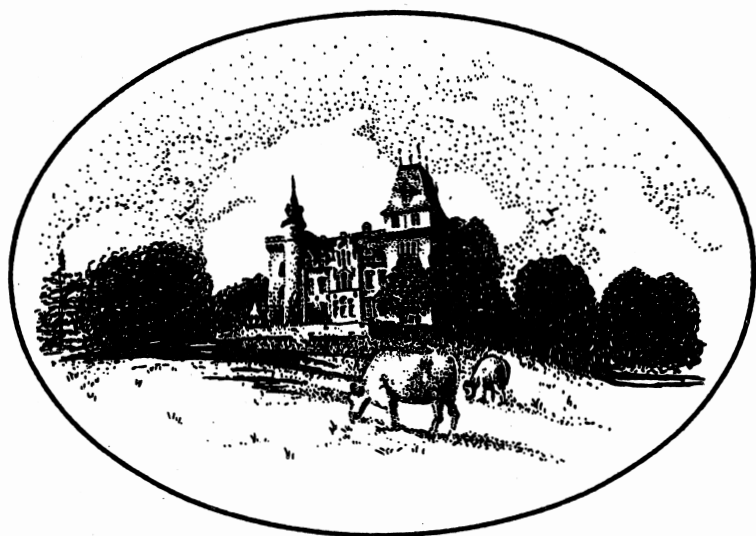


# *Lessons from the Road*

*Volume Fifteen*

France, Belgium, Holland, Germany  
April – June 1988



Rādhādeśa, Belgium

*Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami*

# Lessons from the Road

"Queen of Vṛndāvana, Rādhārāṇī! O Lalitā! O son of Nanda Mahārāja! Where are you all now? Are you just on the hill of Govardhana, or are you under the trees on the bank of the Yamunā? Where are you?"

—Śrī Śrī *Ṣaḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭaka*  
by Śrīnivāsa Ācārya

"If a man offered prayers today because he did so yesterday, he was worse than a scoundrel, said the kotsker (a Hasidic "guru"). Everyday prayer had to have a fresh approach. One ought to search out the truth daily as if it had not been known before.... The true worship of God, Reb Mendel (the Kotsker) seemed to say, was not in finding Truth, but rather, in an honest search for it."

—*A Passion for Truth*  
by H. J. Heschel

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*Lessons from the Road (Vols. 1-14)*

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## *Volume Fifteen*

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The  
Gita-nagari Press  
Philadelphia, PA



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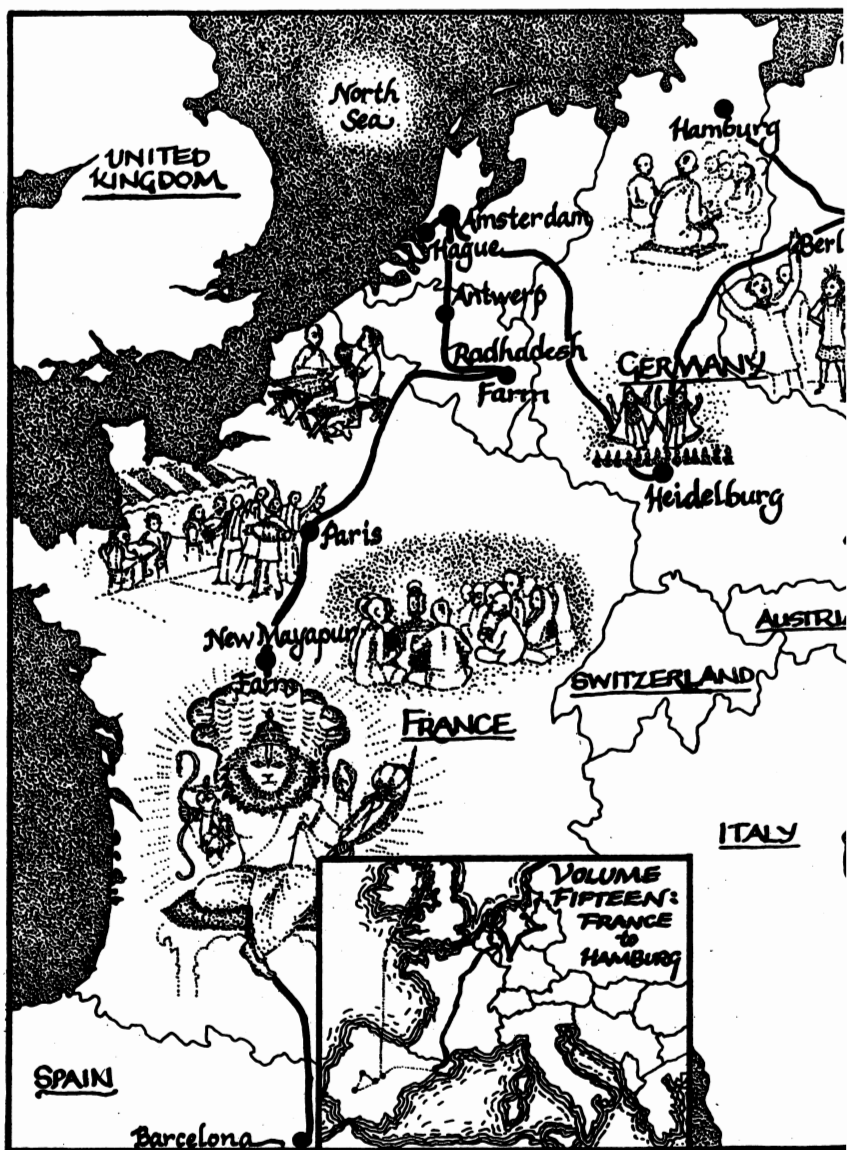
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## CHAPTER FORTY

### *France*

*April 25, travel day to France*

While reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters, I have found statements recommending travel for a *sannyāsī*. He writes, "For a *sannyāsī*, traveling gives him more experience for serving Kṛṣṇa." And, "the more a *sannyāsī* travels and preaches, the more he becomes experienced and unattached." In another letter Prabhupāda was happy to see a *sannyāsī* traveling and said that this was also the process practiced by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who traveled all over India for six years, "and my Guru Mahārāja also traveled, and similarly I am also traveling."

Today, Rāma Govinda dāsa is going to drive us in a van into France where we will catch a night train for a nine-hour trip to Châteauroux, and from there we will go to the New Māyāpur farm.

Yesterday Prahādānanda Swami explained to me that after Bhagavān Prabhu's departure, France ISKCON suffered much more than Spain or Italy. They have already lost one valuable property, and they are on the verge of losing New Māyāpur. Prahādānanda Swami said that several hundred initiated devotees were living in the temples, and many of them had sacrificed greatly to collect funds for the projects and for related ISKCON spending. With the loss of faith in leadership and the loss of property,

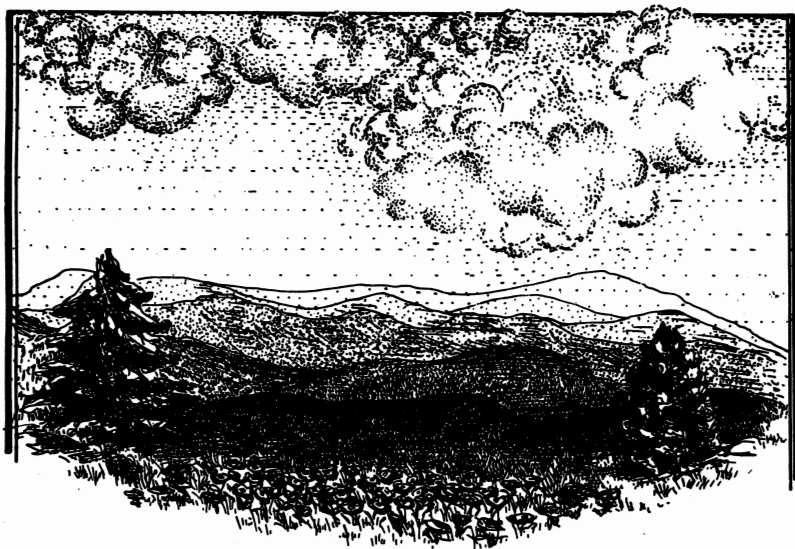
most devotees have left the temples and are living outside, practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in one form or another. So we may expect to find only a handful of devotees and maybe only two functioning temples.

Prahlādānanda Swami also informed me that we may expect a cold reception from the nondevotees of France. He said that when he visited a few years ago, immigration guards stripped him naked and punched holes in his soap looking for drugs. Madhu-māṅgala confirmed from his own experience that, because of so many wars and other cultural clashes, French people aren't friendly toward Germans, English, Americans, or anyone who doesn't speak French.

I was wondering what we could expect to contribute there. Maybe we can meet with devotees who have left the temples, but there may not be an opportunity to gather with them. Besides, maybe my "message" is too glib, since I haven't lived through the rise and fall of the empire as they have. What will I say?—"All right, so the person whom you worshiped and to whom you dedicated your life and soul has left you, and the temples which you toiled so hard to build have been taken away, but after all, Lord Kṛṣṇa is still the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So there is no reason to be bitter." But when you have been severely disappointed in one way, it is hard not to feel a wider disappointment.

### *"Home again"*

Mentioning our travel today, Madhu said, "We will be home again." He calls actual travel time "home," because it's the constant situation, whereas the places we stay in—a room in Miami or Belfast or



Barcelona—are only visits. When we are moving with our luggage, that's our normal position, at least for now.

The border crossing was easy, but the mountain crossing proved difficult. When you were leery climbing into the Pyrenees mountains between Spain and France, when the road had no guardrails but seemed to be a continual cliff thousands of feet above the sea, *then* you didn't cling to a book by Sören Kierkegaard. No, you wanted to think of Kṛṣṇa and Vedic knowledge. So if at the most crucial hour you want to push away and forget some things as not a complete shelter, then why dally with them at any time? We should live as if we were always at the edge of the cliff. This will lessen our many anxieties and help us prepare for death. What else are we preparing for?

By the time we reached the French town of Cerber and boarded the train, I was ready to climb into the upper berth.

But I couldn't sleep. I suppose some travelers love it, or they get used to it. But every time the train stopped, a bell rang and they made announcements, and I awoke. Of course, the drive of the wheels and the sway of the cars have their own music and rhythm....

During the night, I tried to think of how Kṛṣṇa is appealing to different devotees. I had read in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, in Lord Caitanya's explanations of the *ātmārāma* verse, that the Kumāras were attracted by the aroma of the *tulasī* at the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu, and Śukadeva was attracted to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and the *gopīs* were attracted to His beautiful bodily features and to the sound of His flute. So I wanted to begin thinking of the Kumāras and how they must have been very innocent and pure like children, and yet they were great philosophers and very old renunciates. They are a great mystery, they defy the time and limits of human nature, these young-boy incarnations of *brahman* knowledge. And yet the apparently simple attraction by them to a few *tulasī* leaves at the Lord's feet completely changed their minds from impersonalism to Viṣṇu *bhakti*. I tried to remember the aroma of *tulasī*. It's not a very strong or very sweet smell, a faint but pleasant scent associated with temple life and incense and *tulasī-pūjā kīrtana*. Then I thought of Lord Viṣṇu in *Vaikuṇṭha*. Devotional paintings are a main aid to such thoughts, but they are not always perfect, or I am too weak to see through these spiritual windows. I couldn't follow my spiritual train of thought about the Kumāras and Lord Viṣṇu for very long; I became lost on a side-track, thinking how I wouldn't be able to sleep all night.

At least it's true that we have no home. My sense of that is increasing. You are not thinking of returning to your room or your house or your own path in the woods. But what about your sense of mission? Mine is mostly to speak in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* class. I am doing what any devotee could do. And I meet new friends and share with people everywhere the practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*April 26, New Māyāpur, France*

By speaking with Viśvambhara Mahārāja, I received a considerably brighter impression of the situation at New Māyāpur. He said that they have hit the bottom and now things are starting to improve.

After the departure of the zonal *guru* in France, Viśvambhara said there was much bitterness, and some devotees wanted to "throw away" anything that the zonal *guru* had been associated with. But Viśvambhara Mahārāja couldn't agree with rejecting something actually valuable for use in service to Prabhupāda, especially a place like New Māyāpur, which Prabhupāda had visited and very much approved. But at one point Viśvambhara Mahārāja and the temple president at New Māyāpur, Madhvācārya, were the only persons who were committed to keeping the place. Although there is a very serious financial situation in which they owe the bank a great deal of money, the problem has always been more one of devotee commitment, and not just money. Very recently, a group of about thirty devotees has gathered around New Māyāpur with a renewed sense of dedication and commitment to the project.



Viśvambhara Mahārāja says that this is a very favorable condition, and he is now hopeful that they will be able to keep the place by one financial scheme or another. He said that since France is a socialistic country, once families and children are living in a place, it is very difficult for them to be removed by another party, even through a financial suit.

The present financial plan is to sell shares of New Māyāpur to different ISKCON patrons, and he said that he has been getting some good responses. The devotees here are living quite austere now, having come way down from the days of wasteful opulence. Electricity is used very sparingly (it is turned on from 4:00 A.M. until 8:00 A.M. only, and there are very few frills and extras).

Viśvambhara Mahārāja said that there had been over three hundred initiated devotees living in France in the ISKCON centers, and now there are only thirty at New Māyāpur and a much smaller group in Paris. But many of them, he said, still continue to follow the principles and to chant, and now gradually they are starting to visit the temples. On Janmāṣṭamī, for example, they had a very large gathering of devotees at New Māyāpur. This is another reason why he thinks it is important to keep New Māyāpur as a center where all devotees can come. He also thinks that by going out to visit devotees in their homes he can help them to keep good relationships with ISKCON, and he thinks eventually, when they see that New Māyāpur is actually being maintained in a spiritual way, some of them may come back. "Of course, I am an optimist," he said. But Viśvambhara is not an irresponsible optimist. He is like a steady anchor here in New Māyāpur, and one feels that as long as he is

staying here, thinking and talking like this, the place will be preserved and will continue. We both conjectured that possibly in the future even the spreading out of hundreds of devotees around France could turn into something more favorable than we have ever known. He said that even now quite a few of these devotees are talking about opening up little "preaching centers," and so we can see a wider infiltration of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement throughout the whole country.

I was impressed with Viśvambhara Mahārāja as a very modest person, a humble *sannyāsī*. He feels a bit embarrassed that he doesn't travel widely and that he doesn't "have so many friends." I said that it's more important that he stays and does substantial work, rather than just tour and have a wide group of friends in a social sense. He also has refrained from starting to initiate disciples, although he appreciates the "bravery" of those who are doing so.

### *First impressions of the Deities at New Māyāpur*

Gaura and Nityāi appeared almost translucent, shimmering white-hued, and opulently dressed. All the Deities were dressed in royal purple with beautifully crested *jāṛī*, including patterns of light pink and light blue peacocks. One gets the impression that this is on the top standard of Deity dressing in ISKCON.

After bowing down and looking up at Govinda-Mādhava, I was really startled. He is different from almost all other Kṛṣṇas in that His head is tilted extremely to one side and His whole body is curved that way. I got the impression of a "divine madness," something that we sometimes sense in descriptions of

Kṛṣṇa in the *rāsa* dance when He is in the full swing, playing on His flute and leading the *gopīs*, like a maddened elephant, in the water with many she-elephants. Not only His bodily posture but His eyes also have a wild, intoxicated look. Once you get used to it, it is wonderful to see Kṛṣṇa in a mood that is different from His very stately formal pose with the flute. He was decorated in a very opulent turban and was playing a golden flute. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī was also beyond stereotyped models, although I still do not have a clear impression from my first glimpse.



The Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Deities also were startling. Balarāma is smiling in a very confident and good-natured way, and yet at His side is a huge club. I got the impression that He was smiling at the demons He was about to fight, "All right, you rascals, come on." But of course He is smiling differently to His devotees. Kṛṣṇa seemed very serious, not light-hearted, and very much *a person*. It was like Kṛṣṇa was saying to us, "This is who I am with My brother Balarāma. If you want to worship God then worship Me, and not someone else. I am Kṛṣṇa, blackish, with a flute. My pure devotees know Me this way. If you want to, you can too. This is who I am." Kṛṣṇa also appears to be staring at a distant demon like Ariṣṭāsura and readying to kill him. On seeing these forms, my mind rushed to Him, and I felt new impetus to accept the version of the pure Kṛṣṇaites. And I felt sorry that I have been straying toward more general concepts of God, as expressed by devotees other than the pure Kṛṣṇaites.

Immediately after *maṅgala-ārati*, just before I began to sing the Nṛsimha prayers, the temple president, Madhvācārya dāsa, turned to me and said, "Now we say a prayer for the protection of New Māyāpur Dhāma," and then all the devotees recited this prayer in unison:

"O Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī! O Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nṛsimhadeva! O Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi! Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma! Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava! *malgre nos offenses, nous vous prions que selon le desir de Śrīla Prabhupāda, nous puissions continuer a vous servir a la nouvelle Māyāpur Dhāma.*" ("In spite of our offenses we pray unto You that, according to Śrīla

Prabhupāda's desire, we may be able to serve You at New Māyāpur Dhāma.")

*April 27, Mohinī Ekādaśī*

We have three distinct *bhajana* sessions to help us get through the night. The first is from 8:30 to 10:00. Then another session from 11:00 to 12:00 and then one from 2:00 to 3:00. Because of the electricity restriction, we gathered tonight by kerosene lamps. No less than twenty men and women gathered, and it was very nice. At one point one of the *mātājīs* led the singing of *Dāmodarāṣṭaka*. She chose to repeat each stanza two times, which made me restless. It seemed very tedious and unnecessary to sing everything two times, but, except for me, everyone seemed to be peacefully savoring the devotional mood. After the *bhajana*, I said that devotees could sing as they liked, but at least they should know that it's not an absolute requirement that every stanza be sung twice. A little later another devotee sang a long *bhajana* and again repeated every stanza, and again my mind became agitated.

When the *bhajana* session was over, I asked to be allowed to speak, and Madhvācārya translated what I said into French. I told them what I had read in the section of the *Madhurya-kādambinī* by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, as translated by Bhanu Swami. Viśvanātha Cakravartī discusses the progressive stages of devotional service, and when he gets to the stage of *ruci* or taste, he describes a lower and higher form of *ruci*. In the lower stage the devotee is dependent on the "material elements." This means that if the *kīrtana* or *bhajana* is sung melodiously, the devotee likes it, and only if the Deity worship is done artistically, does he have a taste, and only if the literature describing Kṛṣṇa is written expertly with ornamentation, does

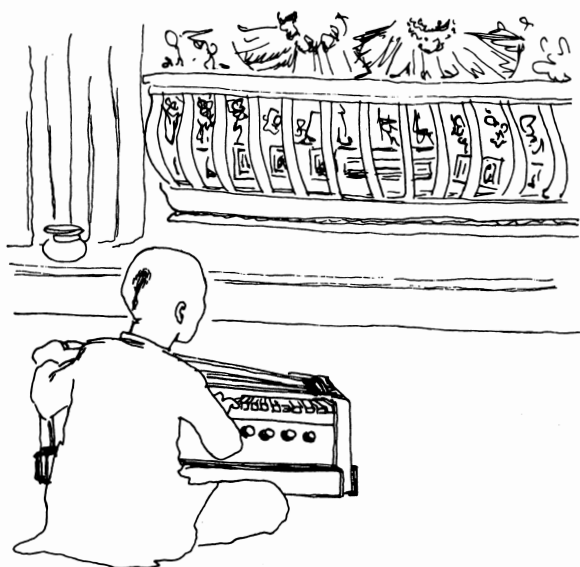
he appreciate it. But in the higher stage of *ruci*, one isn't dependent on such material elements. So we can understand that if we demand that all the songs be very, very pleasing, according to musical standards, that's not the highest. I spoke on this point mainly to correct my own mind from disapproving of the repetitious singing of the stanzas.

### *Ekādaśī note*

As I learn better how to endure *nirjalā* fast, to stay up all night and to chant sixty-four rounds, it's possible that it will become just another routine, a ritual without life. Today I found myself looking forward to tomorrow when there will be more "action" with my paper work. So much dullness and lack of life while chanting sixty-four rounds. When I tried to think of what my actual life was, what really touched me, everything seemed mostly trivial. Real life is hidden.

### *April 28*

*Bhakti* is feeling, not just intellect. When I saw the Deities this evening while the devotee was playing harmonium and singing the Nṛsiṃha prayers, I felt the *bhakti* emotion. But then I thought, much of my emotion is being stirred by the very pleasing tones of this singer and his harmonium and the fact that it is a special hour of day, just after *sundara-ārati*. Since I read that statement by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, of how the lower form of *ruci* is dependent on a pleasing arrangement of material elements, I have noticed it more. But why begrudge it when emotions come, even if in the lower forms? Śrīla Prabhupāda also stated that one should not artificially attempt to give up his lower form of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He gave the example in *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*



that in the higher stage a devotee makes no distinction about the different kinds of favorite *prasādam*—he sees and honors all *prasādam* equally as the Lord's remnants. But if you still maintain favorites among the foods, based on the tongue's satisfaction, then don't deny this, don't be dishonest—dovetail your attraction in devotional service.

If the *bhakti* emotion is aroused by the harmonium and by the singer as you look upon the Deities, don't complain or, with your predominant intellectual self, push it aside. But see that the emotion centers upon service to Kṛṣṇa. Even Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura referred to the elements when he said that "the sound of the *mṛdaṅga* makes my heart leap up." If that *mṛdaṅga* was well played, so much the better. The cowherd boys and girls are also expert in the Vaiṣṇava arts, including music. Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes referred to the temple activities, with musical *kīrtana*, decoration, and incense, as "ground work for ecstasy."

Yesterday morning there was no electricity at all, and during *maṅgala-ārati* a kerosene lamp was the only illumination on the main altars. In particular, I noticed that Gaura-Nitāi's eyes were shining, which was caused by the surrounding dimness. The shining was due to a material phenomenon, but it was very striking to see. "Look, the eyes of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda are shining."

Let us accept our emotions in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But what about negative emotions like anger and envy? Well, those should be abandoned. But when they come, if they can't be converted to favorable service, then they are your reality and you have to contend with them. At least you can note, "What a nonsense I am, still feeling twinges of envy when I hear that a Godbrother is doing admirable work. When will this contamination of mine go away?" The value depends on what you do with these emotions.

### *April 30, Appearance Day of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva*

The New Māyāpur Deity of Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁhadeva is the exact same size and shape as the Deity of Nṛsiṁhadeva whom I carry and serve. But the Deity here has been gold-plated. He stands within a golden, five-pillared throne that is covered by a jewel-studded dome. The *pūjārīs* here have lent me a crown and necklaces for "my" Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṁhadeva, and He will also hold a golden club and *cakra*. There will be an *abhiṣeka* of the temple Deity today and morning and evening classes devoted to the topics of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, with fasting until the evening.

I recall the first times we heard the story of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva from Śrīla Prabhupāda. He read many



verses from his large Sanskrit volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and extemporaneously translated them during evening classes at 26 Second Avenue. The wonderful boy-saint Prahlaḍa! The amazing adventures of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa in the form of half-lion, half-man!

As a preacher, every devotee gets a chance to tell others about the pastimes of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, at least when we find someone with a little bit of faith. I remember fifteen years ago describing Him to a group of very interested people after a public lecture in Santa Cruz, California, while we were taking *prasādam*. They were delighted, and I was too, as I explained the picture of God tearing apart the demon. As Prabhupāda told the doctor who visited him in the hospital in 1967, "Here God is in His loving exchange, and here we see that anger comes from Kṛṣṇa, or God."

The Supreme Lord took this form for the pleasure of His devotee Prahlaḍa. He comes to protect the devotee and vanquish the demon. But we are not as qualified as the pure *bhakta* Prahlaḍa. When Ted Patrick began kidnapping members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the 1970s, the deprogrammers would sometimes taunt a devotee, "So how come your Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva isn't coming to kill me and save you?" In a simplistic way, naive devotees spoke as if they expected Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva to appear whenever they wanted Him to smote down whoever was harassing us. They would call out "Nṛsiṃhadeva!" or sing the *mantra*, and sometimes they reported miraculous results.

Karandhara dāsa said Prabhupāda first introduced



the daily singing of the full Nṛsimha *mantras* after someone threw a bomb into the Los Angeles temple. We had already been chanting the Nṛsimha *mantra* for the help of Śrīla Prabhupāda. And after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, it seemed natural to continue the singing at the end of *āratis*, "for the protection of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement."

So we pray to Lord Nṛsimhadeva and always expect His mercy and protection. The Lord smashes the demons, including the demons within us.

*om namo bhagavate narasimhāya....  
abhayam abhayam ātmani bhūyiṣṭhā om kṣraum*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Nṛsimhadeva, the source of all power. O my Lord who possesses nails and teeth just like thunderbolts, kindly vanquish our demonlike desires for fruitive activity in this material world. Please appear in our hearts and drive away our ignorance so that by Your mercy we may become fearless in this struggle for existence in this material world.

—Bhāg. 5.18.8

In his purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "One cannot stop the repetition of birth and death without being completely desireless.... Therefore we should always offer our prayers to Lord Nṛsimhadeva, who killed Hiranyakaśipu, the personification of material desire.... Hiranyakaśipu was the perfect representative of materialistic life. He was therefore the cause of great disturbance to the topmost devotee, Prahlāda Mahārāja, until Lord Nṛsimhadeva killed him. Any devotee aspiring to be free of material desires should offer his respectful prayers to Nṛsimhadeva as Prahlāda Mahārāja did in this verse."

At the lecture this morning,  
a Frenchman asked, "Why does God  
allow free will if He knows we will suffer?"  
I was able to praise  
the Supreme Lord's love for us—  
He allows us the liberty  
even to do wrong.  
And the questioner's doubts  
allowed me to say that  
You, my dear Lord, want servitors  
who come to You freely,  
without force,  
because with them You enjoy  
blissful pastimes—  
You would not enjoy if  
Your servitors were  
like robots under Your force.

In the talk today  
I admitted it will take severe  
sacrifice to banish  
all material desires,  
and I condemned "comfortable religion"  
and many other right things I said  
on behalf of the Gauḍīya  
Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*.

But now, low again.

All glories to You, My Lord.  
Nṛsiṁhadeva is Your name  
in Your *adbhuta-līlā* of long ago.  
Please allow me to speak again tonight  
to the gathered guests and devotees.

I pray to give these talks  
and to actually change myself—  
Please, Lord Nṛsiṁha,  
drive out the demonlike desires  
for material enjoyment,  
and please sit in my heart,  
please pacify the demons of the universe,  
by killing their desires—  
let the universe be blessed with *bhakti-yoga*.

I spent almost the whole afternoon of Nṛsiṁha Caturdaśī memorizing all the events and the sequence of the Seventh Canto chapters One through Ten. But when I went down in the evening, the children put on a small skit in the temple—and their skit was the same subject matter which I was going to speak on. So I concluded that my prepared lecture had just flown out the window. I then decided to speak on a verse where Prahlāda Mahārāja is asked to go forward to pacify Lord Nṛsiṁha, but Prahlāda says, "I am not qualified." But when I looked at the verse and looked within myself for my realization—it was like opening the cupboard and finding it completely empty. I looked within for at least a crumb and found, "devotional service isn't for the Lord's benefit, it's for ours." Who is fooling whom?

Why should I speak when I have nothing to say?

As I faced the anticipating crowd, I choked, but then a line of thought started to come, and then another. One goes through all this only to realize, "It's not *me* who speaks. I am not the doer."

### Remembering

I remember the wooden pillow of Saint Teresa with its groove in the middle where she rested her head. It remains in my mind as a symbol of renunciation.

I recall the train ride to Châteauroux, especially the moment that we arrived at the station in cold predawn. It was a simple, innocent act, jumping from the train with our luggage and meeting devotees, Madhvācārya and Gaṅgā dāsa, who drove us off in their car. When I asked Madhvācārya if they would be able to save New Māyāpur farm, he replied, "There is a tiny chance."

And I remember Barcelona—morning *yoga* exercises with Prahlādānanda Swami and Kuladeva's mixed smile of happiness and disappointment.

Then, climbing the mountains in our car between Spain and France, the border guards and the red poppies blooming in the hills. In the temple room dramatic skit, I recall the boy who played the part of Prahlāda Mahārāja, saying, "*Oui, pere; oui, pere.*" And I recall the girl playing the part of Hiranyakaśipu as she sat on the *vyāsāsana* formerly used by the zonal guru. Hiranyakaśipu challenged the boy, who was dressed in saffron *dhotī* and *kurtā*. "Where is your God? Is He here now?"

"*Oui, pere,*" the boy stood with his folded palms

before the king.

"Is your God over there?"

"Oui, pere."

"Is He in the pillar?"

"Oui, pere."

*May 2, in the bright green fields of New Māyāpur*

Listening to a cuckoo. Is that the *outer* world? Here's a small white-petaled daisy with a yellow inner cushion. Is that the outer world? One *japa* coach says we should close our eyes when we chant and shut out "the fantastic gross material plane that roars on all about me." That makes sense for meditative *japa*, but we cannot always go about blindfolded. Sometimes we must think of Kṛṣṇa while in the warm sunshine, or on a rainy day. This is Kṛṣṇa too. Here's a beetle with a back like shiny brass. Here's a bee hovering over clover. Hear the breezes in the trees. Is the month of May the *outer* world?

*May 3, in a car going to Paris*

It is possible to improve one's chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, and I think I am going to do it.

To describe Paris as "the fantastic gross material plane that roars around us" is apt. From the peace of the countryside, we joined the maelstrom of car traffic, bridges, intersections, factory-smoking gray air, nearer and nearer to millions of fellow conditioned souls—but our target was in east Paris, an ISKCON house where Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Paris-Īśvara and a small band of devotees reside.

The neighborhood is called Noisy le Grand, which

makes me think it will be noisy here. But that's where we have come; it's Paris. A brass plaque outside the compound reads:

APB  
Association Parisienne  
de  
Bhakti yoga  
Fondateur-Ācārya: sa Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Devotees were ready to offer me a foot bath. At first I said no, but then I remembered hearing Bhakti-cāru Swami's lectures on Vaiṣṇava etiquette. He said that a traveling *sannyāsī* should accept an offer of washing the feet by his guests, but he should never accept foot bathing using milk. Then we went into the temple room where I beheld one of the most beautiful *vyāsāsanas* for Prabhupāda I have ever seen, decorated with swans.

Since I was seeing the Paris Deities for the first time, I didn't have a sad sentiment that this was the glory of the big d'Ermenonville temple which had closed. I was amazed at the beauty of the *vyāsāsana* and how Prabhupāda seemed so effulgent and nice there. And similarly, I beheld the Deities and thought it was all very wonderful. Yet even I could understand that such glorious thrones and Deities were not intended to stay in a small house.

There are about half a dozen devotees in the temple, almost all *brahmacārīs*, and it reminded me of the atmosphere of the house in Orlando, Florida, with its



young enthusiastic men. I was given a wonderful verse to speak on, Dakṣa's opening words as he curses Nārada, "*aho asādhū....*" I took the opportunity to praise Nārada and defend Kṛṣṇa consciousness against materialistic parents. The *brahmacārīs* seemed to like the talk, but one Indian *mātājī*, who had been making a garland as I spoke, objected. She said that she thought Prabhupāda wanted men to stay with their families and be Kṛṣṇa conscious. I replied that I had never said that Prabhupāda broke up families. The disagreement is between all renounced devotees (whether they be *grhasthas* or *brahmacārīs* or *sannyāsīs*) and the materialists.

We don't advocate that *grhastha* men should leave their wives.

### *Starting up again*

I spoke with Gauramaṇḍala and Jagadānanda, two of the Paris temple organizers. They gave me a clearer picture of their situation, how they moved here about seven months ago after the castle in d'Ermenonville was lost. They seem clear-headed and confident that Kṛṣṇa consciousness will build up again. There has been, they said, considerable bad publicity in the country, and our Society is described as bankrupt and finished in France. But they are gradually convincing people that we are still alive. Mostly they have been maintaining the Deities and moving in, but soon they are going to start full preaching, including daily *hari-nāma* in downtown Paris and the usual outreach programs—book distribution, home programs, programs with Indians, etc. They are planning a very large Janmāṣṭamī festival and hope to attract a few hundred Indians.

Gauramaṇḍala told me there is still a residual disagreement among some of the devotees in France in their attitudes toward devotees living inside or outside the temple. He said that during the days when Bhagavān Prabhu was in charge, one either lived in the temple or was considered blooped. Most of the devotees now in the Paris area, who number about fifty or more, have their own jobs and maintain their families in apartments. "We need to be encouraged," said Gauramaṇḍala.

*When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to Paris in 1974 and I tagged along...*

He praised an issue of BTG which showed a group portrait of devotees on the cover.... He asked me to start writing a commentary on the gospels from a Kṛṣṇa conscious viewpoint and seemed to approve two installments I did, even adding a note at one point, but then after two days he decided to drop the idea, saying that the Christians would never accept it.... He spoke at the La Salle Pleyel, but radicals shouted at him to "Get down!" from the throne; Prabhupāda replied, "You too can sit here if you know the science of God," but it was lost on those radicals, and we ended the program abruptly with a big *kīrtana*. Back at the temple Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "No more *vyāsāsanas* for public lectures...." He walked each morning in the Tuileries Gardens and spoke philosophy to his devotees. He spoke during the day to guests, and that was the most amazing thing, how he kept constant enthusiasm to talk Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy and give it to others in the hope that someone would seriously hear, although most of the daytime guests didn't hear submissively.

How he was similar to Nārada Muni!—surcharged with Kṛṣṇa in his heart, convinced that Kṛṣṇa's teachings can solve all ills, and never fatigued to describe the glories of the Lord, just as He spoke in *Bhagavad-gītā*. One time while Nitāi and I stayed in the outer office doing our duties, Prabhupāda sent someone from his room to call us in. Prabhupāda said that what he was speaking was important and we should always be eager to hear it. The fact that he had to call us in to hear made us regret our dullness, our lack of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotee.

#### *May 4, quiet days in Noisy*

When I told Madhu-maṅgala that Prabhupāda used to walk in the Tuileries Gardens, he suggested that we also could go there, "just to get out." He said that by going there maybe I would think and write about Prabhupāda. But we are not close enough to go there during the early morning hours without interrupting our temple schedule.

Madhu still had the idea that I could go to downtown Paris, until he went there for shopping today. Now he is convinced, unless we go for *hari-nāma* or preaching, it's no place for a *brahmacārī* or *sannyāsī* to go and "think about Prabhupāda." One also remembers that when Prabhupāda was in Paris, he refused to even sit for a few minutes at a café table while waiting for a car to pick him up. Prabhupāda asked if they served liquor there. The devotee said yes, and then Prabhupāda said a *guru* cannot sit there.

#### *Seeing Rādhā-Paris-īśvara*

Rādhā-Paris-īśvara appear, at first, "simpler" than Govinda-Mādhava of New Māyāpur. We don't get

caught up so much in the swift river of the *rāsa* dance. But Paris-īśvara is *just as good*. Kṛṣṇa in Paris is very handsome. He stands straight. His *tri-bhaṅga* pose is quite formal. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's hand is offered to us in benediction, and by the mercy of *arcā-vigraha* worship, we feel that Rādhā-Paris-īśvara offer us perfect reciprocation.



These devotees must be very dear to the Deities because even when the Deities had to leave Their big temple in d'Ermenonville and come here to this house, the devotees arranged so that it was safely done. It appears quiet and clean here. The altar retains its opulence and grandeur.

*Jaya Rādhā-Paris-īśvara!*

*Jaya Rādhā-Paris-īśvara!*

### *Hari-nāma Parisienne*

*Hari-nāma* in Paris—becoming distracted by the women, sidewalk cafés—but the weather was sunny and balmy, and the devotees, once you joined with them instead of looking at them from a distance, were transcendently healthy and happy.

An African devotee's face was perspiring as he played the drum and led the singing in the tune used by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Kālyapāni dāsa was in charge of our party and made sure we stayed in double line. Devotees gave out invitation cards, which the people accepted quite readily.

We went down the Boulevard St. Germaine....

It was best when I closed my eyes or when I just heard and danced and *joined* more with the *yajña* and the devotees. Young Bhīma dāsa, who is the most enthusiastic in the temple, is amusing in how he is always ready to step up the rhythm or call out "*Jaya!*" Sometimes when I see him I think, "He is young, maybe this enthusiasm is just external." But on *hari-nāma* he added life to our party and made us smile, and he made the *karmīs* smile also. To be happy is a sign of spiritual life, *n'est-ce pas?*

Bhīma went and got two cups of water for the

*saṅkīrtana* devotees, and he smiled as we drank it.

Paris is very fashionable. People are dressed with care in fashions that are evocative, enticing, interesting to see, whether in short skirt or long, baggy pants or tight, it's always some *style*, so you have to notice. But everyone had to notice us also, the Kṛṣṇa style.

While walking along, I suddenly thought of the photo of Robert Kennedy shot and dying on the floor of a hotel in California. How unexpected he suddenly had to face death. All conveniences and plans for eventual development are suddenly kicked out forever. Street *hari-nāma* exposes you to the elements, but it's *kīrtana*-safe, provided you actually meditate on the names.

The French invitation card, "*Divine... mantra de la grand deliverance... le chant de saints Noms... la perfection spirituelle, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.*"

After Madhu and I left the *hari-nāma*, we walked up and down the Boulevard St. Germaine looking for Gaṅgā dāsa who was supposed to pick us up in his car. When you just walk along without the *hari-nāma* party it's not the same. You are just a Hare Kṛṣṇa on the ground unless you directly chant or preach. I became tired of walking and thought of sitting down, somewhere, but I remembered Śrīla Prabhupāda in Paris, how he didn't sit at a café table. Not finding our ride, we headed back to the *hari-nāma* party.

Did you notice the ambulances with their sirens? Did you see the book stalls on the South Bank and the lovers embracing by the Seine? You must have seen the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Did you notice the sound of the chant *de saints Noms*?

*Those who love Śrīla Prabhupāda*

Bhakticāru Swami, who is co-GBC man for France, is here, and we are sharing a room. He showed me his *vyāsa-pūjā* homage to Śrīla Prabhupāda, which contains some reminiscences of Prabhupāda's last days in Vṛndāvana. One night Bhakticāru Swami exclaimed to Prabhupāda, "I love you, Prabhupāda!" Prabhupāda replied to this, "If you love me then co-operate with those who also love me." I mentioned to Bhakticāru Mahārāja that Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement is a deep and difficult challenge, because there are many devotees who claim to love Prabhupāda, and how can we judge and say, "These love him, and these do not."

Even some who have left ISKCON say that they still love Prabhupāda. If we claim to be the judges of who loves Prabhupāda, we could become guilty of arrogance like the *brāhmaṇa* who condemned the prostitute. Yet she in her shame was actually closer to Lord Viṣṇu than the self-righteous *brāhmaṇa*.

Bhakticāru Mahārāja replied that ultimately one will prove himself by his service—to ISKCON, the GBC, and Prabhupāda.

I become confused by all the polemics and debates as to who loves Prabhupāda, who is faithful, who is best. Who is right? I can't prove my love for Prabhupāda just by argument. Nor can I disprove another's love. Especially when everyone is talking loudly about it.

*May 9, "I love Paris-īśvara"*

I like You, Rādhā-Paris-īśvara with Your white *gopī* dots in a circular design. It's a pleasure to see

You, Lord of Paris.

Prabhupāda reasoned that Paris is famous for beautiful women. Men like to come here for that. But the real enjoyer of all the beautiful women is the *īśvara-parama*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And the truly beautiful women are not the conditioned souls of Paris, but the *gopīs*, headed by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So Kṛṣṇa is certainly the controller of Paris, and He has kindly come within this city in His very attractive *arcā-vigraha*.

He is a sweet young boy dancing and playing the flute. He is not an old man or a muscle-bound Atlas struggling to hold up the world. He is inviting us to join Him, "Don't stay rotting in this world of politics and miseries." He is dressed in fine garments, today in yellow and orange silk, and He stands lightly, with arms and hands raised to play the flute, which charms the minds of His pure devotees.





## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

# *Belgium*

### *May 10, to Belgium*

A devotee named Rāmānanda Rāya dāsa came from Rādhādeśa (Belgium Château) to drive us the four hours from Paris. The roadway was a first-class highway, racing with trucks and double-size trailers, as in the U.S. Nothing seemed "European," except the bright yellow rape fields. A highway marker indicated that this was the Somme, scene of bloody trench wars in World War I and also a battlefield in World War II.

Madhu-maṅgala was dozing and Rāmānanda Rāya was massaging the back of his own neck, so I started a conversation.

"I heard Bhakticāru Swami giving a lecture in Belgium," I said, "and there was no translator. But the national language is French. The devotees all speak English there?"

"Yes," Rāmānanda Rāya said. "Belgium is a small country. It exists on tourism and trade. So in school we all learn four languages, French, English, German, and my own language is Flemish."

"What about Rādhādeśa?" I asked. "How many devotees are there?"

"I always tell the guests about fifty," he laughed. "But actually at most it is thirty. There are fifty to sixty devotees in all of Belgium."

"What is your service?" I asked.

"I do the tours," he said. "Rādhādeśa is a castle built in the thirteenth century and reconstructed in the nineteenth century. Devotees bought it for about a half a million in U.S. dollars. They raised the money by selling carpets and paintings, and they are still paying for the place. Devotees have been running tours and so far 7,000 to 10,000 people a year have been visiting. Now we are trying to upgrade the tour to attract more tour agencies to send buses."

Rāmānanda Rāya said that only one or two devotees left Kṛṣṇa consciousness after Bhagavān Prabhu left. He attributed that to the Belgium leader Jaya Gopāla, who always had a strong influence in the *yātrā*.

"What is the image of our movement in Belgium?" I asked. "Is there a cult image?"

"No, it's good. They are not so aware of that here. People are pious. Mostly Catholic. Not like Holland. In Holland they are more hard-hearted, but they like to read the books. In Belgium people are soft-hearted, but they are not inclined to philosophy."

After riding a while in silence, I asked Rāmānanda Rāya, "You said that Belgian people are not serious to make a commitment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So how did you come?"

"I was frustrated," he laughed. He had been studying economics in the University at Antwerp, but was disgusted with student and social life, so he "became isolated from everyone."

"My background is Catholic," Rāmānanda Rāya said. "But I gave up religion when I was at the university. I went and told my mother that her religion is cheap, there is nothing to it. But she was very convinced. She said, 'You can't take God away from

me.' When I saw her so convinced, that made me more inclined toward religion. I started going to alternative films, looking for something else. Then I met devotees, and one gave me one of those little books, on self-realization. Many devotees in Belgium have joined from that book."

"Did your mother appreciate that you had come back to God?" I asked.

Rāmānanda Rāya (who is quite jovial) laughed, "She said, 'I am glad that you have come back to this point. But you didn't have to join Kṛṣṇa consciousness to do it.' "

We were waved over the border, no questions asked. We stopped to eat our breakfast at a gas station in Belgium. Then onto the road again through flat land on a foggy, rainy day.

### *Tour of the Château de Petit Sommes*

Rāmānanda Rāya took us on a tour like those he will do starting June 15 when the buses start arriving. We sat for a slide show, music by Vivaldi, and narration in French by Rasa-prema dāsa.

The slide show opened with a short history of the Château, followed by pictures of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the religion and culture of "the present owners of the Château." Many slides portrayed Indians in Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* and devotional activities, such as reading scriptures and performing *kīrtana*. After getting a strong visual impression of authentic Indian *sādhus*, we then saw the fair-skinned Belgian devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement in the same activities of temple life and *saṅkīrtana*. The show then instructed us in concepts of changing bodies, transmi-

gration, *prasādam*, the Deity, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, etc.—a complete introduction to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Rāmānanda Rāya said that after the guests see the slide show, he doesn't have to say much more while on the tour, but people naturally ask questions.

He then took us into "the room where devotees perform their daily meditation."

"Now you will hear a musical meditation," said Rāmānanda Rāya. "At this point a devotee leads a *kīrtana*, and I say, 'You can sing too if you like!'"

"You really bring them right into Kṛṣṇa consciousness," I said. "Do they feel cheated and say, 'I came here to see the Château'?"

"No, no," he assured me, smiling. "We tell them whatever they want to know about the Château. Especially when we climb the tower."

"Into the Middle Ages," said Rāmānanda Rāya, as we circled and climbed the narrow stone staircase of the tower. "I tell them, 'If you come to the Ardennes you have to climb also. Keep climbing,' I encourage them, 'the view is worth it.'"

Out on the roof we could see far in all directions, farmlands and forests and fog.

"Up here," said Rāmānanda, "they really get out their questions. There is more personal contact here."

"What do they ask?"

"Oh, anything. Reincarnation. They ask us, 'Do you do sports and go to cinemas?' Or they ask us about the castle. We tell them all the different proprietors of the castle over the centuries."

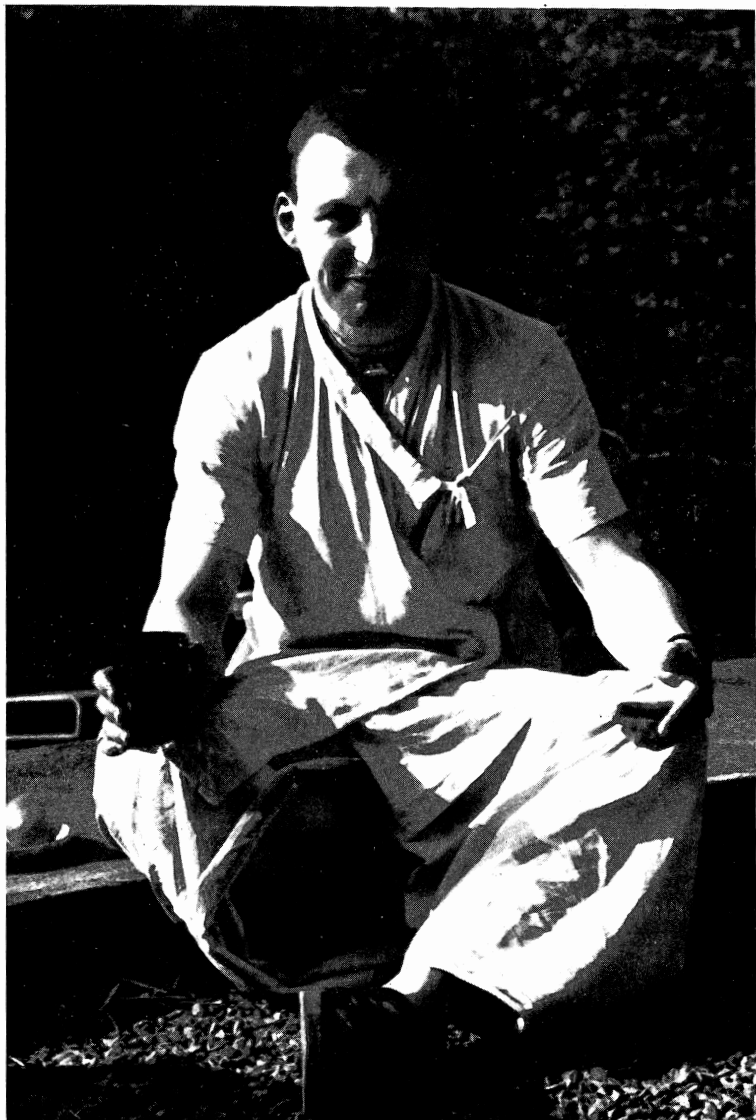
Then we went down, and he showed us a room where all the guests are given a *laḍḍu* and a drink. Then, outside into the rose garden which is geometri-

cally arranged with lawns and benches. The climax of the tour is a visit to the gift store, which the devotees are still constructing.

The Château also houses many original paintings done by European ISKCON artists for the *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* Cantos Ten through Twelve, with museumlike explanations printed under each portrait. They also have some original Sharma paintings of Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana-līlā and other tasteful Kṛṣṇa conscious paintings. Apparently, it's no problem to plunge the Belgium and Holland Château visitors right into the Kṛṣṇa conscious atmosphere, especially when they are guided by such ebullient Flemish personalities as Rāmānanda Rāya dāsa.

The fog partly cleared, and Jagannātha Kṛṣṇa dāsa led us on a walk through the land surrounding the Château. The buttercups are in full bloom, but half the dandelions have already gone to puff-balls. He told us that devotees had been buying small plots of land near the Château, but this resulted in a local anti-sect campaign. In response, devotees gathered their friends from other religious denominations and universities, and held one press conference in Brussels, and another in a town near the Château. They also presented statements by the Dutch government endorsing the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As a result, the local "witch-hunt" died out. It is now easy to buy land, and some of the *grhasthas* are getting their own houses. But it's still small, thirty people or so.

After walking, we sat in the back yard at the picnic table. I could hear a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda coming



Rāmānanda Rāya dāsa of Rādhādeśa

from the temple kitchen. He was talking about devotees coming to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He said that when one attempts to come to Kṛṣṇa, Māyā will dictate, "Why are you going there? There are so many restrictions." If we can listen carefully, Śrīla Prabhupāda's words are always relevant, important—and they are absolute in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He always confronts the nonKṛṣṇa consciousness of the world. He is well aware of the inner life, but always aware also how spiritual life conflicts with worldly life. Prabhupāda addresses most people as "rascals and fools," because he is concerned for everyone; he doesn't want them to remain rascals.

Whether in the back yard of the Château in Belgium or in Philadelphia or Hong Kong, ISKCON means hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prahlādānanda Swami remarked in Spain, "We have to study Prabhupāda's words more carefully, more appreciatively." On one level, Śrīla Prabhupāda's message is already familiar to us. But in a deeper sense, who among us has achieved the purity to hear his message without a tinge of envy or selfish motivation? When we become more qualified, Śrīla Prabhupāda will be waiting for us, in his purports and in other ways, to tell us more, to bring us closer to Kṛṣṇa.

### *Rādhādeśa darśana*

After seeing the roving, *rāsa* dancing Kṛṣṇa at New Māyāpur and dark, handsome Paris-īśvara, it was a surprise to bow down in the Rādhādeśa temple and then look up and behold the delicate forms of the white *arcā-vigraha*, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha. Viśākhā and Lalitā were beside Them.

Because of the beauty of the altar and the temple, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa appear like jewels within a perfect setting.

I asked Jagannātha Kṛṣṇa, "What was it like for most of Bhagavān Prabhu's disciples?"

"The day we got a letter from Bhagavān," said Jagannātha Kṛṣṇa, "it was a big *saṅkīrtana* day, but all the devotees were called from different parts of Belgium to join together in Brussels."

"You knew it was some heavy subject, but you didn't know what it was?"

"No, we didn't know. So we were all very blissful because we had come together for special meetings before, sometimes we would learn that we had to emphasize a certain project or something. But then the letter was read and still, because the letter was so indirect, we didn't know all the repercussions. So Hṛdaya Caitanya had to explain to us. We didn't know whether Bhagavān was just changing his *āśrama* or whether he was leaving the zone or leaving the movement or resigning as spiritual master. So Hṛdaya Caitanya explained all the implications. But even on that day we all still went out on *saṅkīrtana* as usual and did well. In fact one of the devotees, Dāmodara dāsa, raised his hand at one point and said, 'This meeting has been going on for three hours. Can we go out?' For me personally, I credit this also to Bhagavān Prabhu's teachings. He taught us to do *saṅkīrtana* in a devotional way, as a spiritual service to make Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master happy. So we could still do the *saṅkīrtana* even though he left."

"Are devotees anxious about seeking reinitiation



or are they considering themselves as Prabhupāda's disciples?"

"They think about these things, but not at the expense of their peace or faith. We have heard different lectures and presentations, and they don't all agree with each other. It's not resolved. But devotees aren't deeply anxious about it."

### *May 13*

A question and answer session was scheduled. Devotees submitted questions in written form. They were tough ones. Several touched on the point that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only bona fide *guru* in whom we can trust, so why don't we make this clear and say outright that he is everyone's main *guru*? My first response was a fluttering in my stomach—and a desire to defend the new generation of *gurus*. Then I thought further how I don't really feel competent to answer these questions. But I am compelled to. I thought of saying, "I am more concerned with what's honestly true to me, what I realize, and not just in knowing the Right Answer." But they want the Right Answer. Yet there is no single "*guru* attitude" which is right for everyone. Faith is fragile in Kali-yuga. And faith in *guru* is a foundation of spiritual life.

### *May 15, to Antwerp*

We got a driver who used only two of the fingers on his left hand to steer the car, and who drove fast. It was actually rather interesting to see how he pushed his thumb down and finger up with a minimum of wrist action as we veered round the curves, but it

made for completely inattentive *japa*. The trip to Antwerp was otherwise simple and straight on an empty highway.

We pulled into the city and stopped before a row of buildings. On one door was an "ISKCON" brass plaque. The center here is maintained by a household couple. Pūrṇatattva dāsa was quick to bring us here. Last week, within moments of our arrival at Rādhā-deśa, Pūrṇatattva phoned and booked us for the Sunday lecture in Antwerp. As a result, we have skipped Brussels.

We arrived in the middle of their morning program and climbed up three flights of stairs to a guest room. I unpacked, looked out at the Dutch billboards, which are undecipherable to me, "*Verf net nieuw. Der vef de langer.... etc.,*" and then I sat down to unwind.

Madhu-maṅgala broke my reverie by handing me the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, "Here is the verse for today"—a description of the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord.

After the *Bhāgavatam* class, the temple president, Pūrṇatattva Prabhu, said that he understood his devotional service was materially tinged. He asked if he should feel bad about this, or should he just go on tolerating and expecting to eventually improve. I said we should do both. We shouldn't be complacent and think we have already become pure devotees. But our "feeling bad" should impel us to improve within the standard activities of *bhakti-yoga*. We don't have to invent new austerities or ways to please Kṛṣṇa. Improve chanting, improve preaching, improve dealings with devotees and nondevotees. Since there

seems to be no possibility of instant success in this, what can we do but tolerate? But we should pray for *laulyam*, the stage where we cry tears out of intense desire to do some service for Kṛṣṇa.



*ISKCON means...*

The ISKCON plaque on the door  
means spiritual people  
live here. It also means  
you can buy books  
and you can sit in quiet,  
viewing the Deity.  
And you can taste *prasādam*.

If an ISKCON center  
cannot supply all these,  
they should take down the plaque.

*Meeting with a healer*

A healer named Charles saw me in my room after the question and answer session. He is gray-haired with pointy sideburns; a pleasant smile. He bowed from the waist like an oriental. He is an American living in Brussels and says he has studied under five Chinese healing masters. He pushed some "torture sticks" into points on my ears and suggested more vitamins and psyllium seeds for the colon. I have heard similar things, but we keep seeing these gentlemen when it is convenient, because they remind us to follow the right diet, and one of them may suggest something important we haven't tried yet.

Charles had heard from Madhu that I was worried this morning during the car trip because the driver steered with only two of his fingers. Charles said I should have reasoned, "It's okay. Even when things are actually wrong we should think, 'It's wrong, but it's okay that it is wrong.'"

"That's our philosophy," I said. "Kṛṣṇa is in control." I mentioned to him the other side of thinking—striving and self-examination—but Charles favored "unconditional acceptance of everyone just as they are—starting with yourself."

"These thoughts that you express," I said, "are they part of a particular philosophy?"

"Yes, it's the fifth *Veda*," he smiled. Then he said, "Chinese philosophy."

"Taoism?" I asked.

"Yes. At night before you rest," said Charles, "you should think of a good thought."

Charles also has a plan to reschedule the world debt. He said his plan has been accepted by a big man in Washington, D.C. And he also has a scheme to

recover a trillion dollars in third-world debts and give it to ISKCON!

"I hope I didn't hurt you with the torture sticks," he said.

"No. I feel fine."

"So think a good thought. And also at night you should write down the six most important things you want to do tomorrow."

"Thank you. Hare Kṛṣṇa."

1. Chant deep, meditative *japa* sitting down in one place.
2. Be peaceful no matter what, and yet keep working to undeceive yourself.
3. Write in your notebooks, prayers, journal entries, poems, etc.
4. Read Prabhupāda's books.
5. Be kind to devotees and others.
6. Try to return to your original consciousness by rendering loving service to Prabhupāda and, under his direction, loving service to Kṛṣṇa.

### *"How I came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness"*

The Antwerp temple has a nice walled-in back yard with a few trees and picnic tables. While a fat cat crawled along the top of the wall, I sat at a table with Pūrṇatattva and his wife, Tārūṇyāmṛta, and talked about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I asked them how they came to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Pūrṇatattva's story was extraordinary.

He was one of ten children, but when he was about five years old he got a bad hip infection. Somehow this turned into a condition whereby one leg

became slightly shorter than the other. When he was nine years old his father died. When he was ten years old, he had to enter the hospital for emergency treatment, and his mother also entered the hospital with a serious disease. As a result, she died while Pūrnatattva was still in the hospital. Within a few days he was discharged, but now without a mother and father. All the children in the family were then scattered and sent to different orphanages.

He said that when he was first put into the orphanage, he cried day and night about the loss of his mother and the new, strange situation. But suddenly a voice within him said, "There has to be some good in this." And on thinking of this statement, the ten-year-old boy became peaceful.

The orphanage was Catholic, and religious training was compulsory. But when he was fourteen years old, he was transferred to another institution for homeless boys which included a regular workday. Religion was no longer compulsory, so he stopped attending mass. When he reached age fifteen, he did as all the other boys in the orphanage and took to drugs, alcohol, and sex. But somehow, he quickly became tired and disgusted with these things. Then he lost his taste for socializing. Feeling alone and unhappy, he spent much of his time walking in the woods. He had no regular employment and so would spend full days walking in the woods to find solace. One day while lying peacefully on his back in the forest, it occurred to him to think for himself as to what death actually meant. So he began to imagine what it would be like if he died at that moment. He saw himself dead and visualized animals coming to eat his body. As the animals began to eat him, he could see

that they were taking from his body and transforming it into their body. It dawned on him clearly that his self was different from the body and suddenly he aspired to know his spiritual nature. But on coming out of this meditation, he was not happy but saw the present world around him as a prison. Now the trees in the forest, which had been friendly solace, seemed to him like "golden bars," and the whole material world was a prison. He decided that he would have to find God or commit suicide to get out of the prison.



Pūrṇatattva dāsa and Tārūṇyāmṛta dāsī

Preparing to "find God," Pūrṇatattva decided to go to India. He had read some of the writings of Krishnamurti, and although the philosophical speculations had left him unimpressed, he retained a sense that India was a holy place where he might find his answers. He bought a backpack and was getting ready for his travel. One day, before actually leaving, Pūrṇatattva met a devotee book distributor who gave him a copy of Prabhupāda's translation of *Īṣopaniṣad*. Pūrṇatattva had met devotees before and accepted a record and a *Bhagavad-gītā*. The book had been too bulky, and he had not read it, but this time he took the *Īṣopaniṣad* and read it. It made a deep impression on him, and he began visiting the temple in Amsterdam. He progressed quickly toward a serious commitment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Tārūṇyāmṛta dāśī's story was also interesting. She was raised in a laborer's family. One of her first jobs was as a window dresser. She seemed to be doing well but quit abruptly one day when it occurred to her that the work was hypocritical and foolish. Her mother was upset with her, but Tārūṇyāmṛta said, "Don't worry, I don't need much money to live. I'll find something else." She saw a TV show about the work of a social mission in Amsterdam and wanted to join. Although she had no educational qualification, she asked to be taken on at the social mission, even if she could receive only a little pay, because she wanted to help. But after a few years she got disillusioned, seeing that the recipients of welfare soon converted anything they received into another bottle of liquor. Then she thought that if she could get an education in sociology, she could perhaps give more direction to social reform, rather than work within systems that



seemed futile. College study, experimental travel, living on a kibutz in Israel, more work, wanderings....

Tāruṇyāmṛta said that she sometimes even wished that there would be a war or catastrophe so that she could be of some direct and practical service to other people. It seems she couldn't find a way to express that tendency.

Nowadays one sees Tāruṇyāmṛta dāsī as a very energetic lively preacher. She is as much the driving force of the Antwerp preaching center as her husband is, and she regards the congregational members as her "children." She likes to help and mix with people. So it's easy to imagine her in her pre-Kṛṣṇa conscious days looking for a way to help others and become directly involved.

She came in contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness through a book received from a devotee on *saṅkīrtana*. In her case it was the *Bhagavad-gītā*. She liked it very much and wanted to keep a picture of Prabhupāda in her feminist community house, but they forbade it on the grounds that "Prabhupāda is a man." But Tāruṇyāmṛta kept up her interest in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The thing that really changed her, however, was when a devotee-friend of hers invited her to spend a weekend at Rādhādeśa, the country āśrama in Southern Belgium. She said that when she went there she felt like she had found her home. She felt great relief and was able to plunge into work. She cooked in the kitchen day after day and did whatever services she could. Sometimes she cried for happiness. And she didn't even have to wait on a queue, or process an application—she could join at once.

Pūrṇatattva and his wife also have a history of quite a few years of full-time book distribution

*saṅkīrtana*, and this also gives them strength and devotional presence.

Pūrṇatattva and Tāruṇyāmṛta told their stories honestly. As they spoke I thought, "Next, I will tell my story, how I came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They will want me to reciprocate." But as it turned out, they didn't ask me and I didn't volunteer. But I felt left out—Why can't I too tell a story of mistakes, fall-down, and suffering? Is it because now I'm a "perfect guru"?

*May 18, to Amsterdam*

Brahmarāta, temple president of Amsterdam ISKCON, came to pick us up at Antwerp.

"Prabhupāda visited Amsterdam," I said, "and he gave a public lecture there. The people were very degraded and they were talking and not paying any attention. Prabhupāda mentioned it later in his lectures and letters. His impression was that the people were too degraded and that Kṛṣṇa consciousness could only be spread by giving them *prasādam* and chanting."

"That was in a public park," said Brahmarāta, "where hippies and junkies used to gather. The people who come to the temple are nice, but some hippies come too." Brahmarāta explained that Dutchmen are very liberal, and that it's not unusual for intellectual gentlemen and hippies to mix together at a gathering in the temple. There are many people living in the streets of Amsterdam and ISKCON's Food for Life program is in the worst area of the city.

"Rāmānanda Rāya dāsa told me," I said, "that Dutch people are hard. He said they like to read the

books, but they are not soft-hearted like the Belgian people."

Brahmarāta gave a little smile and said, "The Dutch are 'crit-i-kal'. But when they decide to actually become devotees, then they are very serious."



A canal in Amsterdam, Holland

## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

# Holland

The ISKCON temple in Amsterdam is a four-story building built as a convent, standing on the corner of a block in an L shape. It has a rather stark square outline, economically practical, with only a hint of design. A few yards from the front entrance is a Dutch canal.

We arrived just in time for the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class and went straight from the car into the temple room. The Deity is a large painting of Pañca-tattva. Brahmānanda was also there, sitting in the back of the temple. I felt a bit self-conscious lecturing in his presence, since he's known my foibles for over twenty years. After the lecture, which was about the qualities of *kṣatriyas*, Brahmānanda and others asked questions to elicit my opinion: "What kind of administration did I think was best for ISKCON? What do you think should be the relationship of *gurus* and their disciples in relation to Prabhupāda?"

"Why ask?" I said. "The nature of the relationship of *guru* and disciple is fully described in all the books of Vaiṣṇava philosophy."

"Well, isn't it true that the *gurus* and their disciples should *cooperate* to serve Prabhupāda?"

"Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say that also: 'Cooperate with me.' " The questioners seemed to be driving for a relative description of the *guru* in ISKCON and with his disciples. Yes, I also doubt that anyone nowadays is qualified to be absolute. But you

just can't tear it down like that....

"We were mistaken," I said, "to try to imitate Śrīla Prabhupāda and think that we were equal to him. But the relationship of *guru* and his disciples, even now, is sublime."

### *Along the canal*

In Amsterdam you can pull your houseboat up alongside the canal bank and moor there rent-free. That solves the housing problem. Mating, eating, and defense can also be solved easily. But then you still only have animal life. A human being wants more.

A tall gray heron is standing on the sidewalk looking up at the apartment buildings. Gulls are mobbing down, making a loud commotion over a piece of wet bread.

After *maṅgala-ārati*, Brahmānanda read from Śrī Nāmāmyṛta. Caitanya Mahāprabhu laughingly said to His associates in Vārāṇasī, "Although I came to Vārāṇasī to sell My goods, there were no customers, and it appeared necessary for Me to carry them back to My own country" (Cc. *Madhya-līlā* 25.169-70). From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport:

When we began distributing the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the Western countries, a similar thing happened. In the beginning we were very disappointed for at least one year because no one came forth to help this movement, but by the grace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, some young boys joined the movement in 1966....

As Brahmānanda read "some young boys," I couldn't refrain from smiling. Brahmānanda looked

up at me with a grin, and the other devotees shared the moment with us.

We are "old boys" now, but we must never throw away the precious jewel—our association with Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Don't worry," I say, "I will never leave Prabhupāda's service. I won't." But success is not to merely be on hand as a relic, like the last surviving American Civil War soldier. The point is to live and thrive as a servant. I *owe it* to my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda to try hard, at all costs, to advance. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The more one is forgetful of the service of Kṛṣṇa, the more he is considered to be dying."

### *Surinam engagement*

We drove one hour to Den Haag, a city where 10,000 Surinam people live. Along the way we saw many large windmills. They are built of stone with steel supports, and their wingspans appear huge. It is an unusual sight, with mysterious power. When the blades move with the wind, you can imagine how Don Quixote mistook a windmill for a dragon.

Den Haag is multiracial with lots of Dutch graffiti and poor urban neighborhoods. We parked on a block crowded with joined buildings and heavy with unpleasant odors. We knocked at a door, and a Dutch *brahmacārī*, Acyuta dāsa, greeted us and led us upstairs. I was preparing myself to meet a large crowd of Surinam Hindus, but we entered a small attic room and found only two ten-year-old boys. Madhu and I entered, and I looked around deciding where to sit. One of the little boys said, "Sit here," and gestured firmly to a place on the floor. So I put down my *cādar*

and sat. The boys were singing bits of ISKCON songs to themselves, “*Jaya Prabhupāda*,” “*Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya*.” I looked through some record albums on the floor, “*Arati bhajans*” by Pradep, and looked at the stylized paintings of Kṛṣṇa and Śiva on the walls. After feeling some reflex cynicism about the Hindu art, I began to think more deeply about the fact that these people have a strong connection with Vedic culture.

“Usually we have a good crowd,” Acyuta apologized. We waited for about fifteen minutes and then began *kīrtana*. Gradually people began to gather. As I began to lecture, more started entering. They were in their twenties and thirties, an age group you usually don’t find at the gatherings of Hindu parents with Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. I spoke on this verse:

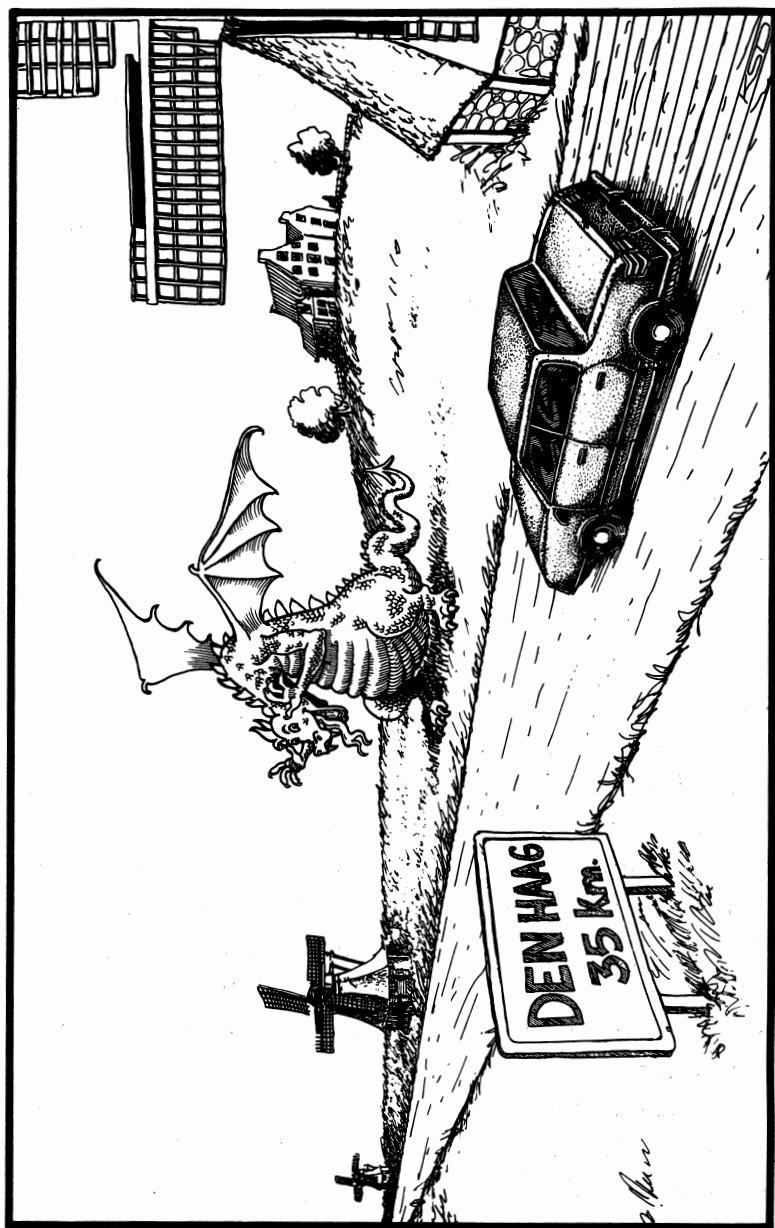
*sādhu-saṅga, nāma-kīrtana, bhāgavata-śravaṇa*  
*mathurā-vāsa, śrī-mūrtira śraddhāya sevana*

These are the five most important items in the practice of devotional service: (1) associating with devotees, (2) chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, (3) hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* regularly, (4) worshiping the Deity (and offering *prasādam*), and (5) living in a holy place.

—Cc. *Madhya-līlā* 22.128

Unfortunately, my time began to run out quickly, due to my old complaint. There was only one small window in the room, which didn’t help, and I had already been affected by the hour-long drive through traffic. Even while I spoke the philosophy, I thought, “I aspire for a vigorous outer life, but it doesn’t seem possible yet.”

While my time lasted, and even after it had run





out, I answered their questions. They started with the same questions—about cooking—that I had received in Dorchester, Massachusetts, from a Guyanese group. Can vegetarian food cooked by meat-eaters be accepted by devotees? Can we eat vegetables in a meat-eater's restaurant? When I replied "No" to these questions they resisted a bit. But they were sincerely concerned—they wanted to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and they wanted to know how. How should you act if your family is against it? How can you do Deity worship in your home? The questions were still coming strong, but I excused myself and left with some sweets wrapped in tin foil.

Past the windmills, back to the temple, and back to bed where I stayed all the next day, missing *mahā-hari-nāma*.

*May 22*

From reading *The Diary of a Young Girl* I remembered that Anne Frank and her family lived in hiding from the Nazis—in Amsterdam. I asked a devotee, and he said that her house is a museum located only a few minutes from the temple. So Madhu and I went for a Sunday morning visit. Driving through the city, glancing at the posters for upcoming rock concerts, I began to lose my determination for the visit.

Although it was only 10:00 A.M., there was already a big queue outside the Anne Frank house. We decided to stand a few moments at the end of the queue and see how quickly it moved. As we joined the people there, I sensed their reserved attitude toward us and compared it to the warmer "live and let live" feelings I had experienced in places like Brazil



The House of Anne Frank, Amsterdam

and Spain. Perhaps they were mostly just curious to see Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees out of the usual context.

The tour itself was crowded with people, and the building quarters were tight, but it was worth it. In the first room we stood and watched a film narrated from the diary. Anne Frank told of how the Frank family (Dutch Jews) decided to go into hiding in 1942 when the Nazis began arresting Jews in Holland and sending them to concentration camps. As Anne Frank's words narrated, the film showed each room, and we heard her expression of fear and longing for freedom. After two years in hiding, her family was discovered by the Nazis, and they were sent to different concentration camps, where they died. The last pictures of the film showed heaps of bodies in a concentration camp.

From her diary:

It is the silence that frightens me so in the evenings and at night.... I can't tell you how oppressive it is *never* to be able to go outdoors, also I'm afraid that we shall be discovered and be shot. That is not a pleasant prospect. We have to whisper and tread lightly during the day, otherwise the people in the warehouse might hear us.

The same movable bookshelf is still there, serving as a disguise. The entrance to their hiding place, which is the upper two floors of the building, was hidden behind this hinged bookcase. Since the supply of herbs for the house in front had to be stored in the dark, the windows at the back were blacked out and painted over. In this way the annex was hidden from view. The other windows at the back of the annex were hung with thick lace curtains and were blacked out in the evenings, as were all the windows in

Amsterdam. This is because the Germans had ordered the black-out in order to make it more difficult for Allied planes to find their way at night. This also lessened the risk of the hideaway being discovered.

The last rooms of the house exhibit photos of modern-day prejudice and oppression. There were also some articles from a German newspaper of recent years claiming that the genocide of the Jews in concentration camps was a myth or at least an exaggeration in numbers, and that Anne Frank's diary was a hoax. But this hardly seems possible from all the accumulated evidence. I noticed in Anne's room that she had decorated the walls with pictures of



The attic window of Anne Frank's house

movie stars, like Ray Milland. Also, there wasn't much reference or prayer to God in her diary. She was just a helpless fourteen-year-old girl, and she spoke what she could, from what she had learned and what she knew. I wondered how devotees would have been able to cope in such situations, with their advantage of knowing about Kṛṣṇa and being able to at least whisper the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Being reminded of the holocaust brought to mind this Kṛṣṇa conscious instruction: If you want to remain in the material world, you should know that there are no boundaries as to how cruel and demoniac people can become. In the *Kṛṣṇa* book, regarding King Kāṁsa, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that there is no heinous act that a cruel tyrant will not commit. Similarly, there is no situation that a pure devotee, like Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva, will not tolerate by depending on the Supreme Lord and carrying out his duty.



## CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

# Heidelberg

*May 23, Heidelberg, Germany*

We drove here in over four hours very fast on the Autobahn. The temple entrance on the first floor is surrounded on both sides by the "Polster Richter" furniture store, and even immediately over the ISKCON entrance is a big sign for "Polster Richter." Painted on a glass door is a figure of Lord Caitanya and announcements of the times of lectures and other programs. When you open the door, there is only a stairway ahead, and all the ISKCON quarters are on the second and third floors of the building.

We arrived during the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class and found our way up into Harikeśa Swami's quarters, where they allowed me to stay. As soon as I entered the room I looked out the window and saw down into "Sunset Billiards" across the street. Although it's a holiday morning, a few men are already playing billiards.

As usual, I feel awkward because we have to inform them that I cannot do so much, only morning classes and seeing a few people and giving one or two evening classes during the week. But usually the devotees accept it, and I settle into a routine in my new "home." I take up my reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books from where I left off, and I go on writing.

Speaking with the temple president, Viśvadeva, I am relieved to hear that the preaching is going well in Germany. The heavy anti-ISKCON propaganda from ten years ago has been mostly forgotten. German people are conservative about new sects, yet, Viśvadeva said, "They are very interested in *yoga* and reincarnation." The devotees here are mostly book distributors, and for that purpose they maintain quite a few small centers and *saṅkīrtana* apartments in big cities throughout the country. Householders are also not discouraged from living in their own apartments, and they pay for this by keeping a share of earnings from their paraphernalia "*saṅkīrtana*." At least Viśvadeva was optimistic about the prospects, and I didn't doubt him.

Viśvadeva said the police in Heidelberg like the devotees. They have also legalized book distribution on the street by paying taxes, keeping accounts of the books sold, and operating in areas where they have permits. No devotees have "blooped" in the past two years. They are also starting farms.

I hear all this with relief because, as a fellow devotee, it is painful to think that we are being oppressed or that we're dying out or fighting amongst ourselves. At the same time, I am detached from what is happening in each ISKCON place. It seems to me that ISKCON will always be in some flux; there will always be some problem, but there will always be reasons for optimism. And there will always be a band of faithful devotees working intently to carry out the aims of ISKCON as they see it. I have been doing this for over twenty years, and now, for better or worse, I am growing older, and I sense that my time is running out. So it seems to me that I might

better spend my remaining years on the very essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, starting with improving my own consciousness. I don't think I am more advanced than other devotees, but I feel more responsible than before for my lack of basic realization.

The problems and the management of ISKCON will continue to go on after I die, but where will I go? Have I been only superficially busy with Kṛṣṇa conscious affairs? Why am I lacking in basic advancement? Am I *conscious* or not?

If I check myself from these thoughts and think how I should help other people, I am again faced with the essence—why can't I help them more now? What am I going to do about my lack of self-realization? These questions seem more important to me now than they used to. Neither is there much demand for me to work at other problems of our Society.

### *Heidelberg altar*

There were twelve burning ghee wicks on the altar, in addition to a few electric lights focused on the small forms of Gaura-Nitāi. Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra Prabhu is here, and his Deities are also on the altar. His Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha is just like mine, only with opulent decorations. Black *śilās* share the silver throne with Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃha. The wood carvings of Viṣṇu's symbols are done by a Western wood carver, rougher but more individual in expression than Indian-made *siṃhāsana*s.

May 25

For the last two days the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*



verses have been very technical, from the Third Canto chapter, "Calculation of Time, From the Atom." "The duration of time of three lavas is equal to one nimeṣa," etc. The temple president mentioned today that if I liked I could choose any verses from the *Bhāgavatam* for my remaining lectures.

I accepted the offer, and this allowed me to link my personal thoughts with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verses. What concerns me now? What do I want to speak on?

I tried to think of a verse where a devotee or the Supreme Lord praises self-searching, a devotee's admission of ignorance and his desire to find out the truth that leads him firmly to the shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. I couldn't think of anything exactly like that. But then I thought of Dhruva Mahārāja's regret for asking the Supreme Lord for material benefits. I want to hear assurance that the Supreme Lord will protect His devotees, even if the devotee is faltering. I turned to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.9.17: "To ignorant devotees like me, You are the causelessly merciful maintainer, just like a cow, who takes care of the newly born calf by supplying milk and giving it protection from attack."

This verse brings out the nature of the Lord's compassion for His devotee. We don't want to make the Supreme Lord obliged to help us out of our errant ways, but nevertheless it is important to know that He is concerned and that He does "give the understanding by which they can come to Me." He is in our hearts, and He destroys "with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance."

May 26

From a letter addressed to "Dear devotees of the North European zone" by Harikeśa Swami, posted on the bulletin board of the Heidelberg temple:

May 13

I am writing this letter in a humble attempt to increase our desire to distribute the transcendental literatures of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the Founder-*Ācārya* of this great ISKCON preaching mission. We have heard about this mission before, and we have also already directly experienced the nectar of engaging in it, but due to the terrible condition of the human society, further discussion on the urgent need to distribute books is required. Awareness of Śrīla Prabhupāda's plan to transform this sinful world through the distribution of his books is the most auspicious means to overcome the bewildering power of *māyā-śakti*.

...Everyone can support the mission of the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Feed a *saṅkīrtana* devotee, make him a bead bag, give him nice clothing, praise him with fitting words, for he is a hero. Show your support by assisting him in his work. Go out yourself and taste the nectar firsthand. It is not that one must sit in his corner internally lamenting over his inability to be part of the direct preaching, get out the door and help the people of this world.

There is no other means to help people than to give them the holy name of the Lord, some Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*, and above all a book (or a set!). What will some introductory talk do compared with hard-bound literature? Give them *prasādam*, get them to chant, but when you give them a book, then it is a complete victory for Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda.

Usually at times like this I would beat the *mṛdāṅga* drum of book distribution loudly in all the

the temple halls crying, "Wake up, warriors. Now is not the time to rest while the forces of *māyā* are laying waste to the remaining preaching fields." This year I am a victim of my body. Shot and wounded on the battlefield when I wasn't looking, I remain in the background, trying to encourage the troops with these words. Please take up this mission with all determination. There is no other mission that even comes close to being as important. It is the only way to prevent total chaos in this already chaotic world. Please take this seriously and DISTRIBUTE BOOKS.

Just outside the temple room, there are shelves of books for *saṅkīrtana* distribution. The German hard-bound books have color illustrations printed right onto the surface of the books, and each book is tight-wrapped in plastic. They have one set of three books called *Die Kunst Zu Leben* ("The Art of Living"), which includes *Easy Journey to Other Planets*; *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*; and *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. The cardboard folders for these are stacked on the floor, ready to be assembled. Different boxes of books are open or stacked on shelves and chairs. *Saṅkīrtana* devotees come and supply themselves from this area.

Rohiṇisūta is visiting the temple for a week. He is the long-time book distribution leader of this zone. He is a thin, graying *brahmacārī*, relaxed in manner, yet he has an intense look and he laughs often. He is now an initiating *guru*, but he continues to travel around the Northern European zone and sometimes to other parts of the world (recently he was in Hong Kong and the Philippines). He continues to go out on the streets and distribute books and teach devotees how to do it. He seems physically frail and says his health isn't very good. "But when I am out on

*saṅkīrtana* there is no problem."

He told different *saṅkīrtana* stories from his travels. His favorite place in the world is Yugoslavia. People there are simple and poor. Although they have very little money and inflation is a constant factor, the people still buy BBT books. As soon as the BBT prints another Yugoslavian translation of one of Prabhupāda's books, the devotees in Yugoslavia sell them all out within a short time. Rohiṇisūta told of a discotheque manager and disc jockey who bought a book and also obtained a tape of the *mahā-mantra* from devotees. The man's discotheque customers used to start brawls around midnight, and so one night the disc jockey put on a tape of the *mahā-mantra* at the violent hour. That night there were no fights but many inquiries about the unusual music. The disc jockey has now interested a coterie of half a dozen persons who chant *japa* on beads and read Prabhupāda's books.

May 27

Since I have been asked to pick any verse I want for lecturing, today I chose another favorite theme—the seeker:

O King, the Personality of Godhead, being very much pleased with Lord Brahmā because of his nondeceptive penance in *bhakti-yoga*, presented His eternal and transcendental form before Brahmā. And that is the objective goal for purifying the conditioned soul.

—*Bhāg.* 2.9.4

Lord Brahmā was all alone in the universe. He sought for the meaning of his existence and for the

purpose of all life. At first he attempted this by his own efforts at research, but he could not get very far. Then he heard the sound *tapa*, and he accepted it as coming from a transcendental source. He performed many years of ascetic meditation, and Kṛṣṇa became pleased with him.

But what does Brahmā have to do with us today? We too are seeking for pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Devotees sometimes use the word “seeker” in an amused or slighting way, referring to hippies or New Age people or spiritually-minded but naive people looking into Eastern philosophies—*those who haven’t yet found the way of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.*

But *we* also are still seeking. We want to see the Deity on the altar as Kṛṣṇa Himself. We are seeking the taste of pure chanting. We still find austerities to be like punishment, and we are seeking for the happiness in taking trouble for Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes we find it, and then we lose it. We forget, we lament, we get distracted. We are seeking to serve Kṛṣṇa in faith, and we are convinced that we will achieve His favor by patient nonduplicious penance.

*May 28, epistemology*

For my third “free choice” of a *Bhāgavatam* verse, I was thinking to pick a nectarean *bhakti* theme, such as the benefits of hearing and chanting, or something about the practices of *how* to chant and *how* to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But thinking of my own needs and interests, I decided to speak on *the need for faith in the authority of Vedic knowledge.*

Without faith, how can there be nectar in hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? Without faith, Kṛṣṇa is seen as a

myth or a symbolic figure and the philosophy itself is seen as speculation, one of "six philosophies" in India or one of thousands in the history of world philosophy. Even someone like me, who is not fond of systemized thought, must nevertheless have a conviction in following the Vedic authorities. And we devotees also have doubts. Therefore, we have to answer the questions: "Where do you get your knowledge? On what basis do you accept this system as superior to others?" We have to study epistemology.

There are numerous verses and purports which discuss the subject. One can find them in the index to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books under headings like "authorities," "disciplic succession," and "knowledge." I chose this one, mostly for its purport, but the verse is also relevant:

O great sage you are as good as Brahmā, the original living being. Others follow custom only, as followed by the previous philosophical speculators.

—*Bhāg.* 2.8.25

In the introduction to *Śrī Isopaniṣad*, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives in condensed form the essence of Vaiṣṇava epistemology. A human being cannot arrive at perfect knowledge because of four defects: (1) he has a tendency to commit mistakes; (2) he is subject to illusion; (3) he has a tendency to cheat; and (4) his senses are limited. The Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* also analyze three basic systems for acquiring knowledge: (1) *pratyakṣa*, direct perception; (2) *anumān*, speculative theories; and (3) *śabda-brahma* knowledge received from authorities. In attempting to learn the truth via direct perception or theorizing, one is impeded by the four human defects, either cheating, limited senses, or so on. Only by hearing from the perfect authority, the

Absolute Truth Himself, who is transcendental and independent to material perception and speculation, can we know that which is perfect and beyond this material world (*apauruṣeya*). Vedic literature is therefore accepted as axiomatic, without doubt or interpretation.

Prabhupāda writes:

One has to accept, after all, *some* authority. The modern scientists are also authorities for the common man for some scientific truths. The common man follows the version of the scientist. This means that the common man follows the authority. The Vedic knowledge is also received in that way. The common man cannot argue about what is beyond the sky or beyond the universe; he must accept the versions of the *Vedas* as they are understood by the authorized disciplic succession.... The alternative for a common man is to believe either of them [modern scientists or Vedic literature] or both of them. The Vedic way of understanding, however, is more authentic because it has been accepted by the *ācāryas*, who are not only faithful and learned men, but are also liberated souls without any of the flaws of conditioned souls. The modern scientists, however, are conditioned souls liable to so many errors and mistakes; therefore the safe side is to accept the authentic version of Vedic literatures, like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is accepted unanimously by the great *ācāryas*.

—*Bhāg. 2.2.26, 36, purports*

The Vedic discussion of the four human defects and the three systems of knowledge may be elaborated into a complete and thorough Vaiṣṇava epistemology. Just as some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are expanding his basic purports to debate the axioms

of materialistic science, so some of his learned and educated disciples may come forward and give us precise and elaborate discussions to combat the speculations of professional Western philosophers. And this will also defeat the speculative tendencies within each one of us. Such discussions and controversial topics of philosophy will help strengthen us and bring about what Śrīla Prabhupāda describes in the Preface to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

...the reader will be sufficiently educated to defend himself from the onslaught of atheists. Over and above this, the reader will be able to convert others to accept God as a concrete principle.

Preaching on Vedic knowledge is definitely keeping me alive. It may be that I am the biggest doubter, but by some *ajñāta-sukṛti*—or by special causeless mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda (maybe because I used to bring Śrīla Prabhupāda a mango), he is allowing me to defend the faith and speak out thoughtfully. The Vedic knowledge is solid; one who knows it is *niṣṭha*, fixed up. You can compare it to other philosophies and you will see that *śabda-brahma* is best. By speaking, the speaker is keeping himself alive.

### *Catching myself in Heidelberg*

My upper denture broke, and we brought it to a dentist here to glue together. When he first saw it, he was astonished and repelled.

"This is primitive!" he said.

At that moment and during the day whenever I recalled the incident, I felt hurt pride on behalf of American dentistry. I had thought "we" were the most advanced.



Maybe only bit by bit can you see yourself honestly. If all truth about yourself and reality were revealed, you would see such a mass of contradictions. And we are certainly unable to grasp the total reality. As for Kṛṣṇa, "Reality the Beautiful," He also cannot be known until you are purified, and even then no one can know Him in full.

There was a very loud, disturbing sound of a pneumatic hammer outside. It was not an ordinary hand-operated hammer, but a huge one attached to a crane. Several times I controlled myself from speaking out my negative emotions. A Godbrother said, "That must be torture for you." Another said, "What a disturbance!" But by remaining quiet and keeping a good attitude, I felt a secret power for the good.

I am reading *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* with the fond idea that I will like him and identify with him and tell the readers about it when we are in Copenhagen, Kierkegaard's town. But while reading I faced the fact that I do not have much ability to grasp dialectical philosophy. I *can* understand it, but it would take slow, painstaking figuring out, and I am not inclined for that. At the same time, I am lacking in an ability to be simple and religious-minded, to not doubt, to abide patiently with my duties, and chanting and reading with devotion.

*May 29, Meeting with Professor Weber*

Śacīnandana Prabhu phoned Professor Weber (he lives an hour away), and the professor agreed to

come to Heidelberg. I asked Madhu to call back and make it clear to Professor Weber that I am not an academic person and I have no program to present to him, although I would like to see him. The professor still agreed to come. I tried to think of what to say and prepared this:

Three reasons for a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee to become aware of the Christian tradition (or any other bona fide religious tradition):

1. For preaching in countries where that tradition is strong.
2. Coming to grips with one's own roots or upbringing in that tradition.
3. For spiritual benefit. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person may share his realizations with other God conscious devotees, take solace in their association, against the Kali-yuga forces of atheism.

Professor Weber has done a significant service by publishing Śubhānanda's book of interviews, *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa*, into German. I used to hear about him from Pṛthu Prabhu, who said that Professor Weber is very astute in Christian history, particularly in how the Church came to ban the teaching of reincarnation.

Professor Weber was accompanied by his wife, and Sukṛta dāsa, the public relations devotee for Heidelberg, was also present. The Professor began by presenting me a gift of a new book in the series of *Studia Irieirenica, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and the Bhakti Religion*. The book is in English and contains essays by Viśvambhara Gosvāmī, Bhakticāru Swami, and other devotees as well as scholars of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. In return I gave the professor a copy of my essay on Saint Teresa.

Professor Weber said he is "more interested in co-

operative religion than in comparative religion." He thinks religionists should share their experiences and realizations for helping to solve problems of the world, such as uneven distribution of wealth and unsuccessful matrimony. We also discussed how we could help each other in attaining pure devotional service.

Professor Weber is well acquainted with ISKCON. "I didn't think ISKCON could reform itself," he said. "But now I see it can. *You* began the reform, didn't you?"

"No," I said, "but I joined before it was too late."

Professor Weber and his wife both made some down-to-earth suggestions about how ISKCON could improve its Sunday programs. They mentioned participation. Devotees could give out sheets and invite everyone to chant *bhajan*s, not that only the professional "choir" does the chanting. They also advised against using microphones in rooms which don't really warrant amplification. The professor said he used to be a priest himself and had learnt how to project his voice in a large hall. It's better to hear the vibrations of the actual human voice, he said. Also, the sermons tend to be too long, and on a rather simple level. Professor Weber admitted that maybe this was his particular problem, since he is used to dealing in intellectual ideas. At least the sermons shouldn't be so long, and it's better to have direct conversation with people as much as possible. He and his wife also stayed in Vṛndāvana at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir once, for three weeks. They said that it was so noisy that they could not sleep at night. They disliked the ISKCON policy of playing loud-speaker music starting at 4:00 A.M. I said I also did not

approve of "loudspeaker religion." Their suggestions were all made in a friendly way. The two hours seemed to go by very quickly, and we both sought an opportunity to meet again.

### *Things I didn't do in Heidelberg*

I didn't go out on book distribution with Rohiṇisūta; I didn't cook for the Deities or perform *ārati* on the altar; I didn't read for two hours each day in Prabhupāda's books, I didn't stay completely alert during the twenty-four hour Ekādaśī *vrata*.

Yet I also didn't go down and play billiards in the "Sunset Billiard Parlor"; I didn't ogle women or indulge in thinking about them; I didn't go to the "China Restaurant" across the street or enter the "Mylord Café-Bistro"; and I didn't ask anyone about the history of atomic physics at the University of Heidelberg.



## *Berlin*

### *May 30, to Berlin*

Can you chant your prescribed sixteen rounds while traveling to Berlin? I mean sixteen *good* rounds? It's possible. Besides, sometimes we have to travel during the early morning. You can shut your eyes when you drive out of the city. I don't think the first streaks of blue dawn in the sky are a distraction from chanting.

The main thing is prayer, O Energy of the Lord, O Lord.... So you can pray in the back seat of the car. But you have to desire it, and that requires *concentration*.

Our route is north one hour to Frankfurt, then on to Hanover, and east to Berlin. Surely this is the best time of the day, as the sky lightens with blue, then pink, then lighter and we see the swelling green forests of Deutschland at the end of May. It makes you think of Goethe writing God-in-nature poems and Mozart's symphonies flowing from the Super-soul. Chanting in the dawn, with Kṛṣṇa-blue clouds and countryside, delivers us from mundane time and place!

Now we are driving in our own car, a sixteen-year-old saffron-painted Volvo. We bought it "damn

cheap" from ISKCON Rādhādeśa, paid to make it roadworthy, and we will return it to them in five months. Today is our first outing; so far, so good.

With the sun blazing and heavy traffic racing in tight lanes, it is hard to concentrate on chanting. It may not be perfect, but we need this shelter—uttering the *mahā-mantra* above the tire hum and the sound of trucks accelerating uphill.

As we learned in school, Germany was divided in half after World War II. West Germany is under the "free allies," and East Germany is under the Soviet bloc. The city of Berlin is within East Germany, but West Berlin is "free." So to reach the ISKCON center in West Berlin we have to enter and exit from East Germany. We were told a delay at the borders can be as much as one hour each way.

Elmstedt is the last western town before the border into D.D.R. (East Germany). We stopped for gasoline.

Stop At Allied Check Point  
Keep Right

Up ahead we saw flags for America, France, and England. And then, "*Achtung—D.D.R.*"

We saw the walls with barbed wire. Madhu said there are landmines in between the walls, which are cement with heavy steel bolts. Then we joined a queue of cars. An elderly man in a uniform approached our car. His military hat was very high in the front, resembling the Nazis.

"To West Berlin?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Have you pistolette?" he mimicked a pistol with his hand and fingers.

"No."

"Radio telephone?"

"No."

Next we approached a stout girl in a booth.

"West Berlin?"

"Yes."

She took our passports, which she put on a covered conveyor belt that was moving up to the next checkpoint. She asked, in German, for our auto papers, which Madhu gave her, and then she asked us to park, and he had to go back and talk. I had finished my sixteen rounds in West Germany, but it seemed like a good idea to chant more while waiting.

Soon Madhu came back, "I had to buy visas." Next, another booth, and a blonde woman with a gray shirt and silver epaulettes. She compared our faces very carefully to the photos in the passports. And that was all. "*Guten Morgen.*"

Five minutes over the border, we stopped for breakfast.

While listening to Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Kṛṣṇa* book tape in the car on the D.D.R. highway, I admitted that I have some doubts about the reality of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Previously perhaps I didn't have those doubts or didn't admit to them. But it's not such a terrible thing. Besides, it's my actual state. I even felt a little happy knowing that I could now acknowledge more clearly the work I have to do so that I can overcome this. And neither was I *all doubts*. Considering my relativistic upbringing and all that I have heard from

nondevotees, it's not so unusual to discover that I might occasionally wonder about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. But then, by hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda speak the pastimes on the tape, I became freshly attracted to them; I heard with pleasure. According to the *ācāryas*, the pleasure in hearing pastimes of Kṛṣṇa is the most important qualification. Maybe my intellect doubts whereas my higher emotions accept. I am not an agnostic or an academic person hearing *Kṛṣṇa* book ... I just don't fully *realize* yet, but I am constantly hearing the *Kṛṣṇa* book, and I like it.

I [said the Earth] am bewildered by Your activities. Even the activities of Your devotees cannot be understood, and what to speak of Your pastimes. Thus everything appears to us to be contradictory and wonderful.

—*Bhāg.* 4.17.36

Those who are not sufficiently experienced cannot understand Your transcendental activities because these persons are covered by Your illusory energy.

—*Bhāg.* 4.17.32

Even Nanda Mahārāja, in his own way, had doubts about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, because of his love for Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Therefore the doubts of Nanda Mahārāja were certainly on the point of affection for Kṛṣṇa, but actually there was no danger from the activities of Pūtānā." From his doubt whether Kṛṣṇa could protect Himself, Nanda began "to take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, out of fear."

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has said that unless we accept the Supreme Lord's activities as inconceivable, they cannot be explained. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The



best course is to surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead wholeheartedly, and, being protected by Him, remain peaceful" (*Bhāg.* 4.17.36, purport).

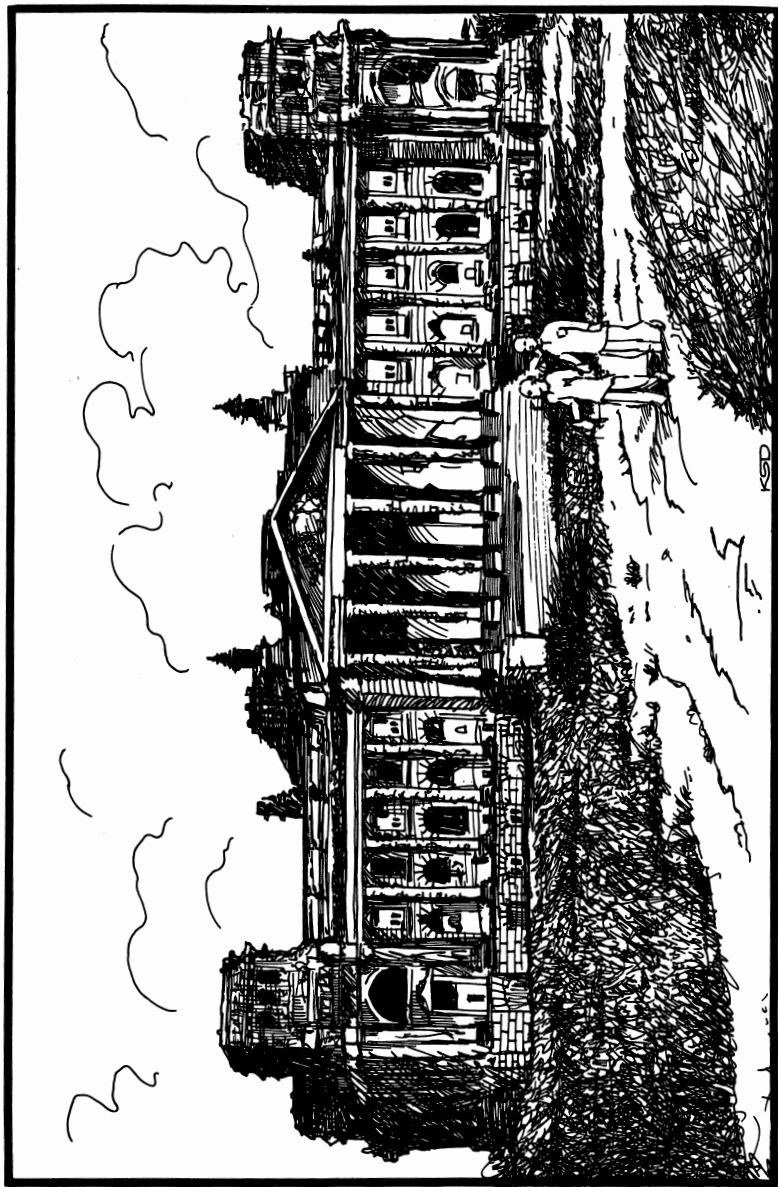
After a two-hour drive through the countryside, we entered similar formalities on leaving D.D.R. and entering West Berlin. We are simply pawns of the international politicians. Our whole life is programmed by manipulative powers. How we dress, what music we listen to, how we try to enjoy life—the "free" West is probably more to blame in this degradation than the fearful Soviets. In the basic ways of *māyā*, both the West and the Soviets conspire, and they themselves are puppets in the hands of *Māyā-devī*.

As soon as we crossed into West Berlin, we saw a Russian tank on a cement pedestal on the Soviet side of the wall, pointing its gun into West Berlin. And then a large group of punk hitchhikers holding up cardboard signs looking for a lift back into West Germany. Entering the city, I saw this graffiti: "State Make Terror."

### *Morning walk by the Wall*

Madhu, Śacīnandana, and I joined Gauravāṇī on his morning *japa* walk. Gauravāṇī is a *saṅkīrtana* devotee who stays in West Berlin and takes a daily *japa* walk along a route which passes along the Wall between East and West Berlin. He ends his walk with a circumambulation around the Reichstag, the building which was formerly the residence and headquarters of Adolf Hitler.

I asked Śacīnandana about the nature of preaching in Berlin.



Devotees chant near Reichstag.

"We suffer from what the Germans call '*Berlin Koller*,'" Śacīnandana said. Berlin is like an island in the midst of the D.D.R., and thus it is an artificial environment, cut off from the rest of the West. Many of its residents feel penned in and often leave the city to live elsewhere. The devotees are affected by the same *Koller*, and after some time they want to leave for West Germany.

At present there are four devotees living in the Bhakti-Yoga Zentrum. When they make new full-time members, those devotees "go West." On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights, there is a lecture, *kīrtana*, and *prasādam*, and on Sunday a regular feast. They perform *hari-nāma* whenever more devotees come for a visit from the West.

Śacīnandana told me about the attempts of the West German government to induce people to live in West Berlin. For example, the government awards a sum of 5,000 marks to the parents of any child born in Berlin. If a young man agrees to live in this city, he is freed from the obligation to serve in the army, which all West German youths have to fulfill. And a whole section of the city has been turned over to punks and other young drifters to live in as they like, without police supervision.

We approached the Berlin Wall. It's all cement, perhaps about fifteen feet high, with a rounded top and no barbed wire. Of course, anyone attempting to climb over from the eastern side would be shot to death by the guards in the towers. On the western side, along the whole length of the Wall, there is colorful graffiti in German and other languages, and varieties of pop art. An artist, who signed his name Bouchet, has painted murals for hundreds of feet,

showing monsters which appear to have been produced from hallucinogenic visions—the monsters are all dancing, drinking, and enjoying sex. It makes you think, “Is *this* the freedom?”

Śacīnandana said there is a museum nearby which documents all the different ways that people have attempted to cross over the Wall. Some have attempted (successfully and unsuccessfully) to cross by homemade gas balloons. One man devised a powerful bow and arrow by which he shot an arrow into a tree on the other side and then made a tight rope, which he crossed. Some tried digging a tunnel underneath the Wall over a period of years, carefully rationing only a small bit of dirt each day, so the garbage collectors wouldn’t suspect.

“They have tried by every conceivable endeavor,” said Śacīnandana. “And yet life on this side is almost the same as over there. Life in West Berlin is very expensive.”

Here is a sample of some of the graffiti in English:

If you love someone, set them free

Tourists go home!

Love is not a wall

Northern Ireland is British

Freedom for the Baltic States

This wall is an illusion

Cologne skinheads, the pride of Germany

They came, they saw, they did a little shopping

We have the right to be free—Lithuania

This side will never fall

Be glad that you are free to go  
everywhere you want  
I like Gorbi  
Death in wilderness  
What you think and do comes back to you  
The smile ends here  
Thank God I'm on this side  
God help the Wall  
Good fences make good neighbors  
Respect for all life

We climbed up a wooden platform for a view into the D.D.R. Immediately on the other side of the Wall is a large grass meadow several football fields long and past that is another wall just like the first. Someone trying to escape would have to climb over the first wall and then make a run through the long open meadow. Throughout the meadow there are many towers equipped with movable flash beams and machine guns, so it is very unlikely that anyone could survive such a mad dash. The names of many who attempted and were killed are commemorated with small plaques on the Western side of the wall. Śaci-nandana said there are many land mines also planted in the meadows. We saw many rabbits playing there. There are also a few platforms on the Eastern side for people to mount and look into the Western sector. From their point of view they could see some of the strange encampments of youths who have set up plastic makeshift teepees with various national flags, and who are living together in a clan just on the

western side of the wall. From the East you can also see some of the billboards like, We Love It—L & M—Rich American Tobaccos—and the ad for an upcoming Michael Jackson concert.

We went to Breitsheid Platz for *hari-nāma*. Nearby is an old, tall, but bombed-out church. Śacī-nandana called it "The Memory Church." Berlin was leveled by bombing during the war, and the church stands as a reminder. Devotees said that years ago, when the first devotees went to Berlin they sent Śrīla Prabhupāda pictures of the spots where they did *saṅkīrtana*, including a spot near this church. Prabhupāda sent back the picture of "The Memory Church" stating, "See the authorities and try to get this church for a temple." Śivānanda tried, but it wasn't possible. There are memorial towers beside the old church, and the whole area is occupied by desperate-looking tramps and punks who live outdoors day and night. Some were sleeping on the steps, and they all looked angry and rejected.

It was rather overwhelming sitting in the midst of heavy pedestrian traffic and chanting. Many young people here dress in what Śrīla Prabhupāda used to call "niggardly" fashion. A fair, young girl in dirty, ripped pants and shirt stood and watched us for a while. A boy with pink hair and a boy with green hair walked together. Two girls with their arms around each other like lovers walked by. A toothless man with a skull-and-crossbones emblem on his hat sat in front of a begging bowl. They were rougher than recent crowds. Some people came up very close and laughed at us; one spit out the Simply Wonderful he

had been given. "Crazy" is the best word I can think of for the atmosphere here. And the film, "Nuts," starring Barbra Streisand, was playing at the local movie house.

But you have to overlook this and join in the chanting. Śacīnandana, who is usually a jolly person, was twice as jolly as usual, putting on a show for the people, playing the drum in a fancy way and laughing. He often made short speeches in between *kīrtanas*. The two ISKCON ladies in unironed *sārīs* mixed with the crowd, giving out invitation cards and sweets. Bhairava Īśa dāsa played harmonium very nicely. Although it was crazy, I am glad I went. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. It was good for cleansing my crazy mind.

### June 1

The West Berlin Bhakti-Yoga Zentrum keeps a guest book for devotee visitors.

Here is an entry by D. Swami from 1984:

"I want to sin in West Berlin."

Berlin is a fantastic place for falling deep into *māyā*. One can definitely descend to the lower species of life with no problem, here in the pit of the city. But here at this Kṛṣṇa consciousness fort, if the inhabitants all chant sixteen rounds a day, follow the four regulative principles, and eagerly associate with Vaiṣṇavas, they will transcend the heavy nescience here and attract many nice people to become devotees. You will be happy and they will be happy. That's the purpose of this movement—unlimited happiness for all.

And from Suhotra Swami:

In this capital of "La Boheme," the young people think they are advancing in so-called "sophisticated living," which is simply filled with the characteristics of ordinary animalism. West Berlin, like the rest of this material world, is actually just an insignificant hole in which the foolish living entities try to hide themselves from Kṛṣṇa. But Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is the incarnation of love of Kṛṣṇa, is directing us—the devotees of this great ISKCON movement—to lift these fools and rascals out of their ignorance by spreading the holy name everywhere. That must be the special mission of the Nāma Haṭṭa devotees of West Berlin.... Because I am so fallen I am praying to the devotees of West Berlin to inspire me to take advantage of Lord Caitanya's mercy, which is flooding the world due to Śrīla Prabhupāda's perfect service to his spiritual master. If I could also do just a little service for Prabhupāda...."

I wrote this entry:

June 1, 1988

I have heard of the Berlin *Koller*, the restlessness which makes people want to leave here for "the West." And I have seen the desperate ones who stay here thinking there is more freedom to enjoy in a sinful place. Therefore, I offer my obeisances to the devotees of Kṛṣṇa consciousness who are staying here and trying to develop their own spiritual lives and share this with others. Surely they must qualify for Kṛṣṇa's special mercy.

I found the preaching enlivening; it reminded me of Prabhupāda in N.Y.C. in 1966 or S.F. in 1967, patiently approaching wild people and giving them *prasādam*, *hari-nāma* and books. What you have here in one apartment in an old building in a



crowded city seems more valuable than a big palace with big overhead expenses and big problems.

May Kṛṣṇa bless you with *utsāha* and may you transform Berlin Koller into anxiety to serve the Supreme Lord and go back to Godhead—taking many ex-punks with you.

There was an interesting guest at the lecture last night. He was Dr. Klaus Bosselmann, a young professor and activist in “deep ecology.” He has connections with the Green political party in Germany, and he advocates that politicians should represent not only their human constituency but the trees and rivers of their locality. “Who is speaking up for the river Rhine?” he said. “Who will protect the river from those who dump chemicals in her?” The professor and his wife are interested in *Tai chi* and *Tao*, and also in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are especially fond of Śacīnandana dāsa.

“Kṛṣṇa conscious ecology,” I said, “is based on a supreme proprietorship of God. A human should take only his quota and should keep a balance within nature. Because nature doesn’t belong to him. Also if we want our necessities of life, we have to perform ‘sacred acts,’ sacrifices. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is the sacrifice for this age.” He seemed very agreeable to these ideas and thought that it would be great if Śacīnandana could address the Bundestag, the German parliament, and conduct a *kīrtana* there.

Each night in Berlin I have followed their regular schedule of speaking on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. They are now on the Thirteenth Chapter. To prepare myself I read from Harikeśa Swami’s book *The Thirteenth*

*Chapter.* Last night's verse was 13.29 which states that if a man sees the Supersoul everywhere he will not degrade himself. This allowed me to speak of man's destruction of the environment. As I did so, I saw Professor Bosselmann glowing with satisfaction. The entire audience was very attentive, even through the translation process, and everyone stayed for another *kīrtana* and a full feast, which the devotees had been cooking all day long.

### *Morning Notes*

I slept all right  
in a comfortable bed,  
now sitting in the apartment  
ready to go.  
Breakfast is packed,  
we have our own car,  
friends are waiting in the next town—  
so there is no ordeal.  
Why not, then, take on  
the *tapasya* of inner discipline,  
self-observation?

Leaving the city by the wide roads Hitler built for parades, looking over the shoulder and up at the Angel of Victory on her tall pedestal—O golden winged goddess holding a wreath and scepter, O smiling angel, please bless us to fight in *this* cause—conquering over birth and death.

## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

# Hamburg

### *Arrival in Hamburg*

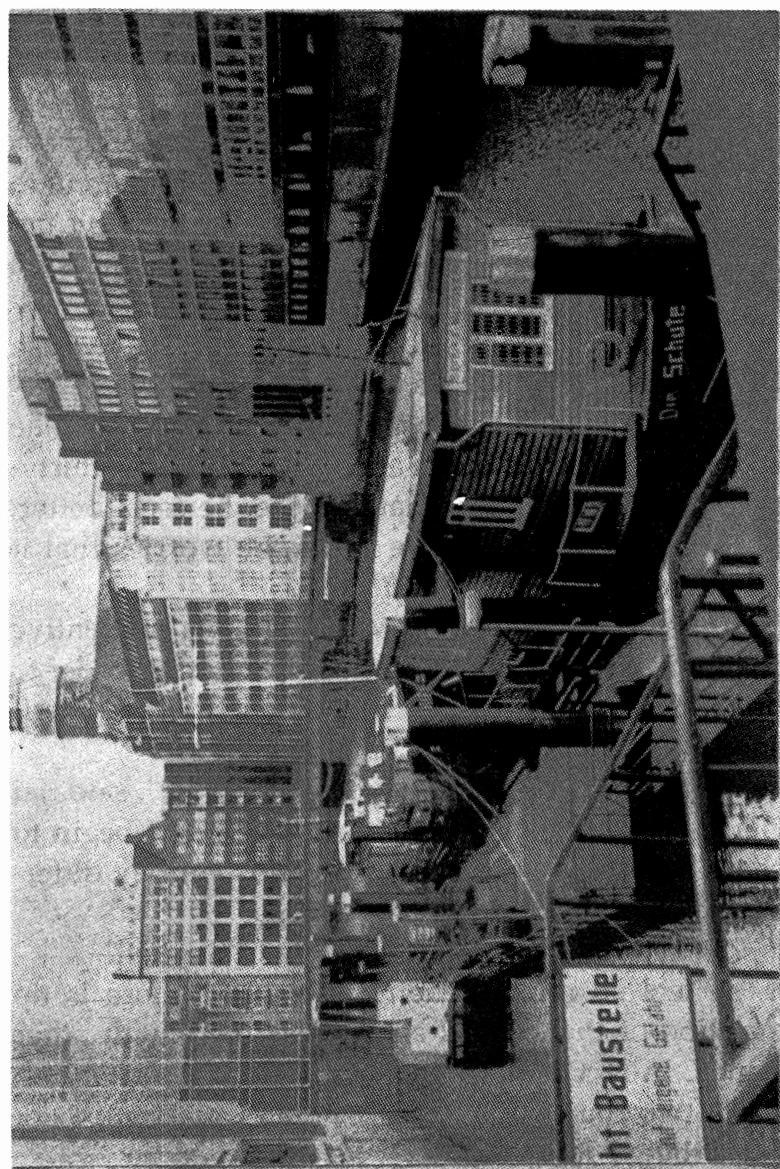
The temple is a houseboat called Govinda moored in a canal of the Elbe river. No devotees can live on the boat, but they hold Nāma Haṭṭa congregational meetings there two times a week and on Sundays. The boat has two levels and a temple room with parquet floor.

We were met at Govinda's by Jai Gaura, dressed in a business suit but with bead bag and neck beads. He joined the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in Hamburg in 1971. Jai Gaura said three disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and two disciples of Harikeśa Swami live in the city and there are about twenty-five Nāma Haṭṭa members. He then came with us in our car and guided us to an apartment.

"How come in such a big city there is such a small number of devotees?" I asked.

Jai Gaura explained that there aren't many devotees in Germany. Munich, for example, is an even bigger city than Hamburg and has no regular Kṛṣṇa conscious program. He then explained that the devotees also felt it was better to concentrate more in the South, in places like Heidelberg, where people are more pious. "People in Hamburg are tough," he said.

He then began to praise the Nāma Haṭṭa work they are doing in Hamburg. He said that sometimes



devotees living in the temple feel that they are pushed beyond their capacity to surrender, and later they fall down. So in Hamburg there are thirty serious devotees all pursuing their own occupations and following Kṛṣṇa consciousness at their own pace. Jai Gaura said that they are all making regular progress. He also explained that a devotee often finds strength by living on his own, becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious from inner conviction, not just because of the peer pressure in the temple.

He gave me a sample of his "Carobi" candy which he manufactures and sells in health food stores.

We also talked about *japa*. Jai Gaura said that he likes to increase his quota and sometimes does thirty-two rounds. When he chants more, he feels better. But when he increases the quota, he worries that it might be considered "*bābājī*."

"My big problem in *japa*," I said, "is inattentive chanting. So I think of increasing the quota in order to break through that. What is the benefit you experience by more chanting?"

"I find that the first sixteen rounds," said Jai Gaura, "are duty. And only after that, do I begin to chant because I want to chant. So it is entirely different experience after sixteen rounds."

"What about the '*bābājī*' criticism?" I asked.

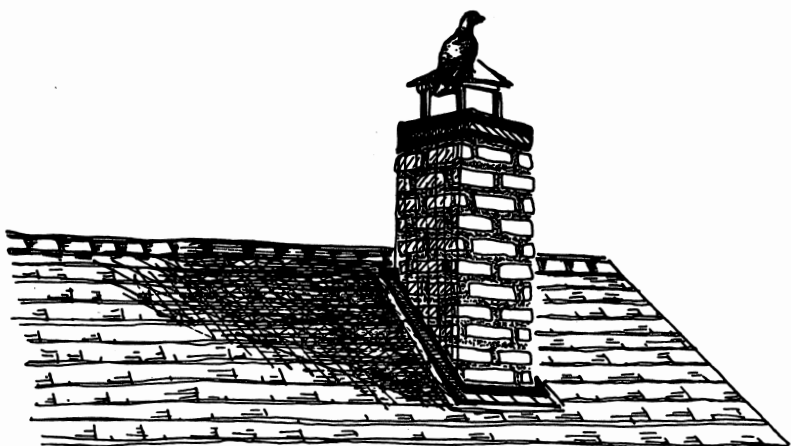
"I feel so much benefit," he said, "there is no question of that. And I am always busy with other things. In fact for three years when I was chanting thirty-two rounds I was busier than usual, and I got more things done."

"Yes," I said. "I think we have to be callous to such criticism."

We agreed that Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly

permitted increased *japa* and even encouraged devotees to chant more than sixteen rounds if they could do it in addition to their regular duties.

And now we are resting in the living room of two disciples of Harikeśa Swami, Vrateyu dāsa and his wife Devarakṣita dāsī, who don't speak English, but who have kindly allowed us into their home.



### *Hamburg Haiku*

Pigeon on a chimney  
against a white sky—  
the long spring day.

Young couples'  
small apartment,  
blow-up photos  
of Śrī Viṣṇupāda.

Through the long afternoon  
I try chanting.

# Die innere Reise zur spirituellen Vollendung

Er ist einer der ersten Schüler von Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, dem hervorragenden Lehrer einer jahrtausendealten, vedischen Traditionsfolge.

Sri Satsvarupa Maharaj ist Gründer vieler spiritueller Farmgemeinschaften und Autor zahlreicher Bücher. Seit 1977 ist er einweihender spiritueller Meister der Hare-Krishna-Bewegung. Man kann ihm seine innere Transparenz buchstäblich ansehen.

Am Freitag den 3.6.1988  
um 18 Uhr,



Invitation flier

June 3

They have printed up a flier for the lecture tonight at Govinda's, *Dem Spirituellen Hausboot* (the spiritual houseboat). Śacīnandana dāsa said the flier was composed "to catch the pulse of the times." They have assigned me the lecture subject, "The inner journey to spiritual perfection." Other pulse-beats of the times include the statement on the flier that I have founded several spiritual farm communities and that "*Man kann ihm seine innere Transparenz buchstäblich ansehen,*" which Śacīnandana said means, "He has an inner transparency which you will see when you look

at him." Maybe some people who come tonight will see through me.

*Pre-lecture advice*

The talk should not be *just* textbook recitation and not to entice superficial, "pulse beat" people who are interested in pseudo things. Tell your own truth and Vedic truth. There is an inner person, and the inner journey is traversed according to a science. There must be a higher person to lead you....

Go to the houseboat with your speech outline in mind, but when you are actually in front of the people, then speak your convictions. Don't imitate a realization you do not have. But also don't go free-form as if you knew a spiritual journey other than the Kṛṣṇa conscious path you are on.

Combine recitation, that is, elaboration on Vedic text and *siddhānta*—along with a desire to actually help people—and use your wits to express it all simply, especially when you are challenged by their doubts and opposing speculations.

Despite my own doubts and speculations, I will speak the strong *paramparā*. Thus, lecturing forces me to surrender to Śrīla Prabhupāda. One thinks, "Here I am directly in his view. As I speak to others, I cannot fail him. My personal failure is my own business, but not here. Here you must surrender, here you are obedient."





# APPENDIX



# *Poems from the Road*

## *Calling Out to Śrīla Prabhupāda IV*

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, of whom I often think  
“Where are you?” O Prabhupāda, who doesn’t  
belong as the exclusive property of any one disciple;

O Prabhupāda, who is simultaneously giving  
thousands of instructions and yet who is silent in  
Kṛṣṇa meditation, please become more clear in my  
mind;

O Prabhupāda, of whom we say, “I wish you were  
present now to tell us who was right and wrong and  
what to do”—and yet whom we fear to think of in  
that way because surely he would be angry with us  
and expose our cherished notions as foolish and  
disobedient;

O Prabhupāda, whom we sometimes prefer to  
worship at a distance, as is recommended in the scrip-  
tures, but whose lotus feet we want to touch, whose  
hand we want to feel on our heads and backs;

O Prabhupāda, who is with us, but who is also in  
another dimension, and of whom we think, “How  
can I reach you? When and where will we meet  
again?”

O Prabhupāda, who is not just another link in the  
disciplic succession of *gurus*, but who is the Founder-  
*Ācārya* of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and  
who said “None of these men could fulfill the desires

of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in the matter of preaching in the foreign countries”;

O Prabhupāda, the remembrance of whom is like *satori*, whose moments are hundreds of haikus if we could only know them and see them rightly;

O Prabhupāda, who said, “Everything is all right,” indicating that there is no need for anxiety because Kṛṣṇa is the controller of *everything*, yet who also used to say, “What can be done?” indicating that he wanted even more success for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but obstacles remained in the way—this also was the will of providence;

O Prabhupāda, who didn’t speak of hidden obscure meanings in the *Vedas*, who said the conclusion was very clear, and yet whose instructions may be looked at in new lights, and whose sincere followers sometimes discover that they really haven’t understood what he meant even on basic issues;

O Prabhupāda, who is the source of all writings and teachings in the ISKCON *sampradāya*; O Prabhupāda, who will always have true followers, and whose followers will keep up his standards in many places in the world; O Prabhupāda, please keep us at your lotus feet, please keep us alive in your service.

O Prabhupāda, who carried within himself the treasure of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* and who brought that treasure to the West, knowing it could not be plundered, and knowing the people were in dire need of it, but who was unsure at first whether they would accept it;

O Prabhupāda, who came to America appearing like an old Indian *svāmī*, and who felt himself “an

insignificant beggar," who survived difficulties alone and gradually found a few rebellious and sinful, but spiritually innocent persons, who were willing and eager to accept the treasure of Kṛṣṇa's love;

O Prabhupāda, who distributed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the form of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures, and Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*, and whose new followers found Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* very delicious and nutritious, which gave their spiritual master increased hope in the possibility of wider distribution;

O Prabhupāda, who truly lived in complete dependence on Kṛṣṇa in a foreign land with no income and at an old age, who followed the trail of favorable preaching as a full Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsī*, who went to San Francisco and there increased his hope and his followers, who wrote his translations of the best Vaiṣṇava texts, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, with purports composed while in the midst of Western preaching adventures such as no previous *ācārya* had ever encountered;

O Prabhupāda, who paid careful attention to each person who came to him, who stopped to hear others and to convince them of spiritual reality and material falsity, who became the best friend and *guru* of his followers—who said, "If you love me then I'll love you";

O Prabhupāda, whose entire *līlā* on this earth is the story of a liberated soul carrying out the will of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose life is for us like the *līlā* of Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Rāma or Lord Caitanya; meant for uplifting and directing us in spiritual life by following your footsteps, whose life is a shelter for thousands, who is the

admiration of any intelligent person capable of appreciating extraordinary merit for the cause of God consciousness, and whose life's activities are very, very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa who declared, "There is no servant more dear to Me nor will there ever be one more dear";

O Prabhupāda, please do not let us stray from your protection in the illusion that we don't need you, and please let us grow strong and fight opposition on your behalf. But even while appearing competent, materially or spiritually, let us not be deluded to think we can survive happily in this world or go back to Godhead without pleasing you and serving you by following your instructions to be Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees, your followers.



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