, a personal servant, and a disciple like Pradyumna dāsa to assist with Sanskrit editing.

Struggling to relate the tiniest fragment of a true picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am reminded of his reply when one of his disciples asked him to speak about his own spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He said, "What can I say about him? He was a Vaiṣṇava man." Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography is a continuum of loving transcendental service by a confidential servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And because he meditates, instructs, and acts only to deliver Kṛṣṇa to all living beings, his life is the greatest benediction for the world.

One Indian astrologer declared, on seeing a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda, "This is a man who can build a house in which the entire world can live in peace." That is a fact, because Śrīla Prabhupāda is directly delivering Kṛṣṇa; therefore He is competent to give all beings eternity, bliss and knowledge if they will surrender to His protection.

But what we do not see in Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography is the awarding of Nobel Prizes, full government support for his mission, and praise and appeals for guidance by the world's political leaders. This is due to those so-called leaders' ignorance, typical of the age of Kali.

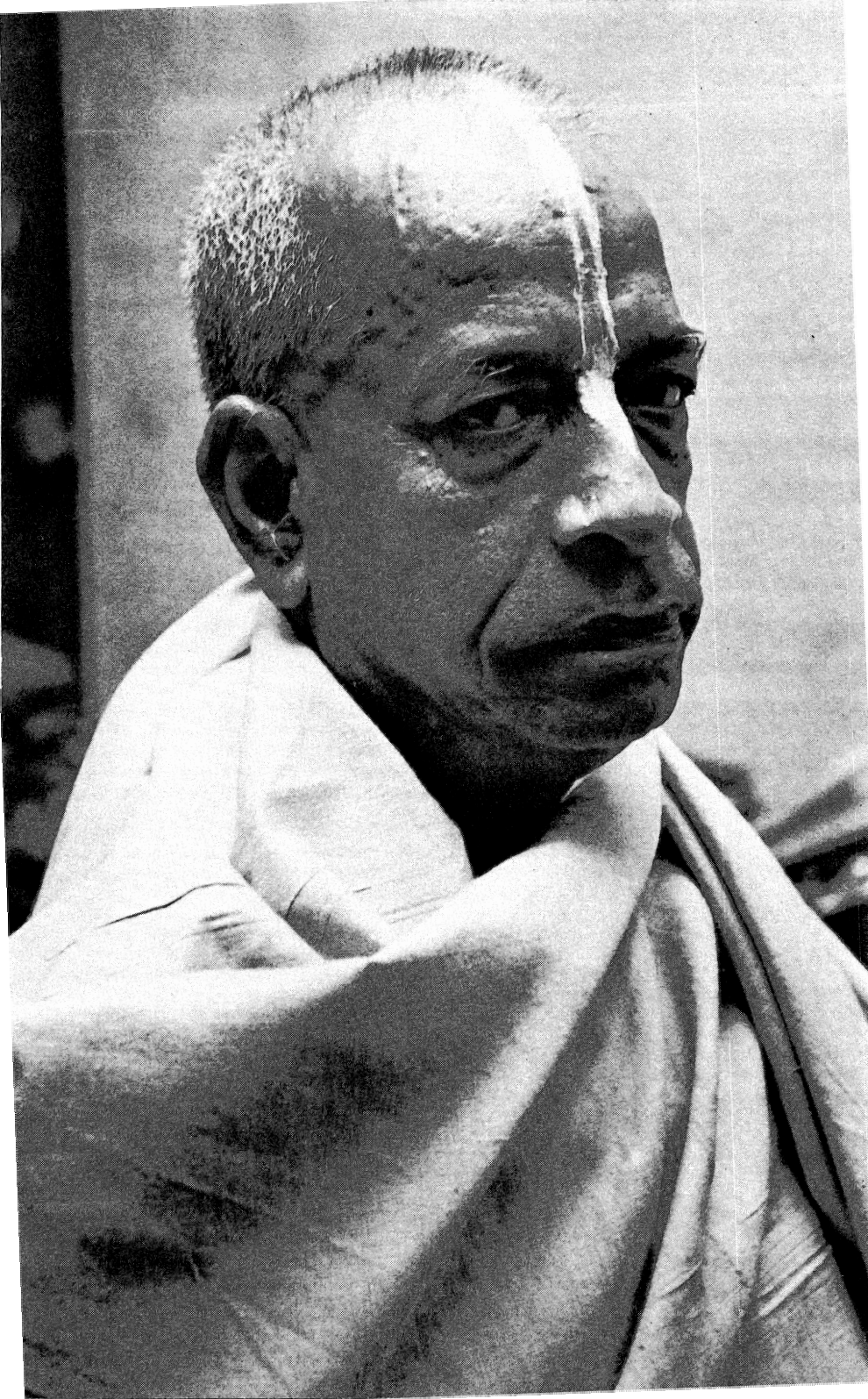
While Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission flowers among persons fortunate enough to receive the perfection of spiritual realization, he will never receive the appreciation of conditioned souls whose very aim in life is to supplant the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and become Kṛṣṇa themselves.

The only personality who can fully appreciate the biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda is Kṛṣṇa Himself. The Supreme Lord is keeping that biography in His heart, as affirmed by

Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Ninth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "Saints are My heart and only I am their hearts. They do not know anyone but Me, and therefore I do not recognize anyone besides them as Mine."

By hearing the facts and figures, dates and places, of his activities in this world, we can better appreciate the awesome reality of Śrīla Prabhupāda's identity—empowered intimate devotee of the Supreme Lord. Let biographers come forward and tell more and more about the events of his life. Gradually, intelligent men will appreciate Śrīla Prabhupāda as the greatest of all personalities.

—Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



1

*hantāsmiñ janmani bhavān
mā mām draṣṭum ihārhati
avipakva-kaṣāyāñān
durdarśo 'hañ kuyoginām*

"O Nārada," the Lord spoke. "I regret that during this lifetime you will not be able to see Me any more. Those who are incomplete in service and who are not completely free from all material taints can hardly see Me."

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.6.21

This verse is from the First Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The story tells how Nārada Muni actually saw Kṛṣṇa face to face by meditation. But Kṛṣṇa disappeared, and Nārada attempted to see Him again. But although Nārada tried, he could not see the Lord any more. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his purport, describes that seeing Kṛṣṇa is not mechanical. Kṛṣṇa appears by His own sweet will, and He also leaves out of His own causeless mercy — just like the sun. He is not subject to our demands.

Now, only a short time after the disappearance of our beloved spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are seeing so many things in this light of separation. And we can understand both separation from Kṛṣṇa and separation from the spiritual master in the same way. Of course, the spiritual master is not Kṛṣṇa, but—*sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-sāstrair*—because he is the direct manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, his coming and going are just as spiritual as Kṛṣṇa's coming and going.

Here Kṛṣṇa has left Nārada after giving him only a brief *darśana* [audience], but then He communicates to Nārada through transcendental sound vibration. Nārada says, "Seeing my attempts in that lonely place, the Personality of Godhead, who is transcendental to all mundane description, spoke to me with gravity and pleasing words, just to mitigate my grief." Of course, these are very extraordinary dealings. Nārada was so pure that he was able to feel great separation from Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa spoke to him, although Kṛṣṇa was no longer personally present. And the words that He spoke are this morning's verse.

Kṛṣṇa next tells Nārada, "I have left you just to increase your attachment to Me." And the same thing applies to the spiritual master. It should not be that after the spiritual master disappears the disciple's attachment for him gradually wanes, that the devotees are sustained when the spiritual master is present but in his absence their memory of him deteriorates. And don't think that if you did not have personal association with Śrīla Prabhupāda you did not know him. Even if that is a fact, the opportunity to approach him continues. Many who had personal association with Śrīla Prabhupāda feel that they did not take advantage of it. Yet they also have the opportunity, even now after he had left, to increase their attachment for him. This association is something each of us deliberately has to cultivate.

Everyone should desire intimate association with a pure devotee. If you don't desire that, then you're as good as dead, because by association with a pure devotee you can develop love of Kṛṣṇa but otherwise it's not possible. You can never

know Kṛṣṇa by your own endeavor; you have to know Him through the spiritual master. And we all know that the spiritual master is present in his spiritual sound vibration. That is even more important than his physical presence. So we have the opportunity to become intimately associated with Śrīla Prabhupāda. And that intimate association means that you are serving and he is pleased by your service. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. "By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Kṛṣṇa, and without the grace of the spiritual master one cannot make any advancement."

There are so many aspects in understanding the disappearance of the great personality, the pure devotee. Here we see that his disappearance is meant to increase our affection and our devotion and our meditation on him. This is what Kṛṣṇa says here to Nārada. Of course, He also says that He left because Nārada was not fully able to appreciate Him; Nārada was not completely pure. So it is a cause for lamentation—and this is another aspect of his departure—that when the spiritual master leaves, you realize, "I never really knew him. I never took advantage of this great person. Such a great devotee will never appear again on the earth for hundreds of years, yet somehow, due to my lack of purity, I did not get to know him or take up his service, heart and soul." That is a cause of lamentation.

Here Kṛṣṇa says, "You would like to see Me, but I will not appear before you, because you are not pure. But on the other hand, the reason I've disappeared is so that you can understand what you've missed. And you can now feel and act in such a way that you can gain Me before your life is over." So this we should deliberately cultivate—increasing our attachment to Śrīla Prabhupāda. And there are so many ways this can be done.

You're all serving here in the Dallas temple, and you can cultivate Śrīla Prabhupāda's association by remembering his activities within this temple, which were quite extensive over

the years. Śrīla Prabhupāda has his rooms here, and he visited here several times and performed so many activities. As you know, Śrīla Prabhupāda installed these Deities, Rādhā-Kalachandjī. Śrīla Prabhupāda came for a visit, and the next day Kṛṣṇa came. So he personally installed the Deity, offered the first *ārati*, and then went up to his room and wrote down on a piece of paper: "Rādhā-Kalachandjī, the Deity of Dallas."

So all these things are very auspicious, and they should be remembered. His rooms should be preserved. The pictures of him when he was here, the things he said here—all these things should be kept in his honor. We have to take this opportunity to increase our service; and that is the proper way to respond to Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance.

In Vṛndāvana [the site of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance on November 14, 1977], the atmosphere is filled with feelings of separation from Prabhupāda, naturally. One devotee came there from America and said, "Oh, there's an atmosphere of remembering Prabhupāda that's so thick here in Vṛndāvana you can cut it with a knife." And he was saying that in America he had sensed a tendency to take a stance of "business as usual," to regard Prabhupāda's departure as not a very important thing and to do business as usual. On my way back to America, I talked to my Godbrother Harikeśa Mahārāja in Germany, and he was telling me that the devotees there went out and, in one day, collected a large sum of money for Prabhupāda's *samādhi* [building of memorial]. I mentioned to him that there was somewhere a tendency to take Prabhupāda's disappearance without any change and to do business as usual. So he said, "Oh, that's not true here. Here it is business *more than usual*." He told how the devotees in Germany traveled to London to see Prabhupāda just a few weeks before he had passed away. So they have a very special feeling for Śrīla Prabhupāda. And this is good. Not that we have an official thirty-day mourning period in which we don't perform any activities—rather, "business more than usual." Let us not take it lightly.

We've missed our chance for further association with a pure devotee in his personal presence. We may not have been aware of the opportunity, but now we should be aware. Everyone knows the tendency: you don't appreciate something, you take it for granted, until it's taken away. So now, at least in one sense, it's too late. So don't take this lightly. Actually it's not too late, but we have to increase our service. And in order to do this, we have to churn the remembrance of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions. What he wanted, his teachings, his pastimes, the significance of our relation with him—meditate on these things. It should be the most important relationship we have, the most deeply heart-felt. Let us meditate on how he is taking us back to Godhead. And if we have any feeling for anyone else, it is Śrīla Prabhupāda who is able to grant him liberation from material misery.

Therefore, we must at least maintain what he has given us . . . and try to increase it. This means following the four rules.* Here in this purport Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions worshipping the Deity and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. If you want to get closer to Prabhupāda, then just chant. Years ago in Boston, I asked Śrīla Prabhupāda—because we were always thinking that Prabhupāda would leave sooner or later—“Śrīla Prabhupāda, now that you are here we can ask you so many questions and get direction and guidance. But how will we be able to get that after you are gone?” And he replied, “The name of Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa Himself. Do you understand that?” So if we are actually sincere and chant, anything is possible for Kṛṣṇa. Here we see it's even possible for Kṛṣṇa to talk to the devotee. So it can also be possible for the spiritual master to talk to the devotee from within his heart. Who can say that it's not possible? If Kṛṣṇa wants it to happen, it can happen. If we

* Śrīla Prabhupāda required his disciples to observe four basic restrictions: no gambling, no illicit sex, no meat-eating, and no intoxication.

chant the holy name, we can know Kṛṣṇa, we can know our spiritual master, we can know what to do.

Our Godbrother Girirāja Goswami gave a nice example comparing ISKCON to Prabhupāda's body. Prabhupāda has used different metaphors. Sometimes he has said the books are his heart—the book publishing and the book distribution are his heart. He has called the money his bloodstream—if someone misspends money, it's like taking his blood. So these things are continuing—his instructions and our response to them. If some devotee knows that Prabhupāda wants these Kṛṣṇa conscious books distributed and if the devotee goes out and distributes them, despite all the difficulty and austerity of that service, then certainly, just as Prabhupāda was pleased before, he will continue to be pleased, and the devotee will come closer to his spiritual master and so become happy and more assured of his spiritual position. Don't think that now there is any difference in the method of pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda. Don't let any deterioration occur in any of the standards or departments or programs of ISKCON.



2

'duḥkha-madhye kona duḥkha haya gurutara?'
'kṛṣṇa-bhakta-viraha vinā duḥkha nāhi dekhi para'

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked, "Of all kinds of distress, what is the most painful?" Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya replied, "Apart from separation from the devotee of Kṛṣṇa, I know of no unbearable unhappiness."

— Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 8.248

In these classes, we are trying to understand through the scriptures the meaning of our spiritual master's disappearance from this world. We are also trying to understand what is the proper feeling, the proper attitude, and the proper action, as well as what is improper. Prabhupāda has taught us everything about spiritual life. Ultimately, of course, spiritual life is spontaneous and, like love, doesn't have to be taught. Still, the initial teaching is *sādhana-bhakti*, so we have to take instruction from Śrīla Prabhupāda on how to understand this

event which appears most unfortunate for the disciple and for the world.

Some of the most direct instruction is in the Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, where Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the disciple is supposed to cry after the disappearance of the spiritual master. He also describes how the disciple is supposed to get solace from the Supersoul, take up the instructions of the spiritual master, and in that way become Kṛṣṇa conscious. As far as separation from Kṛṣṇa or separation from the devotee is concerned, it's the most exalted part of our philosophy. When you start your spiritual life you learn, "I am not this body,"—and then you go on to different ideas. Finally, you begin to understand the intimate relationships between the devotee and God. And the highest stage of spiritual realization is to understand conjugal love of God and the feelings of separation. But although this is the highest level of spiritual understanding, the same principle applies in our present situation also. So we should understand the Vaiṣṇava philosophy of separation.

According to today's verse, the worst kind of unhappiness is separation from a devotee. One way to understand this is in reference to the unfortunate person who, by his own foolishness, cuts himself off from the devotees—not only from the spiritual master, but from his own Godbrothers, or fellow disciples. Such a person finds himself in a very unhappy condition. He thinks he will become happy by leaving the association of devotees; but if he's actually a devotee, even though he's trying not to be one, he'll be very unhappy outside the association of devotees. The best devotee is the spiritual master, the pure devotee, and his passing away is the greatest pain, but the solace is that now, more than ever, we have to associate with the other devotees.

Now our spiritual master, the leader of all the other devotees, is gone. Are we then like any army that has lost its commander-in-chief? Is the spiritual master like the chief *kṣatriya*, upon whose death the whole army is considered defeated? Sometimes with packs of animals, if you defeat the

leader animal, the whole pack is defeated and they run away. Is it like that with us? No, definitely not. In spiritual life, the *guru* trains his disciples in such a way that after his departure they don't even feel that they have lost their leader. But if there is no devotee in the world, then, Rāmānanda Rāya said, "*This is the most unhappy condition.*" If for some reason you are cut off from the devotees—maybe it came about through your own foolishness or by the arrangement of *karma*—then you will experience the greatest despair. We should not minimize the importance of associating with each other. We have lost the physical presence of the greatest devotee, and now more than ever we should appreciate even the so-called minor devotees.

Someone may think, "I would like to associate with Prabhupāda, but now there is no such exalted devotee." Yes, but Prabhupāda's disciples are devotees! If you think that these devotees are not suitable for you and you want to do without any association, then you will experience the worst unhappiness. You should stay in the association of devotees. Any person who doesn't worship Kṛṣṇa, who is too attached to his family, who doesn't stick to devotional service, who doesn't associate with devotees, and who doesn't render service to a superior—he is most unhappy.

On the spiritual platform, the unhappiness of separation is a different kind of unhappiness—and that's what we are going to read about. First I am going to read from *The Nectar of Devotion* some examples that are very elevated and not to be imitated. Now someone might ask, why do we listen to them at all? And the answer is: because they purify us and give us an example of what to aspire to. They show us what real spiritual life is among the greatest devotees.

"The great devotee Uddhava once wrote a letter to Kṛṣṇa: 'My dear Kṛṣṇa, I have just finished a study of all kinds of philosophical books and Vedic verses about the goal of life, and so now I have a little reputation for my studies. But still, in spite of my reputation, my knowledge is condemned, because although enjoying the effulgence of Vedic knowledge, I could

not appreciate the effulgence emanating from the nails of Your toes. Therefore, the sooner my pride and Vedic knowledge are finished, the better it will be."

When the spiritual master leaves, all the disciples—whether they were connected with him personally or not—will probably feel that they did not take full advantage of his presence. This feeling that one hasn't really lived up to expectations in the most important matter of being attached to the pure devotee is pointed out here. What good are the things that you somehow gain—expertise in learning the verses of *Bhagavad-gītā*, or playing musical instruments, or even in distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books? What good is it if you never become attached to Prabhupāda, either through his books or through his personal association in different ways? In the passage I have just read, Uddhava was saying, "I don't have any attachment for the effulgence from the toes of Kṛṣṇa." Because he feels he hasn't developed a personal attachment for Lord Kṛṣṇa, he is indifferent towards anything else. But this is also purifying—the feeling that "If I fail to reach You, what good is anything else?"

Then we find another sentiment. A devotee anxiously expressed himself in this way: "My mind is very flickering, and I cannot concentrate upon Your lotus feet. Seeing this inefficiency in myself, I become ashamed. The whole night I am unable to sleep, because I am exasperated by my great inability." This is another purifying devotional sentiment. We should try to think of Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda. It's not that thinking of Prabhupāda has stopped, any more than thinking of Kṛṣṇa has stopped. Actually, we should think even more of our spiritual master now. Yet here the devotee is saying, "That might be. I know I should. But I can't. I can't think of him. I can't think of Kṛṣṇa." Just as Lord Caitanya said, "I don't have any taste for this chanting." But rather than just being dull about it, the devotee wants to feel the keen regret of being so stupid—being so, as he says, inefficient. He becomes ashamed.

We should aspire for this feeling of regret. Narottama dāś Ṭhākura prays, "I don't like the devotees, I don't like the *saṅkīrtana* movement. I don't like the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa." But that very dislike of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—if that makes me feel ashamed—well, that's good. At least I am a devotee in that I am very unhappy that I am not much of a devotee. So although this devotee in *The Nectar of Devotion* is so exasperated, it is to his credit.

Feeling regret is the same as feeling very happy and satisfied to live in the temple, take *prasāda*, and be jolly and cheerful. This regret is just the other side of that happiness. It's another variety in spiritual life. These sentiments aren't material, and such a person is actually a devotee of a high standard.

Here's another example: "In the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*, Prahāda Mahārāja was thinking himself unfit to approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and he immersed himself in great distress, in an ocean of unhappiness. As such, he used to shed tears and lie down on the floor as though unconscious." Again, this is not something we should imitate, but let us hear these exalted sentiments of the greatest Vaiṣṇavas. He's intensely dissatisfied with his inability, but that dissatisfaction becomes his qualification. After all, what does it mean to be qualified? One of the symptoms of surrender is to consider yourself helpless before the Lord. The devotee says, "You had better help me, Kṛṣṇa, because no one else can." At least he's thinking only of Kṛṣṇa, and he's unhappy because of his lack of devotion to Kṛṣṇa and the pure devotee. There's no question of wanting *material* happiness. We may say, "Why should Prahāda Mahārāja not think he's a great devotee? Everyone knows he's a great devotee." But this is the *mahā-bhāgavata*. He thinks, "I am not a great devotee." Lord Caitanya said, "If I were a great devotee, how could I keep my life in my body? Kṛṣṇa has left the planet, and I am so indifferent that I go on eating, I go on with my routine. How could I be a devotee?" And there are more examples, one after another, from the *Bhāgavatam*.

In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, spiritual separation is described as being different from material separation. Prabhupāda writes, "Pure love on the transcendental platform is the paragon of purity, devoid of material affection and completely spiritual." If we're separated from some so-called lover, we're just unhappy that we're not getting sense gratification. But spiritual separation is not like that. "Affection for matter is perishable, as indicated by the inebriety of sex in the material world. The path of sense gratification causes material distress, but one cannot compare that with spiritual separation. In spiritual separation, there is neither inebriety nor ineffectiveness, as one finds with material separation." So if you are not with the person you love, obviously that's a hindrance, because the person's not there. But in spiritual separation there is no obstacle. Materially, when a woman is separated from her lover, she can't have sex enjoyment. She can't enjoy all the things that they did together. There is frustration. But in separation from Kṛṣṇa, by crying and chanting, the *gopīs* actually found no obstacle. It was a different taste, but it was being with Kṛṣṇa. Just as good—in fact, better—than being with Kṛṣṇa in direct association. To know that Kṛṣṇa is here with me and we are enjoying together is great satisfaction. But when Kṛṣṇa is not there—"Oh, where's Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa and I used to do this. Kṛṣṇa and I used to do that. But now I can't be with Him. Where is Kṛṣṇa?"—somehow, by virtue of Kṛṣṇa's being the Absolute, that separation is more than the contentment of being with Him.

Although these are very advanced devotional dealings, we are supposed to hear about them. But as for our practical experience as ISKCON devotees, there are right attitudes and wrong attitudes about Prabhupāda's leaving the planet. It's a very serious thing. We may not fully understand, but we are now separated from our *guru*; and we should make a special effort not to be frivolous at this time. We have to become responsible devotees. In the absence of the spiritual master, everyone has to take much more responsibility. Someone might

say, "Well, I don't understand this mood of separation—with tears and sentiments and ecstatic feelings for Prabhupāda. I don't feel anything. My heart is just dry and empty. But at least I am going to act right. I am not going to be a nonsense. I am not going to leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I have at least enough intelligence to know that something terrible has happened. If I were an advanced devotee, I would cry. But at least I am going to act very staunchly and push on with this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I understand that something has happened and I am supposed to respond with suitable action. So I will do that." We may not understand all the esoteric aspects of feelings of separation, but we have to understand the importance of cooperating. This is important. Prabhupāda has given the indication: "If you cooperate amongst yourselves, this will be the most pleasing thing to me." He says, "Your love for me will be proven by how you cooperate after my departure." That is the real proof.

And improper action would be to have doubts: "Oh, the *guru* has left. Why did he leave? I don't understand why he left." Or "I heard he was experiencing some pain. Why didn't he do this or that? Why didn't this other thing happen?" Or someone may wrongly think, "Now people say the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is in trouble, and maybe they're right. Oh, I bet the leaders are going to fight. I bet this movement is going to fall apart." These are all certainly improper responses. Why should you be in doubt? Everything is in Prabhupāda's books. Maybe you haven't read the books—that's why you're in doubt. Or you are just hankering for sense gratification. When one is a neophyte devotee, he's often hankering for sense gratification and looking for an opportunity to leave Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "I haven't made a real commitment to this movement, so maybe I can get into sense gratification. It seems like a good opportunity." Sometimes he thinks he should become a so-called Christian again, or he thinks he should go back to his family. Or he just remains a rascal devotee. He stays in devotional service because he knows

it brings relief from misery, but he remains a nonsense. The spiritual master has left, so there is new responsibility. Everyone is supposed to take up the new burden, but he is just a nonsense. This is the greatest rascaldom.

There's a purport in the Fourth Canto in which Prabhupāda specifically describes that when the spiritual master comes to this world he creates order out of disorder, but when he leaves, disorder returns. Yet the sincere, faithful disciple assists the spiritual master in preserving the religious principles. The tendency will be for irreligious principles to sprout up again. The demons and the insincere devotees will cause trouble, and we are without the strength of Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical presence. So those devotees who are sincere will help the spiritual master reinstate religious principles, even in his absence.

Now is the time to be very Kṛṣṇa conscious, because this is an opportunity for demons and irreligious principles. In the Fourth Canto, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "When the *guru* leaves, all kinds of bogus *yogīs* and *svāmīs* spring up and try to introduce irreligious principles." So you shouldn't act out of self-interest—"I want this. I want to do that." Rather, consider that you are a servant and you have to act as a servant. This is the right attitude. There are so many *anāṛthas* that could develop at this time, but there are also many blessings and opportunities. The greatest blessing is that even though Prabhupāda has left, we are all still Kṛṣṇa conscious. That proves that Prabhupāda has blessed us. Everyone was Kṛṣṇa conscious the day before Prabhupāda departed, November thirteenth, and now it's November thirty-first and we are still Kṛṣṇa conscious. Before he left we were Kṛṣṇa conscious. He left, and we're still Kṛṣṇa conscious. Why are you still Kṛṣṇa conscious? "Well," someone may say, "it's because I am such a strong devotee." No, it's not on our own strength. It's because his blessing is still here. When he left, that was also a blessing. Exactly how it is a blessing we don't fully understand. But we should. This is what we are trying to understand in these classes—how the

disappearance of our spiritual leader can actually be a blessing. This is what we are trying to understand; we are trying to take hold of this opportunity. It's a blessing for developing your inner life and your attachment to Śrīla Prabhupāda, which you may not have cultivated very carefully until now. It's an opportunity to become surrendered and serious. Each of us is responsible for his own Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so we should try to understand fully what has happened and utilize this opportunity for becoming more attached to Śrīla Prabhupāda. We can also help each other by discussing these things during the day.



3

*prasaṅgam aṅgaṁ pāśam
ātmanaḥ kavayo viduḥ
sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto
mokṣa-dvāram apāvṛtam*

Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But the same attachment, when directed toward self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.20

We have all been very fortunate, after millions and millions of lifetimes in this material world, to get the association of a great *sādhu*, a *mahā-bhāgavata*, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We are very fortunate persons. Now Śrīla Prabhupāda has departed from this material world, but that does not mean that our attachment has departed. Ordinarily, when a man dies, his wife observes a little mourning and then looks for another husband for sense gratification. In fact, society encourages this. But in our case, it is not that the

spiritual master dies or that our relationship with him dies or that our attachment to him dies. And it is not that because the disciple is still alive, he has to become attached to another *guru*. Rather, the one *guru* who gave us Kṛṣṇa consciousness is still with us. On the title page of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda has written, "Dedicated to my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He lives forever by his divine instructions, and the follower lives with him." So that's what we have been discussing—how to become more attached to Prabhupāda.

Understanding his disappearance is a way for us to increase our attachment. Now, after his recent departure, we are taking to various ways of remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda. Devotees are worshipping a *mūrti* of Prabhupāda, hearing his tapes more often and more carefully, trying to surround themselves with all semblances of his personal presence, and trying to understand that his instructions must be followed very carefully. Any way you can, increase your attachment for Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is our motive in reading relevant verses in these classes and trying to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance according to the scriptures. In India, Acyutānanda Mahārāja quoted some lines from a Vaiṣṇava scripture. One great Vaiṣṇava wrote, "My spiritual master has just left this world. Now, when I visit Rādhā-kuṇḍa, it appears to me like the gaping jaws of some monster. And when I see Govardhana Hill, it appears to be rearing before me like a python." So if the spiritual master is not here, what's left?

We understand that our spiritual master is present, yet we are feeling separation. Here's another reference I would like to read that will help us in understanding spiritual separation: "In *prema-vilāsa*, there are two kinds of emotional activities, separation and meeting. That transcendental separation is so acute that it is actually more ecstatic than meeting." So it's not like material separation. I remember an autobiography that Eleanor Roosevelt wrote after her husband passed away. The

title expressed her feeling: "My life is empty now, and I am just passing a few more years—the real person in my life is gone." But we are not resigned like that. We have to increase the intensity of our attachment to our spiritual master.

And if you are thinking, "All this intensity has nothing to do with me. I never had much of an attachment to Prabhupāda," well, now's the time to begin. We have been discussing the position of the devotee in separation, and you can cultivate this. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā*, Chapter One, there are very authoritative, definitive descriptions of the spiritual master. In one purport, Prabhupāda writes, "The service to the spiritual master is essential. If there is no chance to serve the spiritual master directly, a devotee should serve him by remembering his instructions. There is no difference between the spiritual master's instructions and the spiritual master himself. In his absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple. If one thinks that he is above consulting anyone else, including his spiritual master, he is at once an offender at the lotus feet of the Lord."

As one Vaiṣṇava poet says, "Your mercy is all that I am made of." The devotee's whole life and soul, his pride of being, is, "I've got my orders from my spiritual master, and I am fixed in that service." In the concluding words to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Prabhupāda speaks about his relationship with his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in separation. These references help us in understanding our connection with our spiritual master, who has now left this material world. We know that Kṛṣṇa also left the material world five thousand years ago, although He's actually in the heart of every living being. And similarly the spiritual master is in the heart of the devotee—just as much as the Lord is there, though not in exactly the same way. Of course, we don't fully understand how the Lord is there, but at least we've heard enough from the scriptures that we can begin to understand and accept it. And the same thing applies to our relationship

with our spiritual master. If we serve with love, then Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master will give us the intelligence to understand these things.

In his concluding words of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his *vāṇī*, his words. There are two ways of association—by *vāṇī* and by *vapuḥ*. *Vāṇī* means words, and *vapuḥ* means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but *vāṇī* continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the *vāṇī*, not the physical presence. *Bhagavad-gītā*, for example, is the *vāṇī* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although Kṛṣṇa was personally present five thousand years ago and is no longer physically present from the materialistic point of view, *Bhagavad-gītā* continues." Then Prabhupāda tells the whole wonderful story of how he met his spiritual master and how he gradually formed his life in service to his spiritual master. He started *Back to Godhead* magazine, began writing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and finally came to America.

At the end of this passage, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "I think that His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is always seeing my activities and guiding me within my heart by his words." This is not merely a poetic metaphor. The Supersoul is not alone, but is present with all His associates. Certainly the spiritual master is an associate of the Lord, especially in the heart of his disciples. So the Lord is there, and He is there with His devotees and associates. "It is to be admitted that whatever translation work I have done is through the inspiration of my spiritual master, because personally I am most insignificant and incompetent to do this materially impossible work. I do not think myself a very learned scholar, but I have full faith in the service of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. If there is any credit to my activities of translating, it is due to His Divine Grace. Certainly if His Divine Grace were physically

present at this time, it would have been a great occasion for jubilation, but even though he is not physically present, I am confident that he is pleased by this work of translation."

So Prabhupāda is telling us that his *guru* is with him, and that his *guru* is pleased. It was many years after his *guru* had passed away that the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* was finished, yet he says that he knows that his spiritual master is very pleased, and that he is still present. We may not understand all these things, but if we try to follow the instructions of our spiritual master, we will gradually advance in our realization. So this is an important part of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy which is now being impressed upon us: how to please the spiritual master more and more. Service in separation is very real.

Another way to remember Prabhupāda is to find scriptural references to the great souls. Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura referred to a great person who would come one day and introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. So we can confidently say that this great person was Prabhupāda. Or when Lord Caitanya said, "The chanting of My name should be heard in every town and village," this meant that someone was going to have to do it. So that verse also applies to Śrīla Prabhupāda. In the *Ādi-līlā*, there is another nice reference to Śrīla Prabhupāda's greatness: "One should always think of the spiritual master in terms of his intimate relationship with Mukunda, Śrī Kṛṣṇa." So we can always think of Śrīla Prabhupāda in terms of how attached he is not only to his spiritual master but also to Kṛṣṇa. In his last hours, Śrīla Prabhupāda had a picture of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and he would look at that picture. He would ask that it be held—he could only see it if it was held close to him—and he would look at that picture so intently, with such absorption. He was seeing Kṛṣṇa—not some idol, as the iconoclast says. When he saw the picture of Kṛṣṇa, he saw Kṛṣṇa. So we think of him so intimately related with Kṛṣṇa, and we want to serve him in that way. This is Prabhupāda's greatness.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā*, Chapter Seven, verses 11 and 12, we find, "The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the *saṅkīrtana* movement." (*Kṛṣṇa śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*). In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that unless one is directly empowered by the causeless mercy of Kṛṣṇa, one cannot become the spiritual master of the entire world (*jagat guru*). The spiritual master of the entire world must be considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa's mercy." Also in *Antya-līlā*, Chapter Two, verses 13 and 14, we find: "To deliver people in regions throughout the universe who could not meet Him, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally entered the bodies of pure devotees. Thus He empowered living beings (His pure devotees) by manifesting in them so much of His own devotion that people in all other countries became devotees by seeing them." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport, "Unless one is empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one cannot spread the names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* throughout the world. Persons who do so are empowered. Therefore, they are sometimes called *aveśa avatāras*, or incarnations, for they are endowed with the power of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

In addition, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* says, "Śākyāveśa incarnations are of two kinds, direct and indirect. When the Lord Himself comes, He is called *sākṣāt* or a direct *śākyāveśa avatāra*, and when He empowers some living entity to represent Him, that living entity is called an indirect or *aveśa* incarnation. Examples of such indirect *avatāras* are the four Kumāras, Nārada, Pṛthu, and Paraśurāma. These are actually living entities, but there is a specific power given to them by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When a specific opulence of the Supreme Lord is invested in the living entities, they are called *aveśa avatāras*." Nobody can make people Kṛṣṇa

conscious or spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa unless he is empowered, unless he has special potency. Śrīla Prabhupāda had it conferred upon him to the degree that he is world *ācārya*, and therefore an *aveśa avātara*. He's not Kṛṣṇa, but he is the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa.

One time Jayādvaita Swami asked Prabhupāda, "What does it mean in the *Gurv-aṣṭakam*, 'The spiritual master is very expert in assisting the *gopīs*, who are engaged in making arrangements for the transcendental love affairs of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa'? How should we understand this—that the spiritual master is assisting the *gopīs*?" Prabhupāda replied that the spiritual master was actually doing this service. "Any spiritual master is doing it?" he was asked. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Only if he is in the line of the conjugal *rasa*." So, how the spiritual master is intimately connected with Kṛṣṇa's associates and pastimes is not easy to understand. But what is easy to see is that Śrīla Prabhupāda has introduced Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere—so he is a *śaktyāveśa avatāra*. Now, *avatāra* means, generally, that he is not a conditioned soul like us. We were so fallen, completely part of this *karmī*, hippie culture, and we were saved by Prabhupāda. Otherwise, we were headed for hell. But a personality like Prabhupāda is always Kṛṣṇa conscious. So when a person has always been Kṛṣṇa conscious, he's called *nitya siddha* (eternally perfect).

There's one interesting thing Śrīla Prabhupāda said to Bhavānanda Mahārāja in Los Angeles which reveals Śrīla Prabhupāda's position as a *nitya siddha* devotee. I heard it from Bhavānanda Mahārāja a couple of minutes after Prabhupāda had said it. Śrīla Prabhupāda was saying how he was not very much inclined toward austerity. Some of his Godbrothers could practice so many austerities, but he said that was one reason he found it difficult to come forward and take *sannyāsa*: to perform so many austerities was not his inclination. So he said, "Kṛṣṇa said to me, 'That's all right that you find it difficult to perform austerities, but you just come

down and preach, and you will not have to experience any difficulties.' " This is the kind of intimate relationship Prabhupāda has always had with Kṛṣṇa.

There is an interesting parallel in the life of Uddhava, another *nitya siddha*. Uddhava was a personal associate of Kṛṣṇa. He had the same form as Kṛṣṇa, *svarūpya mukti*. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* he's described as follows: "Uddhava thus served the Lord continually from childhood, and in his old age that attitude never slackened. As soon as he was asked about the message of the Lord, he at once remembered all about Him. He was one who, even in his childhood, at the age of five years, was so absorbed in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa that when he was called by his mother for morning breakfast, he did not wish to have it." In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "From his very birth, Uddhava was a natural devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, or a *nitya-siddha*, a liberated soul. From natural instinct he used to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa even in his childhood. He used to play with dolls in the form of Kṛṣṇa. He would serve the dolls by dressing, feeding and worshiping them, and thus he was constantly absorbed in the play of transcendental realization. These are the signs of an eternally liberated soul. An eternally liberated soul is a devotee of the Lord who never forgets him."

We have all heard how Śrīla Prabhupāda, like Uddhava, was playing with the form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa from his early childhood, and how he was observing *Ratha-yātrā* with his small playmates. In a letter to Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja in 1970, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote of those Deities he had worshiped in his childhood, "The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deity in this family called me to meet Him, and therefore, last time when I was in Calcutta, I stayed in that temple along with my American disciples. Although I had immense opportunities to indulge in the four principles of sinful life because I was connected with a very aristocratic family, Kṛṣṇa always saved me. And throughout my whole life, I did not know what is illicit sex, intoxication,

meat-eating, or gambling. So far my present life is concerned, I do not remember any part of my life when I was forgetful of Kṛṣṇa."



4

*yadā nopalabhetāṅghrāv
ūṣmāṇaṁ patyur arcatī
āsīt sarṁvigna-hṛdayā
yūtha-bhraṣṭā mṛgī yathā*

While she was serving her husband by massaging his legs, she could feel that his feet were no longer warm and could thus understand that he had already passed from the body. She felt great anxiety upon being left alone. Bereft of her husband's company, she felt exactly as the she-deer feels upon being separated from its mate.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.46

Because of its relevance to Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, we are continuing the story of King Puranjaṇa, "Purañjana Becomes a Woman in His Next Life." We read yesterday how, at the time of his death, Puranjaṇa thought of his wife and thus became a woman, Vidarbhī, in his next life. He—or she—then married a great devotee named Malayadhvaja. This great devotee-king gave up his kingdom and went to the forest to execute spiritual life, and his wife

went with him. She gave up all sense gratification and faithfully served her husband.

When a husband and wife want to become renounced, they enter the order of life known as *vānaprastha*. In that stage, the woman no longer combs her hair or makes attempts to dress very nicely for her husband. So sex attraction is diminished or lost. She hardly speaks to him. She just becomes his partner in his Kṛṣṇa conscious duty—no sense gratification in the name of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So Vidarbhī lived like that.

In his purports, Śrīla Prabhupāda has compared the relationship of Vidarbhī and Malayadhvaja to the relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master. He compares Vidarbhī's renunciation to the vows of austerity accepted by a disciple. Free from sense gratification and the desire to secure his own self-interest from the *guru*, the disciple just does his duty. And just as the wife receives all spiritual benefits simply by serving her husband, the disciple will get spiritual perfection by serving the spiritual master.

Our relationship with Prabhupāda is always that we are his menial servants, and we should never forget that. It's not that he goes into the background of our consciousness and we become the lords of all we survey and try to carve out some kind of enjoyment for ourselves. Devotional service means you serve him; and serving him means serving his mission. He is a great personality. He doesn't take service only in dressing and feeding; he takes service in executing big worldwide activities, which are his personal service to his spiritual master and to Kṛṣṇa. So anything you can do to help in that preaching is just as direct and personal as bodily service. Śrīla Prabhupāda would give us that bodily service also, but now it is not possible. Now everyone should take to the service of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, which is Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission.

This verse describes the moment when the spiritual master, who has been living with the disciples and guiding them,

suddenly leaves his body. Certainly this is a great calamity for the devotees, yet his passing away is not the same as the passing away of an ordinary man. I was asked to attend a funeral today and speak about the passing away of a spirit soul. So, we know from *Bhagavad-gītā* that a person does not die, but goes on to another body. We cannot say exactly where or into what species of life a particular soul has gone; still, we can give them some consolation by explaining that the soul has gone to another body, according to his desires. We can explain that since death is inevitable, we should not be attached to material life. Everyone, including all the relatives of the departed, should prepare themselves for inevitable death. But we cannot assure anyone about the future of this *karmī's* departed soul.

If a great personality departs, it is, in one sense, a matter of rejoicing. When Bhīṣma left his body, the demigods showered flowers from the sky and beat drums. Then everyone became respectfully silent. He passed away at an auspicious hour, and everyone knew that he had gone back to Kṛṣṇa. Actually, he was seeing Kṛṣṇa face to face as he left his body. Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda was hearing the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa and looking at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma and was surrounded by all his devotees—not just at the end of his life, but he had dedicated his whole life to serving Kṛṣṇa. “If you think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer obeisances to Me,” Kṛṣṇa says, “then surely you will come to Me.” Even the newspapers in India—where they’re a little more intelligent than in this part of the world—used the caption “At Kṛṣṇa’s Lotus Feet” for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s picture. Another headline read, “Śrīla Prabhupāda Goes Back to Heaven.” So this is the position of the pure devotee. While he’s with us he’s with Kṛṣṇa, and when he leaves he goes to Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world to serve Him eternally. It’s not ordinary; there’s nothing to lament for him. He has certainly gone back to Godhead.

So Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance doesn't have the tragedy of an ordinary death. But it is tragic in another way, in that his contribution is no longer here. He was doing so much to help the world. Now he's gone. When Mahārāja Parīkṣit decided to give up his kingdom and sit down and await his death for seven days, the question was asked, "Why is he doing this? The whole world is depending on him. How can he leave? He is the shelter for all the citizens of the world. Even if he is detached and wants to go back to Godhead, how can he leave everyone else?" So just as they were lamenting, we are also thinking in the same way: "Śrīla Prabhupāda has left us. Now what will we do? What will our movement do? Why did he leave? This *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* will not be the same without him being here to finish it. What will the world do without his guidance?" (Of course, the world didn't always want his guidance, but he has given it, and the world is benefiting from the *saṅkīrtana* movement.)

We've been discussing in the evening class how Prabhupāda was responding to the false hopes the disciples were offering. They encouraged him by saying that if he took his medicine and if he got a little strength, then he would get better. Yet actually he was not getting better. But the mood was that, as disciples, they should serve the spiritual master to the end. And Prabhupāda wanted this. And that attitude of the disciple is described here: "The daughter of Vidarbha continued as usual to serve her husband, who was seated in a steady posture, until she could ascertain that he had passed away from the body." In a sense, Śrīla Prabhupāda made his body like a laboratory of devotional service, so that the devotees could be tested—whether they would serve him to the end.

Sometimes, if a neophyte devotee sees his spiritual master ill, he may become bewildered: "If he's a pure devotee, how is it that my *guru* has become ill?" Or he may become fearful: "What's going to happen? My spiritual master is very ill. Is he feeling pain? What if he leaves? What's going on?" So the neophyte disciple becomes fearful and bewildered, and he

becomes doubtful. He may have various impure thoughts, even to the point of great offenses. He may even think that he does not want the spiritual master to stay. It seemed again and again that Śrīla Prabhupāda could not live, yet he was being encouraged by his disciples. He would drop lower, then seem to come back. The devotees became more and more absorbed in pleading with Prabhupāda to please live, and in that way they were increasing their affection for him.

This is a good instruction for all of us. The wife kept serving her husband until the symptoms of life had left his body. She didn't put him in a nursing home or feel resigned — "Well, there's nothing I can do for him any more. Maybe he'll just pass away." She continued to hope. And this should be our attitude in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if it gets difficult or we don't like something, still we have to stick to our service at the lotus feet of the spiritual master. It's do or die. And once you agree to do that, then there's no bewilderment: "Well, I don't know what's going on, actually. Maybe I'm fearful. Philosophically, maybe I don't understand. But all I know is that I am surrendered to my spiritual master. I'll just do whatever he says. And I will never give up serving him until there's absolutely no life left in my body. I'm not going to give up because of this or that. I am going to continue serving him. Even if my service is not very important by some calculation, I will do my tiny service, and this will keep me steady in devotional service."

So Vidarbhī was like that. There was no question of her leaving him. "While massaging his legs, she could feel that his feet were no longer warm. She could understand that he had already passed from the body. And then she felt a great anxiety." In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "As soon as the circulation of blood and air within the body stops, it is to be understood that the soul within the body has left. The stoppage of the blood circulation is perceived when the hands and feet lose heat. One tests whether a body is alive or not by feeling the heart's palpitations and the coldness of the feet and hands." Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *kavirāja* was also checking these

things again and again in the last hours, and then finally he indicated that Prabhupāda was gone from his body.

Certainly for the disciples, the disappearance of the spiritual master is a great loss; and that loss cannot be mitigated by anyone's sympathy. The next verse reads, "Being now alone and a widow in the forest, the daughter of Vidarbha began to lament, incessantly shedding tears, which soaked her breasts, and crying very loudly." In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Figuratively, the queen is supposed to be the disciple of the king. Thus, when the mortal body of the spiritual master expires, his disciples should cry, exactly as the queen cries when the king leaves his body." This is not a mundane sentiment. Śrīla Prabhupāda has told us everything we must do: "You should eat this food. You should sleep in this way. You should chant in this way." And here is another instruction: "When the spiritual master leaves, you should cry."

In Vṛndāvana, immediately after Prabhupāda's departure, there was not much crying. But then, in order not to fall to the material plane, we had to remember the philosophy: "Prabhupāda is still with us!" And in the days that followed, this became the thing. More devotees arrived from the West who hadn't been there at the time of Prabhupāda's passing away, and the feeling became very positive and cool-headed: "This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is going full speed ahead, and there's nothing to worry about."

So on the one hand, everything is all right, yet on the other hand the direction is to cry. Both sides should be there. You shouldn't feel completely undisturbed: "Well, there's no change. Everything's all right. We'll just push on the movement, and it doesn't matter." No. Both things should be there—at least in this period immediately afterwards. Just like in a Hindu society, or any society, after a loved one passes away, there is a period of very sober behavior, grieving, and remembrance of the person. Not that we become inactive, or sentimental. By our discussions and remembrance, let those who are not able to cry at least feel a little of the significance of what has happened.

"When the mortal body of the spiritual master expires, his disciples should cry. However, the disciples and the spiritual master are never separated, because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple, as long as the disciple follows the instructions of the spiritual master strictly. This is called the association of *vāñī*. Physical presence is called *vapuḥ*. As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciple should serve the instructions of the spiritual master."

Now in the next verse, the wife cries out, "O best of the kings, please get up. Get up. Just see this world, surrounded by water, and infested with rogues and so-called kings. This world is very much afraid, and it is your duty to protect her." And Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Whenever an *ācārya* comes, following the superior orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His representative, he establishes the principles of religion, as enunciated in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Religion means abiding by the orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Religious principles begin from the time one surrenders to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the *ācārya's* duty to spread a bona fide religious system and induce everyone to bow down before the Supreme Lord. One executes the religious principles by rendering devotional service, specifically the nine items like hearing, chanting, and remembering. Unfortunately, when the *ācārya* disappears, rogues and nondevotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles under the guise of *svāmīs*, *yogīs*, philanthropists, welfare workers, and so on. Actually, human life is meant for executing the orders of the Supreme Lord. The main business of human society is to think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead at all times and become His devotee, worship Him, and bow down before Him. The *ācārya*, the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, establishes these principles, but when he disappears, things once again become disordered."

This statement confirms that the world is now in great danger due to the disappearance of God's representative, Śrīla Prabhupāda. For example, when Mahārāja Parīkṣit was present, Kali could not enter. But after his departure, Kali entered, full force. So Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to stave off so many evil influences in this world; but now there's a chance that the demons can become enlivened. And they will try. Outside this movement, and inside, they see that we are without the personal strength of the *guru*.

So the wife of the king is feeling like a she-deer: "O, what am I going to do? I am unprotected." And then she speaks, "O King, please get up. What about the world? You used to protect the whole world. Please, the world is very much afraid, and it is your duty to protect her." But what can be done? He's gone. And now that Śrīla Prabhupāda is gone, according to Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, the world will have to go on without him. The world that never appreciated him anyway will have to go on without him.

So what to do? It's stated here: "The perfect disciples of the *ācārya* try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instruction of the spiritual master. At the present moment, practically the entire world is afraid of rogues and nondevotees. Therefore, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to save the world from irreligious principles. Everyone should cooperate with this movement in order to bring about actual peace and happiness in the world."



5

*citim dārumayīm citvā
tasyāṁ patyuh kalevaram
ādīpya cānumaraṇe
vilapantī mano dadhe*

She then prepared a blazing fire with firewood and placed the dead body of her husband upon it. When this was finished, she lamented severely and prepared herself to perish in the fire with her husband.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.50

Here is the essential meaning of being devoted to the spiritual master: you are ready to give your life. That may mean that you give up your life immediately or that you give your life by serving the spiritual master throughout your whole lifetime. Either way, you are giving your whole life energy when the spiritual master asks. Some people take a spiritual master as a pet—as some people keep a dog—just so they can say, “Yes, I have a *guru*.” But the real meaning is that the spiritual master’s order is the disciple’s life and soul.

Once a disciple accepts a spiritual master, he has nothing to think about or wonder about except carrying out the spiritual master's orders. We have the example of the wives of the Pāṇḍavas. Although Queen Kuntī did not enter the funeral fire of her husband, she did not live on simply for sense gratification. She would have died with her husband, but to live on and take care of the children was more important service. That is chastity. Similarly, now that Śrīla Prabhupāda has departed, the only reason we should live on is to use our body to serve him. The chaste widow does not start thinking about other men. (Of course, women nowadays are even glad when the husband dies—they want to collect the insurance. Or very soon they are thinking of another man. But in Vedic culture this is abominable. Marriage is a lifelong contract.) Of course, we are not as concerned with the husband-and-wife contract as we are with the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple. Real loyalty and faithfulness means that this body, which was engaged in serving the spiritual master when he was present, must continue in that way. Otherwise, I should die. This applies to all of us. In the past you may have entertained the idea of using your body for sense gratification, but now, just the thought of Śrīla Prabhupāda's not being here should be an added impetus to check that desire.

We can also think that Śrīla Prabhupāda *is* here—that he is watching what we are doing. Certainly we behaved in a very special way in his presence. When Prabhupāda came into the temple, everyone would offer obeisances. And if we got a chance to go into his room, or hear him preach, or if he spoke something to us . . . suddenly everything became very, very serious. In his presence, everything became pinpointed—"I am actually in the presence of my spiritual master, who is as good as Kṛṣṇa." Our senses and mind became very alert, and we understood that this was crucial. He may have given us some order, and now our whole life is being based on that instruction—an instruction that we will hold dear and consider to be of utmost importance for the rest of our life. To be in the

presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda was very special. Certainly we didn't act foolishly, frivolously, or inattentively. Even if you were a rascal, at least when you came into his presence you came to your senses. So why shouldn't we continue to think like that? Although the husband or spiritual master has left, the wife or disciple has to behave faithfully. For the rest of our life, we should always be speaking as if Prabhupāda is hearing, and acting as if Prabhupāda is seeing. We should be very determined to please him.

And pleasing him isn't a hard thing to do. We just have to be always following his instructions, fully engaged in devotional service. This is a really serious relationship that every one of us has with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Our relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda and our responsibility to him are eternal. And now we should increase our seriousness. Sometimes we may have acted just like a bunch of naughty children, and he occasionally rounded us up when we went astray. But now the children have to take care of the movement by themselves. We may have a tendency to drift off. But if we drift off now, no one is going to round us up. So we don't want this movement—or any one of us—to drift off. Therefore, we have to be more responsible to what we still have of Śrīla Prabhupāda—his instructions. As the wife was prepared to give up her life, so the disciple should kill himself if he's not going to continue to serve the spiritual master.

In the next purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instructions of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāñī-sevā*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī states in his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary on verse 41 of the Second Chapter that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on this line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Once a devotee asked Prabhupāda, "How do we know if our service pleases Kṛṣṇa?" And he said, "When you see Him." So this is perfection for the devotee—to actually see Kṛṣṇa. We are not impersonalists. When we actually can see God, certainly that means we are perfectly pure. Here Śrīla Prabhupāda says that the same thing, seeing Kṛṣṇa, is attained when you serve the spiritual master's instructions. So we may say, "Well, I don't actually see how that's technically true. I may serve the spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, but he's not the same personality as Kṛṣṇa. How is it that by serving him and his *saṅkīrtana* movement I am seeing Kṛṣṇa?" So this is explained in the purport. We must accept it. It is a way of seeing Kṛṣṇa. It is our only way of seeing Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Don't expect to see Kṛṣṇa by looking in some bush in Vṛndāvana." This is the way: serve the instructions of the spiritual master. This is the great secret. This is the way to see God. And you can actually see Him in your service. As we do service, we will see Kṛṣṇa. And the direction is coming from Kṛṣṇa in the heart. How will this come about? Kṛṣṇa in the heart encourages us to follow the instructions of the spiritual master, and then when we follow them, Kṛṣṇa in the heart reveals Himself. This is the simple system. We should have full faith in this process.

In another purport in the Fourth Canto, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives further stress on following the order of the spiritual master as all in all. Sometimes we meet people who would like to come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but they hesitate because they have so many other things to consider. I met a boy yesterday who was hesitating because of his wife, who is not very inclined to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was also considering his university scholarship. It hadn't even dawned on him that Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to follow the orders of the spiritual master. He didn't really understand that this is what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is. He thought it was some interesting philosophy that perhaps he would come to base his life on. One may think that he can just follow Kṛṣṇa directly by reading *Bhagavad-gītā*, but from *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Nectar of Devotion* we understand

that you have to come to Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master. Whatever he tells you to do, that is the road to Kṛṣṇa. And all these concocted processes you should simply forget about.

In the Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we have the story of the Pracetās, who were thinking of their spiritual master, Lord Śiva, and meditating upon his instructions. In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, "This is the secret of success. After being initiated and receiving the orders of the spiritual master, the disciple should unhesitatingly think about the instructions of the spiritual master, and should not allow himself to be disturbed by anything else."

Now this doesn't mean that we are dull stones. Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us the plan: "Spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Now tax your brain how to do this. His American and European disciples are always thinking, "How can we spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" And in that absorption they will be able to see Kṛṣṇa. They will become perfect. This is the edict of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who, in his explanation of the forty-first verse of the Second Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, explains that the orders of the spiritual master are the life substance of the disciple. Just like your heartbeat, or your blood circulation, or your respiration, you can't live without them. They are as intrinsic as your feelings of desire and love, which are present as long as you have life. Take away a disciple's following the order of his spiritual master, and there is nothing left of him. And he *should* be like that. It should not be that if you take away his connection with his spiritual master he will still have something. No. He's got nothing left. "Your mercy is all that I am made of." The disciple should take that position. He shouldn't consider whether he's going back home, back to Godhead. Don't think, "I can establish my own relationship with Kṛṣṇa. I am a big advanced devotee, and I am thinking of Kṛṣṇa. This is my spiritual life, and I will become liberated." Whether you go back to Godhead or not shouldn't even be a consideration. Your first business is to execute the order of your spiritual master.

We know that sometimes great devotees like the *gopīs* were following the order of Kṛṣṇa, their spiritual master, even though that following was apparently detrimental to their going back to Godhead. But they didn't care. They would do anything to please the spiritual master. Thus a disciple should always meditate on the order of the spiritual master. And that is perfect meditation. If someone asks us about meditation, we can tell him that we always think of the instructions given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and that that is perfect meditation on Kṛṣṇa. Not only should the disciple meditate upon the spiritual master's order, but he should find out the means by which he can perfectly worship and execute that order.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is such an exalted, pure devotee that when we think of him, Kṛṣṇa is very pleased. This is the way we should think of Kṛṣṇa. When the Supersoul sees, "They are thinking of My pure devotee and planning how to follow his instructions," then He is very eager to help us fulfill Prabhupāda's mission. And if we are executing that mission, then everything else will come automatically. Kṛṣṇa says, "For My devotees, I carry what they lack and preserve what they have." If we are fully engaged in serving His pure devotee, then liberation will come, and so will anything material that you need for your service.

Just look at this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda says there is no scarcity of money. All you have to do is follow the orders of the spiritual master, and everything will come. Money will come, liberation will come, happiness will come. Everything that you want will come, because Kṛṣṇa will award it. Śrīla Prabhupāda once described that by preaching we're like Kṛṣṇa's advertising firm — advertising the glories of Kṛṣṇa. Big businesses spend millions of dollars for their advertising. So do you think that when you engage yourself fully as an advertiser for Kṛṣṇa, He is not going to maintain you or take care of you? As long as He sees that you are not cheating in the name of being His representative, then — He's not a poor man — He'll give you all that you need . . . if you're

actually sincere. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that Kṛṣṇa will give you the whole world so that you can rule it and make it Kṛṣṇa conscious; but you have to be humble. You have to be worthy. He'll not give everything to persons who are devotees in name only and who would abuse His good name and ruin everything. The measure of success will be there; Kṛṣṇa will reward us when He sees we are undoubtedly His staunch representatives.

Kṛṣṇa gave Śrīla Prabhupāda never-before-attained powers to preach all over the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said—it almost seems in joking—that we should do more than he's done. So at least we have to try, and if Kṛṣṇa agrees, then the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can spread. Sometimes we appear to be struggling on a very low level, but we have to keep it up and become purified. Then Kṛṣṇa will reward us.

How is serving the spiritual master the same as seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead? Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramātmā, appeared before the queen as a *brāhmaṇa*. But why didn't He appear in His original form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks that unless one is very highly elevated in serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot see Him as He is. Nonetheless, if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead." So even though we can't see Kṛṣṇa, we have to understand that somehow or other we are associating with Kṛṣṇa. It is being achieved, even though we don't know it. The example is that when you take off in an airplane you may not even notice that you have taken off, but when you look out the window you see the good results—you're high in the air. So we can't deny this: when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow the four rules and live in the *āśrama* in the association of devotees, we are actually associating with Kṛṣṇa.

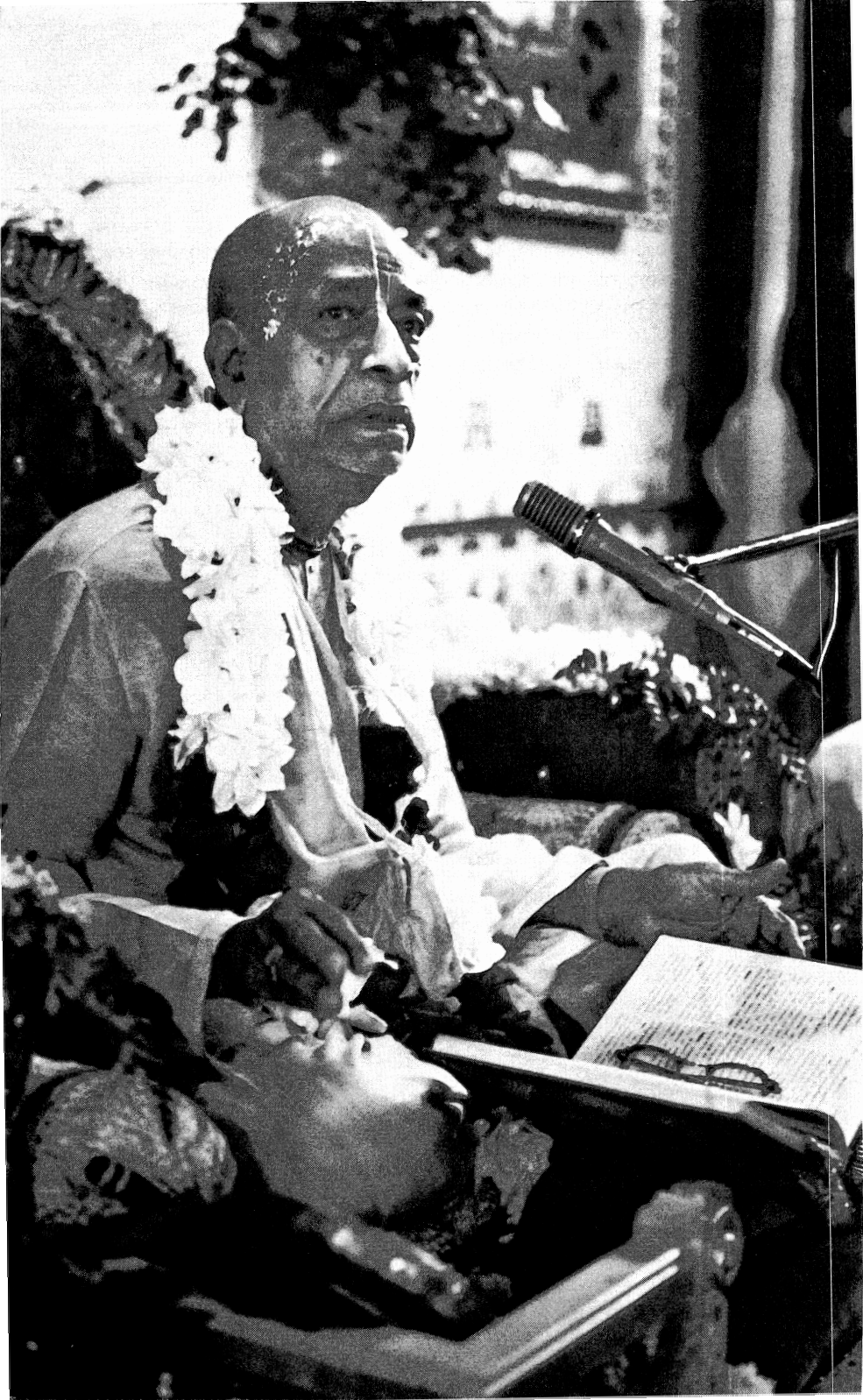
Don't look at it from a material position and become cynical: "They say Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so wonderful, but actually these people are very imperfect, and this is not so

wonderful." That's just looking at it externally, and it means you are still on the bodily level. Actually, you should think, "I can't quite grasp it. I keep thinking of externals. I keep thinking of my body. But I know I am in the sacred association of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotees, and there is nothing more valuable than this. I wish I could appreciate it. I don't appreciate it now, but at least I am not going to stupidly ruin it, or leave it (as if it were something that could be thrown away) in favor of material life." To directly see the cowherd boy Śyāmasundara—that is beyond us. But if you stick to the principles of the spiritual master, then actually you are seeing Govinda. Since the Lord is in everyone's heart, He can advise the sincere disciple from within. This was also confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me."

If a disciple is very serious in executing the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush in Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty. As Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura has said, "If I am engaged in devotional service unto You, my dear Lord, then very easily can I perceive Your presence everywhere. And as far as liberation is concerned, I think that liberation stands at my door with folded hands, waiting to serve me. And all material conveniences of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* stand with her." If one is very highly advanced in devotional service, he will have no difficulty seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one engages in the service of the spiritual master, he not only sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but also attains liberation.

When you look out at the material world and the people in this world, if you see the people as potential devotees, if you see the variety of things in the material world as things that can

be used for Kṛṣṇa, then that's seeing Kṛṣṇa. When you see a person, see a potential servant of Kṛṣṇa. Don't see something as an object of material desire, but as something which can be used to glorify Kṛṣṇa. That is seeing Kṛṣṇa. As far as material conveniences are concerned, they automatically come, just as the maidservants of the queen follow her wherever she goes. Liberation is no problem for the pure devotee, and all material conveniences are awaiting him.



6

*sūta uvāca
iti bhītaḥ prajā-drohāt
sarva-dharma-vivitsayā
tato vinaśanam prāgād
yatra deva-vrato 'patat*

Sūta Gosvāmī said: Being afraid for having killed so many subjects on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira went to the scene of the massacre. There, Bhīṣmadeva was lying on a bed of arrows, about to pass away.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.1

If we hear about the passing away of Bhīṣmadeva, it will enlighten us in understanding the significance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We want to understand the great soul in every activity he performs. His passing away, of course, is the last chapter of his pastimes in the material world. Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya also passed away. That means literally “passed away”—out of our sight, into the next world. It’s not that they have ceased to exist.

Today we are reading about Bhīṣmadeva’s passing away, which was very glorious. It was glorious because he gave

wonderful instructions—and he gave them in a condition no ordinary person could have tolerated. He was shot through with so many arrows that he was lying in the warfield on a bed of arrows; yet he maintained his mental stability because he was a great *yogī*. He was not attached to his body, and he was able to give instructions to Yudhiṣṭhira. He was so great that Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself came there just so Bhīṣma would be able to see Him as he passed away. And this ensured Bhīṣma and everyone else there that Bhīṣma returned to Godhead on leaving his body. Whatever anyone thinks at the time of death, that consciousness determines his next body. So everyone knew that Bhīṣma went back to Godhead.

One obvious parallel here with the life of Śrīla Prabhupāda is that he was always in the company of Kṛṣṇa and that he continued to be in Kṛṣṇa's company at the end of his life. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us, "People say they want to see Kṛṣṇa, but I say, 'Do you have the eyes to see Kṛṣṇa?' *Premāñjana-cchurita bhakti vilocanena*. You have to qualify your eyes with the salve of devotion; otherwise, you can't see Kṛṣṇa. You are so proud. You demand to see God. But you can hear God in His holy name. This is called *nāma-avatāra*." People ask, "Where is Kṛṣṇa? He is supposed to come every age, so why isn't He coming now?" The answer is that Kṛṣṇa is here in the name "Kṛṣṇa." Lord Caitanya taught that Kṛṣṇa is not different from His name. *San̄kīrtana*, the chanting of the holy name, is not different from Kṛṣṇa. It is Kṛṣṇa appearing in this age. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda, of course, is in disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya, through his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and this is the teaching for this age. *Kalau tad dhārī-kīrtanāt*. "In the age of Kali, the best method for worshiping God is to chant the holy name." In Satya-yuga, the recommended process was meditation. In Tretā-yugā, it was to offer sacrifice. In Dvāpara-yuga it was to personally worship the Lord. And now, in Kali-yuga—*kalau tad dhārī-kīrtanāt*—the process is to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa.

So during his last days, Prabhupāda was surrounding himself with the holy name. His whole life had been dedicated to spreading the holy name to every town and village. For his passing away, he especially wanted to fill his room with devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa fulfilled that wish. Śrīla Prabhupāda left his body in the most sacred place on earth, Vṛndāvana, surrounded by Vaiṣṇavas. We are neophyte devotees, just recently picked up from the *mleccha* class, but anyone who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, even if he is born in a dog-eater family, has to be considered an exalted devotee who is qualified to perform Vedic *yajña*. Śrīla Prabhupāda was surrounded by *kīrtana* performed by the Vaiṣṇavas he had created, who were qualified only by following his orders. And that *kīrtana* was actually Kṛṣṇa.

What to speak of Śrīla Prabhupāda, even an ordinary devotee who leaves his body in Vṛndāvana, hearing the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, goes back to Kṛṣṇa. A few months ago, a young girl died in Vṛndāvana, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked if she went back to Godhead to personally associate with Kṛṣṇa. He said, "Yes. Anyone who leaves his body in Vṛndāvana is liberated." So what to speak of the person who is in the foremost Vṛndāvana consciousness—Śrīla Prabhupāda. There is no doubt about His Divine Grace's destination. Prabhupāda used to say, "I can either stay or leave. I have no objection. If I go to the spiritual world, I'll do the same thing I am doing here: I'll serve Kṛṣṇa."

So just as Bhīṣma saw Kṛṣṇa at the end, Śrīla Prabhupāda also saw Kṛṣṇa. As Bhīṣma gave instructions from the bed of arrows, Śrīla Prabhupāda also gave instructions from a position that was so painful and difficult that it seemed a humanly impossible feat. Śrīla Prabhupāda had eaten almost nothing for six months, and his body was so emaciated. According to the doctors, his body was in such a condition that he was in intense pain. But Prabhupāda remained completely collected and noble and grave. And he was teaching . . . until the end. He was teaching Svarūpa Dāmodara dāś that life comes from life,

not from matter. He was peaching and giving instructions to so many devotees. He was showing us that one should preach with every breath he has. And he was teaching us how to die.

The time of death, as King Kulaśekhara prays, is very difficult. Death means that the soul cannot stand to live in the body any more. Everything collapses. Whatever the cause is—heart failure, electric shock, wearing out of the body—it means that the situation has become unbearable for the soul. For the soul to leave the body is not an easy thing. It causes great distress. Therefore, one should not take birth again, because every time he takes birth he will have to die again. And death is the most fearful thing for the living being. As Śrīla Prabhupāda explains it: Imagine that you are a very lowly person but you have been promised that in your next life you will be born as a king. Someone might think, “Yes, I’d like to be a king in my next life.” But then suppose someone says, “All right, you have to leave your present body right now, and then you can take the king’s body.” Nobody would want to do it, because to leave the body is such botheration for the soul. He is not supposed to die; he is supposed to live eternally in his spiritual body. To be in such an unnatural situation, in which he who doesn’t die has to die, is the greatest pain. So at the time of death, a person usually just thinks of the death rattle in his throat or the pain. King Kulaśekhara prayed, “Please let me pass away, not in some prolonged contemplation of my bodily death, but just while I am chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. If I can meditate on You and then pass from this body, that would be good.”

But Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us how it is possible to go step by step to death in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In one of his last days, he told one of our Godbrothers, Śatadhanya Mahārāja, “Don’t think that this isn’t going to happen to you.” Because one may tend to think, “Yes, Prabhupāda has departed, but we are still here. We will carry on in our youthful way after his departure.” But the same thing is going to happen to us! He underwent what everyone has to undergo—death, which is so fearful—in a way that was perfect and glorious. When we have

to go, we can cling to the memory of how a great soul left his body—always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, surrounding himself with the medicine of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, wanting to hear about Kṛṣṇa, and being very detached from the misery of the material condition.

Ācārya means one who teaches by example. And this last lesson that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us was one of his most wonderful and most important. He taught by his life and in his books. Whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda did was instructive: the way he ate, the way he walked, the way he dressed, the way he lay down, the way he breathed, the way he moved. Everything a great soul does should be carefully studied—not imitated, but understood and followed. It's meant to be followed.

As I mentioned before, we can compare Bhīṣma's passing away to Prabhupāda's. Bhīṣma was a great soul, and the particular details of his passing away are instructive for everyone. This is real education: learning how to die. The dog dies, the cat dies, the human being dies. When the cat and dog die, there's no meaning, but a human being is supposed to understand the process for going back to the spiritual world at the time of death. *Ante nārāyaṇa smṛti*: "The ultimate test is whether at the time of death you are able to remember Nārāyaṇa, or Kṛṣṇa." We don't know the internal situation of the pure devotee—no one can know the mind of a Vaiṣṇava—but Śrīla Prabhupāda obviously remained fixed and undisturbed. His passing away was a perfect lesson.

A few days after Prabhupāda disappeared, I asked Girirāja Goswami, "What is the actual significance of our having been witnesses of Śrīla Prabhupāda's passing away?" And he said, "Well, to actually have seen it means that you can bear witness that up to the very end, Prabhupāda remained exactly the same. There was nothing suddenly incongruous with what he had previously shown and taught us." So we can attest to that. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja commented that Prabhupāda passed away showing us no miracle and no gimmicks, but always

depending on Kṛṣṇa. His passing was also very peaceful and in the perfect situation: in Vṛndāvana with the devotees.

Let's read a little more about Bhīṣma now. "At that time, all his brothers followed him on beautiful chariots drawn by first-class horses decorated with gold ornaments. With him were Vyāsa and ṛṣīs like Dhaumya, the learned priest of the Pāṇḍavas, and others. O sage amongst the *brāhmaṇas*, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, also followed, seated on a chariot with Arjuna. Thus King Yudhiṣṭhira appeared very aristocratic, like Kuvera surrounded by his companions the Guhyakas." Kṛṣṇa wanted the Pāṇḍavas to go there, because Bhīṣma always liked the Pāṇḍavas. He tried to protect them when they were boys growing up. They had to undergo such trouble. But now they were well placed again, so he would be happy to see them in this way. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also happy to see his devotees, and he was unhappy if they didn't come and be with him. This means that he accepts his disciples and encourages them to see him and become more attached to him, so that they can carry on Kṛṣṇa consciousness in his absence. Śrīla Prabhupāda was surrounded by loving devotees and was cared for attentively. He was happy to see his disciples and hear them chanting.

Kṛṣṇa Himself came to the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra for the sake of Bhīṣma. "Seeing him (Bhīṣma) lying on the ground like a demigod fallen from the sky, the Pāṇḍava king Yudhiṣṭhira, along with his younger brothers and Lord Kṛṣṇa, bowed down before him." Kṛṣṇa planned that not only would Bhīṣma be happy, but the Pāṇḍavas would benefit from his instructions. Yudhiṣṭhira was in great anxiety for having killed so many people, so he had gone to many great personalities, even Lord Kṛṣṇa, and submitted, "I think my life is ruined. How can I make up for all this slaughter? Millions were killed at Kurukṣetra just to reinstate me on the royal throne." But no one could pacify his heart. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa wanted the Pāṇḍavas to hear from Bhīṣma, who alone was able to give such great

instructions even at the time of his death. So, Kṛṣṇa likes to glorify His devotee.

Kṛṣṇa enjoys playing different roles with His devotees, just so that He can taste transcendental pleasure. He doesn't want to always act as God; sometimes He likes to act in human society and taste loving mellows with different devotees. And here He is reacting like an ordinary person. Śrīla Prabhupāda also liked to do that: to submit to the care of his devotees and take their advice, although he was actually directing them. This especially was his mood at the end. "You just take care of everything. I'll agree to whatever you say," he told his servants and secretary. He let them direct him, even to the point of washing and feeding him, moving him, and consoling and encouraging him. He simply let them do as they liked.

The next verse reads, "Just to see the chief of the descendants of King Bharata, Bhīṣma, all the great souls in the universe, namely the ṛṣīs amongst the demigods, *brāhmaṇas* and kings, all situated in the quality of goodness, were assembled there." The purport begins, "All of them assembled there upon hearing the news of the great warrior's impending death." We can just imagine such a great assembly of important personalities from all over the universe. Certainly everyone there would have had his own idea of spiritual life. So if someone were to appeal to them all, he'd have to know the ultimate universal principles of religion. He would have to speak in such a way that everyone would be willing to give up sectarian beliefs or would see that all sectarian beliefs were included within his teachings. This was Bhīṣma's greatness as a *mahā-jana*, a leading authority in spiritual knowledge, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was also qualified in that way—to teach *sanātana dharma* so expertly that it could be accepted by all people all over the world. We ourselves were not satisfied with sectarian religions or establishment, society and politics. We had become cynical. But Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to break through that because he convinced us: you simply take to spiritual life; and

here is your spiritual life, without any sectarianism. You are disillusioned with politics and sectarian religions, but don't think that all religion is nonsense. Here's the science of the soul — *Bhagavad-gītā* — and it has nothing to do with Jewish or Christian or black or white. This is spiritual truth.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's expertise was that he knew exactly how to preach — to hippies, or Indians, or women, or anybody.

On the night of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *viraha mahotsava*, the leading *gosvāmīs* and *paṇḍitas* of Vṛndāvana gathered and honored Śrīla Prabhupāda. They gave speeches — many in Hindi, which we couldn't understand — all praising Śrīla Prabhupāda. One of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers was slighting Prabhupāda. He said that he had also gone to America, some ten years or so after Prabhupāda, and had stayed as the guest of a professor. The professor had said to him, "Swamiji, if you had come earlier, you could have converted thousands of hippies to become your disciples." And he said, "But I told the professor, 'No, that's not my temperament, to deal with this hippie class and low-class kind of people. Someone else can do that. This is not my temperament.' " But actually, that means his temperament is that he *can't* do it. It means that his temperament lacks great compassion and boldness and expertise, because a Vaiṣṇava wants to convert the conditioned souls. Actually, it is a fact that it was not his temperament. He did not make thousands of disciples, because he didn't have a compassionate, expert, philosophical, humorous, tolerant, completely non-sectarian temperament. Śrīla Prabhupāda's present disciples are not particularly fond of Hindu culture — or even Vaiṣṇava culture as it exists now in India. It is not that we could have been converted just because of our attraction for the culture. Rather, it was because such a dynamic preacher — such a great soul who was a citizen of the whole world — came and delivered us. So if you call that "temperament," it's the temperament of the great soul. We have to be so grateful to Prabhupāda, because by his own personality, actually, he rescued us. He presented Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to time and place.

Otherwise, by reading the *Bhagavad-gītā* in the library, or anything like that, no one would have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—without Śrīla Prabhupāda's example. And even those who will come in the future generations will also be totally indebted to Śrīla Prabhupāda's work. Whatever anyone did before him which led to him in the *paramparā* must be acknowledged. But what he did can never be overemphasized. It cannot be appreciated enough. And whatever anyone does after should never be thought to be independent of what Śrīla Prabhupāda has done.



7

*tathāpy ekānta-bhakteṣu
paśya bhūpānukampitam
yan me 'sūmā tyajataḥ sākṣāt
kṛṣṇo darśanam āgataḥ*

Yet, despite His being equally kind to everyone,
He has graciously come before me, while I am
ending my life, for I am His unflinching servitor.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.22

These words were spoken by Bhīṣma as he lay on the bed of arrows. Everyone was gathered around him—all the great sages, including Vyāsadeva, Nārada, and Śukadeva, as well as Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas. Everyone there knew that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appearing in His pastime as a member of the Yadu dynasty. Bhīṣma knew that Kṛṣṇa was very kind, especially to His devotees, and was therefore coming to see him.

Ordinarily, at the time of death, the soul may travel anywhere in the universe according to his *karma*. But Bhīṣma's destination was already settled, because he was a great devotee,

a *mahājana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that Bhīṣma certainly was destined to go back to Godhead. Yet he was humbly thinking that it was not settled: "Actually, I will probably not attain Kṛṣṇa." But Kṛṣṇa mercifully came before Bhīṣma, just so that Bhīṣma could think of Him. Then Bhīṣma thought, "I see You now, Kṛṣṇa. This is Your mercy, because after I leave this body I may not see You." This was his humility.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "The appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa at the deathbed of Bhīṣmajī is due to his being an unflinching devotee of the Lord. Arjuna had some bodily relation with Kṛṣṇa, because the Lord happened to be his maternal cousin. But Bhīṣma had no such bodily relation. Therefore, the cause of attraction was due to the intimate relation of the soul. Yet because the relation of the body is very pleasing and natural, the Lord is more pleased when He is addressed as the son of Mahārāja Nanda, the son of Yaśodā, the lover of Rādhārāṇī. This affinity by bodily relation with the Lord is another feature of reciprocating loving service with the Lord. Bhīṣmadeva is conscious of the sweetness of transcendental humor, and therefore he likes to address the Lord as *Vijaya Sakhe*, *Pārtha Sakhe*. The best way to establish our relation with the Lord, in transcendental sweetness, is to approach Him through His recognized devotees. One should not try to establish the relation directly. There must be a *via medium* which is transparent and competent to lead us to the right path."

It's possible, by reading in the *Vedas*, to acknowledge that Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu is the Supreme Truth. But that won't bring you into what is referred to here as "the sweetness of transcendental humor." Nārāyaṇa has so many thousands of servitors in Vaikuṇṭha who recognize that He is the Supreme Truth, the supreme controller. And in Vaikuṇṭha every soul offers obeisances unto the Supreme Soul. We are all part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, and obeisances are due Him. But this is something special—this loving attitude whereby one thinks of Kṛṣṇa not as the ultimate omnipotent being, but in relation with one of His pure devotees with whom He has some familial relation-

ship. For example, His mother is Yaśodā, and Arjuna is His friend. So Bhīṣma likes to think of Kṛṣṇa as the Friend of Arjuna. And when you address Kṛṣṇa in this way, it is very pleasing to Him. As for ourselves, we approach Kṛṣṇa through our connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda. For us, who is Kṛṣṇa but Prabhupāda's worshipable Lord.

Kṛṣṇa is the father of all living beings, the seed-giving father. We know Him as the Deity installed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, or the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us. As the pure devotees think of Kṛṣṇa's dealings with eternally liberated souls, like His friends and mother, so we can think of Kṛṣṇa by thinking of our spiritual master and thinking of his different activities of service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda's activities are not manifest any more, but that doesn't mean we can't meditate on them. Kṛṣṇa Himself performed activities for 125 years, and then He left. And the world is still remembering those pastimes.

Now the point is that when we remember Śrīla Prabhupāda we can remember Kṛṣṇa. We are following the instructions of the spiritual master in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness very actively. But to do that and simultaneously taste the transcendental mellow in it, you have to be feeling your relationship with Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master. When we perform our devotional service, sometimes it seems very worldly. For example, we have many business affairs in pushing on the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and going to the morning devotional program in the temple and hearing about Kṛṣṇa throughout the day, we acquire that taste which sustains our service. Thinking of Śrīla Prabhupāda includes remembering his pastimes as well as his instructions. His instructions are, of course, more important, but if we can actually understand what is being described here, and relish Kṛṣṇa in His dealings with those who are dear to Him, then we will taste the sweetness. And why shouldn't we take advantage if there is something sweetly intimate and reciprocal between Kṛṣṇa and a devotee? If we can enter into that sweetness, then

our service will be sweeter. And Bhīṣma is relishing the sweetness of thinking about Kṛṣṇa and His intimate dealings with His devotees, not just as the absolute controller of all living beings. And this kind of devotional service is more advanced in love of God.

We are trying to study Bhīṣma's passing away in its own right, of course, but also as a parallel or reminder of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Bhīṣma was an expert religionist who could speak in a way that would appeal to everyone present. And although he was physically so inconvenienced, he was able to speak the highest philosophy. Therefore, all the great sages had come, and Kṛṣṇa was there in His spiritual form. When Kṛṣṇa comes to the material world, He maintains His eternal form, as does His pure devotee. Such a devotee is called *jīvān-mukta*. But the atheistic disbelievers not only doubt that the pure devotee has a spiritual body; they even doubt that Kṛṣṇa is actually spiritual. They think that anyone who comes to the material world must be materially covered. We should not misunderstand this.

The body of a *jīvān-mukta* (eternally liberated soul) is not different than Kṛṣṇa's eternal body. There is a difference, but Śrīla Prabhupāda said it's like the difference between a solid gold box and a gold-plated box. For all practical purposes, the gold-plated box serves the same as the solid gold box. If one is fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then Kṛṣṇa accepts him as fully spiritual. A great saintly person's body is considered spiritual, and therefore it is not cremated. Although the spiritual master's body is made of the material elements, because he uses his body fully in Kṛṣṇa's service, it has a totally transcendental quality. Still, because it is ultimately made of these material elements, it tends to become old, and eventually he gives it up. But he is not affected by this change of body. That should be understood.

According to the *śāstras*, if you mistake the pure devotee's body as being material, your mentality is hellish—the same as if you think of the Deity as brass or stone. Rūpa Gosvāmī says that although the Ganges becomes muddy in the rainy season,

the Ganges is not taken to be dirty or contaminated. The water is still pure. So in the same way, if you think that there is some defect in the body of the pure devotee, then it is like thinking that the Ganges is contaminated. Those who are actually advanced will bathe in the Ganges, without considering the condition of the water or the presence of bubbles, foam, and mud. And those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious will worship the spiritual master without forming any material concepts. Prabhupāda's servant Upendra was with Śrīla Prabhupāda all through the last months, and day by day he saw Śrīla Prabhupāda diminish in his form. So he said, "People come to me and say, 'Prabhupāda looks terribly thin. He looks so different from his picture before.' But honestly, I don't think of Prabhupāda as being any different. He's always Śrīla Prabhupāda to me. He's the same person. I can understand that he is getting thinner and thinner and thinner, but it doesn't really strike me that he's any different now." He could understand that Prabhupāda is a spiritual person and that the bodily condition does not affect him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has written in one of his purports to *The Nectar of Instruction*, "Kṛṣṇa's devotee is not subject to material conditions, even though his bodily features may appear materially contaminated. One should not therefore see a pure devotee from a materialistic point of view. Unless one is actually a devotee, he cannot see another devotee perfectly. No one should criticize the bodily defects of the pure devotee. If there are such defects, they should be overlooked." So-called defects include the phenomenon of his disappearing. When Kṛṣṇa disappeared, He was shot in the foot by a hunter, and some say that this was due to His sinful activities. Or they say that about Lord Jesus Christ. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Jesus did this to bewilder the atheists: "You wanted to see me dead? Now, you can see that I am dead. And now your atheism is confirmed. So if you want to be a doomed atheist, then you can go to hell."

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "I cast the demons further and further away from Me." Sometimes Kṛṣṇa does that,

just to make them believe in their own nonsense. But His disappearance shouldn't be misunderstood. The faithless person thinks, "He always preached liberation of the soul, but now I see that he is also a conditioned soul." No. He is spiritual every step of the way. And if he leaves this material body, that also is—try to understand this—just another manifestation of his divinity as a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, teaching us how to leave the body. "No one should criticize the bodily defects of the pure devotee. If there are such defects, they should be overlooked." What should be taken into account is the spiritual master's main business, which is devotional service, pure service to the Supreme Lord.

For the neophyte especially, considering a pure devotee from a materialistic point of view is very injurious. Therefore, one should avoid observing a pure devotee externally but try to see the internal features and understand how he is engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. In Prabhupāda's last days, he was still translating the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If you observed his external features, he was so weak that he could not even sit up. He could not press his finger on the dictaphone. He was lying flat on his back. There was no question of reading the books to prepare his dictation. His secretary or Pradyumna Prabhū would read the Sanskrit and the word-for-word synonyms. Jayādvaita Swami would press the button of the dictaphone and hold it to his mouth, and Prabhupāda would speak, with a voice that could barely be picked up on the tape. So someone may say, "Well he is now defeated by the material nature."

But look at the internal features. Despite a material condition of impossibility, he was still doing his devotional work. He said, when he was still dictating although so weak, "People are wondering if this old man is still alive. But they can know that I am still here beating on this big *mṛdaṅga*, and it is being heard all over the world." So they are wondering—such a tiny strength left, but he was beating that drum, and still that drum is beating; and it's going to be heard for hundreds and hundreds of years,

if we can carry out his order. In this way, one can avoid seeing the pure devotee from a material point of view, and thus one can gradually become a purified devotee.

The devotee is spiritual, and Kṛṣṇa is also spiritual. When Bhīṣma saw that the Pāṇḍavas had come to see him, he began to cry because of his great affection for them. They were at his deathbed, and he was very glad to see them. They had suffered so much for him, and he was feeling love for them. He said to them, "I am very sorry that you had to suffer. You suffered so much, but you were protected by the *brāhmaṇas*, God, and religion." As long as a person is fully in cooperation with the wishes of the Lord, guided by bona fide *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas and strictly following the religious principles, then there is no cause for despondency, no matter how trying the circumstances of life may be. This was one of Bhīṣma's instructions. "Don't feel sad. As long as you're Kṛṣṇa conscious, it really doesn't matter what else happens to you." As he could have said, "Just like me. Here I am in such a terrible condition, on a bed of arrows; but I am not sorry. This is all Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, and, Yudhiṣṭhira, it is the same with you."

Some people become very unhappy when their fortunes are turned. When a husband and wife or mother and child are separated, they sometimes cannot even go on living. Because it is such a reverse to them, they think that everything has become inauspicious. In considering ourselves, having just been separated from our spiritual master, you can't say it's not a great loss. But according to Bhīṣmadeva's instructions, it's not that we become morose or inactive and forget the meaning of life. As we have already discussed many times, the disappearance of the spiritual master activates the devotee in a new way to a closer relationship with the spiritual master—one that was not even there before. Śrīla Prabhupāda had given us mercy in every conceivable way by giving us his books and this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But there are so many more things that have yet to be revealed. And one unexpected blessing is that even in his absence each one of us suddenly has an oppor-

tunity to move in closer to him. The word *upaniṣad* means to come closer to the spiritual master, to hear from him more closely. So now we are all feeling separation, but there is nothing to be sorry about. Śrīla Prabhupāda always encouraged us to take everything in a hopeful, enthusiastic way, and push on, depending on Kṛṣṇa.

*He reasons ill who tells that Vaiṣṇavas die
When thou art living still in sound!
The Vaiṣṇavas die to live, and living try
To spread the holy name around!*
