

In Praise  
of the  
Mahājanas  
and other poems

1983



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and other poems

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Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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## PREFATORY POEM

### 1

When they were singing *bhajan*as  
and Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma  
were giving us *darśana*  
I got the feeling  
that shortage of subjects was not my problem,  
and ecstasy of feeling is plenty.  
We are brimming over in Kṛṣṇa consciousness  
with themes enough for hundreds of years.

### 2

Poets chant of battles  
or they criticize wars humanely  
praise cities, or women,  
speak of "The Night," or loneliness,  
lamenting and rejoicing on behalf of all,  
—but is not praise of the Supreme Person  
the worthiest of all themes?

Why not be able to write such chants  
in outpouring abundance?

### 3

Then practice the art,  
where work and poem rise side by side,  
with *bhakti-yoga* the worshipable muse.  
Out of the day's demands,  
out of the body and mind,  
words may be lifted  
and triumphantly shaped,  
—like the art of children,  
simple cows and houses, wrought  
from linoleum carving sets  
from their impassioned, concentrated knives.  
Like the childrens' woodcuts,  
my words may impress  
the worthwhile experience unto the page.



## ON THE FIRST DAY OF DĀMODARA MONTH

Now I'm on another continent,  
in Vṛndāvana, the original abode of Dāmodara  
and I think of my assigned home,  
Gītā-nāgarī,  
led by Paramānanda dāsa.

Rādhā-Dāmodara,  
I come before You,  
glimpsing Your ecstatic beauty,  
even as I stand before Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma.

Golden, playful Dāmodara  
and the Queen of *bhakti*  
have come to the Pennsylvania woods,  
Lalitā and Viśākhā on either side.  
And as Kārttika season begins in Vraja,  
Gītā-nāgarī's oxen pull in lumber  
to heat the fires  
of devotional labor and rest.

And my charges there,  
the young devotees  
who take me as their *guru*—  
may we prosper together  
in the shelter of Their service,  
as arranged by Śrīla Prabhupāda.  
May we stand against the blasts of *māyā*,  
may we work together always,  
under Their sweet glances,  
Their loving command.

*namāmīśvaram sac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ*

## BIOGRAPHY-WALLA

(Written in Vṛndāvana while completing the  
last volume of Śrīla-Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta)

Biography-wallā,  
who cares for your subjective ecstasies?  
Give us the right stuff  
our of your *mistrī* labors,  
the composed picture.

If you do  
we shall take care of you,  
ease your headaches  
and not demand  
that you suffer management.  
Your servants are at hand,  
and even this notepad.

Don't make up reasons  
why not to surrender,  
"I'm disturbed, mosquitoes, etc."  
Like a dutiful clerk,  
stay at your work,  
make clear, don't interfere  
with the wonderful facts  
of the greatest life.

—10/28/82

*TO A DEVOTEE*

We walk in twilight darkening.  
They have to stop from falling down.  
"Be Kṛṣṇa conscious," I say.  
Yet they fall.  
Ducks on the creek  
hear and fly away.  
"Be Kṛṣṇa conscious," I say,  
hoping he will also feel  
assurance unspoken.

*IT CAN BE TRUE**A Warning Against Prākṛta-sahajiyāism*

Over the phone a disciple asks  
 to become a *gopī* for Kṛṣṇa.  
 I say it's not so cheap  
 (not like after-hour phone rates).  
 You have to earn it. How?  
 Early steps of love, to refrain  
 when getting the first glimpse  
 not diving for it, thinking it yours.  
 Serve and show your love, by sacrifice,  
 doing as the *guru* bids. Hearing  
 of the great love for Kṛṣṇa by the *gopīs*  
 while humbly following surrender.

On sighting your own sentiment,  
 don't think you have attained it.  
 The first light of love, the hope,  
 the bare awakening so thrills you,  
 yes, you want it all.  
 But love for Kṛṣṇa is not in wanting yours  
 but giving for His pleasure.

So wait, my friend, be patient,  
 that song you heard, the tears,  
 the sudden inkling, all are true,  
 but you must purify the heart.  
 So start the path to love  
 but do not take the inkling as the All.

Why should it be so cheap?  
 Let me arrive when I pass the test.  
 Give me strength to want it  
 give me, O master, a service



that I can do, to be sincere.

Or else in gross desire we fall  
soaken in body grime,  
hoax of the sublime,  
craving like a dog  
while claiming love-divine.  
A mockery of truth,  
false even to the song  
the tears, and the inkling  
of your own awakening.

It can be true  
if patiently we follow.  
Let a lifetime be spent in work  
like that. And never demand,  
except to serve Him.

## ĀTMĀ-TATTVA

Thirty thousand feet up,  
 I'm in the palm of Kṛṣṇa's hand.  
 Below is like a map;  
 these lives are dreams only.  
 Reality is the soul.  
 Tired eyes also don't count  
 as ultimate truth.  
 Young stewardess's smile  
 is surely not truth,  
 nor being charmed by her.  
 Precious self aloof  
 is also not truth.

Proof of the soul?  
 It is when you analyze the body:  
     hands, head, arms, legs,  
     heart, lungs  
 and it is not there.  
 It's when you hear  
 the authorized words  
 of *guru* and *śāstra*.  
 It's when you die  
 and all matter is vanquished  
 —wife, treasury, pride,  
 atheistic theory of  
 no soul, denial of Kṛṣṇa  
 —all smashed.  
 (When that which was life  
 leaves the body—that is soul.)  
 It's you,  
 not the body.  
 It can't be seen in air,  
 it is too small  
 and requires a devotee  
 to show you.

The spiritually blind can't see  
the soul.

## 2

"But where is God?"  
said the best of the atheists.  
"If He is everywhere  
then why is He not present  
before me in this pillar?  
Let me see  
your most worshipable God  
come to protect you.  
I want to see it."

He came,  
He is not an opium vision  
or myth.  
The devotee Prahlāda saw Him.  
He is in the sound  
never-before-heard  
blasting the ears of  
all demigods and demons.  
They thought the universe  
was being destroyed.  
He appeared,  
came and killed the demon,  
and saved the devotee.  
That is proof of God and the soul.

That you live and breathe  
is also proof.  
Your denial of God  
is also coming from Supreme soul.  
The sun, moon, clouds,  
the movies, the cars,  
the bombs, the girls,

the cigars, hotels, hells  
oceans' surf in San Juan,  
everything is upheld by a spark  
of His splendor.

He (the soul) does not die  
when the body dies.  
He is original,  
knowing, eternal.  
The souls are also everywhere.  
But you have to hear it  
from a devotee,  
and that you do not  
want to do.

*INITIATIONS*

Today I take on more disciples  
even while I hear of those who left.  
One joined a bogus *yogī's* group;  
one is playing tennis;  
one has gone into teenage *māyā*;  
one has disappeared;  
one is suing us.  
They say eighty percent of Prabhupāda's are gone,  
so what can be said of mine?  
But I take on more  
unsure of what will happen to me  
if they leave and sin  
after I accept them.

There is no guarantee  
that one you help  
will always be pure.  
Let me be strong  
and take on good and bad.  
Pray to Balarāma,  
the Reservoir of strength  
and Kṛṣṇa the Supreme.  
Protect us in ISKCON!

## YOU AND ME

As for *me*, there are many,  
mostly false, like "man,"  
"American," "father," "Steve."  
The *soul* is real,  
not the body;  
and when the body is dead,  
I go to another.  
I am the soul,  
God's eternal servant.

As for you, there are also many,  
but really we are  
all souls.  
You and I are  
a union of souls.  
And Kṛṣṇa is the substance.

*THE DAY AHEAD*

The day ahead is loaded with duty,  
nor is it a loathsome *karmī's* load,  
not a dreaded workday for nothing,  
not a lustseeking lost way,  
not rancor ahead, not cheating or hopelessness.  
But a day of devotional service, gaining faith,  
in hopes of approaching the Lord.  
If pure servant I can become,  
then all pains taken are worth it.  
We sing and dance, we study the glorious *śāstra*,  
my friends are gentle and enlightened,  
the others are in need of my help.  
I have a heavy task to represent the Lord;  
by His grace I can do it,  
I am happy to say  
there is no other way.

*THE SNOW OF FEBRUARY 1983*

Darkening night in February  
as snow comes down  
the crazy are condemning  
their best friends,  
the charges are brainwashing.

Anyone can see it is not true  
that we are what they say we are.  
Yet "anyone" is a meat-eater,  
ignorant to the value  
of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*;  
he will rather listen  
to a psychiatrist from Yale.

In the age of darkness  
the devotees are on trial;  
up is down and down is up  
in the age of darkness  
it is clearer than ever.



## TO LONDON

*"According to scriptural codes, a teacher who engages in an abominable action and has lost his sense of discrimination is fit to be abandoned."*

[From the Bhaktivedanta purports to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.5]

A guru cannot be one who  
invites his followers to take LSD  
Such a cheater will go  
to the darkest place of the universe  
after finishing his spiritual master business,  
and his followers will go with him.  
He is no Vaiṣṇava  
mixing pure philosophy with  
concocted versions of other religions  
with crazy claims to be three incarnations  
and venomous attacks upon  
the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

There is nothing a goat won't eat  
and a crazy man won't speak.  
They have become servants to a chemical  
and to a madman.  
He is not harmless, but devilish  
and in his name they worship  
a drug which Prabhupāda came to speak against.  
He saved us in America  
from LSD, and now this so-called teacher  
is inviting them to take  
what even hippies of the sixties have given up  
as destructive illusion.

Worst of all is to contaminate  
Śrīla Prabhupāda's gift  
and then claim it is the essence of his teachings.

ABOUT PRABHUPĀDA  
YOU MIGHT SAY

First you might say,  
"It isn't very sad  
that he went away  
because most devotees  
weren't living with him anyway.  
Did it matter much to them  
since they saw him  
only rarely?  
They *lived* by his *instruction*."

Then you might say,  
"We didn't know it then  
but the loss grows daily.  
*Only he* could correct our wrongs  
and stop our fights,  
reform the worst rebels  
or cut them off completely  
with no splits or factions."

Which might lead you to say,  
"Without his personal presence  
his Movement is doomed  
since no one in the room  
is a faithful follower."  
Or you might start  
your own new bogus movement,  
or you might more frankly  
spin off into *māyā*  
now that "Prabhupāda is gone."

*But, hold on.*  
*That is not his teaching.*  
Didn't he give us *service in separation*?  
It isn't easy, but

isn't it real,  
more important, in fact,  
than his personal form  
which has proven to be  
not always here?

He doesn't speak truth  
who says "it's all gone."  
Śrīla Prabhupāda is still in charge  
of the faithful heart,  
he is still flowing nectar  
to the river of his followers,  
and his Movement won't collapse  
because *paramparā* is guided  
by Lord's own hand.

## TO THE DEMONS

A fight is a fight.  
 You may look for our  
 weakness, and find it.  
 You may look in these books  
 for some criminal implication,  
 and you may find a judge and jury  
 to believe you.  
 You may plot and work  
 for our demise  
 and win some money and men.  
 You may rejoice  
 but you cannot defeat us,  
 'though if I tell you why  
 you will not understand.

You are all like the atheist son  
 of the Vidyanāgara *brāhmaṇa*  
 who laughed to think,  
 "How can Śakṣī Gopāla come to witness?!"  
 And you tease us when  
 Lord Nṛsimha doesn't pounce  
 at every instance  
 as you torture new devotees.  
 All these things  
 will be revealed to you in time  
 but perhaps too late  
 to save your dog-like death.

For now let us fight.  
 And you too may now repeat  
 the names of Kṛṣṇa.  
 Your utterance,  
 "Hare Kṛṣṇa,"  
 and "The Kṛṣṇas"  
 is the only saving grace  
 in your wasted lives.

*THE TEST*

Whatever form the beast comes rushing  
none of it pertains to me  
because I'm not this body  
or the mind. This I pray—  
to always remember Kṛṣṇa,  
when trapped under the weight  
or captive in the den.  
But what of now?  
Benign old house,  
a path of Irish roses  
—isn't this another dream  
to think that death is far away?  
Why don't I cry out  
now and constantly  
"Kṛṣṇa save me! Kṛṣṇa save me!"

## A PRAYER TO LORD BALARĀMA

On Balarāma's appearance day  
 a color photo shows  
 the bottom of Prabhupāda's lotus foot.  
 But I am distracted and feeling far away.

"I never had Prabhupāda's *vapuḥ*,"  
 a boy wrote to me.  
 But which is more lamentable,  
 that he never had, or  
 that I had and now forget?

Almighty Brother of the Lord,  
 fearless Personality of Godhead,  
 as dear to Kṛṣṇa as His own Self,  
 first expansion, Baladeva,  
 from Whom come all other Viṣṇu forms;  
 Haladhāra, jolly in unending bliss,  
 carrying the plow or club,  
 sporting in Vṛndāvana with Your Lord,  
 giver of Bala, spiritual strength,  
 source of Rāma, spiritual bliss—  
 I pray to You  
 kindly uplift me,  
 that I may place the dust  
 of Prabhupāda's lotus feet  
 on my bewildered head.

## TO BHŪRIJANA DĀSA

You are imperfect  
 or I am imperfect?  
 I think we both are.  
 Good worker, you are  
 writing and teaching  
 in Prabhupāda's *gurukula*;  
 you offer me your son  
 and sometimes you ask  
 am I still your friend.

I am certainly your friend  
 but can that help you?  
 (to have a friend who is an outlet  
 for 600 electric plugs?)  
 Yet sometimes we can share alone  
 and always we can serve together.

As for your son, Jaya Gurupāda,  
 he is a babbler, now three years old.  
 "What did you do in L.A.?" I asked him.  
 "I took vitamins," he said.  
 "Did you say *Śrī Viṣṇu*?"  
 "No. I'll do it tomorrow."

He promises  
 to always remember Viṣṇu  
 but can we believe a baby  
 when you and I  
 talk wistfully of an impossible dream  
 to be always chanting and remembering  
 the *mahā-mantra*?

That is our prayer, one day we may do it,  
 and your son may grow up a Vaiṣṇava,  
 and your wife will be satisfied in service.

As we both work, keeping honor,  
we will see this Movement endure.  
How fortunate we are! —  
not to be afraid of old age and death;  
we are Prabhupāda's disciples.



*A NIGHTMARE OF IGNOBLE DEFEAT*

I went on my own  
into a city like Vancouver  
on a good bicycle  
and was captured by youths  
who stole my bike  
although I managed to keep important I.D.  
and they gave me a cheap, child's bicycle  
to ride off into heavy traffic.  
But in the dream I didn't chant  
the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

*KILLERS*

A large bird swooped  
to catch a flapping fish,  
placed him on the river bank  
sharply poked his beak at him,  
driving out the soul  
before eating the corpse.

"All nature is like that,"  
observed a manly creature  
from within his glass house.  
He is a vegetarian  
proud of reading books  
but his *mind*  
is wild with speculations:  
he also is a killer of the soul.

## ON JANMĀṢṬAMĪ WE SERVANTS

On Janmāṣṭamī we servants don't eat  
and that is a special treat.  
We glance at the succulent fruits,  
the delectable *samosās*,  
and bow before Śrī Kṛṣṇa,  
"Please eat and enjoy Yourself."  
At midnight after seeing Him  
we will also relish  
the fruits and fries  
but with a difference—  
they are mixed with God's own taste.

This is the day we do not eat,  
and our hearts are lighter for it.  
By early eve we begin to float,  
the tongue unlocks,  
we can finally speak  
directly Kṛṣṇa,  
and our brain is clear  
to consider the year.

This is the day the Lord appeared  
and all day long we prepare for Him.

At the hour when usually we're asleep  
tonight we're wide awake  
until finally it is twelve:  
we blow the horn of bone,  
and the Lord is born.

He appeared in Kāṁsa's cell,  
prayed to by Devakī  
and carried by His father  
across Yamunā's froth

to a house in dark Gokula.

When irreligion rises  
and demons are ascending,  
when devotees are oppressed,  
He advents Himself in every age  
just to set it right.

In Kali He has appeared  
in the form of the holy name  
in the womb of the ISKCON Movement  
arranged by Gaurāṅga's *śakti*.

Until night is gone  
we chant, fast and feast;  
and finally we are tired—  
now it is Vyāsa-pūjā.

*I WISHED I WAS BETTER*

Vyāsa-pūjā, 1983

In the bright assembly,  
during readings of homages  
Bhāgavatapāda said of him,  
"You taught us the Supreme is a sentient being,  
you gave us the Bhaktivedanta purports,  
you gave us the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*,  
and emphasized to distribute books."  
And Navayogendra Swami said,  
"Once Prabhupāda said,  
'My movement is for fallen souls.' "  
And one lady disciple said,  
none of us is God,  
we can each do a part,  
and we should not fight among us.  
I spoke also,  
but I wished I was better.

Then we bathed Prabhupāda  
in delicious liquids.  
At *kīrtana* we came alive  
dancing, leaping,  
chanting together,  
offering gladiolas three times.  
There followed a sweet play  
by the *gurukula* children  
then back to Rājarṣi's house  
for well-cooked *prasādam*.  
I wished I was better.

*DON'T TRY TO STOP HIM*

Bala dāsa, gray-haired Bengali,  
 white-vested, is very sincere;  
 he has served Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa for years  
 in a room within his house.  
 Now the children have grown up  
 not interested in devotion,  
 and his wife wants to talk with me.

She wants to keep the house,  
 wants him not to serve so much,  
 I will have to tell her,  
 "Be a real wife like in Vedic culture."  
 It will be hard for her  
 selling this big house  
 and moving to the hectic temple,  
 I can sympathize  
 but what choice does she have?

Last night he forgot to come home  
 and she cooked for nothing,  
 thinking she is cheated by Kṛṣṇa,  
 now that her husband is a sold-out *bhakta*  
 and the children gone away  
 and old age approaching,  
 it is hard for her to see  
 the joy in surrender  
 but if she does not  
 there is only a world of sorrow,  
 repeated birth and death.

Mother, be happy,  
 don't try to stop him;  
 he wants to surrender.  
 You can come too.

*FATHER AND SON*

The man on the plane seat in front of us  
asked his restless young son,  
"Tell me what kind of plane we are on."  
The child was silent  
and his father was annoyed with him,  
"Look at the card in front of you!  
Now read it—it's a Boeing 727!"  
The man was trying  
to sharpen his son,  
so he won't grow up a fool.  
But what does it matter,  
now and in the future,  
whether we know the number of the plane  
or how to rent a car?  
Yes, these are important  
but why don't you teach him  
why he was born  
and how he can get out  
of the clutches of death?  
Where is that father  
who knows himself?

## RĀDHĀṢṬAMĪ AT GĪTĀ-NĀGARĪ

## 1

Prabhupāda put it so simply:  
 "She is the best devotee of Kṛṣṇa."  
 We believed him with no material tinge;  
 simply on his order we were allowed  
 to transcend all *jñāna* and *tapasya*.  
 Beholding the oval painting in the storefront,  
 Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana,  
 we heard from him *why* She is the best:  
 "Because no one loves Kṛṣṇa as much as She."  
 Prabhupāda, like Rādhā, was the compassionate side of  
 Kṛṣṇa;  
 and he told us of Rādhā's compassion:  
 "The chanting is exactly like the cry  
 of a child for its mother.  
 Mother Harā helps the devotee achieve  
 the Lord father's grace."

## 2

An ordinary devotee cannot understand  
 how She approaches Kṛṣṇa in a conjugal mood,  
 but we must follow in the footsteps of the *gopīs*,  
 without fear, by unalloyed service,  
 without expectation of reward.  
 It is Rādhā we must follow.  
*All* servants, from the first to the last,  
 must follow in the footsteps of the *gopīs*.

As we work in the kitchen, or distribute books,  
 as we work with the lawyers,  
 as we fight with the demons,  
*all* servants follow Rādhā  
 and keep Her on their minds  
 by chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa*.



## 3

Walking in the *japa* garden  
I begin to understand  
how by Her mercy  
we develop love of God.

And on the appearance day of Rādhārāṇī  
I offer this prayer:  
Please give me the blessings  
of engagement in Your service  
as given by Your pure devotee.  
I really don't want  
material enjoyment anymore.  
Please help me  
to drive away unwanted lust  
and let me worship You,  
O personification of the best  
devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

*THREE RATHA-YĀTRĀS*

## I. Washington, D. C.

Hundreds of chanters  
 dancing in dust-raising summer  
 between the Monument and Capitol,  
 before the jolly, billowing carts.

America, hear us—  
 please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.  
 Your violence to nature,  
 the killing of fetuses  
 the killing of animals  
 will result in mass killings  
 to your own human beings.

Worldly powers didn't chant or listen  
 although the President passed by;  
 for a moment he spied the tall, silken carts  
 and then continued in his presidential way,  
 police sirens wailing.

Before the chariot of Balarāma,  
 we prayed to Him, please help us  
 to subdue the demons.

## II. Boston

Startled, they were coming out of shops  
 on Boylston Street, the police  
 escorting us, and the wooden-wheeled cart  
 rumbling along without a hitch,  
 the Deities surveying all,  
 as our small group chanted,  
 lighting up the gray world.

The Jaḍa Bhārata play, "Three Lives"

was good for the mellow Boston crowd.  
Because it showed transmigration,  
how a man could leave his kingdom  
yet lose his spiritual gain  
due to attachment to a pet.  
Death came and gave that sage  
his next life in the body of a stag.  
Seeing hundreds peacefully receive  
Kṛṣṇa conscious drama, all devotees  
were happy and fulfilled.

It was Boston at its best.  
Even the sky held up,  
'though rain had been predicted;  
Lord Jagannātha was beaming.

### III. New York City

"Today the bums get a break."  
By car through the combat zone,  
pornography leaping out at us,  
the horsedrawn cabs at Central Park,  
turning at last to Fifth Avenue we saw  
the same red, green, yellow and blue canopies,  
the ISKCON Jagannātha carts that now have toured  
through a dozen cities this summer.

Suddenly they began to roll,  
yellow ropes pulled by devotees and friends.  
Down 59th Street, it was cool and sunny  
and we were dancing, nevermind  
shyness or short breath,  
strength comes in spirit  
and singing comes strong  
when you forget all else.

They thronged the sidewalks

not for seeing the Lord,  
yet here He came, and they were awed.  
In front of St. Patrick's they gathered  
rows deep, snapping photos.  
Down the sunny, cool Avenue,  
police were servants too,  
deaf to drivers who leaned on horns;  
they weren't permitted to break up  
the progress of the wonderful carts.  
At 23rd Street and Madison Square  
the canopies lowered like mystic art  
tops shivering, spires tilting in the breeze,  
they came down to fit under the wires.

Past 14th Street we began to run  
and then we saw the Arch—  
another Kṛṣṇa conscious triumph.  
All afternoon the free feast won  
with *kīrtana* through the setting sun.  
It was New York like when Prabhupāda was there.

## OBSERVING THE HOLY DAYS

## I. September 20

On the appearance day  
 of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura,  
 I wanted to write an homage  
 but had to arrange a marriage  
 and took action to avoid  
 another disastrous court case.  
 While riding in the car from the airport  
 I heard bad news.  
 "We have just begun to fight,"  
 said Mahākrama Swami,  
 while Śeṣa was gravely silent.

We spoke of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura,  
 his prophecies for Māyāpur,  
 his prodigious devotional labor,  
 sleeping 3 hours in 24,  
 composing 13 volumes of poetry,  
 teaching the science of surrender  
 and bringing us ecstasy:  
 his heart leaped up  
 when he heard the *mṛdaṅga*  
 and the singing of authorized *bhajanās*.  
 Śrīla Bhaktivinoda will bless us a thousand times  
 as we follow the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

## II. September 21

We will observe  
 the disappearance day of Haridāsa Ṭhākura  
 by writing letters to the Congress  
 urging hearings against the deprogrammers.  
 In the temple room we will play a tape  
 and hear Prabhupāda speaking  
 —Lord Caitanya danced,

taking the body of Haridāsa Ṭhākura on his lap,  
and He performed his burial on the beach.

We find ourself observing holy days  
in strange, fighting ways.  
But that is also right  
as Haridāsa Ṭhākura  
was himself the boldest preacher.  
He would not stop his chanting  
even when beaten.

"How can the fallen be saved?"  
asked Lord Caitanya to Haridāsa.  
"Do not be in anxiety, my Lord,"  
Haridāsa replied, "the chanting  
of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*  
will deliver everyone."

### III. September 22

Prabhupāda, you took *sannyāsa* in 1959  
and then came to America all alone  
and began this great Movement.  
You knew the failures and troubles  
we would encounter, but you assured us,  
whatever we could do for serving Kṛṣṇa,  
we ourselves would be rewarded,  
gaining love of God.

I am also a *sannyāsī*  
created by you, and my monastery  
is the city preaching field,  
where the constant sound is the whoosh  
of tire treads on the roadway.

Today the *U.S. News* says the #1 problem  
is the threat of nuclear war.

And every 5 seconds there is a serious crime,  
and every 2 minutes there is a murder.  
The demons are after our money  
and attacking our *bhakti*.

But this also happened today:  
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa wore beautiful red outfits.  
The milk fast has begun  
and the full moon rises.  
This is the day of Prabhupāda's taking *sannyāsa*  
and we must always recall  
that we can never be vanquished.  
We are not this body—  
be bouyant over that.  
We can chant the Lord's name.  
We would rather die than give up preaching.

## IN PRAISE OF THE MAHĀJANAS

*svayambhūr nāradaḥ śambhuḥ  
 kumāraḥ kapilo manuḥ  
 prahlādo janako bhīṣmo  
 balir vaiyāsakir vayam*

*dvādaśaite vijānīmo  
 dharmam bhāgavatam bhaṭāḥ  
 guhyam viśuddham durbodham  
 yam jñātvāmṛtam aśnute*

Lord Brahmā, Bhagavān Nārada, Lord Śiva, the four Kumāras, Lord Kapila [the son of Devahūti], Svāyambhuva Manu, Prahlāda Mahārāja, Janaka Mahārāja, Grandfather Bhīṣma, Bali Mahārāja, Śukadeva Gosvāmī and I myself know the real religious principle. My dear servants, this transcendental religious principle, which is known as *bhāgavata-dharma*, or surrender unto the Supreme Lord and love for Him, is uncontaminated by the material modes of nature. It is very confidential and difficult for ordinary human beings to understand, but if by chance one fortunately understands it, he is immediately liberated, and thus he returns home, back to Godhead (*Bhāg.* 6.3.20-21).



## PREFACE

What is my access to great ones  
except by service at his feet,  
who brought me to knowledge  
leading me by *Bhāgavat* light?

*Mahājanas* to me were but myths,  
great ones still are distant to me,  
but to their feet I draw near  
through the messages I hear  
direct from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

His assurance to me was real and sure  
but the pity is my memory fails,  
and my carelessness grows,  
so to bring me close again  
I recall the *mahājanas*,  
calling out the great ones  
in hopes I may remember the teachings  
of he who brought me here.

## 1. LORD BRAHMĀ

The first is four-headed Brahmā  
 of this universe the creator.  
 When his son thought Brahmā was God  
 the honest father told him,  
 I am but the gardener for He  
 who truly creates all life,  
 and I work under His command.

In the beginning, Lord Brahmā said,  
 I was alone and did not know  
 who I was or what was the universe.  
 All around was dark, below the raging sea,  
 but I heard the sound of *tapa* from above  
 and took to faithful meditation.

Brahmā knew the Supreme as a Friend;  
 he was the first learned poet,  
 the engineer of fourteen planetary systems;  
 none can understand, even today  
 the science that he knew and what he could do.

By virtue of his ascetic heart  
 he sat for a thousand years  
 and realized that Kṛṣṇa is One,  
 the Beginning the Middle and End.

The all-attractive Lord  
 becoming most kind upon him,  
 spoke to Brahmā four kernel verses  
 in which everything of God and the world  
 He told in brief,  
 And He shook Lord Brahmā's hand,  
 allowing him to see  
 some of the eternal beauty

of Goloka Vṛndāvana.

If you want to speak of his faults  
be careful!

Who can imitate or criticize  
he who creates all bodies,  
who arranges all species of life at once  
who fashions innumerable galaxies  
and spins them into orbit.

If in making inconceivable plans  
he sometimes errs and has to redo it,  
that is no cause for a tiny wretch  
to loosely criticize Brahmā  
who is always the Lord's servant.

And if he also errs in the moral realm,  
and even becomes bewildered  
upon seeing Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana,  
then still we must not deride,  
"the demigod is in *māyā*!"

But we may hear from the Mahājanas  
how Brahmā himself was belittled  
just to teach us: if he is proud,  
even a Brahmā  
may sometimes err.

We are not worshipers of the demigod  
yet as tiny souls  
we bow before Lord Brahmā  
as the greatest ascetic,  
the god of creation,  
the *sampradāya* head;  
and we worship his confidential treatise,  
The *Brahma-saṁhitā*,  
wherein he prays to be reborn  
as a grass outside Vṛndāvana  
to be trampled by the feet of the *gopīs*.

## 2. NĀRADA MUNI

Always calm and devoted to Kṛṣṇa,  
 he comes to the ignorant,  
 to hunters and demons,  
 and to bewildered family men,  
 to tell them the truth—  
 birth and death come and go forever,  
 but we are meant for severing it  
 and going back to Godhead.

He never marries,  
 never gets dependent on a plush situation,  
*guru* of Mahājana Prahlāda and Dhruva Mahārāja,  
 he is the sage among the gods,  
 and he delivers *bhakti sūtras*.  
 Nārada-deva, please allow me  
 to drink your nectarean words.

I love to hear of his blessed boyhood,  
 his sudden arrival in tense scenes.  
 His long philosophical narrations  
 prove he is as good as Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa;  
 all the Seventh Canto is his words,  
 part of the Fourth and First and the *Pāñcarātra*.

All glories to Nārada  
 who helps us remember Śrīla Prabhupāda,  
 who came to us in the nick of time.  
 All glories to Śrī Nārada, whom we worship  
 as a preacher-servant, who fearlessly travels  
 to the dens of the jackals  
 and to the cities of forgetful men.

## 3. LORD ŚIVA

He is the greatest of Vaiṣṇavas,  
his picture everywhere in India;  
Mahādeva is almost God Himself  
as yogurt is almost milk, yet changed.  
He is lord of the ghosts,  
who came again as Śaṅkara and taught  
the confusing, dangerous Māyāvāda.

He frequents the crematorium  
yet millions adore his snake-enwrapped form,  
erect-sitting, ever-youthful renunciant  
beside his demigoddess wife,  
the master and mistress of the world.

Though we are not going much to him  
because his service is different—  
to tend to the demonic with their  
ghastly desires like Vṛkāsura  
who cut his own flesh in hopes  
Śiva would grant him  
a boon to destroy all living heads,  
so we do not much travel with him  
who travels with the ghosts, on Nandi the bull,  
yet we know he is the greatest devotee  
and he always remembers the Lord  
whom we also worship.

Although his is a different kind of service  
it is unalloyed *bhakti*  
as when he stepped forward to catch the Ganges  
or when, on command, he dances and destroys.

‘Though we scorn the demons who wrongly approach him,  
yet eagerly we hear from him  
about the highest worship—

serving the servants of Lord Viṣṇu.  
And when Śiva speaks  
beneath his tree on Mount Kailash,  
Mahājanas like Nārada gather;  
the subject is always *viṣṇu-bhakti*  
and detachment from the world.  
Who knowing rightly will not  
offer honor to Mahādeva?

## 4. THE FOUR KUMĀRAS

Four young boys looking five years old  
 going naked to the higher planets  
 all the way to *Vaikuṇṭha*  
 go the four young boys  
*Sanat*, *Sanaka*, *Sanātana*, and *Sanandana Kumāra*.  
 They are all empowered  
 with transcendental knowledge.  
 and self-satisfied.

Yet when they smelled the *tulasī* at Lord *Viṣṇu*'s feet  
 it turned their minds to personal devotion,  
 Brahman-knowledge was never so sweet,  
 impersonal bliss was a small emotion  
 compared to this.

When their father bade them to marry  
 they refused. *Brahmā* was not amused  
 and in anger from his brow burst forth  
 a blackish crying babe.  
 Yet the boys are not condemned by sages  
 since they disobeyed in favor of the truth.  
 They remained ever-youthful throughout the ages  
 with luster, memory and celibate proof  
 that transcendental life is the highest taste  
 and of knowledge, *bhakti* is the best.

Like *Nārada* they come and go  
 with no worldly appointment,  
 received by kings, their feet are washed  
 and the water drunk and sprinkled  
 over the heads of pious leaders.  
 What they eat is taken as *mahā-prasādam*  
 and their potent speeches break *māyā*  
 like dynamite through rock.

The four Kumāras show us

eternal wisdom in the bodies of young boys.  
They didn't learn it by broken hearts  
deceived by a woman's love  
or through the pangs of lost youth,  
disappointed tears ending in death.  
The four Kumāras show us  
worldly pain can be avoided  
and happiness attained  
by transcendental knowledge,  
which never grows old.  
Yet even they learned love  
when they caught the aroma  
of the green *tulasī* buds  
at Lord Viṣṇu's lotus feet.



Lord Kapila was a golden haired  
Viṣṇu Avatāra, whose mother and father  
were far from ordinary souls.  
When Kardama left home for a renounced vow,  
Lord Kapila gave to Devahūti  
His ambrosial words  
and now all hearers  
may share her great fortune.

By analysis Kapiladeva counted twenty-four and more elements in life. Tallying the five, earth, water, fire, air, as well as sky, and then the subtle, like mind, intelligence and ego, he said we must find a twenty-fifth element, the spirit-soul, and the twenty-sixth requirement is the Supersoul. It is Lord Kṛṣṇa who makes the elements appear and by Kapiladeva's count we see what is matter, what is spirit, and where is God.

He told how the soul comes into the womb  
where there is hardly any room to breathe  
and he grows in miserable stages.  
After birth, he passes through the human ages,  
at each step pain for every soul that fell,  
until he dies and is dragged to hell  
for further suffering (no peace in the tomb)  
Eventually, he is born into another fitful womb.

After His discourse, Devahūti praised Him  
by rapturous description  
of His Holy Name:  
“Oh how glorious are they  
whose tongues are chanting Your Holy Name.”

Kapiladeva replied in gravity  
that His mother should take up  
the path He had described.  
What is hard becomes easy  
when we follow his words.

Constant remembrance,  
as attained by Devahūti,  
is still possible today,  
freedom from the pangs of matter,  
transcendental bliss,  
attainment of the goal,  
eternal residence with Him,  
by hearing from the Mahājanas.

## 6. SVĀYAMBHUVĀ MANU

Empowered energy of Hari,  
to protect the virtuous and kill the demons,  
he moves with the power of combined gods,  
sun, fire, wind, punishment, piety,  
and directly brings the will of Viṣṇu  
to the entire earth and populace.

Nowhere to be found such kings today?  
Yet if the people want it,  
by proper training,  
the *kṣatriyas* can return,  
but if it's sin you cherish in your secular state,  
then keep the rule by rascals,  
and thus we have our pandemonium state.

Unlike the Kumāras,  
he obeyed Lord Brahmā  
when asked to marry  
for the purpose of beginning the world.  
Over thousands of years he never grew weary,  
his secret was ascetic devotion.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious king—  
bold and fierce in military might,  
yet submissive to the right  
of the *brāhmaṇas*. The demons  
saw a lion in rage, but like a lamb  
he approached the sage Kardama,  
and asked him please to  
accept a perfect wife,  
Manu's daughter, Devahūti.

Although amidst riches  
in his *kṣatriya* palace

he never succumbed  
to lust, greed or malice.  
The earth wails today  
and its people are devoured  
for the lack of such a king.  
Our prayers and endeavors  
are for his return—  
the ushering in of *bhāgavata-dharma*,  
led by its protector, a royal sage.

## 7. PRAHLĀDA MAHĀRĀJA

A young boy, he didn't practice  
severe austerities in the jungle  
yet more than any mystic or magician  
he was impenetrable, uncanny,  
when the world's most destructive demon  
sent him to be killed by his henchmen,  
nothing would work.

They tried poisons, spears, throwing him  
off the cliff, exposing him to the weather,  
snakes, clubs swung by strongmen,  
nothing worked,  
and Hiraṇyakaśipu correctly ascertained:  
maybe this boy is immortal and  
he shall kill me for my offenses.

How did Prahlaḍa  
protect himself?  
He thought of Kṛṣṇa,  
accepting as mercy  
what his Lord ordained.

When asked for his secret  
he freely revealed:  
the best thing is to leave the world,  
and practice nine ways of *bhakti*.

His fathers and teachers were outraged  
and they spoke of Vaiṣṇava spies:  
it was a brainwashing case,  
Prahlaḍa should be deprogrammed.  
And they tried, but nothing could harm him.

He was a fearless preacher,  
a first-class saint,  
for the betterment of the hearer

he spoke his mind.

Prahlāda became the full-grown emperor  
yet I think of him as a boy  
lying prostrate at the feet of Nṛsiṃhadeva.  
And I cling to his name, praying  
for at least a grain of his  
intense remembrance of God.

O small boy with hands together in prayer  
tiny before the wild killer-demon,  
small before the enraged Supreme Being  
little boy, soul of great souls  
allow me simply to remember you  
please inspire me to apply myself  
to the order of *guru*.

## 8. JANAKA MAHĀRĀJA

A devotee has no interest in the world,  
 it is illusion and useless for enjoyment,  
 but he works to teach the public,  
 as did Janaka Mahārāja: "Even kings  
 like Janaka attained the perfectional stage  
 by performance of prescribed duty."  
 He fought, when required,  
 to give the right example.

In a large arena attended by many  
 he allowed Lord Rāma to compete  
 for the hand of Princess Sītā.  
 It took three hundred men to carry in  
 the tall, gigantic bow, unstrung.  
 When Rāma asked, "Shall I string it now?"  
 Janaka approved. Swiftly the Lord  
 cracked the bow in twain with a boom  
 that shattered their ears.  
 Not by force, but with personal pleasure  
 Janaka gave his daughter to the Lord  
 and he gave a promise:  
 Dear Rāmacandra, she will be  
 like Your shadow, Your servant,  
 wherever You go,  
 she will always do Your bidding.  
 Handing over Sītā  
 was the fortune of the king,  
 to give to the Lord  
 Who owns everything.

Duty-bound exemplar,  
 giver of Sītā,  
 it is you Lord Kṛṣṇa mentioned  
 in His *Bhagavad-gītā*  
 as the great man whose standard all will follow.

Now we too have  
come to worship duty  
as our destined lot  
never giving up *sādhana*,  
holding our place in the line.  
So we shall try to remember you  
as we go forth to our 1980s battles  
armed in strength of duty,  
following a great king of the past  
who fought when required  
and joined Sītā's hand to Rāma's.



## 9. GRANDFATHER BHĪṢMA

In praising a great one  
 like Bhīṣma, we do not hope by hearing  
 to become another Bhīṣma!  
 That is not the point in praising  
 (to pretend by cheap arrogance  
 to be oneself a *mahājana*)  
 but to be in awe,  
 as before the *līlā* of Godhead,  
 and to follow their teachings.

He alone could fight ten thousand men.  
 By comparison, Bhīmasena was called a fig,  
 and even Arjuna, when hand-to-hand,  
 had to be saved by the intervention  
 of furiously rushing Śrī Kṛṣṇa  
 who swung a wheel in His upraised hand  
 threatening Bhīṣma's head.

Why was he on the opposite side  
 so that Kṛṣṇa was his foe?  
 One reason: he was financed  
 by the Kurus and so felt honor-bound,  
 yet beyond that cause—  
 to be the opponent of Kṛṣṇa  
 was his heart's desire.  
 The Chariot Driver of Arjuna,  
 bearing down on the military field,  
 His hair and body dusty,  
 whip in right hand, reins in left,  
 sweat and blood across His visage,  
 was Bhīṣma's worshipful God.

In chivalrous *rasa*  
 he shot his arrows at the Lord  
 and seemed to wound His blessed body.

But how can we understand,  
 we who grow faint at the sight  
 of blood and carnage,  
 how can we understand  
 this love-exchange  
 which climaxed  
 when the Lord prepared to kill him  
 while Bhīṣma's heart was full of love?

His deathbed was dozens of arrows  
 at his side the sons of Pāṇḍu  
 and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself  
 came to assure him.  
 Bhīṣma cried to see the Pāṇḍavas  
 but gave his learned opinion  
 delivered more coolly than a judge in chambers  
 that all suffering was due to inevitable time,  
 the inscrutable plan of the Lord.

"Let my mind be fixed upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa,"  
 he prayed, and envisioned the Lord  
 rushing on the battlefield,  
 friendly with Arjuna,  
 dancing with the *gopīs*,  
 and staying by his side  
 as the sun went down,  
 and Bhīṣma proved a *mahājana* at dying,  
 by remembering the Lord  
 until he passed from mortal body,  
 not by force but choice.  
 Great sages who had gathered  
 were so awed at his departure  
 they were silent  
 like birds at the end of the day.  
 And from the sky came showers of flowers.

## 10. BALI MAHĀRĀJA

When the little *brahmacārī* came to him  
 Bali was ready in spontaneous attraction  
 to serve the cheating Viṣṇu  
 nevermind his *guru* said don't do it.

While Śukra cursed him to rot,  
 he washed the Lord's lotus feet  
 in a golden water pot  
 and sprinkled the sacred drops  
 on his own blessed head.

When Lord Viṣṇu assumed His Universal Form,  
 in one sweeping step  
 all that Bali claimed was gone,  
 and by the Lord's second step—  
 as his toe pierced the outer limit,  
 the Ganges descending—  
 Bali's three step's promise was undone.  
 Now he was a liar  
 and his *guru's* curse had won.

Defeated, Bali beheld  
 the wonders of the Universal Lord—  
 the twilight under the Lord's garments,  
 the sea in His semen,  
 Truth and Lakṣmī on His chest,  
 the moon and stars in His face,  
 yet most wonderful of all,  
 from Lord Viṣṇu's point of view,  
 was the steady heart of His servant  
 when forced to give up "everything."

His honor was ruined,  
 luster lost,  
 soldiers beaten,

body tied by ropes,  
yet Bali was determined  
that the Lord accept his head  
as a third resting place.  
That way he could surrender  
whatever was his  
under the lotus feet of Viṣṇu.

## 11. ŚUKADEVA GOSVĀMĪ

When we are forced to think of other scriptures,  
 and to compare their preachers to ours,  
 we thrill with quiet pride,  
 appreciating the son of Vyāsadeva,  
 who without hesitation,  
 could answer any question,  
 and who in seven days by the Yamunā  
 gave humankind the topmost *bhāgavata-dharma*.  
 We don't find anyone else  
 as learned and as sweet as he.

For twelve years reluctant he stayed  
 within his mother's womb,  
 until from Dvārakā none other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa  
 walked into his father's cottage  
 just to assure the boy,  
 "Come into the world and I promise  
 you will not be affected by illusion."

As soon as he was finally born,  
 he left for the forest.  
 Vyāsadeva called him, "My son! My son!"  
 but only the forest's echo made reply.

Waiting by the Yamunā,  
 the renounced king about to die,  
 was surrounded by ancient and learned sages,  
 yet all respectfully arose when Śukadeva arrived.  
 That sixteen-year-old naked wanderer,  
 with hue like Lord Kṛṣṇa's  
 delicate of limb, with wide eyes and curly hair,  
 was accepted by the intelligent company  
 as the greatest speaker of them all  
 to deliver deep and concise replies  
 in the science of Kṛṣṇa

for Parīkṣit's last days.

His philosophic poetry  
is proof self-evident,  
as he recited the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,  
based on what his father meant.  
His name means "parrot,"  
not to say he repeats unthinking,  
but after the parrot's special gift,  
to bite into a piece of fruit  
and leave it sweeter to the taste.

*"śrī śuka uvāca"*

means the purest exposition,  
the ultimate science of God,  
with all impurities removed.  
"Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said"  
means what we are about to hear  
is authorized and absolute.  
The liberated sage would not repeat  
old myths or speculations.  
Coming from Śukadeva, we know  
the love of Kṛṣṇa for the *gopīs*  
could not be a mundane affair.  
His "Structure of the Universe"  
and "Descriptions of the Hellish Planets"  
are flawless and supreme,  
though far beyond our senses.

His speech is a guarantee:  
it will be pure Kṛṣṇa conscious.  
'Though he spoke five thousand years ago,  
he includes each new reader  
of Śrīla Prabhupāda's widespread books,  
and soon they too are gladly at his feet,  
respectful like the ancients of Yamunā,  
and blessed to hear it straight from Vaiyāsaki.

## 12. YAMARĀJA

We often lament the bad age,  
 the absence of kings like Janaka;  
 we cry out at the persecution of devotees,  
 the slaughter of children and cows.  
 It seems as if there is no justice,  
 but Yamarāja's rod falls hard  
 on every sinner for every sinful act.

He is the controller of impious deeds,  
 the king of death.  
 His deformed messengers,  
 horrible and merciless,  
 drag the sinful to hell.

We avoid his men and his function  
 and he kindly avoids us.  
 In the place where *Bhāgavatam* is spoken  
 punishable death will not appear.

He is the *mahājana* who taught  
*dharmam tu sākṣād*  
*bhāgavat praṇītam*:  
 no sage or saint,  
 but only God  
 can introduce religion.  
 To follow what He enacts  
 is the only religious truth.

In the case of Ajāmila,  
 Yamarāja was pleased to hear  
 his messengers repeating the Holy Name.  
 About Vaiṣṇavas he told them  
 they never sin,  
 but if by mistake they do  
 they are protected from reaction

because they always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

Bring to me, said Yamarāja,  
only those averse  
to the honey of Kṛṣṇa's feet,  
who dislike the devotees,  
who fall to illicit sex,  
drag them to me.

Those who refuse to chant,  
who never once remember Kṛṣṇa,  
who never once bow down to Him,  
who consider everything else as their duty,  
those fools and rascals,  
drag them to me.

We do not offer a *pūjā* to him,  
and we avoid his ghastly fiends;  
but as the free citizens are protected  
by the state police,  
we rest in the assurance  
that even for the atheist  
God is Death,  
demons do not go unchecked,  
and for this thankless task,  
a confidential associate,  
as good as Saint Vidura,  
is chosen by the Lord  
and he serves as Yamarāja.



## CONCLUSION

Twelve *mahājanas* are mentioned,  
but there are many more  
stalwarts of devotional service  
Vyāsadeva, Uddhava, to name two,  
and hundreds more.  
The innumerable *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana,  
although not known as Vaiṣṇava scholars,  
are the absolute greatest of all.  
And many pure devotees reappeared  
as the associates of Lord Caitanya  
whose *saṅkīrtana* devotees continue today  
and will continue in the future.

In the spiritual world  
even the cows, calves,  
grass on riverbanks,  
Yamunā water, bees and birds  
are all great souls,  
and they are innumerable.

Or consider any one of the aforementioned twelve,  
each are members of *paramparā*,  
the chain of disciplic succession;  
hearing from any one  
is as good as hearing from all.

They all teach *bhāgavata-dharma*,  
surrender unto the Supreme  
and love for Him.  
It is very confidential,  
and difficult to understand  
but by the grace of the *mahājanas*,  
if we are very fortunate  
to meet and link with their succession,  
we can enter the road of liberation

and go quickly back to Godhead.

In my preface I hoped to remember  
 Śrīla Prabhupāda who brought me here,  
 who placed my doomed feet  
 onto the most auspicious path.  
 Through the *śakti* of every *mahājana*  
 I can see the powers of that one  
 who carried the *mahājanas*' teachings  
 to where they never went before—  
 the savage western worlds,  
 where now they rule  
 in Kṛṣṇa conscious temples  
 and their teachings are widespread  
 through the books of Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the essence of the *mahājanas*—  
 the *sampradāya* head;  
 greatest ascetic;  
 distributor of the *Vedas*;  
 traveling as youthful boys;  
 teaching the Sāṅkhya system;  
 bringing in Manu's rule  
 protected by Nṛsimadeva;  
 exemplary in duty;  
 teaching how the soul should pass away at death;  
 giving all he has to Kṛṣṇa;  
 making the *Bhāgavat* sweeter;  
 and teaching the fools  
 that there is a rod of death.  
 All these qualities and many more  
 are found in *jagad-guru*, Śrīla Prabhupāda.  
 I wish to go on singing his glories  
 and always serving among his men.

All glories to the *mahājanas*;  
 All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda;

All glories to the assembled devotees;  
All glories to Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga!

November, 1983

*A CURRENT EVENTS LECTURE TO YOUNG BOYS  
ON THE SUBJECT,  
"THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WAR."*

First we gave them the simple science,  
that held their attention best.  
Uranium is loose like jelly,  
and they shoot the neutrons splitting,  
a pound of it explodes to a blast  
of intolerable heat.

The boys got restless when I told them  
the politics and history  
of the atom bomb.  
Siddha ran his finger  
across the rug  
and VK stretched and yawned.  
They and I were not victims of the blast.

Mainly, I said, we have to remember Kṛṣṇa  
if this ever happens  
and to prevent it we have to preach;  
also we should know that Kṛṣṇa is in control.  
Afterwards, they only asked  
how the bombs could be used for something else  
if not for killing people.

All I wanted was  
to get them to remember  
to chant the Holy Name  
at the time of death.

## THE URGE TO SPEAK

I am not inclined  
 to speak of the pines  
 or the trees without leaves  
 or the cold creek,  
 such words seem useless now.  
 I have gone further  
 and don't want sensual talks;  
 we are getting down to business  
 and rhymes about the water won't help.

But when I walked down the road  
 the moon was moving around  
 like a white cow playing in the 4 A.M. clouds,  
 and the temple ahead, lights in the night,  
 looked like the simple drawing of a child.  
 Should that be spoken, or  
 is there nothing to say but  
 to carry out duty until the end  
 in a world that is doomed?

## 2

Here are some topics:  
 How Lord Jagannātha is always happy;  
 the importance of reading the *Bhagavad-gītā*;  
 a *guru's* concern for his disciples;  
 how to bring Śrīla Prabhupāda more  
 to the center of my life;  
 I wonder if someday I will be more mature;  
 Can I say something to help you  
 by an experience of mine?

Because I am not dumb,  
 and we are not meant for *mauna*  
 (the austerity of complete withdrawal),  
 I pray to speak  
 in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way.

## A GURU TO HIS ŚIṢYĀS

Disciples want things from me  
 and I want things from them.  
 They want me to inspire and lead them  
 to make success of our projects  
 and I want them to inspire me  
 by the success of their efforts.  
 And both of us face the difficulties  
 of trying to preach a pure movement  
 in a degraded, vicious age.

Yes, America still has freedoms,  
 but mostly it is "freedom" to be a dog or cat,  
 and our freedom to practice *bhakti*  
 is just thrown in with that.  
 It is a free country,  
 but the devotees are hardly mentioned  
 as counting.  
 That's natural in this age.

This is called freedom  
 but sometimes they take it away.  
 The deprogrammer claims  
 he can tear out your *bhakti*  
 but a true *bhakta* cannot be robbed.  
 We saw our Muktipāda  
 survive and get away,  
 and he is flourishing in Vṛndāvana.

You can't expect peace  
 or early release.  
 I ask you to stick to this.  
 And the same message:  
 Keep at it for Kṛṣṇa,  
 renounce, serve this movement,

and soon there will be more.

As a husband protects the wife,  
or the *guru* his *śiṣyā*,  
so each of us has to *save himself*;  
only then can we be useful.

We are doing duties, but do we love Kṛṣṇa?  
We are doing duties, but are we blissful?  
We are not doing enough!  
We should be bolder, sell more books,  
speak more often, be purer;  
we lack in every Kṛṣṇa conscious way  
until we can *realize* when we say,  
"Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all pleasure."

*HOW PRABHUPĀDA SAVED ME*

I was a lost soul,  
abominable habits plagued me,  
and I was heading for worse,  
when Prabhupāda came to a place  
where I was crawling about,  
and he gave me the breath of new life,  
spiritual vision for all my days,  
and a purpose: to serve him.  
When he gave me my first typing  
I replied, "This is enough  
to last the whole winter,"  
and he laughed: "It is enough  
for your entire life!"



*TO AN INNOCENT NONDEVOTEE*

Play one of Prabhupāda's tapes  
and listen very carefully  
whether you are driving your car  
or in prison, or in your home  
listen to him and read his books  
very carefully, and then turn away  
from the whole world of speculation  
and material illusion.  
He has told the truth  
and if you follow your conscience  
then you should do as he says,  
and become again the servant  
of Kṛṣṇa, your eternal Master,  
and take up the work of reforming your life,  
so that you may join and preach with us.

*DAWN IN LAYERS*

Before me I see water moving with chunks of ice,  
above that, the dark undecipherable riverbank,  
then upright, leafless trees,  
the angles of the tall hill slopes  
and then a thin rim of sky light  
upward through uncountable layers,  
varying hues of blue, up to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's  
from where it all is spinning  
as He sends out light  
to all souls and worlds.

With more light on the scenic view,  
toil and illusion I see  
and I turn to hear  
the way to penetrate all layers  
to go back to His eternal abode.

*ANOTHER WASTED LIFE*

Before your birth  
as human soul  
while in your mother's womb  
you prayed  
that when you came into this world  
you would be the Lord's devotee  
and not repeat mistakes  
that lead to birth in a future womb.  
But the shock of birth  
made you forget  
and your parents  
were illusioned.

Mostly you never prayed again  
all the life-long  
except to ask for daily bread.  
You did not ask  
to become a pure devotee of the Lord  
and no one advised you  
because no one knew Kṛṣṇa.

*THE FORTY-PLUS CLUB*

The forty-plus club  
 is not for "good old boys,"  
 but the first batch of youngsters,  
 who came in the sixties  
 to Prabhupāda's lotus feet,  
 and who leaped and ran ten hours daily  
 on *hari-nāma* downtown,  
 are now getting older but wiser.  
 They work harder and they are better  
 in delivering Kṛṣṇa consciousness  
 because they know old bones  
 don't make a devotee  
 and a preacher's life  
 is in intensity of spirit.  
 Digestion power, backs, and teeth  
 and sight and legs may fail  
 but we are not this body;  
 and we grow more eager to teach.

Now their followers are their hands and feet  
 building Māyāpur and New Vrindaban  
 on the strength of their commands,  
 no lack of hardy sinews, youthful faces,  
 wild, ecstatic *kīrtanas*,  
 even the elders are dancing,  
 and they are traveling more than ever.

Instead of only Hare Kṛṣṇa youth  
 we now have Vaiṣṇavas both young and old  
 with deeper concentrations  
 getting closer to the goal,  
 and if, with time, a cane is used  
 or spectacles, it's just a lesson  
 in mortality, for all to heed.

The real one is the spirit soul,  
and from the *bhakti* point of view  
even the plus-forties are budding youths;  
it is less than twenty years since we were born.

*THE LIVING AND THE DEAD*

I was in darkness, eyes shut,  
taking whatever came  
from talkative faces,  
fasting from lust  
because I knew it wasn't right,  
but that was torture also,  
and running the mind to hallucination  
looking for a god of the ego-self,  
and these things were becoming fast my ruin  
until he came, a soul divine  
who pulled me from my self-center  
and gave me sweet relief.  
I sought his shelter,  
the intellect satisfied.

I see all are like I was  
in one way or another.  
He may be the President  
turning on the National Christmas Tree  
and bringing home the troops  
while secretly he plots to send them out again,  
to fulfill his vain ambitions;  
he seeks a place in history,  
but doesn't know when he will go  
or where the soul flies next.

Or one may be a young beauty star uprising  
of television and magazine fame  
excited with the flush feeling  
that success is near,  
brazen, blazing with the lust for fame  
to be praised, and to enjoy!  
Every night to shoot like a star  
higher and higher—but not to know  
—or even if in her bones she knows, she doesn't care,

but sadly, madly she plots  
her *kamakazi* course head-on to death,  
moth-like into the arriving flames—the end!

Or consider the herds of children in school,  
misruled, turned tough and crude  
scared as stiff within and always boasting  
joking, defaming, lest they be found out,  
in dark terror as to what it all means,  
all alone but making a show  
as do their elders, who lead them on,  
“It is in the pro football game,  
it is in the Christmas party,  
it is in new clothes, cars, speeding on,  
it is in study for security of pay.”  
As if growing up coarse and stupid  
will bring a soul joy.

And worst are the so-called learned ones,  
snakes with diamonds on their heads.  
They are the greatest deluded, thinking,  
—sinking all the while, but thinking  
they have researched, read and plumbed  
the depth's of the frog's well.  
It is well-said by the *Vedas*,  
that they are puffed-up doctors  
who compare the description of the ocean vast  
to whatever water is at their froggish feet,  
and this is done for money  
and to expose their fertile brains.  
They are acclaimed as the greatest,  
who have thrown off God as an ancient myth.  
But they also die bereft  
on the road, in the sky, in bed, pitiless,  
dragged to hell 'though they cannot believe it  
by a death-rope that captures them  
as easy as when you kill a cow

with the smack of a gun.  
They die, and soon are  
forgotten, but their soul flies down.

All these things are going on  
but no one cares,  
too mad, too much had by *māyā*.  
They would rather be dead.



*THE AUTHORITY TO SPEAK*

A brother said I am peripatetic  
but I don't so much walk-and-preach;  
we fly somewhere and then sit down,  
and speak from the open book.  
Looking to my side and upwards  
to where Prabhupāda always sits  
I see his patiently folded hands,  
saffron, worshipable *jagad-guru*,  
he wears his reading glasses,  
with the *Bhāgavat* before him,  
and listens gravely  
to his children speaking.

The sons are now *gurus*  
as long as we speak the truth.  
"Prabhupāda says" we are often quoting;  
his words and life form a vital *śāstra*.

Ultimate authority  
behind our words,  
like the government behind the police,  
or Kṛṣṇa behind the sun.  
Our father, Prabhupāda,  
please move us pure and lively  
so we can function  
as teachers.

*IT IS FOR EVERYONE*

At best, they think I am one  
 who has found some little peace  
 from a self-inflicted wrack,  
 by coming in contact with an eastern *guru*.  
 I am sick of that appraisal;  
 what do they really know?  
 They think that chanting Kṛṣṇa  
 may be good for me, but never, no way  
 should it be sung by everyone.  
 That would be the worst thing!  
 Imagine, everyone chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa!  
 Good grief, how would we run the world?

But it's not just good for *me*.  
 Am I the only soul, and all others  
 are something else? Are we to stay in ignorance  
 as Catholic, Hindu, Jew, follower of Islam,  
 as black and white and man and girl?  
 No, in fact, we are souls, individual souls,  
 and God is Supreme,  
 and of His names, Kṛṣṇa is the most sublime.  
 And *He* says, "Chant My name."  
 Don't take it as *my* thing;  
 it is the *dharma* for everyone.

And do not worry for the world,  
 it will run on  
 even while we chant and hear  
 even as we work for Kṛṣṇa,  
 that worldly work endures.  
 But if it goes at a simpler pace,  
 if perhaps we give up slaughter  
 or billions of wasted efforts  
 what is the loss in that?  
 We can chant and work,  
 and all will get done,  
 all will be done.

*DEAR ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA*

They want more books on Prabhupāda  
and so do I  
but what can I say?  
I have written on his life  
from beginning to end,  
only highlights of course,  
but that is all I know.  
Now I was thinking—  
if I am willing to pay the price,  
if I am brave, renounced and dutiful—  
maybe he will take me to him  
where he is moving and preaching  
and I can write the further volumes  
of what he is doing,  
or he will chastise me  
and send me back to do a humbler service,  
before the final return to him.

Maybe these are only dreams,  
but what else do I have?  
Just Prabhupāda and his order,  
my dreams of returning to him,  
writing more of his glories,  
and sharing them with the world.  
“Give us more Prabhupāda!” they ask me,  
and so I ask you, Śrīla Prabhupāda,  
what shall I tell them further?

## TO MYSELF: WHY IT IS SLOW

Understand why it is  
that there seems no way  
your mind will be absorbed in ecstatic love;  
why it is you struggle every day.  
It is not Kṛṣṇa's fault.

Be grateful  
if you have to travel for many lives  
along the *bhakti* road.  
Every step is freedom  
from the path of hell.

Don't demand,  
"How long will this go on?"  
But be glad for daily duties  
and know why—  
it is slow because you are dragging.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda has prayed  
to be a dog of the Vaiṣṇava.  
(If he throws me some scraps  
I shall take it as pure nectar.)  
Only then will I find  
the joy of the servant  
of the servant of the servant.

## FATE FOR FOOLS

My *guru* said to go out and preach  
but it was Thursday and according to *Pañjika*  
I was not supposed to travel, at least  
not in the afternoon.  
As I prepared to go out early  
I saw a milkman with an empty pail,  
and then I remembered,  
according to my horoscope  
I was going through a very bad time.

In confusion as to what to do,  
I asked my astrologer and learned something new:  
my very nature, he said, is to procrastinate.  
He also prescribed that I should marry  
a very pretty Pisces, but not just yet,  
as now was the time to be wary of change.  
He said I needed gold and sapphire for my body  
and for a fee he read again  
into the fascinating lore of my personal self.  
As I became entranced by my qualities and perils,  
the time grew late—it was the inauspicious hour.  
And yet my *guru* had said go out and preach!  
Alas, for today, I concluded,  
I cannot travel and I better not preach;  
it is not in my stars.

LORD KṚṢṢṆA'S SPECIAL LOVE  
FOR JAYA AND VIJAYA  
AND FOR ALL THE FALLEN SOULS

When the Kumāras cursed His men  
Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted that  
but this was His request:  
*Please don't let them be away too long;  
I love them too much  
and they love Me;  
when they are away  
they will hanker to return  
and I will anxiously wait for them.  
So punish them sufficiently  
but soon let them return.*

## TO MOTHER AND FATHER

My interpretation has been  
that out of respect we parted,  
sharing some unspoken code.

I thought—  
Why should I come to you to be abused  
when I was doing the best thing?  
And maybe you thought,  
Why should he come around  
if he rejects his own religion?  
But what was your religion?  
To me your way was *karma*.  
Pure love of God, I only learned from Prabhupāda,  
working, eating, *everything* for Him.  
And a full philosophy to knock down atheism.  
Anyway, it was too much for you,  
a misunderstanding, and so the parting.

Yet the real test lies ahead  
if pure servant of the Vaiṣṇava I can become  
then all our families will be delivered,  
the whole clan back to Godhead,  
the fore-folks from Ireland and Italy  
can all come too, not in the body,  
but as pure spirit-souls.

Then you may recognize  
the greatness  
of my spiritual master.

*DOGS, HEAVEN AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLD*

I had a dog who lived for 14 years  
before he died when I was 22,  
and now I sometimes dream of him  
running around in our home, our town,  
(such is the impression of the mind and body,  
of the conditioned spirit-soul).  
What have I to do with him,  
that fox terrier mongrel named Mickey,  
where is he now, in what body,  
and where will my mother and father go,  
and the home town, and the whole world,  
the universe of people and their pets?  
It is all illusion, but very few  
can unlearn what seems so firm:  
    their dog is their best friend,  
    their family the all-in-all.

## 2

Some pseudo-religions will even create  
a heaven where Mickey and Mom and Dad  
all gather together as the heavenly kin  
to eat meat I suppose, and watch heavenly T.V.  
—someone's concoction of eternity.  
As if Christ had come to teach  
such inconsistent mockery!

The truth is everyone's a soul,  
sometimes born as a half-a-god  
and sometimes as a dog;  
we go to heaven and we go to hell  
despite our many religions.

And these changing bodies  
are always filled with grief



until we finally break it up  
by the grace of the pure devotee.  
Only then we may replace that ignorant heaven:  
when by transcendental light,  
Lord Kṛṣṇa's planet is revealed.

## A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

I want to thank my mother and father  
 for raising me as a nice boy and  
 putting me into Brooklyn College and the U.S. Navy;  
 my college friends led me to the Lower East Side  
 and in the Navy I felt imprisoned,  
 so when I got out I moved  
 to that "Archetype Spiritual Neighborhood."  
 And I want to thank the New York City  
    Department of Welfare  
 for assigning me to their East Fifth Street office,  
 and I want to thank Mentor paperbacks  
    for publishing  
 their misleading, unbona fide edition of the  
    *Bhagavad-gītā*,  
 because at least I got the idea that there was  
 something wonderful in Kṛṣṇa's book.  
 And I am grateful to the proprietors of  
 "Matchless Gifts" nostalgia shop  
 for going out of business in June 1966;  
 and I am eternally indebted to Second Avenue  
 for existing as a thoroughfare, with a  
    south-side sidewalk,  
 and I am grateful to that sidewalk  
 and to the summer of 1966;  
 and I am grateful for the fact that  
 my life was a sordid mess and that  
 I could get no satisfaction despite  
 my old college friends and the *mystique*  
 of being young in Manhattan.

All these led me  
 to the lotus feet of Prabhupāda  
 who was transcendental  
 to time, persons, and places  
 and yet he appeared right there,

walked right into my own life also,  
exploding the walls of my unhappiness,  
kindly!  
Giving the wisdom of his  
merciful Kṛṣṇa-devotion,  
his sweet-tasting and hot-spiced *prasādam*.  
I bow down again and again  
in thankfulness to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa  
for arranging all these things,  
and for sending His purest, greatest devotee:  
I bow down and pray to serve him  
and I give thanks again and again.

WHEN SRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA  
WAS PRESENT, AND NOW

When he was present, I wish I had spoken up  
praising him as is recommended in the scriptures;  
why was I shy about that?

I wish I had gone to India with the first wave  
in 1969, and been trained there by him.  
I regret I was not utterly surrendered in his  
presence, to do whatever and to go wherever he  
wanted.

I wish I had caught his attention more at the end  
and been able to reach across the awe and reverence;  
I could have joined with those who served his body,  
and reassured him day and night.

I could have gone with him to more places,  
been satisfied to catch just a glimpse;  
yet all things still seem possible,  
for surrendering my life to his order.

2

It is reform itself that is most hard,  
to break the bond of complacent habits,  
the conceptions of self-limit.  
Otherwise, what is lacking?  
His books are here, to be seriously read  
and relished as a daily function,  
as good as offering him a massage,  
or walking in the dawn with him.

And his tall orders are standing:  
work in peace with Godbrothers,  
make war against the demons  
by holding *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana*.

Don't be showbottle, but a genuine disciple,  
chanting and hearing as he prescribed.  
To be free of scandal, travel and preach.  
By boldest effort, do something substantial.  
And together push on the goals of his movement.

I know it is already late  
and I am slow and late,  
the impressions of sin are deep within.  
Regret, regret,  
but there is so much to do!  
Śrīla Prabhupāda is calling,  
and I must respond.

Cows,  
Mothers,  
giving milk, and from milk  
comes butter, *ghee*, cheese,  
*sandesh*, yogurt, ice cream . . .  
And in a civilized land her dung  
is used for fuel, fertilizer, gas,  
and her mate, the bull  
is pulling your plow.  
They should never be killed.

The Supreme Lord is a cowherd boy,  
a peacock feather in His hair,  
a bamboo flute upon His lips,  
and cows are His personal pets.  
*Gopīs, gopas, Govardhana Hill,*  
*Goloka, Gopinātha,*  
all are blissful in Kṛṣṇa's abode.  
Cows should never be killed.

But it will be a long time before they can  
understand it,  
and it will be a long time before there is any  
peace on earth.  
Although the logic is plain that we should not  
kill her,  
the killers show no mercy,  
vote-powerful beef-men, uncontrolled consumers,  
and the priests and rabbis are in it too.  
All America is shooting the slaughterer's gun  
and the blood stains spread everywhere.  
The downtown meat shop, the neon-dancing cows—  
cruel double-talk, as if the cow  
is happy to be killed and eaten.

It will be a long road before they can see

they are killing their own mothers and fathers  
 and they cannot undo the karmic link  
 between the stockyard and the Bomb.  
 It is already too late,  
 as Macbeth said of his crime,  
 "We are in blood steeped so far,  
 that returning were as tedious as go oe'r."

## II

But there is hope.  
 If you protect her  
 you can avoid Lord Kalki's axe.

At Gītā-nāgarī we are doing that,  
 raising summer corn and hay  
 and money-raising too,  
 for winter ahead  
 to protect Kṛṣṇa's cows.

In freezing rain the cows live in,  
 their stalls are padded with softest hay,  
 the best of corn and oats is theirs  
 and twice a day they offer their milk.

Large-eyed, gentle Brown Swiss mothers,  
 jerky, nervous calves,  
 bulls ferocious, muscle-humped, nose-chained,  
 and tall, broad, long-horned oxen,  
 all protected, never killed.  
 Give them grains and land for pasture,  
 save their lives and spare your own.  
 Love them as your children, as man is meant to do.

Because in *Genesis* it states  
 that humans shall dominate the beasts,  
 does that mean you should kill them all?  
 Kill the gentle, useful cow?

Better *use* her, *use* him  
 let them live and serve you,  
 as you serve God.

## III

"But then what do we eat?  
 Where is the protein and brawn  
 is peas, carrots, and corn?"  
 Don't you know it's just false propaganda  
 that human beings need meat?  
 From the land-grown, Kṛṣṇa-given grains  
 and from varieties of well-cooked greens  
 there is everything you need  
 for a healthy, vigorous life.  
 But all our food should be offered  
 in devotion to God, and only then  
 do we transcend  
 the vegetarian beasts and the meat-eating men.

## IV

It is easy to avoid the greatest crime,  
 all it takes is knowledge  
 of the transmigrating soul  
 and the laws of *karma*.  
 But when you cause a cow to die untimely,  
 you also meet death, a thousand times.

To see the playful, peaceful calf  
 and her large-uddered mother,  
 both free from devilish harm,  
 on a Kṛṣṇa conscious farm,  
 is to see the plan in action:

Cows giving milk, and from milk,



butter, *ghee*, cheese,  
and her brother, the oxen  
pulling your plow.  
They should never be killed.

Hear us, media persons  
with your cameras on your shoulders,  
and you anticult lawyers with your  
million-dollar brainwash cases;  
T.V. producers, editors-in-chief,  
clergymen, deprogrammer consultants,  
law-makers with restrictive proposals,  
police-in-league with kidnappers,  
apostate ex-devotees on the witness stand  
—*but don't you already know the truth?*  
—that we are not what you say we are,  
not your brainwashed zombies!

Why do you lie to the world,  
that we drink urine and eat only two chickpeas  
for lunch  
that we are hypnotized mindless by chanting  
the Holy Name,  
that we are psychotic, hate our parents,  
and with glazy eyes, we deceive  
a hapless soul into our camp?!

Do you really believe it?

That we are building an arsenal in the cultish hills?  
Or do you just say and write whatever sounds bad?

Do you understand the *Bhagavad-gītā*?

Have you worshiped with us,  
or even *talked* with us?

Then how do you know what you say?  
And if you really don't know,  
then why do you print it?

Why do you say it?

If you care for the truth,  
(and you are not just trying to sell a sensational  
story).

If you like to be fair-minded,  
(and you are not just trying to make money through  
prejudice).

If you respect liberty,  
(and you are not a bigot)  
then come and hear our side,  
talk with us and look into our books.

*A DEVOTEE'S TWILIGHT WALK WITH HIS MIND*

Color schemes in the evening here  
 are starkly gray and white,  
 snowfall in twilight.  
 Two rabbits slowly move aside  
 as I hear the panicky wingbeats  
 of a large bird afraid of me.  
 Creatures in the cold,  
 how can they endure tonight?  
 There is so little shelter  
 in the ice-dripping forest.  
 With the loud crunch-crunch of my booted feet  
 I move through the icy mush.

What is beyond the mind  
 of one who must either hold back  
 his material desires  
 or hold tight onto *sādhana* rules?  
 I do no free-flying yet,  
 no eagle-soar of love,  
 but on the earth of rules and regulations  
 I walk in patience  
 knowing for certain this is the way home.

There is a difference  
 between what I know  
 and what there is  
 of the spiritual world.  
 But I do not doubt that place  
 as I receive the sound vibration  
 coming down from Kṛṣṇa.  
 There is no other way to know it;  
 just as the son may only know  
 the identity of his father

by hearing from his mother.

Chanting, musing, serving,  
I walk with my mind  
like a driver holding the reins:  
he restrains his horses from lunging aside  
yet he cracks the whip to drive them on.  
So the mind cannot be trusted,  
but bridled and driven.

I have got my order  
from my spiritual master,  
as I walk through a darkening day,  
steady as she goes,  
driving back to Godhead.

When the first locomotive took its maiden run, they laughed at the words of a simpleton: "God did not intend man to travel more than forty miles an hour!" But I think there is truth in that remark. So much of what we do seems forbidden.

Once on a flight to Vancouver  
the pilot took us down  
near the top of Mount Hood,  
and as the plane came closer  
to that jagged white-capped peak,  
I kept thinking, "What *right* have we to do this?"

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, with bold  
Vaiṣṇava vision,  
said that the whole world's riches,  
might be used to serve the Lord.  
Because all is His energy,  
nothing is forbidden,  
if rendered back to Him  
by one who is surrendered, whose only aim  
is service.

But if *anything* is taken  
with no intention to serve  
it is outright stealing  
as when Rāvan kidnapped Rāma's wife.

The end of this is madness,  
toxic spills, polluted rivers,  
nations hostages to missiles—  
all entanglement in *karma*.

"Well, you can't disinvent it," said one General to the doves

and he was right. There is no stopping.  
As the modes of nature dictate  
men are puppets in response.

By the first greedy gesture—  
    God's goods snatched  
        for our enjoyment,  
we asked for it.  
And now we have to pay.

*YEAR-END PRAYER*

Holy Name, be my constant companion,  
and let the reader who is not yet chanting  
read some lines of mine and begin his chanting.  
And allow my brothers and sisters  
to go on chanting.  
Give us, Dear Nāma Prabhu,  
time and intelligence for inoffensive chanting  
and a desire to increase  
the numbers of chanters.  
Let us greet the new year  
with the Names of Kṛṣṇa! and Rāma! and Hare!  
If in dependence, we can cry,  
begging to receive the Holy Name  
then all will be auspicious.  
Because You give Your very Self  
to the sincere chanters  
of Your Name.



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