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# Prabhupāda Meditations

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

# *Prabhupāda Meditations*



Persons interested in the subject matter of this book  
are invited to correspond with our secretary,  
c/o GN Press, R.D. 1, Box 837-K  
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### *Epigraph*

When all the sons of Prācinabarhi left home to execute austerities, they met Lord Śiva, who, out of great mercy, instructed them about the Absolute Truth. All the sons of Prācinabarhi meditated upon the instructions, chanting and worshipping them with great care and attention.

### *Purport*

A disciple should always meditate on the orders of the spiritual master, and that is perfectional meditation. Not only should he meditate upon that order, but he should find out the means by which he can perfectly worship and execute it.

—*Bhāg.* 4.24.15

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# *PART ONE*

## The Assignment

### 1.1

The manager of the Vaiṣṇava Institute for Higher Education wrote asking me to give a series of lectures as part of an upcoming seminar to be held in Vṛndāvana, India. He suggested that my topic could be "Prabhupāda Meditation." As soon as I heard the idea I began to wonder what the words meant. It might mean simply a few "thoughts" about Prabhupāda. Maybe he wanted me to give a series of biographical sketches modeled after *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. But at second sight, the words seemed not so simple. "Prabhupāda Meditation" might mean the method of meditating as taught by Prabhupāda, which would call for an elaboration on *śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ-smaraṇam* (hearing, chanting and remembering Lord Kṛṣṇa); or it might mean that they wanted me to describe what Śrīla Prabhupāda personally does in his own meditations—how does he think of Kṛṣṇa?—or it could be taken to mean that I should talk about Lord Kṛṣṇa, since it is He who is the object of Prabhupāda's meditations—as indicated by the title of the record album, "Kṛṣṇa Meditations" which has a cover photograph of Śrīla Prabhupāda playing the *mṛdaṅga* while singing a *bhajāna*. Or the title "Prabhupāda Meditations" might mean that all of these possible themes are actually inextricably mixed together, and the VIHE wanted me to consider them in that way. When I began to consider in this last way, which

seemed the most interesting, it had one big drawback. I would never be able to come to a definite conclusion. How could I prepare a syllabus on "Prabhupāda Meditation" unless I could lead students to a conclusion which they could write down in their notebooks, and on which they could be tested in the final exam?

But the invitation was intriguing, and so I have decided to go ahead, although the subject is ultimately beyond my reach. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead is unlimited in His glories and qualities, so also His pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda, cannot be measured or contained. In fact, he cannot even be understood except by a qualified Vaiṣṇava. Therefore, if I go ahead and speak about "Śrīla Prabhupāda Meditation" (whatever it means), my attempt will be like a small bird trying to empty the ocean by carrying drops of water to the land. To be honest, I would prefer to speak my own version of "Prabhupāda Meditation" and admit that it's not the whole truth. I can give my opinion, and show you how I arrived at that opinion. I can tell you the story of how I have taken up "Prabhupāda Meditation," pondered it and made it work in and out of my daily life.

*State of the Author (1990)*

## 1.2

Sitting down for breakfast, I noticed a small brown bug lying on his back on the eating table. I thought he was dead. But while eating fresh fruits and yogurt, I saw the tiny legs of the bug moving,

just a little bit. Without thinking, I at once flicked the bug off the table and sent him crashing to the floor, out of sight. I soon regretted my act and thought of what I should have done: Chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and then carefully removed him and placed him out of the way, to die. Although I did not attack a healthy bug in a malicious way, yet what I did was no better.

Since this little incident occurred on the same day that I began my "Prabhupāda Meditation," I considered the two endeavors. "You are going to write about the pure devotee of God, Śrīla Prabhupāda," I thought, "and yet you are so selfish. Even if you do write, what are your motives? Just see how you behave when no one is watching. How can such a person write a book about Śrīla Prabhupāda? And if he does write, what good will it be?" I also thought of the incident reported by Śatadhanya, who spared the lives of ants that were crawling on Prabhupāda's desk in Māyāpura. Prabhupāda commented, "Before you would have killed them, but now you are purified."

### 1.3

I will begin with a memory that shows how being apart from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and yet thinking of him is natural to me. This occurred just before the time Śrīla Prabhupāda went back to India in 1967, when he was very ill. Young Brahmānanda and Gargamuni (the two brothers whom Śrīla Prabhupāda once described as "just like two puppies") were with Śrīla Prabhupāda in his room in

the 26 Second Avenue apartment. I was in the other room, by myself, looking out the window. Brahmānanda and Gargamuni were speaking in a loving way with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I heard them say, "Swamiji, your skin is so smooth, it is just like a tiny baby's skin." But I was thinking, "This is my place, to be apart from Swamiji." I felt my service to him was in the other room, rather than being there, although I also wanted to be there with him. At least at that moment I appreciated even more serving him in the other place and thinking about him. Probably this was intensified by the occasion, which was that we were being forced to be without Prabhupāda's personal presence. And so I thought, "This is how I'm meant to serve."

One also recalls Tripurāri's staying at the airport to distribute books, even when Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in Los Angeles:

We had *kīrtana* all the way down the stairs, and when we got outside, all the devotees were going back to the temple. Then I thought, "What business do I have going back to the temple and chanting with all the devotees? My business is to stay out and distribute the books. That is my service."

## Memory

### 1.4

Baladeva and I intend to work together to help



me recall my life with Śrīla Prabhupāda. B. suggested in a half-humorous way that I take some "memory pills" which he saw on a shelf in a healthfood store. He said it would be more an "act of intention," as if to signal to the "unconscious mind" that it should get ready. And so I have bought a bottle of Brain Pep, which "increases alertness, fuels the brain." It seemed harmless enough—the strongest ingredient was ginseng. But as I swallowed a pill with a glass of water, I doubted whether it is the brain that will bring me back to Prabhupāda.

### 1.5

I'm groping . . . not exactly sure how to proceed. Here's an example. Say you were a witness to the activities of Jesus Christ, maybe you were one of his original disciples. You already compiled memoirs, or even your "gospel." But a faithful Christian approaches you and asks for more "meditations on the Master."

You say to him, "But I already wrote it."

"That was one book.," he says. "Tell us more. His appearance on earth is so rare and we want to remember him always. Although we can do it from his teachings, we want to be sure you've said all you could before you pass away."

"All right," you say, "but help me to remember. Frankly, when I try to think of the Master, all that comes to mind is everything that has happened *since* his disappearance. I have been involved in the missionary work, and in the remembrance of the

Master's teachings which he left with us—and I know those teachings are more important than his personal presence. Besides, his presence is also with us."

Now let us change the example to our actual subject, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who was the savior of the whole world. Why be falsely modest? Tell us all you know.

But you say, "I'm not the only one. There were not only twelve or thirteen, but thousands of disciples. But I too. So help me remember the teachings (*vāṇī*) and the person (*vapuḥ*). I met him in 1966; I would like to recall it. I'm ready to go back, although it will take work to do so. I also want to see how he is present now in all things—when I see or think of anything I want to connect it to him, and do it for him—not by force or dogma, but as a disciple. I want to be mature and myself, a willing, self-actualized disciple. I want to purify myself of the doubts and other obstacles to this pure service. You say I may help you, but you be kind to me as well. Help me to be with him as a faithful follower, as I used to be; as I actually am.

## 1.6

I've come to Śaraṇāgati in British Columbia, an ideal place for meditations. As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in his Jaladuta diary, "Thanks to Lord Kṛṣṇa for enlightening Sumati Morarji for all these arrangements," so I feel in this cabin. Up on a hill with no one in sight. From the window, pine trees

everywhere. It's been raining so the land is green, and silent but for the wind. This first day is filled with hopes for "Prabhupāda meditations."

### 1.7

Baladeva and I are doing recall. We begin by remembering the walk from my apartment on First Street to Śrīla Prabhupāda at 26 Second Avenue. I rented that apartment just after I met Śrīla Prabhupāda, as a way to start a new life. I wanted to be like a *yogī*, a clean devotee, and so I kept the apartment bare.

Around 7:00 P.M. I start out—to see Swamiji. I've come home from work, taken a shower and changed from my office clothes to black chinos, a short-sleeve shirt, and dirty tennis shoes. I brush my short hair forward and start out. Down the stairs and out the front door—facing a tall fence across the street, the playground with handball courts and basketball courts. I turn right and walk half a block up First Street heading west to Second Avenue. Tenement buildings on the right, Puerto Ricans, Ukrainians, office workers and a few hippies. Coming around the corner on Second Avenue, there's the Mobil gas station, and then you face 26 Second Avenue. I'm twenty-five-and-a-half years old.

After setting this scene, I relaxed and listened to B. describe it further, leading me to Swamiji.

*Baladeva:* You're looking forward to seeing Swamiji. He's a new and interesting person that

you've met, very exotic. Full of unknown things that you want to hear. So you go to the door in the storefront, open it, and there's a hallway ahead and stairs. You go to the right, past the stairs, down the hallway and into the courtyard. There's a birdbath there and a tree and some green, it's summer. Then you face the back building, and look up to see if you can see Swamiji through his window. You go up the flight of stairs. You've made your journey and you're going to see him. Thinking what it will be like, what he will say to you and the others. Just go through that door, go in and have a seat. There are already people there sitting in his room. He's in the middle of a conversation. Just go there and be in his presence. You don't have to do anything but listen to the conversations and notice how you're feeling. When you feel like talking about it, you can tell me. I didn't get a chance to go and so I'd like to hear how you feel.

Baladeva invites me to be there with Swamiji in 1966, but I'm here in 1990, looking back. It seems so long ago. As soon as I speak about it, I encounter the same "canned memories" which I often repeat. But they're reliable memories and I'm trying to open the cans and see what's actually in them.

B: When was the first time that he looked at you?

S: That was in the temple room when I asked a question, "Is misery eternal?" He answered, "Yes, material misery is eternal. But there is another world."

B: It was more than just an answering of a question.

S: I had been there before and I knew that people raised their hands and he called on them. In order to call on you he had to look at you and recognize you. Maybe he had already noticed me from the audience. So he asked, "Any questions?"

B: What was your first time alone with him?

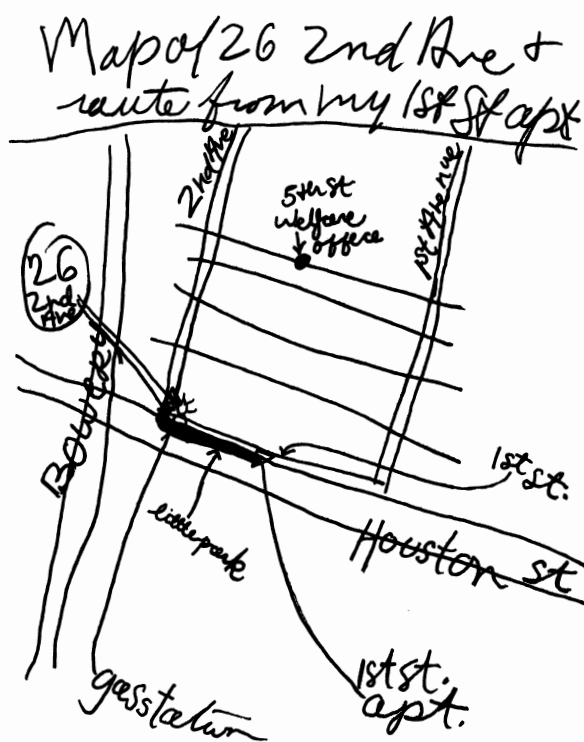
S: The memory I always go to which is established in my mind as my first time alone, was when I asked a question, "Is there spiritual progress that you can make that you don't fall back from?" He said, "Yes."

## 1.8

We used to imitate Swamiji in various ways, trying to act as spiritual persons, sometimes to show off to newcomers. One thing I began to imitate was a sound that Prabhupāda made, an ecstatic utterance which sounded like "Mmmm." Prabhupāda would often do it, and we all took it as an ecstatic moment in his speech. He might be saying, "Kṛṣṇa is very beautiful," and then he would pause and feel something and make that sound, "Mmmm." When I did it in imitation I was not feeling ecstasy, but I was Swamiji's follower. It was something that I had picked up, and something that some of us did. It was the *śakti* of Swamiji. We had noted it and taken it up as our way.

So one day a guest was eating *prasādam* with us in Swamiji's apartment and he sat down next to me. He was a marijuana smoker, and was checking

people out closely to see their mannerisms. When he sat down next to me there was a moment of silence and then I made that sound, "Mmmm." He immediately noticed it and appreciated, "Yeah, I dig you, man! I see what you're into." My sound had proclaimed, "We are Swamiji's followers and we're not afraid of anything because we know Kṛṣṇa." If I had *said* the same thing, it would have sounded arrogant or untrue. But by making that sound, the young hipster picked it up and appreciated. "Mmmm" implied that we don't die, we're eternal souls, Kṛṣṇa is full of bliss, He is within your heart.



## 1.9

What is "Prabhupāda Meditation?" It's thinking of him in a deep way, favorably, like the verse, *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*. I want to learn the art and gain the inclination for it.

For a Prabhupādānuga, *anything* may be considered a Prabhupāda meditation. But this obviously can be misused or misunderstood. If I'm acting for sense gratification, I can't claim, "This is my Prabhupāda meditation." But if I catch myself in sense gratification and remember the instructions of my spiritual master, then I can turn it favorably. I may recall Śrīla Prabhupāda's saying, "'Am I doing this for sense gratification or for Kṛṣṇa's service?'—You can test." And so what started as an invitation from *māyā* becomes a meditation on Prabhupāda's *vāñī*.

I go to Lord Kṛṣṇa through Śrīla Prabhupāda. I please Lord Kṛṣṇa by pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda. *Yasya prasādād . . .* I think of them together. When I read a verse of *Bhagavad-gītā*, I read the Bhakti-vedanta purport. So Prabhupāda meditation is very inclusive and not restricted to memories only.

## 1.10

An early example of an intense Prabhupāda meditation occurred for me after I had met Śrīla Prabhupāda for only a few weeks. With his permission, I paid a visit to my parents at their summer bungalow in Avalon, New Jersey. I arrived at their home in the evening and went immediately for a swim in the canal in their backyard. As I floated in

the water and looked up at the stars, I was overwhelmed with the presence of Prabhupāda, hearing his voice and the things he said, which he had been teaching us. After having associated with him, day after day, I felt it coming through me, all the Prabhupāda expressions. There I was in the water, looking up at the sky which was so very far away, and without calling for it I was surcharged with remembering Prabhupāda. I understood, "Swamiji has really gone deeply into my life, and it's very strong!"

I have told this story before, and I've written about it. There is no harm in the repetition provided each time you remember, you do it by going to a genuine source of feeling and thought. So I want to open those canned memories and see them as they actually occurred. To do it, one has to enter an altered state of consciousness.

When Maitreya asked Uddhava to speak about Kṛṣṇa, or when Parikṣit asked Śukadeva certain questions about Kṛṣṇa the response was not canned. Rather, Uddhava and Śukadeva felt such ecstasy by thinking about Kṛṣṇa, that they could not even speak:

On the inquiry by Vidura about Kṛṣṇa, Uddhava appeared to be awakened from slumber. He appeared to regret that he had forgotten the lotus feet of the Lord and remembered all his transcendental loving service unto Him, and by doing so, he felt the



same ecstasy that he used to feel in the presence of the Lord. Because the Lord is Absolute, there is no difference between His remembrance and His personal presence. Thus Uddhava remained completely silent for a moment, but then appeared to be going deeper and deeper into ecstasy.

—*Bhāg.* 3.2.3-4

### 1.11

An active student of Śrīla Prabhupāda may see my attempts as idle, but what can I say? It is not idle. I am fighting for survival of dear memories, and refusing to allow my everyday consciousness to deteriorate into a watered-down following of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda can be very heavy, as the breaker of illusion. So when I say I want to remember him, I want to open myself up to that too.

### 1.12

We often think, "What would Prabhupāda do or say in a situation like this?" And as the Bhakti-vedanta Archives supplies us with all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spoken and written words, we can push a computer button and bring up what he has said on "walks in the woods," "when the body feels cold," "nail-biting"—almost *anything*. But even Prabhupāda's instructions have to be applied (as they were by him) according to time, place and person. We must ponder on the meaning. If Śrīla

Prabhupāda said that woodland walks are all right provided you think of Kṛṣṇa, then should we justify spending all our time in the woods? If we find a statement by Prabhupāda that woods-walking is useless, shall we give it up for all time? We have to think and feel what he meant—and what it means to us.

We want to surrender to his order. That means becoming disciplined by him; don't invent or interpret, accept the *paramparā*: *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*. "If there's no surrendering," Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "then there's no beginning even, what to speak of advancement. Disciple means . . . one who accepts discipline . . . . As soon as the discipline is broken, then everything is lost" (Conversation, Melbourne, July 1, 1974).

But surrender also means love. You don't deposit yourself like a "surrendered" *stone* at your *guru's* lotus feet—you grow as a person and live for him and his mission. You attain your maturity—you turn to Kṛṣṇa within, you try your best—and it's all offered to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. Your offering should be thoughtful, painstaking—a garland of handpicked wildflowers, an artistically arranged plate of fruits, an innovative way to preach. "Whatever you do, do it for Me." And as you work to make a thoughtful project on his behalf, you always stand ready to be told, "That's wrong, do it over."

### 1.13

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. I am trying to write something artistic in the name of serving you. This is in line with the *Bhāgavatam* verse spoken by Nārada, *idaṁ hi puṁsas tapasaḥ śrutasya va . . .*. On this verse you have remarked, "These talents are acquired after austerity. So everything should be employed to describe *uttamaśloka*, Kṛṣṇa . . . This is art."

I know you want plain, direct service. Please help me. I think of the verse spoken by Arjuna to the Lord: "As a father tolerates the impudence of his son, or a friend tolerates the impertinence of a friend, or a wife tolerates the familiarity of her partner, please tolerate the wrongs I may have done You" (Bg. 11.44).

Is thinking and writing of you also service to you? Yes, in the same way that chanting His holy name is service. Prabhupāda, please give me strength; teach me to play upon the big *mṛdaṅga* and tell about you to the world.

*Kīrtana-rasa*

### 1.14

In the second recall session with Baladeva, I started again from my 1966 apartment at First Street and took the short walk over to 26 Second Avenue. B. was going to steer me into the hallway to go up to see Swamiji in his apartment, but I suddenly wanted to go directly into the storefront and attend the temple meeting:

Thinking of the *kīrtanas* . . . with his one-headed drum. That's really the heart of association with Swamiji, he's playing his drum and we start playing the *kāratālas*. It's really nice, the making of spiritual music together, especially when you feel part of the group. Swamiji is leading the *kīrtana*. First he sings some prayers and you just go with it and listen. It's not only sound but the total *kīrtana*, watching him and trying to get the bliss.

When Swamiji sings you all sing together and your voices are merged. It's musical and spiritual but it's a kind of crying too—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare . . . .

You start in; this is going to go for half an hour. It goes back and forward, he sings and then you sing. Swamiji is completely into it. He loves to do what he's doing, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

After awhile the dancing started. Maybe Acyutānanda or Jadurāṇī, Kīrtanānanda, Brahmānanda, and I would get up too. The dancing was walking in a circle or standing in your place and moving your feet. The circle goes slowly around in front of Swamiji on the dais. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

He keeps his eyes closed, and sometimes they open and he sees what's going on. He looks around at the people, and then he closes his eyes again.

After the *kīrtana* there would be waves of quieting down and the devotees would be smiling to each other, "Wow, that was far-out, man. Boy, I re-

ally got off on that one." Then there would be calming down, getting your seat, getting ready to hear Prabhupāda talk. Swamiji was getting himself ready, he had his pocket watch, and he put that in its place, getting his book ready, and maybe he'd say, "Raymond, fix this light." Or, "Get water," while everyone's rustling and trying to calm down.

One wants to be with Swamiji again in those *kīrtanas*. If it can be done, it will act as a vital tonic. *The presence of the guru.*

Don't deride the love which Prabhupāda encouraged us to feel in the *kīrtanas*. Now twenty-four years later, don't patronize, "We were hippies, you know, and Prabhupāda was permissive. He encouraged ecstasy in the *kīrtana* and he led us to believe that we actually loved the Lord, but since then, we've discovered that we don't love Lord Kṛṣṇa so easily."

It may be said that I've overlooked a great secret—it *was easy* to love Lord Kṛṣṇa when Śrīla Prabhupāda was leading you in *kīrtana*, and that's still available. Meditate on being in *kīrtana* with him as you go about your routine duties on his behalf. Don't complain, "But now I have to be a *guru*," and "Everything is institutionalized"—but as you go about your bathing, eating, sleeping, etc., you can sing, and in your mind's eye you are with him.

### 1.15

It's natural that you want to meditate on being with him. And you'd like to convey some of this to

others also. You want to honestly say, "I have such a great spiritual master. Come and meet him."

There are different levels of Prabhupāda consciousness. Devotees have even spoken of "an illusory Prabhupāda," meaning a Prabhupāda whom they imagine. When one is deviating, one can rationalize that Prabhupāda won't mind—an illusory Prabhupāda. And there is an official Prabhupāda, and a superficially worshiped Prabhupāda, and so on. There's a Prabhupāda of the nectarean anecdotes whom the Western theologian would refer to as "the historical Prabhupāda." And there's the all-pervading Prabhupāda. As Sūta Gosvāmī said about Śukadeva: "I offer my obeisances to my spiritual master who enters into the heart of everyone." Similarly, Vyāsadeva praised his spiritual master, Nārada: "Like the sun, your goodness can travel everywhere in the three worlds, and like the air you can penetrate the internal region of everyone. As such, you are as good as the all-pervading Supersoul" (*Bhāg.* 1.5.7).

Unfortunately, one may live many years in contact with one of the lesser versions of Prabhupāda. Also, one can bully others by a heavy-handed use of quotes from Prabhupāda's letters, and one can misuse Prabhupāda's authority in various ways. Therefore, it's important to discover and remain aware of the most basic understanding one has of His Divine Grace. Remember that you promised him you would chant sixteen rounds every day and follow the four rules. Remember the day that you took the beads from him and made that vow in his

presence? Feel the weight of it.

(I remember in 1968 when my Godbrother, Pradyumna dāsa, was hospitalized with a hernia. Prabhupāda was visiting Boston at that time and he wanted to see his disciple. I went too and I heard Pradyumna say to Prabhupāda that during and after surgery he had not been able to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but he had thought about Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda approved that kind of meditation. So it may not always be composed of words, although if we're conscious to recite the "mantra" of his name, that is very nice. But just to turn to him loyally in a dependent mood, especially when in difficulty, is sufficient.)

By Prabhupāda's grace he lives within me. Our communication in separation depends on the purity of the disciple. But whether pure or impure, the favorable remembrance of him can bring us immediately to our constitutional position. I may sometimes think that I have to go on my own, taking help from other spiritual masters, or daring to go directly to Kṛṣṇa, yet the Vedic scriptures remind me and bring me back to my senses. Only if I please the spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, will Kṛṣṇa be pleased with me.

*Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa*

1.16

When all is said and done, I'm confident that Prabhupāda will claim his devotees as long as we turn to him. He has specifically instructed us about

the time of death. He said the same thing that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says: Think of Kṛṣṇa at the end of life and "surely you will come to Me, without doubt." This time-of-death meditation will carry us to the spiritual world. And Kṛṣṇa will note the brand of our meditation, as the followers of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda personally meditated on Lord Kṛṣṇa until the last breath, while residing in Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandir, while urging his disciples never to give up preaching.

There is no conflict between thinking of Prabhupāda and thinking of Kṛṣṇa. Even when we feel we are most in tune with Kṛṣṇa directly, by His words in *Bhagavad-gītā* or in His beautiful Form in the *arcā-vigraha*, even then we are gratefully aware, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am doing what you told me and as always, you were right—*Kṛṣṇa is so nice.*" According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, the spiritual master leads the devotee into his eternal *rasa* with Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. And just in case we have not done so well, it's Śrīla Prabhupāda who will stand between us and the Yamadūtas' fierce punishments.

#### 1.17

According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, Śrīla Prabhupāda may be in Goloka Vṛndāvana in the form of a *gopa* directly playing with Kṛṣṇa, or he may be in the form of a *mañjarī* assisting the *gopīs* who are arranging for the conjugal pastimes, of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, or He may be moving in Lord



Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement. Just as the eternally liberated Nārada Muni travels sometimes in the spiritual world and sometimes in the material world, playing his *vīṇā* and helping conditioned souls by glorifying Kṛṣṇa and giving relevant instructions, so Śrīla Prabhupāda may be doing like that. I do not know.

I do know I had a very definite pastime connection with His Divine Grace, when he came to us at 26 Second Avenue. A tiny, conditioned entity cannot expect to know very much about confidential devotional service. Furthermore, he should be satisfied to carry out the orders of the spiritual master as given in this world.

So what is the *basic* message of Prabhupāda? The very first thing he said to us was, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and be happy." And for reading, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are all we need. Live with devotees, cooperate and push on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. These are our goals and this is our work. Only by faithfully prosecuting these orders can we realize Prabhupāda's promise that we will think of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day.

### 1.18

Prabhupāda meditation needn't be thought of as something esoteric and elusive. It's remembering your spiritual father. You're sorry that you're not serving him better. But you know you shouldn't just dwell on that in a negative way. Prabhupāda writes, "If one has faith, even if for the time being he can't fully carry out the injunctions of the

Lord—as long as he doesn't admit defeat and hopelessness—then gradually he will be elevated to the right position."

So you remember your spiritual father and you live by his instructions.

Another point: Are Prabhupāda meditations private or public? They're both. Sometimes it is shared among the devotees, as when everyone gathers for the Prabhupāda *guru-pūjā* and sings the same prayers. There should be agreed upon conclusions as to what Prabhupāda meant in his teachings and what he intended for his followers. He's not just one person's Prabhupāda. One of the best ways to remember him is to work with his followers even when it's difficult.

And as a complement to the public worship, there is a private relationship with him. It must be so, and we don't want it otherwise. Sometimes we even feel disturbed when someone starts talking about Prabhupāda. We think, "Prabhupāda remembrance is not so easy to attain as this." Or we think, "They have asked me to speak of Prabhupāda, but how can I do it? It is not something to be so openly discussed."

Then it *is* esoteric? Yes and no. It is an open secret; it is pure love—which you cannot weigh and put into a package. We each have our pure devotion for Prabhupāda, and it is not always touched on in the general recitation of his glories.

Sometimes we are unsure, "Does Prabhupāda know I'm here? Does he love me? Does he understand my inner nature?" The answer to this is yes,

but you have to enter a real relationship as menial servant, as disciplined follower, practicing devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda will shower his blessings on you and you will know him, without a doubt.

### 1.19

Remembering the spiritual master is an important and frequent topic in Vedic literature. *Yasya deve para bhaktir . . .* Only to one who has implicit faith in *guru* and Kṛṣṇa are the imports of the Vedic literature revealed. So we may remember the spiritual master in a philosophical way, in his *tattva* or "category"—he is the representative of Viṣṇu. We also remember him in a personal way, recalling the activities and qualities of His Divine Grace. When you read in the *śāstras* of the liberated person, the bona fide spiritual master, it's very reassuring because you have no doubt that your Śrīla Prabhupāda is a bona fide *ācārya*. He fits the bill in all respects.

The spiritual master is addressed as "Prabhupāda" because he is a completely self-realized soul. The word "pāda" means "position" and "Prabhupāda" indicates that he is given the position of prabhu, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for he acts on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

—*Bhāg.* 4.23.18

Take a Vedic reference on the importance of the *guru* and savor it, giving thanks to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda: "The spiritual master is honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also told us of important *guru* meditations which occurred in his own life. As soon as he met Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in 1922, Śrīla Prabhupāda realized that this was his spiritual master, "Not officially, but in my heart." Śrīla Prabhupāda did not move into the *āśrama* of his *guru* but continued travelling throughout India doing business as a householder. But he would often stop and think of the wonderful Vaiṣṇava who had entered his life by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement: "I have met such a nice saintly person."

Years later while reading Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary, Śrīla Prabhupāda was struck by the force of this statement: Just as life breath is essential to a living being, so the order of the *guru* should be the life breath of the disciple. Thinking upon this deeply changed Śrīla Prabhupāda's life.

So every disciple should carry out the order of the spiritual master and repeatedly think of him, whenever one can. He is the saintly person who has come and changed our life from one of doom, to one of hope. When we fall into dullness, or when passionate duties cause forgetfulness of our spiritual master, a reading of Vedic knowledge will remind us again and bring us Prabhupāda meditation. "He opens my darkened eyes and fills my

heart with transcendental knowledge. He is my lord, birth after birth . . . . The Vedic scriptures sing of his character."

*It Was Like This*

**1.20**

In one recall session with Baladeva, he asked me for strong impressions and exact details. But I could hardly remember anything exactly as it happened. However, I do know in a general way, the *rasa* or flavor of being with Swamiji. So with your permission, I may recreate an evening's activity in Swamiji's apartment just before he would go down to the storefront for *kīrtana* on Monday, Wednesday or Friday night:

When I come into his room he recognizes me. I say I'm feeling better now in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and I'm getting through the days at the welfare office by thinking and working for Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda says something to encourage me, like, "I told you it would be like that and you will see it is true more and more. It is such a nice thing." Then he turns to Raphael and says, "When are you going to fix the lock on this door?" Raphael replies, "I'm sorry, Swamiji, I didn't get around to it." Then Gargamuni comes in with a report, "Sw-Sw-Swamiji, today I put one of your pa-pa-pamphlets in a h-h-headshop and the guy said, 'Is this the same Hinduism that has the caste system? We don't want this here.' So I said to him, 'Everywhere in the world there is this system of four divisions.'"

Prabhupāda says, "Yes, he doesn't know the *varṇāśrama* system because he's less than a *śūdra*." We all laugh at that and Gargamuni says, "Sw-Sw-Swamiji, h-he wouldn't want to hear that from *me*! Maybe you could go talk with him."

Swamiji says to Gargamuni, "So how much did you collect for those pamphlets?"

"Well I only got t-t-two dollars." Then Swamiji turns to me, "Brahmānanda says you have not signed all the invoices. But you're the secretary and you have to sign when any money is given out."

"Well, Swamiji," I say, "I did sign them, but I was at work today and they didn't give me the latest ones."

Swamiji says, "Anyway, see that everything is done properly. Whatever money we're getting is coming in by Kṛṣṇa's grace and we have to account for it all." Gargamuni confirms, "Oh yes, Swamiji, we're very careful with all the money."

Then someone asks, "What time is it? When do we have to go down to the storefront?"

We are all aware that it's a *kīrtana* night and soon we will go down to the storefront and meet the guests. But first we go to the next room and put on *tilaka* with Swamiji. He is very attractive to us, his smile and his willingness to flow from one thing to another according to whatever comes up.

In the next room we sit down and wait for Swamiji to put on his *tilaka*, and we watch him. When he puts *tilaka* on one part of his body, then we do it in the same way. Swamiji looks over from his corner to see Jadurāṇī painting and he says,

"Oh, you're improving. This is very nice. Yes, Lord Caitanya used to dance like that. He was very beautiful with a golden form. He used to dance and everyone in Navadvīpa would come to take part in that *kīrtana*. So make it like that."

She asks him, "Swamiji, should Lord Nityānanda have an effulgence around His head?"

"Oh yes, He also."

"And what about Gadādhara?"

"Yes."

"Should he have long hair?"

"No, this one should be shaven-headed just like a Hindu *brahmacārī*, but the others may be like that."

Swamiji says that if we can get a good Indian *mṛdaṅga* it would add to the *kīrtanas*. Someone says he saw a *mṛdaṅga* like that uptown in a store and will try to get it. Swamiji then mentions that the harmonium should not be played the way we play it, as a drone.

"No, Swamiji? I thought it was a drone instrument."

"No," Swamiji says, "it's not a drone instrument. It is played with melody. I will show you one day how to play, but for now you can play it like that. The drone instrument is that *tamboura*."

Madhusūdāna comes up and says, "Swamiji, there's about twenty people down in the storefront and I think most of us should go down now."

"Yes," Swamiji says, "you all go down and I will join you." Swamiji has just taken his shower and so his skin, which is always soft and smooth, is

especially fresh. He holds the wet *tilaka* clay and a mirror in his left hand and his wrist is turned in a delicate way. Keeping his back straight he glances down to the mirror bending his neck a bit forward. With his pinky extended gracefully, he starts to apply the *tilaka* with the ring finger of his right hand. then he offers several sticks of burning incense and rings a bell before the picture of the Pañca-tattva. We don't know what he is praying or what *bhajana* he is singing, but we watch. He is barefoot in his apartment, but on leaving, he will put on his white rubber shoes with the pointy toes.

We go down to the temple and mix with the guests or talk among ourselves, waiting. Although we have just been with Swamiji upstairs, now there is more anticipation that he will soon come in and start the program. We are proud and thrilled to see him suddenly appear through the door. Swamiji is a real *sādhū* from India, wrapped around with *khāḍi* saffron, with his *tilaka* so fresh going up his long forehead and the arrow point on his nose very nicely done. He stands at the door a moment and steps out of his slippers.

There is a slight tilt to the floor. It is not uncommon to see cockroaches. It's a narrow room and everyone is crowded in. I watch from my own spot on the floor where I like to sit—in the front half of the room (closer to Swamiji) and on the right hand side of the room. I feel happy with new well-being, thinking with pleasure: "I'm going to stick to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness no matter what anyone says. I'm following Swamiji. Tonight I'm going to listen



to what he says and I'm going to get into the *kīrtana*."

As you dedicate yourself, you look above Swamiji's head to the circular canvas of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. They look almost like puppets or mannequins, but still, it's Kṛṣṇa with His flute and Rādhārāṇī, and so it's very nice. The form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, focused above Swamiji, is made of bright reds and blues and yellows and filled with jaunty angles, Kṛṣṇa's flute, His elbows and legs, and Rādhārāṇī holding on to His shoulder.

### *Kīrtana-rasa*

#### 1.21

Swamiji says, "Let us have *kīrtana*," and he starts playing the drum. He sings solo for quite a few minutes. He begins with "*vande 'ham*" and builds up. You become a little anxious, hoping that the guests won't go away. If they can just wait, everything will be great. But even if they don't like it, it's great. Finally, the Swami begins to sing Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. We look up to him and sing in response, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The whole room is filled with the *kīrtana*, with no energy left over for anything else. Most of the guests are singing. By giving yourself to this singing, you go out of yourself. Swamiji said this is cosmic consciousness. You can do it without taking any drugs.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare,

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. We chant, then Swamiji chants. His head moves slightly from side to side. He has very nice fingernails, cuticles, half moons, and you can see all that as he plays, his hands and fingers working on the drum and singing.

After the *kīrtana*, there was a transition before he began to speak. As people quieted down, he opened the book and started. But some people would leave because they didn't want to hear the philosophy.

Now the mood was intellectual philosophy, argument, spiritual knowledge. Swamiji explained that the chanting is Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It's all described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. As he spoke, everything became clear and defined: Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person according to the previous *ācāryas*. "Kṛṣṇa," "Vṛndāvana," "Goloka," "*Bhagavad-gītā*," everything was being explained.

I faithfully heard, believing in what he said, accepting the arguments. I tried to grasp the philosophy, the language, although sometimes missing points.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness was substantial knowledge, and could be reached only by devotion. There were glimpses—that you could actually attain pure *bhakti* and live forever with Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Swami explained things which no one else talked about, that life is filled with problems and miseries that no one can solve, birth, death, disease and old age...the *ātmā* is free, and you don't die. We were sharing

and accepting what he said. I couldn't directly experience much of it, but when he said, "It's such a nice thing"—we all respected that he was in an elevated consciousness beyond us. He was a self-realized soul. He was far-out—because he had so much devotion and realization of Kṛṣṇa. And that was the difference between he and us.

### *Faithful Meditation*

#### **1.22**

When Kṛṣṇa appeared on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, he was about ninety-years old, Prabhupāda said. By that time in His life, Kṛṣṇa had married 16,108 wives. Each of His wives had ten children by the Lord, and each of those children had married and had their own children as well. So Kṛṣṇa was a great-grandfather with a family numbering in the millions, and yet He looked like a beautiful youth of no more than sixteen or twenty years old. Whenever I hear these "fantastic" details of Kṛṣṇa's life, I put myself into the position of an innocent person who never heard of Kṛṣṇa before. "What will they think?" And then I remember how I first thought when I heard of Kṛṣṇa and His wives and *gopīs*.

How did Śrīla Prabhupāda convince us? He did it on the basis of perfect Vedic authority. He also gave the evidence of powerful scholars and sages who accept everything that Kṛṣṇa says and does. Prabhupāda explained: Since Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, nothing is impossible for Him. Why be astounded that He had 16,000 wives,

since He lives in the hearts of all the innumerable living entities?

I have become faithful in accepting the way that Prabhupāda thinks about Kṛṣṇa. When I hear that Kṛṣṇa married 16,000 wives, I accept it calmly, because I accept Śrīla Prabhupāda. I can empathize with the cynics but I reject their reductionist explanation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I can defend myself against the atheists and yet I admit to this simple faith: I accept Kṛṣṇa as God because Prabhupāda said He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The acceptance of spiritual truths such as I've mentioned about Kṛṣṇa and His superhuman *līlā* is sometimes given the name "dogma." The dictionary definition of dogma is "a philosophical tenet; a theological doctrine authoritatively asserted; a principle or belief." In ordinary usage, dogma is derided as opposed to the truth, which is free and dynamic. Dogma implies dullness and fear. The religionist is supposed to be afraid to even think, lest he begin to lose his faith. However, there's another way to look at it. It's not wrong that some conclusions are settled once and for all. Even Descartes, in attempting to dismantle all dogmatic beliefs, arrived at his "I think, therefore I am." Everyone works from a premise even if it's "Nothing is certain," or "Nothing exists." We accept the theistic proofs of *śāstra* and we have learned how to defend them. More importantly, by following them we gain direct realizations of Kṛṣṇa, His name, His form, His loving service.

Prabhupāda criticized the speculations of an im-

perfect philosopher, but he encouraged us to think, meditate, worship. It is not dogmatic. We are not afraid to look and think. But for subjects that are beyond the human jurisdiction, we take guidance from the Lord and His pure devotee.

When I meditate on Śrīla Prabhupāda or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it is *they* who are meditating within me, just as when you pray, it is Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master who are praying with you. This is faithful meditation. And when the devotee becomes confused or doubtful, he places his inquiry before the Lord: "This is my doubt, O Kṛṣṇa, and but for yourself, I have found no one who can answer it."

### *Sugar Doll*

#### 1.23

Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda commenting on his personal method of reading, "It is just like sugar doll. Anywhere touch—it is sweet. That's all. When I read books, I open anywhere. Any book I take, and anywhere I open, and I read" (Conversation, March 2, 1975).

I have seen Śrīla Prabhupāda do this. He kept a volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the pocket of the airlines seat, took it out, opened at random and read for hours. And in Los Angeles and other places, he would go to his garden in the evening and ask a disciple to read out loud by opening anywhere in the *Kṛṣṇa* book.

When the book distributors met with Śrīla Prabhupāda, they wanted to know, "What is the best book to distribute?" Prabhupāda first recom-

mended *Bhagavad-gītā* and they noted it down. Then he added *Īśopāniṣad*. A devotee asked, "What about *Kṛṣṇa* book?" Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, *Kṛṣṇa*. They will read as storybook. The *Kṛṣṇa Trilogy* is selling very nice?" Then he said, "*Nectar of Devotion* is very nice." Another devotee asked about *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for distribution at the airport, and Prabhupāda approved. Another devotee said, "Many of the *karmīs* appreciate the Fourth Canto, part four, the story of King Purañjana." Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, it is very nice, Purañjana."

I like to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's opening of any book anywhere, and recommending any *Kṛṣṇa* conscious scripture as beneficial for others. We may also remember *him* in that way, by the method known as sugar doll.

#### 1.24

A possible weakness in my meditations is that I claim to be yearning for union with Śrīla Prabhupāda, yet I am afraid of an actual encounter with him—because he makes me surrender. If I'm afraid of an encounter, that means that I prefer to remember him rather than to be with him. In the memory form, Prabhupāda cannot answer me back. He is the object of my worship, but he remains silent. This type of meditation could come dangerously close to worshipping an "illusory Prabhupāda."

But I shouldn't damn myself and say that I am trying to avoid him. Despite my laziness, when Prabhupāda speaks, I will obey. Neither is he entirely silent since his disappearance. He speaks

through his many disciples, and I'm listening to them. He also speaks in my heart and I respond. He speaks directly in his writings. Prabhupāda meditations are not one-way talks with only me speaking whatever I like before an idol of my own creation. At their best, Prabhupāda meditations are two-way conversations by worshipful followers. As one can "talk" with Kṛṣṇa, so it is possible to do this with *guru* also.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was once asked about communication with him "when you're not with us." At first he said we can read his books, but the devotee asked, "What about in addition to your books, just as Supersoul speaks to us?" Prabhupāda replied that it depended on the purity of the disciple.

Regarding his relationship with his own spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "I think that His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī is always seeing my activities and guiding me within my heart by his words. As it is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 'tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye: Spiritual inspiration comes from within the heart, wherein the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His Paramātmā feature, is always sitting with all his devotees and associates'" ("Concluding Words" of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*).

I admit my failures but I know that Śrīla Prabhupāda is with me. One time I placed a doubt like this before Śrīla Prabhupāda's friend, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, in Vṛndāvana. My complaint was, "I used to be more surrendered when Prabhupāda was personally present." Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja replied

(very soberly and sweetly), "You should not think like this." He said that I should consider that in my younger days with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I was only a boy. Prabhupāda gave me orders for everything in my life: "You should chant, you should go there, you should do this, you should do that." He taught as a father and mother teaches the child, sometimes pulling them by the hand. But when the father sees they have grown, he wants them to use their intelligence and do the service on their own.

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said, "You are given a chance to do better *sevā*. So you should think that I am a *more* surrendered soul than I was. I have to do highly qualified *sevā*, which at that time I could not understand. I was then not in a standard to know what was wrong and what was right. Whatever he ordered or told I obeyed. But now I have to act according to his wish. So I am most surrendered."

When I asked how one can understand that he's pleasing the *guru* after his disappearance, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja replied by quoting the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse which ends, *yeṇ ātmā su prasidati*. When Lord Hari is satisfied, then the individual soul is satisfied. At the end of this conversation with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja I said, "I tend to be doubtful."

He replied, "No, never, never. Go on. If you want to do anything, or begin anything you should think I'm doing it only for the pleasure of Guru and Gaurāṅga. Don't be doubtful."

Although I have to consider the possibility that I'm still a rascal, I know that Śrīla Prabhupāda loves me and finds a place for me in his service. We have



to be confident of our ongoing exchange with him, but not *too* confident so that we think we know everything about Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. Be confident of your own surrender—but always a fool before the *guru*.

Every disciple must consider himself completely unaware of the science of Kṛṣṇa and must always be ready to carry out the orders of the spiritual master to become competent in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master.

—Cc. Ādi, 7.72, purport

## 1.25

Keep trying as you do in *japa*, again and again. Why do we get bored? One reason is bodily limitation: fatigue. It's hard to control the mind. You are also affected by the rain and overcast sky. You're not spiritually advanced enough to experience *ruci* (taste) at every hour. Without the sanction of Providence, nothing can happen.

But think—there are hundreds and thousands of followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda. They are all meditating on him *by their service*. For example, Rasāla dasa said that he and his wife, Sitā dāsī, are "consumed" by training and working oxen at Gītā-nāgarī. In summertime, they are in the field plowing and planting all day. In the winter, all day hauling wood. They live by the dharmic vision that

humans should work the bull and protect the cows. Another cow protection follower, Balabhadra prabhu, has taken a few oxen travelling with him in a trailer, to tell the world about it. "Unless this is done, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is on paper only, or only in the temple."

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted a society with temples and devotees living together. But ISKCON is attacked by irate parents, anti-cultists and various money-hungry rascals. Who will protect ISKCON from the fights that drain the society's treasury and threaten to close down the Movement as a visible force? Amarendra prabhu fights—like an infantry soldier on a beachhead, he struggles inch by inch, foot by foot, in the courts. He is a lawyer for Kṛṣṇa. He has hardly any time to chant his *japa* rounds. Few devotees are able or willing to help him, although it's a matter of life and death for ISKCON. He stays up late at night writing legal briefs, makes phone calls, meets religionists and lawyers, seeking their support. I can't even describe what he does, just as I don't know what it's like to walk for hours in a straight line behind the oxen. But Amarendra is acting on Prabhupāda's order, and he is pleasing Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda.

Hundreds of others go out on the streets every day, "Excuse me Sir, we're giving out these books on spiritual knowledge and a better way of life." The book distributors are Prabhupāda's daring soldiers. They get rejected dozens of times within an hour, and they look deeply inward for the strength to go on:

Why such risks? Because they want to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness and it is difficult . . . . Now we can just imagine how merciful Kṛṣṇa is to those who engage in His service, risking everything for Him. Therefore it is certain that such persons must reach the supreme planet after leaving the body.

—Bg. 11.55, purport

Go ahead, appreciate the workers of Śrīla Prabhupāda. See yourself by comparison as a rabbit among elephants. That *pūjārī* at Bhaktivedanta Manor who comes and goes off the altar with the Deities' clothes and bathing paraphernalia, quiet and determined to serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—he's doing it because Prabhupāda wants it. Somewhere a mother is teaching the *Kṛṣṇa* book to her child . . . *pādayatra* devotees are walking and chanting through another village. Anyone, anywhere who thinks of his order . . . but especially we're attracted and humbled by those who work hard, patiently, and who do it all for him. Meditate on Prabhupāda's followers.

### *Remembering a Friday Night*

#### 1.26

Rāyarāma is cheerful and friendly, to break the ice: "How are you doing?" I say, "At least I'm working for Swamiji. Otherwise, I don't see much sense in working for the welfare department anymore."

He repeats something he heard from Swamiji: "Yeah, the Swami says that there's really no benefit in any material welfare. It's like beating the husk of rice after the paddy has been removed.

"Why don't we go into the other room, and wait for Swamiji to do his bells?" Rāyarāma says.

"Yeah," I say, "but I want to first give Swamiji some typing that I finished." Rāyarāma starts a conversation with Madhusūdana dāsa. Madhusūdana's face is covered with white dots where Swamiji told him to cover his pimples with *tilaka*. Rāyarāma says, "Madhusūdana, is your father going to bring butter again? Because Swamiji says tomorrow he wants to show us how to cook. He's going to make *purīs*, so we need butter."

"Yeah, well, my father usually comes by every Saturday at ten with the butter," said Madhusūdana.

I go into Prabhupāda's inner room with my typing. There's no one in there. I take out the typing and check it over again, count the numbers of the pages and see that it's all right and then I briefly think of the essay. It was "Kṛṣṇa, The Reservoir of Pleasure." I sit and look at his tin suitcase which is his desk, and the mat that he sits on, and the picture of Kṛṣṇa standing on the world. Glancing to the left through the glass window into the other room, I see Jadurāṇī painting and singing Hare Kṛṣṇa to herself. I heard Hayagrīva's loud voice. Umāpati says, "Yeah, it's a new language called 'sanskritification!'" The Mott Street boys are goofing off. Swamiji comes out of the bathroom and

comes into his room.

I make obeisances and see his bare feet. He says, "You have finished some typing?" I present it to him. "Yes, Swamijī, it's a wonderful essay. I really like the part where you say the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa and it's the source of all pleasure." Prabhupāda listens attentively while I describe the essay.

"Yes," Swamijī says. "Everything is in the chanting." I take in his words with thirst and hunger. Swamijī says, "Even philosophy is not necessary if we could simply chant. Or course, we can't do that. I have so many activities for you boys to do but the chanting is sufficient." He looks over the typing I did. "Very good. So we will print this. Gargamuni is distributing them in the shops." Brahmānanda comes in and my moment alone with Swamijī dissolves. Brahmānanda has just seen a building at Prabhupāda's request. They talk about it briefly and then Swamijī says, "Tomorrow we're going to teach the boys how to cook for the Love Feast." I say, "I'd like to come too." "Yes," Swamijī says, "of course. Do you know how to roll *purīs*?"

### *Dancing for Swamijī*

#### **1.27**

You go downstairs from Swamijī's room into the courtyard and into the storefront by the hallway door. As soon as you open the door, you see the people and look for your regular sitting spot. As you sit down, you're thinking, "If I can get into it, I would like to get up when they're dancing and also

dance. I'll have to see if I can actually do it. It would be nice if Swamiji would see that I can do it."

It's Friday night and so there are extra people, and some unusual ones. You hope they have the faith to hear what he's saying. But whether they do or not, you're going to get into it.

I keep thinking about wanting to dance. I don't want to show off but if I can do it . . . There might be somebody in the audience who knows me and they might laugh. Unless you're doing it in spiritual consciousness, you'll feel funny. You have to raise your hands. The girls are there. Sometimes when I see devotees dance, I think they're on an ego trip. But if you can do it seriously, it's okay.

Everything depends on Swamiji. If he doesn't come down to the storefront, then nothing can happen. But he won't be late. Everybody is waiting for the show to begin with Swamiji's arrival. Then he actually comes in. He steps out of his slippers and smiles. He steps up on the dais and sits down gracefully. His *khāḍi* robes are flowing, especially the top piece, which is long and flung around his shoulders. His *tilaka* is clean and newly put on. There's a mystical look in his eyes. His hand is reaching out for the *kāratālas*. He wraps the cloths around his fingers.

It's hot and muggy. It has been a hard day at the office. The room is closed and I'm perspiring under the arms. But I don't want this to get me down. I admit that I'm tired, but I'll try to transcend. Swamiji sure looks fresh. He's starting the *kīrtana*, so let's just get into it.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. Prabhupāda chants and then we chant. Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa. He is playing the drum. The waves keep coming again and again as we sing. The chanting is full force and you get out of the body. You just keep chanting, led by the Swamiji. After awhile, a few devotees get up and start walking around in a circle. I also get up and do the Swami step. Once you're up standing, you see everything from a different perspective. Swamiji noticed when I got up, just like he noticed the others. He's cool, he doesn't make a big thing about it, but he sees what you're doing. He likes you to be dancing. It's another surrender. To get up and dance means that you're feeling the ecstasy of the chanting. Now you have to live up to it and not worry what the people are thinking. Be daring and keep dancing with the devotees who are going around in a circle. It's not hard.

✓ Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare. I know I look foolish, but I don't care, because I'm not this body. I'm chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa; it doesn't matter how I look; *I'm not this body*. I don't care what the people in the storefront think, or my parents or the people at work. It doesn't matter because I'm into this, and this is what counts. This is what I love. If it looks foolish or whatever, I don't care.

By dancing you get close to Swamiji. When you go around in the circle you get very close to him and see the objects on his desk, like the pocket watch and his reading glasses. And the book is there and you notice the sink by the right side of

Prabhupāda. You see his face closer and the drum, and the brass rivets around the head of the drum and the two different colors of the wood of the drum. His hand is playing on the bongo head. The circle you're dancing in goes out towards the side where the audience is and you see the people in the room. Hayagrīva is playing that big cymbal with a shimmering sound. Someone's got a flute and he's going with that. Someone is strumming the strings of the old piano set up by the door.

Swamiji goes the full half hour and over—because he loves to chant. He's really happy when a lot of people are chanting together and his devotees are up dancing. We don't know what he's thinking, he's so beyond us, but at least we know he's deeply in the *kīrtana*, feeling the *rasa* within himself. He's within himself and at the same time, he's doing everything. We're all chanting because he's leading.

It's Friday night and so throughout the Lower East Side, people are getting drunk and many are on LSD trips and other things, but our scene is goodness, in the shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the shelter of the pure devotee.

### *Purport Meditation*

1.28

We think that we have met Your Goodness, by the will of Providence, just so that we may accept you as captain of the ship for those who desire to cross the difficult ocean of



Kali, which deteriorates all the good qualities of a human being.

—*Bhāg.* 1.1.23

Prabhupāda's purports provide the best meditation. It is Prabhupāda who meditates on Kṛṣṇa and we get to share his direct realizations in the form of the Bhaktivedanta purport. In this case, our part in the meditation is to submissively ponder over what he has said and apply it in our lives.

We also like to meditate on how Prabhupāda composed his purports—how Kṛṣṇa worked through him, how he consulted the previous Vaiṣṇava commentators, how he deeply felt the anomalies of the age of Kali, and how he desired to broadcast *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the remedy to all ills. The depths of his realizations are beyond us, but we can detect their force in all of Prabhupāda's work. He heard from his Guru Mahārāja, he thought about it, he waited, he wrote, he worked and Kṛṣṇa empowered him as *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*.

The ideal person has given us his personal ecstasies in the shape of *Bhāgavatam* purports. The challenge is whether we can read them in a pure and simple way. Compared to former methods of meditation, reading the purports is very easy. You don't have to sit for thousands of years in yogic trance and endure severe austerities. But you have to be humble and blessed by *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. Desiring deliverance from the vices of the age of Kali, who is not willing to submissively hear the Bhaktivedanta purports?

In the verse quoted above, Prabhupāda is the captain of the ship and the ship is the message of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the shape of *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In another *Bhāgavatam* verse, Lord Kapila recommends that the messages of Godhead are best heard in the company of pure devotees: "In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart" (*Bhāg.* 1.2.14).

### *Slash with the Weapon of Knowledge*

#### **1.29**

When I read about Kṛṣṇa in Prabhupāda's books, I often stop and pray for faith. We're surrounded by Kali-yuga atheists, just as in summer at Śaraṇāgati we're surrounded by blood-thirsty mosquitoes. You can't just ignore them—so we pray for faith. As Prabhupāda writes, "Faith is a most important factor for progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." In one sense, it's shameful to have to pray to the Supreme Lord to convince us that He exists! It's not a servant's business to ask for proof of his Lord's existence. But it's a matter of survival against the bloodsuckers.

There's no problem doubting in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *existence*. He didn't live five thousand years ago, and so I'm not dependent on hearing from someone who was actually there. I'm an eye witness and I received many hours of direct association. (It might also be said that those disciples of Prabhupāda who received substantial association

with him, have a greater responsibility. We may consider ourselves more sinful and fallen if we don't live up to it.) Bloodsuckers may admit that Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly did exist, but they try to criticize him. They judge him in a material way which is forbidden by Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Upadeś-āmṛta*. Rūpa Gosvāmī says that just as the muddy Ganges remains pure during the rainy season, so the pure devotee is perfect despite his apparent defects such as physical illness, growing old, etc. Most devotees know this and so they are rightly situated. But sometimes we expose ourselves to bad association—and before we know it, we've been hit by the mosquitoes of doubt.

I confess that sometimes I find fault with Prabhupāda's use of the English language, and sometimes I think he's too heavy in an argument. Now I mustn't get too depressed by these attacks of doubt—and I shouldn't dwell on them as if they constitute another form of "Prabhupāda meditation." But they should be faced squarely and routed out. Prabhupāda meditation is therefore sometimes conducted on a battlefield just as Kṛṣṇa's sublime discourse was conducted on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

We sit in a lotus position and plan to meditate upon the pure devotee, when suddenly someone throws a stink bomb on our head. We're singing, "Jaya Prabhupāda," and a demon like Bālabāla comes and throws puss and urine on our *yajña* of remembrance. So we cry out to Lord Balarāma, "Please give me the strength to serve You!" And we

fight. We recall that this has happened before, even to a great devotee like Arjuna: "The doubts which have arisen in your heart because of ignorance should be slashed with the weapon of knowledge. Armed with *yoga*, O Bhārata, arise and fight." Sometimes we have to meditate on Prabhupāda even while fighting an enemy.

"Your Prabhupāda's use of English is imperfect," says a voice which has penetrated within my skull.

"Oh, yeah?" I challenge back. "His English is a lot better than your Sanskrit, Bengali or Hindi! Actually, his English is fine. We like the way he talks."

"But why is he so heavy with his guests? Why does he interrupt them when they speak? Why does he correct everybody and insist on only Kṛṣṇa?"

"He's not too heavy. That's your own manufactured opinion. Almost all his guests liked being with him even if he called them a demon. I don't think you have listened carefully to what he's saying. You can't understand. From his position, he saw how deep and dark people's ignorance is. The nonsense that everyone was usually saying to him, their speculations, are the very concoctions that have been misleading the world for hundreds of years. We can't imitate him and therefore *we* may not be as heavy. But there is no fault in Prabhupāda's preaching except for the fault in your eyes."

Fighting back from an attack on faith is good for us. It increases blood circulation, and brings a

healthy glow to the face. It kicks out the enemies within. If Kṛṣṇa desires, He will also grant us some peaceful hours to meditate undisturbed on the qualities of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. But when the bugs bite, we can't just sit there, we must jump up and fight back.

### *Prayer for Help*

#### 1.30

"For any activity done in devotional life, one should always pray to the previous *ācāryas*, 'Kindly help me.'" The Vaiṣṇava is always thinking himself helpless and begging help from the previous *ācāryas*. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, you will find the author at the end of *every* chapter:

*śrī-rūpa-ragunātha-pāde yara aśa  
Caitanya-caritāmṛta kahe Kṛṣṇadāsa*

Praying at the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Raghunātha, always desiring their mercy, I Kṛṣṇadāsa, narrate Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, following in their footsteps.

"In every line he's thinking of Rūpa-Raghunātha, the previous *ācāryas*. So let me surrender to the Gosvāmīs and they will help me to write. You cannot write! That is not possible. So this is Vaiṣṇava's policy" (from a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, London, 7/17/73, on *Bhagavad-gītā*, 1.20).

## *PART TWO*

## 2.1

*Thoughts of Swamiji (from five blocks away)*

*(Written in the mood of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

Swamiji, you're in your room  
and I'm here at the welfare office  
thinking of you.  
I'm fortunate  
to be so close to you,  
and I'll see you at lunchtime.  
My supervisor doesn't know  
and Miss Femme Fatale doesn't know  
'though I'd tell them more if I could.  
For now I have to live within,  
praying to Viṣṇu  
the Lord of *bhakti-yoga*.

Swamiji, as I think of your kind glances  
and the chanting you've brought  
to the Lower East Side,  
I'm grateful to be your son.

I've got so many misconceptions  
of spiritual life  
and heaps of dirty things in my heart.  
You're changing all that  
but I'm just a crawling infant.

Please stay with your children,  
Brahmānanda, Acyutānanda, Kīrtanānanda,  
Rūpānuga . . .  
don't leave us  
or we'll all fall down.

I'm praying at the office  
to serve your mission  
with 134 dollars a week.  
Hearing your lectures every morning,  
sometimes I'm alone with you  
to ask a question:  
"Should I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa within?"

I'll see you again soon,  
O Spiritual Master,  
pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa,  
and I'm living for that.  
Please accept this mango.

*Harer Nāma Harer Nāma*

## 2.2

I like to remember Śrīla Prabhupāda's emphasis on the importance of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. When Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches that the topmost stage of God realization can be attained simply by chanting the holy names, we are pleased and convinced. Even though I can't take up the chanting properly, still it is a solace and inspiration to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda tell us about it. I don't tire of his repetitions on this theme. It's a treat to see him spell out the *mahāmantra* in many Bhakti-



vedanta purports. Each time he praises the holy names we are reminded, "Yes, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Just see how Prabhupāda emphasizes it."

An outstanding example is in the eighth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna to "Remember Me" at the end of life. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that this remembrance can be achieved simply by chanting. "Therefore the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare is the best process for successfully changing one's state of being at the end of one's life" (Bg. 8.6, purport). As many times as Kṛṣṇa says, "Think of Me," Prabhupāda reminds us, "By chanting Kṛṣṇa's names, one will be transferred to the Supreme planet, Kṛṣṇaloka, without a doubt."

Similarly, in the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda reminds us that all attempts to meditate on Lord Kṛṣṇa can be successfully carried out simply by chanting: "The process is very simple: one can devote himself in his occupation and engage at the same time in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. Such transcendental chanting attracts the devotee to the Personality of Godhead" (Bg. 12.6-7, purport).

Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended the chanting of the holy names of God even to persons who did not use the names Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Thus he applied the *harināma* verse, which recommends, "Only by chanting the holy name, can one attain God realization in the age of Kali." In a conversation with

guests in Iran, Prabhupāda advised that all persons in the Islamic culture should chant the name of Allah. Some of his guests objected and gave their interpretation that the name of God was material. Prabhupāda refuted this on the basis of the *Koran*. Some guests pointed out that Allah was the Arabic word for God, but other Islamic languages would have different names to call Him. Prabhupāda replied, "It may be Turkish name, it may be Arabic name, it may be Sanskrit name. Whatever he knows, let him chant. That is our program." When a guest doubted that the name of God is perfect, Prabhupāda replied as follows:

If the name Allah indicates to God, then this Allah word is as good as God. There is no difference . . . . If Allah is an approved name of God, you chant it. That is our request. We don't force you to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. No, we don't say that. If somebody says Jehovah is the name of God, that's all right, you chant Jehovah. If you say Allah is a name of God, that's all right, you do it. We simply request that you chant the holy name of God . . . . We say: *harināma*. That is the *śāstra*. *Harināma*. The name of the Lord.

—Conversation, Iran, Mar 14, 1975

Only a hard core materialist can fail to be roused

by Prabhupāda's invitation to utter the names of God. As there is full potency in God's names, so there is all potency in Prabhupāda's faithful preaching of the Holy Name.

### *A Meditation on Pride*

#### 2.3

There is no difference between the spiritual master's instructions and the spiritual master himself. In his absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple.

—Cc. Ādi 1.35

What does this mean, that the *guru* 's order is the pride of the disciple? It means the disciple has received a treasure, and this is the cause of his satisfaction. He's not boastful about it, but undeniably, his *guru*'s order is a cause for self-congratulation. He's confident that a great soul is leading him back to Godhead. He's no longer down-trodden. The disciple of a bona fide spiritual master has won the prize, the cream, the flower.

Such pride exists even in the Supreme—Lord Kṛṣṇa is proud of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and She is proud of Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda was proud of his Guru Mahārāja who was never defeated, and his Guru Mahārāja was proud to be the son of Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura. All devotees of Lord Caitanya are proud to belong to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*.

Material existence crushes us and makes us

ashamed. Our relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda makes us transcendental. Yet this pride doesn't work against humility. We always remain a fool before the spiritual master.

One time I wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda that I did not think myself a very bold preacher. He wrote back that he too once thought he could not speak, but by practice he gained confidence. Moreover, he said, we're not cheating anyone when we speak, so you should not be hesitant or ashamed. Prabhupāda compared the devotees of the Lord to a servant of the king. As the king is most honorable, so is his servant.

The spiritual pride in the *guru's* orders implies a grave responsibility. One has to discharge Prabhupāda's orders for the benefit of the whole world. The pride of the elite must be preserved at all costs. Arjuna was proud of his friendship with Kṛṣṇa, but when Arjuna wanted to renounce the *kṣatriya's* duty, Kṛṣṇa warned him not to dishonor their glorious relationship. And so it is stated that the spiritual master will always keep company with a disciple "as long as the disciple follows strictly the instructions of the spiritual master."

Let us be proud of the knowledge in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Never take it as a minor event that we have come to accept them as scriptures. Who can comprehend these things except the devotees themselves? People will take it as vainglory. But even at the risk of being misunderstood, we have to speak and write of Prabhupāda's glories. The world should see splendid architecture in his

memory, his *samādhis* and museums—and the Bhaktivedanta Institute and the Bhaktivedanta Manor. Most important of all, we should consider ourselves blessed by his association, and so in pride we bow down at his lotus feet. By the causeless mercy of Prabhupāda, even the lowest born and most fallen can now aspire to the topmost bliss, Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. May we always remember that we are the servants of the true servant of the Supreme.

### *A Canned Memory*

#### 2.4

I want to remember the time when Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted a daily mango from me. The amazing thing is that Śrīla Prabhupāda used to remember this insignificant act, and even in his very last weeks in Vṛndāvana, while recalling the happy days at 26 Second Avenue he said, "Satsvarūpa would bring me a mango." So there was something about it that I wish to remember. But when I try to recall the exchange, I come up with only the same old memory. I complained about this to myself, to the "file clerk" whose job it is to keep all these memories intact. He began to answer me back:

*File Clerk:* "You have spoken in a deriding way about canned memories. But the very thing you deride is also a strength. Time after time when you want to recall something, I've got it and I can supply it. You feel it's stale by repeating it, but what can I say? At least you have them. And you can feel

sure about these memories—they're reliable. The fact that you don't experience all the emotions you'd like to and all the colors you'd like to see, and that fact that you're really not there as a person, but it's the information presented in a codified way, well what can I say? A memory is what it is. So take it and appreciate it."

When the file clerk spoke up so strongly, I began to pacify him, telling him my appreciation for his work. It's true he's kept important facts for history. But what about the actual experience? We didn't appreciate how important Śrīla Prabhupāda was. Now we understand that even things in relation to him which seemed unimportant at the time, were certainly worth keeping. Nothing should have been rejected. And so without criticizing the memories that still exist, I pointed out to my clerk that we should make more effort to remember Śrīla Prabhupāda and not claim "that's all there is."

*To this file clerk I replied:* "I admit that memory is very deep and elusive: the ways of the mind are unknown to me also. I did not deliberately reject anything about Prabhupāda, but we are all subjected to forgetfulness. Ultimately, Kṛṣṇa is the final decider on these things. From Him comes knowledge, memory and forgetfulness. If He wants us to suddenly remember Śrīla Prabhupāda, then that's a great blessing on us, and if He wants us to forget something, it is our fate to accept that. The files of memory have no bottom to them, and so we can go as deep as possible and still keep going. If you like, we can do it together and keep trying."

And so I researched for hours, but I found nothing new. I have resigned myself at least for now, to offering to the reader the same *dahl*, rice and *capatis* that I've offered before, in hopes that someone out there is hungry for more of the same. (In support of repetition, I may offer this statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda: "That question we have already discussed, but there is no harm discussing it again because any substantial knowledge if it is discussed one after another, twice, thrice, it is better" (Lecture on Bg. 2.13, March 1966).

### *The Mango-giving*

The Swami mentioned mangoes. He told the story of his spiritual master, who when he was only two or three years old, ate a mango without offering it to the Deity. When his Father (Bhaktivinoda Thākura) told him that this was an offense, the young child vowed never to eat mango again. Prabhupāda told us that we Americans could not fully estimate what a sacrifice that was, since in India, the mango is appreciated as the most delicious of all fruits. Prabhupāda also recalled that when he was a boy, they always had plenty of mangoes—he remembered running into the house from play and grabbing a mango whenever he liked. And Swamiji one time mentioned that mangoes were not available in America.

So one day while at the welfare office and thinking of Swamiji, I remembered his mention of the mango and decided that I would get him one. I went to a produce store on the corner of First Street

and First Avenue and asked the man for a mango. He had none on display, but brought me back to a refrigerated room in the rear of the store where he had a special case for connoisseurs. One mango cost one dollar. It was small but nice, soft but not too soft, green and golden. I took it carefully in a bag and brought it at once to Swamiji.

Swamiji smiled and received the mango graciously. He asked me where I got it. After that, I stopped every day at the grocer and got another mango. When I had been doing this for two weeks, I came again one day when Swamiji's room was filled with boys. The Mott Street boys were there, and they made me feel a twinge of envy. They didn't do much work or raise any money, and yet they were able to stay more with Swamiji than I was. So I gave the mango to Swamiji and sat down with the others. Even as I did so, Swamiji said, "Very good boy." He said it the way you would speak to a very young child. The boys burst out laughing. I blushed and felt I was the butt of a joke. But then Swamiji said, "No, this is love. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness." And then I felt very pleased.

*Friendly to All—According to Śrīla Prabhupāda*

## 2.5

A devotee of Kṛṣṇa is friendly to everyone . . . he knows that only devotional service to Kṛṣṇa can relieve a person from all the problems of life. He has personal experience of this, and therefore he wants to



introduce this system, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, into human society. There are many examples in history of devotees of the Lord who risked their lives for the spreading of God consciousness . . . . Therefore, the highest benefit one can render to human society is relieving one's neighbor from all material problems.

One may say that this definition of friendliness is a personal interpretation given by Śrīla Prabhupāda. But Prabhupāda would always deny that he was giving his own opinions. (The previous *ācāryas* and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself also define friendliness in terms of being compassionate to others by distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.) But even if we consider that Prabhupāda's emphasis on preaching is his personal opinion, the disciple wants to adopt that opinion as his own. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa, while teaching His viewpoint to Arjuna, concludes, "That is My final opinion." Every living entity has the free will to hold a different opinion than Kṛṣṇa. But we should not do so.

When I repeat Prabhupāda's opinion, I give it as the final word. I also give it as if it were my own conviction. If I had not met Śrīla Prabhupāda, I certainly would have had some other attitude about friendliness (or any topic). I would have been inconclusive, or I would have had a new opinion every few years. But once you accept a spiritual master you should also accept his conclusions.

In the beginning of spiritual life, one may adopt the opinion of the spiritual master in a somewhat superficial or even dogmatic way. When our surrender is incomplete, we may be the mouthpiece for the convictions of our spiritual master without actually being convinced of them in the depths of our own being. At worst, a pseudo-disciple may disagree with his spiritual master. Arjuna disagreed with Kṛṣṇa at the beginning of their talks, when Arjuna did not want to fight. After Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the whole *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna, He then asked Arjuna to make up his mind. Arjuna replied, "I am not firm and free from doubt and prepared to act according to Your instructions."

I examine myself to see if I have actually accepted the personal convictions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I try to think deeply why I cannot do what he asks me, and whether I can rectify my unsundered self. By studying his words, and associating with his sincere followers, I try to understand better the basis of Prabhupāda's convictions and "personal opinions." And I consider, as the best example, Śrīla Prabhupāda's surrender to his spiritual master. Prabhupāda claimed that he had no special potency except for this: "I believed a hundred percent in the words of my spiritual master, and always tried to carry them out."

## 2.6

*Why Didn't I Keep a Diary in 1966?*

*(In the mood of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

Swamiji, they want to know  
why I didn't keep a diary  
filled with the life  
of those days.

I thought everything was in your words,  
and they were in books and tape recordings.  
I also made notes of them.  
What is it I should have saved  
for the future? Should I have  
kept notes like, "He has brown eyes . . .  
. . . today Hayagrīva made a joke . . .  
I feel happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness,  
haven't smoked pot in two months?"  
Maybe I thought it was *māyā*.

But I'm sorry now  
I didn't keep a journal of it all.  
I had no presence of mind—  
for me the main thing  
was that you were restoring me to life—  
I was fully occupied  
holding on to your lotus feet.

Maybe I thought there was no need  
to write it down because  
we would never forget  
everything that you did and said.  
No, there's no excuse for it.

Please bless me now, Master,  
to live in those days  
remembering your *kīrtanas* and  
the time I met you  
on the street and bowed down  
on the sidewalk before you.  
As I rose you touched me with your hand.  
You were in ecstasy!  
On your morning walk—  
and I proceeded to the welfare office  
to break through the line  
of angry workers on strike.

*"Let me meditate upon him being enthused"*

2.7

*aiṁ guru devāya vidmahe  
kṛṣṇānāndaya dimahe  
tan na guroḥ pracodayat*

Let us try to understand my spiritual  
master who is always in blissful  
Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Let me meditate  
on him being enthused as he enthused  
us.

The *gāyatrī mantra* provides us with a medita-

tion on the spiritual master which may be applied to Śrīla Prabhupāda. There are actually two *mantras* to the spiritual master in the *gāyatrī*. The first is *aiṁ gurave nāmaḥ*: "I make my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master." This means we should approach Śrīla Prabhupāda not as a buddy, but as we would approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead, bowing down and offering obeisances. Śrīla Prabhupāda actually is a most intimate friend, but he should not be taken as an ordinary person.

The *gāyatrī mantra* advises us "to meditate on him being enthused." One time when he was commenting on the word enthusiasm (*utsāhā*), as used in Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Upadeśāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave himself as an example. He said, "How could I have come to America at such an old age unless I was enthusiastic?" He was enthusiastic to come to America because his *guru* ordered, and when for a whole year he got almost no response in America, Śrīla Prabhupāda remained patient, but still enthusiastic. That enthusiasm can be heard on tape recordings of Prabhupāda lecturing on the Lower East Side, where his voice often cracks with earnestness to deliver the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda was so enthusiastic to write *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that he would rise at one in the morning to do so. His composing of his purports was the perfect example of combined patience and enthusiasm. As he said, "Little drops of water wear away the stone. In this way, I've written all these books."

"Let us meditate"—the *gāyatrī mantra* advises,

and so one can continue on his own, or in the association of devotees. to think about and to discuss the enthusiastic moods and activities of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda's translation contains a particularly interesting phrase, "Let me meditate on him being enthused *as he enthused us.*" A genuine disciple has become enthusiastic in devotional service, and he knows that this is due to the enthusiasm of his spiritual master.

We may meditate on how our enthusiastic spiritual master has transferred this *śakti* of *utsāhā* to us. Prabhupāda said that the mother of his disciple, Acyutānanda, complained that her son used to lounge around the house all the time and was unwilling to go on errands. But since he had come to live with Swamiji, he was always enthusiastic to cook and to run any errands asked by his spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also fond of a pamphlet produced by a Christian minister in Boston which made reference to Śrīla Prabhupāda's enthusiastic disciples. The minister said that he met a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee giving out literature in the neighborhood of the church. The priest said, "These are actually our boys, but previously they were never interested in going to church. Now they have become mad after God." Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that it was only by the enthusiasm of his disciples that the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement was spreading around the world.

When we do not feel enthusiastic, let us meditate on the enthusiasm of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Let it ignite within us our natural enthusiasm to serve

Kṛṣṇa. This is Kṛṣṇa-ananda, which motivates all the thoughts and activities of a pure devotee of the Lord. Whether he is grave and silent, or dancing in the *kīrtana* of Lord Caitanya, whether he is being honored by many followers, or treated as an out-caste, the pure Vaiṣṇava is always merged in enthusiasm and bliss. Let us meditate upon him being enthused just as he enthused us.

## 2.8

*Rādhāṣṭami 1966*

*(In the mood of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

Swamiji, I'm in my room  
thinking of you  
and what you are giving us.  
As I told my brother-in-law,  
"It's transcendental loving service."

It's raining today  
and tomorrow I get initiated.  
It will be fun.

I've got my red *japa* beads.  
You are my *guru* .

I feel serious  
about this initiation  
into Hinduism.

... Now it's later the next day  
and you've given me a spiritual name.  
My true name is Satsvarūpa dāsa.  
From now on,  
I'm no longer Steve Guarino.

When I say I believe in God  
and God is Kṛṣṇa  
and He is present in the *japa* beads  
is this my imagination?  
Is it my belief?  
Is it fact?  
What is the proof?

Anyway, as long as I can see you,  
my doubts will be defeated.  
I've never met anyone like you:  
You are close to us as a friend and father  
and yet you are with Kṛṣṇa  
in a trance of devotion.  
You make strong arguments  
against all doubts.  
What's ahead? I don't know.  
Let me read your books.

From now on  
I'm no longer Steve Guarino.



Let me write it, Satsvarūpa dāsa,  
and more visions of you:

In your turtleneck jersey,  
your shining eyes,  
working at your *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*,  
your spiritual body,  
your life in India,  
the mystery of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Now autumn is coming  
and it is a brilliant hope.  
You say we will go out chanting  
in Tompkins Square Park,  
you say we will go everywhere,  
even Russia and China.  
I too may have to go somewhere.

I want to be serious  
and get up *very* early  
and fight sleep and sex desire.  
And work for you.

It is a brilliant hope—that  
Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Godhead  
and we can play with Him in Vṛndāvana.  
If my father and mother don't like it,  
they can reject me, so what?  
As Rāyarāma said, "It's the oldest  
story in the world, that kids  
grow up and go their way."

Swamiji, you know all this  
and you know Kṛṣṇa.  
Please accept me.  
I'll write more soon  
if you are pleased with this.

*Sanātana Gosvāmī and Mustard Flowers*

**2.9**

As I become aware of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I notice that all of my thinking is guided by him and leads to him. Let me select at random two thoughts or things that are with me right now and note how they are connected to Prabhupāda consciousness. My example will be a volume of Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Śrī Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*, which is on my desk, and the yellow mustard flowers which I see out the window.

I'm attracted to the *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* because I've heard of it from Śrīla Prabhupāda and because it is an advanced book in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by one of the Six Gosvāmīs. When I recently heard that this book was available in translation, I was interested, but also cautious because Prabhupāda has warned us that "Everything that glitters is not gold." Books on Kṛṣṇa conscious topics, even by bona fide authors, can be mistreated by false commentators. It is a natural response for Prabhupāda's followers, whenever they hear of something related to Kṛṣṇa to want to know if it's authorized by Prabhupāda. As for *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*, Prabhupāda describes it in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* as one of

the works composed by Sanātana Gosvāmī. And so it is recommended, as Gosvāmī literature and of interest to all aspiring Vaiṣṇavas. Prabhupāda writes, "All the Vedic literature aims at understanding Kṛṣṇa, and how to understand Kṛṣṇa through devotional service has been explained by Śrīla Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs, with evidence from all Vedic literatures. They have put it so nicely that even a rascal or first-class fool can be delivered by devotional service under the guidance of the Gosvāmīs" (*Cc, Madhya*, 1.33, purport).

While reading the *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*, I also thought that Prabhupāda would be pleased to see me relishing advanced topics of Kṛṣṇa, with aspirations for Goloka. Since I have an almost irresistible tendency to read various books, Sanātana Gosvāmī's book is a good dovetailing of that desire. The *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* is encouraging because it demonstrates that none of the material or spiritual planets can bring satisfaction to the heart of a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa—his only goal is to serve Govinda in His original form in Goloka-Vṛndāvana.

But although I'm having a good time with Sanātana Gosvāmī's book, still I do not feel as certain that I am being strengthened in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as when I read books with the Bhaktivedanta purports and summary studies. I want to read with full certainty that this will help me at the time of death. I want to be deeply convinced of Kṛṣṇa and to call to Him for transference to His abode, or for pure devotional service in my next lives. And no one can give me that strength except

His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda selected from the teachings of the Gosvāmīs and from all the *śāstras* in order to give that which was most suitable for us. Prabhupāda is more than a book writer; he is the via-medium through whom all our service to Kṛṣṇa goes. And so as I read on in this Sanātana Gosvāmī volume, I think that Prabhupāda won't object; he will be pleased that I am reading Kṛṣṇa—but at the same time, I know that the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda are most important for me. I'll rest my point here, having proven, I think, that turning to the *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* certainly brings up my connection to Śrīla Prabhupāda in many ways.

Turning from sublime transcendental literature down to the earth, I look upon the yellow mustard flowers just outside the cabin here in Śaraṇāgati. I do not want to make an artificial, intellectual connection between the wildflowers and thoughts of Prabhupāda, so let me see in a natural way. . . . What have these wildflowers to do with my spiritual master?

My first feeling about these flowers is that they're nice. I can pick them for vases to place on my altar of Jagannātha, Nṛsimha and Prabhupāda deities. But if I allow myself to gaze dreamily at these flowers for a long time, I am reminded by Prabhupāda not to get lost in contemplation of such things. I don't want to become like Mahārāja Bharata, whose meditation on Kṛṣṇa became diverted by his attraction to a fawn.

Moving to a more intellectual process of

thought about the wildflowers, my mind tells me that the flowers are *jīvas* just as I am, but they are in a lower form. Although I may pick them for worshipping Kṛṣṇa, I know that they shouldn't be disturbed or killed without reason. Another connected thought is that just as there are wildflowers here, so there are flowers in the spiritual world for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa—but I have to admit that that thought comes to me only in a theoretical way.

As I look upon the mustard flowers, and their neighbors, the white viburnum, I find my mind wandering and flickering. And so I think, "Better chant some *japa*"—as Prabhupāda has told us. I do like the wildflowers and I'm happy to see them and pick them for worship of Kṛṣṇa.

In a future Prabhupāda meditation, I would like to discuss the possibilities of engaging in regular conversations with him. Even when I don't actively converse, however, it is reassuring to know that Śrīla Prabhupāda is always with us (if we want him to be) and there is no reality or perception that is without his influence.

### *Office Meditation*

#### **2.10**

It was a real *yajña* to work for Swamiji at the welfare office. But it was successful yoga, partly because Swamiji was so physically near and I could beam in on him and know that I would see him soon enough. I was there to work for him, to get the money and pay the rent. It was an open secret to all the welfare workers and clients that I was a devotee

of Kṛṣṇa and the Swamiji. Before Prabhupāda came, my secret was that I was taking marijuana, but now my secret was open and different—that I had become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, with shaven head and *śikhā*. I couldn't preach at the office, and so except for the visible appearance of a Vaiṣṇava, I did the exact same work that everyone else did.

Devotional service was new to me, and I wanted to keep it alive. I was aware that at every moment I was acting outwardly while trying to maintain an inward meditation. Swamiji had told us that Kṛṣṇa is present in the heart as Viṣṇu or Paramātmā. And so I tried to think of Viṣṇu and love Viṣṇu in the heart. I was also writing a poem about Him which I worked on at my office desk.

One morning I told Swamiji it was hard to remain Kṛṣṇa conscious at work. I said, "Swamiji, sometimes when the people in the office say nonsense, I chant within myself without making any sound. Is that all right?"

Prabhupāda replied, "Not only are they saying nonsense sometimes, but even the greatest philosopher is talking nonsense. So you can chant all the time like that within, when you can't actually chant out loud."

So I would chant within myself. But sometimes I was able to be alone in a corner of the welfare building and then I could chant audibly, at least loud enough for me to hear. A good place to do that was on the second floor in the sound-proof booths where caseworkers dictated their day's interviews in order to be typed up. You would take your

recorder up there and start speaking into the machine: "I just visited Mrs. Sally Burns at 62 Suffolk Street. She is receiving aid for dependent children. I found her alone with her two children. She requests a refrigerator. . . ." This was a good place to do it—"Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. . ." When I chanted softly but intensely, I felt as if I was pushing away the whole Manhattan welfare department and all their crazy clients and office girls and office men. . . . Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. In my mind's eye I could sense the presence of Swamiji. And I spoke and prayed to him, "Swamiji, please let me get through this job for you and make money so the temple can run and you can spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Please protect me. Nṛsiṃhadeva, Prahlāda, please protect me. Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare."

— If someone came by and eyed me suspiciously, I went back to dictating my welfare case. Or I took out my poem-in-progress:

I say I want to  
get out  
to where  
You are  
just to be at Your feet—  
but what do I do? Why  
don't I answer every question  
with Viṣṇu? Why do I flinch

when they ask me why I'm flowering  
just by the thought of You?  
—You the indweller in all of us—  
Viṣṇu-in-me!

Chanting without beads wasn't as nice, and so I would think of my red *japa* beads which were hanging up in my apartment, and hanker to return to them. As the morning got late, my hunger would increase and that was a sign that it would not be long before lunch hour when I would be able to get out and go to see the Swami. There was always at least one important question on my mind which I wanted to ask him, or a realization that I wished to share with him. One time I went and told the Swami, "When I'm in the office I can feel the miseries you talked about, birth, death, disease and old age, and I can actually feel that I'm overcoming them."

Swamiji liked that and said, "Yes, but almost no one knows this. They put these problems aside and yet everyone is being forced to die and grow old and be born again. For a devotee, these things are easily overcome. One great Vaiṣṇava, Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī said that for him, the whole material world is blissful. *Viśvam pūrṇa-sukhāyate*. And a devotee can control his senses easily, even though it is difficult for a great *yogī*. So the devotee overcomes the whole material world."

My practice of *karma-yoga* was a daily struggle,



but the Swami was always there to make it victorious. By his grace, one could keep constant attention, inner meditation, and sanctify the work by thinking and by using the money in the right way. Swamiji said, "Satsvarūpa and Brahmānanda are paying our entire expenses by their work." That's what made it possible, to know that you were doing something worthwhile. I never had such a warm feeling in my own family as I grew up. But now I was Swamiji's son, part of a big family, and so I worked for that.

## 2.11

*You Know What I Was*

*(In the mood of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

Swamiji, you know what I was;  
you can see it in me still.  
It's obnoxious my mind  
filled with obscenities  
even if I don't speak them anymore.

So much semen wasted  
and my brains scattered by LSD.  
That time I sat before you  
and imitated a *yogī* in lotus trance,  
what did I think I was doing  
to come into your presence like that?  
I argued against your statement  
that there was no need to read  
other scriptures besides the *Vedas*.  
And I complained, "I'm trying  
to appreciate *Bhagavad-gītā*, so why  
do you have to throw in mind-blowers  
about Kṛṣṇa's marrying 16,000 wives?"

They ask me why  
I didn't write a diary;  
maybe because it's too much madness.  
I had to relearn everything  
and it took some time  
before writing became useful  
for your service.  
There was no need to tell you, Swamiji,  
all the gory details,  
but I could have written down  
how it was sweet in the morning  
to be with you for *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

When you said,  
"If you love me, then I'll love you."  
I should have written it down right away.  
I'm sorry it's mostly all a blank.

But thank you for coming.  
You are saving me.  
I don't want to ever forget or  
think your help was incidental,  
as if I were almost-spiritual  
and you just added a few touches.

Until only a few days ago  
I didn't have a beadbag;  
I thought you were going to teach the  
*Tibetan Book of the Dead*;  
I'd never seen a picture of Kṛṣṇa.  
I thought everything was One  
and that I was the center,  
and sorry for myself,  
love-starved, food-starved.  
You saved me.

### *Prabhupāda Gems*

#### **2.12**

Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports give substantial guidance and inspiration for devotional service. But particular passages will speak with greater

meaning for particular individuals. The Prabhupāda gem that attracts me the most may be something that doesn't particularly catch your attention, whereas the line that strikes you as the most forceful of all, and which you may build your whole life on, does not have that same meaning for me. But many gems will have universal appeal. With this in mind, here is something which Prabhupāda said in a conversation which I was very pleased to hear:

Using any language, you should submit to Kṛṣṇa, and you should feel that "I am worthless. My Guru Mahārāja has given me this chance to serve Kṛṣṇa, to offer to Kṛṣṇa . . . my Lord, I am worthless. I have no capacity to serve You. But on the order of my Guru Mahārāja, I'm trying to serve you. Please do not take any offense. Accept whatever I can do. . . . I am offensive, so kindly excuse me." In this way be humble, meek, and offer your feeling, and Kṛṣṇa will be satisfied. Not that you have to show how you can speak in the Sanskrit language.

—Conversation, Hyderabad, April 12,  
1975

I am glad to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda say this. It makes me aspire to serve the Lord in this mood. I also like to think of Śrīla Prabhupāda in his inti-

mate relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the terms he describes here. Words like these are simultaneously instructions for devotional service, as well as personal revelations by the speaker, His Divine Grace. Our reading of the Bhaktivedanta purports may also shift from one purpose to another—sometimes we are looking for practical application in our daily life, but sometimes we read just to nurture the rendezvous with the pure devotee of the Lord. The more we get to know and love Śrīla Prabhupāda, the more naturally we will be obedient to his teachings.

### *Call to Action*

#### **2.13**

One can't help but be drawn into action when he reads and meditates on Prabhupāda's purports. They are calls to action on many levels: "*Surrender to Kṛṣṇa*," "*Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa*," "*Tell everyone you meet about Kṛṣṇa*."

If you want to keep your life unchanged but you still want to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, it will put you into conflict. He pricks the conscience. And yet he soothes the mind and spirit as he reminds us that we are not this body and we don't belong to the perishable and temporary world. Śrīla Prabhupāda also reminds us of the easy process of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and performing devotional service, by which we can transcend birth and death.

The process is so easy that even a leaf  
or a little water or fruit can be offered

to the Supreme Lord in genuine love and the Lord will be pleased to accept it. No one, therefore, can be barred from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because it is so easy and universal. Who is such a fool that he does not want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious by this simple method and thus attain the highest perfection of life of eternity, bliss and knowledge?

—Bg. 9.26, purport

Is it possible to read Prabhupāda without responding to his call for action? What if one rationalizes his reading in such a way that he reads without changing his life? No, it's not possible. Any attraction to his books will change a person's consciousness in a favorable way. At least the reader will continue hearing the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. And the fact that he likes to read means he is favorable to the pure devotee; and so Kṛṣṇa will be favorable to him.

But it's natural that as we meditate on Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching, we should desire to become a preacher too. He wants this of his followers. It's also natural for each reader to try to adjust Prabhupāda's command to his own situation. Śrīla Prabhupāda also advises this when he says that one should take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness and preach "according to his capacity."

Prabhupāda's invitation to completely surrender to the will of Kṛṣṇa, will find us falling short somewhere or other. But we can follow the *mahā-*

*janas* described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Gradually we will find ourselves swept up by the flow of their devotional service. Therefore, let us not be afraid to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, even though we feel we're not capable of fully responding. It is better, in any case, to hear his message and to be humbled by thoughts of pure devotional service. Even if one did nothing else but read Prabhupāda's books, that in itself would be a reply to the call for action:

In this age, devotional service of hearing and repeating the holy glories of the Lord is strongly recommended, and one who takes the vow of renunciation to family life need not imitate the *parivrājakācārya* like Nārada or Lord Caitanya, but may sit down at some holy place and devote his whole time and energy to hear and repeatedly chant the holy scriptures left by the great *ācāryas* like the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

—*Bhāg.* 1.6.13

## 2.14

### *Summer Morning*

*(In the mood of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

I'm in my room up at 2 A.M.,  
thinking of Kṛṣṇa and Swamiji—  
or I should say, "Thinking of Swamiji,"  
'cause I can't really think yet  
of the Supreme Lord.  
But I have my red beads  
and I'm fighting sleep.  
I don't know anything  
but I'll see my spiritual master  
in just a few hours.

I'll walk to the storefront  
sit inside and he'll come  
looking very serious and calm.  
He'll begin to sing, "*Softly, softly,*"  
while the sunbeams filter dust motes  
and the first garbage cans start clanging.  
I'll be listening to the new knowledge  
of Lord Caitanya's teachings to Sanatan Goswami.  
(I think that's how you spell it.)



Swamiji doesn't talk long in the morning  
'cause Rūpānuga and I  
have to get to work.  
That's blissful too, saying goodbye  
to Swamiji and the boys  
and then I'm on my own.  
I take my necktie out of my back pocket  
and tie it on as I walk,  
buttoning my jacket,  
feeling cowherd boy bliss  
after two bowls of heavenly porridge  
with ISKCON bullet juice.  
Into that sad-glad atmosphere  
of the downtown street.

I'm alone, but no longer alone.  
The Cowherd Boy Govinda,  
the Supreme Personality,  
who Swamiji loves and wants us to love—  
He seems to be calling me—  
I seem to be one of his frolicking friends  
and my necktie is like some paraphernalia  
for Govinda's sports. I can't explain it.  
But all I know is that before I met the Swami,  
going to work was never like this!

*We Can Talk With Kṛṣṇa*

**2.15**

I have found a Prabhupāda gem that speaks  
what I long to hear. Śrīla Prabhupāda says we can  
talk to God. First let me show you the gem:

*Prabhupāda:* The fools think that one cannot talk with God. But God says, *janma karma . . .* the devotees come to Me. Then what will you do there? He'll talk or not talk?

*Devotee:* There He'll talk . . . but we are so insignificant. Why should God waste His time talking to us?

*Prabhupāda:* Yes. Because you are His sons. Although you are insignificant, you are God's sons. So He likes to talk with His sons. Just like a small child. Everyone knows that he cannot talk. Still father tries to make him talking to enjoy. Māyāpura-Candrodaya temple is teaching all these fools and rascals how to talk with God. That is our mission.

—Conversation, Māyāpura, April 5,  
1975

There are many gems like this. In another place, Prabhupāda says, "One has to submit to Kṛṣṇa whatever distress or confidential problem he has. He should say, 'Kṛṣṇa, I'm suffering in this way'" (*Rāja-vidyā*, pp. 17-18).

One way to do this is to sit down quietly and converse with Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. They are together. Just speak honestly to your best friends. At the same time, be aware that you're in the presence of He who you should worship and adore. To help, you can think of verses which describe Kṛṣṇa's glo-

ries. For example, Kṛṣṇa says, "One should meditate on the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, as He who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the maintainer of everything, who is beyond all material conception, who is inconceivable, and who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun, and He is transcendental, beyond this material nature" (Bg. 8.9).

You are not coming into the presence of an ordinary friend. By His mercy, He who is the cause of everything, likes you to speak with Him.

But what do you say?

You can give thanks to Kṛṣṇa for giving you the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and for sending Śrīla Prabhupāda. Be honest in humility, admit your shortcomings.

So that's *you* speaking. But what about Kṛṣṇa speaking to you?

Do you doubt it? He speaks in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. As Prabhupāda says, "When Kṛṣṇa Himself speaks, it is auspicious for all the worlds . . . The devotees will always worship such authoritative statements of Kṛṣṇa because they are always eager to know more and more about Him."

Here you may doubt: "But when Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*, that was in a particular circumstance to Arjuna. Of course, He was speaking to everyone, but still, it doesn't mean that He was speaking to you in your little meditation. Are you *imagining* that He's speaking to you?"

No, it's not imagination. It is personal, Kṛṣṇa.

Here is another quote: "O my Lord, Your devotees can see You through the ears by the process of bona fide hearing, and thus their hearts become cleansed, and You take Your seat there. You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You" (*Bhāg.* 3.9.11).

So what I have called Kṛṣṇa talking to you is actually a kind of prayerful reading. You'll hear Kṛṣṇa speaking by your submissive hearing of His words. As we read, we can pray to Kṛṣṇa to please make His words clear to us, and help us learn how to personally apply them. After reading in this way for as long as you can sustain it—or as much as you can budget in your time schedule—then you can again speak your heart to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. Ask them for what you need in devotional service. And just as you pray for your own needs, pray for the needs of others, your devotee friends, and those who are without Kṛṣṇa. And then go on thanking Kṛṣṇa and make a resolution to serve Him today. This is the essence of Prabhupāda meditation.

*Prabhupāda Meditations are not like a computer*

## 2.16

We have demonstrated how one can start with any thought (*Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* and mustard flowers) and soon connect to a teaching by Śrīla Prabhupāda. This was meant to make us aware that we are always in the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda. But it is not enough to know what Prabhupāda said on many subjects, and to be able to bring them up

like an index or computer. It has to be done with the devotion of a disciple. If we are expert at recalling instructions by Prabhupāda in order to sanction our sense gratification, this is not a high order of Prabhupāda meditation. Neither can that kind of following of Śrīla Prabhupāda last for very long; it will leave us open to a falldown.

. . . practice of sense gratification under regulations may also lead one to go astray—as much as there is always the chance of an accident, even on the royal roads... therefore any attachment for regulated sense enjoyment must also be avoided by all means. But attachment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or acting in the loving service of Kṛṣṇa, detaches one from all kinds of sensory activities. Therefore, no one should try to be detached from Kṛṣṇa consciousness at any stage of life.

—Bg. 3.34, purport

The vital element in Prabhupāda meditation is the spirit for rendering service. Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained this while describing the difference between the *śanta* and *dasya rasa* with the Supreme Lord. If a person discovers that he has an intimate relationship with a great man of this world, this will make one happy. Similarly, when we understand that we have a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, that is a sublime meditation. A more advanced and

grateful person, however, will want to go forward and ask the great personality whether he can render some service in his cause.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said the only question he asked of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was, "How can I serve you?" This is certainly better than seeking out the presence of the *guru* in order to get his sanction for our own desires. If we can regularly think, "How can I serve you?"—then we will be in the higher state of Prabhupāda meditation. If we are entangled or unable to serve Prabhupāda as much as we know we should, still we should think of rendering service to him. Even the thinking will be accepted as favorable. Whatever we are actually able to render as service should be done with devotion. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said (describing the attitude of a pure devotee of the Lord), "'Kindly accept whatever little service I can give.' In this way, be humble and offer your feeling and Kṛṣṇa will be satisfied."

*A Letter to Rāyarāma dāsa brahmacārī*

2.17

Dear Rāyarāma,

I'm an old friend of yours from the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, Satsvarūpa dāsa. It's been more than two decades since you left Kṛṣṇa consciousness and probably you've forgotten it. But please let me explain why I'm writing to you.

I still follow the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Recently, I've been trying to remember my first days of meeting and serving the Swamiji back in 1966 on the

Lower East Side. Along with recalling the Swami, I have rediscovered many memories of my friendship with you, and they are fond ones. Therefore, I wanted to share them with you.

You were the first devotee who ever spoke to me. I wandered into the storefront at 26 Second Avenue, attracted by the advertisement for *Bhagavad-gītā* classes which was taped to the front window. I felt shy, but you broke the ice and asked me my name and made me feel welcome. You were always warm and affectionate in that way. Although you had been following the Swami only a few weeks before I joined, I looked up to you, and you were able to answer some of my foolish questions. For example, after attending the Swami's classes on *Bhagavad-gītā* for a week, I asked you, "What scripture will the Swami be teaching next week? I would like to hear *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*." You laughed and said that according to the Swami, all spiritual teachings were contained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, so there was no need for a survey on Eastern religions.

The first initiation the Swami held in America was on Lord Kṛṣṇa's birthday (Janmāṣṭami) in the summer of '66, when you were initiated. I wasn't ready at that time, but when I heard that there would be another initiation two weeks later, I asked the Swami to accept me as a disciple. You greeted me later and said, "I heard that you decided to get initiated. I think that's wonderful. I'm really glad."

I had an apartment half a block from the Swami's storefront and when I offered to share it

with the devotees, you became my roommate. I remember having philosophical conversations with you while walking the streets of the Lower East Side. Once we were talking about art and you said, "What is art?" You pointed to an outdoor stand with fruits and vegetables on it and said, "See the way that man is placing the tomatoes in a box? That's art. He could do it in a sloppy way, but he's arranging it nicely and that's art." You so much impressed me as a down-to-earth intellectual, that to this day, I remember your "art lesson" vividly. I even remember exactly where we were standing. We then walked up Fifth Street heading west, and I began to tell you of my love for the novels of Dostoevski. I said that there was a great searching for God in Dostoevski, even though it was more a yearning than an attaining. Many of Dostoevski's characters were great sinners, even criminals, but there was always the theme of redemption from sin and surrender to God. You were the only one I could fully share this with, and you responded enthusiastically, "Yes, Dostoevski is wonderful, he had a genuine search for God."

In those days the Swami didn't try to convince anyone that they had to shave their beards, and so you and Hayagrīva wore beards. I remember you rarely wore an Indian *dhotī*, except maybe in the temple. One time when we were walking together, I asked you about your reluctance to wear the *dhotī*. You gave your amused laugh and said, "I'm sure there must be a spiritual planet where they wear pants."



These are just little memories, but my main impression is that you were a serious student of the Swami, and you definitely had a quick grasp of the *siddhānta* of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In fact, immediately after Prabhupāda left New York and went to San Francisco, you were the sole regular lecturer. No one else dared to give a full-length lecture, but you did it expertly. All the devotees were satisfied at how you repeated all of Swamiji's arguments. You even took on all the challenges from the cynics of the Lower East Side. I remember someone trying to rattle you and you answered in a calm way. He then said, "You seem to be very sedate with all your answers." You replied, "I have no idea what you mean by that," and then you went on to deal with his particular question. You preserved your cool and preached what the Swami taught. Madhusūdana dāsa even wrote a letter to Prabhupāda in San Francisco appreciating that you were preaching so well. In Prabhupāda's reply he says, "I'm glad to hear that Rāyarāma is preaching like a lion cub." (Swamiji was the lion, and you were the cub.)

I think you were also the main person who pushed for opening an ISKCON center in Boston, and you suggested to Swamiji that I be the one to go. Some of the devotees including yourself, had attended a "Be-in" at the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston. To your amazement, many people at the rally took up the chanting, and a picture was published in the newspaper. You came back from Boston convinced that it was a great place, because of the

student population, to open a center for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When my name came up as a likely person to go and open it, I felt reluctant and unqualified. I remember us both standing in my First Street apartment and talking about it.

I said, "How could I got to Boston? I don't know how to speak. What would I actually do there?"

You smiled and encouraged me, "Well, none of us know anything, but if we just repeat what the Swami has said, then I'm sure you can do it also." You encouraged me but at the same time you smiled, knowing that I really wasn't a forceful or evangelistic kind of person, and so you sympathized with my feeling of inability. Perhaps you too were thinking, "What is someone like Satsvarūpa dāsa going to do in Boston?"

After I left for Boston, you remained a good friend, although you were busy with your *BTG* duties in New York City. I remember one time you visited us in our Boston storefront, and you observed that it wasn't very expertly managed, and that we were in financial difficulty. You said, "The whole Kṛṣṇa consciousness society is just running by Kṛṣṇa's grace. Otherwise, it would close because we're not very competent." The way you said it gave me confidence—somehow or other, week by week, we continued our temple operations both in Boston as well as New York, but it was only possible because Kṛṣṇa was making it happen. (And the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, now spread worldwide, continues on this principle.)

The Swami didn't play favorites, but he defi-

nitely saw good potential in you. Therefore he appointed you as the first co-editor of *Back to Godhead* magazine. *Back to Godhead* was your baby. Even today many of the letters Prabhupāda wrote to you about BTG are used as guides and printed in a BTG handbook. You had a genuine relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I like to think that it's eternal. Whatever bad feelings came, whatever politics developed, whatever led to your disillusionment and leaving of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, still, the service that you rendered to the devotee of the Lord is never diminished or destroyed. You know this from your own study of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Even a little devotional service never suffers loss or diminution and it can save one from the greatest fear."

I'm aware that when you broke from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you were critical of our spiritual master and the movement, and your way of life has since become opposed in many ways to the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In fact, when we tried to interview you ten years ago, to help us compile the biography of Prabhupāda, you refused to even talk. I'm not so naive, therefore, to think that a letter of reminiscence is going to change all that. Neither would I want to hear offensive things about Kṛṣṇa consciousness from you. But at least I wanted to go on the record, since I am remembering those old days, and tell you that my association with you helped me in the beginning of my spiritual life. I want to remember all that you did in service to the

Swami and to the worshipable Lord Kṛṣṇa in those days, and I hope you too can remember it fondly, at least for a moment.

yours sincerely,  
Satsvarūpa dāsa

## 2.18

*Inquiries from the Learned Spiritual Master  
(In the mood of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

Swamiji, I'm with my new Godbrothers in ISKCON.  
We all agree you are a "self-realized soul,"  
although we don't know exactly  
what that means.  
So we are going to ask you.

I also want to ask you:  
What is Viṣṇu?  
How can I keep up a taste for Kṛṣṇa consciousness?  
How do you spell Sanatan?  
What is the difference between  
Brahmā, Brahman and *brāhmaṇa*?  
Should we take a cold shower?  
What does my name mean?  
When can we expect to become  
pure devotees, if ever?  
How did the souls fall here?  
And where does it say so in scripture?  
Can we read Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura?  
What about *The Gospel of Sri Rama-Krishna*?  
Should we remain *brahmacārī*?

Does it disturb you  
that we ask so many questions?  
Like one night I told you some things  
that I'd read in a Gauḍīya Math book  
and asked you a few questions and  
then you said, "Go downstairs now  
and let me do my work."  
I'm sorry to pester you.

What I really want to know are things  
I probably can't know yet—  
like the future, or advanced spiritual topics  
and technical teachings too, like  
at the time of death do we retain  
consciousness into the next life?  
I think you answered that once  
but I didn't grasp it.  
We have to *wait* for the answers, right?

Also, many of my questions get answered  
during the time when you walk  
from the side door of the storefront  
up to the dais. I mean  
as soon as I see you, they are answered.

So mainly I have no questions except  
one that I don't even want to think of—  
Will you stay with us?

Oh, and what about those four counter beads besides the sixteen? Someone said every time we do sixteen rounds we push one. And are there more songs you could teach us?

Let me surrender to the Gosvāmīs and they will help me to write. You cannot write! That is not possible.

—Lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda on  
*Bhāg.* 1.20, 7/17/73

## 2.19

Pray to the Supreme Lord and Śrīla Prabhupāda as the source of all you can write. It's not wrong to ask for *more* and better, but be humble: "Please help me. Let me praise Śrīla Prabhupāda."

## *PART THREE*

## *The Path of Mental Worship*

### 3.1

Prabhupāda meditation may be considered as a type of mental Deity worship. For worshipping the *arcā-vigraha* of Kṛṣṇa, one may form a *mūrti* from various materials such as metal, wood, marble—mind is also one of the authorized forms. Similarly, one may meditate on the pure devotee, and this is an acceptable worship or service.

The word "meditation" is often interpreted to mean an impersonal or void contemplation. But according to Vedic literature, meditation is always on the form of Lord Viṣṇu or one of His incarnations. In the *Nṛsiṃha Purāṇa* it is stated, "Meditation focusing on the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead has been accepted as transcendental and beyond the experience of material pain and pleasure. By such meditation, even one who is grossly miscreant can be delivered from the sinful reactions of his life." This means that the meditation on the Lord, when properly performed, actually purifies one of sinful life. As stated in the *Padma Purāṇa*, "A person who is always engaged in meditation on the sweet pastimes and wonderful activities of the Lord surely becomes freed from all material contamination" (*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 92).

Devotees who render service to the Lord within their minds, are often persons who are not able to render service externally or with their bodies. In the famous case of the *brāhmaṇa* in South India, he was a poor man and lacked sufficient money for opulent Deity worship. Therefore, when he heard from



a Vaiṣṇava that activities could be performed even by meditation, he became very enlivened. Prabhupāda writes in the *Nectar of Devotion*, "If a person is unable to actually perform Vaiṣṇava activities physically, he can meditate upon the Vaiṣṇava activities, and thereby acquire all the same results." Another case of a devotee who was restricted, was Kṛṣṇa's father, Vasudeva. Vasudeva was imprisoned by Kāṁsa, but nevertheless, upon the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Vasudeva performed acts of mental charity and distributed millions of cows to the *brāhmaṇas*. We are also restricted in an external sense, from going back in time and being with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Therefore, when we remember or meditate upon those times, it can be just as good as any external service for the spiritual master.

An outstanding example of a devotee who performed mental Deity worship was Nṛsimhānanda brahmacārī, who used to meditate upon Lord Caitanya. One time when Nṛsimhānanda brahmacārī heard that Lord Caitanya was coming to Vṛndāvana, he became very pleased and "mentally began decorating the way there" (*Cc, Madhya*, Ch. 1). Nṛsimhānanda brahmacārī contemplated a broad road starting from the city of Kuliya, which he embedded with jewels and bedecked with flowers. He also decorated the sides of the road with *bakula* flower trees, lakes, birds and cool breezes. By this process, he was actually able to follow the Lord's physical progress, and thus he noted within his mind that he could not complete the mental road beyond a certain point. He therefore predicted

that Lord Caitanya would physically not be going beyond that point, and he was correct. Commenting on these activities of Nṛsiṃhānanda brahmacārī, Prabhupāda writes as follows:

For a pure devotee it is the same whether he materially constructs a path or constructs one within his mind. This is because the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Jārāṇḍarā, is *bhava-graḥi*, or appreciative of the sentiment. For Him, a path made with actual jewels and a path made of mental jewels are the same. Though subtle, mind is also matter, so any path—indeed anything for the service of the Lord, whether in gross matter or in subtle matter—is accepted equally by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord accepts the attitude of His devotee and sees how much he is prepared to serve Him. The devotee is at liberty to serve the Lord either in gross matter or in subtle matter. The important point is that the service be in relation with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

—Cc, *Madhya*, 1.161, purport

Needless to say, we are not advocating stopping physical activities in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda. One should serve the spiritual master with all

one's senses, but one who has a tendency and who has the opportunity, can make concentrated attempts to return to times when he was in the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, to relive the *kīrtanas*, the hearing of lectures, and the personal inquiries made in the presence of Prabhupāda's *vāpuḥ* form.

Just as a *parivrajakācārya sannyāsī* does not reside in a particular temple or home, and therefore worships the Deity of Kṛṣṇa in his mind wherever he is, so a devotee of Prabhupāda, wherever he is, can stop and recall Śrīla Prabhupāda by the process of mental worship. By meditation we are no longer restricted by time or other physical inabilities, just as the poor *brāhmaṇa* overcame his financial disability, just as Vasudeva overcame his imprisonment, and just as Nṛsiṃhānanda brahmacārī overcame the distance of miles which separated him from Lord Caitanya.

In *Prabhupāda Meditations* we are attempting to share such mental worship through writing. Thus anyone who is inclined, can come with us into Swamiji's room at 26 Second Avenue, talk informally with him, feel what it was like, and join in the *kīrtanas* with him. One can recall the early days and hear the philosophy for the first time while typing up the tapes of Prabhupāda's *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* and *Kṛṣṇa* book. In this way, one may be completely absorbed in thinking of Prabhupāda, both in one's present day services within Prabhupāda's mission, as well as by the worship of remembrance. As recommended by Śrīla Prabhupāda: "By his mind, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person

always thinks of the activities of the Lord—as He is speaking on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra or engaging in His various pastimes in Vṛndāvana with His devotees. In this way, one can always think of the activities and pastimes of the Lord. This is mental culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness" (*Nectar of Devotion*, XXII).

### 3.2

*I Want to Say*

(by *Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī*)

Swamiji, you've made my life happy  
and you give hope for the future life:  
You've given us the most relishable, all-attractive  
Personality of Godhead.  
I want to thank you  
by becoming your menial servant.

You talk with us as if it's normal for you,  
but you are an intelligent, spiritual aristocrat  
and we were *ganjā* smokers, meat-eaters  
and other things I needn't mention.  
You seem glad to see us  
especially when we meet in your room  
and we ask you about the spiritual world,  
and we also talk about this world.

I want to tell you,  
you are cleaning my heart  
and my body and mind—I was so egocentric!  
(I still am, but it was *much* worse.)  
You're giving me God,  
and there's no way I can repay such a gift.

I knew priests before but  
they couldn't figure me out.  
My father said I was  
"A Greek tragedy waiting to happen."  
You're *the one* in my life.  
I want to say it  
and use my life as your servant  
along with your other disciples.

I like to work for you at the welfare office.  
Please give me more typing of *Bhāgavatam*,  
and I like to change the titles of your lecture  
on the sign in the storefront window.  
Please give me more to do.  
I'm young and can do things,  
although mostly I'm incapable.  
You could really use competent  
well-to-do disciples, people with brains  
for dealing with the world,  
and people with pure hearts and humble natures,  
or good philosophers and organizers,  
at least simple, rugged souls  
ready to do whatever you ask,  
ready to transform themselves  
into preachers because you have asked for it.

I'm none of these good things  
but you don't hold it against me.  
You act as if I am something good  
and you give me the name Satsvarūpa dāsa,  
"Truth Personified—the servant of."

Also I want to say  
I like the *mantra* describing you,  
"Very dear to Kṛṣṇa on this earth."  
That's you. Because you have "taken shelter  
at the lotus feet of the transcendental Lord."  
I love the way you translate.  
I want to offer you my obeisances  
and do your work, my whole life.

### *Opposition*

#### **3.3**

Our meditations are threatened by breakdowns in operations. One of the typists has asthma, the other hayfever. I also have hayfever. My personal assistant also has asthma, and for this he is fasting. He recommends that the typists fast, but if they do, will they be able to work? Since we're up in the country with no electricity, we have been using a ten-year old Chinese generator for the electric typewriters. Last week it had to be taken in for repairs, but this morning it blew a piston. We may have to buy a new one, but where's the money? Baladeva claims that these breakdowns are evidence that we are working at an important project.

Lesser evils are the attacks of ants and mosquitoes. Everyday we try new schemes to out-smart

them without killing them. Yesterday while writing in the woods, a black bear cub approached me within thirty feet. And then I saw the mother bear who could have ended my life with a few swipes. I've been thinking about that ever since. Sometimes when I try to place myself two feet away from Swamiji in his room, a black bear roams into my mind's eye. If I manage to control my mind, then the cries of the juvenile ravens as they fly after their mother, are enough to pierce through almost anyone's *samādhi*.

Aside from these, I am harassed by doubts and pride in my writing. I am not the creator, not the doer, but I forget this. And so every hour I am turning to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, bowing down before them, "I want to surrender and say only what you approve."

But neither can you sit back and sleep on your chariot and expect Kṛṣṇa to do your work for you. Therefore, to surrender also means to write whatever you can before it's too late—before the memories die out. As you are right now, remember your spiritual master. Choose a passage from Prabhupāda's books and read it as deeply as you can. Meditate against the opposition.

Prabhupāda describes the goal: "A truly Kṛṣṇa conscious person, always absorbed in transcendence, in constant undisturbed meditation on his worshipable Lord, is as steady as a lamp in a windless place" (Bg.6.19, purport).

*"He Saved Me"*

### 3.4

One can meditate on one's relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda in many ways. One way to quickly evoke gratitude toward the spiritual master, is to think of how he saved you. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to think of his Guru Mahārāja in this way. On several occasions Prabhupāda was overcome with emotion as he said, "He saved me," and "He pulled me out of material life."

While narrating the early life of Nārada Muni, Prabhupāda informs us that all bona fide *ācāryas* work to rescue fallen souls:

The *bhakti-vedāntas* see that the people in general are wasting time in false, sensuous things. Their business is to get the ignorant mass of people to reestablish the lost relationship with the Personality of Godhead. By such endeavor, even the most forgotten soul is roused up to the sense of spiritual life, and thus being initiated by the *bhakti-vedāntas*, the people in general gradually progress on the path of transcendental realization.

—*Bhāg.* 1.5.24, purport

We may also profit by meditating on the words "causeless mercy." We did not deserve the great for-



tune of Prabhupāda's association. Neither did he come under the force of karmic cause and effect. He didn't come seeking a personal gain. There was no reason for him to come except for the loving desire of the Supreme Lord to bring all separated parts and parcels back to Godhead. Prabhupāda's causeless mercy is materially inconceivable, but it is a fact that we have become touched by this grace.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has also advised us to remember what we were before we were saved by His Divine Grace. We should "be conscious of the difference between our present and past conditions and be always careful not to fall from the most exalted life" (*Bhāg.* 6.2.27, purport). When we think of our lives before and after meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are very grateful and happy, yet we should also be sorry that we were so entangled in sinful life. Both lines of thinking should be kept alive:

It is the duty of a pure devotee to regret his past sinful activities in illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling. Not only should one give up his past bad habits, but he must always regret his past sinful acts. This is the standard of pure devotion.

—*Bhāg.* 6.2.27, purport

Gratitude for the causeless mercy of Śrīla

Prabhupāda impels us to act on his behalf, as his disciples. And while acting in this way, one should be always conscious, both in general and in details, as to how the pure devotee came and pulled us out.

### 3.5

#### *The Other Day*

(by *Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī*)

The other day I came to you, Swamiji,  
after I'd just talked with my father on the phone.  
He said he didn't like Kṛṣṇa or the Swami  
and he said he and my mom  
will have nothing to do with me until I quit.

I was teary-eyed when I spoke this to you,  
and don't remember what you said  
(should have written it down).  
But I remember your eyes smiled  
when you saw that I'm definitely your son.  
Please keep me that way.  
Although I'm old enough to live  
without my mom and dad,  
spiritually speaking I'm only three months old.

My upbringing was so bad  
that I think insulting thoughts in your presence,  
and I tend to disbelieve scriptures.  
But I'm sure it will come out all right.  
And you say that you are sure too,  
as long as I stick to it.

I need you to correct me,  
but I can't take stern reprimands.  
You know this and so  
you're always easy with me.  
I just want to say that I appreciate it,  
although I wish I were made of stronger stuff.  
(When I told you, I sleep only five hours,  
like the Six Gosvāmīs  
you were not impressed,  
you scoffed at me, "You are not a Gosvāmī!"  
I really like *that* one.)

Please teach me the *Bhagavad-gītā*,  
tell me of Nanda and Yaśodā's Son,  
tell me every morning of Lord Caitanya  
and please never stop.  
And as you get to know me  
and see I'm shot with vices—unclean,  
can't sit up straight, can't remember,  
don't have pure faith to carry out orders—  
please know that despite my faults,  
I really think I can make it  
and be a followers of yours  
my whole life,  
*if you'll accept me.*  
That's what I'm asking.

## *Living Together in the Early Days*

### **3.6**

Gradually it became apparent to me that I should share my apartment with others. So one day while taking breakfast with the devotees at the storefront, I made a little announcement that they could use the bathroom in my apartment in the morning. By the next day, I had roommates and my apartment had become an *āśrama*.

Everything was fresh and new in those days, and the concept of living in the association of devotees was a happy one. I thought of it as a trade: I was giving up something nice (to live alone), but it would be replaced by something even better (the association of the Vaiṣṇavas). I stepped forward enthusiastically to do what was required. Sometimes, when I would come home from work and find a few devotees asleep on the mattress, I would feel a twinge of regret. The sanctity of my space seemed disturbed. More often, however, the community spirit felt good and we were all close friends.

ISKCON grew into an organization by gradual increments, and nothing was ever forced upon us by the Swami. Everything was voluntary. To the outsiders he would say, "You can see for yourself or speak with the boys who are here with me. They're working twenty-four hours a day for Kṛṣṇa. Just see how they're feeling the good results." His plan was that people should do things together in a group and he invited everyone to be part of it.

Most of us didn't come with a deliberate desire to join a group. We went to see the Swami in the

informal gatherings in his room, and bit by bit we found ourselves doing the same things together. At first Prabhupāda was cooking for himself and eating alone. Then Kirtanānanda began to cook for him and a few others, and soon a dozen were meeting every day for lunch. That was the lunch group. And then there was a group who came for the morning classes and a group who came for the evening classes. For the most part, they happened to be the same people. When Swamiji said that he needed help with his typing and editing, I typed and Haya-grīva edited—another cooperation. And some came forward and gave him money to pay for his expenses. When he formed his incorporated society, ISKCON, that really brought things together and made his purposes obvious. We didn't understand it all at once, but gradually, as it built up.

One of the nicest times with the Swami was when we all came together to eat lunch. At the very beginning, a group of regulars would attend the Swami's lecture, but as soon as the *kīrtana* was over, each person would go back to his apartment and his separate life. But once we ate together everyday, it created an intimacy.

Let me remember it again:

I come in just a few minutes after one o'clock, straight from the welfare office. I'm not exactly late, but lunch is already underway. I'm a little anxious and hungry; I want to be sure that I get a plate.

"Satsvarūpa, come on!" They make a space for me and I sit down near the wall. The rug has been rolled back and we sit on the bare parquet floors.

There is one row of eaters along the three walls and then another half circle of people in the center of the room. In the center of everything, sitting just to the right of the low table with the Pañca-tattva picture, is the Swami.

Kirtanānanda comes in with *capatī* and says, "Everybody has to take at least two helpings. Right Swamiji?"

"Yes," Swamiji says, "eat more." Swamiji himself is eating. He mixes the different preparations together with his right hand—pours the *dahl* onto the rice and then mixes the rice with the *dahl* with his fingers, then pushes the *sabji* into the rice and takes the *capatī* and pushes everything together. He eats quickly while everything is still warm and he continues to mix it. It's almost like he's tasting with his hand as well as with his mouth and eyes. The Swami's eating was another art which was new and fascinating to us. We all eat with our right hands, just like the Swamiji. It's a joyful but serious business, chewing meditatively and relishing.

Hayagriva says, "This is very succulent!" Others praise the food. Swamiji says, "I can teach you many preparations. I've only taught a few." How foolish the nondevotees are for not knowing how to eat in Kṛṣṇa consciousness! Aromas of food come from the kitchen, the smell of hot rice as it goes on everyone's plate, and the vegetables and *capatī* and the butter in a combined good dinner aroma.

Eating first and talking second. But there is talk also. The Swami is usually quiet, especially at the

peak of the eating, but sometimes Hayagrīva is talking about American poetry, Walt Whitman or Emily Dickenson, and Rāyarāma has something to say about that. After awhile, the Swami looks up and asks, "Raphael, when will you fix the lock?" And, "Stryādhiśa, how is your mother?" An old acquaintance of the Swami from uptown, Mr. Nelson, has come, and Swami is glad to see him. Some who come to see him are a bit eccentric and some aren't serious devotees, but Swamiji is always cordial to them. He invites everyone to eat and eat more.

I like sitting on the floor cross-legged in front of my dish. I'm hungry and I like the tastes, and I like it when it's hot. I never liked hot rice before. Rice was something my mother would be embarrassed to give you. It was for poor people or Chinese. But wow! This was good, rice and vegetables, and you touch it with your hand. Kīrtanānanda's *capatīs* are like pancakes. The Swami calls them *rotīs*.

I ask, "How do you make the *capatīs* come out like this?"

Kīrtanānanda laughs and says, "Swamiji showed me."

Everyone is eating away or passing their plates in for seconds and thirds. We're all sitting on the same level as the Swami and looking over to him. The Swami leans slightly over his plate and there he is—the heart of the new Kṛṣṇa conscious life which you've adopted. His clothes are humble, whatever *khāḍī* he brought from India, with inexpensive additions that we bought him, T-shirts or

jerseys from the Orchard Street markets. Although he is the *guru*, there is no elevated seat. He is bare-foot and eating the same *prasādam* as everyone. When he finishes, Swamiji gets up and walks across the room and washes his hands in the bathroom, then goes to his own room. We begin to finish up also. This is a good time for sneaking in to see Swamiji to ask a question or get some more typing.

*He Saves Me (Not Just Once)*

### 3.7

He saved me when I was in the darkness of ignorance. We should not forget, but keep alive the memory of our conversion. Meditation on Śrīla Prabhupāda as the one who saved us, is more than gratitude for a past favor. Rather, we are in constant need of his saving grace, and he is always ready to protect us. Even after *dīkṣa*, a disciple is constantly tested by *māyā*. There is every chance that one may fall down again and return to former ways.

Even Lord Brahmā is subjected to illusion and suffering, and so he turned to the Lord: "I pray that in the course of my material activities I may not be deviated from the vibration of the Vedic hymns" (*Bhāg.* 3.9.24). Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this prayer as follows:

Brahmā, as the supermost *brahmā*, is afraid of a falldown, and therefore he prays to the Lord for protection. This is a warning for one and all in the



spiritual advancement of life. Unless one is sufficiently protected by the Lord, he may fall down from his spiritual position; therefore, one has to pray constantly to the Lord for protection and the blessing to carry out one's duty.

—*Bhāg.* 3.9.24, purport

In the case of Lord Brahmā, the Supreme Lord was his direct spiritual master, but in everyone else's case, we should turn to both *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. Our need for this relationship is an ongoing one, and this is another proof that the relationship is not diminished by time, or confined to one act which our *guru* performed when we were neophytes and needed an initial pick-me-up.

At the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance from this world, his followers were forced to learn that their relationship with him continued by service in separation. Previous to Prabhupāda's disappearance, we had heard the philosophy of serving in separation, but now we had to learn it as a substantial fact of life. The fact that Prabhupāda's followers could continue as before and increase their feelings of devotion, and even increase their serving capacity, proved that he was very much still with them.

Although in certain ways we may have grown up and matured, we remain disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. After a few years of experience, the disciple knows what he is supposed to do, and so he

follows the rules and regulations and discharges routine duties. He doesn't need to be constantly told these things. One also comes to know that the strength for performing devotional service is given by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of transcendental knowledge. But even when one knows these facts, and preaches about them to others, the active ingredient is always the *guru's* mercy.

A warrior may possess a good weapon, but unless he has the strength to pick it up and use it, he will be defeated. The strength for fighting *māyā* is a spiritual strength (*bala*) which is given by the grace of Lord Balarāma. The spiritual master is the representative of Lord Balarāma, and so it's to him we should pray for ongoing protection. (We may make a distinction here between meditation and prayer. Prayer is a type of meditation, but with the emphasis on personal importuning. In the example of Lord Brahmā previously quoted, he was meditating on the Supreme Lord and urgently requesting His help.) Prabhupāda states, "The only prayer to make to Kṛṣṇa is, 'Dear Lord, please give me the strength to serve You.' Any other prayer you'll never be happy" (lecture, August, 1975).

As Prabhupāda's mercy is the constant factor for spiritual success, so his disfavor will be the direct cause of falldown. Therefore, we should always be aware of the gross and subtle forms of *guru-aparādha*. But all dangers on the path, such as continued temptations from *māyā*, or the committing of offenses to the *guru*, can be mitigated by sincere attempts to follow the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa as

given by His pure devotee. We need not be depressed by the fact that we're always in need of help, and that there is danger at every step. All we need is to constantly be aware of our weakness and turn to the one who can save us. As Prabhupāda advises, "We must simply pray, 'Kṛṣṇa, please pick me up.'" Not just once.

*Which Prabhupāda?*

### 3.8

The name "Prabhupāda" doesn't refer only to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Previous Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* such as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Rūpa Gosvāmī, and many others are also known as Prabhupāda.

In this verse, the word Prabhupāda, referring to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is significant. Regarding this, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda comments, "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and all His servants address Him as Prabhupāda. This means that there are many *prabhus* taking shelter under His lotus feet." The pure Vaiṣṇava is addressed as *prabhu*, and this address is an etiquette observed between Vaiṣṇavas. When many *prabhus* remain under the shelter of the lotus feet of another *prabhu*, the address Prabhupāda is

given. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Prabhu are also addressed as Prabhupāda. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Advaita Prabhu and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu are all *viṣṇu-tattva*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore all living entities are under Their lotus feet. Lord Viṣṇu is the eternal Lord of everyone, and the representative of Lord Viṣṇu is the Lord's confidential servant. Such a person acts as the spiritual master for neophyte Vaiṣṇavas; therefore the spiritual master is as respectable as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya or Lord Viṣṇu Himself. For this reason, the spiritual master is addressed as Om Viṣṇupāda or Prabhupāda.

—Cc. *Madhya*, 10.23

In *Prabhupāda Meditations* we are recalling the activities of a particular Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. We do not mean to imply that he is the only pure devotee or the only Prabhupāda. But neither should a reader claim that these Prabhupāda meditations are primarily intended to describe the *category* of pure devotees rather than the particular *bhaktivedānta* who came to New York City in 1965 and began the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

I am in fact praising our spiritual master, Swamiji, Abhay Charan Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, and I am advocating that devotees

now and in the future may take shelter of him through his Bhaktivedanta purports and by practicing *bhakti-yoga* in connection with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. There is nothing objectionable according to Vaiṣṇava philosophy in seeing all good qualities of the Vaiṣṇava in a particular spiritual master. It could be argued further that only in the personal relationship with the *guru* is one's faith tested, is service rendered, and are the truths of the *Vedas* revealed.

Specifically we advocate following A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda by hearing about him from his authorized followers and in this way, becoming a Prabhupādānuga.

In remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda, what he did and what he taught, we also come to appreciate the previous Prabhupāda *jagat-gurus* and great souls in the disciplic succession of pure God consciousness. In this way, Prabhupāda meditations escape the confines of narrow sectarianism or personality cultism. To appreciate Śrīla Prabhupāda means to appreciate all the great devotees described in the Vedic histories and also those devotees, sons of God and prophets who appeared in lands outside of the Vedic culture. Śrīla Prabhupāda also taught us to appreciate contemporary devotees of the Lord, based on the symptoms of love of God—wherever we find uninterrupted and unmotivated devotional service to the Supreme.

Prabhupāda meditations are dictated by love. God's mercy comes to us in a personal form. We

want to remember our particular rescuer. Finding the qualities of our teacher to be very great, we want to tell others of him and encourage them to follow Prabhupāda. We are thinking of Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, both in the exclusive sense as well as the inclusive sense. Prabhupāda expressed this in "The Universal Teacher," a Vyāsa-pūjā homage he wrote honoring his own spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: "The *Ācāryadeva* to whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the *guru* of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the *jagad-guru*, or the *guru* of all of us; the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly while others do not obey him directly."

### *A Sunday Evening with Swamiji*

#### 3.9

I have been to the Sunday love feast, and then to my apartment to finish up some typing. Now I'm going back to the storefront to give the typing to Swamiji.

As I enter the storefront I see that many guests have already left. Kīrtanānanda is sitting on the front shelf of the storefront window talking with a guy and girl about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He's speaking examples he's heard from the Swami and some of his own. His friend, Umāpati, stands by. Someone mentions Buddhism and Umāpati says, "Buddhism is actually a kind of mysticism for atheists."

On the left side of the front entrance is a shelf with ISKCON literatures where Gargamuni has set up pamphlets, *Kṛṣṇa, The Reservoir of Pleasure* and *Who is Crazy?* The first issue of *BTG* is there, and some incense in homemade packs. Gargamuni wears red *japa* beads around his neck and he smoothes his "Shakespearean locks" with his hand. He says, "You can burn this incense when you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." He laughs, but he's trying to make a sale.

A man picks up the leaflet, *Prospectus*. "Is this free?"

Gargamuni says, "We have to pay for the printing. You can give a little donation for it." Gargamuni holds his fourth plate of feast *prasādam* in his hand and he's picking a little from it as he talks.

At the back of the room where the dais is, there are big pots on the floor and the devotees are giving out whatever *prasādam* is left. Acyutānanda is serving out the *prasādam* with a large spoon. Stryādhīśa is sitting quietly eating. Rūpānuga and his wife and their little child are sitting, having finished *prasādam*, and talking with Rāyarāma. A moody young man is playing the *tamboura*, but pressing the strings down as if it were a guitar. Bob Lefkowitz says to him, "Hey, that's not the way you play a *tamboura*. You'll break it. It's just a drone instrument."

The young man continues playing the *tamboura* by pressing the strings and finally Lefkowitz takes it from him.

Rūpānuga says to Rāyarāma, "Something

should be done to make the temple a cleaner place." He says that he and his wife sometimes feel ashamed to come there because of the cockroaches and the dirt. There are even sweet juice stains on the rug. Rāyarāma smiles and says, "Well, what can be done?" But Rūpānuga is serious about it. He says it's really bad and he will tell the Swami about it.

Jagannātha dāsa (James Green) is also there and he's talking with a newly initiated devotee named Dvārakādhiśa. Dvārakādhiśa is comparing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Western philosophy. He says that the arguments on the existence of God by Thomas Aquinas are very good.

I walk through this scene and out the side door into the courtyard. Paper plates are scattered around, and the janitor, Mr. Chuddy, is upset.

"I told you this before," says Mr. Chuddy. "This is not your place."

Brahmānanda says, "We're just like your sons. So just please tell us what to do and I'll do it. I'll clean up right away. It won't happen again." Brahmānanda has heard from the Swami that he should approach Mr. Chuddy in this way. Mr. Chuddy is pacified but another tenant comes and they both complain again about the plates.

"Did you get some *prasādam*?" asks Brahmānanda politely of the tenant.

"Yes, I got a plate. It was nice but that's not the point."

Stryādhiśa is sitting at the picnic table blinking and looking detached from everything.

I go up to the Swami's room and the door is



open. I can see Jadurāṇī back at her place. She must have eaten *prasādam* quickly and come right up, and now she is singing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and tinkling the brush in the glass. She paints a little on her canvas, then tinkles it in the glass to wipe it off, and then paints again. There are some guests in the Swami's room and he's speaking to them. So I'll go in and sit down.

The Swami is saying that there are symptoms of advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You feel you should take down notes of what he's saying, because you have not heard this before. Right away you ask yourself, "Do I have these symptoms of advancement?" He says one symptom is that you're not attached to the things of this world. You're also not lusty or greedy for material things because you're satisfied in Kṛṣṇa.

Hearing the Swami, you're amazed at how he knows everything and speaks in such an ordered way, authoritative and very relaxed. The room is warm and he's sitting back, with his *dhotī* hitched up a bit so that you can see his satiny skin up to the knee. He looks at me but doesn't say anything because he's really absorbed in talking, and I'm just glad that I'm there. I'm included and listening.

After awhile I ask a question—"Are there more symptoms of advancement?" He says that another symptom is that you're not afraid. There's no fear because you know that even if you die, you don't die. You are an eternal self. Some of the guests don't agree with this. They make points and then the Swami counters again.

While he's talking, Swamiji seems to notice the typing that's in my hand. He says, "What is that? Do you have some typing for me?"

"Yes." You come forward on your knees and put the manuscript beside him. He touches it, looks at it in an offhand way and goes back to preaching. But then a few minutes later he looks at you and asks, "Do you have more work?"

"Yes, I have more."

I had been feeling sleepy over at my apartment and thinking, "Oh well, I can go and see him in the morning." But I'm glad I decided to come back to see him, because this is where I really want to be.

As the evening gets later, Acyutānanda looks in and asks, "Swamiji, would you like something to eat? Would you like some puffed rice?" Some of the guests realize how late it is and say that they'll have to leave. I think I should leave also and give the Swami some time to himself. Finally we all get up and start for the door. Swamiji says, "I need some time to work on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*."

Then he says, "The store will open tomorrow morning at six o'clock." By the store he means himself. A man says, "I have to get back to the Bronx and the daily grind again. It sure has been nice being able to talk with you, Swamiji. And I hope I can follow some of these principles."

Everyone leaves the apartment, as Acyutānanda and Kīrtanānanda signal that we should all go and leave the Swamiji alone. Jadurāṇī stays in her corner, painting. I could stay too, but I'm going to go. I'll be back in the morning. We bow down and

say goodnight and somewhat reluctantly leave Swamiji. He's smiling to us, and we know we'll be able to come back soon. As I walk home, I picture the Swamiji in his room alone, typing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on his typewriter.

### *Meditating While Ill*

#### 3.10

Prabhupāda meditation can be rigorous work; it requires the cooperation of a healthy intelligence, mind and body. Memory-concentration, intellectual discrimination, reading and writing may seem to be easy tasks, but they are actually exhausting when pursued constantly. Thinking can be impaired by physical illness. One shouldn't think, therefore, "When old age arrives, then I can relax and spare time for inner life." Prahlāda Mahārāja advised his young schoolmates to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness at the earliest possible age:

Therefore while in material existence, a person fully competent to distinguish right from wrong must endeavor to achieve the highest goal of life as long as the body is stout and strong and not embarrassed by dwindling.

—*Bhāg.* 7.6.5

At any stage of life we may be impaired by disease or fatigue. But this doesn't mean that our thinking of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa has to stop

during those periods. There are particular thoughts which may be dovetailed with the inconveniences we experience when the body's illness demands our attention, diminishes our range of activities—and even seems to diminish our consciousness.

We may think of how Śrīla Prabhupāda put up with such difficulties. Although we are advised not to try to read the mind of the pure devotee, yet we may worship Prabhupāda's example of tolerance in distress. On the Jaladuta voyage to America, Prabhupāda twice experienced heart attacks. And he continued to suffer strokes and many other maladies while discharging his strenuous duties on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. I can recall being with Prabhupāda at Beth Israel Hospital in New York City in 1967, when the doctors were running him through a series of tests after he had experienced a severe stroke. At one point the doctor made us leave the room while they gave Prabhupāda a big needle for a spinal tap. When I returned to the room I asked, "Swamiji, did it hurt?" Prabhupāda looked at me kindly and said, "We are tolerant."

Devotees who were near Prabhupāda during any of his illnesses, and especially in the last months and weeks of Prabhupāda's days in Vṛndāvana in 1977, know that he was always in perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness during such situations. Prabhupāda even used these times as means of instructions and realization. When devotees brought news of book distribution to his bedside he said, "This is life. The material world is just bones. . . . So take care of the bones as long as possible, but the real life is here,

always remember that. The material world means we are simply protecting bones and flesh together. But they have no knowledge of what they are." Although we can't imitate Śrīla Prabhupāda or great *ṛṣis*, we can still apply their instructions to our own illness and dwindling.

When we are physically indisposed we may also meditate on how Śrīla Prabhupāda does not reject us because of illness. We should not feel sorry for ourselves nor think that the pure devotee is unsympathetic to our condition. He himself has gone through these difficulties; he knows that we are sincere and that we would work more actively on his behalf if we were fit.

Illness also teaches us that Kṛṣṇa is the controller. We are not independent to run here and there and to think hard without any restriction. At least as long as we remain conditioned by the material body, we are like a cow at the end of a rope. Illness means the rope is being tugged, and this is a reminder that we are completely dependent. In the conditioned state, sickness means that the *prakṛti*, or matter, is subjecting us to its control. Another thought is to accept that we are ill as a result of karmic reaction. None of these thoughts should produce mental depression, but should make us sober, and in a simple way, even more devoted than when we are normally active.

The fact is, when we have even a cold or headache, our normal range of meditative activities may be reduced. But we should know that even a simplified form or worship of the Lord is acceptable

to Him. I have already mentioned how Śrīla Prabhupāda approved of his disciple Pradyumna's simple mental turning to Prabhupāda at a time when he was in the hospital for a hernia operation, and unable to chant many *mantras*.

So there is no time when we are forced to be out of favorable thoughts of our spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. By even the simplest gesture of mind and feeling, we can turn and pray, "Please pick me up. Please give me the strength to serve you." And as long as the body is "stout and strong and is not embarrassed by dwindling," we should use our health with gratitude, for carrying out the order of Kṛṣṇa's representative.

### *Swamiji's Attractive Beauty*

#### **3.11**

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is "handsomeness and waves of nectar of handsomeness" (*Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*). But Swamiji was seventy or eighty years old. We were all young men, so why were we attracted to this "old man"? (Swamiji used to say, "I'm an old man, I may die at any moment." And, "I am a poor foreigner. Why are they after me?")

He had the attractive features of a sage. The way he sat, the shape of his head, the gestures of his hands. He was from the East, like Gautama Buddha. He sat on the floor or on the ground, and whatever furniture he had was at a low center of gravity, no chairs. The aura and look in his eyes was from another world. You can't describe it, his shining eyes. His eyes signaled, "You can look in my eyes but you

will not be able to understand my love of Kṛṣṇa, but that's what's there." He was childlike also, very sweet but very strong. You couldn't come before him like a rogue and a rascal and still approach him. You had to accept that he was an elderly person, a *guru*, and you must be respectful to him, and *then* things could happen. Then you could begin to perceive his actual beauty; he would relax and allow himself to be taken care of by you and to exchange with you.

We were certainly not turned off by the fact that he was an elderly person. We weren't looking for youth. We knew where our youthful smart-aleckness had gotten us—into trouble and suffering. There was no question of sexual attraction, or as men sometimes do, squaring off with aggressiveness: "Can you beat me up? Can I beat him up?" With the Swami, it was freedom from all that because he was the *guru*, he was old, and he knew so many things that you didn't know.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's transcendental beauty transcended his old age. The way he smiled is not a worldly thing. So young men and young women liked to come to hear the wisdom. It wasn't just the wisdom, it was his way of moving, his graceful movements, his clothes, the things on his desk. It was a treat to be there in his presence and to watch everything, with respect and friendliness and wanting to serve.

Swamiji kept spelling everything out: He was a representative of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is there in His name, Kṛṣṇa is there in so many ways and we can

serve Kṛṣṇa and go to Kṛṣṇa. Aside from Swamiji, nobody was going to tell you about Kṛṣṇa—that Kṛṣṇa is God and that Kṛṣṇa is a cowherd boy. Kṛṣṇa was so "far out" we couldn't believe it, but every time we went in front of Swamiji you had to believe it. He kept up the reality of Kṛṣṇa. And in the books that he gave out—*there was Kṛṣṇa*. He made such a powerful presentation that you said, "Let's go up and hear the Swami talk about Kṛṣṇa." You would come to him with your concoctions, "What about this? And what about that?" But Swamiji would bring it right back to Kṛṣṇa and you would accept it.

And so gradually in his presence, hearing about Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, you started becoming Kṛṣṇa-ized and you realized that Swamiji had knowledge and influence to do this to people—to create faith in them, for Kṛṣṇa. But you had to go back regularly to him and get it charged up.

He had unshakeable faith in Kṛṣṇa and he could see Kṛṣṇa. We sometimes imagined how he saw Kṛṣṇa. We couldn't quite understand it. When did he talk with Him, in sleep? Partly we imagined this, how it actually took place. Swamiji would say, "Yes, you can talk with Kṛṣṇa, but He only talks with intimate persons." We may not have known exactly how it took place but we did know that we were attracted to him because he had such a conviction about Kṛṣṇa.

I remember once in that room he said, "People can talk philosophy about Kṛṣṇa, but *what is their*



*realization?*" Then I realized—that's what he's got. Swami has realization. Exactly how he realized, we didn't know, but we had faith that he was experiencing a huge amount that we were not.

Those who were not his disciples thought he was pretty much like everybody else: He's an old man with Hindu knowledge, but probably has the same motives and drives as everybody else. But we disciples believed in him and sensed that his perception of everything was very different from ours. He was in touch with Kṛṣṇa and he was fascinating and attractive and lovable. We could sense his mystic potency.

Even Allen Ginsberg saw it. He said, "I would disagree with him and even suspect ego exchanges, but no matter how much I disagreed, I was always glad to see him and be with him because of the aura of sweetness due to his complete dedication." It was nicely put. Even he, although not a disciple, when coming into the Swami's presence, was able to see, "Here is a man who is totally dedicated and in love with Kṛṣṇa." That made Swamiji beautiful; although he appeared to be an old man, he was beautiful because of his love for Kṛṣṇa.

I remember feeling his beauty one time when a black minister came. Jadurāṇī brought him around because she was taking guitar lessons from him—Reverend Gary Davis. He was talking about prayer. The Reverend, who was blind, was seated on a chair, and he pounded his cane on the floor. His wife was sitting beside him in a chair and the Swami was on a lower level in front of them. The Re-

verend said, "But the problem is, you've got to know *what to pray for!*" Swamiji just sat back, and he was so graceful, almost like the combined feminine and masculine grace. And in a very calm way, contrasting with Reverend Davis, Swamiji said, "What to pray for? We pray, 'Please let me love You.'"

These are some of the things that we could see in him. Others would be puzzled as to why he let the hair grow out of his ears or how come he's wearing eyeglasses if he's perfect? But we saw these as not inappropriate to a sage.

He was lovable because of his dedication to Kṛṣṇa but not lovable like a five-year-old kid is. He was heavy. You could just try to tell him why you don't believe there is God and he would knock you down with intellectual arguments, and if need be, he would shout you down. If you tried to shout back, then everything would be ruined. Swamiji would go anywhere and meet anyone to preach, even if people weren't receptive. But he didn't *regularly* expose himself to people or places where he would be mocked or harassed. There had to be respect and then it could happen. You can't expect a *guru* to give Kṛṣṇa to faithless persons.

Anyway, I see it's not possible for me to describe in words, Swamiji's attractive beauty.

*Typing for Swamiji*

### 3.12

Typing is yoga. You sit on the floor cross-legged in front of the typewriter. Instead of performing

*prāṇayāma* and raising the life air in the *cakras*, you type the words of Swamiji from the *Bhagavad-gītā* manuscript. Concentrate and type, incorporating all the editing marks made by Hayagrīva. If you make a mistake in typing, then stop and correct it. Everything is concentrated on looking at the message and making it right. Thinking of your typing as yoga gives a nice spirit to the work. But the most important thing is that it is in connection with the Swamiji. It is his words of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

I kept pounding it out. When I was supposed to be calling on welfare clients, I would often drop in at my apartment and do an hour of typing. Always pushing it on. The Swami was aware of what I was doing. He asked about the progress, and when I handed the work in, he handled it and said it was nice. We were both interested in these clean white pages with typing marks on them, his work. It was very dear to him.

He had bundles of thousands of pages that he had typed, wrapped up in saffron and lying on the floor in his closet. When he first took some typing out of this mass of material and gave it to me, I remarked, "I think you have enough work to last me a whole winter." Swamiji laughed and said, "I have many lifetimes of work for you."

After I'd been doing it for some months, Swamiji started using a dictaphone. One day I stopped in at his apartment in the middle of my office workday to put in an hour on his manuscript. Swamiji kept the dictaphone covered in his room except when it was in use. When I went in and got it, he noticed

that I was dressed in shirt and tie from the office. He remarked, "You are still at your office work?" I replied, "Yes, but I go out and see clients. Right now instead of seeing them I'm coming to do this work. I'm like Sanātana Gosvāmī who stayed away from work in order to read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*." As I said that, I was holding the dictaphone, and heading for the next room where Jadurāṇī was painting, where the clotheslines were strung with Swamiji's clothes, and where the jar of ISKCON bullets was waiting in the corner. As I left his room, Swamiji smiled and said, "You are Sanātana."

Sometimes when I was typing in his second room, he would walk in and see what I and the others were doing. One time I stopped and said, "Swamiji, you just said on this tape that the four Kumāras are eternal *brahmacārīs*. How is that, that they could be eternal *brahmacārīs*?" He'd reply and then I'd go back into *samādhi*, locked into hearing his phrases and hearing the philosophy, while typing.

The typing work didn't go through any secretary of Prabhupāda's, but direct from him to me. When I returned a batch he asked, "Is everything all right?"

"Oh, fine Swamiji," I said. "I'm really enjoying typing the sixth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. It's wonderful how Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the same as the *yogīs* except that we have more facility because the *yogī* can see Kṛṣṇa only when he sits down and gets deep in meditation. But a devotee can see Kṛṣṇa in His picture or chant His holy names." It wasn't artificial for me to engage in *kṛṣṇa-kathā* about what I'd

just been reading because I was filled with it by the typing. At least I could read something and then repeat it exactly as I had heard it.

In a practical way, I was connected to him, and my mind was saturated with Kṛṣṇa thought. You knew that you couldn't do nonsense because you had to type. Your time was taken up; you had to get up early, chant your rounds, type, go to work. A full life.

Swamiji said never be idle. He had written an announcement and posted it on the wall: Always be engaged, and if you don't have any work, then chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is how we worked for the Swami; different boys did different things.

### *Why I Follow His Way*

#### **3.13**

Is there something in *The Way of St. Francis* that may spark me to write about the way of Śrīla Prabhupāda? A follower of Saint Francis writes of their founder-saint, and we have our founder-*ācārya*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I don't need other books or comparisons, but I turn to them out of a feeling of lack and maybe because I want to say something newly attractive about Śrīla Prabhupāda. But when I talk of why I follow him, I should speak for myself.

He was the only one who taught me of God and I listened. He explained everything. He represented a "science of God." He came to where I was, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, into my egocentric,

dirty life, when I was turning over Van Gogh's question in my mind. According to scriptures, if you meet the *sad-guru* (eternal spiritual master) you shouldn't wait to do something else or look for someone else—but surrender to him and take initiation as his disciple.

He brought the chanting of the holy names, and youthful hope about the chanting. Although I've been chanting for twenty-four years without much progress, I still have enthusiasm—"What a great idea! What an easy thing to do all the time! And how devotional!—Chant God's names!"

And he brought us the chanting in a musical rhythm of drum and *kāratālas*. Don't underestimate the hold of the *kīrtana* music with Swamiji leading us night after night.

He gave us a complete philosophy, Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. Lord Caitanya is the benedicting moon. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are the ultimate goal in Goloka. The Gosvāmī philosophers teach the way. And Prabhupāda is their latest representative.

"But later, when you grew older, didn't you change your mind? Weren't you ever sorry for following him? Didn't you find it difficult to renounce so much? Weren't you disappointed by the institution?" One who asks those questions doesn't understand. Celibacy, for example, feels right; it's wonderful peace and simplicity. Just for giving me *brahmacarya*, I owe my life to Swamiji. He made it sound like routine work.

Disappointed? Not so much. I *am* in anxiety that Śrīla Prabhupāda might be disappointed in me. So

many things went wrong, fell short. But I remember, when one of his first disciples went away, Prabhupāda said, "It is not so amazing that someone leaves Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The amazing thing is if someone stays." (Because *māyā* is so strong.)

We've almost all been disappointed by the institution at one time or another. But the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement is growing again, seeds are coming up in unexpected places, Russia, Eastern Europe, China. America is surviving bad times. So I have no regrets for taking to the spiritual path and working for the Movement. I'm happy; I have a tangible connection with a pure devotee of the Lord. I'm only sorry because if I see him today, he may show his disappointment for my obvious failure.

But he gives me hope, just as in the beginning. I want to please my spiritual master by coming alive in devotional service unto Lord Kṛṣṇa. I'm only beginning to understand that the most important thing is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and service to Him. I'm a new student, and the Swami is teaching me the *Bhagavad-gītā*, leading me to Kṛṣṇa.

### *A Glimpse from a Saturday Night in Swamiji's Room*

#### **3.14**

You can sit down, it's a closed room and Swamiji is sitting on the other side of the little desk. His desk is a tin suitcase. Over Swamiji's head is a calendar painting of Kṛṣṇa playing His flute and standing on the world, and then over our heads here on the other side of the room, there's a picture

of Lord Caitanya, which the Swami sometimes glances at. He's sitting on his mat which is the same mat he uses when he lies down to sleep. His typewriter is also on the desk. He rises early and does his work right here, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

"Now a boy, Neal, is going to do some typing for me." When Swamiji speaks, you try to be part of it. Don't be an outsider who comes and raises doubts. But when they come, then you get to observe the Swami answering questions, which is good for us.

Tonight you have a question: "Swamiji, you said that the souls leave Kṛṣṇa and come into the material world out of envy. So where does it say that in the scriptures?" The Swami shows you in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He says, "Chapter 7, verse 27." He gives you the book to read out loud: "All living beings are born into delusion, bewildered by dualities arisen from desire and hate." So there it is: Kṛṣṇa says they come here out of envy and hate. You say, "Hate sounds like too strong a word." But Swami says no, they actually hate God. Then he gets strong in saying it. I accept what he says.

It's been a few months now, and you notice that some things he says you have heard before, but that's all right—although it makes you wonder, if already some things are starting to be repeated, what does it mean? But then, there's so much more that you don't know. Anyway, the difference between the Swami and us is immeasurable. It's not just that he's read a lot more books. But he has direct realization of Kṛṣṇa. He says if we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa we'll also have realization, but I know that



it's not possible that we could ever have as much realization.

He's the pure devotee in this particular form, in a goldenish complexion, and an Indian body, elderly but strong looking, like a strong father or even grandfather. You are drawn to him. And the same truth will be conveyed to anyone who comes here. They can accept it and see for themselves, the presence of a person who has a different consciousness than we do, because he is a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa and you can have faith in seeing him. Those who don't see him that way, it's unfortunate. If someone comes and doesn't get a wonderful impression of the Swami, what can we do? We can't force them if they miss the point. It's their mistake. It doesn't phase us.

### 3.15

*Stanzas*

*(by Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī)*

#### 1

Swamiji, you said, "If you are not ashamed  
we can wear our *japa* beads around our necks.  
And you said, "Thank you very much"  
when I shaved my head.  
People jeer at us sometimes on the streets  
but we remember you and Kṛṣṇa  
and it's all right.

## 2

I go to work with *tilaka* on my forehead  
 because I want to show them  
 I'm a Vaiṣṇava, and because  
 the marks of Viṣṇu are beautiful.

## 3

I'm not afraid to go out  
 to Saint Mark's Place  
 and start calling out loud,  
 "*Back to Godhead* magazine!  
 The yoga of ecstasy! Read how,  
 by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa  
 you can attain the state of bliss  
 of love of God!"

## 4

I'm reading no more books, Swamiji,  
 except yours and eating  
 no food except yours.  
 The renounced saintly life  
 I'd read about is coming true.

Sometimes when a night starts out  
 I'm feeling doubtful  
 or I may not like somebody,  
 but once we get into the *kīrtana*,  
 I go with you to Kṛṣṇa,  
 and everything's all right.

*The Expansive Pure Devotee*

**3.16**

I dreamt that Śrīla Prabhupāda was present and his secretaries announced that he would lecture on the Eleventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. There would be a thorough written examination, his secretaries said. I thought, "But isn't there a more important test of whether we are deeply reading and worshiping these books?" The fact is that Prabhupāda consciousness of any kind is good. Certainly the thorough studying of his books is good, and so is the leisurely reading, and a prayerful reading of even a small amount.

Regardless of approaches, everyone has a direct line to reaching Prabhupāda's mercy. For some, it may be their service to his mission, even if they don't find much time to read. The heart of attachment to him is dedication, and it may be taken up in many individual ways. Some devotees stress obedience to the vows of *sādhana*, and another group take as more important, the spreading of the teachings to new people. And everyone draws examples from the life of Śrīla Prabhupāda to support

their own way of serving him—whether by cooking, preaching, worshipping the Deities, leading *kīrtana*, giving classes, teaching children, or whatever.

For example, some parents believe in "indulging" their children up to the age of five, because Śrīla Prabhupāda said something to this effect. Or devotee-parents will say that Śrīla Prabhupāda's father sent him to college for a career and use that as an example for their children's future. A business-inclined devotee will look at Prabhupāda's life during his pharmaceutical business and take direction from that. A family man sees Prabhupāda's responsibility towards his family members as a motto and it helps him to chalk out his own life. Should we take *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*, or try to engage all family members in preaching until we die? What did Prabhupāda do? The list of angles is endless, since people from all walks of life have made Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa their goal.

What does this mean? Why the confusion? Shall I alone break through this bewildering variety of sincere attempts to understand Prabhupāda and present the *real, definitive Prabhupāda*? No, they are all serving him and each is a testimony to his dear-ness and greatness.

Let each follower do it in his best way. In a 1966 lecture on the Bowery, Prabhupāda emphasized "dove-tailing our consciousness with the Supreme." He said, "Don't stop your activity (that's not possible) but act in a way that you can serve the Lord of the senses with your senses." So everyone's service is possible. And yet we must admit that

there are servants who are pleasing and those who are more pleasing.

Let me not be upset or envious at the existence of the party spirit among Prabhupāda's followers. Don't be bewildered by their propaganda and by the attention Śrīla Prabhupāda gives them. And since I am supposed to be an impartial writer, then let me give us as many authentic views as possible of Prabhupāda. Memoirs are nice, but tell them gently, not to prove that you are a good disciple or to prove one of your pet theories.

All right, here is a glimpse: *"Prabhupāda worked to sell his Back to Godhead magazines in the 1950s alone in Delhi. He approached people at the tea stalls, worked in the heat of Delhi's summer and sometimes collapsed from the effort."* This is an authentic glimpse of Prabhupāda. He's told us this in his own words. So think of Śrīla Prabhupāda distributing the magazine in a 110 degree heat. But what is your conclusion based on this incident? Is it—"Sell books until you drop on the street?" Yes, but other messages also. It means, "Whatever you do, think of Prabhupāda." It means, "When you fall on the street (gored by a cow or hit by a car), think of him." It means, "Think of him when you go to Delhi," or "When you give birth to a child in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, think of Śrīla Prabhupāda." It can mean many things to many sincere devotees.

Let us appreciate how Śrīla Prabhupāda is everyone's best example. Choose our own way to serve him. A successful servant is one who thinks of him intensely while trying to carry out his in-

structions. Another way of saying it is that a devotee should offer his whole life and whole self to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Decide on how best to do this, and then give all you have as an offering to him.

Furthermore, anyone who gives himself or herself and serves Prabhupāda, remembering him in a humble way, will overcome all material difficulties. Thus it happened to Prahāda Mahārāja, who was a perfect devotee in Kṛṣṇa-smaraṇam:

Thus the weapons of the demons had no tangible effects upon Prahāda Mahārāja because he was a devotee undisturbed by material conditions and fully engaged in meditating upon and serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is unchangeable, who cannot be realized by the material senses and who is the soul of the entire universe.

—Bhāg. 7.5.41

But does this mean that it is entirely individual? Is there no definitive view of the *līlās* and instructions of Prabhupāda? Yes, there is a consensus view. The meaning of Prabhupāda's life, according to his faithful devotees, is conclusive. Yet even within the authorized ISKCON understanding and carrying out of the instructions, there are inevitable parties. This party spirit exists even in the spiritual world among the different wings of *gopīs* or among devotees serving in the various *rasas*. Mother

Yaśodā and her friends look upon Kṛṣṇa's activities from a different point of view than do the young *gopīs*, and the cowherd boys have their own point of view.

So let us work in a party of like-minded devotees for carrying out Prabhupāda's instructions. By taking up the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda which most attracts our heart and to which we feel we can give our greatest efforts, we will enter into association with devotees who are like us. A certain group will gather up from Prabhupāda's writings all he has said about living on farms and they will feel nourished by those instructions while they work on a farm to carry on cow protection and ox power. They will live in a kind of trance of conviction that they are carrying out Prabhupāda's most important mission. What about those who are distributing his books, are they opposed to the *varṇāśrama* servants? No, although sometimes in the rhetoric of the party spirit, devotees may sound like that. Let us not be agitated by the party spirit, and neither be discouraged.

Let everyone come together, at least sometimes, and appreciate Prabhupāda as the universal teacher. Let's all draw the same conclusion from his life and teachings—that *he is our inspiration*, and that this is expressed in many ways.

The most important thing is to "make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." That is, out of our broken lives, and our mixed motives for following Śrīla Prabhupāda, let us turn it into devotional service rendered to the Lord and His pure devotee.

Let us also accept that "my" Prabhupāda is shared by many. Śrīla Prabhupāda once explained this to a disciple who couldn't understand how Prahlāda Mahārāja could say, "My dear Lord." Does this mean that Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva is exclusively the Lord of Prahlāda Mahārāja and of no one else? Prabhupāda explained that Kṛṣṇa is able to exchange in this way, although an ordinary person is not. When a wife says of her husband, "my husband," her claim nullifies the claims of other women. A devotee says, "My Lord Kṛṣṇa" or "My dear Prabhupāda," and finds himself alone with Prabhupāda. But at the same time, others also have a direct access to an intimate relationship with the pure devotee of the all-expansive Lord.

*How Much Should I Beg*

3.17

How important is *Prabhupāda Meditations*? If it's not important, why am I doing it? If it is important, why don't I call out louder to Kṛṣṇa begging Him and Śrīla Prabhupāda to manifest themselves fully? I think the answer to these questions is an individual one, depending on a devotee's mood or *rasa* with the Lord and his *guru*.

I'm dedicated to my writing project. Let me get up early and do my writing, and whatever Kṛṣṇa wants to send, I'll accept it as *prasādam*. There's no use in calling out louder. I don't want to bother the Lord or Prabhupāda, and besides that, they are already blessing me.

From what I have understood of Prabhupāda's



teachings, our prayers should be reserved for sentiments like, "Please give me the strength to serve You." I am praying to Kṛṣṇa for that, and I should pray more strongly. Prabhupāda advises us, "For any activity done in devotional service, one should always pray to the previous *ācāryas* to kindly help me." And yet I can't help but feel reluctant to call out, and not be too demanding about my own project.

But this raises questions. On the one hand, one should work humbly and not make demands of the Lord. On the other hand, we're advised that the price of love of God is *laulyam*, or the intensity of the desire to serve the Lord. One should desire to perform some service and one should cry tears—and those tears are the price of your devotion. Since I am not crying out so much, maybe I should ask myself, "Why don't I want it more badly?" One answer I can give is that I'm afraid I may be asking the Lord to make me a famous writer so that people will say, "You wrote such a brilliant book about Prabhupāda. You're empowered. You must be very close to him." If I actually take pleasure in hearing such praise, then my praying to write a devotional book will be impure.

One cries out to Kṛṣṇa in different ways. It doesn't have to be literally done by looking upwards and crying out loud, "Kṛṣṇa, please help me!" It can also be expressed by getting up very early, writing as much as possible, trying always to think of the next Prabhupāda meditation, and taking notes about it. One expresses oneself to the Lord

by those endeavors.

Aside from my own particular mentality, when I hear devotees making prayers to the Lord for the improvement of their service, it usually seems right. If the young musicians of "Kṛṣṇafest" record a song and pray, "Kṛṣṇa, please make this record a hit so that all the kids will love it and Kṛṣṇa consciousness will spread widely"—why object? And who can disagree with the prayers that have been given to the whole society of devotees to recite for protection against the anti-cult court cases? We pray every morning, "Dear Rādhā-Dāmodara, if You desire, please keep all of Your temples open for Your devotees." Devotees intensely involved in their own services work hard, do everything they can, and at the same time, they pray to Kṛṣṇa. And even as they pray they allow the Lord to do as He desires.

Sometimes it seems to me that the only prayer we should make would be a prayer like that of Vāsudeva Daṭṭa or Jesus Christ, asking the Lord to please save all of the conditioned souls of the world. "Let there be no more suffering but let everyone go back to Godhead." Pure devotees who pray like that are also willing to do whatever they have to do to bring it about, including taking the suffering on themselves. But even great devotees know that the Lord's will is not fully known to us. He has given all living entities a little amount of free will and based on the misuse of that free will, the material world and the resultant suffering goes on. Why then should one pray to change that which is already perfect, namely the Lord's ar-

rangement for the material world? My answer is that when devotees make such prayers, they are going beyond the standard philosophical comprehension of the Lord's works—they dare to call upon the Lord to be even more merciful, and they offer themselves as sacrifices for this cause.

Aside from the prayer to the Lord to save everyone, we also hear of devotees praying for little things, for help in the execution of pure devotional service according to time and place. Certainly my asking for the potency to write a book would be a request for a relatively minor thing. It's not a minor thing to me, and yet I have to admit that it is a little thing. Of course, if Kṛṣṇa wanted, He could make the book so attractive that it would create a wonderful revival for all persons in remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda. At any rate, whether I call out loudly or not, I take this project seriously and I am praying by working at it. I cannot sincerely pray the big prayer for release of all living entities, with myself as the sacrifice. But realistically, knowing my own capacities, I have come to do this *sevā* unto the pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I know there are other important projects being done in the world of ISKCON and many may think that those projects are even more important. But for me, I'm doing the best I can with this.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also advises that we regard our offering as imperfect and small. We know that there's nothing we can really do to impress Kṛṣṇa in terms of a "perfect offering." So we should pray to the Lord, "I'm offensive, I'm imperfect and my

offering is not wonderful. So please excuse me and please accept me." This is the Vaiṣṇava mood, to submit oneself as unworthy, and to make one's offering in that way: "Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I've come here to try to write of you and to write of the 1966 days, because I think it is important to expand remembrances of the pastimes of the *śaktyāveśa-āvatara* and of the Lord. And so we want to remember you. If you desire, please make this not just my own feeble memory or feeble commentary, but please make it wonderful. And in any case, please accept this offering."

If I am writing the pastimes of Śrīla Prabhupāda and trying to meditate upon him, I should certainly have conviction that it's important. And since we're advised to ask Kṛṣṇa for help, it's inevitable that I'll ask for help in this endeavor I'm involved in. It's our service that's important. If your service is to grow vegetables, then that's important. You should worry at night whether the animals are going to come and eat your plants or whether a frost will destroy them. Similarly, this writing is our service. I hope Prabhupāda will be pleased with it, but I think that his pleasure will come when he sees me working as best I can. Then Kṛṣṇa may think, "Just see how much this devotee wants to remember My pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda." Also, if I can work at it nicely, Śrīla Prabhupāda will enjoy being reminded again of his early days.

The question is, how much should I beg? I have replied that one begs according to his particular mood or *rasa*. I should not be passive in the name

of humility, or refrain from asking the Lord at every step for His mercy. Prabhupāda has advised us to do this. Please help me. I can't write. It's not possible. With every line we should think, "Please, I can't remember Prabhupāda. It's not possible. Please help me to do it."

## *PART FOUR*

## *Prabhupāda in the Śāstras*

### 4.1

Since all the *Vedas* praise the pure devotee and inform us of the supreme value of associating with him, what is the need for me to recall my subjective experiences? Even if my memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda give me personal comfort, how do they help others? The answer is that our faith is enhanced when we personally experience what the *śāstra* declares. Reliable personal witnesses also help to confirm that a particular spiritual master actually fulfills the qualities which the *śāstra* ascribes to great souls.

There is no doubt about one's becoming freed from all reactions to sinful activities after visiting a devotee or touching his lotus feet or giving him a sitting place. Even by remembering the activities of such a Vaiṣṇava one becomes purified, along with one's whole family. And what then can be said of rendering direct service to Him?

—*Bhāg.* 1.19.33, quoted in *Nectar of Devotion*, p. 102

How shall I prove that this verse applies to Śrīla Prabhupāda? Do I dare say, "I visited Śrīla Prabhupāda, touched his lotus feet, and I have become free from all reactions to sinful activities"? In one sense, yes. Ever since meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have given up the four pillars of sinful life, illicit sex,

intoxication, meat-eating and gambling. I have been able to do this only because of his order and his continued blessings. By meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have also taken up the daily chanting of sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. And I know hundreds of devotees who are also following these principles based on the order of His Divine Grace.

The personal testimony of the pure devotee's followers has some value. When a *brāhmaṇa* follower of Madhavendra Puri saw Lord Caitanya's ecstatic symptoms of love of God, he concluded that Lord Caitanya must also be a follower of Madhavendra Puri. The *brāhmaṇa* declared, "Upon seeing Your ecstatic love, I can just imagine that You must have some relationship with Madhavendra Puri. This is my understanding. This kind of ecstatic love can be experienced only when one has a relationship with Madhavendra Puri. Without him, even a scent of such transcendental ecstatic love is impossible" (Cc. *Madhya*, 17.172-3).

We expect the disciples to bear witness not only by words of praise for their *guru*, but by exemplary actions. A great spiritual master is not disproved if some of his disciples become fallen, but on the other hand, enthusiastic, purified followers are certainly an important sign of a Vaiṣṇava's potency. A Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* is not eager to gain a reputation as a potent preacher, but he is very desirous to please his spiritual masters, and he is also compassionate to save fallen souls. Prabhupāda wrote, "If even one man becomes a pure devotee of the Lord, we shall consider our attempt a success."



The Prabhupādānugas therefore, have a responsibility to live up to their master's teachings and expectations. When we are obedient to the vows we have made to him, it is another way of expressing thanks. We try to improve ourselves and aspire to become better devotees, for the pleasure of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We know that a worthy disciple can help newcomers to appreciate the works of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

So according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we will become purified along with our whole family, just by remembering the activities of a Vaiṣṇava. The statement, "What then can be said of rendering direct service to him?" implies that active service is even more rewarding than the act of remembrance by itself. In another translation by Śrīla Prabhupāda of the same *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse, he specifies personal services we may render to the Vaiṣṇava: "Simply by our remembering you, our houses become instantly sanctified. And what to speak of seeing you, touching you, washing your holy feet and offering you a seat in our home?" (*Bhāg.* 1.19.33). When saintly persons like Śrīla Prabhupāda come to this world, they should not be ignored. If one meets a pure devotee and neglects him—or if one vows to follow his order and later falls away—this is a serious mistake. Here is Prabhupāda's purport:



. . . The householders therefore, should feel grateful when such saints and sages appear at their doors. A

householder who dishonors such holy orders is a great offender. It is enjoined, therefore, that a householder who does not bow down before a saint at once must undergo fasting for the day in order to neutralize the great offense.

—*Bhāg.* 1.19.33, purport

Śāstric praises of the pure devotee may always be applied to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Meditation on Śrīla Prabhupāda may be conducted, therefore, simply by reading the Vaiṣṇava descriptions of the pure devotee spiritual master. We should never see these descriptions as exaggeration.

If a disciple's personal remembrances also help readers to remember Prabhupāda, and if they inspire them to serve him, then they are in line with the *śāstras*. But my personal experience of Śrīla Prabhupāda will be limited in many ways. For example, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that one's sinful reactions are taken away by seeing the pure devotee. But I may not be aware how my *karma* has been removed. Also, as long as there are impurities in my heart, I will not be able to see the pure spiritual form of the Vaiṣṇava. Even without my memories of Prabhupāda, the śāstric verses praise Prabhupāda and point to his writings and activities. Sensitive seekers, even if they come many years after the disappearance of Prabhupāda, will recognize Śrīla Prabhupāda in the *śāstras* and they themselves will become testimonies of his ongoing abil-

ity to rescue souls from *māyā*.

When personal experience of Śrīla Prabhupāda concurs with the eternal scriptures, then we feel complete confirmation. A good example is the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* verse, "The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the *saṅkīrtana* movement" (*Cc.Antya*, 7.11). It is now historically verifiable that Śrīla Prabhupāda spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa all over the world, and so this śāstric statement now reads as prophecy.

Let us therefore bear witness to the faith-building potency of the pure devotee who delivers Kṛṣṇa to the world. Let us remember his activities and teachings, follow his orders and help to fulfill the prophecies for the golden age within the age of quarrel.

### *Mercy From His Room*

#### **4.2**

Some memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda are difficult, because they show my failures. Some memories are sweet and completely reassuring. I would like to start with some of the sweet ones, as they occurred in Swamiji's private room at 26 Second Avenue.

One evening I went to Swamiji's room and found him alone. I had been reading a Gauḍīya Math book by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and it stimulated my intellect. So I asked Swamiji, "What does it mean when Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, 'The

darling of Nanda?" Swamiji explained it.

Then I said, "Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says that a person who sees the spiritual form of the Deity on the altar is the true theist." I was repeating this to Swamiji because I was impressed with Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's expressions, and also I wanted to hear what Swamiji thought of the slight difference of words and concepts between himself and Bhaktivinoda. I made a few more comments and then Swamiji said, "Now go downstairs and let me finish my work." I suddenly realized that I had overextended his welcome to me. Swamiji had better things to do other than chat with me about the meaning of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's language. In obedience, I bowed down and left him alone.

On that occasion, the Swami gave me a little glimpse of the difference between us. He could talk and listen to a young boy who was excited about his first reading of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, or he could be composing Bhaktivedanta purports. Prabhupāda considered his time well spent if he could attract someone to Kṛṣṇa, but it was sometimes embarrassing to see how we foolishly intruded.

I have another dear memory of a moment spent with Swamiji in that same room, in 1967, just before he left to return to India. He had tried to recover his health in San Francisco, and now decided to go back to India. At the same time, he decided that I should go to Boston to open an ISKCON center. After only one day in Boston, I returned at night and told the Swami what had happened. I said, "I did the whole thing in one day, Swamiji! I

went and applied for a transfer to the welfare department and I've got the job." Swamiji said, "By Kṛṣṇa's grace" as an *addition* to my statement. He made it clear that I had forgotten Kṛṣṇa by implying that I had done something significant on my own.

So just before he was to leave from New York, I was able to share a moment alone with him to say goodbye. I told him that now I was going to move to Boston. He encouraged me and said that I should go there and "sound off the big cannon of Hare Kṛṣṇa." I bowed down before him and all of a sudden, I felt his hand on my back. His hand went from the top of my head all the way down my back. It was like a caress and a benediction. I felt that I had now gained a precious spiritual commodity, and it was the blessing that I most wanted but would never have dared to even think of or to ask him for. I didn't deserve it, but yet it signified, "I'm pleased with you. In this way I'll make you strong."

After I left Swamiji, I went down and told the devotees what had happened. I also believed that for the whole next year in Boston, whatever I did came from the direct influence of that benedicting touch by the Swami. When alone, I would sometimes remember the rub on the back and think, "Swamiji has blessed you to do service here in Boston." I still worship that touch, only now I don't think it was a blessing just for Boston, but for all time.

Another memorable moment with Prabhupāda in his 26 Second Avenue room, was when I went back to New York to visit him after I'd been in

Boston for a year. Prabhupāda was spending a few days in New York, and the Boston devotees had come down to be with him. One afternoon, Brahmānanda said that Prabhupāda wanted to see me and Jadurāṇī. I guessed it was something about the Boston preaching. I sat close to Prabhupāda and she sat a little further away. Even when you were with him in the close quarters of his room, there was distance. It's the distance of his spiritual life and yours. He's intimate with Kṛṣṇa and you're just a spiritual infant.

Without introductory remarks, Prabhupāda said to us that he thought we should get married.

Jadurāṇī and I both objected. I said, "But I thought it's better to remain *brahmacārī*." I wanted to avoid marriage, although I sometimes felt that it was becoming inevitable. Prabhupāda had certainly caught me by surprise.

Jadurāṇī stated her case strongly, saying that she definitely didn't want to get married. She quoted something from the philosophy how it's not necessary, it's material, and we should just surrender to Kṛṣṇa. But Prabhupāda was not affected by our remarks. He seemed to have decided.

I said, "Is this what you want, Prabhupāda?"

Prabhupāda looked at me in a way that I can't explain but which I'll never forget. And he said, "Yes." So it was concluded in a simple way. I thought, "That's it, it's decided." We could have continued to protest, but I saw no point in it anymore. I was aware that part of me wanted to be married, and part of me didn't, and the motives

could be examined and the whole thing could be discussed at length—but what was the point?

So I turned to her and said, "That's what Prabhupāda wants." She had to stop and surrender.

This memory is sweet not because he arranged a marriage, but because he inspired us to do his will. The essence of the *guru*-disciple relationship is that you should ask, "Is this what you want us to do?" And when he says, "Yes," then your heart is satisfied.

Memory is such a nice thing for connecting us with the pure devotee. When things happen in the flow of the present, you didn't always recognize that *this is an important moment*. The present flies into the next moment and the next moment, and there are always distractions and nothing stops. We don't have a television playback to see the important moment that just passed. But we want to be thoughtful about our relationship with Prabhupāda. So by memory, you can note, *that was good, that was deep, that was substantial, that happened*.

### *Double Treat*

#### 4.3

According to Vaiṣṇava philosophy, the *guru* gives you Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda did that. We were unqualified to realize Kṛṣṇa directly, but our association with Śrīla Prabhupāda made us Kṛṣṇa conscious. The fact is, Swamiji always gave us a double treat: when we were with him we got both Kṛṣṇa and Swamiji. So it's more than a reminiscence to say, "Anything I know about Kṛṣṇa, I re-

ceived from Swamiji." It's declared in all the *śāstras* and by all the Vedic sages that the Supreme Lord reveals Himself through the *guru*.

My lord, devotees like your good self  
are verily holy places personified.  
Because you carry the Personality of  
Godhead within your heart, you turn  
all places into places of pilgrimage.

—*Bhāg.* 1.13.10

In the case of Prabhupāda's first Western disciples, we had no knowledge of *śāstras* or *sādhus*. But gradually, we received the nectar from *guru*, His Divine Grace. We learned that Kṛṣṇa is the most relishable of all incarnations and He is the original form of Godhead. Swamiji concentrated on *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein Kṛṣṇa is the speaker and the Supreme Lord. Along with the *Gītā* lessons, he mixed in stories of Govinda's pastimes in Vṛndāvana, His lifting Govardhana Hill, the devotion of Rādhārāṇī (His best devotee), and the *gopīs*. Whatever it was about Kṛṣṇa, we heard it from him. As Prabhupāda said in one lecture, "The atheists claim that God is dead, but the pure devotee can hand you God"—and as he said it, he held his own hand forward and opened it.

Someone might say, "Since Kṛṣṇa was foreign to you, did it conflict with your previous ideas of God?" But there was no conflict for me because I had abandoned God. Before Swamiji came to the Lower East Side, I would sit with my friends in a



dark apartment, with just a candle burning, while we shared LSD. I remember saying, "Why don't we write in large letters on the wall, 'LSD is God'?" That was our misunderstanding, although there was a yearning for religion. It was not that we had a firm hold on the Judaic-Christian or Catholic concept of God, and so upon meeting Swamiji we were thrown into a religious crisis. Rather, I had no God, but Swamiji gradually introduced me to Kṛṣṇa. (In later years, Prabhupāda said that the Western young people are nice because they have no preconceptions about Kṛṣṇa, and therefore "they accepted what I said.")

The big step for us was to accept the Swami as *guru*, and that wasn't hard. He looked like a *guru* and he acted like a *guru*. He taught us according to the scriptures, that you should accept whatever the *guru* says: "He is in the chant of His holy name. The name of Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Truth." And so we learned our lessons from the *guru*.

The fact that we had fallen out of the mainstream of U.S. society, worked in our favor. We didn't care about getting a good career or job, and we weren't interested in politics. That was our "qualification." We were free to give our full time to the Swamiji and to our own spiritual development. It didn't take long before we also began to repeat his messages. When asked a question about Kṛṣṇa, one of Swamiji's followers would pause, and you could see him thinking back to what he had just heard the Swami say. And when he re-

membered it, he would repeat it, because that's the only way we knew.

After hearing from Prabhupāda for quite a few years, I still can't claim to have realization of Kṛṣṇa or mystic perception of Him. I'm also finding out that I am more conditioned than I thought I was, because of being brought up in the Western culture. I have inherited working-class cynicism from my parents, and an intellectual cynicism from college professors. Somehow, I now have a basic, simple faith in Kṛṣṇa, and that comes from association with Prabhupāda. As described in the *śāstras*, the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, the seed of devotion is planted in our heart by the *guru*. And if that seed is watered by chanting and hearing, and protected by fencing against the "mad elephant" of *guru-aparādha*, then one can proceed quickly in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

It was a matter of fact that we were getting Kṛṣṇa from the Swami. He conducted a school for Kṛṣṇa consciousness at 26 Second Avenue. He gave regular lectures and gave us his books, although the subject was beyond academic understanding. The essence of this school was to associate with a pure devotee.

He gave us love of God, and we saw him practice love of God twenty-four hours a day. Even when the Swami was asleep we could look through the window in the wall of his room and see him there. We got close to the *śakti* of his pure devotion and received his blessings. And despite our own foolish ways, we understood the truth. We hung onto the pure gem that had come into our dirty

lives—the gem of association with the Swami.

All religious cultures of the world advise you to receive God directly from the saint or pure devotee. If you didn't meet a realized soul, then whatever you imbibe of religion is a bit academic, somewhat ritualistic, somewhat institutionalized, and definitely unrealized. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura sings, "Whoever became liberated without the mercy of the Vaiṣṇava?" Without the grace of the pure devotee, religion cannot become a major part of your life. It cannot enter your heart; it's not so real. But when you meet a saint and when you are receptive to him, then everything changes. If you do menial service for the saint, then you receive God's grace. In the case of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the God consciousness he was teaching was the most relishable, because the scriptures he taught from were "the most voluminous and exacting" science of God consciousness due to the unbroken disciplic succession. From Swamiji, we received the ultimate double treat.

We rejoiced in the fact that we were babies in spiritual life, learning everything from the beginning. We weren't ashamed of it. Swamiji even compared *sādhana-bhakti* to a kindergarten. He said that just as the rambunctious youngsters are kept busy with constructive activities, so in *bhakti-yoga* we engage all the senses and proclivities in the service of the Lord. In our spiritual kindergarten, we danced with our teacher and followed his lead in singing, while playing rhythm instruments. And he taught us like that, starting from the ABC's up to

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Ever since he arrived, we were having a happy time.

*Slow Down and Read What the Swami Has Said*

**4.4**

By the time I met Prabhupāda I had completed four years of college and had become somewhat crazy. I would only read books that held my attention and which I thought helped me in my writing, such as *Naked Lunch*, *Howl*, *Death on the Installment Plan*, *A Thief's Journal*, and *Last Exit Before Brooklyn*.

So where did the Swami's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* fit in along with all these hip authors? In one sense, you might expect me to think, "This is some old-fashioned commentary on a religious book from India." But I couldn't reject it like that, even though it wasn't written in the American fast-paced way. Just because it didn't supply the gratification of jargon and speech, didn't mean I couldn't look at it. So I made an exception to my usual policy to reject anything that didn't move quickly in the most modern frame of reference.

I had to slow down to read what the Swami had said. And I found that he was saying something that *made me* slow down. I calmed myself and started to appreciate it without preconceptions. Besides, if I had any favoritism in religious reading, it was towards Eastern religions, and so I liked that.

Intelligent persons do cut off the  
interknot of the knot of reactionary work  
by remembrance of the Personality of

Godhead, therefore, who will not give attention to this message?

Purport:

Contact of the spiritual spark living being with the material elements is the point of interknitting knot.

After the squeaking of brakes and calming of mind, I tried to see what the Swami was saying in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Part One. There was nothing flashy in his mode of presentation. It was a book filled with misprints, from India. One could usually guess at the intended meaning behind the misprints, such as when the book read "The Supreme Lard." "One should surrender to the Lard. . ." But there was something I liked about this, something attractive. I liked the physical object, the brick-colored book. And I began to like the misprints, "The Lard." And because I was looking for kicks, I transferred that in a harmless, dovetailing way into the Swami's book. I thought, "This is far out. This is mystical stuff! I'm gonna get into this!" (As soon as my sister heard about it, she thought it was my usual syndrome of going too far into *anything*. "Oh no, Stevie," she said, "not another trip." I said, "Hey, no, this is good. I'm gonna get into this!")

Oh, the twice-born sages! By serving those devotees who are completely freed from all ranges of vice, a standard of great service is done and

as the result of such great service  
affinity in the messages of Vāsudeva  
is made possible.

Reading Swamiji was true love. And it was a double treat—Kṛṣṇa and the Swami. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa would speak in the verse, and then Swamiji would speak in the purports. (Swamiji seemed to be speaking in the verses also.) You got Swamiji with all his personal traits, living with us, exotic and lovable—and Kṛṣṇa who is completely lovable, the all-attractive Personality of Godhead with His cows and friends in Vṛndāvana. They're always together, Swamiji and Kṛṣṇa.

I read the first volume of *Bhāgavatam* from the beginning, as he advised, but sometimes I would reach into it at random. I kept the book with me at work, in a lefthand lower drawer. To the left of my desk was our supervisor's desk, and then to my right were my co-workers like Miss Fennel and a stocky blonde-haired man who the other workers called "creeping Jesus." Even though my supervisor was nearby, he couldn't see over into the deep drawer. So I would open the drawer, open the book, read a little and then close it. One phrase really struck me. Swamiji wrote that there are many realistic obstacles on the path of devotional service. I thought, "He knows. Swami and the sages and Kṛṣṇa know that there are many obstacles and they're realistic about it. They know what we're going through."

By reading a few moments at the office, and

more often at my apartment, I quickly (and superficially) went through the first volume. Then I started to read it again. There were things in the book that Swamiji wasn't lecturing on. So by reading you gained supplementary knowledge to what you had heard in the classes. But in the beginning, hearing in the classes was more impressive. It's clear to me that if I had never met Swamiji, but had found his book in a bookstore, first of all I probably wouldn't have bought it. But even if I had bought it, I don't think there's any way I could have become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa just by reading the book. The book was valuable because it was *something of the Swami's*. But along with the book there was also Swamiji himself, the *kīrtanas* and Swamiji in his room. Now, since his disappearance, the book is of major importance, and we sometimes think it's all we have. And there's *plenty* in the book. But at least at my first reading, I could not read deeply. Nevertheless, I was soon attached to his book, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and I didn't want any other books. Just as before when I wouldn't read any books except hip literature, now I didn't want any books but Kṛṣṇa's.

### *The Ideal Reader*

#### 4.5

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you teach Kṛṣṇa directly but it takes much patience to hear and read. We're so distracted. Therefore, if someone simply reads your books with patience and submission, that's a first-class service. The ideal reader of your books comes

to know Kṛṣṇa face to face as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And that reader lives with you as His best friend.

The ideal reader doesn't have to be one of those who associated with you personally in your *vāpuḥ* form, although he (or she) likes to hear such Prabhupāda pastimes. But he likes best of all the times when he reads your books. Then he is with you and Kṛṣṇa. Even we who associated with you knew that your essence was in your writings.

This reader of your books is humble about his connection to you. He keeps the books in a bookcase and protects each one of them with a transparent book cover. He tries to associate with devotees, gives money to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, preaches in some capacity, worships the Deity, chants the holy name. And he particularly excels in relishing the reading.

He has read everything you've written several times, but his enthusiasm for rereading never diminishes. He thinks, "It's about time I started reading the First Canto again." And so the transcendental saga of Vyāsa speaking to Śuka, Śuka to Parikṣit, Sūta to the sages at Naimiśarāṇya—unfolds before him again and again with new wonder.

He especially likes to be reminded of the importance of reading and he treasures verses like, "*Paramahamsas*, devotees who have accepted the essence of life, are attached to Kṛṣṇa in the core of their hearts, and He is the aim of their lives. It is their nature to talk only of Kṛṣṇa at every moment, as if such topics were newer and newer. They are at-



tached to such topics, just as materialists are attached to women and sex" (*Bhāg.* 10.13.2).

He has very little attraction for other books. He can't get interested in other topics of conversation. He'd prefer to stay home with your book. Even when he goes to a holy *dhāma* like Vṛndāvana, he likes to read there. He can't explain it, but he knows that he's starting to glimpse the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord in the pages of your books. He knows he's not a special person, and yet you promise—"The transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, are so powerful that simply by hearing, reading and memorizing this book, *Kṛṣṇa*, one is sure to be transferred to the spiritual world, which is ordinarily very difficult to achieve."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I wish I were that ideal reader. I wish I could at least meet him. He wouldn't have to preach to me that I should read more, but I would naturally want to do it, just by seeing him do it. He would remind me where to find you in the best way. I want to learn Prabhupāda meditation from him.

### *Grateful*

#### **4.6**

Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the following definition of grateful: "Any person who is conscious of his friend's beneficent activities and never forgets his service is called grateful" (*NOD*, p. 166). I want to be grateful to Śrīla Prabhupāda and carry out that sentiment in my actions.

For example, I may think of his *praṇām-mantra*: "My obeisances unto you, O Spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. You are so kindly teaching the message of Lord Caitanya and delivering these Western countries which are filled with voidism and impersonalism." Thanks to Prabhupāda, now whenever I meet with the *māyā-vāda* philosophy (which is frequently), I appreciate that I've been trained to avoid their snares and to see through their word jugglery.

I am grateful to Lord Kṛṣṇa for sending Śrīla Prabhupāda. I feel fortunate to have contacted him. And therefore, remembrances of personal association with Śrīla Prabhupāda—not allowing those times to be forgotten—are themselves acts of gratitude.

The concept of *guru-dakṣiṇa* is meant to prevent the disciple from lapsing into ingratitude. We don't think that we can ever repay Śrīla Prabhupāda for what he has given, but we should make the attempt. "As you have learned this knowledge from me, now you should be kind and give it to others." It is not enough to feel thankful while I keep the gift for myself. Since I have received blessings, I am obliged to give them to others.

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the perfect example of a grateful person. He never forgets even the smallest favorable service rendered to Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Anyone who addresses the Lord immediately attracts the attention of the Lord, who always remains obliged to him" (*NOD*, p. 166).

As the Lord is the epitome of gratefulness, so is His pure devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda often expressed deep appreciation to his disciples for the services they were rendering to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The fact is, that Prabhupāda's disciples were carrying out his vision in an attempt to reciprocate with him and to please him. This dynamic relationship was observed by the scholar, Larry Shinn, in his foreword to *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*: "What springs from page after page is the willing devotion of young men and women to a man whom they admire for his deep faith and humility, not his autocratic or forceful demands."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also set the best example of a grateful disciple in his own devotion for Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Whatever success he accomplished, Prabhupāda said, was all due to the mercy of his spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda saw Kṛṣṇa's mercy upon him in many ways. He once expressed gratitude to the United States of America, as the place where his mission first flourished. Prabhupāda said, "America has been so good to me to give money, men, everything. I have no designation that 'this is my country,' but because they have given me so much facility, I cannot forget my obligation to them. I want to make them happy, and through them, the world."

We should not be so dull as to ask, "What should I thank him for?" We thank him for teaching us the invaluable art of offering food first to the Lord, and then eating spiritual remnants. We thank him for uplifting us from an animal-like life to a

life of refined, hopeful humanity. I thank him for allowing me to write praises of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. We thank him for making us satisfied and happy. "Many of our students were dry and morose previous to their coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "but having come into contact with devotees, they are now dancing like jubilant peacocks."

### *The Mind of the Ācārya*

#### 4.7

*Vaiṣṇavera kriya mudra vijñe na bujhāya*: "One cannot understand the mind or the activities of the Vaiṣṇava." This means that a pure devotee should never be judged by material standards. And when we associate with him, we shouldn't take him for granted. Don't think he is an ordinary person. The depth of his love for Kṛṣṇa is a mystery to us.

On the other hand, I always assumed that there was a normal, intelligent exchange going on between Śrīla Prabhupāda and I. A disciple may exaggerate that because Prabhupāda is mystical and dear to Kṛṣṇa, therefore at every moment, some strange vibration is coming from him and he's signaling to us in unknown ways. Prabhupāda, however, always emphasized normal exchanges of intelligence. He mocked the "fable" of a *guru* who transferred knowledge to his disciple by electric shock and then said he'd lost all of his own knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda always talked about Kṛṣṇa in an authorized way, and with realization. And he spoke of pure devotees and devotional service. But he didn't talk

about himself as someone special or more advanced. Neither did he tell us exactly what he was thinking in his inner mind, although sometimes when disciples were talking among themselves, they would speculate about the mind of the *ācārya*. When we were with Śrīla Prabhupāda, he was always present in a real and personal way. He was our friend and teacher, a nectarean pure devotee of the Lord.

In reverence, we accepted the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda's devotion to Kṛṣṇa was beyond us. And we were also happy that Śrīla Prabhupāda was with us, as our venerable and lovable spiritual master. But there were other aspects of his personality which were dear to us, although they didn't quite fit in with standard conceptions we may have had of a "pure devotee" or a "spiritual master." One example is Prabhupāda's childlike nature.

One time I accompanied Śrīla Prabhupāda and Rāyarāma on a visit to the lawyer to see about Swamiji's immigration status. We were in the waiting room discussing the legal case, when Swamiji became absorbed in playing with a lamp that was in the office. This lamp was in the shape of a ship's stern and it had a small propeller. While we were speaking of immigration legalities, Swamiji reached over and began spinning the propeller on the boat. It was as if he reserved the right, at any time, to drop out of the reality which others were taking so seriously. It reminded you of liberated souls you'd read about, like the Kumāras. And it indicated that we don't know the mind of the

*ācārya.*

Another time, Swamiji and several devotees were on a tour of a building in Manhattan, with the idea to purchase it. The real estate agent led Swamiji through the rooms, explaining everything. But at one point we noticed that Swamiji wasn't with us. He had been left behind somewhere, and when we found him he was in a remote part of a room playing with a foot pedal of an old-fashioned sewing machine. He was standing by himself and operating it with his foot, exempting himself, for the time being, from the heavy real estate talks.

I've also seen Prabhupāda sit in the back seat of a car and crank the window up and down repeatedly, and I have seen him move his finger across a fogged window pane and make playful marks. In a detached way, Prabhupāda liked to hum and sing to himself. Whatever Prabhupāda did, it was an answer to the question made by Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "How does a transcendentalist walk, how does he sit and how does he speak?" Sometimes the *paramahamsas* or swanlike persons float on the water of the material world and appear to be like children. Sometimes they act like madmen and don't communicate at all, although Śrīla Prabhupāda never did that. And most often, they are teachers with their finger raised in the *jñāna-mūdra* pose, instructing the conditioned souls.

If a disciple intruded too much or assumed to know the mind of Prabhupāda, he got a rebuff. This would serve to remind him not to assume that he knew everything about his spiritual master, Śrīla

Prabhupāda. I experienced this one time when I went with Prabhupāda to see the lawyer on Chambers Street in Manhattan. My assignment was to bring Swamiji back to the storefront at 26 Second Avenue after the meeting was over. I was happy with this mission and concerned that I get Swamiji back safely. I tried to guide him in crossing the streets and protect him from the traffic, but his tendency was to rush before I did and dart across the avenue. At one point I remarked, "This city is like a jungle, except there are no snakes." Swamiji replied, "What about Mr. Paine?"

Then on the bus I sat beside him and tried to keep my mind purified and not spaced out. I wanted to be a good but menial companion, and not pester him with a lot of philosophical questions. When we got near our bus stop I said, "Swamiji, this is it," and I stood to ring the buzzer. But Swamiji said, "No, there's one more stop." I sat down and at the next stop, on his indication, I pulled the wire buzzer.

When we were walking the last few blocks, I realized that this was the end of my special mission of intimacy with Swamiji. My main idea was just to deliver him to his room safely, but I couldn't resist from asking him a question. So I leaned over while we were walking and said, "Swamiji, the Rama-Krishna mission has spread themselves very effectively. So how is that they've done that if they're not bona fide? And how can we become effective also?" Swamiji didn't answer me at all, although I had spoken loudly and clearly. By now we were

standing on the curb of Second Avenue, waiting to cross, with the storefront in full view. I felt humiliated and had to swallow my question in silence. I couldn't say, "Didn't you hear what I said?" Or, "What did you think of what I said?" For some reason unknown to me, he had decided to ignore me. I realized that this was his right, but it felt very heavy. I thought I must have displeased him and I felt a great distance between us. But I continued my mission and went across Second Avenue with Swamiji and brought him to his room.

The episode left me thinking, "What happened? What did I do wrong?" I told myself, "Don't make a big thing out of this. He can do that if he wants." Now when I think of it, I guess that I overstepped my bounds—I'd become proud that I had successfully brought Swamiji home and I tried to enjoy his association by asking an impressive question. At least his silence came to me as a good slap. He reduced me to what I actually was supposed to be, the menial boy who was accompanying him home. I should have been satisfied doing that, relishing it for what it was. So what if he didn't answer my so-called philosophical question? What right had I anyway, to ask about the Rama-Krishna mission or how the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement is going to be spread?

As time passed, I accepted that rebuff, and began to relish it. As Prabhupāda would say, "The *guru* is not a pet." I became more assured that Swamiji was definitely a person, he was always caring for you, but he may teach you in his own way—so take the



lessons.

*Śrīla Prabhupāda Meditations are a Way of Lining Up With Him*

**4.8**

As a unique individual, Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed his attraction to Kṛṣṇa in ways which were particular to him. Although I am his disciple, it will not be possible for me to mirror Prabhupāda's devotion. For one thing, I don't have the capacity he has, but also, it might be argued that I am *different* because I am also an individual. If, however, we minimize the ways in which we do connect favorably with our spiritual master, we may come to regard him merely in an official way. The more of Prabhupāda's teachings and traits which I follow, the better it is for me. When I am lined up with Śrīla Prabhupāda, thinking exactly as he's taught, then I'm secure in following the *paramparā*. If I have to draw inspiration for my spiritual activities from other teachers, then I will be on uncertain ground.

For example, say I don't agree with Prabhupāda's emphasis on book distribution and to support my own position, I cite the example of previous *ācāryas* who didn't seem to emphasize book distribution or who did not emphasize preaching in an outward way. There are several difficulties when I do this. One is that I run the risk of sliding back in my relationship with my own spiritual master. Furthermore, I'm unsure of my relationship with the previous *ācāryas*, and whether their example exac-

tly applies to me.

Lining up with Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot be forced. It may be a fact of nature that I am not inspired equally by *all* of Śrīla Prabhupāda's programs and ways of teaching. Neither did Śrīla Prabhupāda demand *everything* of each disciple—he sometimes indicated that he was satisfied if one simply followed the basics. But the more I follow, the better it is for me.

I follow Śrīla Prabhupāda as much as possible out of self-interest. Śrīla Prabhupāda never scorned self-interest, but said that it had to be purified. I want to make myself a better servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, to situate myself free of designations, whimsy and sense gratification, and I want to enter the mellow of eternal servitorship. That is my real self-interest—to love *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. The more I feel confident in relating to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the more I will receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a realized way.

Prabhupāda meditations help me to do this by recalling the incidents and details of my life with him, and meditating on his meaning. I do it to become more favorable to him. I do it so that I can gradually overcome resistances and lukewarm attitudes that I may have towards Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Because we're individuals even in the spiritual world, it's inevitable that there will be certain traits and teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda to which I will be especially drawn, gratefully and wholeheartedly. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "There are nine standard items of devotional service of the Lord, and a can-

didate can make his choice to adopt any one, two, three, four or all of the items together as he likes. Since all the services are rendered to the Absolute, they are absolute and there is no material difference of quality" (*Easy Journey to Other Planets*). Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that a spiritual master should be expert in finding out what his disciple is best suited for, and thus he assigns him, "You should work in the editorial department, you should work in the cooking department, etc."

Let me, therefore, be a department man in his movement, and a specialist in certain items of the *bhakti* process. As I work in my favorite way, let me do it according to the way he taught. Let my whole self be offered to him. As I observe the many aspects of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I see that I cannot personally follow all of them—such as how to raise children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, earning money and giving it to Kṛṣṇa conscious projects, being a king for the Lord (like Pratāparudra Mahārāja), defeating the materialistic scientists—yet let me be at least a basic student of those teachings of Prabhupāda. Let me appreciate those who are expert specialists in various fields. And let me praise the glories of my teacher.

### *The Eternal Resident of Vṛndāvana*

#### 4.9

Vaiṣṇava literature teaches that a devotee should aspire to go back to Goloka Vṛndāvana, and he should choose a resident of Vṛndāvana and follow his example. I first heard this in 1967 while typ-

ing Prabhupāda's dictation of *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*. I was curious about following a resident of Vṛndāvana, so I wrote to Prabhupāda asking for more information. In a letter of March 21, 1967, he remarked, "For ourselves, when we are in the perfect stage of devotional service, we can know our eternal relation with Kṛṣṇa, and as such one of the associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa becomes our ideal leader. This acceptance of leadership by one of the eternal associates of the Lord is not artificial. Do not, therefore, try it at present; it will automatically be revealed to you in proper time."

After that, I saw my question as premature, put it out of my mind and got back to work doing practical service for the Swami. But nowadays, when devotees read this statement about the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana, the question often comes up, "Are we ready for this now?"

In his 1967 letter, Swamiji warned a neophyte against seeking for the eternal resident, but the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* recommends it:

If one wants to engage in spontaneous loving service, he must follow the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana and constantly engage in devotional service within his mind.

The devotee should always think of Kṛṣṇa within himself and one should choose a very dear devotee who is a servitor of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. One should constantly engage

in topics about that servitor and his loving relationship to Kṛṣṇa, and one should live in Vṛndāvana. However, if one is physically unable to go to Vṛndāvana, he should mentally live there.

—Cc. *Madhya*, 22.158-160

So some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's senior disciples have started to address the matter in a mature way. They advise us that while we should never imitate advancement, we should try to reach the stage of *rāganugā-bhakti* as soon as possible. In *rāganugā-bhakti*, one continues to follow the rules and regulations (*sādhana*) but he constantly hears of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's associates and he starts to develop attachment for them. This may lead to attraction to a particular resident of Vṛndāvana, as recommended in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

When this topic comes up in conversation I think of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and how he may be considered the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana whom we should follow. This isn't a concoction on my part, and neither is it meant to replace the teaching that one should follow Nanda Mahārāja or the *gopas* or other eternal residents of Vṛndāvana. Once in India, some of Prabhupāda's disciples said they thought *he* was the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana whom they could follow. Prabhupāda did not elaborate on the point, but he affirmed their sentiment.

Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda has disappeared from the world in his *vāpuḥ* form, it remains

somewhat of a mystery as to when we will meet up with him again. He is a liberated soul, and therefore, he has a place in the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. We have also read in a song by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura that he aspired to be in the form of a *gopī-mañjarī* along with his spiritual master, assisting the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. These secrets are quite beyond me at present. But I can put my understanding in a simple form: since the liberated spiritual master is in Goloka Vṛndāvana, it stands to reason that if we follow him, we also will come to be in his presence in Vṛndāvana (provided we reach the perfect stage).

And yet the next life meeting with the spiritual master remains, at least for me, highly theoretical. This much I can say with personal conviction: I wish to always hear about Kṛṣṇa from Śrīla Prabhupāda. And I want to think that Prabhupāda is the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana whom I should follow. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja says that the Vṛndāvana resident should be "a very dear devotee." That certainly fits Śrīla Prabhupāda who is very dear to Kṛṣṇa on this earth. The servitor is also supposed to be an associate of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda is from Vṛndāvana, both within the context of Vṛndāvana, India, where he resided at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, in the Prabhupāda *samādhi* and at Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira, and he is also a resident in the eternal Vṛndāvana. He is the teacher of eternal Vṛndāvana in this world. He has spread the glories of Vṛndāvana far and wide.

What's really on my mind is this—I want to

know whether the 1966 pastimes and other pastimes of Śrīla Prabhupāda as we knew them—whether they are eternal. Did Prabhupāda, the eternal servitor, appear within this material world in a temporary *līlā*? But how little we know! What is eternality? Even if you define it for me, I cannot comprehend it. All I know is that Śrīla Prabhupāda came here and taught us of eternal Vṛndāvana. And I know that I can—if I concentrate and lead the proper life—think of him now, and worship him and follow his orders.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja advises that, "One should constantly engage in topics about the servitor and his loving relationship to Kṛṣṇa." This would seem to be an approval of *Prabhupāda Meditations*. When I think of Śrīla Prabhupāda singing in the *kīrtana* and I read about "his" Kṛṣṇa, and meditate on the faith he has instilled in me to be a servitor of the Lord—I think this is good enough for me. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja even advises that if one awakens his attraction for an eternal resident, he is not to be checked by ordinary standards. "When such covetousness is awakened, one's intelligence no longer depends on the instruction of *śāstra*, revealed scriptures, logic or argument."

I do not claim that I comprehend Śrīla Prabhupāda as the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana, but I think that it fulfills the purport regarding serving Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in a particular way. Actually, I should probably not even be discussing these topics, but be content with the original instructions Prabhupāda gave me: "It will be automat-

ically revealed to you in proper time." Śrīla Prabhupāda, please forgive my impertinence. Please keep me engaged in your eternal service, wherever and whatever that may be.

*Prabhupāda Smaranam*

4.10

1

Like Nazim Hikmet's poems  
written in prison,  
Prabhupāda *smaraṇam*  
should be genuine feeling.  
Hikmet loved his wife and the cause he lived for.  
I love life, the pulse under the wrist  
and spiritual life  
where I meet my spiritual master  
in the inner world, in daily actions—  
reading his books—

This is like a letter, a way of talking. . . .

What you want from me, Prabhupāda,  
is that I stop my nonsense  
and use this human form of life



to get out of suffering.  
Go back to Godhead,  
and help others.  
For this cause,  
you're here right now.

2

*All the time* I may remember you  
in nonsentimental contact,  
manly camaraderie,  
as the father with his child in friendship,  
the teacher correcting and guiding his student,  
the seer of the truth, pointing the way,  
as Vidura told Dhṛtarāṣṭra,  
"Get out of here at once. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa."

I didn't used to be afraid to come before you  
and bow wholeheartedly.  
Will you again look into my eyes  
and see my weakness of heart?  
Let me cry tears,  
why be ashamed of it?  
I want to feel the power of  
your purifying gaze  
and your words of guidance.

*Love and the Pirate Scarf*

4.11

In the beginning I wanted to tell him, "I feel I

have a loving relationship with you." One of the first ways I expressed this was when I told him I felt obliged to attend all his classes. This came up when I had to miss a weekend to visit my parents in Avalon, New Jersey.

"Swamiji, I won't be able to attend classes for the next two days because I have to visit with my mother and father."

"That's all right."

I said, "The reason I'm telling you is because I don't want to do anything without your permission."

Swamiji had never assumed control over my activities, but when I spelled out my feeling of obligation to him, he smiled.

He *wanted* us to surrender. In his lectures he would say, "Just like these boys who are with me. They are grown up, but they don't do anything without my permission. They will say, 'Swamiji, may I have a piece of fruit?' And I will say, 'Of course, it's in the refrigerator.' They could take it, but the etiquette is to first ask the spiritual master."

But sometimes when you make your gesture of surrender, it turns out to be a mistake. Then the *guru* has to correct you, and you have to accept it. It's a sign that the relationship is becoming more developed.

One of the first times Swamiji corrected me, he did it without saying a word. I was in his room when he was unwrapping a parcel he had received from India. I don't remember the contents, but it was wrapped in a piece of saffron cloth about the

size of a handkerchief. Swamiji put this cloth aside as if to discard it. I looked at it and said, "Can I have that?" He said, "Yes," and I took it as a prize.

The next morning when I came to Swamiji's morning class, I had tied the saffron handkerchief around my neck, like a pirate's bandanna. Part of my motive was pure whimsy, to create a new clothing fashion. But also I wanted to show the Swami that I was his man, and so I wore his cloth. But saffron kerchiefs around the neck are not part of the *brahmacārī* dress. While lecturing on the *Bhāgavatam*, Swamiji noticed the scarf, and he looked a bit alarmed. His glance was clear, and so I removed the kerchief and never wore it again.

Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to exchange gestures of love, but he didn't like concoctions. Years later, when he heard that some of his disciples were taking the used *brāhmaṇa* thread that had been worn by the temple Deity and putting it on their own wrist, he said it was a concoction. The sentiment behind these gestures was nice, but we should be willing to do it in a way that actually pleases Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. This becomes a delicate matter when a newcomer is an artist or a "free spirit" and wants to serve Kṛṣṇa in his own way. You want to tell them that their sentiment is nice, but you also have to inform them sooner or later, "This is not the way we do it in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Swamiji bypassed all that just by giving me a look, and I was glad to get off that easy. I thought, "Okay, that's cool. No more pirate scarf."

## Waiting to Remember

### 4.12

By following Śrīla Prabhupāda's way, one is always under his protection, but it sometimes becomes an unthinking practice. My forgetfulness of Śrīla Prabhupāda is like this: I don't forget to follow his order to chant sixteen rounds and follow the four rules, but neither do I remember him in a lively way. Maybe once very early in the morning I'll feel confident and have faith and be able to express Prabhupāda appreciation for half an hour. But then I turn to my morning duties, go chant *japa*—and that also not so well. After that, maybe once or twice during the entire day, despite attempting to do it, will I again be able to enter his presence and speak. And so I wait and seek relief from forgetfulness of Prabhupāda.

Today while struggling in this way, I thought of the example of Arjuna, who even after he had heard Lord Kṛṣṇa's instructions on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, forgot all that he had heard. This happened after the disappearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa from the earth. Arjuna saw many bad omens and felt the loss of his own powers. He also lost the enlightenment which he had attained when Kṛṣṇa had spoken the *Bhagavad-gītā* to him. At the depths of despair, Arjuna finally remembered again and became attracted to the instructions of Govinda.

Arjuna's constant remembrance of the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa rapidly increased his devotion, and as a result

all the trash in his thoughts subsided.

Because of the Lord's pastimes and activities and because of His absence, it appeared that Arjuna forgot the instructions left by the Personality of Godhead. But factually this was not the case, and again he became the Lord of his senses.

—*Bhāg.* 1.15.29-30

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, "Since the Lord is Absolute, deep meditation upon Him is as good as yoga trance."

But what does this mean to me? When will I be able to remember Prabhupāda constantly? It doesn't seem possible. And yet I am not satisfied to just "run on automatic," following Prabhupāda without deep, conscious intentions. Here's something else which Śrīla Prabhupāda has written about Arjuna which may offer help:

The feeling of separation from the Lord is undoubtedly painful to the devotee, but because it is in connection with the Lord, it has a specific transcendental effect which pacifies the heart. Feelings of separation are also sources of transcendental bliss, and they are never comparable to contaminated material feelings of separation.

—*Bhāg.* 1.5.28, purport

The void or agitation which I feel for most of the day, writing down a note and then throwing it away, walking in the woods trying to pay attention but not being able to say anything substantial about Prabhupāda and so returning from the walk empty-handed and humbled—is this not a pain of separation? And therefore, isn't it a type of intimacy of relationship with him? Fortunately, the empty mood is alleviated twice or so each day, with a little oasis of Śrīla Prabhupāda thought. But I'm hoping that Śrīla Prabhupāda looks kindly on the dry stretches too, as I wait for the chance to think of him in a better way.

### *Nostalgia Craze?*

#### **4.13**

I want to go back to Swamiji's room at 26 Second Avenue, as much as I am able. Someone might accuse me of thinking too much of the "good old days." But I think it's my prerogative to be more attached to memories of Swamiji in 1966 than to any other memories. Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotees in Vṛndāvana favor the good old days when Kṛṣṇa was living with them, and they sometimes even criticize the Lord's devotees in other places. So I think it's not just sentimentality on my part that I lament the loss of simplicity and my inability to be with Prabhupāda as I used to at 26 Second Avenue.

It's a fact that toward the end of Prabhupāda's pastimes, I lost access to him. I remember one time when Śrīla Prabhupāda was visiting the New York ISKCON skyscraper in 1976. He was leaving for his

morning car ride and his GBC men pressed forward to get in the car with him. I went forward too and made it right to the back door of the car, but there was no more room. Rameśvara Mahārāja, the last one in, apologized, "I'm sorry, but Prabhupāda *asked* me to go."

It was also during that New York stay, that Prabhupāda made his famous visit to Gītā-nāgarī. I shouldn't complain about these things, because I had much more access than most. I *could* have included myself in the Rādhā-Dāmodara bus that took Prabhupāda to Gītā-nāgarī. Instead, I spent the day in the 55th Street temple, reading his books and feeling sorry for myself. I had rationalized that there were too many devotees going to Gītā-nāgarī; the living quarters would be inconvenient, and I would probably get only a very limited time to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Another time when all the devotees went to India to be with Prabhupāda, the same thing happened. After the main festivals at Māyāpura and Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda went for a week-long lecture program in Hyderabad. Hundreds of disciples went with him and I was also free to go. But I didn't want to because it would be too inconvenient. I knew I wouldn't get much of his association, and everywhere there would be crowds and the weather was too hot. I decided it wouldn't be worth it.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's last year I visited him four times, commuting between Los Angeles and India, but I missed out on his pastimes in England in September of that year. I was in Vṛndāvana at the

time he decided to go to England, but my plane ticket was via the Eastern route back to Los Angeles. Also, the devotees at *Back to Godhead* were expecting me to come back to manage the magazine. Nevertheless, I should have adjusted things, changed my ticket and gone with Prabhupāda to England. But because so many of his secretaries and leaders were accompanying him, I lost my taste. I very much wanted to be with Prabhupāda, but it seemed that even if I went along in the entourage, I would not really be with him. I would be painfully apart from him even while traveling to the same places. Unfortunately, I was also sick with envy of those who were serving him.

Prabhupāda's 26 Second Avenue days were very special. I don't talk of them so much, but it has always been a source of inner pride for me to know that I was there. It hurts, therefore, when I sometimes hear devotees deride those memories. I remember one time, an international *saṅkīrtana* leader came to the Philadelphia temple to hold a week of seminars on "contact *saṅkīrtana*." During one of his lectures he said, "These are the times that count, right now, not remembering Prabhupāda from the old days." Then he told a story of when he was with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles. He said that Mukunda Mahārāja, who had been with Prabhupāda at 26 Second Avenue, came to see Prabhupāda after several years of separation. In one of their first meetings, Mukunda said, "Prabhupāda, do you remember the early days together?" And Prabhupāda was supposed to have replied, "Oh, those are old



stories."

When the international *saṅkīrtana* leader told this incident, he looked at me and said, "Did you know that Prabhupāda said that?" I replied, "No, I hadn't heard that before." It hurt to think that Prabhupāda had actually said it, although I knew at other times Prabhupāda liked to talk of 1966 and he said, "Those were happy days."

What were some of the ingredients of those days that made it so safe and secure? One of the main things was Prabhupāda's complete accessibility at all times. He didn't have so many other things to attend to, except take care of the devotees at his one center. His disciples all had menial but important services for him, and everyone was in complete admiration of him. He was our one and only *guru*, and we had to stop all other intellectual, sensual and spiritual interests just to follow him. Everything was focused on learning about Kṛṣṇa from Swamiji. And if we had any doubts about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the way to resolve them was clear and open—ask the Swami. It was the kindergarten of spiritual life. He was always gentle and you were often physically close to him. He led us in singing the *kīrtanas* and everything was filled with hope for spreading the movement.

The potency of those '66 days is not mere nostalgia. But the word nostalgia has bad press. In the material world, there are many nostalgia crazes, such as old car aficionados, Elvis Presley fans, etc. Genuine nostalgia, however, is not a craze or a fad or an industry. When I remember Prabhupāda in the best

way, it turns into prayer and it leads to positive action for the present.

When we were with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the beginning of ISKCON, we were all babies in spiritual life. Now we appear to be very grown up with many responsibilities. But it's good to keep the truth alive—that we are actually babies and our spiritual master is protecting us. If now we have to perform austerities, enduring quarrels with God-brothers and mixing with nondevotees, and if we have to do extraordinary things like accepting disciples, still, the inner, simple abiding truth is that I'm a spiritual baby and I'm doing this for Prabhupāda.

By going back to remember my first year with Swamiji, I become aware that my relationship is actually the same, despite the external changes. Prabhupāda's devotees haven't become monsters forgetting their *guru* and taking advantage of his property. No, we're just like we were in the beginning. We eat when he says to eat and we give him our money, and when there's a doubt, we ask him. Prabhupāda knew that there would be changes, as he wrote in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "There is always some upheaval in the material world." But if we keep our original Kṛṣṇa consciousness intact, then our relationship with him is always strong. He gave us our beads and he told us to chant. He told us to offer *prasādam* and to do some preaching. This we can do no matter what the upheaval is, favorable or unfavorable. No one can take it away. And even though the external scene of 26 Second Avenue has

vanished, I can go back for a special memory—what it was like to be a spiritual child in a young man's body with Prabhupāda as strong as a lion, and the gusto of his playing on the drum.

I prefer the 26 Second Avenue pastimes, just as you may prefer some others. So it is with the eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* and residents of Vṛndāvana are so much attached to Vṛndāvana-*dhāma* that even if Kṛṣṇa goes away, they stay in Vṛndāvana. They prefer Vṛndāvana to Kṛṣṇa. They will *remember* Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, but they won't leave Vṛndāvana. If Kṛṣṇa is so unfaithful as to desert Vṛndāvana, that's His business, but the Vṛājavāsī's will never leave the land of His original pastimes.

Sanātana Gosvāmī informs us in *Bṛhad-Bhāgavat-āmṛta*, that the residents of Vṛndāvana wouldn't even *believe* the stories they heard of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes outside of Vṛndāvana. When Akrura came to take Kṛṣṇa from Vṛndāvana, all of Kṛṣṇa's dear friends were very hurt and outraged. Akrura explained that Kṛṣṇa had to leave in order to give solace to His real mother and father, Devakī and Vasudeva. But when they heard that, the residents cried, "These are all lies! Kṛṣṇa has no other mother and father but Nanda and Yaśodā!" They cursed Akrura and called him a liar and an agent of Kāṁsa. In this attached mood, the residents of Vṛndāvana considered all other pastimes of Kṛṣṇa to be a big hoax. And so I prefer to think of Swamiji at 26 Second Avenue in his room at night, shaking with laughter after we had all come back from the

Louis Abalofia "Be In." "All right boys," he said, "go home now, drink your milk and say your prayers. The store will be open at six in the morning. *Jaya-O.*"

We said, "*Jaya-O*, Swamiji, good night," and we knew that we were going to see him in the morning. I prefer that.

Yes, I have to do something for Swamiji now, and I am. But sometimes I think that Swamiji should never have left the Lower East Side. He could have just stayed there and I could have stayed there too. That would have been nice. Swamiji could still be giving *Bhagavad-gītā* classes three nights a week. I could have continued my work at the welfare office; there was no need to quit. That's when all the trouble started, when Swamiji went to San Francisco. They brought him there to take part in a concert with rock-and-roll bands like the Grateful Dead. I never thought it was a good idea.

### *Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

#### 4.14

I make it a big deal that I'm still alive  
and Prabhupāda has "disappeared."

As if it's a huge difference between us, and yet  
it's just a thin wall soon broken through.

Then, Master,

*Wherever I go, will I be able  
to follow your instructions?*

Why haven't I asked this before?

Why can't I know the answer?

You said, "Yes, the ecstasy of separation  
from the spiritual master  
~~is~~ even greater than the ecstasy of meeting with him,"  
then let me touch this absence-of-you,  
and celebrate it while walking down a hill  
strewn with green weeds and flowers.  
At every moment as long as I live  
I want to consecrate myself to you  
and bring you more disciples.

My end will come soon  
but *now* counts too—  
as I wake you from your bed  
and carry you to your *vyāsāsana*  
and wash your face  
and look upon your form with care  
and fix your *japa-māla* in your hand  
and sing to you and put your *cādar* on your shoulders  
and bow down again and again.

*"Personal Association is for Fools"*

#### 4.15

I am very much pleased for the nice  
sentiments you have expressed there-  
in. But you should always remember  
that whatever we are doing, it is in  
the *parampara* system beginning from  
Lord Kṛṣṇa, down to us. Therefore, our  
loving spirit should be more upon the  
message than the physical represent-  
ation. When we love the message and  
serve Him, automatically our devo-

tional love for the physique is done.

—Letter to Govinda dāśī, April 7,

1970

In this letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda is cautioning a disciple not to be over-attached to the form of the spiritual master. We should always remember that the important thing is the message coming through him.

Prabhupāda's point is meant to encourage us and not to dampen our affections for him. He reminds us that we can take shelter of the message which he has brought, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, even after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and even after our own physical demise. If our affection for Śrīla Prabhupāda were entirely dependent on the "physical representation," then we would have ceased to serve him since November, 1977. But there is no cessation in our relationship. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "He lives forever by his divine instructions and the follower lives with him."

The letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda to Govinda dāśī is not intended to be a dissertation on the entire nature of the *guru*-disciple relationship. There is other evidence in *śāstra* (as well as the evidence in our hearts and minds) which indicates that the personal form of a great soul is never forgotten, even after his disappearance. If we stress only the message that he delivered and neglect the person who delivered it, we minimize the importance of the pure devotee.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes compared himself

to a mailman. (In India, a mailman is called a "peon".) Here again the stress is on the message which the peon delivers. He should not interfere with the delivery of that message, or tamper with its contents. The mailman doesn't have to be an extremely qualified person, as long as he faithfully brings the letter to your door. The metaphor of the mailman is helpful, especially when we consider *ourselves* as deliverers of the message of Kṛṣṇa. But the example is incomplete. A mailman is not an important person in our lives; we see him only briefly, and post office technology will probably find a way to replace him by a robot. Our relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda is not like that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda made it clear that we should not think of him as a teacher who gives us some temporary help and whom we later give up. He said that a temporary relationship with the *guru* is implicit in the teachings of the *māyāvādīs*, but Vaiṣṇavism teaches that the *guru* is eternal. The *māyāvādīs* sometimes compare the *guru* to a ladder. One uses the ladder to reach a higher position, but if the ladder is no longer needed, one kicks it away.

The physical form of the pure devotee is spiritual. He is a *jīvan-mukta*, a liberated soul, and his body should never be seen as material. His form is therefore worshipable in *guru-pūjā*. And in the case of a great soul like Śrīla Prabhupāda, even after his disappearance, his body is honored in permanent *samādhi*.

Another statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda which is similar to the letter to Govinda dāśī is, "Personal

association is for fools." Prabhupāda wrote this in a letter to a disciple who wanted to give up his service (*prabhu-datta-deśa*) in order to be with Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda emphasized that a disciple should be satisfied serving his *guru* anywhere, and not seek to gratify himself by going to see and touch the personal form. This remark by Prabhupāda has specific usage according to time and place, and some of us were shocked to hear it. In fact, we sometimes replied, "Prabhupāda's association is for fools? Then call me a fool, but I want to be with him."

Śrīla Prabhupāda had to respond to disciples who were feeling anxious about their separation from him. And he asserted that they were certainly together even though they seemed to be physically apart.

You write that you have a desire to avail of my association again, but why do you forget that you are always in association with me? When you are helping my missionary activities, I am always thinking of you and you are always thinking of me. That is real association.

—Letter, August 17, 1969

But always remember that I am always with you. As you are always thinking of me, I am always thinking of you also. Although physically we



are not together, we are not separated spiritually. So we should be concerned only with the spiritual connection.

—Letter, November 13, 1969

We might argue that when these letters were written, it was only a matter of geography and time that separated Śrīla Prabhupāda from his disciples. They expected to see him again when he visited their part of the world, or when they traveled to see him. And yet Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he did not feel any separation from his own spiritual master, even though Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had disappeared for many decades.

I also do not feel separation from my Guru Maharaja. When I'm engaged in his service, his pictures give me sufficient strength. To serve the spiritual master's word is more important than to serve him physically.

—Letter, July 19, 1970

In the higher sense, there is no difference between the situation as it was when Prabhupāda was present from 1966-1977, and the situation as it is since then. All that separates us is geography and time as well as the purity of our minds and intentions.

We should know that Prabhupāda's message is more important than the "physical representation"—but it is equally important to be assured that his

personal form is important to us even today. Śrīla Prabhupāda installed the *mūrtis* of himself, and he encouraged personal remembrances. For example, he wrote, "Who is taking care of my apartment? It should be cleansed at least twice a week and on the altar of the Deity, at least one incense may be offered daily" (Letter, August 22, 1970). Surely it pleases him that we continue to honor his apartments, his pictures and his *mūrtis*. It helps us to remember him. And when we remember the representative of Kṛṣṇa, then we can remember his message, Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Like it or not, we are attached. When we love a person we think not only of their teachings, but of their personal form and activities. As Prabhupāda writes, "The individual soul is embodied since time immemorial. It is very difficult for him to simply theoretically understand that he is not the body. Therefore, the *bhakti-yogī* accepts the Deity of Kṛṣṇa as worshipable because there is some bodily conception fixed in the mind, which can thus be applied. Of course, worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His form within the temple is not idol worship" (*Bg.* 12.5, purport). Similarly, it's natural that we don't create a void image of Prabhupāda or forget him in favor of the message which he brought.

Even when we consider the *vāñī* as all-important, the *vāñī* itself has a form. Prabhupāda's teachings come in a form of books, sound recordings, and impressions in the mind. It is not formless. Therefore, we take pleasure in recalling the *messen-*

ger, our lord and master, who came from Goloka to tell us about Kṛṣṇa.

### *Prabhupāda's Pleasure*

#### **4.16**

When Swamiji started dictating the *Kṛṣṇa* book, he sent me the tapes. That was a special treat. He also wrote a letter and asked if Jadurāṇī or someone could do paintings very quickly. He wanted three or four done per week. So we were off to a flying start on his new project, the *Kṛṣṇa* book, and I was the typist.

When I typed *The Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*, I was the first one to hear about it and to tell the devotees. But with the *Kṛṣṇa* book, it was much more exciting for everyone because we were hearing for the first time some of the personal pastimes of Child Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. When I would give classes in the Boston temple, I would repeat almost word for word the descriptions Prabhupāda gave of Kṛṣṇa stealing butter, Kṛṣṇa showing the Universal form to His mother, and so on.

One night during one of Prabhupāda's visits to Boston, when we were still in the storefront in Allston, he asked me to speak in front of the group who had come to hear him. Prabhupāda would sometimes ask several disciples to lecture during the same evening. He did it to train us up and I thought that he also liked to sit back and let the disciples do some of the work. He liked to speak himself, but when we spoke, he seemed to listen and at the same time, he withdrew himself.

I stood up so that Swamiji and I were both facing in the same direction towards the audience. He was on the dais and I was standing by his side. I began preaching the same basic philosophy which is all I knew: You're not this body, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. But then I thought of what I'd been hearing on the *Kṛṣṇa* book tapes. So I started telling the story of Kṛṣṇa stealing the butter. Kṛṣṇa would steal the butter and distribute it to the monkeys, and when the monkeys had eaten to their satisfaction and wouldn't take anymore, then Kṛṣṇa said, "Your butter is useless, even the monkeys won't eat it."

As I was telling this pastime, the audience was attentive and some were smiling, but when I said that Kṛṣṇa said the butter was useless, something changed in the audience. Suddenly, they were all charmed, and I knew what it was. They weren't looking at me, they were looking at Prabhupāda. They started to laugh and go, "Oooo! Aaah!" I looked over at Prabhupāda and he had a big smile on his face. He was delighted by hearing about Kṛṣṇa, even when I told it, and it had sent him into the ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

There were many other occasions when we could see that Prabhupāda was pleased to talk of his friend, Kṛṣṇa. One devotee said, "When I first heard Prabhupāda talk about Kṛṣṇa, it was like someone talking of their most intimate friend. It wasn't like talking about something he read in the scriptures." Prabhupāda took pleasure in Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes, and he also loved to defend the philosophy and assert that Kṛṣṇa is the

Supreme Personality of Godhead. That was a prominent pleasure for Prabhupāda.

In one 1966 lecture, he said that Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "I spoke this *Bhagavad-gītā* forty million years ago to the sun god." Then Prabhupāda said, "Who could say that but Kṛṣṇa? If I say that I made a speech about *Bhagavad-gītā* forty million years ago, you will say, 'Oh, Swami is speaking nonsense,' but when Kṛṣṇa says it, you can't say that because He's the Personality of Godhead." Prabhupāda also said that Kṛṣṇa claims, "I am the highest truth, there is no one higher than Me." Prabhupāda said, "Now if I were to say that I am the greatest, although I'm limited in so many ways, you will say, 'Oh, Swamiji is so proud.' It will be blasphemy if I say like that." In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda was always taking pleasure in talking about Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's philosophy and Kṛṣṇa's authority.

One of the most wonderful things about those early days is that Prabhupāda was so accessible, and so we could see his pleasure in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He also allowed us to express our pleasure and our realizations to him. One time around 1968, I gave a lecture on the topic of the spiritual master and I recorded it. It was just a class for the three or four devotees in our temple. I sent it to Prabhupāda and his secretary, Puruṣottama dāsa, who told me later, that Prabhupāda said, "He understands it." On another occasion, I was the priest at a marriage ceremony of a devotee couple and I lectured about Kṛṣṇa conscious marriage. I sent that on a tape to Prabhupāda who wrote back that he approved it.

Devotees would send their lectures, or if they had a nice *kīrtana*, they would think, "Let's send this to Prabhupāda." And he would listen and then comment on it. But it wasn't long before he was not able to listen to so many tapes. Now we exchange pleasure in new ways; by devotional service.

### *The Danger of Guru-Aparādhā*

#### 4.17

Rūpa Gosvāmi defines pure devotional service as serving Kṛṣṇa *favorably*, with no tinge of *karma* or *jñāna*. It's not enough to *think* of someone; it must be favorable. Kāṁsa meditated on Lord Kṛṣṇa, but he was always thinking how to kill Kṛṣṇa. So Prabhupāda meditation must be favorable, not doubtful or offensive.

In the name of speaking freely and honestly, I don't think it will serve any good purpose if I try to remember lapses of faith or disagreements I may have had with my spiritual master over the years. They are my shame, and it won't benefit others to hear dirty things and lack of surrender. But I may mention some of the principles involved, with the aim of being on guard against dangerous *aparādhās*.

My earliest memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda are of idolizing him without any interruption. Sometimes obscene words would come up in my mind in his presence. It was easy to identify them as ravings, and I kicked them out as best I could. They were easy to deal with because they gave me so much pain and shame, and there was no way that I could attribute anything bad to Prabhupāda from my own

bad thoughts. It was obviously happening because he was so pure and I had been immersed in a milieu that was very impure.

All the devotees who became attracted to Swamiji held him in the highest awe and reverence. I remember informal talks among devotees in the cellar of our Boston storefront. We would share things that we had heard the Swami say to us; we repeated them faithfully as a way of worship. We never thought of him as an ordinary person. And thus in a spontaneous way, we followed the Vedic axiom that the *guru* is perfect. We were satisfied that Prabhupāda tallied, in all respects with the definition of a pure Vaiṣṇava.

But I remember one day in New York, Rāyarāma told me, "Hayagrīva and I are close because we both have a very strong intellectual honesty." I asked Rāyarāma what he meant by that and he said that an honest person never denies the truth that occurs to him from his own senses and intelligence. If scriptures are against what one thinks and feels in his conscience, he still has to give credence to his own understanding. Rāyarāma saw this as a heroic stance, whereas following the scriptures was prone to dogmatism.

His philosophy didn't sound right and so I said, "But in relation to Kṛṣṇa and the Swami, I thought the whole point was that we have to give up our own convictions and accept the higher truth." On that occasion, I defended the process of hearing from authority. But I was naive in thinking that I myself had become completely free of all my cul-

tural conditioning or that I had now become a full-fledged Vaiṣṇava who could perceive his *guru* with perfect submission. I assumed too quickly a victory over the old self.

It's a fact that we do have to come to grips with intellectual honesty and not just accept things blindly. We also have to defeat the notion of intellectual honesty when it comes in direct conflict with *brahma-śabda*. We also have to face religious hypocrisy when it occurs within ourselves or within others and in the movement. All these things can be cleared up. As Kṛṣṇa says, we have to arm ourselves with the weapon of knowledge and slash the doubts. When we are victorious we can look with childlike purity upon the Lord and His pure devotee.

My first deviation was when I failed to carry out Swamiji's instructions not to give Mr. Paine any money. Whenever I think of it deeply, I'm sorry that I was swayed and failed to carry out my spiritual master's instructions. Mostly, I see myself as a dupe of the real estate men, and a dupe of my Godbrothers who were themselves swayed. I don't think it's worth remembering that episode so much or looking for some new revelation in it. There is even a kind of sweetness to that deviation because I was so obviously befooled by the cruel world. I had no recourse but to turn to our spiritual master. And Swamiji came forward as the protector of we New York boys, not only spiritually, but he also rescued the money back from the demons. It was a good lesson that you should always follow Prabhupāda and



not be swayed. Don't have respect for demons even if they have a good education or fancy cuff links. Even if they flatter you, don't disobey your spiritual master. That lesson is never outdated, and in that sense, it is nice to meditate on how Swamiji saved us. It puts me in my right place although I'm sorry I could not follow what he said.

~ In more recent years, some unwanted doubts began festering in my mind, and I noted them down in a diary. Finally, I spoke about them with a Godbrother, Kuṇḍali Prabhu. My question was, "If so many of Prabhupāda's disciples have left, then it seems like he was demanding too much surrender. Was that a mistake on his part? Also the fact that the movement has failed in certain ways, is he to be held responsible for that?" My Godbrother's replies were all positive. He said that we should always appreciate the great odds Prabhupāda was working against in the West as he tried to start the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement. It's not that every single move he made had to become successful or had to be perfect in a tactical sense. But we should always appreciate that he was always perfect in trying to get the pure movement of Lord Caitanya's Kṛṣṇa consciousness going. And Prabhupāda's work *was* successful. So we should be sympathetic and appreciative to all his attempts and not find fault. Furthermore, we can't know the mind of the *ācārya*. I don't remember what else my Godbrother said on that occasion, but the most important thing was to be able to admit to problems like that. I wanted to bring it out and confess and be helped.

Devotees sometimes ask me if I was ever afraid of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I usually reply, "Yes." I say that it's healthy to be afraid of displeasing the spiritual master. Sometimes I would be afraid that Prabhupāda's secretaries and representatives might misrepresent him. Or I would be afraid that Prabhupāda would ask me to do something that would be very hard for me. These are *anarthas* that have to be overcome—by trusting in the loving relationship with Prabhupāda, and by accepting, without fear, the position of servitude.

Sometimes I would also be afraid that my mind and senses were seeing Prabhupāda in an unfavorable light. For example, one year in India, Prabhupāda called his GBC men for an impromptu meeting in his room in Vṛndāvana. The room was darkened and Prabhupāda was in a stern mood. He was unhappy that so many of his manuscripts had been collecting and yet the books weren't being published. This was a prelude to what later became his order to publish seventeen books in two months. When I entered the room, at first I thought he was saying that he wanted to write but he had no time. I suggested that he might go from India to Hawaii because that was always a good place for him to write. Brahmānanda turned to me and said, "That's not the point. Prabhupāda is saying what's the use of going to Hawaii or doing any writing unless these books get published?"

Prabhupāda turned from one person to another asking why the books weren't being published. I felt uneasy, partly because I was unaccustomed to living

in India, and also I felt pressure from the other devotees. These were simply my own problems. But at the time, I felt bewildered to see Prabhupāda angry, even though I realized that there was nothing wrong with the commander-in-chief calling in his officers and telling them that they had failed to carry out his instructions. The commander trusts that he doesn't have to always speak to his captains with the most delicate forms of expression—he can tell them honestly what's on his mind, and they will be loyal to respond. They don't mind getting some sauce.

But I was fearful that I had had an unappreciative moment. It was partly due to a lack of real surrender to Prabhupāda, but also bewilderment by the mind and the material nature. It can happen, but I don't want to excuse myself too easily. One wants to perpetually worship the lotus feet of the spiritual master, and so it's disturbing when anything comes up to interrupt it. It's a fight to attain real devotion.

I will not belabor this point but remind myself and my readers that a disciple has to make a constant and deliberate effort to keep himself in a normal relationship with the pure devotee. The *śāstras* have also prepared us for the devious tricks of the mind and other misconceptions, and we may safely follow their directions. For example, in the *Nectar of Instruction*, Rūpa Gosvāmī warns us that we should never criticize the bodily appearance of the pure devotee. Prabhupāda comments:

If we consider the bodily defect of a

Vaiṣṇava we should understand that we are committing an offense at the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇava. An offense at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava is very serious. Indeed Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has described this offense as *hātī-mātā*, the mad elephant offense. The mad elephant can create a disaster, especially when it enters into a nicely trimmed garden. One should therefore be very careful not to commit any offense against a Vaiṣṇava.

—*NOI*, text 6, purport

There are also direct warnings in the *Nectar of Devotion*. Rūpa Gosvāmī encourages us that by associating with a pure devotee, we can make spiritual advancement even if we don't know in the beginning exactly what we are doing. The benefit received from favorable contact with the pure devotee is called shadow attachment to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the negative side as follows:

. . . by the association of pure devotees, attachment for Kṛṣṇa can be aroused; but if one commits offenses at the lotus feet of the devotee, one's shadow attachment or *para* attachment can be extinguished. This extinguishing is like the waning of the full moon which gradually decreases and

at last becomes dark. One should therefore be very careful while associating with pure devotees to guard against committing an offense at their lotus feet. Transcendental attachment, either shadow or *para* can be nullified by different degrees of offenses at the lotus feet of pure devotees. If the offense is very serious then one's attachment becomes almost nil. And if the offense is not serious, one's attachment can become second class, third class.

—*Nectar of Devotion*, p. 144

I realize that even by discussing such experiences, I run the risk of Vaiṣṇava *aparādha*. But it's not offensive if one acknowledges his wrong, repents, and rectifies by taking a positive outlook. The path of devotional service is like the razor's edge and we must always be vigilant.

### *Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

#### 4.18

They have their leader, Jesus Christ,  
"Tender and luminous and demanding  
as he always was,"  
and we have ours, Prabhupāda.  
A man in prison writes to his wife,  
"Life should be beautiful like you,  
friendly and loving. . . ."  
And we too are reassured  
by our spiritual master's

tender and real presence.

He is mother, father, lover, lord,  
preceptor, the way to the light,  
intimate of Kṛṣṇa.

But underneath all that I say,  
is the dread of my insincerity. . . .

Nevermind,

I think of *your* love for your Guru Mahārāja,  
even though you only met him 4 or 5 times.

## *PART FIVE*

## *His Compassion*

### 5.1

I can't begin to comprehend all the suffering that is going on in the world, nor do I want to. It's too bewildering and painful. I also cannot comprehend Prabhupāda's depth of compassion and his strong desire to bring everyone relief from their pangs. As a neophyte devotee, I repeat phrases like "the sufferings of repeated birth and death," "the threefold miseries," and "the fallen souls suffering in material nature"—until these phrases sometimes become clichés or merely philosophical concepts. But a *mahātmā* whose heart is expanded, actually feels compassion for the sufferings of other souls.

In most cases, an individual conditioned soul knows only his own suffering. He is concerned with how to alleviate his bodily and mental pains. That is his meditation. Or he may think also of his family's needs. But if we want to practice Prabhupāda meditation, then we will have to comprehend the world's suffering and how to be compassionate for other living beings.

As a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned whoever he met, not to try the impossible. Sometimes a person would challenge Prabhupāda, "What are you doing to help suffering humanity?" Or, "How can we help *everyone in the world*?" Prabhupāda would reply, "Do you *know* all living beings? No, that is not possible." Or he would remind the person who expressed a world-embracing view, that they couldn't do *anything* to alleviate



suffering. They can't even end their own suffering. Therefore, Prabhupāda's first lesson in compassion was to point out our ignorance of how to do good.

The universe is not chaotic, meaningless suffering. There are strict laws that govern all activities, such as the laws of *karma* and *saṁsāra* (transmigration of souls). If we ignorantly try to meddle with these laws in a sentiment of "doing good," it will not help anyone.

Every student of *Bhagavad-gītā* is faced with the misplaced compassion of Arjuna. Arjuna's unwillingness to fight with his bodily relatives is sometimes praised as compassion, and sometimes criticized as ignorance and cowardice. When the *Bhagavad-gītā* first describes Arjuna as "overwhelmed with compassion," Prabhupāda comments, "He was also crying out of compassion. Such symptoms in Arjuna were not due to weakness but to his soft-heartedness, a characteristic of a pure devotee of the Lord." But a little later in the same chapter, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how Arjuna's feelings are misplaced:

No one knows where compassion should be applied. Compassion for the dress of a drowning man is senseless. A man fallen in the ocean of nescience cannot be saved simply by rescuing his outward dress—the gross material body. One who does not know this and laments for the outward dress, is called a *śūdra*, or one who laments

unnecessarily. Arjuna was a *kṣatriya* and this conduct was not expected from him. Lord Kṛṣṇa, however, can dissipate the lamentation of the ignorant man and for this purpose the *Bhagavad-gītā* was sung by Him.

—Bg. 2.1, purport

Every human being should aspire to be kind to others, but the work begins with one's self. When we learn the first lessons of *Bhagavad-gītā*, we grasp the concept of self-realization: We are not the body, we are spirit soul. Only when this knowledge is established, can we become responsible to help others. As Prabhupāda would say, "Physician, heal thyself."

People would sometimes misunderstand Śrīla Prabhupāda, and see him as a religionist who was concerned with the soul and God, but unconcerned for people's suffering in the here-and-now. But this is not a fact. As a *sādhū* who cuts illusion, Śrīla Prabhupāda derided misplaced compassion, but was himself engaged in the most important welfare work for all living beings. He was compassionate in the enlightened way, to give people Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Relief from suffering comes when we cease the cycle of birth and death and attain the eternal spiritual world.

Prabhupāda also felt transcendental frustration because he knew what had to be done, and he himself was doing it, but very few people were helping him. Even transcendentalists who are aware of the

cause of suffering, often remove themselves from all contact with the world of suffering. But the Vaiṣṇava ācārya stays involved with the world. Prabhupāda writes:

The word "*ātmā-upāmyena*" refers to thinking others to be like oneself. One can very intelligently conclude that without devotional service, without becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious, one cannot be happy. Therefore, the duty of all devotees is to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere all over the world, because all living entities without Kṛṣṇa consciousness are suffering the pangs of material existence. To preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the best welfare activity. Indeed, it is described by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as *para-upakara*, work for the true benefit of others.

On numerous occasions devotees witnessed Prabhupāda's personal feeling in response to widespread suffering. He would sometimes cry tears while thinking about the crimes of abortion and cow-killing. I was present on one occasion when Prabhupāda expressed his horror at animal slaughter and then spoke to stir our own compassion for the sufferings of the world. This is reported in the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-Līlāmṛta*:

Śrīla Prabhupāda became emotional,

and tears came to his eyes. "It is the duty!" he said. "Caitanya Mahā-prabhu has explained, *para-upakara*: 'Save them.' If it is not possible to save everyone—as many as possible. This is human life. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness—to save those who are in the darkness. Don't think, 'Kṛṣṇa consciousness is my profession. I am getting a living, food and shelter.' Not like that. It is *para-upakara*. And Kṛṣṇa will be very much pleased."

—Śrīla Prabhupāda-Līlāmṛta, *Uniting Two Worlds*, p. 121

Receiving a glimpse of Śrīla Prabhupāda's compassion also helps us to understand the cause and the strength of his anger. He was angry at the ignorance which caused suffering. And therefore, the name calling—"They're all rascals and fools," "*mūḍhas*, less than animals!" The *mūḍhas* are the blind leading the blind, and they comprise the society of cheaters and cheated. It is ignorance only which puts everyone into perpetual suffering. They don't know that they are not these bodies; they don't know the goal of life is Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupāda's powerful condemnation of materialistic society and its leaders and fools, was therefore motivated by the desire to bring relief to all suffering. How often people misunderstood this, and thought he was "merely religious" or unsympathetic!

How can our meditation on Prabhupāda's compassion lead to more compassion in our own lives? To begin with, I try to at least be sober and aware that I live in the world of death (*mṛtyaloka*), a world which is miserable and temporary. I try to be friendly and kind to those I come in contact with, as Śrīla Prabhupāda was. Human kindness should be expressed by refraining from killing other living beings (*ahimsa*). And kindness is also related to meekness—one should act with humility, as Lord Caitanya says, ". . . devoid of all sense of false prestige and ready to offer all respects to others."

But more than this—by distributing the holy names of God, and working for the compassionate cause of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can actually follow Prabhupāda's ideal mood of compassion. *How to save other living beings? How to end the suffering?*—this meditation is not beyond us. In fact, Prabhupāda has said we must do it if we are actually to be his followers, in the mood of Prahlāda Mahārāja:

As for me, however, I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals. I know that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without taking shelter of Your lotus feet, one cannot be happy. Therefore, I wish to bring them back to that shelter at Your lotus feet.

—*Bhāg. 7.9.44*

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

5.2

1

I like to keep talking to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda,  
and devotees like it—  
they say the Prabhupāda *śakti* comes through.  
It's story telling,  
except the stories are true.  
I read that Raghunātha Gosvāmī would talk  
three hours daily  
about his personal association  
with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu  
and his eyes were always filled with tears.

I used to tell myself it's too sacred  
and inexplicable to remember you.  
But mostly it's forgetfulness, *tamo-guṇa*  
and preoccupation with myself  
that makes me avoid you.

I remember  
 walking beside you in India,  
 in the morning,  
 making a sitting place for you in a boat,  
 to visit your Godbrother, Śrīdhāra Mahārāja.  
 I didn't care for problems and finances,  
 but I liked to watch you.  
 You dipped your hand into the Ganges.  
 I did too, cold and holy.  
 The boatman and your dark countrymen,  
 were all respectful to you.  
 Carrying your reading glasses,  
 your *gam̐cha* and oil ready for your massage,  
 I went with you  
 across the Ganges in a boat.

"What are you doing?"

### 5.3

Śrīla Prabhupāda had the ability to look through you. I remember a time when he did it to me. It was in the summer of 1972, a few months after he had awarded me *sannyāsa*. It was at the "*Bhagavat-dharma*" discourses, held in New Vrindavana on Janmāṣṭami of that year.

I had been travelling to the temples in the U.S. helping to institute the morning *Bhāgavatam* class. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all the ISKCON centers to hold a daily class in which there would be responsive chanting of Sanskrit and a forty minute talk on

a *Bhāgavatam* verse and purport. This meant we had to study the *Bhāgavatam* and learn to pronounce Sanskrit. That was right up my alley and so I was happy to do it. I was especially satisfied when I thought, "I'm simply carrying out his orders and I have nothing else to worry about."

But at the New Vrindabana festival, I felt anxiety because I wasn't able to see Prabhupāda. I was only one out of hundreds of followers. Because I used to have more access to him in the old days, I felt sorry. When I expressed this to Prabhupāda's servant, Nanda Kumāra, he said, "If you like, you can go over to see Prabhupāda at the house where he's staying." I took the invitation and drove over in a van with my assistant, Dhr̥ṣṭaketu dāsa.

When we came into Prabhupāda's presence, Dhr̥ṣṭaketu asked, "Prabhupāda, in one book you say that we should always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day?"

Prabhupāda said, "No, if you try you will fall asleep."

"Prabhupāda," I said, "I don't really have any questions to ask you. But I was in anxiety and wanted to see you."

Prabhupāda said, "You're one of my older students. You should know better. Service in separation is sufficient."

I said, "I just wanted to tell you what I'm doing."

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "What *are* you doing?" It wasn't just the words, but it was the way he said it. It went right through me and made me feel, "*I'm not doing anything.*" I felt my worthlessness



and lack of making a substantial contribution to Prabhupāda's mission.

At that time, Śrīla Prabhupāda was on continual world tours. He was fighting to keep the Bombay land, and beginning his other big projects in India. I didn't know much of what he was doing in India but I knew some disciples were personally helping him to achieve his goals. By comparison, I felt like an ant.

Since he had asked me, I said that I was traveling to temples in the U.S. and instituting the *Bhāgavatam* class.

"You should get a bus like Viṣṇujana Swami," Prabhupāda said, "and travel to the interior. He's doing very nicely."

I said, "So the *Bhāgavatam* class is not important?"

Prabhupāda became annoyed and said, "Kṛṣṇa's head is important and His tail is important." He explained that when the *guru* says one thing is important, it doesn't mean that other orders aren't important. I became enlivened at Prabhupāda's suggestion to start a traveling bus party. As soon as I left his presence, by inquiring around, I was able to get an old school bus, and I immediately started to follow in the footsteps of Viṣṇujana Swami.

I didn't tell the devotees about that moment in Prabhupāda's room when he said, "What *are* you doing?" It took a while to sink in. I was sorry that when he had asked the question, I was exposed as useless. But at the same time, it felt secure to know that Prabhupāda could do that to me, and yet he was my well-wisher.

When I recently re-told this incident to a group of devotees, a few of them became uneasy. They said that the phrase, "What *are* you doing?" sounded a bit like the heavy pushing tactics used by some of the leaders in ISKCON. I agreed that sometimes devotees get burnt out by the pressure of that question. Sometimes the pushing is done in a demeaning way, "What *are* you doing? Why don't you do more? You're a small-timer, a pooper-timer." It can be abused. This may happen when leaders merely imitate Prabhupāda's expansive, pushing mood, or dominate over others, without being sensitive to each person's capacity.

Prabhupāda made demands of his disciples, and yet he also taught us that the secret of devotional service is in a devotee's sincere attitude. Lord Kṛṣṇa advises in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that we offer Him water, a leaf or fruits, and if it is offered with devotion, He will accept it. The Supreme Lord and His pure devotee see the inner intention of a servitor. No one can offer anything big or wonderful to Kṛṣṇa because He already owns everything. But He wants to see our devotion.

Devotional offerings may be small in the external sense, but the important thing is to feel humble, and to give what you can according to your capacity. Even a child can make a satisfying offering to the pure devotee of the Lord. Prabhupāda gave the example of a small son offering a chewed biscuit to his father and saying, "Father, this is very nice. Won't you taste some of my biscuit?" The father has supplied the biscuit himself, but he's pleased at

the offering. He thinks, "My son has so much affection that he's offering me the food he likes." We all like to hear that kind of story.

But it's true that Prabhupāda wanted his followers to do substantial work. I remember hearing the words "solid work" and "substantial work" from Śyāmasundara dāsa, Prabhupāda's secretary during the early 1970s. Śyāmasundara would write letters to the GBC and say, "Prabhupāda is in India and he's really pushing hard. You devotees in America should do something. Prabhupāda said it's not enough to just sit around and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. He wants to see substantial work." That phrase was drummed up in the temples, and we began to examine ourselves, and each other, as to whether we were doing substantial work.

Then came the phrase, "Shoot for the rhinoceros." That meant you should try to do something amazing and very difficult, and even if you fail, it will still be considered wonderful—that you tried to shoot the most difficult animal. Prabhupāda also said, "You are Americans, so you should do something wonderful, or else what's the use of being an American?" He meant that Americans were ambitious, successful people, and therefore when they became devotees, they should use some of that ingenuity and good *karma* to do something great for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I like to hear the reassurances that any little service is nice, but it's also inspiring to have a spiritual master who wants you to do something wonderful. Prabhupāda didn't do this to strike fear into us, but

he combined the two attitudes, substantial work, and simple acts of devotion. And he wasn't narrowminded in thinking of what constituted impressive work. He congratulated devotees for doing apparently simple things like dressing the Jagannātha deities. That was also substantial work. And of course, distributing books, making life members, convincing George Harrison to buy a building—these were obviously big works. One time a devotee criticized Śyāmasundara dāsa, who always tried to shoot for the rhinoceros in the American style. The disciple said, "Śyāmasundara's plans are rather utopian." Prabhupāda replied, "Maybe utopian. But if you do something utopian for Kṛṣṇa, that's also good."

I hope when I meet Śrīla Prabhupāda again, if he asks me, "What *are* you doing?" that I will be open to it, even though it's painful. I want to find within myself a desire to do something nice and substantial. From hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings I know that if I could chant Hare Kṛṣṇa without offenses, *that* would be substantial. If I could become free of sex desire and develop attraction to the messages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, that would certainly be pleasing to Prabhupāda. The idea that you should "go for it" and try to achieve something meritorious in this life, is certainly an inspiration from Prabhupāda. He said, "Don't be a good-for-nothing, so-called Vaiṣṇava. Be like Arjuna and Hanumān." And he also praised the spider who assisted Lord Rāma—and the cows and calves of Vrndāvana.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

**5.4**

I want to sing of your qualities  
like in our '66 *kīrtanas*,  
simple and eager to be with you.  
I've read how Mother Yaśodā sings  
while churning butter.  
Like that, spontaneous love,  
spontaneous composition.

I remember  
walking on Juhu Beach beside you.  
(All places where you walked  
now have magical-sounding names,  
Juhu Beach where Prabhupāda walked,  
starting before dawn and returning  
when the sun was up and he was perspiring,  
talking *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.)

My false ego cries,  
"Don't push me out  
of your Prabhupāda remembrances!  
How can you remember unless I'm there too?"  
And memory says, "Don't deride them as 'canned'  
just because you've told it before."

Me singing Nṛsiṃha prayers  
while Subhānanda played harmonium  
in Prabhupāda's very last week in Vṛndāvana.  
He asked, "Who is singing?"  
When Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami told him  
he just said, "Hmmm,"  
and that was my last external exchange.  
Another time I started to sing  
and he stopped and said  
he wanted to hear Hamsaduta instead.  
What pride I had to swallow!

I like to be patted on the back  
and called forward for special attention.  
I'd leap for joy if I caught his smile  
and a word of trust.

Here you come walking down the street, Prabhupāda,  
and I'm beside you and ten others.  
I'm hanging back in the middle distance,  
straining to hear.  
"What do they say?" you asked  
waiting for a challenge.  
Then you single me out, "*You*  
sometimes take their side.  
What do the rascals say?"  
"Oh, Prabhupāda, they say that  
Kṛṣṇa consciousness is just our faith;  
they say there is no proof we live after death."  
Prabhupāda: "*They* say, but what do *you* say?"  
"They're simply speculating," I say,  
"I accept the scriptures."  
Prabhupāda: "You accept the scriptures,  
that is your sentiment.  
Now come to reason and argument."

Prabhupāda, you picked me out rightly  
as one who sometimes agrees with rascals,  
but I'm coming to reason and argument.  
Please tolerate me, at least I know  
not to come too close behind you on the walk.  
And what I've heard you say, I'll preach.

*"Get that fool out of here!  
We want to hear of Prabhupāda!  
Or if he's got to stay, let him talk straight."*

I remember  
walking with you on Commonwealth Pier.  
You pointed to a sign, "Unalloyed Steel," and said  
"We have unalloyed devotion."  
You spoke of Prahlāda Mahārāja and Jesus Christ—  
they seemed to have been defeated  
but they came out triumphant.

Joining us on the walk, Jadurāṇī asked,  
"Where are you going, Swamiji?"  
and you said, "Where are you taking me?"

Because I made a bad engagement at Boston University  
and only a few people came  
you stayed back from the Harvard lecture  
just in case no one attended.  
But at eight o'clock the room was full.  
I ran to the phone, "Please hurry!"  
Forty minutes later you walked in,  
sat on the front desk  
and gave them straight *paramparā*,  
to my great relief.

Are those memories all right?  
*"They're of Swamiji, so I won't complain.  
But the telling of them is barely passable.  
Do you have anymore?"*

## *Reprimands*

### 5.5

Don't be sorry when I find fault. That is my primary duty. Canakya Pandita says one must find fault with disciples and sons, it is good for them.

—Letter, April 20, 1974

In another letter, Prabhupāda stated, "It is the duty of the spiritual master to find fault with the students so that they can make progress, not that he should always be praising them" (Letter, May 24, 1972). And so I must accept his reprimands in that spirit. He wants to see only that I advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That means some of my most cherished notions may have to be thrown over. And he can do it.

But how to be certain that the voice of reprimand we hear today is actually his? We may not always be a hundred percent sure, but we must listen humbly to the consensus of our Godbrothers. And our ears should be developed to hear Prabhupāda speaking, which he does so clearly in his books. We worship the *guru* who can correct us.

Once on a morning walk in Māyāpura, a disciple asked, "Prabhupāda, I heard that once you were



chastised by your spiritual master. Could you tell us?" Most of us had heard the story before, and some of us thought that it was improper to press Śrīla Prabhupāda for a story that was perhaps too personal. Prabhupāda paused, but then he began to tell the incident. He said that while his Guru Mahārāja was lecturing, an older man wanted to speak something to our Prabhupāda. So our Prabhupāda leaned over—and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura caught them both being inattentive to the lecture. To the older man, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said, "Do you think that your so many rupees per month has purchased me?" And to our Prabhupāda he said, "Do you want to come up here and give the lecture?" Once before, when Prabhupāda mentioned this incident he said, "We were sometimes chastised by our spiritual master. That was on our brilliant days." Śrīla Prabhupāda was the perfect example of a disciple who pleased his spiritual master, yet he said it was a brilliant occasion when he was reprimanded.

(I prefer to use the word "reprimand" rather than "chastise." One of the *BTG* editors pointed out to me that "chastise" usually means physical punishment, and so it is stronger than we perhaps intend when we use it in ISKCON. Prabhupāda almost never dealt in any kind of physical chastisement. By sarcasm or by raising his voice or speaking strong words, he could make us feel crushed and corrected.)

Prabhupāda used to reprimand me gently, with a few sarcastic words. When he once bore down on

me in a concentrated way, I broke into tears. Harikeśa Mahārāja swears that his relationship with Prabhupāda was always biff, bam, kick, smash. But Nanda Kumāra, Upendra and Śrutakīrti told me that they rarely got reprimanded by Śrīla Prabhupāda, even when they did something wrong. For his own reasons, Prabhupāda taught his disciples in different ways. It would be too simple to say that the ones he reprimanded heavily were more faulty, or those he reprimanded were more in his favor. He saw the temperaments of his disciples and he knew what they could bear and how to teach them best. Prabhupāda said that in teaching children, you should apply continual pressure, the way you control a plant by tying it next to a stick. By a gentle, continual pressure, the plant or child will be kept in control, but if you try to apply sporadic pressure of a more violent sort, you may break him.

A disciple should value reprimands from the spiritual master for the corrective value, and also as a sign of intimacy. After I had been relieved of my duties as Prabhupāda's personal secretary in 1974, he called me in because he wanted me to show Jayatīrtha the financial records I had been keeping. It was a business exchange but at one point, Prabhupāda said, "Satsvarūpa is very expert." This was a sarcastic remark about my poor record-keeping. But Prabhupāda had said it so casually that Jayatīrtha didn't notice it at first. Suddenly it caught him and he laughed, looked at Prabhupāda, and then looked at me. Prabhupāda, however, just went on discussing the financial business in a matter-of-

fact way. His remark that I was "very expert" went into me like a shaft, but at the same time, it was an intimate exchange which the third party could only observe from the outside.

Jayādvaita Swami tells of the time when he was a new devotee and was allowed to assist in cooking for Prabhupāda in Boston. Jayādvaita made a few mistakes and Prabhupāda reprimanded him, saying that he didn't have any brains. Jayādvaita had previously heard that a reprimand by the spiritual master was a serious thing, but he couldn't help feeling very blissful when Prabhupāda was raking him over the coals. He sensed that he was getting special mercy.

One time, Prabhupāda reprimanded a devotee who was supposed to be guarding outside his door in Māyāpura. Prabhupāda had been ringing his bell but the man had wandered off from his post. A *sannyāsī* disciple who observed this reprimand then asked Prabhupāda, "How should we feel when the spiritual master is angry with us?" Prabhupāda said, "You should be grateful that you're getting attention. Just see all the people of the world, how they're completely neglected, but if the spiritual master is angry with you, that means he's giving you his attention." Normally, when we are getting such attention, it feels uncomfortable, and it should be taken as a serious matter for rectification. But what is a disciple for, except to be disciplined? And so we should also be glad.

Prabhupāda's reprimands were often given because of an unintelligent act by a disciple. When he

did this to me it was crushing to my false ego, but at the same time, I gained appreciation for Śrīla Prabhupāda's strong intelligence. I lacked all kinds of intelligence—practical intelligence to do things in the world, and also philosophical intelligence as well as the sensitive human intelligence to care for others' needs. One time when I was with Prabhupāda in Calcutta, I made a series of mistakes. Then when we were about to travel out of Calcutta, I purchased the plane tickets and brought them to Prabhupāda to show him that everything was in order.

Prabhupāda asked, "So will there be any delay at the airport, at the ticket counter or with immigration?"

"No, Prabhupāda," I said. "Everything is in order and there won't be any difficulty."

Prabhupāda said, "That's what *you* say." He then began to comment in a general way about the importance of intelligence. He said that if a person has intelligence, he's actually a strong man. If one has a good brain then he is strong. I thought that was a good description of Prabhupāda himself. He seemed to imply that a person could get on well in the world, even if he wasn't physically strong, or if he lacked money, provided that he had intelligence. And because Prabhupāda wanted to see that strength in his own disciples, he reprimanded them when they acted like fools. Although one should be a fool before the spiritual master, the spiritual master doesn't want his disciples to be fools when they act as representatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Sometimes Prabhupāda would make a big issue out of what seemed to many of us to be a minor infraction. One time when I was his secretary, he received a letter from devotees at Bhaktivedanta Manor. The letter was written on their new letterhead, which included a drawing of a cow's head. Prabhupāda called me in and showed me the picture of the cow on the letterhead. At first I didn't see anything wrong with it. But Prabhupāda explained in a disturbed tone of voice, that this was the way a cow is depicted in a slaughterhouse or beef shop, a disembodied head. When a Vaiṣṇava draws a picture of a cow, it should be the whole cow in a happy mood. Prabhupāda implied that the devotees who did this had devious motives and that they were obviously lacking in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I thought that Prabhupāda was overreacting and so I said, "I don't think they meant anything by it."

But Prabhupāda insisted that it was a dangerous act, and as I listened, I began to understand the serious implications of the disembodied cow head.

Prabhupāda never held grudges. He could reprimand a disciple in a fiery way, but the next time you saw him it was as if he had forgotten it. One time a *sannyāsī* disciple began residing with the *bābājīs* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa instead of staying with the devotees in ISKCON Vṛndāvana. Prabhupāda asked to see him, and when he came, Prabhupāda spoke in vigorous, angry tones saying, "Don't become a monkey! Don't become a monkey!" The disciple submitted to Prabhupāda and agreed that he would

do as told. Prabhupāda gave him a few more verbal lashes during that interview and left him without a smile. But it was understood that the disciple was forgiven, and the next time that he came to see Prabhupāda, all was well again.

A devotee named Hṛṣikeśānanda once seriously deviated and even got himself reinitiated by another *guru*. But then he came to his senses and returned to Prabhupāda's shelter. In a lecture, while Prabhupāda was describing the effects of bad association, he said in a gentle way, "And here is the example, Hṛṣikeśānanda. He associated with some *asat* persons, but after awhile, he could not bear it anymore and so he came back to our association." Prabhupāda told it as a nice story and described Hṛṣikeśānanda as a faithful person. So when you tried to do the right thing, you were forgiven.

Prabhupāda easily forgave those disciples who had taken *sannyāsa* vows but who later felt that they could not follow them. In his Bhaktivedanta purports, Prabhupāda wrote strongly against this as a falldown, but he usually dealt gently with the disciples when they were actually in the grips of *māyā*. On one occasion, Prabhupāda assured a disciple who had fallen from *sannyāsa*, and invited him to become a *grhāsthā* and take up responsible work. Prabhupāda wrote, "My only concern is that you don't become an ordinary foolish person." In other words, even if you make mistakes, and even if you get reprimanded, you are still within the mercy of the spiritual master's guidance, provided you stay as his disciple and try to render service.

*Australia, 1974:*

That boil on my leg.

It became huge.

Prabhupāda told me to apply  
what was it?—honey and salt?

A home remedy.

The allopathic doctor in Melbourne said

"Who told you this?" *A friend*, I said.

And neither could that doctor cure me.

(Later in Chicago, I underwent a knife.)

That boil was a symbol

of my impurity and unrest—

I was his servant but wanted a transfer

so I could preach his message

rather than hold his *kāratālas*

while he preached.

He is speaking to the Franciscans.

They like him—pure God consciousness.

He answers their questions.

I listen for myself faithfully

and listen to hear how the Franciscans will take it.

"What do you think of St. Francis

who spoke to the trees and the sun as brother?"

"That is *real* God consciousness," he said.

When I massaged his legs at night

he said, "You are dancing nicely."

He meant at the Melbourne Ratha-yātrā that day.

Why did I want to leave him?  
To be my own man.  
To be prestigious.  
For selling his books.

### *Prabhupāda Is Not Alone*

#### 5.7

I've been reading some of Prabhupāda's letters compiled under topical headings. In the section "Vaiṣṇava . . ." there are a few letters where Prabhupāda states the importance of cooperating with fellow devotees, even though there may be disagreements. These statements make me consider whether my Prabhupāda meditation is in harmony with the cooperative spirit.

I don't think there's any harm in thinking about Prabhupāda. Hearing memories and realizations of Prabhupāda is, in fact, one of the nicest ways to associate with devotees. Sometimes when devotees become embittered with one another, they find that one of the few ways they can come together is at a "Prabhupāda Night," when they put aside all controversial topics and just exchange stories and readings of Prabhupāda's teachings and Prabhupāda-*kathā*.

But when I meditate on Prabhupāda, should I include thinking of his disciples and associates? One letter seems to indicate something like this:

The spiritual master is never without his followers, so to serve the spiritual master also means to be the servant of



his disciples. When you want to serve the king, you must also serve his minister, secretary and everyone who serves him. And to serve his servants may please him more than to serve the king personally. So the spiritual master is not alone. He is always with his entourage. We are not impersonalists. We take care of every part of the whole, as much as one should take care of his hat as well as his shoes. Both are equally important for the upkeep of the body.


—Letter, January 23, 1969

This statement makes me think that I should be careful not to escape into a world where it's "just me and Prabhupāda." *Prabhupāda Meditations* should not be a way to get away from all other devotees.

Because we have that desire for an exclusive relationship with the Lord and His pure devotee, sometimes Kṛṣṇa arranges through *yoga-māyā*, so that His devotees think He is with them only. Lord Kṛṣṇa did this in the *rasa* dance and also when He ate lunch with the boys in the forest of Vṛndāvana. And Lord Caitanya did it when dancing amidst the crowds of devotees at the Ratha-yātrā. Each devotee thought, "Lord Caitanya is dancing with me alone." So that's special mercy, but mostly devotees are aware that the Lord has His entourage, and they take their place in friendly exchanges with other servants of the *guru* and the Supreme Personality of

Godhead.

Does this mean that I should meditate equally on my Godbrothers just as I aspire to meditate on Śrīla Prabhupāda? But I prefer to meditate on Prabhupāda rather than on "Prabhupāda dāsa." It's probably not an either/or dilemma. Rūpa Gosvāmī has described the different kinds of relationships that a devotee should have: he saves his love for the Supreme Lord, he becomes friends with devotees, he gives his association to innocent persons to help them in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he avoids the demons. Meditation on Prabhupāda may be considered in the same category as meditation on the Supreme Lord and the supreme worshiper lord. "He is my lord and master, birth after birth." So there is nothing wrong with giving special attention to memories and appreciations of Śrīla Gurudeva.



I may look on my Godbrothers as worshipable senior devotees for me, and I may render them service. In that case, it's somewhat similar to my relationship with my spiritual master, but it will never be exactly the same as my thoughts of Prabhupāda. With some devotees I'll have a more equal relationship, and with some, I may serve them by giving them guidance and instructions, because they are newcomers.

Prabhupāda meditations are in a class by themselves, but his letter is a good reminder that "the spiritual master is not alone. He is always with his entourage."

Some of the letters I read also gave advice to disciples not to give up service to the *guru* and his

mission because of quarrels with fellow devotees: "Do not at any time take an attitude of non-cooperation because you may have not agreed with another's point of view." Prabhupāda saw personal disagreement not as an anomaly, but as the normal condition among individuals. Yet one shouldn't get upset about disagreements when they occur. Prabhupāda wrote: "Because there is some fighting or bickering among us, that does not mean that I should go away. . . . I must perform my duty under any circumstance and never think of going away under disgust" (Letter, August 26, 1972).

According to our tendencies, we work within a particular *āśrama* or a particular temple where we find it pleasant to cooperate. But even when the going gets rough, we shouldn't go off alone "and just think about Prabhupāda." Rather, if I'm fortunate enough to become increasingly attracted to thinking of the pastimes and teachings of His Divine Grace, then I can be a useful instrument to serve in troubled waters. I can remind others (and remind myself first) how Prabhupāda wanted us to act and cooperate together: "Your love for me will be tested by how you cooperate after I am gone."

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

5.8



*Boston 1968*

He is going out the flimsy door of the storefront  
The whole storefront is like a pack of cards.  
The teenage hoodlums bang the walls  
and shout to me to come out and fight.  
But since Swamiji has come,  
the neighborhood has been peaceful.

He is going out the door on a Friday night,  
wearing his swami hat.  
After the first night, when he shouted and said,  
"There is no happiness in the material world!"  
not many guests came.  
He sang joyous *kīrtana*,  
didn't recommend TM or yoga  
and laughed at the suggestion  
that Ravindranatha Tagore was a poet.  
He championed celibacy until  
just a few guests were left.

As he walked out the door,  
he looked at me kneeling on the floor,  
and he said, "Can you come on the walk tomorrow?  
Do you have the day off?"

I leaped off the floor.  
"Yes! I have off. I will come. Thank you."

Maybe you have seen him in the video  
wearing a big gray-checked coat, walking  
in Allston, Mass. I asked, "How will you instruct us  
after you leave?"

My memory grows dim as to what he replied.  
(Is that what it means to die? To forget Swamiji?)  
No, how could I forget? He told me,  
"The name of Kṛṣṇa is the same as Kṛṣṇa.  
Do you understand?"

## Beginning the Tenth Canto

### 5.9

All followers of Prabhupāda know that you can meet with him in the best way by hearing the Bhaktivedanta purports. But the quality of our meetings with Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books depends upon ourselves. He is there, deep in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He is ready to give us each full attention. He's not going to be interrupted after one minute by someone coming into the room to divert his attention. He's here now talking of the most essential topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And if you're submissive and listen very closely, he will also address your personal needs. But it requires your rapt attention.

If you think, "I've met him in these purports many, many times; I already know all that they say," then you will be disinclined to be with Prabhupāda. And you'll also be mistaken about the new discoveries that can come by re-reading his books.

With this in mind, I turn to the Tenth Canto, Part One again. Why *choose* any book since it's all a sugar doll? I chose this one because Janmāṣṭami is coming next month, and so if I start reading of Kṛṣṇa's appearance, it will prepare me. But any book by him is equally Prabhupāda. And just as Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned us not to skip over Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and jump to the *rasa-līlā*, we also should not think, "I only want to read the books he wrote in India," or anything like that.

Every part of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is special in its own way. The Tenth Canto is special, but if I had chosen to read the Seventh Canto which contains Prahlāda Mahārāja's chapters, that would have been special too.

As soon as I begin to read, I wonder why I don't do this more often and more carefully. I wonder why I read anything else at all. These are good signs. Shall I make notes as I read? That's up to me. "There are no hard and fast rules."

(1) Śukadeva Gosvāmī began talking about Kṛṣṇa's appearance at the end of the Ninth Canto.

(2) Mahārāja Parikṣit inquired more about Kṛṣṇa, who appeared in the dynasty of the moon god.

(3) The Tenth Canto will be an elaborate description of what was mentioned in one verse at the end of the Ninth Canto, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, known as Lilā-puruṣottama, appeared as the son of Vasudeva, but immediately left His father's home and went to Vṛndāvana to expand His loving relationships with His confidential devotees."

As I read, I am with Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parikṣit, who are the best of Kṛṣṇa's devotees. I am also with all the sages who gathered to hear from Śukadeva, and the whole *paramparā* of Kṛṣṇa devotees and *Bhāgavatam* commentators who are eternally hearing and discussing Kṛṣṇa-līlā. The whole purpose of our participation is to meet Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His abode with His devotees and pastimes and to

render devotional service to Him, beginning with attentive hearing. And all this is conducted in the full presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the latest link to Lord Kṛṣṇa. If you say you are not interested, then you are simply restless and deluded.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

5.10

1

Prabhupāda, they're printing  
37 volumes of your conversations.  
I know you didn't ask for it,  
but your disciples are proud of you—  
all of your talks are Kṛṣṇa conscious perfect.  
How heavy you are with the *mūḍhas*,  
just like your Guru Mahārāja!

And your *Bhāgavatams* are in new editions.  
There is sad news too,  
leaders who fell down,  
temples threatened in law courts,  
diminishing ranks.  
You know this, don't you?  
And who am I to tell you?  
Better you get a full report  
from those who are competent.

But if my radio beam is reaching you—  
and I'm sure it is because you said  
no prayer to the spiritual master goes in vain—  
then please accept my humble obeisances.  
Please bless all your devotees.  
Give us the strength to serve our Lord.  
Please be with us.

2

After I sent my message,  
I relaxed in the evening air  
of Śaraṇāgati wilderness.  
I'm feeling the peace of Prabhupāda  
at least for a little while.

Feel the breeze,  
see the brilliant green in the late-day sun.  
Hear the trees.  
Now go down the hill,  
and pray that he will speak to you in the night  
so you'll wake up with his inspiration  
on your lips, brain and fingertips.  
And now one more message:



Prabhupāda, they will give you a full report,  
 but I wanted to add—  
 the self-sufficiency farms are nice,  
 and after here, with your premission,  
 I'm going to Eastern Europe,  
 where people are very receptive.  
 I won't speak to you of Russia—it's such good news,  
 better you hear it from the people themselves.  
 Prabhupāda, the world  
 is all-blissful to a devotee, isn't it?  
 My anxieties are simply *māyā*  
 and forgetfulness of you.  
 I'm trying to remember you in 1966.  
 It may be foolish,  
 but how can I give up thinking  
 of when you played the one-headed drum?

*Early Morning Meditations on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Vol  
 5.11

I often tell others how wonderful it is to rise  
 very early as recommended in the scriptures. But  
 first, I have to get up from my own bed and wash  
 my face. And I have to come out of dreams. Those  
 dreams have lasted most of the night, and they're  
 not what I want. Once I'm conscious, my dreams  
 seem ridiculous. They leave me groggy and so I  
 come to the *Bhāgavatam* under the lamplight,  
 squinting like an owl who's accustomed to the  
 dark. Moths are attracted to this light and a bug  
 crawls on the back of my neck. But these things can  
 be overcome. I'll try again to hear of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the

origin of all the Viṣṇus who appeared in the dynasty of the Yadus. Let me read Prabhupāda.

The going is a bit rough at first, because the material seems quite technical, regarding the four first expansions of Kṛṣṇa (*catur-vyūha*). But then this sentence, "Although Śukadeva Gosvāmī was the greatest *muni*, he could describe Kṛṣṇa only partially (*aṁśena*) for no one can describe Kṛṣṇa fully." That fit my mood, to hear that there's much, much more to Kṛṣṇa than we can ever understand.

My imperfect reading is intruded with doubts—"Is this the scripture of the Hindus?" "How can it be the only book worth reading?" "How can I attain conviction?" Then I come upon this: "Everyone within this material world . . . beginning from Brahmā down to the insignificant ant, is full of material desires for sense enjoyment . . . but when thus engaged one cannot fully understand the value of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*" (*Bhāg.* 10.1.4, purport). This explains why I doubt; I'm somewhere between Lord Brahmā and the ants.

We have to hear from a pure devotee whose only motive for reciting the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is to serve the Lord. He is giving the right medicine for the conditioned soul (*bhavauṣadha*). But then, "The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to train qualified preachers to recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* throughout the entire world." Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't want me to stay resting at his feet but to tell others ("recite") that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The plan to step again into the river of *Śrīmad-*

*Bhāgavatam* is glorious, but it's beset with difficulties. When we go to bathe in a sacred river, there is often a pebbly bottom or turtles and other rude awakenings or distractions. Every day is not the same. Some mornings are more sublime. But be pleased, spirit soul, that you are off the bed of dreams and here at the river. For an old sot like you, it's a treat to be singing Sanskrit under the lamplight. In today's purport, I find a verse from "*Daśāvatāra-stotra*" and happily croak the *śloka* of Lord Buddha:

*keśava dhr̥ta-buddha-śarīra jaya jagadīśa hare*

I like it so much I try it several times, using the same tune as Prabhupāda.

When you wake, your doubts wake also, and your physical complaints wake—so would you prefer to sleep? No, I prefer *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I'm not a spider or a moth who's only attracted to the lamp or to the flesh. I aspire to be one of those preachers Śrīla Prabhupāda wants to be all over the world, delivering *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I can do that if I work within ISKCON, reading from his books in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class.

Since merely talking about Kṛṣṇa is so pleasing, we can simply imagine how pleasing it is to be rendering service to Kṛṣṇa. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for appearing as the essential teacher and pure devotee. I understand that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is powerful medicine and will counteract sense gratification which pushes us into *bhava-roga*, the cycle of birth and death. I'm taking the medicine, by your

grace.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

5.12

1

I have tried to elicit the cooperation  
of my subconscious, my peaceful body,  
the brain, the mind, and whatever else  
Kapila counts in his 24 elements.

But it's only by Prabhupāda's mercy  
that I can remember him.  
And memory comes from Kṛṣṇa  
who is in my heart.  
Even as I marshal my tiny powers,  
my pen makes *daṇḍavats* at every stroke.

2

*1965, New York City:*

Prabhupāda stepped off the Jaladuta.

Later he said, "I was in anxiety,  
a new man ...didn't know which bus to take."

Think of him

carrying the message of Lord Caitanya,  
"for you people."

He was anxious to catch the bus to Butler, Pa.,  
but much more than that—I can feel it—  
he was anxious to deliver me.

Yes, me too.

I was so anxious by 1965  
that I jumped out a window.

Multiply my story by 3,000  
and that is the anxiety  
of Prabhupāda landing in New York,  
looking around with his compassionate eyes.  
Traveler's Aid helped him.  
He found the right bus.  
He found us.

3

*In the hospital, June 1967:*  
Long hours bed watch.  
He allowed us to massage him.  
A miraculous recovery after a stroke.  
I typed a letter to a doctor in Delhi,  
"Send *ayurvedic* medicine."  
Then Prabhupāda got out of there.  
Gargamuni loves to tell how  
the doctors acted like they owned Swamiji.  
They wanted to test him, inject him with needles  
and the disciples, like the comedy team,  
"Leo Gorcey and the Bowery Boys"  
sprung Swamiji out of Beth Israel Hospital  
while the doctors cursed.

Watching by his bedside,  
skyscrapers outside.  
He doesn't have to talk.  
I'll arrange for fruit  
and I'll keep the doctors away.  
But I can't do it alone—Swamiji,  
I need to be with your followers.

Together we pray to Kṛṣṇa  
that you will stay with us—  
"Our master has not finished his work."  
If you leave we will be like riven clouds.  
But it won't happen,  
there's no question of separation.

Twenty-four years later:  
just tell us where you are  
so we can come to you and tell you  
what we did.

*A Meditation on Massaging Śrīla Prabhupāda* ✓

### 5.13

I may meditate on the time when Prabhupāda allowed me to massage his body. Sitting here now in summertime reminds me of being in India with Prabhupāda.

It's time for the massage and even before you begin, perspiration is dripping down your sides. Prabhupāda is sitting in his *gaṁcha* on a *kuśa* grass mat, waiting for you to begin. His body is small, not very small, but not a big fatty body. You kneel in front of him. Carefully pour a few drops of mustard oil from the bottle onto your hands. You begin massaging his head making those small, almost pinching motions (which he showed you) with your fingers. Prabhupāda is withdrawn, but he occasionally speaks.

After ten minutes, he gives just the slightest indication with his head, and that means you

should now go around his back. You put more mustard oil on your hands. But when you begin to touch him he says, "Too much oil." You put some back into the bottle, and a drop spills. "Don't waste," Prabhupāda says.

Now you're working. You rub as best you can, starting at the bottom of his back where there is light fattiness at the hips. Prabhupāda moves under your hands but you try not to shake him. You work with two hands, all the way up to the horizontal lines at the back of his neck, and then his shoulders again and then the whole back again. The back takes the longest time. It's not up to you to decide how long to massage, and you don't want to be a quitter. You know you've been a quitter sometimes with the night massage.

— After a while you move to his front and start to do his chest and around the heart. And then you do his belly. Sometimes you use only one hand because it's hard to get at, but two if you can. You do it facing him. Don't rush, take the time to do it as nicely as you can. Then you start on his left shoulder gently massaging the slender bicep, massaging all the way down. You pull the fingers straight forward as he showed you. One finger makes a little cracking sound which Prabhupāda likes to happen. But not all of them pop like that. Then you start the other arm and do the same thing working down. You pull the fingers and get one or two pops. Then you start the left leg and work all the way down and do his foot. You remember, "These are the lotus feet of the spiritual master." His foot is pink on the

bottom. Then the other leg, and finally, it's finished.

"All right, " he says and he takes the mustard oil himself and puts a few drops in each nostril, then in his ears, and in his navel. Then he gets up and goes to his bath.

Now is the time to rush and get everything else done before he comes out of the bath. See that his clean clothes are put out on the bed. See that the devotee who is making his lunch has it ready to serve hot on time. But I cannot stay there now. The massage is a gift, an offer of service by Prabhupāda from the past to the present. I asked him for service and he gave me this massage. Now I have to come back to meditation at my desk. But I know that it's possible for Prabhupāda to give me his association just like he did before, by various forms of service.

### *Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

#### **5.14**

*Chicago morning walk, 1975:*

I am not a member of the Rādhā-Dāmodara party,  
but I'm in the library party and we  
can tell Prabhupāda stories  
of standing orders, fifty last week,  
and he's pleased.

Everyone puts their best foot forward,  
to boast,

"Look at me, Prabhupāda, I'm preaching too!"  
What's life for but to catch his eye?



As the sun rises on Lake Michigan,  
TKG and Viṣṇujana Swami line up  
three of their Greyhound buses  
and a hundred men in macho vests stand in rows.  
Prabhupāda walks, bearing his cane  
and takes his place for the photo  
while we watch from a distance  
and rejoin him as soon as possible.

"Is Ekādaśī inauspicious? I heard it was."

Prabhupāda laughs at the idea.

"Can we chant 25 rounds on Ekādaśī?"

Chant all day, he says. Don't stop at 25.

"But what about the preaching?"

No, he says, the preacher must go out.

But for those who have nothing to do,  
they can chant all day.

Everyone is jostling, laughing,  
moving near, walking sideways, walking backwards.

Viśakhā dāśī moves near with her camera.

She asks about women.

What did he say?

We laugh with him,

but next minute turn profound.

What he says is like scripture.

What did he say

on that bright spring morning

walking with great confidence?

Twenty years later remembering this,  
I am still jostling,  
trying to push my way in,  
"Look, Prabhupāda, I remembered in a poem."  
Prabhupāda stops, touches his cane down,  
looks at what I've brought.  
He reads outloud a line of my poem.  
Everyone bursts into laughter.

It's true I never could have  
written such stuff back then.  
But who would have foreseen  
that twenty years would pass?  
Who could have predicted  
that Prabhupāda would "disappear"?  
Who would have guessed what would happen with  
Dhīra Kṛṣṇa dāsa or Tripurāri?  
Who could have said,  
"You will all go separate ways,  
and some who stay will make embarrassing mistakes,  
but you will all be faithful in your own way?"

Now we have his books  
and memories of walking,  
*and his eternal service.*  
We are scattered  
like straws in the sea,  
but whatever he said is true.

## *A Spiritual Archives*

### 5.15

About a year before I met Śrīla Prabhupāda, I was confined to bed for six weeks with my legs in casts. During that time I used to daydream that I was a caretaker in a transcendental archives. I imagined a place where living scriptures were kept and saints and scholars used to go there and meditate on the available wisdom. I wore the robes of a monk. It had an Eastern flair. Now things are much clearer, and I'm no longer seeking impersonal or vague forms of wisdom. I am fixed as a *Bhagavad-gītā* follower, a follower of Prabhupāda, a worshiper of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But when I request Prabhupāda for memories of him, I sometimes think I am going back to the spiritual archives.

The place I am thinking of is like a library, but not your hometown library. In the 42nd Street library in Manhattan, only a limited amount of books are available for open circulation. The major activity is done by scholars who request special materials, and who are given books by library workers. In the New York City library, you fill out a form and hand it in and then wait for the workers to bring you books. But in the spiritual archives as I envision it, you make your request more in the form of meditation, or a prayerful request. It brings to mind the way Lord Brahmā would make requests to Lord Viṣṇu while Brahmā sat on the shore of the milk ocean. In this transcendental library, a request must be made with *bhakti*. It is not

like going to a file cabinet and looking up a book by alphabetical order according to the Dewey Decimal System. I'm looking for memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda. My own memory bank has stored away versions of things Prabhupāda did, and I'm grateful for these. But I'm looking for new threads which may lead to new memories. And so I make requests in the spiritual archives.

I am not the only person seeking in this transcendental archives. There are many devotees, and many of them are poets and writers. Service by writing praises has been done over the centuries by devotees who have praised their spiritual masters, the previous *ācāryas* and the Supreme Lord. So when one enters the transcendental archives there is also a possibility that you may associate with transcendental poets and faithful disciples of *gurus*.

I am also not the only one who is praising Prabhupāda. Even his many initiated disciples are not the only ones who are praising him. There are many Vaiṣṇavas who praise Prabhupāda. Some of them know him in his eternal *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, much Prabhupāda-*kathā* is beyond me, but I'm satisfied in knowing my own relationship. There are many other things about Prabhupāda I would like to know, but I don't even know what to ask. At least I feel it is proper to ask for my own memories which have somehow eluded me over the years.

In the transcendental archives, memories of Prabhupāda are preserved, his *līlā* is here as eternal music, literature, and as eternal pastimes. The portion of Prabhupāda's pastimes that we took part in

is only a very small part, but I request to see it again. Although I don't know what is best for me, I want to hear of his first pastimes in New York in 1966. And I want to know the pastimes with His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda with his disciples in the world.

It is also possible that by association with other devotees and writers in the transcendental archives, I can gain access to their resources and words of praise for the previous *ācāryas*. Even though one can be praising Mādhavācārya or some other spiritual master, because they are Vaiṣṇava poets and scholars, they may share with me their methods of inspiration and their specific usage of words. I can certainly use help. On my own, all I have is a 20th Century American sensibility, meager schooling in the English language, and a struggle with my *sādhana*.

I want to come often to the transcendental library and become more accepted here. At present, I feel a bit lost, like a displaced person looking for his family roots, searching to see where his own name appears with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I know everything is retained there, and one just has to locate it.

As I sit in my allotted place in the archives, waiting to see if my requests will be answered, I do some writing on my own. My spiritual friends like to hear what I am doing. So even before I receive any new information, I'm writing home to my friends, sharing what comes to mind. I hope that my requests will be heard, and that the influence of this place will bring more memories of Prabhupāda. In the meantime, by practice, I may improve.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

5.16

I hoped I might dream of Prabhupāda,  
but I didn't,  
woke unhappy, almost shouting,  
*"What do you want?!"*

Anyway, now that I'm awake,  
I remember  
Prabhupāda on Staten Island.  
What a foolish idea to take him with us  
while we drove around  
looking for a summer cottage  
for him to recuperate in!

We stood on the cold beach facing the ocean.  
He said, "The ocean is the body of Kṛṣṇa."

We looked at the sea  
and tried to sense what he meant,  
pleased that he had said it.

The young man who was driving us,  
just an acquaintance, not a disciple,  
began to shiver and Swamiji said,  
"You are cold."

The man smiled and said, "I'm all right."  
But Swamiji said, "It's foolish to say you're not cold  
when you're actually freezing."

So Swamiji insisted that we go back to the car  
where the man put his jacket on.

And I remember Swamiji had to pass water,  
so he went apart from us and squatted on the ground.  
There's even a photo of Swamiji with Gargamuni,  
sitting outside on the Staten Island ferry.

We never got the cottage.

I've forgotten the rest, but I remember,  
*"The ocean is the body of Kṛṣṇa."*

*Request to Continue Prabhupāda Meditations*

5.17

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

Please let me always fight the doubts. Although I know there is an advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness where one is not troubled by them, I can foresee doubts coming to give me trouble right up until the last moments. But if I have strength of purpose I'll be able to defeat them.

In a similar way, I cannot ask you to spare me from heat or cold or bodily ailments, or hunger and thirst, although advanced devotees and *yogīs* can transcend these. I may also transcend them by tolerance and by not stopping my devotional service unto you, even when surrounded by the pressures of the material nature.

↪ I want to fight for life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I request you to make me your soldier. I have the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda to follow and other stalwart devotees such as Mahārāja Parikṣit, who were not hampered even by impending death. As a *kṣatriya* king and a great devotee, Mahārāja Parikṣit was fearless, but he too prayed for the protection of the Supreme Lord, both in this life and in whatever future lives he would have to take in the material world.

I pray that if I should again take my birth in the material world I will have complete attachment to the un-

limited Lord Kṛṣṇa, association with  
His devotees and friendly relations  
with all living beings.

—*Bhāg.* 1.19.16

Please give me presence of mind to consider myself your servant in this life and in the future. Give me shelter in devotional service and conviction to work in your mission to help others.

When I prayerfully read and write, I feel the strength of your lordships. But I also see myself surrounded by dangers at every step. I am therefore in a situation where prayer is my only recourse. And prayer is best enacted by chanting and hearing the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

For these reasons I desire to go on with the *Prabhupāda Meditations*. I have been striving to do them in a concentrated way, but soon I will have to take up other duties. Please allow me to continue to think and speak and write in this way, wherever I go, as long as I have life. Please broaden my concept of Prabhupāda meditation, and allow me to focus on the memories, pastimes and teachings given by my spiritual master.

On Mahārāja Parikṣit's meditation it is said:

Mahārāja Parikṣit sat down firmly on the banks of the Ganges to concentrate his mind in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, rejecting all other practices of self-realization, because transcendental loving service to Kṛṣṇa is the greatest



superseding all other methods.

—*Bhāg.* 1.19.5

Mahārāja Parikṣit was cursed to die within seven days—whereas my life *appears* to be of longer duration, and my duty is to remain active and involved in the world of preaching. But I dare to compare myself to Mahārāja Parikṣit because it is the intention of Vyāsadeva and Śrīla Prabhupāda that everyone see themselves as one who is "just about to die." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Everyone is a dying man, either very shortly or after one hundred years. The duration of life is immaterial, but the duty of a dying man is important."

So by thinking of Kṛṣṇa and remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'm sure to be protected from all forms of *māyā* and even from death—if you will just sanction my request and grant me the strength to continue. The odds are actually in my favor *if* I turn to you, because Kṛṣṇa is far more powerful than *māyā*: "This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto me can easily cross beyond it" (*Bg.* 7.14).

Why should I doubt that you will carry me through? Why should I fear that I will exhaust the telling of the pastimes and memories and teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda? Even when I seem to lose vigor, you pick me up and reveal to me new pastimes and interesting ways to remember Śrīla Prabhupāda, and to speak for the pleasure of the devotees.

By writing this letter I wish to remain in the fight against all forces opposed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But since I am not courageous or capable, I request you to give me the wherewithal to endure in spiritual consciousness. The way of the saints and sages is clearly marked by them by their triumphant teachings and writings. They have left the undoubtable conclusion that one should engage oneself in constant chanting and hearing of the Lord's activities, and this will assure one of the direct association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the killer of innumerable demons and the vanquisher of time.

We who come after the sages have only to follow their indications. The Lord has also provided a spiritual master to guide us. And because it is a very bad and dangerous age, Kṛṣṇa has sent a glorious spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is just like a Goloka cowherd boy, to gather up thousands of cows and calves and bring them easily and peacefully into Kṛṣṇa's abode. Please bless us to follow you, and to know that your protection is always at hand.

## *PART SIX*

"Swami, How They Love You"

6.1

In the late 1960s, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrivals into New York was featured in the *New York Daily News*. They published several photos of devotees surrounding Swamiji at the airport, offering him garlands and dancing joyfully. The headline was, "Swami, How They Love You." Although it was a pun on the Al Jolson song, "Swanee, How I Love You," the phrase, "Swami, How They Love You" captured the essence. Even the *News* reporter saw the *bhakti*.

This was one of the main features of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the early years—devotees loving Swamiji. You can see it in a photo which was included in an early edition of *Īsopaniṣad*. It shows devotees running down Second Avenue in the middle of the road, barefooted and completely unrestrained. Some of the men are bare-chested, with their *japa* beads bouncing around their necks. The girls in *sarīs* are like the descriptions of the *gopīs*, who were in such a rush that they didn't comb their hair properly or put their earrings on in the right position. Swamiji had just arrived at 26 Second Avenue and these devotees are about a block away, north of the storefront. They're all running south, towards him. Nandakiśora is there, Patita Uddhārana, Madhusūdana's wife and others. Whatever you may say about that photo, you can't say they were unenthusiastic on catching sight of Swamiji.

Some of the young girls became so effusive in

praising Prabhupāda that he restrained them. They used to scream and sigh during his lectures when he reached over to drink water or if he made a facial expression while describing Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, or if he did almost *anything*. So one day Prabhupāda told Brahmānanda to tell the girls (these were several high school girls, Indira, Ekayāṇī, Kañchanbala and Lilāśuka) that they should be more sober in the presence of the spiritual master.

Overflowing affection for Prabhupāda wasn't expressed only in emotional displays, but in a willingness to do whatever he asked, and a complete trust in him. Jayādvaita Swami points this out in explaining how the devotees accepted whatever appeared in Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā* manuscript, even though it was typed with many errors. One of the mistakes the typist made was to state that there was a "planet of trees," whereas Prabhupāda actually intended, "The planet of the *p tris*, or forefathers." Jayādvaita Mahārāja commented that when the devotees saw this, their reaction was, "A planet of trees? Far out! Well it must be, if the Swami says so." Of course, we shouldn't accept typing mistakes, but acceptance of whatever the Swami says is the core of the *guru*-disciple relationship. Whatever Vyāsa-deva says or whatever Prabhupāda says, we accept. So is it a planet of trees or a planet of *p tris*? One statement is a mistake and one is the truth, but all we wanted to know was what the Swami actually said. Otherwise, to us, either statement was equally possible or equally impossible.

In trying to express just what it was like to

idolize Prabhupāda and be with him, one of his disciples used the expression, "We were like little chipmunks in front of him." This is a laughable image, but it describes in part what we were like. We were very excited and worshipable in our *darśana* with Prabhupāda.

Everyone was satisfied with whatever he did. During one of Prabhupāda's visits to Boston, Patita Uddhārana gave him a gift-wrapped box and said, "This is from my mother for you." Prabhupāda opened it and unfolded a first-class white sweater. Prabhupāda said, "Here, you may take it," and he gave it back to his disciple.

"Oh no, Swamiji," said Patita Uddhārana, "it's for you."

Prabhupāda insisted on giving him the sweater and everyone loved the gesture. When we remember these things decades later, it's like a healthful massage. A Vaiṣṇava lives philosophically and also by the heart.

### *Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

#### 6.2

*L.A., 1969:*

Walking out of his room, he stopped  
before a crude painting of Kṛṣṇa being dragged  
through the Vṛndāvana mud,  
as He hung onto the tail  
of a frightened calf.

Kṛṣṇa was in His yard and  
the nearby *gopīs* watched the fun.

Prabhupāda said, "For the atheist, God comes as death,  
but we see Kṛṣṇa in loving pastimes."

scared to hell! I just tried to keep alive, that's all." Similarly, if we were not in good consciousness when we were with Prabhupāda, we're not able to leave out our own pains when we give our impressions of him.

→ Aside from physical illness, other blockages may come, such as homesickness or false ego. With these human limitations in mind, let me attempt to tell some cloudy memories of days when I was a greenhorn in India, in the association of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had many things on his mind, including complicated land purchases, money deals and bank exchanges. Devotees like Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, Jayapātaka Mahārāja, Gargamuni Mahārāja, Tejyas Prabhu and others were able to relate to him in all these details. But an American *sannyāsī* just coming for a visit wasn't able to comprehend it all. You longed for more relatable moments with your spiritual master when he would speak the philosophy which gave you so much relief of the heart, or when you could talk with him personally about simple things. When you were with Prabhupāda in your homeland, America, you were more relaxed for observing him with your mind and senses. In a country where you couldn't speak the language, and you didn't know your way around, the tendency was to feel foreign or homesick. Whenever there was direct contact with Prabhupāda, he broke through all those barriers and that was very nice. Godbrothers would also help, by speaking on Kṛṣṇa conscious topics or Prabhupāda

topics which were transcendental to time and place.

These strained occasions were also good for learning. To be in Prabhupāda's presence was not just for your enjoyment; the main thing was to serve him. But when the strain was too great, then you especially treasured those moments when Prabhupāda inspired you to overcome physical difficulties, political difficulties, or the pain of not feeling very useful to your spiritual master. The memorable moment would help you to keep going, such as riding in a car with him, or when he noticed you or called you in to ask how you were doing. Sometimes Prabhupāda also indicated that he knew that it was difficult for you in a foreign place, and he tried to help you through. Sometimes he reminded you not to be so attached to your own nation and habits. He didn't give a lot of coddling.

My attempt for simple and pure perception of Śrīla Prabhupāda was particularly obscured near the end of the time when I was his personal servant in 1974. I contracted a series of physical illness, and at the same time, my mind was disturbed because I wanted to leave his personal service and go out and preach on his behalf. It reached a low point for me in Bombay, and then Prabhupāda decided to go on a European tour. My devotee friends predicted that this tour would cheer me up, because I was tired of the heat and sickness in India.

But once we started traveling, I develop a case of jaundice; my head turned yellow and I had to lie down in the room next to Prabhupāda. I couldn't do my service and I couldn't go on the morning



walk. And then I caught a cold. One time in Germany I began to massage Prabhupāda and as soon as I touched his back he said, "Oh, your hands are very hot. You have a fever. Go lie down." I went to the door, found the nearest devotee, taught him quickly how to give the massage, and then I went and laid down on the floor in the other room. For weeks I couldn't shake the diseases, either jaundice, a cold, and then a big boil.

Before that, when I made my first visit to India to be Prabhupāda's secretary, I had a similar bout with illness. I felt so exhausted and ill that I couldn't even stand up. All I could do was lie down on the floor in my "office" just outside his room. I was supposed to be his visiting GBC secretary and so I was located with a few of my belongings outside his door, to screen guests and type letters. But all I could do was stretch out in that space, because there was nowhere else in the temple to lie down. When Prabhupāda came out for his evening lecture, there I was, an unpleasant sight. All I could do was sit up and bow down, but stay in my place. Prabhupāda saw me and then walked off with the devotees into the temple, while I stayed flat on my back. I was half-unconscious during his evening program of *kīrtana* and lecture. When it was over, Prabhupāda came back through the hall with his entourage walking in my direction. Again I managed to sit up, bow down and then collapse after he had passed. This lasted for several days.

At times like that you feel particularly grateful to devotees who reach forward and make friendly

contact. A humorous remark about your condition, with a touch of kindness, or seeing that you get medicine, makes all the difference.

Prabhupāda was compassionate about the sufferings of his disciples. One time while defining the twenty-six qualities of a devotee, he said that kindness should be expressed by sympathy for fellow devotees who are sick. But of course, Prabhupāda had to continue, as long as he had his own health, in active service. He couldn't sit like a nurse at the bedside of each of his disciples, who seemed to get sick, one after another. He felt empathy for us, but he had to carry on. I saw this during my illness on Prabhupāda's European tour. In Rome when I was lying down, Prabhupāda would come in and out of his room and see me lying there. After one occasion like that, Bhagavān dāsa came to me and said, "Prabhupāda just said that if you don't get well, then when he travels to Geneva, he's going to leave you here."

I groaned, "Oh no," and tried to immediately act as if I wasn't sick.


As Prabhupāda began one morning walk in Rome, he noticed me sniffing beside him. I was unprepared for the chilly European climate; I had only rubber thongs for shoes, and no sweater or hat. Prabhupāda looked my way and said, "Oh, you're not sufficiently covered."

I replied, "I'm all right."

Prabhupāda said, "No, you're not all right."

On one occasion I was in extreme physical duress, yet somehow or other I felt very blissful

about it because I was with Prabhupāda. This was also in Calcutta during my brief stint as temporary secretary in 1973. I went with Prabhupāda and a few other devotees into the inner-city of Calcutta to do a home program. We drove to a poor section of town that was so dense with foot traffic and oxen traffic and *rikshaw* traffic and cars, that our car had to go very slowly. On this particular night, I had a terrible headache, which was probably connected with the oncoming sickness which later floored me. As soon as we reached the man's home and sat down in a simple room, Prabhupāda turned to me and asked me to lead the *kīrtana*. Although my head was banging away, I felt very happy to be with him and that he had asked me to sing. My mind and senses were reeling, thinking, "This is hell!" but I also felt lighthearted to sing Hare Kṛṣṇa and "hang in there." I thought that the pain probably couldn't get any worse than it was, and here I was with Prabhupāda. And after all, "I'm not this body." That was a rare occasion for me, when I was hurting and physically frustrated, but not sorry for myself.

 The best example of tolerance is Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. He always did his service despite illness. Sometimes he was not able to sit up or speak into his dictaphone or talk with people, but the moment he was able to do so, he would resume his service. And at all times, he remained Kṛṣṇa conscious with a strong desire to be active. Prabhupāda never coddled himself. It might even be said that he shortened his life by so much work. One time when he met with Yogi Bhajana, the *yogī*

asked, "How is your health?" Prabhupāda replied, "I'm not feeling well." Yogi Bhajana said, "Yeah, you're carrying a very heavy load." I thought that was a nice recognition of what Prabhupāda was doing and the reason why he had physical maladies. He was carrying a heavy load.

If any of us live until our eighties, we will have a better idea of what Prabhupāda was going through. He used to mention in his lectures some of the pains of old age, "When you are an old man, there are so many complaints." He knew firsthand what the complaints were, rheumatism and so on, but they didn't stop him. Prabhupāda endured the austerities personally, and recommended it for his disciples. He wrote to Yamunā dāśī in 1968:

Physically and mentally we may be disturbed sometimes, but we have to stand erect on the spiritual platform. I may inform you in this connection that I am at the present moment physically unfit; I am having always a buzzing sound in my brain. I cannot sleep soundly at night, but still I am working because I try to be in my position of spiritual platform. I hope you shall try to understand me right, and do the needful.

—Letter, January 15, 1968

When Prabhupāda received a letter from Jai Govinda dāsa, who described how he had under-

gone a difficult trip from India to Germany, Prabhupāda sympathized and also approved of tolerance.

. . . But do not mind this trouble, because you underwent it for Kṛṣṇa's sake. I was on the sea for one month and ten days continually, and that was a horrible account. Perhaps you have read it in my diary which you collected in Vṛndavana. So let us forget our past difficulties and in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if anyone faces difficulties, it is considered as blessings, because without tapasya, or voluntarily accepting some inconveniences nobody can realize the Transcendence.

—Letter, May 8, 1968

It is one thing to endure the troubles and understand they are for your purification. But when you are personally with Prabhupāda, it becomes a great annoyance and frustration that you cannot serve him nicely. Nothing can be more embarrassing than to have to lie on the floor when Prabhupāda comes out of his room, and not join him for his lecture in the temple room. You think, "Here I am, a clot in his vision." We're supposed to be the dog of the spiritual master, but the dog whom Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura speaks of is a healthy dog who stops demons from bothering the pure devotee, and

accepts scraps from his master. A healthy dog is useful, but nobody likes a sick dog.

I have portrayed myself as helpless in the grips of *prakṛti*, but sometimes it was laziness and indulgence which prevented me from serving nicely in times of difficulty. I know I failed, for example, to be a selfless servant during the time of Prabhupāda's evening massage.

For evening massage, Prabhupāda would lie down on his bed ready to take rest for the night. He would close his eyes and appear to rest. This was not a signal to the masseur that he should also doze off. But that was hard to avoid, because you had done a long day's work and you also wanted to rest. It appeared that Prabhupāda was sleeping, breathing slowly and heavily. You might think, "I guess that's it, he is asleep for the night, so I'll go take rest." But that was usually not the case. Prabhupāda wanted you to continue the massage until a certain point when he was ready to dismiss you, and then he would say, "Go take rest." At that point, he would turn over and sleep for the night. But it wasn't up to you to determine *when*. My mind would be crying out that I should go and take rest, or I might allow myself to get drowsy. Sometimes Prabhupāda would notice it and tell me to go take rest. I don't think I ever said, "Prabhupāda, I want to take rest. I can't do this anymore," but my thoughts were like that.

And that is why, when some of us who were with Prabhupāda, try to remember him, we come up with blanks. Or we come up with painful re-

membrances of what we were doing when we were with Prabhupāda. If one was able to overcome the austerities and serve Prabhupāda nicely, then Kṛṣṇa would be pleased. That's the most important thing—not our own memories, but how Kṛṣṇa remembers what we did. We pray He will forgive us for our transgressions against Śrīla Prabhupāda. Surely Kṛṣṇa knows that even when our minds were raging and our bodies failing, we really did desire to serve His pure devotee.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

**6.4**

*Summer 1966:*

*Don't reject the wisps of the past.*

I once met Swamiji alone on the street,  
going to his apartment.

I was so new he called me "Steve."

Up the stairs. He gets his key out

Opens the door and we both go in.

No one else is around.

"I want to become a trustee," I say,  
referring to a plan he had mentioned:

For forty dollars a month you would get  
privileges in his society, books, etc.

It sounded good,

so I paid a month down.

I think he gave me a receipt.  
He was wearing an American sweatshirt  
of red or peach color  
and he pulled it over his head.  
I noticed his protruding belly.  
He sat at his place.  
I was shy and ready to leave.  
Then he said, "You are a young man,  
you will live a long time.  
I am an old man, I won't live as long.  
So you should use your life for Kṛṣṇa consciousness."  
It was too much for me to hear.  
People I knew didn't talk about death.  
So I said, "Just because you're older doesn't mean  
that you won't live longer than me."  
"That's in unusual cases," he said,  
"but normally a youngman outlives an old man."

And so I became a trustee,  
and had an exchange  
with this very unusual, saintly person  
who brought the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*  
and the brick-colored *Bhāgavatam*  
and his "Society" for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda, do I make too much  
of one barely remembered moment?  
Or do I make too little of it?  
I don't know if I'll live as long as you did.  
Will I be able to give myself to Kṛṣṇa  
and to others, as you did?  
That's what you are waiting to see:  
it's what you asked me to do  
the day I paid forty dollars  
and became a trustee.



## *The Ideal Place for Prabhupāda Meditation*

### 6.5

It is natural to desire a peaceful place for practicing meditation, but in Kali-yuga it is increasingly difficult to find it. Therefore, if we learn to always meditate on Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, we may remain peaceful wherever we live.

Vedic literature recommends a sanctified place for the practicing transcendentalist. Lord Kṛṣṇa advises in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that one should "live alone in a secluded place and should always carefully control his mind." This advice is given specifically for one who practices *dhyana-yoga*, but it is also applicable to the pure Vaiṣṇava, even if he does not practice the eight-fold yoga system. For example, Śrīla Vyāsadeva chose to live in a cottage which was ideal for his composition of Vedic literature under the order of the Supreme Lord. Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī describes Vyāsa's place:

On the western bank of the river  
Sarasvati, which is intimately relat-  
ed with the *Vedas*, there is a cottage  
for meditation at Śamyāprāsa which enlivens  
the transcendental activities of the sages.

—*Bhāg.* 1.7.2

In his purport, Prabhupāda states, "For spiritual advancement of knowledge, a suitable place and atmosphere are definitely required." Similarly, when Nārada Muni first received the revelation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's form, he did it while practicing medi-

tation in a secluded place. Nārada, although a young boy, had wandered through many places, including "flourishing metropolises, towns, villages, animal farms . . . ." But when he stopped for his meditation, it was in a quiet place! "Under the shadow of a banyan tree in an uninhabited forest I began to meditate upon the Supersoul situated within, using my intelligence, as I had learned from liberated souls" (*Bhāg.* 1.6.15).

As the physical location can be an aid to meditation, even more important is the condition of one's mind. And in Kali-yuga it also becomes increasingly difficult to keep the mind peaceful. If one manages to find the time and place for peaceful thought, one's mind will disturb him. Perhaps Nārada might have been in a disturbed condition because he had just experienced the death of his mother. Vyāsadeva admits that he was dissatisfied in his mind, even though he had written so many Vedic scriptures. But in both cases, these great devotees transcended their personal difficulties by practice of devotional service. Therefore, the most important thing is practicing to transcend one's mental and physical situation.

Gajendra, the king of the elephants, tried to enjoy himself in ideal material surroundings, in a beautiful lake in the mountains, but he was attacked there by a crocodile. Even while in the grips of the crocodile's jaws, Gajendra practiced concentrated prayer upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead. According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Gajendra "fixed his mind in his heart with perfect

intelligence and chanted a *mantra* which he had learned in his previous birth" (*Bhāg.* 8.3.1). His spiritual trance is described as *samādhāya mano hṛdi*, which indicates the perfection of focus on the Supreme Truth. And yet Gajendra achieved it under excruciatingly painful physical and mental conditions. This is not general instruction for aspiring meditators, that they should throw themselves into the jaws of a beast, but it often happens like that in this dangerous material world. If we try to wait until we find the best place and until our minds quiet down like "a lamp in a windless place," we may never be able to approach Kṛṣṇa meditation or Prabhupāda meditation.

Arjuna is the *bhakta* who is most often recommended as the example to follow. Arjuna was a *kṣatriya*, and so he had to think of Kṛṣṇa even while on the battlefield. He was willing to give up the *kṣatriya*'s duties in order to think of Kṛṣṇa in a secluded place, but Lord Kṛṣṇa insisted that Arjuna stay on the battlefield. The real point is not that we should enlist in the army, as if that is the ideal occupation for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But we should learn to serve Kṛṣṇa and think of Him favorably, without making strenuous endeavors to find a new occupation or a new place for living. Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna as follows:

Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kṛṣṇa and at the same time carry out your pre-

scribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt.

—Bg. 8.7

✎ In the Introduction to *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The Lord also tells Arjuna that he need not give up his occupation, but while he is engaged in his occupation, he should remember Kṛṣṇa (*mām anusmara*). If he doesn't practice remembering Kṛṣṇa while he is struggling for existence, then it will not be possible for him to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death." The recommended path for all persons in all situations is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and take time daily to hear *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And this should be done in the spirit of love, even while engaged in material duties.

Śrīla Prabhupāda directed his followers to stay active in the world, in order to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His own spiritual master, Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, preferred to remain in cities like Bombay and Calcutta because the city offered the best opportunity to meet people, give classes in *śāstra*, and spread the holy names. Now the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spread all over the world, and if one is too disturbed to live in the city, one can live on a Kṛṣṇa conscious farm. Śrīla Prabhupāda has spread the jurisdiction of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so widely that one can confidently practice *bhakti-yoga* both in the city as well

as in the country—and one can practice in one's own home with one's own family, as well as in the *āśrama* of devotees in the ISKCON temple.

In all cases, one should be directed by the spiritual master. When we choose to live in a certain country or city or farm or home, with the aim to please the Lord and the pure devotee, the place where we live becomes designated as *prabhu-datta-deśa*. This means the place given by the spiritual master for executing our spiritual duties. A preacher can identify with a metropolis like New York City or London, and always think how to give the people of that area the benefit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Or one may identify with a patch of land for development of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, by cow protection and living from the produce of the land. And certainly one can choose as *prabhu-datta-deśa* one of the holy *dhāmas* of this planet, such as Vṛndāvana or Māyāpura. In each case, the ideal circumstance is created by dedicating oneself to a place for the pleasure of the spiritual master.

We do not have to duplicate or imitate either Śrīla Vyāsadeva in his cottage surrounded by berries, or Arjuna on a battlefield surrounded by fighting warriors. We have to simply start serving Kṛṣṇa wherever we are without being too fickle. We can't wait to change our material body because it happens to be giving us trouble, and similarly, sometimes we can't change our locality. We have to learn to transcend and somehow find peace and quiet, at least within ourselves, on a daily basis. By ardent efforts to serve Kṛṣṇa according to the nine-fold prac-

tice of *bhakti-yoga*, the mind becomes peaceful. And so the advice Kṛṣṇa gives to the *yogī*—to find a peaceful, secluded place—can be attained by everyone, when the mind is fixed in Prabhupāda meditation.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

6.6

1

*Boston 1968:*

I remember him sitting on the dais  
in the Allston storefront.

I stood beside him

showing him an ad Rāyarāma had done.

Swamiji held the page and read,

"This man has changed the consciousness of the world."

He was silent as if he would say nothing at all.

But then he said, "The spiritual master  
should not be called a man."

At first I thought, "Swamiji, he's made  
such a bold claim on your behalf—*the man who  
changed the consciousness of the world!*"

But Swamiji made it clear:

call him a self-realized soul

or a pure devotee,

or the representative of Kṛṣṇa.

The ad was wrong

and so was the mentality behind it.

*Boston 1969:*

That bearded Don came to see him,  
the one who lived in the storefront  
at 26 Second Avenue.

I told Prabhupāda, "He's here,"  
but he didn't want to see him.

"He's hopeless," Prabhupāda said.

"Prabhupāda wants to see you."

I went at once.

When I got there he said, "Look."

He stood by the window.

(I was ashamed that we gave him  
such a chilly, bare room

and that we couldn't afford to pay the fuel bill,

and that a window was broken

and that the front lawn was yellow.)

He pointed to a paint bucket overflowing with rain.

"You shouldn't be wasteful."

"No!" I cried, anxious to defend myself.

"It's just water. It *looks* green."

I was the temple president,  
not some fool who would leave  
a can of paint in the rain.

But Prabhupāda said, "Anyway,

I just wanted to say,

*don't be wasteful.*"

Why couldn't I listen as a faithful child  
without interrupting him,  
and receive his full blessing?  
Did you think he was mistaken  
when he called for you—  
the very thing your heart ached for?  
Be grateful that he thought of you,  
even as a wasteful fool.

*Worship of Śrīla Prabhupāda by Listening* ✓  
6.7

Śrīla Prabhupāda's daily lecture was the main opportunity for everyone to associate with him in person. In a large temple like Los Angeles, that meant about four hundred devotees would gather in the morning, and even the ladies on the balcony could see what color sweater Prabhupāda was wearing, how he smiled and how he looked down gravely at the *Bhāgavatam* page. Everyone could get everything they wanted by attending his class. Although Prabhupāda spoke in public halls around the world, he mostly lectured to his disciples in the temple. His lectures were therefore very intimate forums for the spiritual master to speak and for the disciple to hear.

The morning lecture was treated by all devotees as one of the main ways to worship and be with Śrīla Prabhupāda—a grand occasion for *vāpuḥ*. Although Prabhupāda didn't invite pomp, yet he behaved with formality in the morning class. Those who attended knew that it was a serious happening.



↙  
The *Bhāgavatam* volume had to be open for him in the right place, his servant had to bring his eye-glasses and a glass of water. The P.A. system had to be adjusted to the perfect pitch. The temple president made sure that nothing went wrong to disturb the sacred function. In a sense, it was the major reason that Prabhupāda had come to visit the temple. When he went to the Berkeley temple and sat on the *vyāsāsana* with its lions on the armrests, he told the devotees that he was traveling to the centers in order to give his disciples inspiration. And the main way he did that was by lecturing in the morning. It was the only time when everyone could sit down and hear him speak.

Hearing in the class was a crucial test of how well a disciple was serving Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even if one was an ISKCON leader and therefore entitled to sit up front, if he was not listening during Prabhupāda's lecture, then it would affect him adversely sooner or later. According to the *bhakti* science, no one could neglect hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda personally felt that lecturing was an important way for him to associate with us. He took it as the duty of the Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*. We think of Śrīla Prabhupāda as a liberated person who has no duties, and yet the *jīvan-mukta* acts dutifully just to set an example. Prabhupāda lectured even when his health was not good, and he was always enthusiastic.

When Prabhupāda lectured, you were aware that you were not hearing just one person, but you

were in the presence of a living *paramparā*. I remember feeling that from the very first times I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda. Once I tried to convey it to one of my Lower East Side friends. I said, "He's not just sitting here now, but what he says is connected and it's going back thousands of years through all the different teachers and *gurus*. It's actually going back to Lord Kṛṣṇa when He first spoke the message, and in fact, it's eternal." As with many things about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I have now come to accept this doctrine as matter-of-fact. But even in the beginning it was a fascinating mystery, and an important reason to go and hear from Swamiji. He was with us at 26 Second Avenue, and yet he was repeating an ageless message. All the persons he spoke of, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Nārada Muni, Lord Brahmā and so on, were all living when he spoke. And because of his faithfulness to the *paramparā*, the truth that Prabhupāda spoke had not changed with the fashions and speculations of philosophers over the centuries. When Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke authoritatively and with devotion about Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parikṣit or Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, it would actually be happening. By his words he bridged time, and the ancient past became a present reality.

Devotees sometimes wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked, "What about the gaps in the disciplic succession?" The gap they usually referred to was the long time period between Vyāsadeva and his disciple, Mādhvācārya. Prabhupāda replied that these gaps were not very important. One can gain

all disciplic information from the latest link in *paramparā*. Prabhupāda said you can "pick up from the *ācārya* all the past information," and "everything is there."

Prabhupāda's presentation was so real that it immediately worked. By lecturing first in America and then worldwide, he single-handedly spread the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement. As he sometimes said, "Whatever change you see in my disciples, it has all come about by hearing." No one else accomplished this for Prabhupāda, but he did it himself. Many *svāmīs* and professors had spoken from *Bhagavad-gītā*, but no one ever became a devotee of Kṛṣṇa by hearing their lectures.

When we think of Prabhupāda's disciples before they met him, and unfortunately, when we see how many of his disciples returned to their ways after his disappearance—it shows us how powerful Prabhupāda was in attracting and holding souls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, by their listening to his words. Although young men and women coming to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda in the '60s and '70s had been through many trips and disappointments, when they came in contact with Śrīla Prabhupāda they sat like sages at his lotus feet and became satisfied. In effect, we thought, "Whatever else is going on in this phony, crazy world, this person, Prabhupāda, is real and I'm going to be his devotee and serve Kṛṣṇa."

It's wrong to think that Prabhupāda is no longer here to give the daily class. We can still hear him although it may take more effort on our parts than

when Prabhupāda was favoring us by his glances and personal presence as he spoke. Becoming "fixed up" in Kṛṣṇa consciousness still occurs by hearing, either from Śrīla Prabhupāda or his representatives in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. Prabhupāda didn't intend that the *paramparā* of speaking should stop with himself. When a guest asked Prabhupāda, "How does one achieve this divine consciousness that you're speaking of?" Prabhupāda replied, "Come and hear from us. We are having classes every morning at seven-thirty. Come and participate with the others." Śrīla Prabhupāda offered himself in that way. And because he is transcendental, he continues to live in sound.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

6.8

*Bombay 1974:*

Juhu Beach again.

The walk with him is a sanctuary for my troubled mind.

We don't like it when Dr. Patel comes,  
but what can be done?

At least the doctor's group isn't there  
in the first moments before sunrise.

We walk with Prabhupāda through the streets.

A few lights. A few dogs.

Somebody washing out his throat.

Some hogs.

But you're with Prabhupāda.

You've got the heavy tape recorder  
on a strap around your shoulder  
and the microphone in your hand.

Somebody asks a question.  
 Prabhupāda says, "The result of *sukṛti*  
 is to take birth in America . . .  
 but now they come to India for spiritual enlightenment."  
 What was the quality of our listening?  
 How deep did it go?  
 I can't answer.  
 And yet we were there.  
 We never thought, "It is an ordinary thing  
 to walk with him,  
 and hear him speak philosophy."

Here they come:  
 Dr. Patel has white pants and white *kūrta*,  
 Dr. Sar, white shorts, white shirt and  
 he carries a short stick like a riding crop.  
 We disciples sigh.

And so the laughter and assertions of Hinduism  
 and "I think," as we join the walkers  
 along the beach,  
 as the sky lightens from purple to blue.

Prabhupāda is not going to be defeated,  
 but you hate to hear them  
 cut him off in speech  
 and contradict him—  
 "Sir, you may say what you like, but we  
 are not Māyāvādīs and we worship all of India's saints,  
 and you shouldn't speak so strongly . . ."

But the walk is freedom.  
Prabhupāda fills your mind  
with *siddhānta* for Kṛṣṇa  
and your affection for him flows.  
*If nothing else, you think,  
I still love the walks.*

Golden sun on Prabhupāda's body,  
his saffron is bright and soft like sun,  
and the beach is also golden  
and the space of sky and sea.

"What is the time?" Prabhupāda asks.  
We turn back, not to be late  
for Rādhā-Rasabihari's *darśana*  
in the metal-roofed temple shack.  
Talking Kṛṣṇa consciousness all the way.

And now I must arrange for breakfast;  
don't forget the ginger today.

### *A Kṛṣṇa Conscious Commentary on the Bible* 6.9

During Prabhupāda's 1974 tour of Europe, he engaged in extensive dialogue with representatives of Christianity. In Rome and Paris he saw great cathedrals and wherever he went he met the influence of Christian culture. Śrīla Prabhupāda took a positive approach towards this. When he saw that some big churches were vacant, he suggested, "Give us the churches for our use. We will keep the pic-

tures of Jesus on the altar along with our own Deities and we will chant the names of God. What is your objection?"

One of the main thrusts of Prabhupāda's teachings in Christian countries, was to challenge whether anyone was actually following the teachings of Jesus Christ. On this point he was similar to the Christian philosopher, Kierkegaard, who said that throughout Christendom, one could hardly find a genuine follower of Christ. Prabhupāda offered a twofold friendly suggestion to Christians: (1) they should follow the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," and (2) they should chant the holy names of God, using the name Christ or Kristos.

When Prabhupāda was in Paris he called me into his room with another idea that was stimulated by his meeting with Christian culture. He said that he was thinking that a Kṛṣṇa conscious commentary might be written on the *Bible*. At first I thought he meant *he* was going to write it.

I said, "That could be done, Prabhupāda, because as you say, Christianity is also God consciousness. And Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the *summum bonum* of God consciousness, so therefore, Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be able to give a good commentary on the *Bible*. Are you going to do that?"

Prabhupāda said, "I thought you could do it. You can write something and bring it to me and I'll give you some guidelines."

This was an exciting offer for me in several ways. At that time, I hardly thought much of Christianity in a serious way, and neither did I

think of myself as a former Christian. But my main hankering, even if I wasn't aware of it always, was to do some writing. So this was a most juicy writing assignment. "A Kṛṣṇa conscious commentary on the *Bible*. Wow!" It seemed like just the thing to pick up unenthusiastic spirits. New life for the boy in the outer office.

"Sure, Prabhupāda," I said, "I'll get to work on it right away. What portion of the *Bible* should I take?"

Prabhupāda left the details up to me. First I had to obtain a *Bible*, which wasn't difficult. I managed to find time alone in my little cubbyhole, and began making a commentary from one of the Gospels. I treated it just as I would a section of the *Bhāgavatam* for an essay in *Back to Godhead* magazine. I started with the description of the angel announcing to Mary, the mother of Jesus, that she was to become the sanctified mother of the Son of God. I quoted from the Gospel and then made commentary on the assumption that Jesus Christ's birth was spiritual. He was not born like an ordinary soul forced from *karma*, and produced by the sexual combination of a conditioned mother and father. He was sent by God, and therefore he only *appeared* to be the child of Mary and Joseph. I made reference to the appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa as described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: Kṛṣṇa appeared in the heart of Vasudeva and then was transferred to Devakī. I simply repeated what Prabhupāda said about Kṛṣṇa or Lord Caitanya, and applied it to Jesus Christ as a pure devotee.



When I had typed up about three pages I took it in to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He didn't read it immediately, but looked at it later along with some of his mail. He made a few notes in the margins and then we sat and discussed it. Prabhupāda's written comments did not contain any criticism of what I had done, but they were further comments about the nature of divine birth. Prabhupāda seemed satisfied with the initial installment and he asked me to continue.

I was really getting into a big writing project. I saw the whole *Bible* as material for an exciting Kṛṣṇa conscious treatise. I started writing a second installment and had it mostly done and ready to bring in to Prabhupāda. But then he called me in to talk more about it.

Prabhupāda said, "Do you think that this kind of commentary will actually convince anyone?"

"I don't know, Prabhupāda," I said.

He said, "I don't think the Christians will accept what we say. Whatever we say, they will argue against it. Therefore I don't think there's any use in continuing this. What do you think?"

"All right, Prabhupāda. I agree with whatever you say."

And that was it, finished. I felt a bit disappointed that the project was dropped but relieved that we didn't get too far into something which Prabhupāda thought wasn't going to be worthwhile. And I saw his point, that although it was fun to do, and it was a bona fide application of the Bhaktivedanta philosophy, yet the Christians for whom it was intended would not accept it. For me, the enduring

and interesting point of this episode, is that Prabhupāda didn't question the validity of treating Jesus as a spiritual person. He mostly turned it down because he didn't think it would be accepted.


*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

6.10

*June 1974:*

Riding on the *ratha* cart in San Francisco,  
my last day as his traveling servant.  
This memory came and I wanted to reject it,  
but if you do that it's not good.  
Make the best of what comes.  
Any moment spent in the presence of the pure devotee  
can free you from birth and death.

I was in my last days,  
but retained the privilege to ride with him  
and the duties to bring him medicine—  
I crushed a seed with a mortar and pestle  
and mixed it with honey and rice water.  
I'd have to show someone how to do that;  
and how to pack his suitcase.



On this *ratha* cart I was with many *sannyāsīs*,  
and in the middle of the route,  
Prabhupāda asked to get off to pass water.  
I climbed down with him.  
Prabhupāda wearing a knit cap and white sweater,  
a big rose garland, as he descends the steps,  
and you are preceding him  
gritting your teeth because of the boil.  
He went apart,  
and everyone was satisfied to pause  
in Jagannātha's procession.

At the outdoor theater,  
over a powerful sound system, he spoke  
of Ratha-yātrās he had just attended  
in Melbourne and Chicago  
and he ended his speech recommending  
that everyone take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness  
and save the world!  
Then he held out his arms like Lord Caitanya.  
Devotees and onlookers were leaping and crying  
as his rose garland broke  
and he threw the flowers!

You went back to the car with him  
and rode to an apartment.  
Many men were in his room,  
but he had to call for Jayānanda.

A day or two later, he flew to L.A.  
There he let me go.  
But two nights in a row,  
after I was discharged,  
he asked to see me.  
When I entered his room he said, "Close the curtains,"  
which was a duty done by his servant.  
And he asked me,  
"How do you like your new service?"  
—just to let me know that he held no hard feelings,  
and that I shouldn't be anxious.  
Two nights in a row, well past 9:00 P.M.,  
I went up to him, closed the curtains,  
and talked a few minutes  
about the library party.

## *Śrīla Prabhupāda's Ecumenical Message*

### **6.11**

In the friendly and humble spirit of a Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled throughout the world encouraging everyone he met to chant the holy names of God, and to practice the essence of religion as contained in all scriptures, "Obey God's laws."

Prabhupāda's uncompromising presentation of God consciousness may have disturbed some religionists, but if one carefully thinks about it, Prabhupāda was only saying what was also said by the founders of the great religions. Those who wished to water down or change basic religious principles may have been disturbed by Śrīla Prabhupāda's insistence, but not those who were true seekers on the path of God consciousness.

Prabhupāda once humorously compared himself to a karate expert who knew how to push on the weak spot of the opponent. He was not a belligerent preacher looking for a fight, but he did see major weaknesses or hypocrisy in many who claimed to be following religion, and so he would always press on those points to bring out the falsity.

Since he traveled extensively in Western countries which were at least nominally Christian, he regularly confronted Christians as to why they did not obey the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Śrīla Prabhupāda saw this as a preliminary teaching and therefore it was a great defect if a follower neglected it. Prabhupāda's emphasis on this particular point should also indicate to us that "Thou shalt

not kill" (known as *ahimsā* in the *Vedas*) has an important place within the Kṛṣṇa conscious *siddhānta*. Śrīla Prabhupāda was immediately interested whether a religionist followed *ahimsā* or, "Thou shalt not kill." He saw this failure to do so as disobedience to God and religion. By pointing to their failure in this one commandment, Prabhupāda dismantled their whole position.

The commandment that Prabhupāda referred to as one of the Ten Commandments, has been interpreted by theologians to mean, "Thou shalt not murder." In other words, they say it applies to human beings but not the killing of animals. Śrīla Prabhupāda insisted, however, that in the original language of the *Bible*, the word is "kill" and it should certainly apply to animals. He was not interested in semantic quibbling about Aramic and Greek translation; he saw the attempts to change the word *kill* to *murder* as an excuse by those interested in sense gratification and ignorant of the laws of God.

Going beyond text-quoting, Prabhupāda would appeal to reason. If a religionist has faith that there is a soul within the human, then by what logic does he claim that the soul is not in the animal? The animal shows all the basic symptoms of life as it exists in the human being. The fact that an animal is a less intelligent creature should not make him a candidate for killing by the human being who should be his protector.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching points out a major embarrassment and a major lack in these world re-

ligions which don't practice *ahimsā* towards animals. We should see Prabhupāda's confrontation in that way, and not think of it as Hinduism or think that he was just finding a way to trip up a priest in order to defeat him in debate. Prabhupāda was trying to be helpful.

If I may be allowed to express Prabhupāda's thinking in my own words, I see him addressing a Christian priest like this: "First of all, you've got a huge discrepancy in your behavior as religious people. That is, you're killing the cows and eating them. How can you say anything about the mercy of God and understanding the soul, if you persist in doing this? So right away, you should clean this up." Prabhupāda would speak like that, whether it was with a Cardinal, a Bishop, a priest or a committed member of the laity.

Especially when he was introduced to a clergyman, the talk would usually begin with polite exchanges. The clergyman might ask Prabhupāda, "When have you come to this country? What is the basis of your movement? How many centers do you have? What are the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?" Prabhupāda would be pleased to reply to all these questions. But after a few minutes he would say, "But one thing is . . ." And we who had witnessed similar encounters between Prabhupāda and churchmen would think, "Here it comes."

"But one thing . . ." Prabhupāda would say. "Jesus Christ says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' But I see all over the world in/so many Christian countries, they're killing animals like anything. Why is that?"

Prabhupāda would throw up a roadblock. Some people are surprised when they hear recordings of Prabhupāda speaking like this or when they read his published conversations. Modern religionists are interested in ecumenical exchanges, but here is Śrīla Prabhupāda bringing out this roadblock. Wasn't he interested in ecumenism?

The fact is, Prabhupāda was a universal teacher and the philosophy he represented is one that embraces love of God wherever it appears. Prabhupāda would often lecture on the *Bhāgavatam* verse, *sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharma yato bhaktir adhokṣaje*. In giving the purport of that verse, Prabhupāda would say that real religion is not to be a member of a particular sect such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or Buddhism. But real religion is *bhakti*, or love of God. That is the highest spiritual truth—uninterrupted, unmotivated devotional service. But if a person is indulging in meat-eating and animal slaughter, then he is blocking his practice of *bhakti*. Obedience is the first symptom of love for God, who teaches us not to kill. God teaches not to kill, yet we kill. So how can there be *bhakti*? Śrīla Prabhupāda therefore wanted to deepen the ecumenical exchange. He could not pretend to agree with the discrepancies of those who claim to be religionists, but who did not obey God's commandment.

Sometimes clergymen or religion professors wanted to jump over Prabhupāda's roadblock and go on to discuss higher aspects of spirituality. But Prabhupāda insisted that one cannot have a talk on

*bhakti* unless he understands and practices "Thou shalt not kill." There is an interesting exchange on this point in a conversation Prabhupāda had with professors of religion in Los Angeles. Prabhupāda said that one could not attain love of God as long as he indulged in killing God's creatures. The scholars seemed a bit taken aback by Prabhupāda's insistence on this, as if he were stuck on the Hindu doctrine of cow protection. They wanted to talk about *bhakti*, and so one of them said, "Are you saying that love means not to kill? Is that your definition of love?" The professor's implication was that Prabhupāda's definition was not a very satisfactory definition. But Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, not killing is one of the items of love." When Prabhupāda said this, it became clear, if you thought about it, that one who professes to love must *at least* be unwilling to kill. How can I begin to consider a friendly loving exchange with someone if I'm not certain of whether he intends to kill me? Love presupposes nonviolence. Therefore, how can there be love for God if one is thinking of killing God's creatures?

It may be that Prabhupāda's influence on Christianity will grow, and that those who are actually interested in love of God will come to accept his basic point. More of them may become vegetarians, and perhaps understand that even vegetarianism is only a beginning step. They may come to understand that all food should be offered to God, the Supreme Person. The Christian teachings contain the means to do this—they have the right prayers and many of them are ready to surrender and serve.



They would also get great pleasure out of it spiritually, by offering their food to God and not eating the remnants of innocent animals. There is also the example of Jesus Christ who is always described as very gentle and loving. How can we gain the peaceable kingdom of God if God's own followers are killers?

The day may come when Prabhupāda's influence will grow and people will start to study his conversations with priests and religionists and better understand what he was saying. Then they will not think of him as belligerent for bringing up his roadblock, "But one thing . . ." They will come to understand why he asked that embarrassing question again and again.

The Catholic Church has become very much aware that religious practice is not conducted only in a cloister. The Church emphasizes that love of God has to be shown in relation to one's neighbor and in relation to the problems of the world. The Church makes strong statements nowadays about poverty and inequality. There cannot be God consciousness without social justice. The church is such a strong force in the world that political analysts say that the fall of the Eastern European Communist bloc could never have taken place without the influence of the Catholic Church in those countries. The Church has shown its leadership in responding to human suffering, but now they have to also respond to the suffering animals.

Now there is a growing animal rights movement in many countries of the world. Repre-

sentatives of Christianity are going to be asked, "What is the Church's position towards killing animals?" But unfortunately, the Church has only a barbaric and inadequate reply. Up to now they have replied, "What's the problem? Yes, we kill animals. That's what they were made for. They don't have a soul. It's all right to eat them." And this is the same Church that wants to end injustice and suffering in the world—and which expects God's mercy at the time of death.

So Prabhupāda was hammering away at this point in his meetings in the 1970s, although few responded to him. We hope one day his voice will be heard. Then, those who are interested in ecumenical exchanges will understand that Prabhupāda was actually in the forefront of ecumenism. He was pointing out the major difficulty, but once that difficulty is removed, there can be deeper exchanges and spiritually-minded people can begin to understand how all religions are one.

### *Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

#### 6.12

*Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana:*

A bursting *kīrtana* with Gurukṛpa leading.

Light from the wall chandeliers.

Black floor, dark room.

Prabhupāda in the far corner of the dark room  
in the early morning,  
wearing a wool hat that someone gave him.

I had thought Second Avenue was his home.  
But now I have traveled to Vṛndāvana.  
I see I am just a tiny, conceited Westerner.  
India seems harsh, but Prabhupāda is at home.  
I realize better how kind he was  
to make a home on the Lower East Side.  
New York was also special for him;  
he went there for his Guru Mahārāja.  
He loved us there in the spiritual kindergarten,  
"Swami in Hippieland."  
Prabhupāda said, "My home is at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet,"  
so that means *everywhere*,  
but Vṛndāvana is special—  
he has friends here like Bhagatjī,  
and Akiñcana dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja.  
They speak to him in Hindi, or is it Bengali?

Does he see me too?  
I crawl forward.  
What do I mean to say?  
Thank you, Prabhupāda, for bringing us here  
and walking with us in the morning on the road.  
You are sometimes frightening  
to unsundered disciples.  
Will you look at me with anger and say,  
"Become temple president in New Delhi,"  
(or something impossible like that?)  
I'm a fool in your presence,  
especially in Vṛndāvana.

## *The Savior of the Mlecchas*

### 6.13

I cannot think of a single instance of Prabhupāda making me or anyone else feel inferior on the basis of our birth in *mleccha* nations. He never said or even implied, "Don't forget, you're an untouchable." He wasn't like that.

But many caste *brāhmaṇas*, and even some who follow the Vaiṣṇava religion in India, thought that Prabhupāda's Western disciples could not really be accepted into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda would defend us, "They were *mlecchas*, but they've given it up." And he said this on the basis of the *śāstra*. Śrīla Prabhupāda received this viewpoint from his own Guru Mahārāja and it is also the compassionate message of the Vedic scriptures. Lord Caitanya also said that people all over the world should be given the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa says everyone is eligible: *kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda pulkaśā*, all tribal people, even those who may be considered inferior races by material standards, are all eligible to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who is a *paṇḍita* sees everyone equally, whether he is a *brāhmaṇa* or a dog-eater—because the real person is not the body; he's the soul. Everyone can become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Prabhupāda took this śāstric conclusion as an essential part of his preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura advised Prabhupāda to preach in the West, so how could he do it unless the *mlecchas* were eligible to become Vaiṣṇavas? Prabhupāda never hesitated or seemed uncomfortable in

carrying out this message, because he was a *mahātmā*. His thinking was broad-minded, whereas the other thinking—that because people were raised as meat-eaters, they have a permanent disability in this lifetime—is crippled thinking. Prabhupāda's attitude was, "As soon as you give it up, you can be forgiven." In confidential exchanges with his disciples he might remind us that we were *ex-mlecchas* and had some bad habits, but he always assured us that our saving grace was to practice the rules and regulations and to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Then there would be no taint based on material designation.

An example of Prabhupāda defending his disciples is in his stance against prejudice in Jagannātha Puri, Orissa. Because the caretakers of the temple do not allow Westerners to enter, even if they have been practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness for their whole lives, Śrīla Prabhupāda preferred not to personally go into the temple. I was present with him when he stayed for a few days in a beach hotel at Jagannātha Puri. A friendly *paṇḍita* from the Jagannātha temple came and sang the Jagannātha śloka, "*Jagannātha svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me.*" When he finished singing, Prabhupāda said, "Yes, you are praying Jagannātha Svāmī, please reveal Yourself to me. So why do you not let these Western boys see Jagannātha Svāmī? They're practicing Vaiṣṇavism exactly in all details." As Prabhupāda said these words, there we were at his feet, me, Gargamuni, Gurukṛpā, all *ex-mlecchas* from America. And here was our patron saint, Śrīla Prabhupāda, going out on a limb and saying, "What's the

problem? Why can't they see Lord Jagannātha?" We were all very touched by seeing Prabhupāda speak up for us. He went on to tell the *paṇḍita* that these boys have a yearning to see the Lord. "They want to see Jagannātha," said Prabhupāda, "and your prayer says, 'Jagannātha, I want to see You,' so why don't you let them see Him? Of course, if you don't we don't mind. We have our own temples where Jagannātha is installed."

Sometimes *brāhmaṇas* or *svāmīs* in India officially accept the Western devotees, but with some restraints and conditions. In Śrīla Prabhupāda, there was no tinge like that. He never drew back from contact with us in the mood of, "Yes, you're devotees, but I don't want to eat with you," or, "I admit that you're a devotee but I don't want to get too close to you." Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed the *mlecchas* to massage and to cook for him.

He even called Australia "The land of the *mlecchas*." But once the residents of *mleccha-deśa* took to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Prabhupāda was pleased to call upon Lord Kṛṣṇa to appear in the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to be worshiped by the Australian devotees of ISKCON.

Sometimes when we made blunders, especially those involving undecanliness, Prabhupāda reminded us that we were *ex-mlecchas*. But when he did that it was like a father getting heavy with his son, reminding him of his place. When it came down to it, Prabhupāda never had disdain for us, but saw us as sanctified by the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One time when I was Prabhupāda's secretary he

called for his Sanskrit secretary, Paṇḍitjī (born Paul Sherbow of Massachusetts, U.S.A.) to come and give him a massage. Paṇḍitjī was busy writing and so called back, "Just a minute, Prabhupāda! I've got to go wash my hands."

Prabhupāda called back, "There's no question of washing your hands. You're sanctified. You're a →Vaiṣṇava."

This tolerance by Prabhupāda was not a liberal side issue, but it was a main conviction—that his followers were sanctified because of the power of the holy name. We are spirit souls, not this body.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda was well aware that we might again fall into our former bad habits and so he warned us about this. In a farewell address to the devotees in Los Angeles he said, "You're all fortunate. *Now remain fortunate! Don't become unfortunate.*" If we became unfortunate, we would backslide into being *mlecchas*, meat-eaters, takers of drugs, illicit sex-mongers and gamblers.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also told us not to have respect for those who were practicing *mlecchas* habits, although we should be polite toward everyone. A practicing Vaiṣṇava should not eat with the meat-eaters or have intimate exchanges of mind with them. By such association one would become contaminated. A devotee remains protected from contamination as long as he practices the rules and regulations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. From this position of strength, a preacher may mix with the non-devotees. But the association of the *mleccha* is dangerous. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda created a Kṛṣṇa

conscious society so that his devotees would not have to associate with the dirty habits of the *mlecchas*.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

6.14

*New Dvārakā*

Waiting outside his building in the morning.

"*Jaya Prabhupāda!*"—everyone bows down.

He gets into the car.

Riding through the streets,

Prabhupāda is in the back seat.

He hums, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya* . . .

Condemns the rascaldom.

Asks why his disciples sold the building in Hawai'i.

Walking on the beach,

you can't always hear him because of the surf.

"Just see. The small crab takes shelter in the ocean."

Yadubara wants to film him all day.

Brahmānanda says, "Don't bother, because his real life is what he speaks.

Otherwise, there's not much to see."

The filmmaker doesn't agree.

"Does Prabhupāda mind if I film?"

At least one time he remarked,

"They are always filming,"

as if he thought his activities weren't worth it.



There's a film of Prabhupāda in his room  
at 26 Second Avenue.  
You see his hand gestures,  
and he's murmuring *japa* the whole time,  
wearing a turtleneck jersey  
and a cardigan sweater.  
I'd rather see that film  
than one of Abraham Lincoln  
speaking the Gettysburg Address.

Look closer.  
On the beach his cane is poking holes,  
his canvas shoes leave prints.  
For his breakfast, hot cereal with fruits;  
you carry it up on a silver tray,  
for him.

*More on Hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda*  
**6.15**

Throughout the ages, speaking and hearing about Kṛṣṇa has always been one of the most important and relishable ways for Vaiṣṇavas to associate together. Devotees hold *kīrtanas*, they share *prasādam*, and almost more than anything else, they like to enlighten one another in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we are therefore interested in meditations on Śrīla Prabhupāda, one of the best ways to achieve it is to attend his lectures and hear what he says.

He enters the temple a few moments before the *darśana* of the Deities. To the accompaniment of the

"Govindam" song, he offers his full *daṇḍavats* before each of the altars, and then stands to slowly and lovingly greet the Deities. Śrīla Prabhupāda then goes to his *vyāsāsana*, and joins in the *kīrtana*. After that, his servant hands him his reading spectacles and another devotee opens the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and places it before Śrīla Prabhupāda on the bookstand. Prabhupāda sings, "Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava"—and only "Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava"—for a few minutes. One of the devotees leads recitation of the Sanskrit and then Prabhupāda begins to lecture on the verse.

He dips into the stream of *paramparā*. Although the devotees are somewhat familiar with the subject matter, no one can ever guess exactly where and how Śrīla Prabhupāda will start again. His speaking is as good as the speaking of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and it is up to his audience to be like Mahārāja Parikṣit and listen with rapt attention.

Prabhupāda was aware that he was battling against outer forces for the attention of his audience, and that the minds of conditioned souls are flickering. One can hear this battle as the background to his lectures of 1966 given at 26 Second Avenue. It was not unusual for a Bowery bum or rowdy to step in the open doorway and hurl insults even while Śrīla Prabhupāda was lecturing. Prabhupāda was not phased by these interruptions. He would immediately say to an intruder, "Don't disturb, don't disturb." Sometimes teenagers would stop outside and turn up the volume on their radios, pouring Latin American music into the store-

front.

➤ Śrīla Prabhupāda would incorporate these interruptions into his lecture. In one class, while explaining how conditioned souls are beset with the threefold miseries, he said, "Just like we are trying to speak. We are not harming anyone, causing any problem, but still, some people come and they cause disturbances." Śrīla Prabhupāda was determined and unperturbed, but he was also vulnerable. When a few teenagers stayed longer than usual at the doorway making noise, Prabhupāda said, "Where do they come from? They are disturbing." And then he laughed with resignation. On another occasions when young girls were screaming outside, Prabhupāda softly moaned, "Oh," and it seemed to pain his heart. He turned to his audience for help, "Can you not stop them?"

Prabhupāda was sensitive to the smallest noise, but when there was nothing else to do, he simply raised his voice and went on with his talk. He was able to keep his mind fixed on his lecture even though the disturbances continued. (Hear the constant fireworks during his lectures in Bombay.)

When there are no disturbances from other living entities, then we suffer from the distractions from our own minds. We attend Prabhupāda's class, but our minds continue to scheme about other matters and other persons. Despite mental distractions, devotees tried to hear Prabhupāda, because we knew that this was sacred ground. He might even notice if we were too inattentive or sleepy, and he might comment on it.

Prabhupāda's lecture was the place where you could hear pure philosophy, no matter who you were. If you could listen you would find immediate satisfaction in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We also knew that if we surrendered to hearing, Prabhupāda would never mislead us in the slightest way. His lectures were devoid of any political motivations or mundane thoughts and implications. Nowadays, devotees sometimes complain that the lecturers are "too motivated." But everyone trusted that Prabhupāda's only motivation was to attract us to Kṛṣṇa and to the performance of devotional service. When he did make references to contemporary persons and situations, it was only to illustrate the *siddhānta*.

So you sat and tried your best, looking up to him, hearing and appreciating him and following the flow of his logic and śāstric reference; watching the way he moves his hands and the way he looks down his reading spectacles to the book in front of him. Sometimes he closes his eyes and then looks up suddenly into the faces of his audience.

Prabhupāda knew it was a struggle for his audiences to hear, and he sometimes tried to prod them. In a 1966 lecture Prabhupāda said, "So these are very sublime topics. I'm sure if you will just give your attention you will be benefitted undoubtedly." Another time he paused and said, "Of course, people are not interested in these topics." He laughed in sympathy with the ordinary mind. "They are just dry topics," he said, "simply dry topics." Aside from occasional remarks to catch attention, Prabhupāda

assumed that his disciples would listen and, at any rate, he continued to deliver the message because his Guru Mahārāja wanted him to do it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures were spontaneous. One night, after a lecture in Hyderabad when I had managed to pay attention, I told Prabhupāda afterwards that I had appreciated his talk. I said, "Your lecture had so much symmetry to it." Prabhupāda replied, "Did it? It's not my speaking. It is Kṛṣṇa who is speaking." Prabhupada's talks were spontaneous, but that did not mean they were not well-formed. They were spontaneously well-formed. If I have to give a lecture before devotees, I will think and worry about it; I will have to choose a topic and verse to speak on. But Prabhupāda spoke without any preparation except for his constant Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and very rarely did he choose any topic beforehand, except the topics that were raised by the verse and purport of the *Bhāgavatam* or *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Prabhupāda's lectures seemed to follow a free form, and if one listens superficially he may not detect any form. But there is always a structural beginning, middle and end to his talks. He liked to follow a train of association, and so discussion of a word like "*Bharat-varṣa*" might lead to telling us how the word "India" was given by the foreigners and that might led to talk about how invaders attempted to ruin India—and then he would go on to something else. At his own speed, he (and Kṛṣṇa) would finally gather together the relevant topics and bring them to a satisfactory conclusion. These

recorded talks can now be studied and the more carefully one looks at them, one will appreciate them in all respects.

Keeping in mind that Śrīla Prabhupāda was lecturing when he was eighty years old, he was a dramatic orator. He did not jump around or shout, and yet he was colorful and emphatic. He sat cross-legged in the way of Vaiṣṇava speakers, and so his bodily language was mostly with his hands. He also "spoke" by widening his eyes as well as raising his voice, which was never monotone. When Prabhupāda wanted to emphasize an idea like "peace," he wouldn't merely *say* the word, but he would say, "Take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and you will feel *peace*." He would express it with his whole being, and if you listened well, it would enter your being too.

Although I've tried to indicate that there was something special about actually being there while Prabhupāda spoke, and that it can't be entirely captured by tape recordings or videos, I don't claim that people who didn't meet Prabhupāda are missing out. We may have to give more of ourselves nowadays than we did when we sat back and enjoyed his presence, but Prabhupāda continues to reciprocate through the sound vibration. It is the same as hearing from Kṛṣṇa through the *Bhagavad-gītā* thousands of years after His conversation on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. By recalling some of what it was like to personally hear from Prabhupāda, we are trying to stimulate interest in attentive hearing of Prabhupāda even today.

*Prabhupāda Smaraṇam*

6.16

At my desk in the Dorchester welfare office.  
They won't let me out  
to see clients because they know  
I'll just go home to the storefront.  
But I'm a wealthy man—  
I mark the calendar with three and a half weeks  
of Swamiji in Boston.  
I get to see him every night.

I ride with him in a taxi.  
I'm in the radio studio with Uncle Jay  
and Swamiji suddenly walks in  
around 3 A.M., all clean  
and tilaked and beautiful, and he  
begins to talk on the radio.

Range anywhere to be with him.  
Some memories are just a wisp,  
like being in the taxi,  
a flash of dialogue,  
but it's in my bones,  
and in Kṛṣṇa's account books,  
and will be with me when I die.

He is walking into a TV studio in New York...  
As he sits in the front seat of a car  
racing to Forth Worth, Texas,  
he eats 2, and then 3 cookies with icing.  
These little things are meaningful  
because of the big thing—he  
is the king of devotees,  
the teacher for all humankind.  
When *he* eats 3 cookies,  
it's something!

One time in Allston,  
he was coming back from his walk  
and I watched from a third story window.  
A local tough guy who disliked us,  
walked up to Swamiji with no recognition  
and I was afraid that he would insult  
the pure devotee, but he didn't.  
The moment they came closest to each other,  
Swamiji was slowly stepping up  
from the road onto the curb,  
assisted by his cane.

This big guy, who lived with his girlfriend named "Red,"  
and who threatened to break down my door  
if I ever tried to hold *kīrtana* in my apartment—  
came close to Swamiji, and ignored him,  
treating him like an unimportant person.  
I saw it all helplessly from above.  
But then I called out, "Prabhupāda!"  
Me and my wife were looking  
down out of the same window.  
"Prabhupāda!" He didn't see us at first  
but looked up,  
saw us and shook his head, sideways  
with approval.  
I thought, "Maybe it's wrong  
that we are both looking out of the same window."  
But he approved, and we were happy to see him.  
As soon as we could,  
we ran downstairs to be with him again.



Śrīla Prabhupāda is the Energy  
6.17

Therefore, since the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is full of Vāsudeva-kathā, anyone who hears, anyone who joins the movement and anyone who preaches will be purified.

—Bhāg. 10.1.16, purport

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the energy behind thousands of energetic persons who are now hearing, joining and preaching in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Even those who are initiating disciples into Kṛṣṇa consciousness fully acknowledge that their power-source is Śrīla Prabhupāda.

No one knew Kṛṣṇa, and no one preached His holy names. Now thousands do. No one knew Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and no one knew Bhagavad-gītā. As It Is. Now thousands know.

One may say that "thousands" isn't such a great number and that "millions" are interested in other persons and movements. Let them say that. But it is very wonderful that in Kali-yuga, when religion is declining sharply, a wave of pure God consciousness has come. It is like a new sun rising from India and going around the world, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is the one who is causing this to happen, just as millenia ago, King Priyavrata caused the sun to go around the earth.

The old science of *bhakti-yoga* is in new dress. It is present in all countries of the world. This brings to mind the "Motto" printed in Śrīla Prabhupāda's

first *Bhāgavatam* volume from India:

It is admitted even in higher circles that in fact, the whole root and background of Indian culture is wrapped in Sanskrit language. And we know that the foreign invaders of India could break down some of the monumental architectural work in India, but they were unable to break up the perfect ideals of human civilization so far kept hidden with the Sanskrit language of Vedic wisdom.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the mature, ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic literature. We have just begun to give it rendered into English with broader outlook and it is the duty of the leading Indians to spread the culture all over the world at this momentous hour of need.

The invaders could not break up the Sanskrit wisdom, but neither did the *ācāryas* distribute it with the broader outlook. It stayed in India because the *ācāryas* were saving the work of distributing it worldwide for someone to do at the right time. Once a disciple asked Śrīla Prabhupāda why Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura didn't spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness outside India. Prabhupāda replied that Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura could have done it because he was an empowered Vaiṣṇava, but he saved it for "us."

Let us therefore accept and praise the one who was sent by the previous *ācāryas*. Let us welcome and embrace the Vedic knowledge he brings.

Not everyone accepts Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So what? Should we wait until it becomes more fashionable and "normal" and then hear and preach? We may die and be reborn many times before that happens. It doesn't matter that we were not born into this religion. Shall we wait for that? Better not—because I am more likely to be born into an animal species with no religion at all.

When he came to America, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained nicely how Lord Caitanya's movement was a great boon for all people of the world. He explained it without criticizing the good that was being done by existing religions in the West. As Prabhupāda's followers, we should not be arrogant that we have taken up Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but let us not doubt that Kṛṣṇa consciousness belongs everywhere. We are not foreigners to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda has given us *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (no easy task for him), we must beg for the taste of the fruit, and beg for service to Śrīla Prabhupāda which will enable us to appreciate his message.

Let us worship Prabhupāda's Lord Kṛṣṇa. Don't think of Him as Indian or a myth. Our birthright in the West is skepticism, voidism and impersonalism. (And not just the West—India is also a repository of bad religion.) We pray to be spared from the legacy of materialism. Prabhupāda has given strong arguments against atheism in its many forms (such as

materialistic science, reductionistic psychology and philosophical speculation) and his learned followers are helping us to overcome all prejudices against pure theism. Many sincere souls are working on Prabhupāda's account, helping us to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

As we hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and contemplate the brilliant future for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we remain in Prabhupāda's presence. From this viewpoint we can see the quarrels and failures within the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as temporary. The opposition to Kṛṣṇa consciousness will come and go, like fame and infamy in this world. but Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide will not go away. And Śrīla Prabhupāda will always be with us.

The spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not one person's work, but if there is anyone special to thank for it, it is Śrīla Prabhupāda. Lord Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas* who guide the destiny of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, desire that we recognize Prabhupāda, and that is why they saved the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for him. We offer our thanks to him for revealing the truth of Vāsudeva to us every day. We pray to receive Him more openly and to participate in this purifying movement.

### *A Personal Note*

#### **6.18**

As this volume comes to a close, I beg Lord Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda for the strength to continue the practice of Prabhupāda meditations. I wish to always be in touch with the process of praising and

remembering him. I want to worship memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda and uncover more of them. It is clear to me that these memories do not come at my own command, and so I wish to remain receptive and grateful for even the smallest wisp of a memory of Prabhupāda, whenever it comes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized his own communion and connection with his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. In his "Concluding Words" to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

Although according to material vision, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda passed away from this material world on the last day of December 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his *vāñī*, his words. . . . I think that His Divine Grace is always seeing my activities and guiding me within the heart by his words. . . . Spiritual inspiration comes from within the heart, where in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His *paramātmā* feature, is always sitting with all His devotees and associates.

—Cc. *Antya*, Volume 5

Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers may also have immediate communion with him. It is done

through the medium of service and by the realization that Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to guide us and that he is pleased with our activities. We have much work to do on behalf of our spiritual master. He wants us to read the books he has given in order to better understand Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and he wants us to appreciate the importance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the world. He wants us to work in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and to assist in spreading Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana*. He wants us to help maintain the institution he created. The practice of meditation on Śrīla Prabhupāda, as done in this book, by memories and reflections (or as done in one's own way by any follower of Prabhupāda), is also a part of the ongoing service to His Divine Grace.

I must never think that my task is completed—the work of active service or the work of remembrance of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. How can I claim that I have completed the course? Can I say that my *anarthas* are all removed now? Have I come to the perfection in *japa*? Do I fully realize my eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in a particular *rasa*? Am I free of the lowest types of desire for sense gratification as well as its subtle manifestations. Have I preached and worked to my fullest capacities so that I am now ready to retire? The answer to all these questions is no, I've hardly begun. ←

The art of remembering past association with Śrīla Prabhupāda is another vital practice which I have not developed to the fullest. My taking the

time and effort to learn this art and to continue it regularly, is not a sign of weakness or sense gratification. Rather, Prabhupāda-*smaraṇam* is a *bhakti* practice, and a vital one, a part of my here-and-now connection to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Previously I had neglected this practice, and allowed memories to deteriorate and vanish. Now I have taken the time to remember, and I hope to continue it. I also want to be more eager to hear the remembrances of other Prabhupāda followers and their realizations of Prabhupāda's all-pervading presence in the lives of the devotees within the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement.

When Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja came to the end of his immortal *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, he said, "My words are like disciples of the spiritual master and they could only dance by the mercy of the spiritual master." When the words, which are like puppets, do not receive any more energy from their directors, then they become exhausted and stop their dance. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja was able to say this with satisfaction, after completing his long and blissful scripture on the pastimes and teachings of Lord Caitanya. I cannot compare myself to him, and so I plead to my *gurus* to please allow my words to dance further. In my case, it is not a wonderful dance, just the simple "Swami step" that Prabhupāda taught us at 26 Second Avenue. I haven't danced to my fullest satisfaction, and I want to practice more, to improve the steps.

Although Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja wrote a very long book, he also said that his topic had not been ex-

hausted. My topic has also not been depleted although I may sometimes feel a personal exhaustion and inability.

At the risk of sounding greedy, I ask for more mercy to continue the "Swami step" guided by the authorities of *paramparā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he preferred to see books about Kṛṣṇa rather than books about himself. But I think if he sees that books on Prabhupāda enliven the devotees in their connection to ISKCON's founder-*ācārya*, and to the *saṅkīrtana* movement—then he will be pleased.

Aside from this, a devotee can only write what is in his heart. When Rāmānanda Rāya joined Lord Caitanya at Jagannātha Puri, he went straight to see Caitanya Mahāprabhu rather than make the customary visit to the Deity in the temple. When Lord Caitanya asked him why he behaved that way, Rāmānanda Rāya replied:

The legs are like the chariot, and the heart is like the charioteer. Wherever the heart takes the living entity, the living entity is obliged to go. What shall I do? My mind has brought me here. I could not consider first going to Lord Jagannātha's temple.

—Cc. *Madhya*, 11.37-38

What can I do but beg for more mercy to go on remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Trṣṇapriṣa Mahādvādaśī, July 18, 1990  
Śaraṇāgati, B.C.



## GLOSSARY

### A

*ācārya*—a spiritual master who teaches by example

*ahiṁsā*—nonviolence

*ārati*—a ceremony for worshiping the Lord with offerings of food, lamps, fans, flowers, and incense

*arcā-vigraha*—the Deity form of the Lord in the temple

*āśrama*—the four spiritual orders of life: celibate student, householder, retired and renounced life. Also a dwelling place for spiritual shelter.

### B

*bhakta*—a devotee

*bhakti*—devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa

*bhakti-yoga*—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service

*brahmacārī*—a celibate student

*brahmacārīni*—a female celibate student

*brāhmaṇa*—one wise in the *Vedas* who can guide; the first Vedic social order

## C

*caitya-guru*—the Lord in the heart who acts as the spiritual master, directly instructing the living entity

*catur-vyūha*—the quadruple expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa: Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkārṣana, Vāsudeva

## D

*daṇḍavats*—literally, "falling down like a rod"; offering prostrated obeisances

*dhāma*—abode, place of residence, usually referring to the Lord's abode

*dhotī*—a man's lower garment

## G

*Gauḍīya sampradāya*—the chain of spiritual masters coming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

*gr̥hastha*—regulated householder life; the second order of Vedic spiritual life

## H

*harināma*—congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord

## I

*iṣṭa-goṣṭhī*—discussions among Vaiṣṇavas about spiritual topics and the instructions of the spiritual master

## J

*japa*—soft private chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa

## K

Kali-yuga—the Age of Kali, the present age, characterized by quarrel; it is last in the cycle of four ages and began five thousand years ago

*karma*—fruitive action, for which there is always reaction, good or bad

*kīrtana*—chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord

*kūrta*—a simple style of man's shirt extending approximately to mid-thigh

## L

*līlā*—a transcendental "pastime" or activity performed by the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees

## M

*mahātmā*—a "great soul," a broadminded, liberated devotee

*mantra*—a sound vibration that can deliver the mind from illusion

*māyā*—(*mā*-not; *yā*-this), illusion; forgetfulness of one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa

## P

*Paramātmā*—the Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the heart

*paramparā*—the chain of spiritual masters in disciplic succession

*prasādam*—food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa, literally, "Kṛṣṇa's mercy"

## R

Rūpa Gosvāmī—the leader of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, the principle followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

## S

*sabji*—a spiced vegetable dish

*sādhana*—regulated spiritual practices

*sādhū*—a saintly person

*samādhī*—trance, complete absorption in God consciousness

*saṁsāra*—the repeated cycle of birth and death in the material world

*saṅkīrtana*—congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord

*sannyāsī*—a person in the renounced order, the fourth spiritual order in Vedic society

*śāstra*—revealed scripture

*smaraṇam*—devotional remembrance (of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee); one of the nine basic forms of *bhakti-yoga*

## V

*Vṛndāvana*—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa

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