

GURUDEVA AND NIMĀI

STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS
BOOK ARE INVITED TO CORRESPOND
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"One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding."

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34 purport

"Stalking Wolf had told me how young Indian braves would often leave the tribe and survive alone for twelve moons. Through this experience, they would find themselves. The Indians believed that the Great Spirit would bring a special teaching to the isolated brave. Many Indian legends told of great discoveries made by these braves that benefited the entire tribe."

—Tom Brown, Jr., *The Search*

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PREFACE

My spiritual master, Gauracandra dāsa Swami, is a follower of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktisiddhānta Swami Prabhupāda, the Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. This story is about our struggle for survival when we were stranded in the Canadian mountains, and when we were also fighting for spiritual truth.

My Gurudeva asked me to tell about the ordeal he and I went through, even though it includes some offensive mentality on my part. The book also contains excerpts from Gurudeva's diary which are confessional. My Gurudeva said, "Our story is the real life-and-death struggle in this world." What he means is that a person's attempt to maintain faith in the order of the spiritual master is the most important struggle in his life. We hope this story will help others.

Nimāi dāsa

#1
Guru Reform

When I got myself into trouble in India, my Gurudeva fetched me out of jail and out of *māyā*. It was then that he asked me to travel with him. A statement in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* describes what happened:

“If by chance a servant falls down and goes somewhere else, glorious is *that* master who captures him and brings him back by the hair.”

—Cc.Antya-līla 4.47.

Gurudeva certainly fulfilled the spiritual master part of that statement by saving me, but I’m sorry to say that I didn’t prove myself worthy as a loyal servant.

As Gurudeva’s servant, I did all right in the beginning, when things were blissful and easy. Gurudeva and I went together to Gujarat, India, where Gurudeva was received as a worshipable *sādhū* by devotees in their homes. Even though it is the Age of Kali and India has become degraded, many Gujaratis still profess to be devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and they are vegetarians. The Vedic culture is so nice that they were pleased to honor my Gurudeva as a bona fide spiritual representative of the Supreme Lord. They weren’t prejudiced against him just because he was born and raised in the West. They invited him to their homes, washed his feet, and gave him an elevated seat while they sat on the floor and listened to his

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam discourse and joined in the *kīrtanas*. The *prasādam* we received in those places was tasty cooking like *paratha* and *dhokla* and a sweet *dāl* like I'd never tasted. My appreciation for Gurudeva was enhanced by my seeing him treated like that. He told me he didn't feel worthy of having his feet washed and being offered *ārati* and all that, but he was obliged to respond to their Vaiṣṇava etiquette.

After Gujarat, we went to New Delhi and then we flew back to America. In the West, most people have no idea of Vedic culture and they also lack deep God consciousness. Otherwise, they would recognize a saintly person like Gurudeva as a bona fide priest. Even a Christian priest doesn't get much honor. But at least in Prabhupāda's temple in New York City, Gurudeva was well received and again I became happy to see it.

But I was a fair-weather disciple. When Gurudeva was not well received, which happened when we went to Canada, I became affected—not at first, but gradually. When we arrived at the temple in Victoria, British Columbia, no one received Gurudeva with honors. They didn't even meet us at the airport, although I had phoned telling them we were coming. And there was no foot-bathing ceremony, which I had been accustomed to seeing in India. There was barely a "Haribol, Mahārāja" from a devotee who happened to be standing around the temple when we pulled up in the taxi. I had to ask where we could stay and at first they weren't sure, but they ended up giving us the use of their guest room.

I was aware that a *guru* reform had occurred in

our Movement, but I had never received a full whiff of it. In case you don't know what the reform is, I'll mention it briefly. After Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared from the world, some of his senior disciples, with the approval of the Governing Body, started initiating disciples. Not every disciple of Prabhupāda was allowed to become a *guru*, but only a select few. Those who were *gurus* had many disciples and everyone in the Movement honored them. In many ways the *gurus* were given the same respect as Śrīla Prabhupāda. They sat on elevated *vyāsāsanas* just like Śrīla Prabhupāda, while their own Godbrothers sat on the floor. Everyone considered the *gurus* as pure devotees of the highest standard. But—to make a long story short—some of the *gurus* deviated and eventually other Godbrothers began a reform movement. Then at the international meeting in Māyāpur, India, the Governing Body voted some changes or reforms. More Godbrothers were invited to become initiating *gurus*, and we stopped worshipping the *gurus* everyday on big *vyāsāsanas*, which was now reserved only for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Those are some of the bare facts of what happened, but there were intense emotions and many arguments involved. I was mostly spared from it because I was never invited to any meetings, and at the farm where I stayed in Pennsylvania, no one talked about it much. When Gurudeva announced to us some of the changes, I just accepted it. He said the Movement had made some mistakes and he was personally sorry if he had offended any Godbrothers or Śrīla Prabhupāda. We saw that he was acting

humbly and for the good of the Movement. I never stopped considering him as a pure devotee and as my spiritual master who connected me to Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *paramparā*.

But in Victoria, some of the devotees were heavy and bitter about the mistakes that had been made, and since I was my *guru's* personal servant, I had to bear the brunt of some of it. At first, it seemed insulting and unnecessary.

After the first *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class that Gurudeva gave in Victoria, one of his disciples asked what I thought was a strange question. He said, "Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda is gone and there is no pure devotee who can command respect, how can we become enthusiastic to preach to newcomers?" Gurudeva replied that the disciplic succession was still working, and any qualified devotee of Śrīla Prabhupāda could preach on his behalf, and newcomers would get the same benefit as those who had been personally initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He gave an example: You may wonder if a certain light bulb will work, but when you plug it in and it *does* light, then that is proof that it works. So since we see people are becoming initiated by Prabhupāda's disciples and are serving nicely in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, this is proof. But when he said that, some of Gurudeva's Godbrothers raised their hands and challenged. Gurudeva answered them all right.

Then a guest to the temple raised his hand and said, "Can a person just directly worship Kṛṣṇa and

offer Him food and prayers?" Gurudeva replied that one has to render service to Lord Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master. He quoted *Bhagavad-gītā* verse 4.34 where Kṛṣṇa recommends that we approach a spiritual master. But the guest said, "No, I mean, can we just worship Prabhupāda directly?" Gurudeva replied, "Oh yes. Prabhupāda is everyone's *śikṣā guru*, instructing spiritual master. You can take a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda and offer your food to him even if you are not initiated. And you can read his books and accept him as your *guru*." Gurudeva didn't go on to say that the newcomer would have to become eventually initiated by a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I figured that he just wanted to affirm that Śrīla Prabhupāda was *śikṣā guru* and *jagat-guru* to encourage the guest. Also, most of the devotees there didn't want to hear anything more.

Usually when we visit a temple, some of my God-brothers and Godsisters volunteer to cook for Gurudeva and do his laundry. But when I arranged for this in Victoria, the temple president came to me and said he couldn't spare the devotees. So I had to cook and do the laundry myself. I didn't mention this to Gurudeva, but I resented that the devotees weren't able to do a little service for their spiritual master. I thought it was important for a disciple to learn the principle of trying to please Kṛṣṇa by pleasing His representative. I've found it's inspiring to do this in the personal presence of the *guru* and felt bad that disciples wouldn't have the same opportunity. Gurudeva discovered that I was doing those duties myself, but he seemed nonplussed. I could understand the temple presi-

dent's point of view, that the Victoria devotees had more important services to do, but I also guessed that he was trying to show me that Gurudeva wasn't better than anyone else and should not expect special treatment. As a result, I became agitated and eager to leave the temple.

Then I overheard Gurudeva talking with one of his disciples. I'm usually close outside his door and I eavesdrop if it sounds interesting. This was a confidential talk, but I couldn't resist. The devotee was Subala dāsa and he was asking about his relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Gurudeva was assuring him, "Yes, you have a direct relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda as *śikṣā guru*." But Gurudeva asserted that he too was Subala's *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā guru*, as long as Subala was willing to receive instruction from him. Gurudeva said that if a devotee is willing to become a servant of the servant of the servant—a hundred times a servant of God—then this shows his faith and Kṛṣṇa is pleased with him. He quoted Lord Caitanya as saying,

gopī-bartuh pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsah

"I am not a *brāhmaṇa* or a *sannyāsī* or anything but a servant of the servant of those who serve the *gopīs*."

But Subala kept wanting to know more about his right to worship Śrīla Prabhupāda. He said, "I joined this movement by reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, and I actually saw him at an airport in

1977. So I want to ask your permission to worship directly, because I consider that Śrīla Prabhupāda is my main *guru* and my relationship with you is secondary. Is that all right?" Gurudeva said "Yes," but he didn't sound very enthusiastic. "I don't want to be offensive to you," said Subala, "but that is what I think." Gurudeva gave his approval again, and Subala thanked him happily. I ducked away from the door as if I had not been listening, but actually that conversation had a deep effect on me.

Like Subala dāsa, I too had been initially attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. I was in my first year of college (which is as far as I ever got) and a friend gave me a paperback copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. The verse and purports completely answered many of my questions and exposed the folly of my dreams and my parents' dreams that I should become a lawyer or businessman. What was the sense of becoming a material success, if the body is doomed? What about the success of the permanent self, the spirit soul? I became convinced by studying the Bhaktivedanta purports and I also began to chant the *mahā-mantra* before I even went to a temple, or met the devotees, or heard about my Gurudeva (whose initiated name is actually Gauracandra Swami).

In Victoria, these thoughts led me to seek out the audience of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the temple room. I went and bowed down before the life-sized *mūrti* of Prabhupāda and then sat before him, savoring my relationship with him. The *mūrti* of Śrīla Prabhupāda is very calm and regal, and I looked with new eyes

upon his saffron-dressed form, his hands folded on his lap, and his head ever so slightly tilted to the right. By being with him in the temple room, I felt very close to Prabhupāda and I thought that if he wanted to he could communicate with me. While looking at him I realized better that Prabhupāda was actually the pure force behind the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, because he is an indisputably pure devotee and a highly empowered preacher (*śaktyāveśā avatāra*). So if Gauracandra Swami had given Subala dāsa freedom to consider Prabhupāda as his most important *guru*, then shouldn't I too have the freedom to choose? And if I were to choose between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Gauracandra Swami, wouldn't it be obvious that Śrīla Prabhupāda was unquestionably the more advanced devotee and therefore a better shelter for me? Gurudeva had always said that his disciples shouldn't consider that there was a competition between him and Śrīla Prabhupāda. All right, no competition, but still, it was natural to *compare* them and to seek the stronger. But did I have direct access to Prabhupāda? Was I "jumping over" the person I was supposed to accept as my link to Śrīla Prabhupāda? *How vitally did I need my initiating guru?*

My thoughts were interrupted when I noticed Subala dāsa sitting next to me, smiling and looking up at Śrīla Prabhupāda. Subala was slightly balding and had been through a lot of family trouble, such as splitting up with his wife and giving up his job in order to become a full-time devotee. As we sat together, Subala said something about how great Prabhupāda was and so we began talking. I admitted

to him that I had overheard what Gurudeva had said to him.

“I am feeling relieved,” said Subala, “that he has allowed me to go where my heart is.” Subala and I continued glorifying Prabhupāda, his books and his potency.

“Actually the *gurus* are not really qualified,” said Subala, “if you consider what the scriptures say.” I have heard remarks like that before, and usually they set off alarms and red lights inside my head. To speak like that was offensive towards my initiating spiritual master. Whenever I heard such things I would either argue against them or go away. But this time I stayed.

“Have you read what Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his books?” said Subala. He had the quotes in a notebook which he took from his bookbag. He began to read aloud:

The *uttama-adhikārī*, or the highest devotee, is one who is very advanced in devotional service. One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*. A neophyte *Vaiṣṇava* or a *Vaiṣṇava* situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikārī* as a spiritual master.

—*Nectar of Instruction* text 5, purport

I have heard that statement before and I knew it was argued back and forth by devotees. But this time I accepted that it could be applied to my initiating

spiritual master—as someone who was probably not an *uttama-adhikārī* or if he was one, his position was contested by his Godbrothers. And anyway, Śrīla Prabhupāda was *more* than a *mahā-bhāgavata*; he was a *mahā-mahā-bhāgavata*.

Subala went on to make a general statement about “those guys,” meaning the initiating *gurus*, and the wrongs they had committed. I told him that he shouldn’t lump Gauracandra Swami in with the rest. He agreed but added, “he’s guilty by association.” I finally figured out that I was indulging in unnecessary talk, and so I decided to return to my duties in serving Gurudeva.

“Where were you?” Gurudeva looked up when I entered the room. I had forgotten to serve him his evening milk. He was calm as usual, but I knew he must have been somewhat annoyed by my absence, especially when I had no good excuse. It then occurred to me that I had also forgotten to do his laundry as well as a few other things I was supposed to do. I decided not to hide the trouble in my mind and so I tried to mention it, indirectly.

“Gurudeva, it’s quite different here, isn’t it, from the way we were being received in Gujarat?”

“Our Movement is going through some painful transitions,” he replied. “Sometimes the changes occur like the swings of a pendulum from one extreme to another.”

Within a few moments, I blurted out to him the issues which had possessed my mind, but I tried to

conceal that they were of such personal concern to me. I read him the quote from *Nectar of Instruction*, that a devotee who is less than the liberated *uttama-adhikārī* shouldn't become a spiritual master. I asked him what he thought.

Gurudeva replied at length. He said that when this question was asked a few years ago, the *gurus* used to reply that *uttama-adhikārī* could also apply to ourselves. In the same passage describing the *uttama-adhikārī* as spiritual master, Prabhupāda defines the term by saying, "Out of many Vaiṣṇavas one may be found to be very seriously engaged in the service of the Lord and strictly following all of the regulative principles, chanting the prescribed number of rounds on *japa* beads and always thinking of how to expand the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement." So by that definition even some of Prabhupāda's disciples could qualify. By a similar interpretation, one could note that Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes used words like "pure devotee," and "liberated personality" to apply even to his young disciples, provided they were fully engaged in the process of *bhakti-yoga*.

"But that kind of interpretation won't hold anymore," said Gurudeva. "The fact is, we followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda have to act as spiritual masters, not based on whether we are *mahā-bhāgavatas*, but because it is our duty. It's the order of Prabhupāda and we have to undertake it even at great risk."

Gurudeva explained that the major mistake the Movement had made after Prabhupāda's disappearance was to claim that only a few select persons could become spiritual masters. But throughout Prabhu-

pāda's books and letters he advocates that all his followers should become spiritual masters. Lord Caitanya says, "Whoever you meet, tell him about Kṛṣṇa, and you will become spiritual master." Gurudeva spoke of the pressing need for many initiating and instructing spiritual masters in the world, due to the complete absence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Gurudeva's point was that it would be ideal to accept a *mahā-bhāgavata* as your *guru*, but there are many, many statements indicating that Prabhupāda wanted his followers to become *gurus*, and not necessarily that they had to wait until they became *uttama-adhikārī*, or until their Godbrothers recognized them as such. Gurudeva showed me a few statements, such as the one in a letter by Prabhupāda where he says, "Generally the spiritual master comes from the group of eternal associates of the Lord, but anyone who follows the principles of such ever-liberated persons is as good as a liberated one. Persons who are less qualified are not liberated but can act as *guru* and *ācārya* by strictly following the disciplic succession." He also showed me a purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda in the Fourth Canto where he states,

Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the Supreme. . . one can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.18.5

Gurudeva said the very fact that there are so many warnings in the scriptures and from the previous *ācāryas* about the right behavior of *gurus*

indicates that those who are *gurus* may be prone to mistakes. For example, a *guru* is warned not to take too many disciples. Lord Caitanya said a *guru* should not accept money or grains from materialists, and should not be proud of his position. Lord Caitanya gave these instructions “for all spiritual masters.”

When Gurudeva mentioned that we should not jump over our spiritual master in going directly to the previous spiritual master, I tried to listen very carefully, because this was my main concern about my relationship with Prabhupāda. Gurudeva said that over the centuries perfect masters have sometimes appeared who have started *sampradayās*, such as Rāmāṇuja and Madhvā, and he also mentioned Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha. Gurudeva said, “Imagine what it was like for disciples of the perfect masters to also become *gurus*. The direct apostles or followers of the perfect masters are very fortunate, but they must also face the fact that people will be disappointed—because they just missed becoming disciples of the original spiritual master. Still, one who represents the perfect master is acceptable, provided he really represents his teacher.

“The real test is a personal one,” said Gurudeva, “whether your spiritual master has actually saved you from material life. If a disciple of a disciple of a disciple of the perfect master actually saves you by giving you the teachings of his previous teachers, and if you feel a debt in your heart to him, then he may be qualified and may actually be in fact your spiritual master.”

“What if,” I asked, “a follower of a follower of a

perfect spiritual master feels that he has a personal debt to the *perfect* master?"

"Then he has to fulfill that debt," said Gurudeva. "But one way to fulfill it, such as the debt we all feel to Prabhupāda, is by serving another follower of Prabhupāda. This shouldn't be imposed on people as an institutional dogma, which I think is another mistake our Movement made. But neither should we make such a swing of the pendulum that we deny that Prabhupāda's mercy comes also through his followers. We shouldn't deliberately try to undermine the faith that may be coming to people's hearts when they meet devotees of Prabhupāda who tell them about Kṛṣṇa, and who explain Prabhupāda's books to them and help them to practice."

There were more questions on my mind, but I felt too confused and contaminated to pursue the topic. I didn't want to ask merely theoretical questions or to challenge. I was thinking of asking, for example, "Why does someone have to explain Prabhupāda's books to us, why can't we just read them on our own?" From what Gurudeva already had said, however, I could see that there was a need for spiritual masters even after Prabhupāda. I hadn't yet asked my personal question, whether I should consider Prabhupāda my main spiritual master, but I guessed that Gurudeva might have answered it by saying that I had to answer it for myself. When I stopped asking further questions, Gurudeva could see that I was still confused.

"You seemed peaceful before we came here," said Gurudeva, "and now you may be thinking differ-

ently. You know, Nimāi, your tendency is to go off on different detours. You go in one way and then become influenced and go in another way. So consider things carefully."

"Thank you, Gurudeva." I bowed down, left his room, and tried to catch up on the duties I had neglected.

But the emotional changes that had occurred when I had heard Gurudeva tell Subala that Prabhupāda could be his main *guru* and my own awakening of direct attraction to Prabhupāda didn't leave me. Some of those emotions were nice, but some of them scared me. My innocent dedication to Gurudeva was exposed as shallow. As a result of all of this, I remained somewhat disturbed and less enthusiastic. I also forgot to do things in my service to Gurudeva. Some of my mistakes turned out to be very costly.

#2 The Crash

Toward the end of our stay in Victoria, Gurudeva decided he wanted to visit New Naimiṣāraṇya, a community of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees in northern British Columbia. About six different families had built a home in the wilderness, without phones or electricity, and they were practicing “simple living and high thinking.” One of them had written to Gurudeva asking him to visit: “We hardly ever see anyone up here and we’d be encouraged if a *sannyāsī* came and assured us that what we’re doing is part of Prabhupāda’s movement.” A devotee from Victoria agreed to drive us there in his van, but on the day we were supposed to leave he canceled the offer in favor of some urgent business. When Gurudeva heard that, he wanted to go without delay to our next scheduled stop, San Francisco.

The man who drove us to the airport was just beginning to learn about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I had spoken with him at the Sunday feast about transmigration and about his profession—flying. As soon as we got into his car, he proposed that he could fly Gurudeva and me in his one-engine plane to New Naimiṣāraṇya. He said he had done it himself half a dozen times and that it was an easy three-hour flight. Gurudeva likes to act with caution and time for deliberation, so I didn’t think he would go for it. But he began to ask the man questions as if he were seriously interested in the offer. The man, Bob Gates,

said he was a licensed pilot and that his little plane was very reliable. He regularly made much longer flights to the mountains and all the way north into the Arctic region. Sometimes he flew trappers or tourists or parcels or even a dog or calf. He said the devotees at New Naimiṣāranya had prepared a level field just for this purpose. "Flying in a plane," said Bob, "is still safer than driving a car on the highway."

And so before we were halfway to the city airport, Gurudeva decided to accept the offer. Bob changed direction and drove us to a smaller airfield where he kept his plane.

Bob left Gurudeva and me in the car while he went in to check the weather report and prepare his plane.

"What do you think, Nimāi?" asked Gurudeva.

"Think about what, Gurudeva?" I was still in my confusion over spiritual masters.

"About flying in this plane."

"I think it's all right, if you do." I knew that Gurudeva had flown in little planes before, in Guyana, and he liked the adventure and the convenience. He didn't like long car trips because they gave him headaches.

"I want you to personally inquire about the weather where we're going," Gurudeva said. The sky was overcast. Spring was supposed to begin in a week, but it was still cold. Gurudeva told me to go into the air terminal and make two phone calls, one to the San Francisco temple to tell them we were not coming and one to the Victoria temple to tell them we were planning to go to Naimiṣāranya.

I went inside, but someone was using the pay phone. I sat waiting for a while, but I spaced out. At first I began thinking of the talk with Gurudeva about how someone could be a spiritual master even if he wasn't a *mahā-bhāgavata*. Then I fell into bad consciousness while waiting in the airfield office. I doubted whether my spiritual master could take me back to Godhead. But I also doubted that I could depend entirely on my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. And I doubted myself. I doubted my faith in Kṛṣṇa and the pure devotees. By shaking the foundation of my faith in Gurudeva, my whole spiritual life was being threatened. But now that I had started, it was hard to stop. While sitting and worrying, I began to doze. Then Bob Gates came over and woke me up.

"We're ready to go," he said cheerfully. "The weather report isn't so bad."

I told Bob that I had to make phone calls for Gurudeva and that I would join them in a few minutes. As I dialed the phone, I could see out the window Bob and Gurudeva walking towards the small planes. They stopped before a one-engine white Cessna with a red stripe. It looked fragile and I wondered if it could carry us with all our baggage. When no one answered the phone at the San Francisco temple, I decided not to bother trying any other phone calls.

I think I should explain why I didn't pursue making those phone calls. It might have been very important if I had been able to tell Gurudeva a weather report that I had heard with my own ears. It also could have made a big difference if I informed the devotees where we were going. I can "explain" my

action by saying, "I just spaced out." But it was something more. It was a minimization of the order of the spiritual master. It just didn't seem that important to me, making these "little" calls that Gurudeva asked for. Hadn't the pilot said that the weather was all right? And why bother calling up different temples? Now that I look back, I think my resistance was connected to a general doubtful state. A faithful disciple would have carried out the order of the spiritual master at all costs and just assumed that the *guru* would not have asked for something if it were unimportant. I tried a second time to reach the San Francisco temple, but when no one answered I just dropped the attempt to call anyone else and went out to join them at the airplane.

Now I have to describe a very low point. As we stood outside the plane Gurudeva asked, "Did you make the phone calls?" I replied, "Yes." I rationalized to myself that I wasn't lying, because I had tried to phone San Francisco.

"Was it all right?" asked Gurudeva. I knew he was referring to the weather report. He didn't want Bob to hear that we were double-checking on him. At this point, I told a bold-faced lie and said, "Yes." Why? Because I just didn't consider it very important, and I thought that Gurudeva would never find out one way or another. So there, I've said it. Now everyone can know what a rascal I am.

As the plane taxied for the take-off, I noticed that the doors were held shut with less security than a car

door. And the plane cabin was very noisy from the engine roar so that you couldn't converse. Gurudeva and I, strapped in small, hard seats, prayed on our *japa* beads.

The Cessna lifted lightly into a hazy sky. As far as I could tell, Bob Gates had very few panel instruments. I don't think he had a radio and he certainly had no radar, so he was flying by visual reference. He flew at a very low altitude in order to see the ground under the clouds. I guess he was expecting to make the whole trip just by memory. Gurudeva had a road atlas which he took out and showed me what he thought was our route north, over places called Squamish, Garibaldi, Brandy Wine Falls Park, and then passing in between some of the peaks of the Coast Mountains and over Chilko Lake. One time Gurudeva leaned forward to Bob and said, "Are we over the Squamish yet?" But it was no use because Bob couldn't hear him over the engine. Gurudeva would have had to shout and he didn't, so he sat back, chanting and holding on. I think we both felt uneasy to be so much at the mercy of Bob and his little plane.

At times like that, you naturally turn to God, at least I do. Death came closer too, like a personal presence, and so I was forced to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa in direct open prayer of His holy names. After a while, a turbulence began and the plane started to shake. We lost altitude and suddenly gained it again. I didn't know whether the pilot was jockeying to get out of the wind currents or whether the gusts were moving us around helplessly. It got so strong that I consid-

ered the wings might come off. They were mere wood and fabric, not like when you look out the window on Pan Am and see steel rivets.

The visibility diminished. Then you couldn't see at all, just fog all around. When we noticed wet snow flakes swirling, Gurudeva said to me, "He should turn back." Then he shouted up to Bob, "*Shouldn't you turn back?*" But Bob, with his hands very tightly on his steering shouted back, "*I think it will be all right! I've done it before! If it gets too bad, we can land somewhere!*"

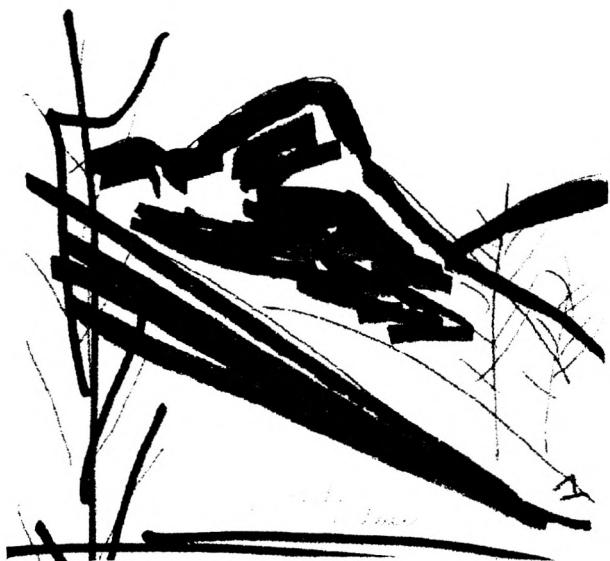
I was feeling relieved that at least I could chant out loud without embarrassment. When traveling in commercial jets, I had often thought that in an emergency it might be very awkward to call out Kṛṣṇa's names in the midst of two-hundred non-devotees. Even if I could do it, they might say, "Tell that Hare Kṛṣṇa to shut up!" But here chanting was expected. Gurudeva was chanting also, although at the same time he was looking outside and glancing forward to the pilot and the control panel.

"How could he have received good weather reports?" Gurudeva said as if he were thinking out loud.

There were some breaks in the clouds and we could see a huge bulk of a mountain not far to the left. We lost visibility again and when we regained it we were heading toward another smaller mountain.

Bob suddenly banked sharply. He wasn't consulting us and so we could only guess what he was attempting. The personal danger was real enough, but I also felt terrible anxiety and regret that I had

placed Gurudeva at the mercy of such flimsy protectors. And now we were trapped. It seemed that Bob had lost his way.



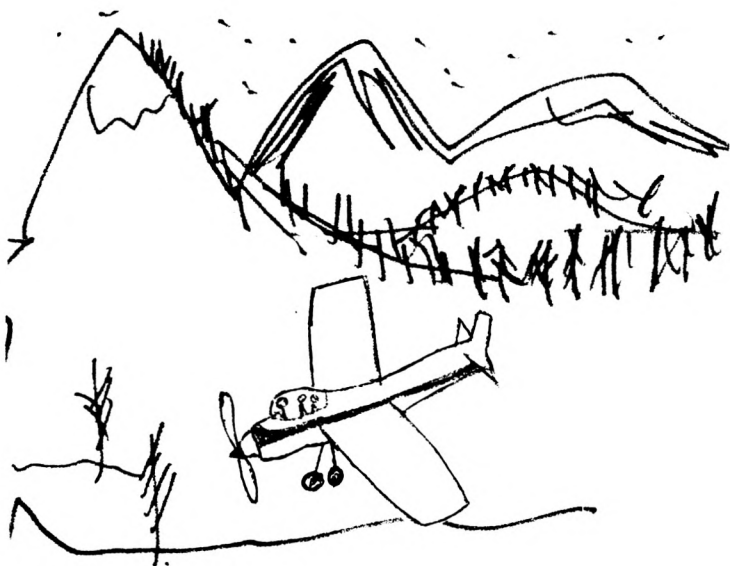
View of mountain from window

Then the engine started to run rough. I began praying like anything, loud and sincere. I was completely frightened and holding on tight. Gurudeva's chanting was deep and clear and loud. Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead and He would decide. We just tried to remember Him.

The plane began to lose altitude and Bob switched the engine off. So he was going to land. The propeller kept turning and he switched the engine on again, but it only ran smooth a few seconds before it acted up. He switched it off and glided, constantly losing

altitude but maintaining enough height so we could make an emergency landing and not a nose dive.

"Hold on," he shouted, "this might be a bit rough!" Down we went into a ravine—I couldn't call it a field—amid mountains and trees, toward a somewhat clear space of snow. I was by then in a panic, but at least the holy names were on my lips. We were all three crying out for Kṛṣṇa. The first ground impact was maybe the tail touching down, and it wasn't bad. I fully braced myself. The second jolt was severe. The third was the crash. We were hurled and crushed against the plane, which crumpled and broke into pieces.



Forced landing in mountains

#3
Gurudeva's Journal

March 14.

Pain. Broken leg. Freezing cold. Lost in the mountains. But by Kṛṣṇa's grace we are alive and have found a trapper's cabin, and we have food and a fire.

Yesterday we crashed into a ravine in the Coastal Mountains. We are far from civilization, in a dangerously inaccessible spot. There are big peaks here, each ten-thousand feet tall. Mount Tatlow, Razorback Mountain, Taseka Mountain, and all snow capped—at least I think these are some of the peaks in sight. Who would ever come by here?

I was the only one with a serious injury. Besides the broken bone, I had a cut on my leg which probably would have received about six stitches from a doctor. I'm afraid it may become infected. We started walking (I with a crutch), and after an hour we found this little cabin. The foolhardy pilot insisted on walking off by himself to find help. I thought it better to stay where we are. A crashed plane and smoke from a cabin are more likely to attract attention than a man wandering in the snow. But he insisted and it is also brave of him to do so.

I have to forcibly restrain my imagination from living in "what might have been"—if we had gotten a car ride to New Naimiṣāranya, or if I had been more cautious and not jumped into this crazy offer of a

plane flight, or even if Bob had had enough sense to turn back when he saw the storm. What actually has happened I must accept as the will of Providence and as the best opportunity for spiritual advancement.

March 15

Freezing cold night. Stripped of all amenities (but not necessities). For how long?

Nimāi dāsa is not much companionship, not yet. He's so young and inside his own head; being with him is like being alone. Something unpleasant came over our relationship in Victoria when he picked up new doubts whether I am a bona fide spiritual master. I thought I had already gone through that. I admitted that I, like the other *gurus*, had been imitating Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I acknowledged my lesser position. So I wanted to go on and do the needful, to *serve* disciples by acting as their spiritual master in *paramparā*.

Being thrown here in the mountains has brought me again to face myself for what I am. I don't like what I see. Nimāi is right: He should take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and I should encourage him to do it. I can't give shelter to anyone and I don't spontaneously speak the science of Kṛṣṇa. At best, I'm just a clinging, dependent disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Maybe I've not advanced *at all* since I first met Prabhupāda and he blessed me to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, follow the four rules, and follow him.

That's it, *bas*

Jaya Gauracandra dāsa

Let me admit my disqualifications as spiritual master:

When I “became” *guru*, one of the biggest changes I went through was my behavior toward women. Previously I was very strict as a *sannyāsī* and wouldn't even look at women's faces if at all possible. But as *guru* I was supposed to become the protector and intimate guide of many women. I asked one of the other initiating *gurus* about it, and he said it was no problem, you just have to see them as your daughters. I tried it, on the premise that I was a liberated spiritual father. When an attractive young woman approached me and said that she wanted me to initiate her, or rather when her temple president told her that she had to accept me as her eternal *guru*, I would ask her to come see me for an initial interview. Sometimes I would sit alone with one of them for more than two hours, while my *brahmacārī* assistant sat just outside the door. The daughters approached me openly and adoringly because according to the system I was as pure as an angel. I was like another Śukadeva Gosvāmī who could walk naked, and when the ladies bathing by the river saw him, they didn't bother to cover themselves because they knew that he had no designs on them. He was purely thinking of Kṛṣṇa. But I can admit to impurity and were not some of the daughters also in the mixed modes? It was only by Kṛṣṇa's mercy that I got through the years of guruship with no gross falldown. Now, it's

mostly a series of battles that I somehow survived. But to have put in so much time resisting feminine attraction doesn't speak well of someone who is supposed to be in higher consciousness.

There are many other disqualifications. I really lack compassion to face "the zoo" of nondevotees, and neither do I appreciate the association of Kṛṣṇa. So much envy in my mental life. Maybe that's why Kṛṣṇa has thrown me here— "You want to be alone? Here!"

Just the fact that I still expect to be served hand and foot by servants and followers means that I'm covered over. Once I complained to a Godbrother that my servant had been a few minutes late in serving us lunch. The Godbrother said, "Yes, it's hard to get good servants nowadays." He was teasing me, as if I were some kind of patrician or slave owner, and I resented it. But there was truth to that remark. I *expect* to be served. I think I *need* it for *my* service to God! I need a cook, a dishwasher, a toilet cleaner, someone to wash my clothes and sew my buttons, someone to open doors for me, someone to make my phone calls. And I accept a soft pillow mattress, money, and assistants. I don't drive cars, I ride in them. My servant screens prospective visitors: "You can't see him," is his standard line.

So what? Well, it's just too much covering around the real person. I'm not even able to ask the vital question anymore: *Who am I?* Because the too-ready answer I give myself is, "I'm *guru*: My name is Guru-

deva." But as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī writes, if you think you're *guru*, then you are actually *goruh*, a cow.

I have received so much honor in this lifetime as *sannyāsī* and *guru*! Why don't I just refuse it? Because it is duty. I won't blunder like that *sannyāsī*-disciple of Prabhupāda who threw away his *daṇḍa* saying, "I don't want people to bow to me." We explained to him, "They are not bowing to you personally. You are representing the *paramparā*." But if you *are* possessed of false ego and material desires, if you are cheating, then you had better put down the *daṇḍa*.

Serve as befits a *sannyāsī*. If a householder in Gujarat wants to offer you heavenly sweet-rice and a cushion, you may accept it. But then accept austerities equally, and accept them with the same pleasure. Lord Caitanya was delighted to walk with one servant through South India singing:

kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! he
kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! kr̥ṣṇa! pāhi mām

"O Lord Kṛṣṇa, please save me! O Lord Rāma, please protect me!"

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, please be my worshipable Deity, please be my friend, please come to me and save me from my self-inflicted wounds. I want to be your devotee, to serve as a devotee of your pure devotee, but so far I'm a "farcical Nārada." Please have pity on me and banish my self-pity. Let me stand up like a devotee of the Lord. Better late than never.

As I write this entry, my pen is running out. I have a supply of Shaefer cartridges in my briefcase and I am inclined to keep writing. But how long before someone finds us?

March 16

I have to be careful or I'll lose track of the date. I must be sure to check it off each morning on the calendar.

I'm going to try to talk with Nimāi. We are in this together. I should see him as a spirit soul and as a Vaiṣṇava, not by designation, a "young kid," "neophyte devotee," or "servant." He's trying his best within limitations, which is all I am doing.

So far Nimāi and I have mostly talked about how we expect someone to find us here. They will notice the plane is missing. They will send a search party. They will see the plane's silver landing gear, which we have exposed. They will see the smoke from our chimney. They will send down a helicopter. But we have also admitted that almost no one knew where we were going; it's not like a lost jumbo jet that does not show up in New York. Who knows if Gates even properly logged in, or whatever they're supposed to do at the airport? So there may not be a deliberate search. Maybe some hunters or trappers will come by. But our Movement is such that one could go weeks without anyone even asking for him. If my name comes up in conversation, devotees will say, "Isn't he preaching in Canada somewhere?" I know when I don't hear of a *sannyāsi*'s whereabouts for a long time, I start to wonder: "Did he bloop like so

many others?" "I heard he got married and has a job as a shoe salesman in Oklahoma."

I'm afraid.

**kṛṣṇa! kṛṣṇa! pāhi mam
kṛṣṇa! kṛṣṇa! rakṣa mam**

#4 Fears

I could have functioned much better in the woods if I hadn't been so afraid. The actual work was practical—how to maintain a food supply and physical shelter, and how to reciprocate with Gurudeva. But when I became distracted by fear I couldn't concentrate on my work.

While writing this, I've just looked up the word "fear" in the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. If I share some of it with you, it will help me to express myself. Prabhupāda states, "*Bhagavad-gītā* is a transcendental literature which one should read very carefully. It is capable of saving one from all fear." When he discusses the fact that the Kurus were afraid on hearing the sound of the conches blown by the Pāṇḍavas, Prabhupāda comments, "One who takes shelter of the Supreme Lord has nothing to fear, even in the midst of the greatest calamity." There is also an item listed in the index as "fear: freedom from, as requisite for love." This means that a Kṛṣṇa conscious person has to actually be free of fear, as well as lust and anger, in order to advance in transcendental life. Kṛṣṇa finally promises that if one surrenders to Him, He will deliver us from sinful reaction: "Do not fear." Hearing these statements by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I can conclude that my fear was a combination of being in the bodily concept of life and of not remembering Kṛṣṇa.

I probably had what medical people call shock or

trauma after the plane crash, although I wasn't much hurt. I was shocked that Gurudeva was bleeding and that we were freezing in the snow and that we were lost. I didn't want to believe that it was really happening. I kept wanting to be somewhere safe and warm where we all belonged, such as the temple room or the attic room in the Pennsylvania farm. Although I still had something very valuable, my service relationship with Gurudeva, I just freaked out and couldn't face reality.

When we entered the cabin, one of the first things I saw there became another major cause of my fear. There was a photo on the wall and some books, and as soon as we entered I went right up to them to see what they were. I am like that. Even if I enter a place with a very serious purpose, I have to check out the titles of any books or magazines and look at any pictures or any graffiti on the walls. So in this cabin there was a photo nailed to the wall. It showed a tall creature walking on two legs in the woods; its face was like a mask or like a werewolf with big teeth. One picture showed him coming forward and the other picture showed him walking away. The caption said, "Pictures hurriedly snapped of an object thought to be a Sasquatch near our cabin at Nahanni Butte, April 1967." Another picture showed footprints in the snow and said, "Alleged Sasquatch tracks." That was all I needed: my imagination filled in the rest. It all happened in about ten seconds, and I don't think Gurudeva even noticed. Although we had immediate urgent duties, most of which fell on me to carry out, such as building our first fire and looking for food, I

still managed to find a few minutes in which to pick up another book in the cabin and glance through it. It was a *Guide to the Wildlife of British Columbia*. It featured photos and descriptions of moose, wolves, coyotes, cougars, and bears. On the first page I turned to I read, "WARNING: black bears frequent the area and ARE NOT TAME OR FRIENDLY. A disappointed bear or sow with cubs can quickly kill a human when annoyed or alarmed." The grizzly bear is beautiful in a sense, because of his natural power, but to even think of meeting up with him gave me the jitters. The same with the wolf. And yet we were in their backyard.

The cabin was just one room and had an earthen floor. There were wooden bunks, a stove, a small pile of wood, a hatchet, a knife, but no food. There was another small structure near the cabin, smaller than a room, but well built and set upon tall posts. Gurudeva asked me to enter it, because as it turned out, it was the food cache. Within half an hour of our arrival at the cabin, I was out again by myself in the snow. I could guess the reason why tin was nailed around the four posts, and why I had to enter the "pantry" with a long ladder. It was built that way to keep out our friends, the wolves and bears. The cache wasn't full; it contained only two cardboard cartons of stuff. There was a 2 1/2 kg. bag of whole wheat flour and smaller bags of corn flour, oats, powdered milk, sugar, and powdered mashed potatoes. There were bags of different kinds of beans and a collection of canned vegetables, like corn, peas, and so on. There was also a jar of peanut butter. A fair

percentage of it was inedible for a Vaiṣṇava, such as cans of beans with pork and things that were probably considered delicacies, like Brunswick sardines, liverwurst spread, coffee, and cream of mushroom soup. I wasn't sure whether the previous owner had dwindled down the supplies from a larger amount, or whether this cache was left just for people like us who were lost. I didn't even try to imagine how long the food would last. We had no concept of rationing, and so I planned to make a feast to cheer us up.

I made a big mess in the cabin trying to cook, and only a few of my preparations came out edible. I never cooked before, except to help a little and watch others. My so-called *capāti* dough was all sticky, and when I tried to roll it, it stuck to the rolling pin (a jar) and to my hands. I managed to pound one into shape and put it over the heat, but although I burned the outsides (and also my fingers), the insides of the *capātis* were raw. So I gave up on it and turned to other things. This was in full view of Gurudeva, who was lying on the bunk and enduring the pains of his injuries. A few times he sat up and told me something about how to cook. He also smiled as if he were amused.

I figured the easiest thing would be to just boil water and heat things up that way, like steamed vegetables. So I got some snow from outside and melted it for water and put the pots on the stove. My beans soon boiled furiously. But even after half an hour they were still hard and shriveled up so they had to be tossed aside. What finally came onto the

plate for offering to the Deities was canned corn and string beans which I had not ruined, and surprisingly, a rice which was soft, although a little too soft, and canned pears and canned applesauce, which were impossible for me to ruin (fortunately, the last resident had left a can opener). The peanut butter was also very good. All this was offered to the little Deities which Gurudeva always travels with. He has a small Deity of Gaura-Nitāi and one of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and one of Nṛśimha-deva. I assembled all these on a box and made the offering of prayers.

Although I knew that we could not expect our battery-run tape recorders to last long, I thought it was appropriate to play a lecture tape of Prabhupāda while Gurudeva ate. He asked me to also eat and not wait until he was finished. So we ate together hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda, who happened to be talking on a verse from the *Bhāgavatam* that says if you hear about Kṛṣṇa then your duration of life cannot be taken away by the sun. We both ate quite a bit, and then we were able to sleep, which is one way to ease the trauma of the crash and the desolation of being lost in the mountains.

On the afternoon of our first full day at the cabin, the fuel supply ran out, so I went out with a hatchet to cut down a tree. In one sense, all of this was fun and exciting, like being a Boy Scout again, only this time for the service of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, rather than for merit badges and scoutmasters. But on another

level, it was frightening and hellish, and I would have given anything to have been done with it and back in the world of security and warmth.

I dared not go deep into the woods but went to the edge of the clearing and began working on a small fir tree with the hand ax.



Sasquatch

Whenever I heard the slightest noise, I stopped and looked up, imagining a wolf or bear—or a Sasquatch. My eyes were also overactive. If I looked at a rock or distant tree the wrong way, I suddenly imagined it was a beast. My fears even began to supply imaginary “films” in which a few big wolves came trotting around the bend. I carried the knife at my belt and even took it out and handled it and swung it in the air, as I would have to do if I were attacked. I’m not a physically brave or violent person, and I doubted that I would have the guts for hand-to-

hand combat to the death. But if it came to that, I would have to fight rather than be eaten alive. But I thought I probably wouldn't fight well, unfortunately. They say if you're real scared, an animal can tell, and if you run from him, that's even worse. So in this way, I was nervous and distracted the whole time that I was cutting down the tree and chopping it into logs. It took me hours and it was dark before I finished. When I was carrying the wood back I saw fresh turds in the snow. And there were dog-like tracks. I was so scared I decided to tell Gurudeva about it. I didn't want to disturb him by causing unnecessary alarm. Our situation was dangerous enough. But I felt that I had to turn to him in my fears.

There was a fireplace, but we decided to burn the fuel in the stove in order to make it last longer. Although it was cold outside, maybe around ten degrees Fahrenheit, at least it wasn't winter. If it had been winter, we might have frozen to death. After I built a fire, I mixed up and heated some powdered milk.

"Gurudeva," I said, "I'm becoming overwhelmed with fears."

Gurudeva sat up on the bunk. "I'm also afraid," he said, "but what can be done? Let us at least turn to Kṛṣṇa with our fear." Gurudeva was wearing an improvised splint for his broken leg. His other leg, where he had cut it, was wrapped in an improvised bandage. With his hands on his wounds, he smiled in a way that comforted me.

"When Arjuna was afraid," said Gurudeva,

"Kṛṣṇa didn't exactly tell him that his tears or fears were forbidden. But what *was* forbidden was the giving up of duty. Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna to tolerate. In other words, because we're not liberated we're afraid. Otherwise, Kṛṣṇa wouldn't have to tell us to tolerate, would He? But He knows that we're weak and conditioned, and so He reminds us that everything in this world is temporary and we should tolerate it."

I then confided to Gurudeva my specific fears of the wild animals. Even while we were talking, some animal, either coyote or wolf, started high-pitched howling not far away.

"As far as I know," said Gurudeva very soberly, "they usually won't attack if you leave them alone. But we have to be very cautious. In your case, I think your mind is adding terrors to what is already here. Why add to it?" Gurudeva laughed. "Isn't it fearful enough for you just as it is?"

We laughed together and continued sipping our milk. Gurudeva then told some pastimes from the *śāstras* concerning fear. He said that even Kṛṣṇa's father, Nanda Mahārāja, was afraid. His fear was for the welfare of Kṛṣṇa, a kind of ecstatic emotion. "But still," said Gurudeva, "the *Kṛṣṇa* book mentions that Nanda was afraid. He was on his way home from Mathura and, based on a warning by his friend Vasudeva, Nanda became afraid that maybe demons were attacking his child.

"You're afraid of this so-called Sasquatch," said Gurudeva, with a glance toward the photo on the wall. "But Nanda had to contend with a *rākṣasī* demon

who was twelve-miles long and whose only business was to suck the blood of babies. And when Nanda was afraid, what did he do?"

"He began to think very anxiously of Kṛṣṇa," I said.

"And so should we," said Gurudeva. "Very anxiously and prayerfully. Since we've come here I've been reciting that song,

kṛṣṇa! kṛṣṇa! kṛṣṇa! he

It means, 'Kṛṣṇa please protect me, Kṛṣṇa please save me.' Like that."

Gurudeva asked me to join him in singing the *bhajana* of *kṛṣṇa! kṛṣṇa! kṛṣṇa! he*—We sang it together and then he led into a Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* which we continued for about half an hour. Gurudeva then sang another song which goes like this:

*samāśritā ye pada-palava plavarā
mahat-padam puṇya-yaśo murāreh
bhavāmbudhir vatsa padam param padam
padam padam yad vipadām na teṣām*

He said the meaning is that the material world is dangerous at every step. But for one who has taken shelter at the fearless lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, who slays the demon Murāri, the dangerous ocean of birth and death becomes shrunk up to the tiny impression that is made in the earth by the hoof of a calf.

Gurudeva continued talking about Kṛṣṇa as fearless, and about His holy name, of which even fear personified is afraid. I felt pacified and enlivened to

hear him speak in this way, and he encouraged me to contribute what I had heard from the scriptures. It was 10 P.M. by the time we stopped and put out the kerosene lamp. I kept on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to myself until I fell asleep.

Gurudeva's Journal: Sending Out a Beam

*bhajahu re mana śrī-nanda-nandana-
abhaya-caraṇāravindo re:*

"O mind, please take shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa which award fearlessness." If we could do this constantly, there would be no fear.

It's all right if someone actually wants me to serve as his teacher, but he should know who I am. And I should not bluff him.

Why become so hung up? It's the most natural thing in the world that after practicing as Prabhupāda's disciple for twenty-five years I should be able to train newcomers in *how to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda*. But that doesn't make me Prabhupāda. I cannot control what I am within the hearts of those I train up. I can't demand, "Worship me exclusively" or "Don't accept me as a spiritual master." Just teach them how to be a student of Prabhupāda; teach it in words and actions; be absorbed in it and detached from the results.

I used to think that being a *guru* was a conflict in my mood of worshiping Prabhupāda. That means I was doing something wrong. It's not a conflict. I would think, "At every moment they must see me as perfect and the receiver of their service. But if I'm always a receiver of service, then how can I be a servant? These servants of mine won't let me just

serve the *guru* of my heart!" Much of this has been cleared up by *guru* reform.

Taking the Lord's Picture

Rādhā-Dāmodara,
if I can remember You
in this far-away place,
the mountains will not freeze me,
and the wolves cannot harm me.
But when I send out my beam
will You accept it?

I focused Your image
in the camera of my mind,
because I *need* You!
But the picture came out faded,
"due to lack of devotion."

I will try again.
There is nothing else.
Please give me suggestions.

Giridhārī

I can see the Coastal Mountains
and I know there must be
a mountain maker.
I have faith
that He will reveal Himself
as the Mountain Lifter
to protect His devotees.

March 17

Thinking about our rescue from here is speculation. Maybe *this* will happen, maybe *that*. It's possible that no one will come at all. Then? I'm supposed to be the leader and figure out what to do. But I can't walk far.

The main thing is to maintain (or achieve) Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I can just hear Śrīla Prabhupāda saying, if someone were to tell him about surviving in the wilderness—"Who has survived? No one can survive. This is a bogus idea. First of all you have to understand that however long you may live you must die. So what problem will you have solved if you 'survive' *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī*."

March 18

City-slicker vegetarians. Tenderfeet. Untried monks. Fortunate recipients of the highest spiritual knowledge. Poor souls. Unhappy. Blessed.

Lost babes in the woods. Praying men. Connected to the eternal *paramparā* by the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Two different souls. Friends. Still trying to learn the beginning lessons,

"O son of Kuntī, the non-permanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of

winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed."

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.14.

Bodies in the mountains, minds wandering the three worlds—souls "on ice?"

Feet on earth, hearts faltering, "While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead."

Unwise. Only theorists so far. But belonging to you, Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

March 19

Built the fire on the evening of this day. "Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong." I used to think that St. Francis's "You light the night" was quaint and humorous. *Electricity* lights the night, not Brother Fire.

And what is the most important thing we did today? Drank water. Made bannock, a type of pan bread, for the first time. Ate beans. Evacuated and urinated. Stayed indoors when the wolves howled. Thought a million errant thoughts. The most important thing was chanting the holy names. We did it, me and my "son" Nimāi dāsa. We chanted loud *japa* in this sourdough cabin.

I Discover My Doubts

After one week, we had eaten half of the cache. We had also used up the lamp kerosene and our tape recorder batteries. The firewood was unlimited as long as the hatchet held out, and I counted five hundred matches. But we realized that we very seriously had to ration out things like food and matches and learn as soon as possible how to do things in alternative ways. The weather changed. It was very cold at night but above freezing in the day. We were not so worried. We told each other we would just depend upon Kṛṣṇa.

As for the wild animals, I continued to be afraid of them, to think of them, to hear them, and occasionally to see them. I started walking farther away from the cabin in order to find small trees I could cut down. One sunny day when snow was melting and the ground was soft I took about a fifteen-minute hike. I was returning, walking down an incline, when I saw less than a hundred yards ahead two black bears passing me from right to left. I said, "Christ!" out-loud. This wasn't one of my imaginary "films," and these bears weren't in the zoo. I turned around and started walking quickly up the hill again, although I didn't like going farther away from the cabin. Finally I came down again, constantly looking around me for signs, but nothing happened and I didn't see any bears again.

Since talking with Gurudeva about fear, I was no

longer always in a state of near panic. I noticed that my continual consciousness was less frivolous. I didn't allow myself to fully relax and enjoy different moments, but instead I kept awareness that danger could come at any moment. Any little "heaven on earth" I might create could be destroyed in an instant. This thinking helped me to remember to chant more, not just when I was chanting my sixteen prescribed rounds. I thought, "When bad times come, then *all* you'll have is Kṛṣṇa. And whatever else you have is illusion."

Being in the woods in that condition brought me moments of better clarity and depth than I was used to. Usually I seem to run around confused and influenced by different people too much. But now many irrelevant things became cleared away. For example, I saw that my relationship with Gurudeva was natural. I was his *brahmacārī* assistant. I did my chores without resentment and looked to him as my spiritual guide. So then what was all that stuff I was confused about in Victoria? It didn't seem to matter anymore. In fact, I had to think about it just to remember what it was. One of the issues was whether I had a direct relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, or whether anyone was stopping me from that. I could see that my relationship with Prabhupāda was clear and open and my Gurudeva was always inviting me to take it up. No one was in the way between Prabhupāda and me.

After that evening when Gurudeva talked to me about fear and we had a *kīrtana*, I felt more inclined to approach him with things on my mind. He also

seemed to welcome it. After all, what else did we have to do except survive together and do our own thinking? But you can only think so much on your own, and then you want to talk with someone else. Although I'm sure I wasn't very elevated company for Gurudeva, yet he still didn't mind my talking, as long as it was Kṛṣṇa conscious.

So after a few days I told him that I didn't have anymore problems about my relationship with him and with Prabhupāda. The reason I brought it up to him was not because I wanted to talk so much about it, but I just wanted him to know that I felt all right. But Gurudeva seemed to have been thinking about it himself, because he began saying humble things about how he wasn't qualified. He said that he personally could not bring me back to Godhead, but Prabhupāda could. And so he wanted to help me and help himself by depending on the pure devotee. When he spoke like that, I liked him even more and wanted to serve him. Although he was saying that he was unqualified, he wasn't being morbid or depressing about it. He wasn't artificial. He said, "When there are no big trees, then a castor tree is considered big." That's a saying by Śrīla Prabhupāda. It means that if there is no longer a *mahā-bhagavata* like Śrīla Prabhupāda present, even an "ordinary" devotee will serve as sufficient.

"You are more than sufficient for me," I said.

"That's because you're submissive."

So I realized that the "guru reform" business really hadn't affected me. And I was glad about that.

But almost immediately after I had expressed my

gratitude to Gurudeva, while I was walking towards the woods to cut another tree, Kṛṣṇa suddenly gave me another moment of unusual clarity. It was like He held up a mirror so I could see my own spirituality.

This “clarity” wasn’t something wonderful that brought me a vision of Kṛṣṇa in all things. It was just the opposite—I suddenly saw myself as more or less a nondevotee. I still wanted to be a devotee, but I saw that I wasn’t one yet. I think what happened was that I clearly sensed how thin and how very recent my spiritual life was and how longstanding was my life of forgetfulness. Something like this is also written somewhere in a purport by Prabhupāda. He says that it is not that we were always devotees. He says that it is not to be expected that we are one-hundred percent devotees. Or something like that. We may have very recently become devotees by the grace of a pure devotee, but our being a nondevotee goes back for many lifetimes in different animal species in which our consciousness was never raised above eating, mating, sleeping, and defending. Even in this lifetime, for almost twenty-one years, I had no higher awareness, maybe just sometimes lip service to God, and at other times a definite agnosticism. Even as I write this I’m not so foolish as to claim, “Now I have higher awareness.” But when I was forced to take a closer, unflattering look at myself, removed from the many support systems that make life go smoothly even in a religious institution, I suddenly asked myself, “Do you really believe in God?” And I found I had many doubts. Logically I could have tracked them down, because I *have* been a devotee for a few

years. I wasn't happy about this sudden "clarity." I had no intention of "preaching" or advocating that there is no God, but I had reverted to a stage that I thought I had already passed through.

Something like this is described several places in the scriptures. For example, Arjuna said very doubtful things to Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, so that Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, "Arjuna, where are these impurities coming from?" Of course in Arjuna's case, he was doing it on purpose just so that Kṛṣṇa could teach all mankind and all less intelligent persons by His teaching of Arjuna.

In my case, I wasn't doubting God's existence as much as I was doubting my own convictions. I saw that I was not at all fixed up in even the ABC's of spiritual knowledge, even though I could repeat those ABC's. Śrīla Prabhupāda has described that there are three classes of devotees. The lowest one has not much faith, nor does he understand the scriptures, nor is he able to speak with theological meaning to others. I used to think that I had advanced to the second class of devotee, who is described as possessing good faith and an ability to speak to others. One who is a third-class devotee is advised to move ahead to second class as soon as possible, or else he will soon fall away from the spiritual path. I suddenly saw myself as third class, or less than that. Here I was chopping wood and serving a spiritual master in so many ways, but I didn't really have any conviction. I didn't know what I was doing.

It was shocking to learn this. My fellow devotees in the temples, although they call me names for my

eccentric ways, used to concede that I wasn't a bad scholar. If there was a guest, I used to be able to talk to him glibly about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For example, if some guest to the temple wanted to help me wash dishes in the kitchen I used to explain to him, "This isn't ordinary work, you know. This is called devotional service, because we're actually serving God even though it looks like we're doing something ordinary." But here I was doing devotional service with less realization than a submissive guest to the temple.

And then another doubt hit me: "Even if there is God, which is most likely, how can we accept the Vedic scriptures' version that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? He looks like a young boy." Doubts like that "Is Kṛṣṇa really God?"—I had had answered years ago when I was a young *bhakta*, either by other devotees or by reading the scriptures. But here it was back again. That meant I never learned it in my heart, or if I did learn it, it was so superficial an understanding that it was torn away in a second. Just as we had to face the rude awakening that we were lost in the mountains, without phones, cars, mail service or nice food, and always on guard for wild animals, so I realized I couldn't count on a profile of myself as a faithful devotee.

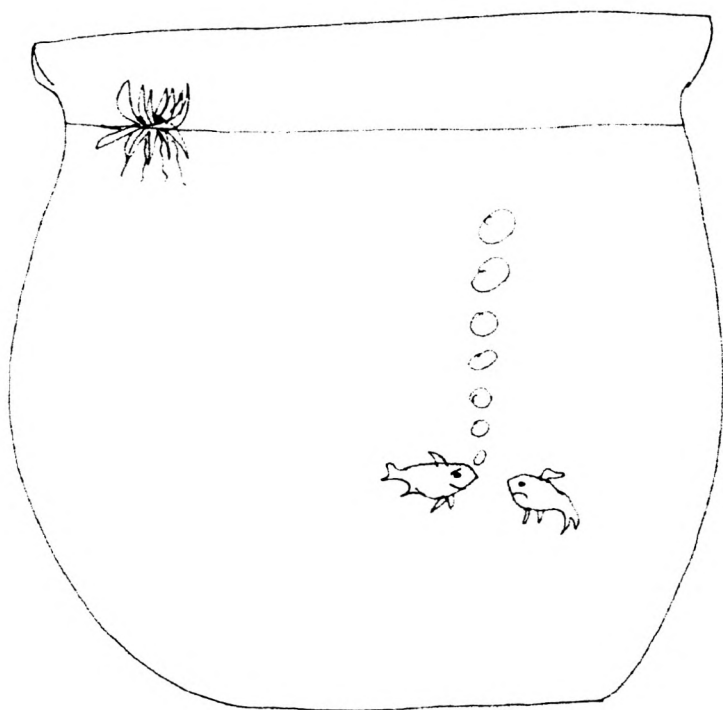
But at least I knew where to go in this predicament. I thought, "I am definitely going to ask Gurudeva about *this*."

Gurudeva's Journal: Prisoners in a Cave

March 24

N. approached me tonight with doubts in the existence of God. It was late and I said we could discuss it fully tomorrow. I decided we should start having a daily morning program—rise and attend *maṅgala-ārati* by 4:30 A.M., then chant *japa* together two hours, sing *pūjā* to Prabhupāda, then have a class from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I didn't think we would be here indefinitely—and still don't—yet we should live our Vaiṣṇava way as long as we are here. In 1967 Brahmānanda wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda that the devotees were just about to move from their old temple at 26 Second Avenue to a new address but that they were also in the process of beautifying the old temple by painting and making improvements. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that they should go on beautifying the old temple, because even if we are in a place (or in this world) for a short time, our process is to beautify for Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, we should be regulated. Maybe Nimāi wouldn't have been seized with doubts if we had had a regular program of chanting and hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Poet Desmond O'Grady asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Where does God get His knowledge?" Prabhupāda replied, First let's ask *what is God?* He's defined as *svarāt*, independent. He doesn't "get" His knowledge from someone else; He's *svarāt*.



Two little fish in a fish bowl. One says to the other,
*"Sure I believe in the existence of God. Because, who
changes the water?"*

Should I prepare notes to talk to N. on the existence of God? Better pray that Kṛṣṇa allow me to convince him and convince myself. N. has heard the answers before and he actually accepts them, but he wants the *life* of knowledge.

How do broken bones heal themselves? Scientists explain it in bombastic words. It's a *śakti*, an energy given within the living body; dead mens' bones don't heal.

Hurt. Sorry. Lost. Lost heart. Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna, don't be a coward or people will criticize that you are a friend of mine and yet a coward. For one who has honor, infamy is worse than death. Most people think nothing is worse than death. What do *I* think?

I think you should say your prayers and take rest.

March 25, 2:00 A.M.

Good to rise early; good to make this cabin a temple. Improve the altar. Take down Sasquatch and other pictures and put up Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya *lila*. Put the animal traps out of sight. I'm somewhat distracted by Nimāi's *japa* which is like "indistinct whirring." I am on my fifth round; Nimāi will be a few ahead of me by now. Why does he pace so heavily with his feet? Maybe I should sleep more. Doctors used to say that I have a bodily constitution which warrants more sleep. How long will we have to stay here? Will we die of starvation?

Swallowing the Forest Fire

His friends looked to Him
as a dying man looks at a picture
of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
They called to Him
across the crackling flames,
"Kṛṣṇa, it's not right
that we should perish like this!"

"Don't worry," He told them, with His eyes.
Then Govinda said to close their eyes
and in less than a moment
He sucked the whole fire
into His mouth.
"Well done! Well done!"
They danced around Him.
It was one of many sports in a day.

All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa!
All glories to the spiritual master,
who saves us from the fire
of repeated birth and death!

Saving the Kings from the Cave

20,800 kings
were trapped in a cave
by the demon Jarāsandha.

In the dark for years,
their bodies starved,
their hearts desolate
their pride smashed.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed their tormentor
and came before them.
In the soothing light of His presence,
they bowed and admitted,
“We were proud of our royal opulence,
but now we’ve been reduced
to prisoners in a cave.
Your rescue and presence are
bliss to our hearts!
We regret our former ways,
please accept us as Your servants.
Give us instructions how to please You,
O redeemer,
who owns the three worlds!”

Lord Kṛṣṇa released them
to return to their kingdoms,
to guide the people
in this world and the next.

Dear Lord,
We too have lost our way
and we call to You.
Give us Your assuring presence.
We are proud and unworthy,
but please come and take us back.

Submissive Hearing

In the morning after completing our *japa*, Gurudeva invited me to ask him questions. He was sitting on the bunk and I sat near him on the floor.

"I don't want to sit so high," he insisted, and so I helped him adjust his legs so that he was sitting on the floor. But then I insisted that he sit on a deerskin mat we had found in the cabin. We joked about that mat, because Vaiṣṇavas usually don't sit on deerskins. Yogīs use them in their meditations in the forest, and trappers use them in their own way. But there was nothing else to sit on except the earth.

"So what are your doubts?" he asked, just as if we were in a normal temple situation.

"Nothing you haven't heard before," I said. "But it's something new to me. Yesterday I suddenly saw that all my God consciousness is theoretical. It's all from the book, with no sign that it's part of me and what I know. Or I only know very little, maybe nothing."

"Maybe that's good," said Gurudeva. As usual, he didn't talk like a know-it-all. He liked to explore questions with you, so that you could find the answers together. But he soon steered things to the Vedic scriptures or something that Prabhupāda had said.

"I don't think *this* is good," I said. "It makes me lose faith in the statements of the *śāstras*. I don't think I have been *truly convinced* yet on basic points. For

example, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that the self of every person is eternal. But how do I know that? And then He gives an analogy: Just as we pass in one lifetime through different stages or bodies, such as boyhood and youth and old age, so at death the soul passes on to yet another body in a new life. But is the analogy itself proof? And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna claim that Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everything, but how do I *know* that? Do you see what I mean?"

"Do you think that Vyāsadeva or Kṛṣṇa are cheating?" Gurudeva asked.

"No I don't," I said, "I don't." It has always been very important for me that great souls, like the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and the sacred teachers in other times and places, like Lord Buddha or Lord Jesus Christ, actually lived and reached higher consciousness. I never thought that they were cheaters or bluffers, and I resent it when people deride them or psychoanalyze them in mundane ways.

"It's probably not logical," I said, "but I can believe in great souls and in the scriptures on one hand and yet still have a strong voice within me of total doubt."

"Why?" Gurudeva asked.

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe I'm affected by all the skepticism and science that I've been exposed to."

"In other words," said Gurudeva, "you're a conditioned soul. We all are. And as long as we're conditioned, we'll have some kind of doubts, big or small. I do also. So let's accept that it's not unusual to have some doubts. And accept also that they're not magic-

ally going to go away all at once. It's like the bears. We can't *wish* them away. But we don't have to be so petrified that we can't live our own life."

I sensed that Gurudeva was going to be able to help me with this problem. And I think we both knew that it was important. If he and I could talk openly, and if we could succeed in this, we could really overcome anything, including whatever might happen in the mountains.

"Why is it Gurudeva," I asked, "that I can't have these questions answered once and for all? Why does it seem we have to keep learning them over and over?"

"Because we're dull and our will is weak," said Gurudeva. "So *māyā* moves in. But so what if we have to go on hearing and hearing? As long as we have enough sense not to *stop* hearing from *guru*, *śāstra*, and *sādhu*."

"Okay, but what about my questions? If for me the truth about the soul and the next life, and the truth about God is all in the books and not in my heart or head, then should I just admit that I'm an agnostic?"

"No," said Gurudeva. "Prabhupāda used to consider an agnostic more or less like an atheist. Atheists deny the scriptures; they think they are ordinary books and that the saints and sages are more or less deluded. Is that what you think?"

"No Gurudeva. I accept the existence of elevated souls."

"You *say* that, but why? Why do you believe in them?"

I wasn't sure what to say, but when I paused, Gurudeva continued.

"You accept them because, although you don't know anything yet for yourself, you have been shown God consciousness by them. For example, in my case, my ultimate point of reference is Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda represents the *paramparā* teachings, and he is the form in which those teachings came to me and touched me. He's my standard. Whatever I have heard, before or since, which attacks or tries to undermine the God consciousness that Prabhupāda taught and exemplified, does not shake me. I reject it. Prabhupāda is a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and he has created in me the desire to also become a devotee."

"But," I said, "what if someone says that they want objective knowledge. Prabhupāda may be dedicated to Kṛṣṇa and you're dedicated to Prabhupāda. But where's a proof that everyone can examine for themselves?"

"All right, I'll tell you what Śrīla Prabhupāda says." Whenever Gurudeva thought a challenge was serious, he replied by taking his position as a disciple of his spiritual master. That way he wouldn't bluff anyone, but neither would he get defeated by staying on unsure ground.

"Knowledge about the soul and God," said Gurudeva, "is scientific and open for inspection. But in order to inspect it, you have to become qualified yourself, just as a science student has to become qualified by the austerities of study and practice before he can know for himself the secrets of his

science. In fact, no one can judge the science of God except those who actually study it thoroughly."

"With the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Gurudeva continued, "the proof is beyond mental speculation or examination by the senses. That's the big stumbling block for everyone who's a materialist. They refuse to think there's knowledge beyond their senses. But there is. So when you say, 'How can you prove the soul?', we reply that it's proved by the statement of the scripture, and it's proved by the statement of the Personality of Godhead. You already know this—it is called *śabda-brahma*—knowledge received by hearing from authority. There's no way to fully understand the soul and God unless you accept bona fide scriptures, and if you then practice their teachings yourself, you gain direct realization. You can't reject hearing from God and at the same time know Him in truth. Prabhupāda would give the example, if a child wants to know who his father is, he has to accept the word of his mother. She's the authority on that subject, and the child has to hear from her. You can't know God by yourself, by the inductive process."

"Is it wrong," I asked Gurudeva "if at every step I feel within myself that I have a choice to either accept faithfully what you say or reject it?"

"No, that's not wrong," said Gurudeva. "This isn't brainwashing. Why should it be threatening to your faith if at every moment you accept what's being said by free choice? But you reach a point where you begin to accept the basic elements of the science. That should never become mechanical for us, because then

we get cut off from the root or the very reason why we took to spiritual life in the first place. Doubt is a sign of intelligence, in the beginning. But you can't be doubtful all the time. Still, you should know how and why you overcame those doubts. Then if you have to, you can repeat the reasoning again and again. But eventually you should get a feeling of triumph over the doubts. They're like rascals that you've defeated, so even if they pop up again, you can take the sword of knowledge, as Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, and kill them. Remember that statement by Lord Kṛṣṇa?"

I tried to quote from memory but fumbled. So I reached for the *Bhagavad-gītā*, turned to the last two verses in the fourth chapter, and started reading out loud.

One who acts in devotional service, renouncing the fruits of his actions, and whose doubts have been destroyed by transcendental knowledge, is situated factually in the self. Thus he is not bound by the reactions of work, O conqueror of riches. Therefore the doubts which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of knowledge. Armed with yoga, O Bhārata, stand and fight.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.41-42

"Is it clearing up?" Gurudeva asked.

"Yes," I said, "but I have more questions." Gurudeva laughed. I knew that he didn't want to go on unendingly if it meant I wouldn't carefully think over what he had already said. But I needed to ask my questions personally. It wasn't enough to just look up "doubt" in the index to Prabhupāda's books. I had to know *why* I should look at the books and believe in

them in the first place. I had to hear it from my teacher. Someone who knew me had to catch my rascal mind and remind me of my inclination to accept saintly persons and scriptures and then test me as to why I have that inclination.

"How can we tell," I asked, "if a person is actually in higher spiritual consciousness, and how can we tell that a book, such as *Bhagavad-gītā*, is the absolute truth?"

"There are symptoms for a saintly person," said Gurudeva. "First there are *brahminical* symptoms like sense control, peacefulness, cleanliness, simplicity, nonduplicity, and religiousness. Beyond that you have to receive the seed of devotion in your heart from someone who is himself a genuine devotee of God, of Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna asked a question similar to yours. Kṛṣṇa told him that a person in higher consciousness doesn't lament over life or death. So Arjuna asked, what is a transcendentalist like? How does he sit and walk? How does he talk? Kṛṣṇa replied that the saintly person understands that he's not the body, therefore he's detached from material happiness and grief. Then later Kṛṣṇa said that to be a qualified person you have to receive the knowledge from a spiritual master in disciplic succession. When you find a person with all these qualifications, he's a saintly person."

"And the books?" I asked, "How do you know they're perfect?"

Gurudeva replied, "Our acceptance of the books is axiomatic."

"Is that reasonable, Gurudeva?"

"Yes, because the scriptures have been accepted by great authorities of all different schools, *and* by empiric experience we often find that what the *Vedas* say is true. For example, the *Vedas* say cow dung is pure although they also say stool is impure. So a prominent doctor examined cow dung in the laboratory and found that it has all antiseptic properties. Furthermore, the *Vedas* offer detailed reasonable explanations for phenomena that no other source so adequately explains. If you don't accept the *Vedas*, you have no alternative way to know."

"There's also a statement in the *Mahābharata*, that things which are inconceivable, such as God, cannot be reached by ordinary logic. We have to approach a realized devotee, a *Mahājana*, who has received the knowledge from *guru*, *śāstra* and *sādhū*."

"I feel better," I said. "I think I've licked my first problem. I have more questions, but should I save them?"

"Yes," said Gurudeva. "Why don't you think over what we said and write it down for yourself. Now we should follow our schedule of other duties."

Gurudeva seemed enlivened by our talk, as if he had been lecturing to a larger audience in an important place. I was also enlivened. We both realized that *Kṛṣṇa-katha*, talks about Lord Kṛṣṇa, could overcome all our problems.

Gurudeva's Journal: Turning Inward

March 28

We've been here two weeks. I calculated that if we eat a minimum ration of cache food, we have two more weeks' supply. We have to immediately start finding (and trying to eat) food from nature. It's also my duty in devotional service to think how to be rescued, so that we can join the Movement in our regular service. But since I conclude that there's no use in trying to hike aimlessly (and neither *can* I do it yet), it's my Kṛṣṇa conscious duty to figure out how to live on here, even if that means I have to spend my energy thinking like an animal. Food seems to be the main problem. Prabhupāda says it's no problem: No one should starve to death; it's only the humans who mismanage. So what are the birds and animals eating?

But I can't think only about how to eat. Śrīla Prabhupāda said the people in India accepted famine, although arranged by the British, as ultimately due to *karma* and providence. An American visitor to India said, "In our country there would have been riots." Prabhupāda said that the Vedic culture was so nice that people would die of starvation and accept it.

He Was Never Lost

At 70 years of age, entering Manhattan
with no money or home,
only the address of a Māyāvādī yogī.
Crossing the street
against horns and sirens,
to room 307—
His property was stolen.
Moving to the Bowery,
he saw every place
as Kṛṣṇa's mercy.
Kept going.
Another month alone.
No one wanted to hear
talk about Kṛṣṇa.
Just for Lord Kṛṣṇa and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī,
he recorded *Gītopaniṣad*.
A year later
Kṛṣṇa sent some boys
and the Movement started.
He was never lost.

This diary is a good place to consider my service to Prabhupāda's Movement. What was I doing before coming here, and what do I intend to do when I get out? I have to think how to maintain the body, but my deeper concern is to maintain the spirit. Let me review it.

After our Society made the changes in guruship, I turned more inward. Since I had been guilty of excesses (imitation of Prabhupāda), I thought I ought

not merely “repent,” but learn to depend on Kṛṣṇa so I don’t fall into excesses again. I decided that too much superficial activism had contributed to my becoming proud of my position. So I became more interested in prayer. I stopped initiating disciples for a while and dropped leadership in some of the projects I was managing.

This led me to associate with Banu dāsa, with whom I shared my thoughts about inner life. We both had collections of statements by Prabhupāda on prayer and constant thinking of Kṛṣṇa. I shared mine with him. He helped me also to see how I had become puffed up by accepting the praise of others, especially my disciples. And he helped me become aware that *we need Kṛṣṇa constantly*; we are helpless without Him. We also both found benefit in reading a few of the best Christian mystics on prayer.

That led to my taking time to practice prayer and my trying again to overcome inattentive *japa*. I began “conversing” with Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa during the day, even while doing “little” things. I spent two weeks in Ireland, with only one other devotee, practicing prayer, and I compiled prayers and my own reflections on them but hesitated to share them with devotees.

I want to print my manuscript, *Seeds for Prayer*. I think it could help our Movement. Although our Movement has corrected itself from the gross egoism of us *guru* leaders and others, there’s something superficial in devotees’ dealings and in much that goes on in temple life. My hope is that by sharing my own direct cultivation of prayer, to Kṛṣṇa and Pra-

bhupāda, it will be a kind of preaching. The inner life is very important. So I should appreciate it and encourage myself that it's not selfish. I want to bring to the Movement something which I feel is lacking in myself at least.

But I'm afraid they may say I'm too reclusive, a *bābājī*. Śrīla Prabhupāda and his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wrote that one shouldn't attempt to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in a secluded place in imitation of Haridāsa Thākura. One should work laboriously for the spiritual master and try to spread this mission for helping others.

Another hesitation: When praying to Kṛṣṇa I think, "this is me, this is my personal expression of Kṛṣṇa consciousness." But that might be a self-deception. We're advised—as Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna—to sometimes change our personal view in favor of what Kṛṣṇa wants. It is difficult always to know what to do and to do it. If I asked three different leading Godbrothers what I should do, each might tell me something different.

March 29

I know what my *Seeds for Prayer* is. It's the beginning of a way of life. If I *want* to keep it up, it will take long commitment and hard work. Do I want to?

The mountain fades in a mist,
and sometimes it's visible,
with crevices, trees, and snow.
Like that is my yearning.
But when I slipped and fell,
He was there.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

There was a wooden chest just outside the front door. It was used to store kindling for the fireplace. I suggested that Gurudeva might like to sit on the chest a few hours a day, around noon, when it was sunny and warm enough to be outside. He took to it and started spending part of every day on the "front porch." I would join him sometimes, sitting at his feet, and we'd both look out at the wilderness.



Often it was windy, and when we were quiet, you could hear the pines and watch the nearby trees move their branches. Of all the creatures in the

woods, the ones we saw the most of were the Canadian blue jays. I was used to seeing northeastern blue jays, which are bright, light blue with white in their feathers. These birds were a deeper blue and had black heads and pointy black tufts. Their cry was like other blue jays, just a bit more musical than a crow. The reason they came around was that I would leave out remnants of food. They would swoop down and take the grains and then call loudly to each other. Sometimes six or eight would come around at once, and they would do wild things, like bump into the sides of the cabin or sometimes peck at it just like a woodpecker does.

Gurudeva had learned from Prabhupāda to observe Kṛṣṇa in nature, and he did it often. He quoted Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, that nature was like a book which can show you the spiritual world. Gurudeva said that the jays were "stout and strong," and not because of the extra handouts that we were giving them. Their food was supplied by nature, and nature, he said, is under the control of God. Every creature in nature has its own food supply, with no question of shortage or starvation. "But the human being," said Gurudeva, "has developed such bizarre and demoniac tastes that he needs to have his food imported by planes and trucks from all over the world, or else he thinks he'll starve to death."

Our cabin was situated on a small hill which led into the valley where the plane had crashed. Straight ahead from our front door was the face of a big mountain.



Mountain view from window

Over the weeks, Gurudeva said different things about the mountain. He said that, according to Prabhupāda, a mountain has a soul. The proof of the presence of the soul is that a body goes through six stages of life; it's born, it grows, it gives off by-products, it has a certain life duration, it dwindles, and it dies. So a mountain goes through those stages also. For example, it gives off by-products, like minerals.

The Vedic scriptures state that some mountains can even fly, and maybe the ones that we are seeing have landed. Mountains are also mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “Of immovable things, I am the Himalayas.” By appreciating the essential quality of a mountain, you can see Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Immovable.

These talks were good for me to hear, especially because they helped me overcome my so-called doubts about the existence of God. Whatever further doubts I had, Gurudeva continued to clear them up by talking with me. He gave examples that he personally heard from Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda would very often quote a verse from the *Upaniṣads*,

*Nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetānāṁ
eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān.*

This means that each of us is an eternal spirit soul, a person, and the Supreme Being, God, is also an eternal person. But the difference between us and “that One,” the Supreme, is that He is supplying the needs of all the other living entities. Mankind doesn’t supply the needs of the blue jays or the bears and wolves, the ants or the elephants. But God supplies—for mankind also.

When Gurudeva spoke his appreciations and convictions of God, he used the words “God” and “Kṛṣṇa” interchangeably. But this was another doubt that had hit me in my “clarity.” When I had faced the fact that I was really not a devotee, one of my doubts was that even if there is a God, the Supreme Being, how can we be sure that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is God? My doubt

didn't come with a full set of atheistic or anti-Kṛṣṇa arguments. It came more like a sudden drop or loss. The arguments came afterwards. So one day while sitting together outside the cabin, I explained to Gurudeva my doubts about Kṛṣṇa.

"Gurudeva," I said, "the other week I expressed to you my doubts about God, and you helped me very much. But I didn't ask my question why Kṛṣṇa is God. How can we exclusively accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Being? I remember in high school I once read a book by Carl Jung, who observed that religions have similiar elements. So it seems simplistic to say that only Kṛṣṇa is God. Or do we say that? Maybe I'm revealing my impersonal tendency, because sometimes when I doubt Kṛṣṇa, I also think, 'How could this boy Kṛṣṇa be the Supreme Controller, Maintainer, and Destroyer, as well as the source of the impersonal eternal Brahman?' "

"That's quite a mouthful of doubt," said Gurudeva.

I don't think I would have dared to ask such doubts in front of other devotees, or even of Gurudeva before we had landed in the mountains. But you *should* be able to ask your *guru* about your real doubts. Neither was I trying to raise some intellectual opposition. I wasn't playing a game.

"First of all," Gurudeva replied, "because we say that God is Kṛṣṇa, doesn't mean we reject other theistic versions of God or other names for God. The first thing is to actually understand God consciousness and to approach it in a nonsectarian way. You can't be prejudiced beforehand that Kṛṣṇa can't be God, or

that another name for the Supreme is the only name of God."

"Yes," I said, "but why should God look like a cowherd boy?"

"You're jumping way ahead," said Gurudeva. "God can be many things. He can be anything. But before we think about Kṛṣṇa, His pastimes, His forms and how He's a person with inconceivable energies and so on, we should first consider Kṛṣṇa's teachings of God consciousness. Prabhupāda never liked it when even so-called believers in Kṛṣṇa wanted to jump ahead and just talk about Kṛṣṇa's dancing with the *gopīs*. Neither should you reject Him because you heard someone say 'He's a cowherd boy.' First, study His *Bhagavad-gītā*."

"A person who is Kṛṣṇa conscious has to be fixed in the basics. For example, when Sanātana Gosvāmī approached Lord Caitanya, Sanātana said, 'People in my neighborhood call me a *paṇḍita*, but I don't even know the basic truth. I don't know my destination and what is good for me.' So when you inquire about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, rather than just start talking about advanced pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, which you don't really understand, you should ask yourself, 'Why am I suffering? Where have I come from? Where am I going next life? What is God? What is my relationship with God?' But although people claim to be advanced in transcendental and spiritual life, if you ask them these basic questions, they don't know the answers. So if we want to see how good Kṛṣṇa is, let's go to Him with these basic questions. Let's approach Kṛṣṇa as *jagad-guru*. Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*. In His

book He teaches everything about the science of God in a way similar to other scriptures, but He also gives information that is not found in the others."

While Gurudeva was speaking, the wind was picking up, moving the pines, and making that deep wind-sound. He was taking his time answering, choosing his words, and I was also patiently hearing. It was nice being alone in the wilderness and hearing about Kṛṣṇa in a gradual way.

"You've asked why Kṛṣṇa is God," said Gurudeva, "so I'll answer in that way. But it's interesting that when Kṛṣṇa taught Arjuna, he first started explaining about the nature of the individual soul and transmigration of the soul. Only later did He describe the Supreme Person. What we call God, which is an English word, is explained in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by the word *Bhagavan*. In one verse it's stated that there are three aspects of the Absolute Truth. One is the impersonal all-pervading aspect, which is called *Brahman*. The other is God in the heart, called *Param-ātmā*, as perceived by the *yogīs* in meditation. And the other aspect is *Bhagavān*, or God, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All three of these are different ways of looking at the one Absolute Truth. So we don't say that only *Bhagavān* is the Absolute Truth, because the other aspects are also, and so are the other incarnations. Other religions point to the Absolute Truth in one form or another, but according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Bhagavān* is the highest manifestation of the Absolute Truth. The other manifestations give eternality, or they manifest all knowledge, but only in *Bhagavān* do you get sac-

cid-ānanda-vigraha, or eternality, knowledge, and the bliss of loving exchanges with Him."

"I think I agree," I said, "that Kṛṣṇa and the Vedic literatures are the best teachers of the science of God. But because He's our best teacher, does that mean Kṛṣṇa's God?"

"Kṛṣṇa is a name to describe Him," said Gurudeva. "It means all-attractive. God must be all-attractive. But who qualifies to be God or Kṛṣṇa, the All-Attractive One? All the *Vedas* say that *Bhagavān* appears in different incarnations and has different names. They're all called Viṣṇu. But among all the forms of Viṣṇu, the original form is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And if you study Him, He has the all-attractive qualities of the original Personality of Godhead. To study Kṛṣṇa is an unlimited science. I don't think it's wrong or terrible if you say, 'I don't know Kṛṣṇa yet,' because even the greatest sages and devotees don't claim they know Kṛṣṇa in full. But when you just pop off and say, 'Kṛṣṇa can't be God, He's a cowherd boy,' then this is a foolish doubt, and it's based on ignorance of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Better you admit you don't know Kṛṣṇa, but hear from the scriptures and the spiritual master about Kṛṣṇa. Knowing Kṛṣṇa and fully surrendering to Kṛṣṇa are not so easy."

"So Gurudeva?" I asked. "May I ask you something else? This may sound like I'm changing the subject, but I'm not. I wanted to ask you about Jesus Christ in relation to Kṛṣṇa. Because when I suddenly realized that I'm not even a devotee of God, and then when I had this doubt about Kṛṣṇa, it also took the form of a challenge like, 'Anyway if there is God,

why not see Him as Christ, as so many others do in the West? Why take an Indian God?' That's how it hit me. And I guess I have some sentiment for Christ."

"There's no contradiction between Christ consciousness and Kṛṣṇa consciousness," said Gurudeva. "One time someone asked Prabhupāda about Christ and he replied, 'Christ is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that's all. So you become like Christ, Kṛṣṇa conscious.' Another time Prabhupāda was praising the Vaiṣṇavas because they're not only interested in their own spiritual welfare but in helping others and he said, 'Try to liberate all conditioned souls. Just like Jesus Christ. For himself he was the son of God, and so he has nothing to do. He was already perfectly God conscious. He knows everything. But then why was he crucified? Because he wanted to work for others.' And Prabhupāda said, 'This is Vaiṣṇavism.'"

"But He's the *son* of God?" I said. "Kṛṣṇa is the father?"

"Yes. And the Father and son are one in quality. If the theologies or incarnations seem to be saying something different, it's because religion is taught differently according to time, persons and place. The essence is the same, to know God, and render Him loving service, to go back to Godhead."

I had many more things to ask, but I didn't want to push my luck. I wanted to fill myself up with whatever Gurudeva could impart to me. And I felt that I was receiving deeply whatever he said. If I could just keep asking questions in this mood of exchange, whatever I heard would do me long-term or permanent good. Even though his answers were satisfying,

they led me to more questions. But I decided to stop.

After I had asked my last questions I thought that Gurudeva didn't want to talk more and that he would suggest we take up our other duties. But he continued to sit with me. And although he was silent, I sensed that he wanted to say something. We both chanted *japa* for a few minutes as the sky darkened, and the clouds caught the last effulgence of the setting sun.

"Nimāi," said Gurudeva, "may I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"It's something personal about my own service. I have some doubt and I wanted to consult someone."

When Gurudeva said that, I couldn't think of anything intelligent to say, and so I stayed silent. I wanted to serve him.

"You're aware of how I've been trying to practice prayer in recent months, and how I've been talking about it?"

"Yeah. I think it's great."

Gurudeva smiled. He said, "Do you? I'm feeling a little unsure about it. On the one hand it's like an important discovery or breakthrough for me. And I would like to print my book on prayer, *Seeds of Prayer*. But sometimes I think I might get criticized by some devotees."

"Oh, Gurudeva, you should print that book!" I said. This was something I was enthusiastic about, and I couldn't help but show it.

"Your practice and your talking about prayer are just what our Movement needs," I said. "With all different controversies and falldowns of leaders, people are looking to an example of a saintly person. Some of the devotees that I've talked to really like it when you talk about how we should always think of Kṛṣṇa and always pray to Kṛṣṇa. You yourself have said that somebody will always criticize no matter what you do."

"That's true," he said, "but aside from what others might say, I'm trying to think within myself whether it's right, whether it'll be pleasing to Prabhupāda and help the preaching. I don't want to make one of these cheap presentations, like people who say they are always talking to God or Jesus, and yet they themselves are nonsense."

"But what you're doing isn't cheap," I said, "you're showing and telling us what many of us have missed. Prabhupāda was always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and he and Kṛṣṇa want us to practice it. It's so easy for us to just get swept away in our passionate activities and to forget what we're doing it for."

This was a favorite subject of mine, Gurudeva's absorption in prayer. It enthused me, and I could tell that it enthused him. I figured that Gurudeva knew what he wanted to do, but maybe he was using me as a sounding board for his ideas. I felt sorry that he had no one to actually consult with but me, with all my offenses and doubts. But at least I meant what I said. I loved to hear Gurudeva talk of an inner life and how we should be always praying to Kṛṣṇa.

Gurudeva's Journal: Seeds of Prayer

April 5

Nimāi's encouragement for my practice of prayer was helpful. He said that the devotees would benefit from *Seeds of Prayer*. So whenever we get out of here, I intend to print it in a limited edition and distribute it to those who are interested. Aside from printing a book about prayer, I want to *do* it. As Nārada prays in the Kṛṣṇa book,

"My dear Lord, You have kindly asked me what You can do for me. In answer to this I must simply request that I may not forget Your lotus feet at any time. I do not care where I may be, but I pray that I constantly be allowed to remember Your lotus feet."

My thinking and speaking to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda waned in recent months, but since coming here they have increased. I see that I am *mainly* praying to He who will protect me from material danger, death, attack, panic, pain, and further worldly adversities. This world remains very real to me and I'm afraid to be lost in the wilderness. This is the lowest form of prayer and devotion. "Those who when they are in distress, and in need of money. . . turn to Me," are declared by Kṛṣṇa to be pious but materialistic. And yet that's where I am at. I'm grateful too, because just as the world is real and fearful to

me, so my prayer for protection is also real and fervent. The more threatened I feel the more ardently I pray and feel intimately within the Lord's presence. It's a bit amusing in an ironic way that as a supposed *guru* and follower on the path of pure, unmotivated love of God—I who have often lectured against “cheating religionists” who pray for daily bread—find myself down on my knees before Lord Nṛsiṃha saying, “Please protect me, I am afraid.” The howls of the wolves turn my thoughts to Kṛṣṇa. My lack of higher religious attainment is exposed. Great devotees, like Lord Caitanya or Śrīla Prabhupāda, were in the highest stages of pure devotion, *desiring always to please Kṛṣṇa*, even when they were in danger.

Prayer

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I try to avoid You
when fetching water
or starting another wood fire
and while sweeping the floor again.
These common acts I know,
are *bhakti*,
when done as personal service to You.

To think of You
when I chant Your names
is harder for me.
I'd rather bow down
to start the fire
than to place my head at Your lotus feet.

I worship *whatever* connection
You will allow me—
I'll go on sweeping the dust for You
and throwing it out the door
and surveying the diminishing food stores,
making plans to be "rescued,"
sleeping, evacuating,
and bathing this body of mine.
But I know these are not enough.

When I boil the water
and put on the rice
while mainly thinking of food that pleases me,
it's stretching it a bit to say
"I'm offering You *prasādam*."

And when I gaze at our local Himalaya
I'm just a common man, not a mystic.
But I am confident
that You, who are known as Janārdana,
will find some specks of devotion in my acts,
and You'll accept them in Vaikuṇṭha,
where I'm storing up my credits
for my ultimate return.

But Lord, when the little bird
tried to empty the ocean
by taking water in her beak,
You saw it was impossible,
and so You sent Garuḍa
to finish the task.

I wonder,
what will you do with me?
I'm sure you have a plan
to deliver slowpokes.
Please allow me
to take my eternal part
in Your blissful pastimes.

April 8

I'm thinking in a general way of my disciples. Usually I hear from them by mail. By now there must be a few dozen letters waiting for me somewhere. Some people are wondering where I am. "Maybe he took a retreat, like that time in Ireland when we did not know where he was for two weeks, or like when he's traveling in India." They needn't be alarmed.

Some disciples couldn't care less. I've initiated over six-hundred, and dozens of them no longer practice the rules and regulations or think much of me. They dropped me and I dropped them. But you still occasionally think of people from your past life: "that person I accepted as my *guru*" or "that person I accepted as my disciple to deliver back to Godhead." Some who write me occasionally may be disturbed if I don't show up for months, and some will become seriously concerned. But their lives will go on, and according to how they approach Lord Kṛṣṇa, He will reciprocate with them. I am not indispensable.

I say these things not without jealousy, a desire to be loved. And I feel some resentment and hurt towards those who have resisted my offers to help.

Why don't they give me their attention? After all, we vowed and agreed to function as *guru* and *śiṣya*. Did I really disappoint them so much, or was it their own reawakening of material desires? Even if they had material desires, why didn't I deliver them from agitations by bathing them in divine love? Why didn't I give them a higher taste of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? And if I *can't* do that, why did I accept so many "disciples" in the first place? When an ex-disciple says, "You let me down," "I couldn't follow you as a *guru*," is that the truth that hurts, or am I justified to think, "they are just not serious?"

Mail for me piles up somewhere, letters from disciples and a few from Godbrothers. Maybe I've been appointed to some editorial committee, maybe someone wants my opinion. A few steady correspondents will wait for our on-going friendly exchanges. And the book publishers who have my name on their lists will automatically send me catalogs and wait to see if I am still a "live one." Newsletters will pile up, as will "free offers" and first letters from persons writing from far away places. The Pan Am World Pass has probably written to inform me, "Your opportunity for a free ticket is running out. Contact us today for your free offer." My subscription to *World Press* has already run out.

But although I am functioning here with at least one disciple who is sincere and in need of my services, and who appreciates what I can give him, maybe that is my speed, just one disciple. And if, as they sometimes say it's the example that counts, then I'm continuing at least in basic operations, even

though I am “lost.” I’m chanting and teaching a disciple. By teaching one can I teach all by example? That’s why I’d like to print *Seeds of Prayer*, to share with them.

April 9

Because Nimāi is sincere I should sincerely connect him to Prabhupāda. Because he has some faith in me, I shouldn’t think, “Oh, he’s *my* disciple.” Spiritual life is meant to conquer repeated birth and death. If one assumes to be *guru* and actually cheats his disciples, he goes to the world of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance, and his followers go with him. So bring him to Prabhupāda.

April 11

Today the food supply runs out.

#12 Controlling the Tongue

Now I have to do some confessing. I've admitted that I have trouble controlling my mind. But as you probably know, if your mind is agitated, it usually means your senses are also. I have trouble controlling my tongue, and sometimes I become sexually agitated, although I don't usually break the regulative principles. I know many people who have been initiated who have that trouble, but I'm not trying to make an excuse. Also, I'm only twenty-four years old, but that's not an excuse either. Once in a while I've had bad dreams, you know. But nothing deliberate. You might think that being stranded in the mountains would be conducive to less sexual agitation. *Yogīs* leave the city and come to the mountains just to get away from all that. Yet I've also heard that if someone's mind and senses aren't controlled, it doesn't matter if he lives alone and practices meditation in a cave, he will still be plagued by the pushes of the serpent-like senses. Well, it's true.

In my case I think it was a reaction from offensive thoughts toward my spiritual master, and from lying to him and cheating. That's another thing you hear about and you may doubt—that you suffer from offenses to Vaiṣṇavas. It's clearly stated in the scriptures that insults to a Vaiṣṇava are comparable to what a mad elephant will do when he charges into your garden. It's called Vaiṣṇava *aparādha* and it

uproots the creepers of *bhakti*. I had read about *aparādhas*, but it seemed esoteric. Now I know. You do suffer from blaspheming devotees. And one way you suffer, if you're trying to be a *brahmacārī*, is that you find your material desires increase. And there's only one way to get release, if your problem is due to insults. You have to go to that person whom you insulted and beg forgiveness. Anyway, I became so agitated in the mountains that I was having dreams, and one time I even committed deliberate self-abuse.

So I went to Gurudeva to confess it and ask forgiveness. This was about a month after we'd been in the mountains.

Gurudeva said, "I thought so. I could see that you were morose the last two days." Gurudeva minimized and overlooked that I had said it was because of my offenses to him. He just wanted to help me overcome the problem, and so he mostly talked about that. But because he knew, of course, that I had committed offenses to him and that I was suffering from them, he looked me in the eyes gently and said, "I forgive you."

"You have a problem controlling your tongue, don't you?" he said.

"Yes, Gurudeva."

"You've also been filching from the cache," he said.

"Yes, Gurudeva."

When Gurudeva is heavy, he's actually gentle. He doesn't have to shout or slam things. He was also sympathetic about my tongue. He said that I had been working much harder physically than he had,

and so I needed more food. But in rationing, he had given me twice as much as himself.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

"Not really, it's my tongue." I hadn't thought that he had noticed that I had stolen things, because I did it like a mouse by just tearing off bits of bannock and peanut butter. But he knew.

"The senses are in a straight line," he said. "Tongue, belly, and genitals. If you don't control the tongue, and then overlead your belly, you'll also be more sexually inclined." I had heard that before, but I had never heard it so relevantly applied. To tell the truth, I liked being chastised by Gurudeva, because I knew it was for my good. Everyone should be so lucky to be caught and chastised by his *guru*. But I was also ashamed and embarrassed. Then he lectured to me in a personal way about illicit sex.

"According to Prabhupāda," he said, "to overcome Mr. Lust, you should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa more. And you may also take more to Deity worship." Once Prabhupāda wrote to a person who was sexually agitated, "Either you can perform devotional service twenty-four hours a day and think of Kṛṣṇa and that will save you, or else you should get married. But don't practice immoral sex. Immoral sex and spiritual life don't go together."

Gurudeva then gave some practical advice how to avoid self-abuse. He was not sympathetic about it, as he was with my tongue. I mean he was sympathetic with *me*, but not with the act. He said it's a deliberate act of misbehavior. He told me not to do it anymore. He said that I should become very carefully aware of

my actions leading up to such immoral acts. I should not allow myself to take even the first steps in my mind. He explained that everything happens according to three stages, first thinking, then feeling, and then willing. So he advised me to be on the alert, because it's a serious mistake to break the four regulative principles. As soon as I think of doing such a thing, I should stop my deliberate plans, or get away from that place, or do whatever I have to do to avoid going further into the feeling and willing stages. I can honestly say that what Gurudeva said on this occasion has been very effective for me.

After being stern for a while, Gurudeva relaxed and smiled. Something seemed to amuse him. He said, "Anyway, it looks like we're both going to be in for some austerities for awhile. We'll *have to* control our tongues, because there's no more food."

Gurudeva explained fasting. He said that it was important that we found some weeds or plants or berries to eat, but that we could expect to eat a lot less. He wasn't sure if we could actually find that much to eat. He didn't even mention meat-eating. He said that we should look forward to our fasting in a positive way. We shouldn't think that we are fasting because of famine, or just because of the external circumstances of being stranded on a mountain. We certainly weren't fasting for political reasons to try to prove a point, and we weren't fasting in a mechanical way as therapy under the order of some doctor. In other words, if we had to do without food, we shouldn't keep thinking of different kinds of food we'd like to eat, because this would be depressing to

the mind and would hurt the body also. The best way to fast, he said, was to remain in spiritual consciousness. That would be best for the mind and body.

“Almost everyday,” said Gurudeva, “we think of satisfying the tongue and the belly. So if we don’t eat as much and we turn our thoughts more to Kṛṣṇa, there is a spiritual advantage.”

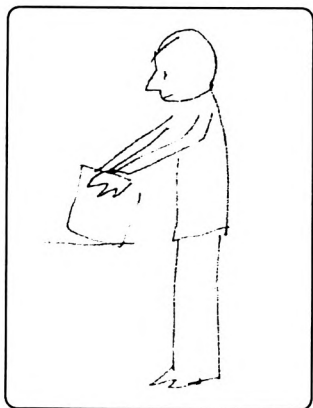
Hearing from Gurudeva, I actually became fired-up to start fasting and overcome Mr. Lust.

“It just so happens that in a couple of days there’s an Ekādaśī. Would you like to observe the full vow with me?”

Gurudeva had been observing the full Ekādaśī vow for a few years, which meant not eating or even drinking water, chanting at least sixty-four rounds, and staying up all night singing *bhajan*s. I had never done the full *vrata* with him, although when we visited the temples some of the devotees used to join him, and they said it was great. But now I thought I was ready for it and since he asked me, I said yes.

Ekādaśī comes every two weeks, on the eleventh day after the waning moon and after the new moon, and it’s traditionally a time when Vaiṣṇavas fast, at least from beans and grains, and increase their chanting and hearing of Kṛṣṇa. But this was the first time I ever really got into the spirit of it.

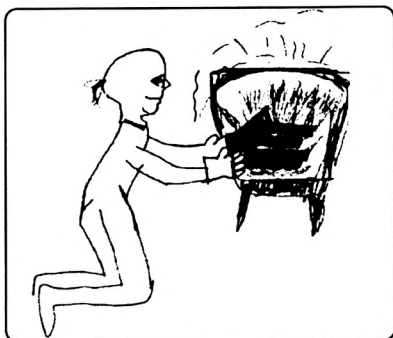
The day before, I collected enough wood and cleansed the cabin and everything, so that I would be free to chant all day on Ekādaśī.



Potwasher



Japa walker



Fire builder



Log hauler



Slipping on ice

For me, the extra *japa* was mostly a matter of counting my beads rather than praying and being in *samādhi* (trance) with the holy names. But as the day wore on, I could not help but surrender more to the process. By my determined will, my mind was getting the message, "You have nothing else to do but hear the holy names; you might as well listen and give up your trips." And since it was also pre-decided that we wouldn't eat or sleep, my senses—although they would have liked to rebel—also became subdued to the vow. We offered food to the Deities, because we don't make Lord Viṣṇu fast on Ekādaśī, but to Prabhupāda, Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, who appear as devotees, we didn't offer grains. We didn't have any grains anyway, so it was easy to avoid. I burned a stick of incense from a remaining pack, and I also decorated the altar with forest greens.



Gurudeva and Nimāi after three weeks

In preparation we also cut our hair and beards,

which up to now we were growing like wildmen. So in the auspicious presence of so much transcendental vibration, I overcame the constant heaviness and peril of our situation.

When evening came on Ekādaśī, I went outside for a break. Around midnight as I was chanting, I thought how all the trees could benefit, so I chanted loudly and heard their echo, which Haridāsa Ṭhākura says isn't just an echo but "the *kīrtana* of the non-moving living entities." I am sure many of the moving entities also heard me, and it was good to let them have it, rather than cringe silently when they made their "call of the wild".

It would have been nice if we had had a harmonium and drum for singing *bhajan*s, but we did have a pair of *karatālas* and I improvised a drum from an empty flour tin. Gurudeva spoke about Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa, and we read favorite sections of the scriptures and those which were applicable to our situation. Gurudeva, for example, read and commented on this verse:

*nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve
na kutaścāna bibyati
svarg-āpavarga-narakeṣv
api tulyārthā darśinah*

Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.17.28.

I'm not saying it was all easy and blissful for me, but nevertheless it was a triumph of spirit over matter. Lord Kṛṣṇa has given us a potent method in observing Ekādaśī, and I hope I can remember to observe it as fully as possible as long as I live.

The next day I was in extra good spirits, and Gurudeva said he was also. My mind was clear to consider seriously, but in a transcendental way, how I was supposed to go out and gather food from nature. Gurudeva had previously asked me to do this, weeks ago, but I wasn't able to. But now I got into it. I had been a Boy Scout for a few years when I was a kid, and I tried to remember about eating what you find in the woods. I thought, if there's anything to extract from the evergreen trees, we ought to consider it because they're all over the place.

But maybe evergreens would be categorized as impious trees, because they don't give fruits or flowers. Of course, they give some sort of fruit or flowers even if they're not in the class with mango and banana and apple trees or *kadamba* and *parijata* trees, which are really pious creatures. So I cut some green pine needles and boiled them into a tea or soup. It was pretty horrible at first, but we drank some. The pine cones also contained some little nuts and we managed to eat them.

From that day I kept thinking and looking for more edible, nourishing things, and I found that some of the more tender weeds, like dandelion greens were best. They became a staple, along with clear water from the creek. As Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "Do the trees not give fruit? Do the rivers not



Evergreen tree

give water? Can't you use your soft arm as a pillow?
Doesn't the ground provide a bed? Can't you find

some rejected cloth for garments? Then why do you flatter men and go to passionate sinful endeavors (*ugrakarma*) just to 'make a living?' "

To live as an animal and keep alive as long as possible isn't the same as transcendental consciousness. We were fortunate to be able to do both. I had to keep reminding myself, however, to think as Gurudeva suggested, that we were not merely victims of famine or catastrophe, but we were fasting and practicing *śravaṇam kīrtanam* to voluntarily remember, worship, and serve Govinda in this world and in the next.

Gurudeva's Journal: Dreams of Prabhupāda

April 15

I had a dream that we were in a South American city, "Cintron," Colombia, and I was lost. Finally I was able to return to the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple at the "135 Mohendro" address. I was taken in a taxi driven by an American. Then I was wondering, "Why have we come to this country?" My secretary replied that this was the way our plane itinerary had been planned. My secretary and I both reasoned further that I had traveled here because I wanted to preach. In the dream I said, "I used to travel just to collect disciples." Then through a translator, although he was not very expert, I spoke to some Colombians. What was most notable was that I was fired-up to speak and preach, because I was in a foreign country. I had great gusto to convey Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This dream left me with a resolution that when I get out of here, I want to preach vigorously and try to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I may have been burned by my mistakes as a puffed-up *guru*, but now I want to get out and preach. This is not incompatible with the internal cultivation. I will confide to my disciple here, that this is what I want to do.

April 16

Waiting for Nimāi

I am waiting for Nimāi,
who has gone to fetch water.
If I lived alone,
I could fetch it myself,
but I am waiting for
his cheerful, shy appearance
at the cabin door.

Solitude makes you feel
the evening darkness
intensely quiet
and so vulnerable.
You pray more
to your Friend.
But I'm human—
I want to be with Nimāi.

He represents the whole *saṅga*
for congregational chanting
and the six exchanges of love.

As I wait for him
I'm thinking what to say
to ease his passion and confusion.
If I could speak of Kṛṣṇa!

April 17

I dreamed I was with Prabhupāda in a mountain retreat. He arrived by railroad and I assisted him. "Śrīla Prabhupāda, where is your basket?" I asked. He was coming to write his commentaries to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and we had to arrange for batteries for the dictaphone. We set up an arrangement of power from the sun. Śrīla Prabhupāda was bathing in warm water in a room filled with sunlight. Then I was typing his tapes and hearing his voice, "The materialistic demeanor cannot stretch to reach the Transcendental Autocrat who is ever calling the fallen souls back to His eternal abode." I went into Prabhupāda's room with the typing and some ripe grapes. He was smiling and the room was filled with sunshine. There were other devotees present. He said, "Gauracandra, this place is very nice."

"When will we go back, Śrīla Prabhupāda?" I asked.

"Why are you anxious to know?" Prabhupāda said. "Let us stay. I can gain strength here. I was feeling tired. Now you can assist me. What are you cooking for lunch?"

I said, "I'm afraid it's just some bannock."

Prabhupāda said, "Cook it nicely for Kṛṣṇa."

Then Prabhupāda was walking suspended over the ground and many devotees were there. I could see that each person thought Prabhupāda was only with them. We were chanting in a very big *kīrtana* with many devotees and guests. More kept entering by the front door of the cabin and passing out the

back door to the other side of a mountain where everyone was crying, "All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda! All glories to Śrī Kṛṣṇa!" Someone said, "Keep it up until the whole world is here!"

Usually my dreams of Śrīla Prabhupāda are peripheral and ambiguous. This one was ecstatic and light. I woke up surcharged.

I can't expect to dream like this always. But I heard of an Indian tribe where the children were encouraged to have brave dreams or auspicious religious dreams. Even when my dreams of Śrīla Prabhupāda seem to be insignificant or incomprehensible, I become interested and satisfied, because it helps me to gather my thoughts and ambitions to serve him better, and to re-establish my lost relationship. If someone comes upon an excavation site of a fabulous ancient civilization, *any* genuine artifact he finds there, even a laundry list or a broken jar, would be considered very valuable and would be properly kept.

April 18

Another Śrīla Prabhupāda dream. Are more coming because of my simplified diet of only water and soup?

I dreamed I was feeding cookies to my childhood dog and I saw Prabhupāda from a distance. He thought that I should come to him. But his servant, Kurukṣetra dāsa, was there so I hesitated. Mentally Śrīla Prabhupāda and I communicated. I knew that when Śrīla Prabhupāda would leave that place I

would also. So I kept a humble distance.

Does more dreaming of Śrīla Prabhupāda mean my unconscious self is turning more to him and is more receptive? I hope so. With less distractions here I am noticing it more. When other activities and selfish concerns are reduced, what is left except my relationship with him?

In the morning while Nimāi was out, I napped and dreamed again. It was a dream in which many things occurred. There was very little narrative or scene-setting that I could recall. I woke with this verbal message or sensation: "There are many things short of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Even powerful persons do not attain devotion to Kṛṣṇa. But by virtue of my relationship with Prabhupāda, I can enter into that eternal relationship where Kṛṣṇa will accept me. No one else but Prabhupāda can bring me there."

April 19

Last night in a dream I suddenly remembered an old acrobatic trick my father used to do with me. My dreaming self said: "I remember when I was a little boy I would stand, bend down, and place my hands between my legs. With full faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda—I mean with faith in my father—he would then come behind me, take my hands, and pull me into the air into an acrobatic flip, while I screamed in delight 'Do it again! Do it again!' The trick depended on complete trust in him." When in the dream I said that I had full faith in Prabhupāda, I was very surprised

that I said “Prabhupāda” instead of “my father”. My surprise woke me up.

I confided to Nimāi dāsa that I had been dreaming of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He asked if there was anything I was doing consciously to bring it about. I said, “No, it is just his mercy.”

I dreamed I was on the telephone with Prabhupāda. There were devotees with him, and they told me that Prabhupāda would now come and speak to me. I couldn’t hear him well, but it seemed that he was saying, “We are transcendental to the teachers of *jñāna*, because we can concentrate on Kṛṣṇa. You have always been a transcendental beggar.” The import of his speech was that I should do something big for Kṛṣṇa. He seemed to imply that I should help build a big expensive temple. I wanted to ask the other devotees who were with Śrīla Prabhupāda what he actually said, because I was talking to him from a ferry boat and there was a lot of noise. I thought, “Prabhupāda knows what’s best for me. At this time of my life he has given me this instruction. If he actually did say I had to do something big, like construct a temple, he knows it’s the best thing for me to do.”

When I woke up, I thought it would be very difficult for the Movement, at this time, to engage devotees in such a project as building a big temple. Whatever Prabhupāda was saying on the phone wasn’t clear and cannot be taken as such. But the good impression was that Prabhupāda was watching

my career in spiritual life and recommending what was best for me, I also seemed willing to do whatever he said.

Later in the night I had another dream. We were attempting to bring a new Deity into the temple, but He wouldn't fit. It was very hard for the *pūjārī* and he fell down with the Deity. Then Prabhupāda was performing a miracle to lift up one side of the temple. At the time I could not appreciate the miracle. But we all accepted that it could be done.

April 20

A rough dream:

Prabhupāda was in the temple room sitting on a *vyāsāsana* and in the same room, also on a large *vyāsāsana*, was a disciple of Prabhupāda who looked as old as Prabhupāda himself. I was there sitting in the audience slumped over and watched. In Prabhupāda's presence, a devotee asked the old disciple, "How do you feel lecturing in front of Prabhupāda?" He replied, "I have thought about it and I think I should just be patient." And I noticed that while I was speaking, Prabhupāda glanced at me to size me up. When this was said, Prabhupāda smiled slightly and we all understood that he was fully aware how we were conducting things with the big *vyāsāsana* for his disciple. Prabhupāda saw it as a game and he gave his permission and he seemed to approve the remark that we should just be patient with it. Prabhupāda's attitude made a nice atmosphere, and then the ceremonies were over and we all bowed down while

Prabhupāda quickly left the room to go about his usual activities. I felt excited and pleased to write down my realizations. While those events were happening I had been slumped over and tired, but now I felt enlightened because Prabhupāda had revealed his attitude and we were blissful.

April 21

I dreamed that Prabhupāda was carried in a palanquin, as his devotees walked alongside, to a Greek audience at an "Elias" temple which was in the city. The temple was connected to a scene in the Bible. Before the head man of the temple, Prabhupāda spoke in Hindi. We then held *kīrtana*. Everyone knew that Prabhupāda had great faith that the *kīrtana* would cleanse people, even though they didn't understand the language. It was a very large audience, but few people could understand Prabhupāda's lecture, because of the language difference, yet the *kīrtana* was sufficient and important. I sat near Prabhupāda, and as he left, I helped lead the way through a swinging door. Prabhupāda was wrapped in *cāḍars* .

#14
Appreciating Śrīla Prabhupāda

I became disturbed when Gurudeva spoke to me about his dreams of Prabhupāda. Rather than share his happiness, I became anxious. I was jealous. I thought, "Here we are without food, but Gurudeva's got something special to sustain him. And I can't have it." It was nectar to be with Gurudeva, but it was heavy also. He exposed my *anarthas*, my unwanted habits. Prabhupāda warns us about this in his purports:

The Deity of the Lord and the spiritual master should be seen from a distant place. This is called *mar-yāda*. Otherwise, as is said, familiarity breeds contempt. Sometimes coming too near the Deity or the spiritual master degrades the neophyte devotee. Personal servants of the Deity and the spiritual master should therefore always be very careful, for negligence may overcome them in their duty.

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līla* 12.212, purport

From what I've heard, senior devotees who were close to Prabhupāda also found it hard, as Prabhupāda forced out their *anarthas*.

I didn't reveal my mind about the dreams to Gurudeva, because it seemed awful. I was afraid he would be hurt and think he had no one at all to talk to, and I would end up ruining everything. But by not telling him I had to start faking responses when he told me his dreams. My actual response was, "Why can't I have experiences like that?" I knew he wasn't

showing off by telling me that he dreamed of Prabhupāda. He was treating me as a confidential friend. But I wasn't worthy of it.

Then I became confused thinking of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Sometimes I used to think that it was fortunate that I came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness after Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared from the world, because I would be less likely to see Prabhupāda in too familiar a way, or to commit offenses in his presence. I was usually satisfied by hearing of his greatness and achievements. But when Gurudeva started telling of his tangible association with Prabhupāda, I felt left out. Gurudeva seemed to be very interested also in the fact that he was having more Prabhupāda dreams now that we were fasting from regular food. I almost thought that he was getting ready to die if he had to. I thought he was saying, "If we have to die here, that's not so bad, because I can think of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa." But what about me? I wasn't ready. I couldn't think of either Kṛṣṇa or Prabhupāda. Gurudeva was drawing from his years of association with Prabhupāda and, in a difficult time, he was dreaming of him. And I felt bad about it.

After a few days riding on the chariot of my mind, I decided to submit my problem to my spiritual master. Gurudeva was sitting and reading on the front porch chest during a chilly but sunny afternoon. I finished my chores and went and sat beneath him. He put down his book, indicating that he was willing to give me time and attention.

"Gurudeva, can I ask you some questions about Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

"Yes," he replied, "it's your mercy on me if you do."

"I want to know about my relationship with him. Do I have an eternal relationship with Prabhupāda? How can I know it? When will I know it?"

Gurudeva gave me a serious look. "Yes, you have a relationship with Prabhupāda," he said. "But I can't say exactly what it is. It's something that you have to develop more to know. I don't know myself what my relationship is with Prabhupāda. I know him from certain association I've had, but spiritually and eternally I don't know yet. In one song, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura yearns to meet with his spiritual master in the spiritual world. He says that his spiritual master will appear in the spiritual body of a *gopī* and Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura will be a *gopī*'s assistant and together they'll serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. So that's in the liberated stage. This much I can say: that you will recognize and know Prabhupāda more and more; it's just up to you. And you know what? When you meet him, you'll realize that you have already known him, and that's how you'll recognize him."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that even when Prabhupāda was present in the world, we might go without seeing him for as long as a year and when we saw him again, I would think, 'Prabhupāda is just like he is in separation, in his tapes and books.' In other words, when we saw him in his personal form, his *vapuh*, it made us appreciate even more that Prabhupāda was mostly with us in his *vānī*, or his teachings. Being with him personally helped us to appreciate his form in his teachings.

You know the difference between *vānī* and *vapuh*? The *vapuh* is the spiritual master's personal presence. When he's present you can serve him by cooking or talking or walking with him, like that. But he's not always available in that form. However in the *vānī* form he's eternally available. Therefore we say about the spiritual master, 'He lives eternally and his disciple lives with him by following his instructions.' How did Prabhupāda know his own spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura? He said he only met him a dozen times over a period of about fifteen years. And yet Prabhupāda said that his spiritual master was always with him, was watching him, was pleased with him, was in his heart. That's by the *vānī*, the teachings."

"Does Śrīla Prabhupāda know my services to you and my devotional service in general?" I had never asked anyone these exact questions, and Gurudeva's answers were important to me. But I knew I was also avoiding my questions about Gurudeva's dreams of Prabhupāda.

"Yes, Prabhupāda knows," said Gurudeva. "Everything goes through the *paramparā*. Just as when you offer your food as *paramparā*. You offer it to your spiritual master with faith that he will offer it to Prabhupāda, and Prabhupāda will offer it to his spiritual master, and in that way it is offered to Kṛṣṇa. This same question was once asked by a disciple of Prabhupāda on a morning walk in India. The devotee said, 'Prabhupāda, you have thousands of disciples, how can each one be assured that you are aware of his services?' Prabhupāda replied that a devotee

would feel enthusiastic about his personal relationship just by following the rules and regulations, such as chanting sixteen rounds. When he serves Prabhupāda by chanting or maybe by distributing Prabhupāda's books, a sincere devotee will feel personal contact. He'll *know*, no one else will have to tell him or assure him. So there are theological explanations of how a past *ācārya* can know or communicate with devotees in later ages. But the test of it is by experience, when you worship or serve that devotee. If you read Rūpa Gosvāmī's book *Nectar of Devotion*, for example, you worship and you commune with him and you'll feel that you're with him and that he knows you."

Gurudeva's answers were so transcendental and pleasing to me that I wanted to expose and remove all the dirty things in my heart as soon as possible.

"When you tell me your dreams about Prabhupāda," I said, while looking down to the ground, "I feel left out. I become envious."

When I looked up, Gurudeva was surprised.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It's my fault if you feel that way."

"No it's *my* fault. I wanted to admit it to you."

"By telling you my dreams," said Gurudeva, "I've made too much of them. They're not on a level with the scriptures. Although Prabhupāda is in my dreams, the dreams are mixed with impurities." I wanted to protest more against his self-effacing statements, but I knew he wouldn't accept it. I also thought that if I could ask more questions and gain more understanding of my relationship with Prabhu-

pāda, that would be the way to free myself from enviousness or feeling left out.

"Could you explain again," I asked, "how Prabhupāda is the *śikṣā*, or instructor *guru*?"

"According to the scriptures," said Gurudeva, "a person can have only one initiating spiritual master, but he may have many instructor *gurus*. Since Prabhupāda left the planet before you joined this movement, he could not be your initiating *guru*. But the *śikṣā* and initiating *gurus* are identical in terms of being eternal guides, and so on. And in our *paramparā*, many disciples had their main relationship with their *śikṣā guru*. It can also be done even though many years separate the *guru* and disciple, just as Madhvācārya became the disciple of Vyāsadeva hundreds of years after Vyāsadeva had passed away. Anyone can accept Prabhupāda as his teacher, as his *śikṣā guru*, to the degree that he actually surrenders and follows the *vānī* of Prabhupāda. There's no reason to feel left out. When a so-called senior devotee like me toots his own horn by telling stories of how he met Prabhupāda, or by telling his dreams of Prabhupāda, you just have to tolerate it. But it shouldn't intimidate you."

"I'm sorry," I said, "I feel offensive now. I don't want to jump over you to reach Prabhupāda. I mainly want to hear about him from you. Please keep telling me about Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"One of the best ways to come close to Prabhupāda," said Gurudeva, "is to read his books. We also have the full biography of Prabhupāda and different nectarean memoirs that are coming out. So why

don't you read more? And also we have the Deity of Prabhupāda here. I think it would be nice if we worshiped him together. We can bathe him and dress him, why don't you help me more with it? I used to have a higher standard of worship, but since we've come here, I've neglected it."

"Yes, that would be nice," I said. "And I'll try to read. But I especially like it when you tell me about Śrīla Prabhupāda. Could you tell me about the early days when you were with him in New York City?"

Gurudeva laughed. "What can I say? My memory is not so good. Your question is like asking 'Tell me about the Pacific Ocean.'"

We both became silent and listened to the wind in the trees. After a few minutes Gurudeva spoke again. "It was the beginning," he said. "No one knew of Prabhupāda's greatness by hearing or tradition or advertisement. He had no money and we were his only followers. But gradually we came to know he was a self-realized pure devotee, and from him we became convinced that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He taught us the *Bhagavad-gītā*, gave us knowledge and faith. It was the perfect way to become linked to Kṛṣṇa, by Śrīla Prabhupāda personally, in the humble form in which he first came, and at that time and place. I needed it in that way otherwise I doubt that I would've become a devotee or that I would've even lived long."

I was ready to put in a few more questions, but I realized that Gurudeva wanted to speak more about the early days.

"He was. . . dressed in simple *khādī* cloth from

India. No silk. No shirts even, but simple cloth wrapped around him. We began to bring him things, like sweaters and socks, although those also were inexpensive, because we didn't know better. He cooked for us wonderful tasty *prasādam*, and he insisted that we 'eat more!' He invited us to his apartment. One time I met him on the street after I'd been initiated. I bowed down on the sidewalk... He would personally lead the singing of all the *kīrtanas* in the storefront temple... I can't remember well. Just different things... He saved me."

Gurudeva seemed to be in reverie, as if he was feeling more than he was able to say. Then he sort of woke himself from it and spoke more quickly.

"I'm sorry I can't tell you more. I've written some of it down. Maybe someday I can learn how to relive it all and recall it. Because when I think of meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda again I can't imagine that those early days with him will simply be erased. Even Śrīla Prabhupāda used to remember them. He said, 'Those were happy days.' Although in later years he had many disciples to help him, in the beginning he said, 'I was depending only on Kṛṣṇa.'"

"Any one devotee's memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda are fractional. We should always be aware that he was empowered to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness as no devotee ever did. Before him, *bhakti* was locked in India and the only swamis who came to the West were *yogīs* and impersonal meditators. At least no pure devotee came who was so empowered. So if you want to appreciate Prabhupāda, appreciate his greatness as *very dear to Kṛṣṇa*, and at the same time

be aware of his personal, lenient dealing with every individual. You will find this in his biography and also, as you serve more, you'll find that he's in your own heart."

"How can I really feel grateful," I asked, "or whatever it is I'm supposed to feel, if I never met him?"

"Look Nimāi," said Gurudeva emphatically, "the important thing about Prabhupāda is that he taught us and imbued us with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He taught us that we are eternal spirit souls and that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And he convinced us to follow the authoritative Vedic literatures and to actually practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is his miracle. In remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda we don't talk of a wizard or mind reader. Many people seem to emphasize that their *guru* could read their minds or show them lights and visions. Some people even say things like that in connection with Prabhupāda. But I distinctly remember someone once asked him if he could read minds, and he said that doing so was superficial. He said a person couldn't know everything in another's mind, and anyway it wasn't important. What good is seeing lights or even learning sub-religious principles if your teacher can't save you from death? Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us that nothing short of complete surrender and love of God can save us from transmigration and enable us to go back to Godhead. He *planted* the seed of *bhakti* in our hearts and taught us how to water and care for that plant by chanting and hearing the holy names. Prabhupāda stayed and,

by his personal example and books, gradually developed, in a painstaking way, a society of devotees... Yes, you can serve Śrīla Prabhupāda, you and people far into the future."

The night after I questioned Gurudeva about Śrīla Prabhupāda, I had a dream in which Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared to me. I was away from the cabin cutting firewood and Prabhupāda came walking along the path. He observed me working and smiled. Then a second scene followed where Prabhupāda was lecturing in a large temple room, like Los Angeles, before many devotees. He singled me out and asked, "Nimāi, what is the purpose of human life?" I replied shyly, "To serve Kṛṣṇa." This scene then merged into a third where Śrīla Prabhupāda again appeared at our cabin looking for me. But this time he was angry and said to me, "Why did you do that?" I woke with a shock, but was very pleased to have received his mercy in the form of chastisement. I later told Gurudeva about it and he approved. He said, "So now you know."

Gurudeva's Journal: A Bona Fide Forest Sage

May 1

When Nimāi expressed his innocent arousal of devotion to Śrīla Prabhupāda—and his being peeved that I dreamt of Śrīla Prabhupāda—my first reaction was jealousy. I had been thinking of Nimāi as *my* disciple, and I was hurt to see him want to be Prabhupāda's disciple. But I surrendered to it. If I take full shelter in Śrīla Prabhupāda, why shouldn't he?

Every day I see
the unnamed mountain,
morning, noon, and night
in millions of phases,
although the same hard slope.
Sometimes in black silhouette
against a dark blue sky,
and sometimes rosy with
clouds half-hidden behind the peak
and clouds moving left to right
with the wind.

It doesn't move,
but always changes.
The peak is snowy, bare
and one side of its face
is unshaven with pine trees.

My Lord, Your creation
is mysterious
and when untouched by civilization,
it's more mysterious still.
In this wilderness I pray to You,
succor me with Your nearness,
Lord of the mountain,
O You who move all things.

May 8

Nimāi is taking me on "the palanquin" to see the neighborhood. There's a downhill path to the flooding creek. Ice is thawing. New birds and ducks returning. Spring means life, but also death. This world is *jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*. The strong eat the weak. One living being is food for another. The cheerful singing birds are deadly predators to insects, and they themselves are preyed upon. Near the cabin we saw a pile of feathers and recognized by color that it was a friendly bird who had eaten out of our hand. We saw the meandering tracks of a rabbit, then bigger dog-like tracks covering the smaller tracks, and scuffle marks and blood. Eggs in nests means there will also be egg-robbers. The mating calls of big animals are invitations for the males to fight. We watched the graceful feats of the hawks and eagles in the sky, but when one swooped down, we heard the death cries of a mouse.

We should see this scene for what it is and think, "I must work to get out of this cycle and not descend again into the lower species." The tendency is to



Gurudev in woods by creek

forget and to use our intelligence only as cunning for survival and enjoyment in speculation.

May 10

While chanting *japa*, it occurred to me that I would like to start a little school or *āśrama* if we ever

get out of here. One idea could be to hold four or five-day retreats for busy householders and friends. They could come to a place like the farm in Pennsylvania, and we could have intensive sessions in basics like *japa* or reading and prayer. The goal would be that within a few days some students could actually achieve a significant rebirth and reconciliation with Kṛṣṇa. The sessions could be held yearly to refresh and reaffirm the initial experience of reconciliation. I'm not sure if I'm up to guiding others in such introspection, but at the very least the classes would be helpful for improving *japa*, instilling devotees with improved reading habits, and reawakening them to the fact that we are all about to die and that our purpose is not simply the struggle for survival—which in the cities takes the shape of family maintenance and child upbringing, or for unmarried temple devotees, passionate, external activities with little realization.

Aside from short courses, there could be month-long courses held maybe twice a year. A place like Vṛndāvana, India, might be ideal. There could be courses taught by different *sannyāsīs* and others on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, or *Nectar of Devotion* and special interests, like Vaiṣṇava etiquette, logic, and public speaking, and a course on writing, a course on Sanskrit, and so on. A Vaiṣṇava institute. Of course, such an ambitious plan would involve considerable management, financing, and cooperation of many devotees. It could start with something small. At least I could teach a course myself and gather some of my disciples for it.

While I'm here I may design a syllabus, outline chapters and sections of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and even teach the course to Nimāi with homework assignments, class discussion, and exams. It can be like a *gurukula* or *āśrama* here. That will also help us to endure this situation. A course on "prayer" may be controversial or beyond my realization, but it's a challenge. If I could do it in a thoroughly Vaiṣṇava way, who could object?

May 12

I had a dream of Śrīla Prabhupāda last night, but I am not going to talk about it.

May 14

I can't help but think that Lord Kṛṣṇa may have put me here to fulfill my desires. Is there anything morally wrong with an isolated life in the woods? So many sages and *yogīs* have done it, and in cold places too. It's called *tapo-vana*, retiring to the forest for austerity. I remember reading of Pṛthu Mahārāja going to the forest, where he refused to receive any cooked food sent from the city and vowed to live on roots, tree trunks, fruits, dried leaves, or whatever nature provided. Sometimes he ate only dry leaves or only water.

One lesson I have learned here is to slow down. Time no longer has the same meaning that it did in the cities, where everything is divided by hours and minutes and calendar days. I've stopped setting the alarm to my clock or even wearing a watch. You work with the sun and go to bed when you are tired.

Now the senses are becoming quieter, without heavy food. Chanting and hearing are becoming more clear. I'm not making so many plans. So in a certain way I think I am closer to the Supreme Lord in my heart.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Vaiṣṇava sages do not go to the forest for their own benefit only, but to help humanity. Even when in the forest, they gather like the sages at Naimiṣāranya, to perform sacrifices for the good of all men. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "They are always anxious to perform acts which may bring about peace in the world." They are sincere friends to all living entities, and at the risk of great personal inconvenience, they engage in austerities for the good of all people. In Naimiṣāranya this was done by hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from Suta Gosvāmī. And now that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has been spoken and recorded, it is our duty to distribute it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells of two kinds of sages, the *bhajanānandi* and the *gostyānandi*. The *bhajanānandi* worships mostly for his own benefit and tends to inhabit solitary places for contemplation. The *gostyānandi* is more often found among many persons with whom he associates in order to guide them in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *gostyānandi* is appreciated as a higher devotee of the Lord. Maybe I wanted to live like this in the forest, therefore Kṛṣṇa has thrust me here, but in any case I am now forced to stay. Let me make the best of it by not complaining, by living like a bona fide forest sage and readying myself to help others when the opportunity comes again. Maybe my idea of a forest school can help in that way.

Gurudeva's Forest School

There was a wheelbarrow in a woodshed which I used to carry chopped wood from the forest to the cabin. After a couple of months, Gurudeva still couldn't walk, except very slowly with two canes, and so I began to think that I could make the wheelbarrow into a palanquin for carrying him to some nearby places. I had favorite places which Gurudeva hadn't seen, such as the creek, the lake, a nice grove, and other spots which I wanted to share with him. When I first mentioned my idea, he laughed and scoffed at it. But I kept telling him it would be nice and comfortable and that he would be happy to see more of Kṛṣṇa's wilderness. Then one day I just went ahead and cleaned up the wheelbarrow, padded it with some clothes and a cloth and presented it at the door introducing myself as a *pukka rikshaw* driver. Gurudeva accepted the ride, and I took him along the path I had worn leading into the forest and toward the lake. We were both glad that he took the ride, because it opened up new vistas for Gurudeva, who had been cooped up in the one room with all its reminders of trappers and hunters.

A few days after Gurudeva's first palanquin ride, the ice on the lake suddenly broke up. A big piece of brittle ice that spanned the lake was pushed against the shore by the wind. Slowly it drove against the shore in piles of jagged, broken crystals with a sound like thousands of dinner plates breaking. It continued

for a few days like that, crashing and crunching on the rocks and scarring trees, until eventually the lake was thawed out. The ducks soon found out about it and began landing on the lake and diving after fish. I also began to notice more animal tracks, either because there were actually more animals walking about, or because I was noticing things better. I *was* noticing details that escaped me at first, and I was becoming at least a little bit attuned to the natural world around us.

By now it was over a month since we had been eating only what we found in the woods. During the first four or five days of "fasting," I had headaches and other bodily discomforts, but then the body seemed to resign itself and allow my mind to be free. It was harder to do chores, but we also didn't burn wood twenty-four hours a day in the stove, and so my work wasn't as much.

One day when we came back from a nature walk, Gurudeva announced that he wanted to start a forest school and that it required my cooperation. I had noticed that he had been writing intensely for a week or so. He said he had prepared a syllabus for different courses that he hoped could be taught by different senior devotees and that he wanted to form a Kṛṣṇa consciousness institute whenever we returned to civilization. I thought it was a wonderful idea, and I told him I would love to help him bring it about once we returned to temples and association of devotees.

"But I want to start it now," said Gurudeva. "We will begin our own experimental school, just you and me right here in the mountains." At first I couldn't

grasp it, until he explained that I would be the only student in all the classes and that he would teach me. I didn't like the prospect. It seemed like too much responsibility for me, but Gurudeva was so excited by it that his voice was extra forceful and his eyes were shining.

"There will be six courses, Nimāi, and you'll be the star pupil in all of them. There is *brahminical* culture, logic and public speaking, prayer and inner life, Sanskrit and verse memorization, a writing course, and a course on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. What do you think?"

"I don't know if I can do it, Gurudeva," I replied limply. "But I'll try."

"If you try, you'll succeed," he said. I was glad that Gurudeva was confident in me, but afraid that if I did fail to hold up my end, he might become frustrated in his plan for the institute.

"There will be homework in each course," he said, "and exams." I never cared for academic institutions and Gurudeva knew that, so he assured me, "It won't be like an ordinary school. You'll like it." I hoped so.

My participation in the courses turned out to be a lot of foolishness and I would rather not tell about it. I don't know what good it will do unless you want to laugh at me. Gurudeva's forest school has since developed successfully and so my initial difficulties don't have much significance. But he wanted me to tell about it. He said it's history and people can benefit from hearing the mistakes of the first blundering pioneer. So only out of duty I'll tell some of it, but I'll make it brief. One excuse for my behavior is that

when you go a long time without eating, you day-dream a lot due to lightness.

In the course called Brahminical Culture, I became very enthusiastic but imitative. I'm not an initiated *brahmin*, so I had to function as a "blind uncle." In case you don't know what a blind uncle is, it comes from a story told by Prabhupāda. There was once an orphan who was crying because he had no mother and father. His uncle came to him and volunteered that he would act as the child's parent, but unfortunately this uncle was blind. The bereft child accepted the offer, saying, "A blind uncle is better than none." So I was the blind uncle student at the forest school.

One of the important purposes of the Brahminical Culture course, according to Gurudeva, was to understand the deep cultural and spiritual meaning underlying the different acts which a devotee performs, which we may take as ritualistic unless we know why we're doing them. I missed that point and became more interested in imitating the refined behaviors of a spiritual person. I would end up doing wrong things with a flair. For example, no one is supposed to recite the Gāyatrī *mantras* unless he is an initiated *brahmin*. But I reasoned to myself that since I was taking the *brahminical* class, I might be an exception to this rule. As Gurudeva's servant, I used to carry an envelope containing sheets of the Gāyatrī *mantra* for when he initiated *brahmins*, although I wasn't supposed to look. But I began to recite the Gāyatrī when I became a student in the course for *brahmins*. Another thing only *brahmins* can do is

worship *śālagrām-śilā*. This is a form of the Lord like the statues in the temple of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, only the *śilā* is worshipped just as it appears in nature, as a stone from sacred places in India, like Govardhana Hill. In the *brahminical* mood, I picked up a rock from the stream nearby and while I didn't actually start anything with it, I was toying with the idea of considering it like a practice *śilā*. Gurudeva must have read my mind, because when he saw me carrying it he said, "What do you think you're doing?" I tried not to admit what was on my mind, but as I say, he seemed to read me, and he reprimanded me strongly. He told a story at that time of a *brahmin* who put two little balls inside of his pot, and all other *brahmins* imitated him without knowing what he was doing.

I also had been practicing little things I had seen other *brahmins* in the Movement do, such as facing the sun when saying *mantras* and lying down at night facing the East and folding your *dhotī* with special pleats and wearing arm bands, although I didn't wear an earring like some of them do. Although I experimented, I wasn't really sure which direction to face or exactly how to move your fingers in the *mula mantras* and things like that. Gurudeva got pretty disgusted with my antics and decided that it wasn't a good idea to teach someone like me, who wasn't yet a *brahmin*, in a course for *brahminical* culture. So for the time being he dropped that from the syllabus.

The course on logic and public speaking was interesting and very valuable, but I found it hard to take to. If you learn logic and debating, you can de-

feat the nondevotees. I wasn't so much interested in arguing or fighting with others, but I thought it would be helpful for me to defeat my own mind. But I found it difficult to memorize the different types of false logic, CIRCULAR and ANALYTICAL. I especially couldn't take it when Gurudeva invited me to debate with him. In public speaking I learned many orator's tips, and then I had to prepare my own lecture. The beginning of my first lecture, I stood fidgeting before Gurudeva. It would have been easier if there were a room full of people, but it was only my spiritual master and some blue jays who seemed to be making fun of me with their squaks. As I began to speak, I remembered a funny story I had heard a Hindu man tell when I was staying at a health sanatorium in South India. I thought it might be interesting to introduce the philosophy with the story and so I began it. It was about a man who had thirteen wives, and who had a problem remembering their different names. One of the wives suggested that he could tell them apart by an interesting method. "Just speak the *Bhāgavatam*," said Gurudeva, interrupting me. His interruption was quite a shock for me and I think I learned a good lesson about the importance of speaking *paramparā*. We shouldn't waste people's time, but give them straight Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The main purpose for our public speaking was to give *Bhāgavatam* lectures, and since I have always considered the *Bhāgavatam* lecture very important, I felt bad to waste Gurudeva's time with my poor lecturing. I thought maybe some people are better just at hearing and they should improve their hearing skills

rather than just fake it as lecturers, but Gurudeva insisted that I could be taught.

The course in prayer and inner life was something introduced especially by Gurudeva. I wanted to succeed in this so that he would feel confident to introduce it once his school developed. He made it clear that he wasn't teaching any special techniques or methods of prayer, but was trying to awaken within us a desire to call on Kṛṣṇa at every moment. He showed me many passages in Prabhupāda's books where this mood is evoked. For example, Prabhupāda writes, "In execution of devotional service one has to submit to Kṛṣṇa whatever distress or confidential problem he has. He should say, 'Kṛṣṇa, I am suffering in this way.'" Gurudeva also emphasized that prayer didn't mean asking Kṛṣṇa for something we want, or for trying to get Kṛṣṇa to change His mind, but it was to cooperate with God and seek out what He wants for us. Prayer is learning to accept His will. Gurudeva promised that if I developed the habit of regular prayer, it would noticeably change my life. Prayer puts you in touch with Kṛṣṇa.

These were all things that I wanted very much to attain, but although it sounded very good in theory, it was very difficult for me to practice. Practicing prayer assumes that you are actually serious to enter into a deeper relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and that means that you have to surrender in reciprocation. When you start praying, Kṛṣṇa is going to let you know more what He wants of you. And I found that very hard to handle. Because if I sincerely prayed, "Please Lord, tell me what You want me to do," and if Kṛṣṇa

actually told me what He wanted and yet I couldn't do it, then what? My reluctance to pray exposed to me that I'm actually afraid of Kṛṣṇa. I think this is the real reason I found it difficult to practice prayer. I invented other reasons which were more like excuses, such as I was embarrassed to bow down and afraid that Gurudeva or other people would see me engaged in prayer. These are silly excuses. Anyway, I tried to do it, and I still haven't given up in the practice of prayer.

Sanskrit and verse memorization was particularly difficult for me. I suppose it's also in the category of an excuse if I say that I have a weak memory, although I think that's a fact. It was hard for me to become so humble and study each word of the scripture carefully and to treasure it so much that I should imprint it within my mind and commit it to memory. At first Gurudeva said that I had to learn one *śloka* per day. When he saw that I couldn't do it, he said do three a week, and finally he asked me to do one a week, which I was actually able to do. My mind rebelled by telling me, "What will you do with this memorized verse? What does it have to do with your life?" My reluctance showed me that I was not surrendered to the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa. And I even thought uncharitably of some different devotees I knew who had memorized hundreds of *ślokas*, but who became unserious about spiritual life, and who even broke the regulative principles. It made me think, "What good are learning *ślokas*?" Anyway, I'm not the least bit sorry for those *ślokas* which I did commit to memory, at the rate of one a week. They eventually began

to accumulate, and now I see them as an opulence in my life.

My favorite course was *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Gurudeva treated the *Bhāgavatam* in a systematic way, starting from the First Canto. I loved hearing how the *Bhāgavatam* was put together by Vyāsadeva who told Śukadeva who told Suta, and how all the different speakers appear. There are stories within the stories. He helped me to see also that Prabhupāda's purports are not as repetitious as they appear to be when you look at them superficially. The purports develop one thought after another and once you start to study them more, they are revealed to you.

As for the writing course, it required a lot of patience, more than I normally have, especially in learning how to re-write and correct what you first wrote down. But I tried to work on some pieces. If possible, I will include something I wrote at the forest school within this book.

I've briefly described my own performance at Gurudeva's experimental school in the mountains, and now I'd rather drop the subject and tell you something more interesting. Gurudeva's school is a first-class project, but it is unfortunate that the idea came to him when I was the only person around to participate. Although I complained from the demands of the school, now that I think of it, it was really nectarean because it gave me a chance to directly serve my spiritual master in something that was important to him. I regret that his interests didn't automatically become mine and that I may have been

more botheration than help.

Once we began the classes, they continued without interruption and helped us to occupy ourselves for several months even as we grew physically weaker. Being occupied in that way also helped me from becoming panicky or worrying as I sometimes did, about what might finally happen to us unless someone found us soon.

Gurudeva's Journal: Beyond the Mountain

June 16

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, I want to be your devotee. I want to wake up and do the right things. I want to do what you want me to do. But I am already going in a direction which is, I suppose, the direction of my own will, and I'm trying to dovetail that into acceptable devotional service. Please help me to satisfy you in that way. If the service I'm attached to is really not Your will for me, please let me know clearly. Otherwise, I will continue to try to please You by the service I am doing. But that service also is imperfect, so please improve it, and let me do something humbly that is helpful to the Movement.

I may have my plans, like the forest school, and my claim to be working at prayer and inner life, and my responsibilities as initiating *guru* to guide disciples, but if these activities should be abandoned instead of perfected, please let me know. You will have to do this in a way which I can understand. I am too much set on my own ways, and I am not able to see them as totally wrong ways. Only You can enable me to see.

My Lord, this prayer is also made insincerely. It is merely clever and literary. But I hope my intention to address myself to God and *guru* is not so far off the mark that You do not even hear me.

I am Your servant,
G.C.S.

June 19

Crooked, scarred tree near the cabin:

I noticed him when we first arrived. He had been chopped at a few times. He is as broad as a telephone pole, and taller than that, but his trunk also grows crooked after about ten feet up. He is not fully branched with pine needles, but is scraggly. Although there are millions of trees here, I can't meet them all, but he is nearby. For him I feel some of the pity and wonderment for souls in the bodies of trees. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that one gets the body of a tree as a result of extreme lust. His punishment is that he can't move and stands naked.

If a person comes to harm the tree it can't protest or go away. It is also very sinful to cut down trees for producing sense gratification newspapers and magazines. In the past, I have seen loggers destroying acres like these in the mountains, felling in a matter of moments by chainsaw a tree which took hundreds of years to reach its' stature and dignity in nature. As for the nearby scarred and crooked fir tree, he provides niches for many jays. Without him and his nearby brothers, I also would feel more desolate. Imagine, if when I looked out all I could see was barren rock or sand and dirt. It would tend to make the heart morose.



Stump and fallen tree

I do not wish to be holier than thou when I pass you, scarred tree, or to scorn you because of your sinfulness. As spirit soul, I am not better than you.

Although you are silent, you convey to me the message that the proper use of human life is to escape becoming either a tree or once again a misled human being. May our daily chanting of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa penetrate your coverings of bark and your concentric circles of trunk, which obscure the pure soul lodged within.

I know you are tolerant, brother tree. I am no wonder-worker or great saint who can reach you as spirit soul. But at least I can recite here thoughtfully a prayer that you may know the Lord and accept my own respect for your right to live in God's wilderness. He is great, the Lord of all, and He desires to release us from all our reactions to misdeeds. He simply wants us to turn to Him and recognize that we are His lost but loving servants. He wants us to understand Him and begin to do whatever we are doing for His sake. And that can be done even in the forest and even—as recorded in Vedic literatures—by the trees.

Fir tree, our chimney smoke
blows past you in the alpine wind.
The calendar says spring,
but it's an Arctic air
that blows from the North.

I am not far away
from the Supreme Lord's presence:
"Of purifiers I am the wind."



Fir trees

Crashing through the forest,
is the wheel of birth and death.

It's up to me to reach Vaikuṇṭha
by a pure God consciousness
that sees right through
the sky and rock.

Like a drinking cup,
I can receive clear water
and thank Him.
Because I am not dead,
I can make the choice.

Meditation: Beyond the mountain

I often look out at this mountain. Maybe I should call it Yearning Peak. I cast my thought beyond it, to where? To a few hundred miles away, where there is civilization. I go beyond the wilderness to cities like Victoria, Seattle, to the South, the East. Maybe I should call it Mount Barrier. But why do I think it's a barrier only to a few cities which I yearn to reach? The mountain is actually a symbolic barrier of what prevents me from going beyond the entire material world, beyond my crippled conceptions of reaching safety in a house in Chicago or Pennsylvania and of attaining the warmth of "society, friendship, and love." I should yearn beyond the mountain for my eternal home in the spiritual world. *That's* what the mountain is preventing me from reaching. That's why we are *lost*: Because we have forgotten Kṛṣṇa. These rocks are not preventing me from going there.

I'm just caught (like almost everyone else on this planet) within false conceptions and illusions. I can free myself by Kṛṣṇa's grace.

June 21

While cleaning out my briefcase I found an unopened letter. It was from someone named Bill whom I can't recall meeting. He had read an article by me in which I repeated Śrīla Prabhupāda's example illustrating why many people do not accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The example is that diamonds are very expensive, and so one cannot expect to have many customers, but that does not lessen the value of the diamonds. Bill objected to my use of this example and said that I'm claiming that only Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees are the elect of the world, and others are rejected by us as "*karmis*," "*demons*," and so on.

He said that he knew someone who knew me before I met Prabhupāda and that I was just an ordinary hippie in the 1960's who took L.S.D. and marijuana and had sex with my girlfriend. He wrote, "And you ate meat for the first twenty years of your life!"

Bill started ranting about the whole Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, whose members think they're the only ones who know love of God—and therefore we say that the diamonds cannot be easily purchased. He wrote, "You probably would say that one should not throw pearls before swine and that everyone is swine but you!" His conclusion was that I should wake up and surrender to his *guru*, Charles Ringo Boddhi-sattva, who Bill says is right this minute flooding the

planet with Love. He included a quote from his *guru*, who said that his message is not only for his own disciples but for the four billion on the planet and that this will all be revealed very soon. Bill also said, from what he knew of me, I was a “do-nothing” who never did much preaching or made any sacrifice.

As I read it, I thought that I was probably guilty of sounding smug in the article I wrote. I’ve done that before and people have caught me on it. I seem to think that there are only a few devotees in the world. If I had Bill’s address I would write him and admit it. But as for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda said both things—that we cannot expect everyone to become devotees and also that everyone *could* become devotees. Lord Kṛṣṇa states, *manuṣyaṇām sahasreṣu ...* “Out of thousands of persons, few try for perfection and out of those who attain perfection, few know Kṛṣṇa in truth.” And yet Lord Caitanya says that the planet will be flooded by love of God, *prema*, and that His holy names will be known in every town and village. I once asked Prabhupāda about this apparent contradiction, and he said it is up to the preachers whether love of God is spread widely.

With all our faults, at least we do have connection to a bona fide *sampradāya* and authorized scriptures. As for my personal history, it is true, I was degraded, but that was a past life. It seems that these fights and accusations will never end. I pray to keep simple obedience to the rules and regulations, and to keep my nose clean. Even if I cannot attain much progress in the inner life, I must at least keep clean behavior and faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Heavy Doubts and Heavy Reactions

Now I am going to tell the most dangerous episode that happened to me the whole time we were in the mountains. Or maybe it's the second most dangerous, not counting the time I thought of killing a creature to eat its meat. Before I tell it, I want to give a little preface.

Whether you are lost in the mountains or living in civilization, maintaining your spiritual life is a struggle for survival. Wherever you are, you have to guard against insults to the pure devotee and doubts in God or Kṛṣṇa, and you have to avoid sex agitation and maintain control of the tongue and mind. You have to be always on the alert. And eventually you have to attain a higher taste for spiritual life. The science of *bhakti-yoga* gives all protection if you practice it thoroughly. People sometimes think that *bhakti* is easy and sentimental, only singing and dancing in the temple. They think because it lacks austere meditation that it's just for women and children, not philosophers. Prabhupāda writes on this:

... Although nondevotees declare that the path of *bhakti*, or devotional service, is very easy, they cannot practice it. If the path of *bhakti* is so easy, as the non-devotee class of men proclaim, then why do they take up the difficult path? Actually the path of *bhakti* is not easy. The so-called path of *bhakti* practiced by unauthorized persons without knowledge of *bhakti* may be easy, but when it is practiced factually according to the rules and regulations, the speculative scholars and philosophers fall away from the path.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.3, purport

So the reason I fell into danger is clear and simple: I wasn't careful and so I fell into doubts again. I mean doubts in my initiating spiritual master, Gauracandra dāsa Swami. What happened is I read a letter which Gurudeva had left sitting on his bunk. It was a crazy hate letter criticizing him personally and even criticizing the whole Movement. It wasn't constructive, but based on a misunderstanding that because we say Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very difficult and only a few people can attain it, we're snobs. I should have put the letter down and not bothered about it. It wasn't even my business to pick it up and read it in the first place, but as I told you, I'm very nosy.

The personal accusations against my Gurudeva stuck in my mind, and the mind started to work on them. I'm not going to commit new offenses by writing all the details here, but I began to agree with some of the accusations. I began finding faults.

As I understand it now, my fault-finding tendency, and all the trouble I got into, was the destructive power of the uncontrolled mind. I know I have to take the blame for my wrong actions, but if there's to be some benefit from hearing of my activities, I think it's to learn what can happen to you if you can't control your mind. This is described in many places in the scriptures. For example, in the Fifth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī explains that the great devotee Rṣabhadeva was very careful in controlling his mind. Mahārāja Parīkṣit, who was hearing the whole narration of *Bhāgavatam*, asked Śukadeva why Rṣabhadeva didn't use his mind to bring about mystic effects. Here is Śukadeva Gosvāmī's reply:

My dear King, you have spoken correctly. However, after capturing animals, a cunning hunter does not put faith in them, for they might run away. Similarly, those who are advanced in spiritual life do not put faith in the mind. Indeed, they always remain vigilant and watch the mind's action.

All the learned scholars have given their opinion. The mind is by nature very restless, and one should not make friends with it. If we placed full confidence in the mind, it may cheat us at any moment. Even Lord Śiva became agitated upon seeing the Mohinī form of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Saubhari Muni also fell down from the mature stage of yogic perfection.

An unchaste woman is very easily carried away by paramours, and it sometimes happens that her husband is violently killed by her paramours. If the yogī gives his mind a chance and does not restrain it, his mind will give facility to enemies like lust, anger and greed, and they will doubtlessly kill the yogī.

The mind is the root cause of lust, anger, pride, greed, lamentation, illusion and fear. Combined, these constitute bondage to fruitive activity. What learned man would put faith in the mind?

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.6.2-5

I sometimes think of the expression, "My mind ran with it." It's like we're in a football game and *Māyā* is the quarterback. She throws a long pass, the mind catches the football and thinks that it has to run with it. So after reading that crazy letter my mind started running with the idea that my spiritual master is an ordinary man. I ran and didn't try to check myself although I *could* have. You can always look at

things from two different sides. It was always possible to think of the previous life of my spiritual master before he met Prabhupāda, and to consider that he had imperfections and shortcomings. You can do that, but on the other hand, the scriptures warn us not to. Rūpa Gosvāmī states in Upadeśamṛta,

A devotee should not be seen from a materialistic point of view. One should overlook a devotee's having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body.

You're supposed to see a devotee just like the waters of the Gaṅges, which during the rainy season are full of bubbles, foam, and mud, but are not polluted. But I had caught *Māyā's* football and I was running.

I suddenly got the idea that I should leave. I was by myself chopping wood in the forest and my mind said to me, "Why don't you just leave?" Our problem was that we were stuck in the mountains, but why not just leave? What I actually was telling myself was, "Leave Gurudeva." He had always said that we wouldn't be able to get anywhere on our own and that we should just wait until someone found us. But I thought, "That may be his idea, but it's not mine. I could probably just walk right out of here and find civilization within a few days." I was so impetuous that I didn't even want to discuss this idea with Gurudeva, but just carry it out at once. When a person rebels from his spiritual authority or is fed up with living in a temple, he usually thinks like that: "I'll

leave." If you're living in a temple or monastery and you want to assert your independence and reject your authorities' hold on you, you *leave*. I wasn't thinking in such a gross way, that I wanted to bloop from spiritual life. But that was part of it. By dwelling on the accusations that my spiritual master was an ordinary man, I began to second-guess him and resent him. I had a better idea than to stay lost in the mountains. I would get out and find the way.

Without any further preparation, I began to walk away. I chose what I thought was the eastern direction. Partly I thought that I was going to take a little exploratory hike just in case I did want to find my way out in the future. Partly, I thought that I would do myself and Gurudeva a favor and walk to civilization. I'd come back with people and rescue Gurudeva with a plane or helicopter. Still another part of me, the wild uncontrollable part, was walking away in order to disobey the order of the spiritual master.

I had done something similar to this the first few months after I had joined the Movement and was living in a temple. But at that time it wasn't so serious. The temple was on South Street in Philadelphia, so when I walked out the door, my old world was right there. But I soon got a strong sense that it was just the same old "chewing what had already been chewed." It was on a Friday night, and it wasn't long before I got disgusted with the night life, and scared, and so I came back to the temple that same night. But once I got going into the woods, I couldn't get out.

For most of that day I followed an animal trail which led in a general direction. Eventually I wan-

dered off it and began crashing heavily through thick woods and undergrowth. Sometimes I plunged into ravines and sometimes climbed up hills and even mountains. From the very beginning I didn't know where I was going, and when the day began to turn dark, I became emotional: I was lost and afraid. I stumbled upon one of my own footprints and realized that I had been walking in a circle. I wanted to return to the cabin, but I didn't know how. I tried climbing another mountain, because from the top I might be able to see the smoke from the cabin or maybe a sign of civilization in another direction. But I picked out a mountain that was so tall it was above the tree line, and I didn't get far before it turned to night and I had to stop.

I hadn't prepared myself for a trip and had no equipment or pack. Although it was supposed to be almost summer it became very cold and started to rain. I entered dense bushes, padded down a bed with leaves, and made my "camp" for the night. But because of cold and fear I couldn't sleep. I heard creatures moving about and sometimes the cry of a bird. I thought of the bears and wolves and Sasquatch—who seemed as real as anything to me as I sat crouched in my bush.

And then from partly up the hill came a low howl, which I knew to be a timber wolf. More wolves joined in, starting on a high note, then slowly dropping in tone and volume, Ow, Ow, Owwhoo-oo-oo. The wolves began answering each other from different sides until there seemed to be wolves howling in every direction. Their howls became louder and more

intense, and then I thought I saw shadows slinking along only a short distance from where I sat. Shivers ran up and down my spine, and I fervently wished that I had stayed back at the cabin with Gurudeva. But it was too late for wishing to do me any good. After what seemed a long time, the wolf pack joined together in one place, all howling, and I guessed that they had made a kill, probably a moose.

I desperately chanted Kṛṣṇa's names that night, but I was too panicked to pray for love of God. When dawn came, I got up and continued walking, although I didn't know either my immediate direction or my destination. I soon came upon a pile of bones with no hair or flesh, which was all that was left of the wolf attack on the moose. There were wolf tracks all over the muddy ground. That didn't help me any to use cool-headed thinking. I continued to lurch around, tripping over branches, scraping my hands and face bloody from twigs and thorns, and only stopping when I ran out of breath. I don't even want to remember the details of that day, and I hope I never have to go through another one like it.

I was so afraid of the dark by the second night that again I couldn't sleep, and I kept thinking that every sound was a ferocious animal coming to attack and eat me. To protect myself I climbed into a tree and spent the night there. During that night, I started "coming down" from panic and total confusion. I began to understand what had happened and what I had done. I had been so self-centered about the whole thing that only after two days did I feel bad that I had left Gurudeva alone! I began to worry for

him and feel sorry for myself. But I checked those emotions too, lest I plunge myself into another turmoil. Instead, I began to consider in a more cool-headed way, "What am I going to do?"

In the morning, I climbed down the tree and remembered some of the Boy Scout stuff I had learned as a kid. I didn't have a compass or anything, but I tried to use common sense. I at least knew that the sun rises in the East. So if that was the direction that I had started heading out in, probably if I turned the opposite direction from the sunrise, I would be heading somewhat toward the cabin. I definitely decided that I wanted to return to Gurudeva. He was right, that it was probably best not to try hiking out of the wilderness. At least I wasn't the man to do it. As for all the offensive reasons and the half-mad plan to "leave," I just put that out of my mind for the time being. I walked all day concentrating my energies in trying to walk in one direction without going in circles. What I did was line myself up visually with an object ahead, like a particular tree or rock, and then made sure that I reached it. At the same time I tried to leave a trail by breaking branches or scarring the bark with a rock. Then I could look behind me and double check that I was keeping my straight path. I'm not sure if I remembered that technique or whether I just thought it up, but just the fact that I was using my wits in a realistic way made me feel more cheerful. I thought of myself as an Indian scout, and of returning to the cabin as a contest of my skills in nature. I also began chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in a rhythmic way to keep from feeling scared or lonely. By the after-

noon of that day I recognized the face of a particular mountain peak and I headed toward it. Just before it started getting dark, I climbed another smaller mountain and from the top I finally saw the column of smoke which I knew was Gurudeva in his cabin. After that sight, I ran nonstop in the right direction and reached home, even though it was completely dark for about the last hour of the hike.

Gurudeva was so happy to see me that he jumped up, called out "Nimāi!" and embraced me. He had tears in his eyes and I was crying too.

"What happened?" he said, but he didn't give me a chance to answer. He said he had been worried and tried walking to find me and that he was praying to Kṛṣṇa. I started to explain a little, but not everything at once. Gurudeva, however, knows me like a book, so whatever I didn't explicitly say he already knew. But neither he nor I wanted to get into it. We were just happy to be united again. He said that I should take a bath and that he would prepare some dandelion soup and salad. So we did that and for the first time in two days I relaxed and was able to sleep in the warmth of the cabin and in the company of my best friend. I was feeling very grateful to Kṛṣṇa.

Gurudeva didn't reprimand me for what I'd done. He must have thought that I had already received enough punishment. But we discussed it the next day.

"When people criticize the spiritual master," I said, "the mind thinks that at least *some* of it may be correct. But it's so heavy! So how do we deal with it? I was thinking that we should have blind faith in the *guru*. Is that right?"

"Not blind faith," said Gurudeva, "but unflinching faith. It's blind if you accept the spiritual master sentimentally or dogmatically. You should become educated in the position of your spiritual master and your relationship with him, according to reason and argument based on the scriptures. But once you accept a spiritual master, it should be with unflinching faith. Prabhupāda even said that he didn't know what would come from following his spiritual master's order to print and distribute books, but he said, 'I did it in blind faith.' As for hearing criticism of the *guru* or Vaiṣṇava, the scriptures say you should argue back or leave that place if you can't argue."

"But what if a spiritual master cheats a disciple who has unflinching faith in him?"

"That is the greatest misfortune," said Gurudeva. "We have to take all care before we select a spiritual master. But you cannot, out of fear that you'll be cheated, refuse to surrender. If a spiritual master misbehaves, he can also be rejected—if he deviates from Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, or falls down from religious life. Even then, the disciple should first patiently wait and pray to Kṛṣṇa that his spiritual master may be redeemed. Also, the past life of a spiritual master, before he became initiated, shouldn't be held against him. You shouldn't even be curious about it. Nārada says the disciple should be submissive and should have an attitude of firm friendship for the spiritual master. So he should be able to talk with him intimately about his doubts, and reason them out."

"I hear all kinds of criticisms of the spiritual master," I said, "Not just that letter that I read, but in the

Victoria temple and almost any place you go you hear things if you're listening for them. Sometimes they say 'Your *guru* isn't doing the highest service,' and they quote Prabhupāda. Or they say, 'your *guru* doesn't preach enough or associate enough with his Godbrothers, or he doesn't take care of his disciples,' and so on. It's heavy!"

"You should be aware," said Gurudeva, "that the statements you just gave are opinions. They're not absolute. He says that your *guru* isn't doing the highest service, but what is actually highest? Just because somebody criticizes, doesn't mean it's absolute."

"It seems that this relationship is inconceivable," I said. "Kṛṣṇa is inconceivable and the *guru* is His representative. Is that right?"

"Yes, Prabhupāda says, 'The spiritual master and disciple do not need to understand anything more than Kṛṣṇa, because by understanding Kṛṣṇa and by talking about Kṛṣṇa, one becomes a perfect, learned person.' The relationship of *guru* and *śiṣya* is not within this material world."

As I said before, my tendency is to eulogize *māyā* more than to praise Kṛṣṇa. I'm amazed and bewildered how *māyā* always bowls me over despite my good intentions. So in spite of myself, I praise her. It's like expressing awe at the power of a hurricane that just tore apart your house. In that mood, I was just about to close this chapter by reminding everyone of the power of the uncontrolled mind. Arjuna says in

the *Bhagavad-gītā*,

For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Kṛṣṇa, and to subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.34

But I just thought of something else that Gurudeva said to me that afternoon, after I had returned from leaving him.

"Nimāi," he asked, "When you were up in the tree all night, were you praying?"

"Yes, Gurudeva. I was praying I wouldn't be attacked. I was too far gone to pray for anything else."

"Still, you were praying. You turned to Kṛṣṇa."

"Yes, I was chanting. And once I got my bearings, I chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa all the way back to the cabin."

"If you can pray and chant," said Gurudeva, "as much as possible, all the time, that will help you more than anything else to deal with your mental problem. We all need to do it, but maybe it's Kṛṣṇa's mercy that he is showing you that if you don't chant and pray you'll be an easy victim for the uncontrolled mind."

How could I forget this most valuable instruction? I only hope that before my life is over I'll be able to say truly that I have learned to take shelter in the holy names of Kṛṣṇa.

Gurudeva's Journal: Nothing to Do But Surrender

June 28

Ekādaśī: a quiet day with nothing to do but surrender to chanting. At least I surrender my occupation, will, breath, and so on, to the practice of *nāma bhajana*. Prabhupāda encouraged us by the example: If an iron rod is left in the fire, it will eventually become hotter, until finally it acts as fire.

Chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa *japa* is as real to me as the mountains, chimney smoke, and rain. So mountains *and* chanting; sky *and* chanting; holy name *and* me. *Sarvam khalv idam brahma*: Everything is Kṛṣṇa. Although my realization is junior, I won't deny it; it's my only hope.

Sitting before the firelight with the returned son, Nimāi, up all night singing *bhajan*as. As we sing, I conjure up other times when I sat in temple rooms in the U.S.A. and Europe with other devotees. We would warm up with favorites like *bhaja*hu re *mana* and *yaśomatī-nandana*. . . Hours passed in the most simple and direct consciousness—Lord Kṛṣṇa is the beloved son of Mother Yaśodā, and He is the transcendental lover in the land of Vraja.

To sing *bhajan*as with only one other is also satisfying, and tonight we are linked up with all other

devotees around the world who are performing this vigil. If this light goes out, we will be immersed in darkness.

From Vibhāvarī Śeṣa:

O mind, obey these words of mine and sing the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of these holy names which are full of nectarean mellows.

From Śrī Dāmodarāṣṭaka,

O Supreme Godhead, I offer my obeisances unto You. O Dāmodara! O Ananta! O Viṣṇu! O master! O my Lord, be pleased upon me. By showering Your glance of mercy upon me, deliver this poor ignorant fool who is immersed in an ocean of worldly sorrows, and become visible to my eyes.

Yawning, stretching a leg, languishing in the lake of nectarean *bhajan*as by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. After we sing, we read aloud in English. You're tired, but you stay up. "This is my desire, that birth after birth I may live with those devotees who serve the lotus feet of the Six Gosvāmī's."

In a cabin
by stovelight
we stayed awake
feasting on the holy names.
We took no other food or drink
and spoke few words,
only the singing.

The harmonium player pumped
a mixture of air on reeds,
in tunes from Bengal
in praise of Lord Kṛṣṇa
in the mood of Narottama.

Deep in the woods,
we attracted the attention
of the killer of Keśi,
the enjoyer of the *rāsa*,
He who appeared as half-man, half-lion,
who is worshipped by a tulasi leaf.

During the night
we felt we'd accomplished
the goal of all our works.

Outside after midnight—cold, very dark, no moon. The whole sky is filled with stars. They are inconceivable, and no human can entirely figure them out. No one from here can go there. But in another sense, the stars are simple fact: lights in the night. I cannot read the stars, except for the Big and Little Dippers. In some places the stars appear tiny and powdered together thickly, and in other places they are big lights in more space.

Our mountains are hard, black outlines, darker than the dark sky. The sky of stars reminds me of my childhood. Now I am in the *paramparā* of Vedic wisdom, which explains the stars and everything else, but I cannot enter that wisdom yet. The best thing for me is to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa—and not stand out here in the cold. I'm cold enough and lonely, better go in where there's fire and a human spirit to chant beside.

July 1

Nimāi dropped on me the criticisms that other devotees make of me. I'm not sure whether Nimāi actually heard my Godbrothers saying these things about me, or whether they are general criticisms that he has heard over the years toward many *gurus*. I suppose some Godbrothers say that I am not doing the highest service. Some would say the highest service is distribution of Prabhupāda's books, and there are letters by Prabhupāda to indicate that. But this old controversy has been termed "childish" by Prabhupāda, and he said it was not worthy of his older students. According to Prabhupāda, each service within the nine processes of devotional service is absolute. A devotee advances according to his sincerity, and not by belonging to a certain department, or by putting down others' service. My service is more in the education of devotees and the literary field, although I've also helped to distribute Prabhupāda's literature. I want to read his literature and serve the devotees who read and distribute his

literature. I want to exemplify the life he teaches in his books.

The result of my hearing criticism is that I defend myself. I've given up mating, eating, some sleeping, yet I defend myself at the first sign of attack, just like the forest birds and beasts.

What did he mean, "Some say that your *guru* is not preaching enough and that he should associate more with his Godbrothers, and that's why he's deviating. Some say he's neglecting his disciples, and that's why they are growing independent and drifting away. Prabhupāda didn't stress the kind of things that he stresses."?

The accusations are full of truth-hurts. But I cry back defiantly, "Oh yeah? Oh yeah? We'll see who is pleasing Prabhupāda!" And then I ask, "Who has criticized me, tell me who?" I want to know so that I can attack the arguments by the "honorable" method of *ad hominum*: "Oh, *he* said it? Well, who is *he* to speak? He may have distributed some books, but he fell down once real bad, remember? Is *he* the kind you say I should associate with? And does *he* say that I neglect my disciples? But *he* does it!" (Do two wrongs make a right?)

Although I am alone, I have become restless hearing the voices of others criticizing me. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, hearing criticism is compared to the harsh sounds of crickets. He who hankers for prestige works hard for it, but when he doesn't attain it, he suffers. The proud religionist wants to be known as a Vaiṣṇava, and when he doesn't receive the laurels which he thinks he deserves, he claims sour grapes.

He thereby exposes his lack of humility. But Lord Caitanya said humility was the first requisite for chanting the holy name constantly.

As Nimāi dumped it on me, I am now dumping it on you, and so the world is polluted by garbage disposal. Let me not dump it on others, but cleanse my polluted mind and heart which are always harassed and which are so prone to strike back in the struggle for survival. Let me cleanse myself in chanting the holy name and humbly admit my wrongs. Pray, when I get the chance to associate with God-brothers and to serve Prabhupāda's movement directly. I will be kinder, more grateful, and more active a soldier—if He will allow me.

The Last Month

I don't mean to give the impression that every day was a crisis, with me falling into illusion and Gurudeva pulling me out by the hair two seconds before I drowned to death. Many days were quiet and peaceful.

Gurudeva began writing Kṛṣṇa consciousness portraits called "Persons and Places I Met in the Mountains." I would go with him and sit in some spot to wait for animals, or just to be quiet until I could start noticing things. He and I could sit for hours that way, Gurudeva occasionally making notes, or both of us reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* silently, or chanting softly. When an animal or a hawk would suddenly appear, we would both notice it without commenting. Just to give me service, Gurudeva also asked me to draw simple pictures of whatever we saw. Some of the birds became unafraid of us and jays would eat from our hands. There was also a marten, which is like a small fox only more mildly tempered, and he became tame around us. He had shiny eyes and sleek black fur, and day by day he came closer to us until he would eat from our hands and allow himself to be petted.

The forest school continued in an informal way. I would memorize verses and study the scriptures, but without any pressure. Although I've recorded a few of the talks I had with Gurudeva, we had innumerable other talks. Sometimes we discussed what we would do when we re-entered society. I said I would

like to continue traveling with him, but if he ever decided otherwise, then I'd like to open my own preaching center. I was only daydreaming, but Gurudeva didn't mind. I thought that I would like to get a small house in the country and grow a garden and have *brahmacārīs* come and live there. We would eat simply, work on the land, and read and chant. I imagined that such a place would have preaching value too, because people would come and want to spend time with us. We would have a guest room, but everything would be on the austere side, and there would be no nonsense or talking politics or fault-finding. Gurudeva said it sounded nice.

He said that he would like to start an institute and offer courses for devotees. Or he would like to travel around the world and preach to people in their homes. He would visit devotees who had become married and who didn't have much connection with the Movement anymore. But he would also visit the temples in every country and go with the devotees in the street for *hari-nāma*. Or maybe he would go to India and spend years there learning the culture. Mainly he wanted to live as a simple *sannyāsī* and to preach.

We did many little things in the mountains which I'll probably never get around to telling, but some of them were memorable in their own ways. For example, cutting wood. I got to be quite expert at it. It seemed like years had gone by since I had chopped that first tree when I was so afraid and incompetent. I never lost my fear of bears, but it was just something you lived with, and none ever attacked us. Or wolves

either. We did sight them a number of times, but they went about their business and we went about ours.

It was always quiet in the mountains. The ground froze up at night and then became soft in the day. There were many wonderful things there, and even when you became familiar with them they didn't disgust you. It was a wonderful place. But I probably would have a completely different opinion if I hadn't been there in the company of my spiritual master, who allowed me to see everything in a spiritual way.

In the last month I had a problem with not having enough to eat. There *was* enough, but my mind and tongue couldn't accept it. We had been eating whatever nature provided for several months, and I had already passed the first tests where the body and mind react in extreme ways. I knew we had enough food to sustain life and that it was even beneficial for health and spirituality. Since that time, I've also heard how people are able to continue fasts for a very long time without suffering, as long as they have water. You just have to learn to separate the intelligence from the mind and the body. The intelligence has to dominate and tell the body and mind what to do. I accomplished that for a while. All my bodily demands—eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—were reduced. I was able to guide the body and the mind without them so much engaged in a tug-of-war with me. I became more peaceful and could read and chant with attention. I was physically weaker, but that only meant that I had to work in a restrained and

thoughtful way. And there were other benefits from our diet, but as time wore on I lost my patience and Gurudeva had to help me out.

We were eating mostly roots and greens, either boiling them or eating them as salad. Although some of the roots were starchy, we never found enough to have what I would call a satisfying meal. Sometimes we ate dandelion leaves, cattails, and wild strawberries (but the other animals gave us heavy competition for these). There was also a berry I've since found out is called cloudberry, but we couldn't find many, and then there were thistle roots, miner's lettuce, and silverweed roots. We had experimented with most of the local weeds, flowers, and tree products and had settled on these items as most edible and nutritious. I thought I had already accepted the bland taste of the food and the lack of bulk, but sometimes I would start day-dreaming of foods that I used to like. Then with the gradual weakening of my body, I began to think that I needed more strength. A line came into my head: "The sage Viśvamisra once ate a dog." I didn't know where this statement came from, but I attributed it to Srila Prabhupāda. Viśvamisra was supposedly in a desert and unless he ate the dog's flesh he would have died. This was called "emergency *dharma*." I had also heard that *kṣatriyas* sometimes ate meat. Someone said that Bhīma ate meat and in one translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* it states that Lord Rāma hunted deer. I thought, "I'm not a *brāhmaṇa*. So maybe I'm a *kṣatriya*."

When I thought like this, I began to look at the living creatures with a different eye. I had often seen

fish in the creek from which I drew water. There were some big ones, like carp, and probably if somebody wanted to, he could catch them in the clear water with just a little endeavor. But other animals, like rabbits or marten, would require more skill to kill. *"And Viśvāmitra once ate a dog."*

I didn't get very far before Gurudeva caught me. I had gone as far as to think of how to make a fishing hook by carving it from wood. I made a few drawings and maybe Gurudeva saw them. By this time he and I had such a close relationship that we could almost read each other's minds. At least he could read my mind, and I was often able to know what Gurudeva wanted before he spoke to request it. Without accusing me of planning to hunt and eat animal flesh, Gurudeva began talking about it one day. His main point was that we were not dying and we had sufficient food from the vegetable kingdom. He said that all the other animals were being provided their needs, so why should Kṛṣṇa neglect us? The Lord wasn't neglecting, He was supplying us. It was not as if I were already a meat-eater that he had to preach to me about vegetarianism, but Gurudeva actually spoke to me like that. He said that the human body has teeth and intestines designed for vegetarian eating. And more importantly, the scriptures forbid eating of flesh and killing of creatures. If the human kills fish or animals just to satisfy his senses, he incurs very bad *karma* and has to suffer as a result. So we shouldn't cause any living entity unnecessary pain.

Gurudeva emphasized that we were all right and that Kṛṣṇa was taking care of us. He told a story that

Prabhupāda had told him one day in Bombay during a general strike. Because of the strike many people were without food and they were in anxiety. But Prabhupāda noted that somehow the devotees in the *āśrama* had sufficient food. He said that this was a sign that Kṛṣṇa was taking special care of them. But Prabhupāda said that even if they did not get food, they would then take the opportunity to sit down and just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That is what Gurudeva wanted: for us to be assured that Kṛṣṇa was supplying sufficient food from nature and that we would not starve to death. But even if such a thing were to occur, we should accept it as His mercy. When I mentioned to Gurudeva the line about Viśvāmitra, he said that did not apply to our situation. After that, I stopped complaining and Kṛṣṇa released me from that anxiety. And as the weather grew warmer, we began to find new varieties of edibles, and life was easier.

On a few occasions during our stay in the mountains we saw planes flying overhead. But they were very far away, like stars in the sky, or we would see the trail of a jet or its shimmering lights. One time a prop plane came closer, but the pilot didn't notice us or didn't know we were in trouble. Then one day, after we had been there for almost five months, a small plane came over close when we were cooking and there was a tall column of smoke rising from our chimney. When I heard the plane engine, I ran outside and waved to it with both my arms. The pilot

then moved the wings in recognition. I thought he wouldn't know we actually needed help, so I threw myself on the ground in a spread-eagle position and again he flipped his wings. The next day a pontoon plane arrived. He circled around our camp and then landed on the lake. The lake was about a hundred yards long and he used almost every foot of it to come to a stop. By this time Gurudeva and I were completely excited and happy, shouting and running toward the plane.

When we came near enough, the pilot shouted, "You guys need help?"

Within an hour we had packed our belongings in the plane, made quick farewells to our "home," and crawled into the plane for take-off.

"It's about an hour to Squamish," the pilot shouted over the engine's roar as we leveled and flew south. "You can tell me all about it," he said.

Gurudeva let me do the talking so I spoke up loud, and told about our experiences, including some Kṛṣṇa conscious topics, as we flew through mild weather and clear skies over the Alpine region of British Columbia.

"That was a good story; maybe you should write a book," the man said as we unloaded at a dock near Squamish. He gave me a hearty slap on the back that sent me reeling, and then he taxied down the lake for another take-off, leaving us waving and thanking him for the rescue.

At Squamish, Gurudeva phoned to find out what

happened to Bob Gates. We were disappointed to learn that the airport in Victoria didn't know anything of Gates' whereabouts. No one had been even looking for him or his plane because he had not logged out the day we flew five months ago. We later learned that none of the devotees have seen him either, although there was a rumor that someone met him on a street in Seattle.

We took a bus to Victoria. At first everything we saw brought a shock. We had become so attuned to living alone in the mountains. When we approached the first city, the car traffic seemed incredibly fast, and the congestion and noise were unnerving. We were glad to be rescued, but we had some mixed feelings too.

They gave us a nice reception at the temple in Victoria, and that night they had a big feast in our honor. I was overjoyed to be able to taste real *prasādam* again. One of the important reasons I had joined the Movement was because of the taste of *purī* and *halava* and sweet rice and vegetable preparations when they're expertly cooked, the way the Indians can do it. So we feasted and everybody kidded me about eating and gaining weight, and they gave me a lot of attention. The temple president invited the media, and men came from the television and newspapers for a press conference. Gurudeva and I explained our adventures, how we crashed in the mountains and lived there. It was a good opportunity to express some Kṛṣṇa consciousness realizations. This time Gurudeva did most of the talking. But unfortunately, the TV and newspaper reports that

came out were more or less twisted and unfavorable. They mostly told about a court case in which an ex-devotee was suing the Movement for "brainwashing" him. For ten minutes they talked about that, and only at the end did they talk a little bit about our being stranded in the mountains. There was a close-up of Gurudeva saying that he was disappointed on returning to civilization to see the amount of pollution and waste of energy compared to the peace of nature in its unspoiled state. But the newscaster made a wise crack, "While nature tests our endurance by physical hardship, civilization has her own tests. And on their emergence from the wilderness, two Hare Kṛṣṇas may have to ask whether they are among the fittest to survive in this environment." When I saw the TV show and the stupid remarks I thought, "It's the same old world."

Some of Gurudeva's disciples who lived on the U.S. East Coast were so happy to hear that he'd returned that they flew out to West Canada just to greet him. And they were planning a big homecoming reception for us at the farm in Pennsylvania.

One day in the Victoria temple they even asked me to give a special talk to the devotees. In my talk I was praising Gurudeva for being courageous and resourceful and mentioned, for example, how he learned to cook using wild plants. One of the devotees laughed and said, "You don't have to be a 'Gurudeva'—*anyone* would have thought of *that*." And then another said, "What do you expect from a Gurudeva

groupy?" That brought me down to earth again. Things hadn't changed that much since we were away.

Gurudeva said that he and I really hadn't done anything very wonderful, and so we shouldn't expect to be praised. It's good that he said that, because I was beginning to feel that I had become a very serious devotee. I was surprised when we first arrived at the temple to see how some of the *brahmacārīs* were talking frivolously. It was harmless, but I wasn't used to it. Yet within a few hours, I was also being frivolous. I had thought that I had become more serious than other devotees, but it really wasn't true. And when I began noticing the women, it was clear to me that I was as much attracted to them as ever. Within a few days I had given up some of the best parts of my daily schedule from the mountains, like my early morning studying of Prabhupāda's books. And I lost my momentum on careful *japa* too.

Gurudeva was probably especially glad to get rid of me as his only companion. I tried not to presume anymore that I should take up all his time, but one night when we were still in Victoria, he called me to his room. As we spoke together about the "old times" in the wilderness, we both realized that our isolation had been in many ways a very nice opportunity.

"Don't regret being back," said Gurudeva.

I don't regret it, and neither do I regret whatever we went through. For me, the main benefit was that I enjoyed a serious relationship with a serious person, my spiritual master. Before this time I was not used

to being with him, but now that I know more what he's like, my intention is to serve him. I hope he doesn't kick me away.

Appendix

“Persons, Places, and Things I Met In the Mountains”

by Gauracandra dāsa Swami
(Drawings by Nimāi dāsa)

1

Patience

I tried meeting patience. To meet her you have to first get past Quick Cheap Victory, and you also have to get past the conviction that you have many things to do on time. I found it better to approach Patience by sitting rather than standing. So I sat on the hill in the forest overlooking a deep ravine, and I watched and waited. Because I was not able to overcome all the obstacles, I didn't fully meet with Patience on my first try. But she came near at one point, and I think I heard her say, “Don't expect anything but participation. Just participate in *bhakti-yoga* and everything will be revealed to you.” So I sat for an hour, and although I saw no animals and I only brushed with Patience, I thought, “If I can carry this with me, I'll perform devotional service much more peacefully.” Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “Among women I am... patience.”

Juniper

I met a dull green juniper with its small gray berries bunched on the branches. It was about six feet tall with a thin top, like a Christmas tree. Next to it was a brighter green fir tree with straight stiff needles. When I saw them, both trees swayed on their hill in the pushes and tugs of the wind.

Why and for whom does the juniper produce those berries? Not for *me*. How much bigger will it grow? How long will it live? I can scarcely conceive that within the tree there is a soul as good as mine. If I sat here longer, I would learn more.

By meeting the creatures one meets oneself. Ferocious beasts make us afraid or they make us ferocious to fight back. And the swaying, forbearing juniper loaded with bitter berries makes me think of the origin (*janmādyasa*), from which everything comes.



Juniper and Evergreen

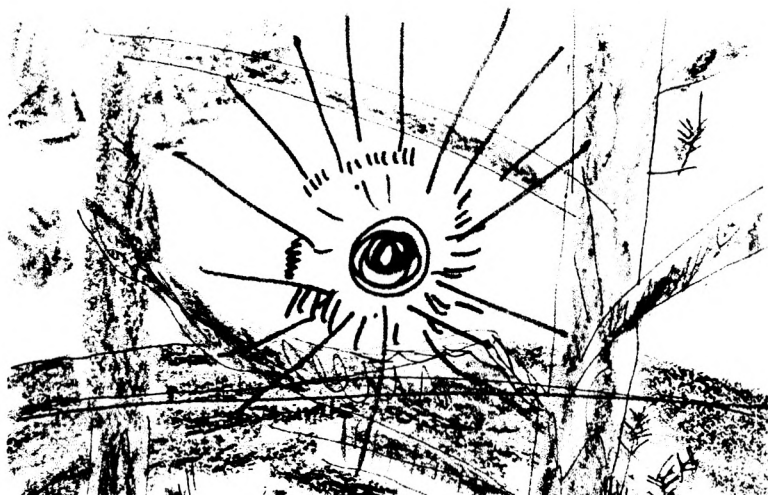
3
Old Tree Trunk



About a hundred yards from the cabin I met an old tree trunk, two feet high. I don't know the story of when it was chopped down. But if I could count the rings, I would know how old it was when it was cut. The exposed part is ancient gray, with holes gouged by birds or animals. By *karma* the soul of this tree had to leave, but in the abandoned hulk new life has entered in the form of tiny green lichen.

The dead stump still dominates the scene. A piece of it sticks upright forming a crude sun dial. It is a page in Nature's Book, but in order to read it one needs a special literacy.

The Evening Sun



I sat in a spot where I could see the evening sun blazing above a hill, and the sky was clear blue. The sun-blaze was so glaring you couldn't look at it. Only through the fir branches could you watch it indirectly.

When you meet a creature or thing in nature, it's not just you and that entity in a vacuum, but you enter a harmony. Like now, it's not me and the sun, but me and the sunshine, and the fir branches, and the cool breeze, my own body relaxed, the constant whoosh and no other sound (thank God), the steady earth, the dirt, weeds, rocks—everything. It's all Kṛṣṇa and His energies and His parts and parcels. Just as we can't meet the sun directly, so we may not see the Supreme Lord face to face, but He's here in all this.

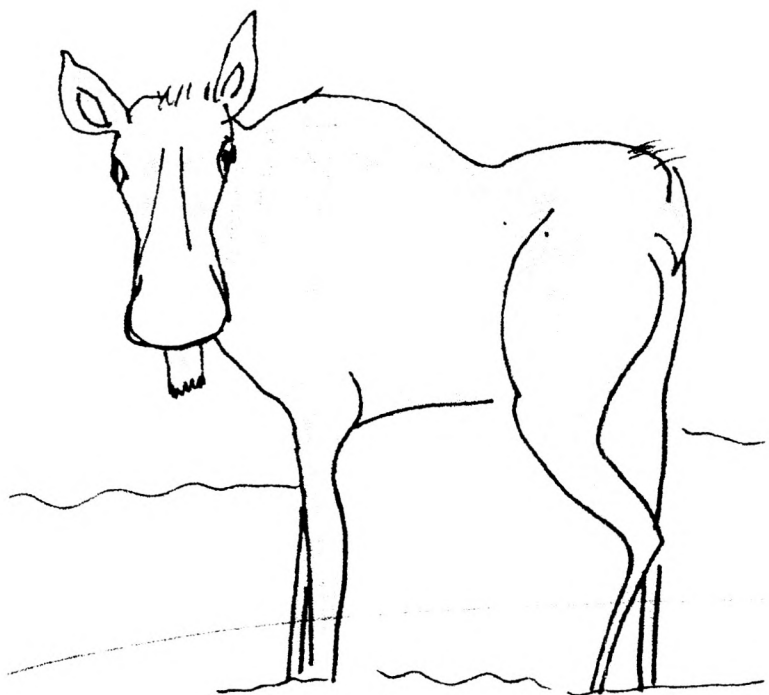


5

Rotting Log

In a ravine I saw a reddish, rotting log. It was open and shredded, worked on by animals, but mostly by time. The log was once a solid object, but now it is turning to mulch, returning to earth. Even the hill is disintegrating. I can't detect the hill's decay because my eyes are untrained, but I can't miss the work of time on the log.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that time is the impersonal feature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead which is present in this world to remind us. We act so perky, well dressed, well fed, chattering our civilized language as we stumble through the forest with a million ideas in our heads. But we will soon pass. Most trees outlive us. Human superiority is to understand all selves are eternal spirit. We can receive education from the *Vedas* and the *guru*, and we can also see for ourself the rotting log.



7

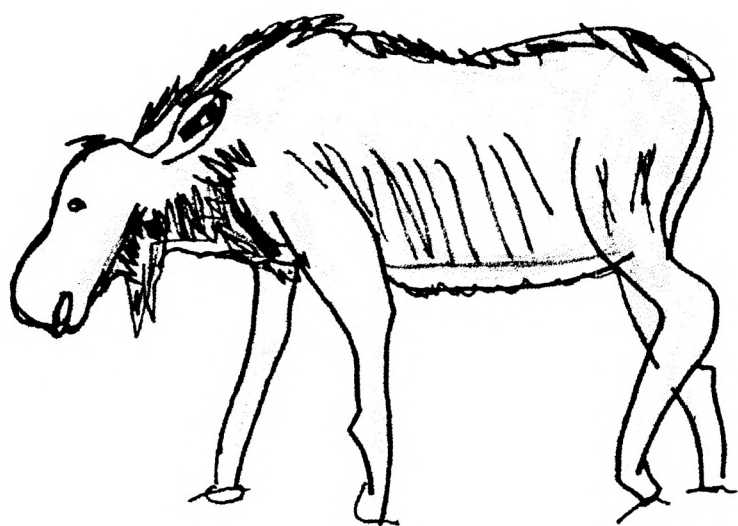
Moose

We met a moose shortly after we arrived, when there was still plenty of snow on the ground. Although he had no antlers, I think it was a bull moose, but the meeting was too brief to become well acquainted. He snorted outside the cabin, about fifteen feet away, and when I opened the door he looked at me and Nimāi as if to say, "Who are you and what are you doing here in the land of wilderness?" He didn't show much fear or aggres-

sion. We watched each other for a while, and then he continued nosing around for edible weeds.

For people who live in this north country, a meeting with a moose usually means, "Hey, Brad, hand me the rifle." They plug him in the head. Good meat for winter. But do they really have to do it? They will scoff at my words. Granted that I don't know the hardship of a trapper or a northern homesteader. But God's law is the law for all. He who unnecessarily kills a creature (which means it is not done in service to God), will have to suffer *karma* in the future. A life for a life; you can't avoid it.

The moose I saw had a long hairy nose and big droopy lips dangling under his chin. Not very handsome. Patches of fur had fallen from his winter coat and he was awkward looking on spindly legs. But if the son says to the father, "Dad, your other son is so stupid and ugly looking. I want to kill him," the father will not allow. He will say, "Don't you dare! Just mind your own business, I'll maintain him." Our moose was a welcome sight at a time when we felt frightened in alien land. After seeing him, we felt less alone.



Spider

One cold day I sat for an hour and could see no moving creature, although I felt sure that many could see me. I could only hear birds. But when I looked at my notepad, I saw a small spider. He was tan colored and moving about with his many legs. But when I looked again, he'd disappeared. Most creatures are shy and they want nothing to do with a human being. I don't blame them.



8
Bear

According to a booklet in the cabin, "An annoyed black bear can quickly kill a human." That got us going. Nimāi saw the bears first. But before I saw one, I often sensed them. I mistook a dark boulder or a stump for a bear. Even a blowing weed or a quick movement by a robin made me look up in expectation.

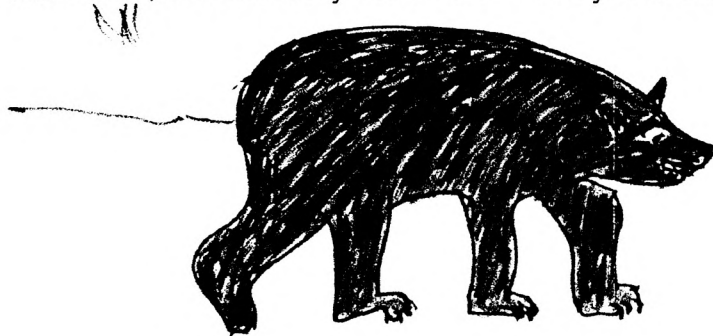
I remember William Faulkner's *The Bear* in which the bruin was a symbol for God—He who is unseen but is always watching. But Vedic literature teaches that the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa is our dearest friend. For us the bear may be more a symbol of fear of death.

When I actually saw the bear, I did not meet symbolic fear, but the real thing. I had to act. But what was right? Should I run, climb, or stand still? I had heard different advice. She was on all fours,



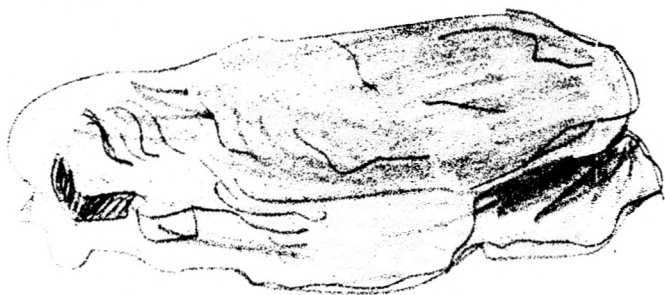
round-backed, and with a cub alongside. I was sitting on a hill overlooking a steep ravine, and the bear started down the ravine from the opposite side. I decided it was better that she see me rather than walk on top of me, so I stood, cracking twigs. She stopped. I stood frozen with fear. Did I think of Kṛṣṇa? Yes—I could hardly stop from talking outloud to Him. But I waited for the bear—she was the object of my fascination. Then she saw me or smelled me. She must have known I wasn't fearless, and yet I was something tall and strange. She decided to give me the right of way and turned around, black and sleek on four claws, and started up the hill with junior behind her. They took their time and stopped once to look back, and then disappeared. It was a while before I settled down after my encounter with the king of these mountains.

Now I can join with the story tellers, "The time I met Blacky over a ravine." It wasn't Death. Or if she *was* Death, she was only on a visit—"See you later."



10
Rocks and a Rock

How do you get to know a rock? The same way that you meet other objects or persons. There's a first meeting with some first impressions. A colorful rock catches your eye, whereas some rocks are nondescript lumps. Rocks that you see more often become part of your life. They seem to be the most dense objects in the natural world. No human by himself can lift a very big rock. If hit on the head by a rock, your skull will crack before the rock does. But rocks aren't violent if you leave them alone; they very humbly and silently stay in their own place. During the day they heat up from the sun's rays and grow cold at night.



There was a gray-blue rock in front of the cabin. It was flat and about as big as my hand. On closer inspection I noticed that it was layered. The green sediment must have formed thousands and millions of years ago, maybe at the bottom of a pond or lake. Some clay and copper dropped ever so slowly through the water. And just as this rock may have

been formed by the wearing down of a mountain, so it also is wearing down. The tiny lichen which has attached itself to the rock is breaking it up, and so is the thawing and freezing. The rock has been smoothed by wind and rain and is being worn down by time.

Why do we think we are better than a rock? At least in terms of longevity, we are just a flash in the pan. The rock has seen empires come and go, and many persons like us. The only reason a human being is special is because he has higher consciousness for self-realization. A human can break through the cycle of birth and death, but a rock can only wait.

10
Jet Trail

One day I quietly looked up and saw a shining object making twin jet trails high above. The sky was blue and the double lines of the white jet stream were very clear. Soon the engine could be heard, but not very loudly and only for a while. I thought of the nuclear doomsday movie "*The Day After*," which showed the white trail of an intercontinental missile leaving Lawrence, Kansas, while megaton nuclear warheads raced to the U.S. from Soviet Russia.

After five minutes there was no more jet sound. The jay became raucous. A junco twittered. The jet trails faded in the blue.

Trying to Figure It Out

Robins sang, "Cheer up, cheer up" and a winged pollynose seed floated onto my head. But why is everyone a predator?

I admit there's a limit to communing and seeking brotherhood in the forest. It is all claw and fang, tramping and swooping down, killing by strangulation, bleeding to death, eating flesh, crunching bones.

Only in human life can you hope to comprehend this by hearing from the *sūstras*. The savagery of the woods is no worse than that of human civilization, which makes war and runs slaughterhouses. In fact, the "law" of humans is worse than the laws of the jungle.

Some days in the forest were like that: Confused about Kṛṣṇa's plan and finally realizing, I can't know anything on my own. I came back to the cabin and read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Then in the dark we chanted while the wolves howled.

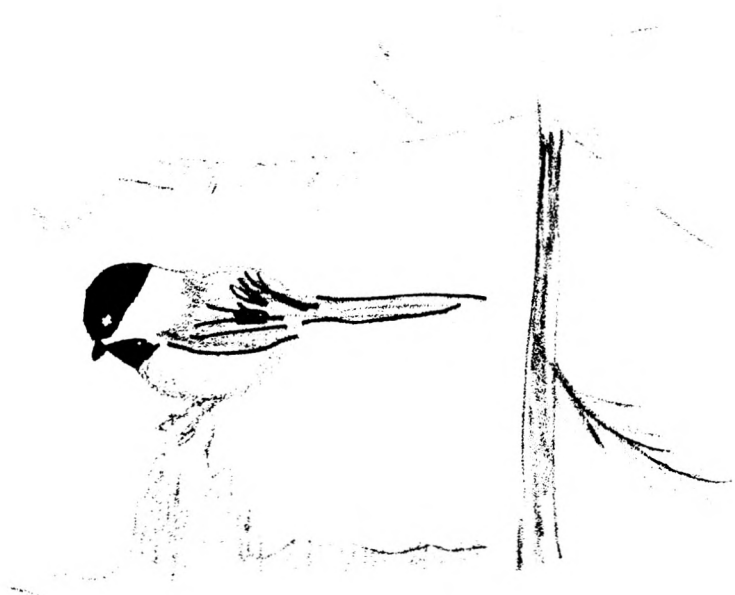
Creekside Birches, Rosehips, and Buttercups

It was a relief to wander into the birch grove. The trees were growing by a stream covered by snow and ice. We saw the red birch shoots. The older birches were sprouting buds like pussywillows. Growing among the new birches were little bushes of rosehips. They tasted like dry fruit with a small core of juiciness. By the same creekside we found a bank where yellow buttercups were growing, the first flowers I saw in the mountains.

The Supeme Lord's creation is vast and inconceivable, and souls are everywhere.



Birches (with evergreens behind) and rosehips



13
Chickadees

Some chickadees came close, singing *tseep-tseep* from the nearby evergreens. They were curious to watch a human being. I could hear the flutter of their wings and see their black round heads, white throats, and gray bodies. Before they appeared, my mind was off in a different direction, self-absorbed with lofty thoughts. The chickadees reminded me that I'm just one soul, and God is everywhere.

14
Sounds

The crow circled over the evergreen forest, announcing big news. I noticed my first butterfly. Was that faint sound before sundown the beginning of the crickets? Sometimes it was hard to distinguish between silence and the pervading vibrations, because the silence in the mountains was full of space and time "outdoors." A single fly buzzing, the flutter of passing wings, a crow caw—it was a game to figure out where the sounds came from. You heard a frog croak, but then the "croak" seemed to fly. Was that a woodpecker drilling? A long silence was broken by a blue fly at your ear.

Gradually I felt more at home with the sounds, and we added our own. But in the morning, when Nimāi and I chanted vigorously, nature stepped back and looked on.

Human Moods Versus Nature

In a birch grove I was often scolded by a red squirrel. I had heard him scold other animals, even when the animals were hidden from view. It was like a long, alarm-clock chattering. Sometimes he varied it with a *chuck chuck*, sassing me because I sat under "his" tree. Many birds also called out, either for mating or as a warning. As the weather warmed, I heard the creek bubbling under the old winter ice, and I frequently noticed something new, such as a big wasp nest hanging from a branch.

But sometimes when sitting alone, all of nature's displays only made me feel lonely. Nature was ultimately incommunicable and "dark," like the pictures in the *Bhagavad-gītā* which show the animals in the mode of darkness. The beasts in the jungle are in the lowest of the three worlds, the hellish animal species, where no one can hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa's name, fame, and pastimes. At times like that, I looked out at the trees and branches as if they were prison bars. "How long will we have to stay here?" I thought, "When can we return to temples and good cooking?" But I usually stopped myself from such depressing thoughts and turned to the sublime features of the wilderness. The unfriendliness was more my own mood than any mistreatment by Mother Nature. She had not asked me to drop down here. So what did I expect?

If I want more intimacy, I should turn to Lord

Kṛṣṇa. The wilderness was also open to me if I opened to it, instead of being miffed when the squirrel jeered at me, or when I stumbled over rocks because I walked inattentively downhill. Sometimes I remembered a relevant verse from scripture, such as:

A person who has given up all desires for sense gratification, who lives free from desires, who has given up all sense of proprietorship and is devoid of false ego—he alone can attain real peace.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.71

16
Ants

I watched the ants at a rotting stump on a hillside. They were large, with a red front half and a black, ball-shaped rear. They looked like they could give me a mean bite, and so I took care not to get too familiar with them.

I noticed that the ants leaving the stump were usually empty-handed, but some of those returning carried pieces of other insects. When you came close enough, the whole hillside seemed alive with moving ants. But once you stepped away for a few yards, they were hardly noticeable on a quiet sunny day. This reminded me of Śrīla Prabhupāda's comment when he flew for the first time, on his journey from New York to San Francisco in 1967. He said, "From the sky the houses look like matchboxes. Just imagine how it looks from Kṛṣṇa's point of view."

Sometimes when I felt morose because of our isolation from humans, I would go and crouch among the ants at the stump and watch the frenzy. That they were highly motivated was obvious, but the purpose of it all was never clear to me, or whether it was absolutely necessary for the ants to live that way in order to survive. Watching them used to cure me of a desire to once again take part in highway traffic at rush hour, or in the downtown

pedestrian traffic during the morning and evening bustle.

While condemning materialistic civilization, Śrīla Prabhupāda used the phrase “anthill civilization.” “Both humans and ants build tall edifices,” he said, “but if a man doesn’t know of the soul and Kṛṣṇa, then despite his proud skyscrapers, his civilization is no more than a glorified anthill.”

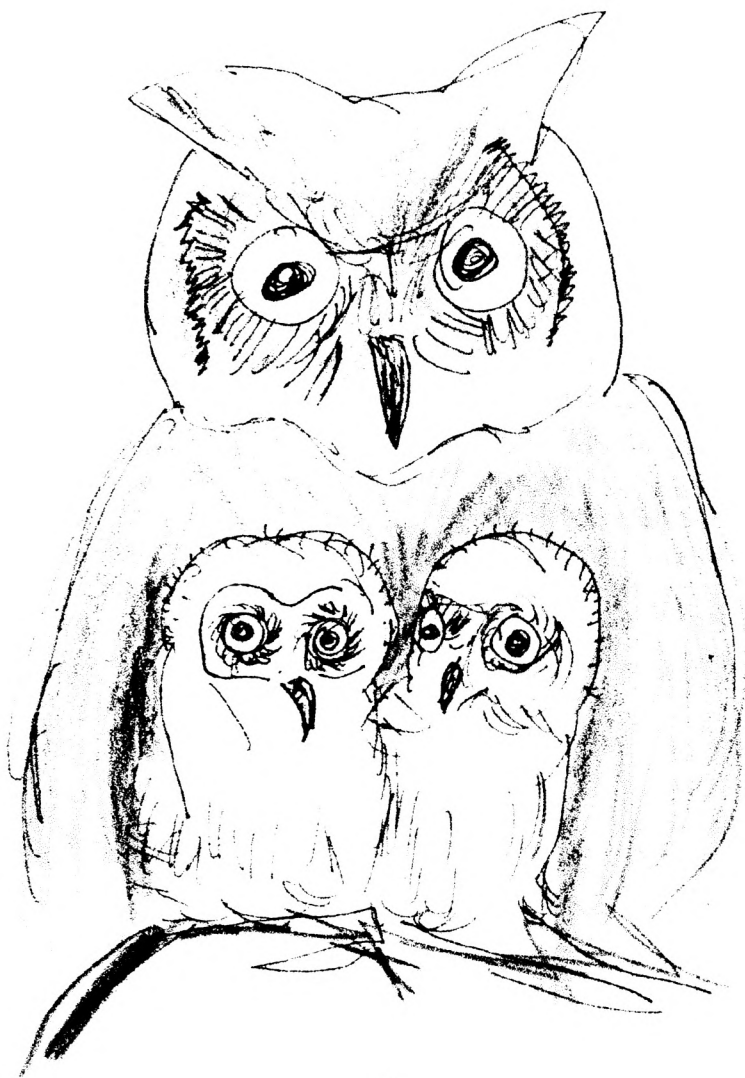
The hunter who was turned into a Vaiṣṇava by Nārada Muni stopped in his rush to Nārada to gently brush aside the ants in his path. Jaḍa Bharata did not want to step on ants, and so he incurred trouble for himself by not properly carrying the king’s palanquin. Stepping on ants is also mentioned as one of the items of unintentional violence, for which a person must be purified by *yajña*. The Jains avoid it by walking with a broom before them. Vaiṣṇavas serve the Lord and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to absolve themselves from unintentional violence.



Movement

The closer you look at any square foot of forest earth, the more it comes alive. Here's a hole in the ground, an opening to some creature's house. Here are some tiny mushrooms, partly knocked over. The weeds are blowing slightly, but their whole bodies move from top to bottom. Specks of bright lichen have taken hold. If you had a microscope, you'd see much more. Everything is moving, nothing is still.

Into the quiet, the woodpecker's drill sounds as sharp as an electric tool. The sound reminds you that all here are predators and victims. Each plays both roles, hunter and hunted. These are nature's truths, not man's, and no one can alter them. The more we enter this world, the more we think to get out of it.



18
Owls

When the moon was bright you could see him in

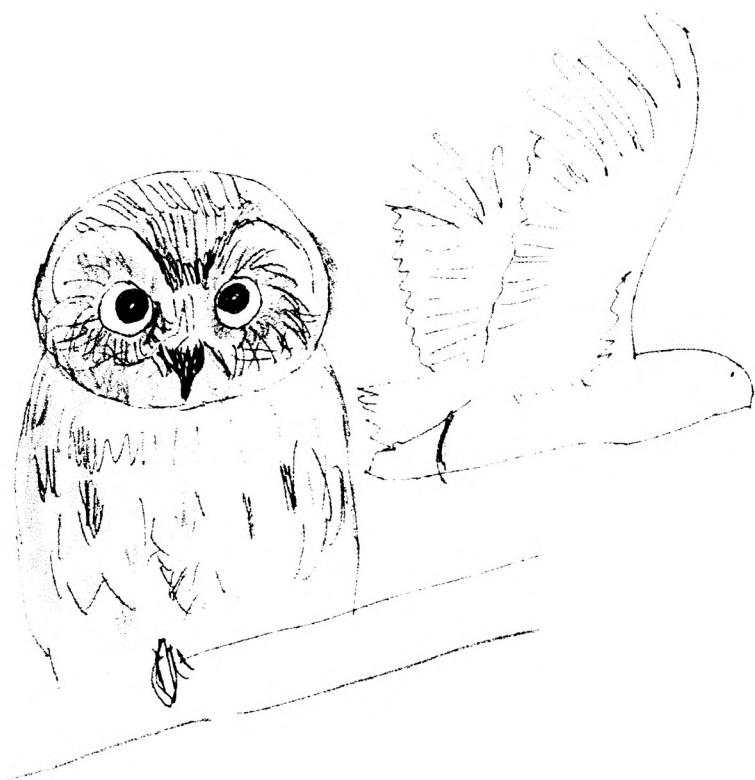
the branches of a tree. The owl eats *only* meat. With his big eyes and facial discs, "the wise owl," is a fat, downy killer.

It depends with whom you empathize. Just as in a Hollywood movie or in a novel, when you enter the life of the leading character, you sympathize with him; his enemies become yours. So in nature, every creature has its own children to raise and feed, and the parents have to work hard and long hours. From the wolves' point of view, they are not cruel or savage, just hungry. They have to track many miles and days before catching a moose. Still, my sympathies go to the moose. But then the moose ravages many living plants.

And so with these owls. If there are mice afoot tonight, no matter how careful they are, the swift, silent owl will see them with his enormous eyes and snatch them and eat them whole. Mother Dūr̥ga punishes us according to our *karma* and desires. As Nārada Muni warned King Prācīnabarhiṣat,

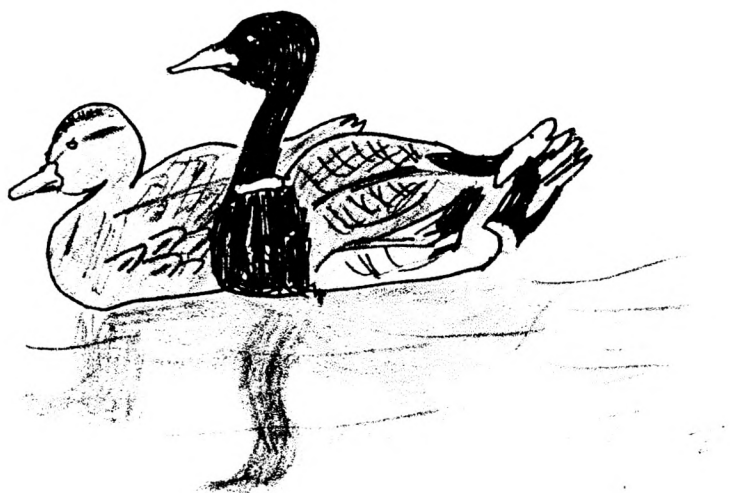
My dear king, please see in the sky those animals you have sacrificed without compassion and without mercy in the sacrificial arena. All these animals are awaiting your death so they can avenge the injuries you have inflicted upon them. After you die they will angrily pierce your body with thorns.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.7-8



19
Ducks

Many species of ducks mix in the nearby lake. One black and white species is like a harlequin. He has a black head with a white half-moon in front of his eye. His sides are like bars of black and white. It seems as though nature "shoots the works" on the drake with little left to bestow upon his mate. Other ducks were redheads, black and whites, and the brilliant green-necked mallards.



It was like a men's sporting club, with only a few ladies along. There was swimming, diving, preening, and scratching. It was quite chilly by the lake, and the ducks reminded me of Prabhupāda's teachings about *acintya śakti*. Each species has its own potency, or *śakti* which is often inconceivable to another species. We

tend to think that humans are superior to ducks and all other creatures in almost every way. But when you analyze it, they have their *śakti*s which are impossible for us.

Just to view the ducks for a few minutes turned my hands cold and my body started to shiver, and yet they were playing and diving in the cold, ripply water. I wondered whether the ducks were suffering in the cold. Sometimes Prabhupāda said that the animals are suffering—"Do not become like an animal that has to work hard day and night just to get its food." But at other times he described the animals as completely provided for by God and living without extraordinary endeavors. Both examples are true. The animals are provided for, and yet they suffer—but they don't know that they are suffering. Their greatest suffering is their lack of enlightenment. Their consciousness is so limited that they do not miss their lack of higher intelligence, and they have less sensitivity to pain. The humans have greater potential for becoming liberated, but also a greater tendency for neurosis and psychosis.

It looked like fun diving in the cold water and living in such an unpolluted environment. The ducks were cohabitating peacefully, taking only what they needed for food and not spoiling the land. They seemed innocent.

Sound

One day I met sound in the forest. I had ventured deeply among the trees and saw an owl fly from a branch and disappear. Then I stood still. My shoes and coat made no noise. I began to notice different levels of wind, higher and lower. Eventually I heard trees creaking and rubbing. Things rattling, things falling, then silence. As I became quieter, I heard my own pulse and heartbeat. After fifteen minutes, I uttered out loud "Hare Kṛṣṇa" and heard it much better than usual. I cannot say that sound is a *person* whom I met, although we know from the *Vedas* that there are demigods in charge of everything. What I met was not a person but a world of quiet and of sound vibration that came when I quieted down and listened. The woods made me reverent, a bit fearful and alert. The names of God came as a prayer. It is best to chant that way, instead of vibrations by a hurried person who is not practiced in hearing anything.

Try it yourself:

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

The manuscript of "Persons, Places, and Things I Met While in the Mountains," by Gauracandra Swami, ends here. He was writing them or thinking about them until the day we left. When I recently showed him what he'd done, he said, "Someday, I would like to go back there and meet Lord Kṛṣṇa through nature."

(Nimāi dāsa brahmacārī)

To be continued ...

GLOSSARY

A

ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example

anarthas—unclean thoughts of the heart

ārati—a ceremony for worshipping the Lord with offerings of incense, ghee lamps, flowers, fans and other paraphernalia

Arjuna—one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers; great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa to whom He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*

āśrama—the four spiritual orders of life: celibate student (*brahmacārya*), householder (*grha-stha*), retired life (*vānaprastha*), and renounced life (*sannyāsa*); a dwelling place for spiritual shelter

B

bābāji—one who retires from society to practice solitary prayer and meditation

Bhagavad-gītā —literally, “Song of God”; a discourse between Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotee Arjuna in which Kṛṣṇa explains devotional service to the Supreme Lord as the ultimate goal of life

Bhagavān—"He who possess all opulences"; The Supreme Lord, Who is the reservoir of all beauty, strength, fame, wealth, knowledge and renunciation

bhajana—devotional song glorifying the Lord

bhajanānandī—a devotee who performs his devotional activities in seclusion not attempting to preach

bhakta—a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—spiritual master of A.C. Bhaktisiddhānta Swami Prabhupāda

bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord by devotional service

brahmacārī—celibate student; member of the first order of Vedic society

Brahman—the Absolute Truth; especially the impersonal aspect of the Absolute

brāhmaṇa—a member of the priestly order wise in the *Vedas* who can guide society; the first social order of Vedic society

brahminical—"priestly"

C

Caitanya-caritāmṛta—Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's biography of the life and philosophy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared in West Bengal, India, in the 15th century to teach love of God by chanting His holy names, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*

capāti—griddle-baked flat bread usually made of whole wheat flour and water

D

dāl—soup made from dried beans such as mung or urad

daṇḍa—a staff carried by those in the renounced order of life (sannyāsa)

Deity—authorized form of the Lord, made according to regulations in bona fide scripture in order to accept our worship

dharma—eternal occupational duty; religious principles

dhotī—a simple lower garment worn by men in Vedic culture

dikṣa—initiating spiritual master

E

Ekādaśī—a special fast day for increased remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa on the eleventh day of both the waxing and waning moon

G

Ganges—holy river in India

Garuḍa—the great eagle who is the eternal carrier of Lord Viṣṇu

Gaura-Nitāi—(Deities of) Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, incarnations of Kṛṣṇa and His principle associate Who taught love of God

through chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*
gopīs—Kṛṣṇa's cowherd girlfriends, His most
 confidential servitors
gosthyānandī—a devotee who preaches love of
 God as His primary devotional service
 Gosvāmīs, Six—the chief followers of Lord
 Caitanya Mahāprabhu
 Govardhana Hill—sacred hill in Vṛndāvana, India,
 where Lord Kṛṣṇa performed many pastimes
 Govinda—a name for Kṛṣṇa—"He Who gives
 pleasure to the land, the cows and the senses"
gurukula—school of Vedic learning for young
 boys and girls

H

halava—food preparation made from grain (usu-
 ally farina) roasted in butter, often with fruit or
 nuts added
hari bol—literally, "chant the name of Hari
 (Kṛṣṇa)"; often used as a greeting or exclamation
 among devotees
 Haridāsa Ṭhākura—great devotee of Lord Cai-
 tanya known as "Nāmācārya" or chief instruc-
 tor of chanting the Lord's holy names: Hare
 Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/
 Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare
 Hare

J

jagad-guru—spiritual master qualified to instruct

everyone in the universe
Janārdana—a name of Kṛṣṇa, the original abode
of all living beings
japa—chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra
individually on 108 beads

K

karma—fruitive action for which there is always a
reaction, good or bad
Keśī—a demon who attacked the inhabitants of
Vṛndāvana in the form of a wild horse, and
was killed by Lord Kṛṣṇa
khādī—homespun cotton cloth
kīrtana—congregational chanting of the holy
names of God
Kṛṣṇa—the original name of the Supreme Lord
(literally means “the all-attractive one”)
kṣatriya—a member of the administrative or
protective class of men, the second order of
Vedic society
Kurus—the sons of Dhṛtaraṣṭra

L

līlā—pastimes of the Lord

M

Madhvācārya—thirteenth-century Vaiṣṇava spirit-
ual master who preached the theistic philoso-
phy of pure “Dualism”

- māhā-bhāgavata*—a great devotee of the Lord
Mahābharata—history of greater India compiled
 by the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa-
 deva, which includes the *Bhagavad-gītā*
mahājana—the Lord’s authorized devotee, who
 by his teachings and behavior, establishes the
 path of religion
mahā-mantra—“the great chant for deliverance”:
 Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare
 Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma,
 Hare Hare
maṅgala-ārati—the first auspicious worship ser-
 vice of the Deity performed at the beginning
 of the day (usually 4:15 A.M.)
māyā—illusion; the external energy of Kṛṣṇa
 which allows the living entity to forget his
 original position as a loving servitor of the
 Lord, due to his own desires to enjoy separ-
 ately from God
Māyāvādī—impersonalist or voidist adhering to
 the philosophy that ultimately God is formless
 and without personality
murti—authorized form of God or His pure
 devotee worshiped in the temple or at home

N

- Naimiṣāranya—sacred forest in Central India
 Nārada Muni—pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa who travels
 throughout the universes in his spiritual body
 glorifying the Lord
 Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura—Vaiṣṇava spiritual

master in the disciplic succession from Lord
 Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Nectar of Devotion—Śrīla Prabhupāda's scholarly
 and devotional translation of the Vaiṣṇava
 scripture, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, written by
 Rūpa Gosvāmī
 Nṛsimhadeva—the half-man, half-lion incarnation
 of Kṛṣṇa who killed the demon Hiranyakaśipu

P

Pāṇḍavas—the five sons of King Paṇḍu: Yudhi-
 ṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva
Paramātmā—the Supersoul or the form of the
 Lord who resides in the heart of all living
 entities
paramparā—a chain of spiritual masters in disciplic
 succession
prasādam—literally, “the Lord's mercy”; food or
 other items which have been sanctified by
 being offered to the Lord
prema—pure love of God
 Pṛthu Mahārāja—an empowered incarnation of
 Lord Kṛṣṇa who demonstrated how to be an
 ideal king
pūjā—authorized worship
pūjārī—priest who serves and worships the Deity
puri—deep-fried bread in ghee

R

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—Lord Kṛṣṇa and His eternal con-

sort, Rādhārāṇī
rakṣasī—she-demon
 Rāmānuja—an eleventh-century Vaiṣṇava spiritual master who preached the theistic philosophy of qualified monism
Rāmāyana—history of Lord Rāmacandra, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, which was written by Vālmīki Muni
rāsa dance—confidential pastime of the Lord and His topmost servants, the *gopīs*
 Rṣabhadeva—an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa as a devotee and king who gave important spiritual instructions to his sons and then renounced his kingdom for a life of severe austerity

S

śabda pramāṇa—method of acquiring knowledge by hearing from authorized Vedic teachers
sādhū—saintly person
śakti—special potency
śaktyāveśa avatāra—a special living entity empowered by the Lord with one or more of the Lord's opulences
samādhi—total absorption in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa
sampradāya—line of disciplic succession
saṅga—association (usually with saintly persons)
sannyāsi—one in the renounced order of life; member of the fourth spiritual order of Vedic society
śāstra—scriptures
śikṣa—instructions, instructing

śloka—Sanskrit verse

śravaṇam-kīrtanam—the devotional processes of hearing and chanting about the Lord

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhakti-vedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—Vedic scripture composed by Vyāsadeva to describe and explain Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes

Śukadeva Gosvāmī—sage who originally spoke *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to Mahārāja Parikṣit just prior to the king's death

T

Tulasī—sacred plant dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa and worshiped by His devotees

U

Upaniṣads—philosophical sections of the *Vedas*

uttama-adhikārī—one on the highest stage of perfect devotion to the Lord who is unaffected by the material modes of nature

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