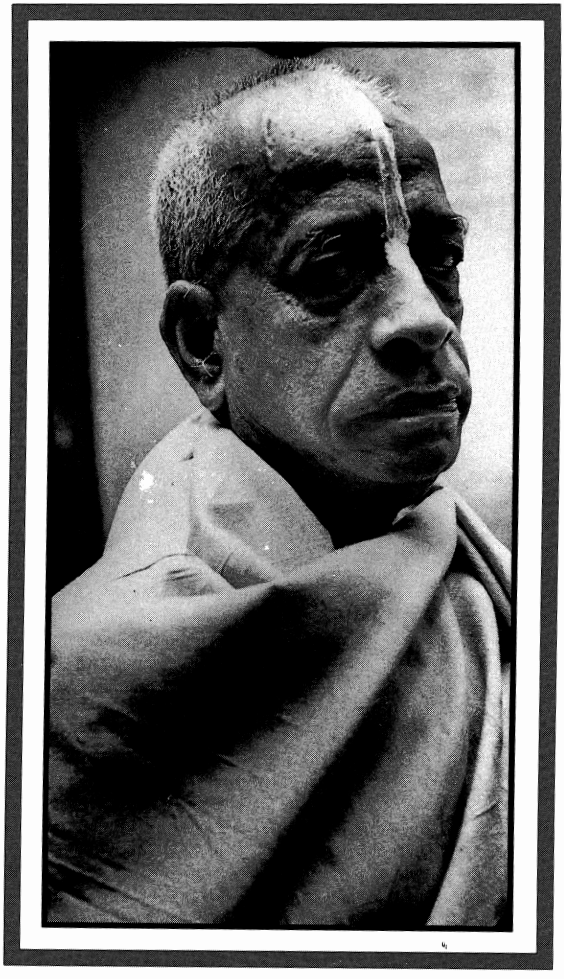


Prabhupāda Meditations IV

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Prabhupāda Meditations
Volume IV

PRABHUPĀDA MEDITATIONS

VOLUME IV

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

GN Press, Inc.

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Only out of His immense compassion does the Personality of Godhead reveal Himself as the spiritual master. Therefore in the dealing of an *ācārya* there are no activities but those of transcendental loving service to the Lord. He is the Supreme Personality of Servitor Godhead. It is worthwhile to take shelter of such a steady devotee, who is called *āśraya-vigraha,* or the manifestation form of the Lord of whom one must take shelter.

—*C.c. Ādi-līlā* 1.46, purport

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Note to the Reader

This volume of *Prabhupāda Meditations* is different than the previous volumes (One and Two) I have published. In Volume Three, I introduced a section called *"Try This . . . "*. I have again composed some little exercises for devotees who wish to use them to help increase their remembrance of Prabhupāda.

In this volume, the format itself has changed. Generally, I divide the material into meditations one or two pages long. As I worked on this volume, though, I found myself in Vṛndāvana and meditating on Prabhupāda in a different way. Therefore, the last section of this book appears more like the actual diary I kept rather than the usual format of distinct, numbered entries.

Finally, I have decided to include a simulated diary I wrote to help myself remember how it actually felt to be with Prabhupāda in 1966 when we knew nothing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although I have interspersed these sections throughout the book, I have set them apart by setting them in a different typeface. Although this diary is not something I actually wrote in 1966, I think it captures the mood of those days nicely and adds something to this book.

Part One



Meditation on Prabhupāda from a bridge
1.1

Here in Wicklow I like to take a walk in the quiet morning countryside and think of Prabhupāda. The houses on this road are close together, but no one sees me because they are all still sleeping. I like to go to a certain bridge. It is a private place, sheltered by tall trees, and loud with rushing water beneath the concrete. I have approached this bridge for two days in a row, thinking, "Let me talk about Prabhupāda when I reach this bridge. Let me speak things that are very personal to me." The water has an almost hypnotic effect, releasing me to say things I don't usually allow to surface. It is the bridge where I tell my secrets.

It's a very tiny bridge, about twelve feet long, with metal rails and cement blocks. It's not that what I have to say is necessarily so sensational, but I have been able to connect with Prabhupāda here.

Prabhupāda is here, just as he is everywhere. Focusing in any place that facilitates remembrance, you can go into the memories of places where you did see Prabhupāda. I think of sensual images when I remember Prabhupāda, say in Māyāpura—the texture of his cloth, the biting smell of the mustard oil during the massage. I think of touching him, or of hearing him speak, even wincing when he reprimanded me. I think of feeling suddenly elated by a humorous remark he made on a walk, or my overall fatigue at competing for Prabhupāda's attention with my Godbrothers. I try to see Prabhupāda in the context of my life too—the whole reality. Living in ISKCON, Prabhupāda.

This bridge has sections of stone blocks cemented together at a good height for leaning on. The rocks are thickly covered with soft, green moss, a comfortable elbow rest. I like to lean and look down into the bubbling stream about twenty feet down and think of my relationship with Prabhupāda. I feel as if I have a little pickax. I throw it down and it bounces off the solid pile of rock burying my memories. Picking at the surface is a start, but I want to mine for more. I am working in that direction. Making that endeavor in itself is enough to bring new meaning to the pictures of Prabhupāda. Even if I can't talk more of Prabhupāda right now, still, I feel closer just by *wanting* to. I am grateful for whatever Prabhupāda sends me . . .

Prabhupāda, I was your servant once in India. The library party had covered most of the U.S. and Europe, and you suggested I come to India and distribute books there. You mentioned it twice. I think you mentioned it the first time when I was massaging you—you said it would be nice. Of course, you were always giving us ideas. You told us that some of the ideas were more like suggestions, that you might suggest something else later. As it turned out, the GBC made a strong request that I become editor-in-chief of *BTG* again. It would have been hard to get out of accepting that position, but perhaps I could have done it by insisting that you had made this suggestion: "Well, Prabhupāda wants me to stay in India and distribute his books. That's more important."

I didn't say that. I started to think of the attractive features of Los Angeles and of working with *BTG*, and I decided to go there. It is another one of the many things that Prabhupāda said that I didn't do.

He once told me to write a book about how things fail without Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I didn't do that either, at least not specifically. But I like to think that I am writing that book one way or another, even though I have not written any one book with that title. Maybe one day I will also be able to fulfill his request to help distribute his books, even though, again, it may not be in such a specific way.

What do we *do* about the different things Prabhupāda asked us to do that we haven't always been able to do? One answer is to take them as suggestions, as he himself said. He mainly wanted us to always be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service in a substantial, productive way. ISKCON is always in a state of flux about what is the best way to preach, but we have that order from Prabhupāda, somehow always to be engaged in his service.

I remember Prabhupāda coming down the stairs in Māyāpura. Devotees were chanting *kīrtana, "Jaya* Prabhupāda." He was majestic in those last years as he walked in the center of all the devotees. But he was also unrelenting when he saw discrepancies. He demanded that things be improved. For example, he didn't like to see dirt around the *dhāma.* He also didn't like it when the *shenai* band concentrated on their musical performance without concentrating on Kṛṣṇa. He was always ready to stop devotees from wasting money and resources and to stop their "trips"—like the devotee who came to Māyāpura to chant all day and live in a tree. Or the devotee who asked Prabhupāda, "There is no *bhajana* here, I want to leave. Please give me your blessings." Prabhupāda was unrelenting in the face of all these challenges.

Prabhupāda went on with his work, and we should go on with ours. Let me think of him in Māyāpura, everywhere, and pray he is accepting my service. I talk too much. Let me get back to work. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda, you can appear anywhere. You can appear here in Ireland as I look down into this stream and think of you in Māyāpura. You are also in my thoughts at Gītā-nāgarī. You went there once, but I wasn't there. I think of you in the spiritual world and in your books. Everything is capable of producing a Prabhupāda "moment." Your clothes, your cane, your shoes, your photos—we save all of these now—they remind us of you. Your existence in your *vāṇī* is mysterious to me, but I have faith that this is a very personal way to connect with you. It's real.

Once again I have hardly scratched the surface. I feel the water bubbling and rushing over the rocks under this bridge is trying to tell me something. I think I don't have time right now to listen, and anyway, I can't seem to hear the creek's message about Prabhupāda. I'll be back tomorrow.

Try this . . .

Wherever you are, you could take a few quiet moments at a particular time of your day to meditate on Prabhupāda. For a worker, it might be on the drive to work; for a mother, it might be after putting the baby down for a nap; for a temple devotee, it might be after cleaning the *pūjārī* room floor each morning. Whoever you are and whatever you

do, can you think of a regular daily time when you could work in a little extra Prabhupāda meditation of your own?

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Noticing Prabhupāda
1.2

One psychologist was talking about the importance of noticing things. If you notice when you get angry, or you notice when you are acting, you can curb these tendencies. He recommended a simple technique of just paying attention to your own breathing and noting how your skin or eyes feel. In order to work deeply, the noticing should be kept very simple. It is not a matter of thinking of concepts, but the primitive act of noticing. When I read of this technique, I thought of applying it to my Prabhupāda meditations. I think it's something anyone can do.

For example, someone pronounces the word "Prabhupāda." You become alert. You don't have to *think* about it. You can just feel, "Prabhupāda's name was just spoken." On another occasion, say you are taking *prasādam* in the association of devotees. Suddenly, you notice that you are among devotees, that the *prasādam* you are eating has been cooked in a particular way, that the child of the couple to your left has a Sanskrit name—everything has been taught to us by Prabhupāda. You may feel this in an overall way, or you may notice particular details. It doesn't require a verbal acknowledgment, but you want to feel the awareness of Prabhupāda in everything you do.

This act of noticing is not intended as a substitute to the more discursive methods of glorifying Prabhupāda with our intelligence and words; but it can supplement our present meditation. Sometimes we are tired of talking, or we realize that words will not be able to capture our experience. Perhaps we are with people who have no interest in Prabhupāda, or we ourselves don't feel inspired enough to speak. At times like this, this "awareness" technique can be fully utilized. We stop in the midst of outward activities, perhaps starting by becoming aware of our own breath, and then turn up the "awareness" volume until we perceive Prabhupāda's blessing and presence.

If we are fortunate to live in a society of devotees, then, whether we "notice" or not, we are regularly being exposed to Prabhupāda's lectures, books, *kīrtanas*, and way of life. Even when we don't actively remember him, we can be assured that our inner self is benefiting by exposure to Prabhupāda. If an iron rod is placed in fire, gradually it will become hotter and hotter, even if only by imperceptible degrees. Prabhupāda used to give the example that a preoccupied airplane passenger may not notice when the plane takes off, but, after a while, he will be surprised to see that he is thousands of feet above the earth. Similarly, even if we sometimes fail to notice the benefit of living in Prabhupāda's shelter, eventually, Prabhupāda will bless us to become more aware.

The scriptures inform us that the association of devotees gives the greatest benefit and is the only solace in this material world. More important than techniques meant to bring us into greater awareness of Prabhupāda is to first situate ourselves

solidly in the association of devotees. In this way, our hearts and minds will automatically fill up with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But when we do become situated, we will want to develop our abilities to remember and love Prabhupāda. We will want to fill our minds only with positive impressions of Prabhupāda's presence in our lives. This will not only help us come closer to Kṛṣṇa, but will give us even greater appreciation for Prabhupāda's other followers. It will help to eradicate envy from our hearts, which in turn will give us a stronger desire to absorb ourselves in Prabhupāda consciousness.

Try this . . .

You might want to practice this technique of noticing small things in your life and how they are connected to Prabhupāda. For instance, right now as you read this, what do you notice in your external surroundings that is there because of Śrīla Prabhupāda? Pictures of Kṛṣṇa? An altar? Even the absence of certain things could show Prabhupāda's influence in your life. What about internally? As you were reading this essay, did you notice any feelings you wouldn't have had before meeting Prabhupāda, such as a genuine desire to remember the guru? Can you think of anything else?

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Prabhupāda at MIT
1.3

A picture of him sitting in a rocker
legs crossed, bare feet,
japa bead bag in hand,
big gardenia garland,
I don't know his mind.
He sure looks sublime,
very old in a good sense, just as
Kṛṣṇa Himself is "the oldest"—
and his deep quiet aloneness,
just for a few hours
in his suite in L.A.
above the temple that was built
by devotion to him.

In 1969 at MIT after a lecture
Prabhupāda said, "So we have got our class here.
You can announce."
I stood up wearing a sports jacket
over *kūrta* and *dhotī,* honed in
on the students, "You're all invited to come—
it's a very opulent little temple with
lots of paintings and of course Swamijī.
At this temple every Sunday we have
a love feast of very sumptuous
Indian delicacies . . . "
"At what time?"
"It's noon."
"Where is it?"
"95 Glenville Ave."
"What time are the classes?"

(Through all this, Swamijī is sitting back
surveying the scene
and I am his son
and his sons and daughters are all there
preaching among the students.
Someone in this hall may take us seriously.
And if not, it is the perfection of life
to be with him like this in the city
at the university, assisting him . . .)
"The classes are at 7 P.M.
We have some flyers to hand out to you.
Swami is there Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
This is a real class with real progress.
We are studying *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.*
I'm going to go around with a tambourine
upside down
for a collection.
Also, very important, the Swami will leave
this area as soon as another city gives
him something more attractive . . . "
Then, although he has spoken for
two hours straight,
Prabhupāda starts commenting, criticizing
false gurus.
And suddenly he's got a debate on his hands.
We want to take him away, but . . .

An Indian man says, "I want to love everyone."
Prabhupāda: "That is bogus—only if you love God ..."
Guest: "Yes, but . . . "
Prabhupāda: "First of all answer this . . . "
Guest: "But what I want to say is—"
Indian man: "What is God?"

Another: "I think the trouble is—"(It's not even a
debate but too many people
talking at once and they have formed a close circle
around Prabhupāda and me and Govinda dāsī
and others can't get in at him
to break it up.
These people are too argumentative . . .)
"Do something!" they say to me. But what can I do?

Man: "What you are doing by chanting is a kind of ..."
Prabhupāda: "You chant and you will understand.
If you have no child, then how can you understand
what is the labor of producing a child?"
Man: "But then it's like saying
that if you haven't ever leaped into a well . . . "
Prabhupāda: "First of all you do not
know yourself."
Man: "But I am God, right?
I am God and you are God too."
Prabhupāda: "You are dog."
(It heats up—we are all God—no—
you don't know the meaning of God—
everything is God—no, no—
But it's all the same—no.
What is the same?
It's all the same, sure.
It's not the same thing.
Of course, it is the same thing.)
And so it deteriorates and we are afraid
that it has become offensive by now
to let this go on. But Prabhupāda is fighting away,
tightly encircled, pushing them off
with arguments. He is far away from
Vṛndāvana, India, but quite at home
in Cambridge, Mass., boxing with the Māyāvādīs ...

Man: "Everything is 'it.' It's all 'it.'"
Prabhupāda: "You don't talk nonsense.
No. We have got enough time."
Man: "No, wait, just one moment.
Cause and effect are all the same thing."
Prabhupāda: "No, no, no."
Man: "Yes, sure."
Prabhupāda: "This is cotton"(he takes hold of the man's shirt collar)
"The collar is cotton.
Would you like to take cotton instead of the shirt?"
Man: "This is illusion."
Prabhupāda: "Not illusion."
(It's sure not illusion, but Prabhupāda has the man by the collar
and the devotees say to me, "Now get Swamijī out of here,
right now!"
But it continues for at least ten more minutes—
Vivekananda comes up as a topic,
and everything is one, serving humanity
is service to God.
When several people start talking and shouting at once—
Prabhupāda looks to us outside the circle
and we say, "We have a car.
The car is waiting."
Prabhupāda says, "All right, car is waiting."
And I say to the Māyāvādīs,
"Come to the temple and ask the questions you have."
Prabhupāda leaves as a true gentleman,
"Thank you. I thank you for your questions."
And the guy with minimum respect says,
"Oh, okay, fine. I'll ask you again."

Vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā
1.4

Devotees sometimes try to guess what was on Prabhupāda's mind. Whenever this question comes up, someone inevitably quotes the familiar saying, *vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā vijñe nā bujhaya,* "One cannot understand the mind of the Vaiṣṇava." Prabhupāda sometimes added, "Nor should one try to inquire into his previous life." The meaning of this verse may also be extended to mean that people should not criticize an *ācārya* or try to give him advice. Prabhupāda makes this point in *Nectar of Instruction:* "The spiritual master must not be subjected to the advice of a disciple, nor should a spiritual master be obliged to take instructions from those who are not his disciples. This is the sum and substance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's advice in the sixth verse" *(Nectar of Instruction,* text 6, purport).

It is especially important for disciples not to try to second guess their guru. I remember in the beginning days at 26 Second Avenue, devotees sometimes wondered, "When does Prabhupāda actually talk to Kṛṣṇa? Maybe he does it in his sleep." For awhile, there was even speculation whether Prabhupāda was actually Kṛṣṇa Himself. The disciple can only understand things rightly when they are explained by the *ācārya* according to *śāstra* and *sādhu.* It is stated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* "Although I know that my spiritual master is a servitor of Śrī Caitanya, I know Him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord" *(C.c., Ādi* 1.44).

Interpretations on the position of the spiritual master are probably inevitable though. I remember once hearing some devotees talking about *japa.* One

devotee said that we should chant very intently and call out to Kṛṣṇa. *Japa,* when done rightly, is an intense experience, either of love of God or of aspiring for love of God. But another devotee countered this by saying, "I've heard Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting *japa* on a tape. I don't mean to speculate about the mind of the *ācārya,* but his voice sounds very regular and not particularly emotional." This is an example of someone making a judgment based on an external perception of the guru's activities. He heard the guru's voice and decided that he wasn't chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with much emotion. From that, he concluded that he was chanting "like Prabhupāda."

We do not know how Prabhupāda chants, although we can hear the sound of his chanting. Neither do we know what he thinks about when he chants. He was not obliged to reveal these things to us. He sometimes quoted Jesus Christ's statement, "There are many things I have to tell you, but you can not bear to hear them now." Prabhupāda said, "Yes, the *ācārya* knows things, but he does not tell everything to the disciples." Lord Caitanya also followed this principle. Although He was so deeply immersed in the conjugal *rasa,* He spoke about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes to only a very intimate few. We can be certain that Prabhupāda did not reveal everything on his mind to us. Even if we were to ask him, "What do you think of when you chant, Prabhupāda?" it is unlikely he would reveal his innermost state.

There is a śāstric statement that when the pure devotee appears in the world, he is not really seen by people. His appearance is compared to a cloud in relation to the moon. The moon is actually station-

ary in the sky, but it appears to be blowing across the sky with the clouds. It is an optical illusion. Similarly, a pure devotee often appears to be an ordinary person moving through the world, but actually his mind is fixed only on Kṛṣṇa.

"One should not try to understand the mind of the *ācārya.*" This should be a stabilizing reminder to us. Although we want to know our spiritual master as deeply as possible—we will listen to him and pray to him and study his books to find out exactly what he wants from us—we should be careful not to look for so many hidden meanings, or to speculate on esoteric principles. Prabhupāda will give us what we need to know. We have to trust him to reveal himself to us as we qualify ourselves and know that he understands each of our hearts in this regard. Let us first digest what he *has* given us, and let us increase our remembrance of and love for him by studying his writings and activities as told in his biographies and memoirs. Let us first understand him as he has revealed himself to us, and then, by service and inquiry, trust him to give us more.

What does a pure devotee experience when he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa? When does Prabhupāda talk with Kṛṣṇa? Where is Prabhupāda now? When I go to the spiritual world, how will I recognize Prabhupāda? Prabhupāda often replied to such questions: "When you go there, then you will understand."

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Doing the needful
1.5

Prabhupāda always did the needful—whatever was best for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His own Kṛṣṇa consciousness was mature; therefore, he wanted to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. As he preached, his own enthusiasm and attachment to Kṛṣṇa increased more and more. Although he was perfect, the ocean of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is always increasing.

The BBT publishers list many of Prabhupāda's accomplishments in the "About the Author" section at the end of Prabhupāda's books. Finally they state, "Śrīla Prabhupāda's most significant contribution, however, is his books." Thus we think of Prabhupāda as a writer of transcendental literature. He was a translator and a commentator on *śāstra*. He was a philosophical writer who carefully represented the *parampará* in modern English. His writings contained his personal experiences and realizations.

Prabhupāda had much personal love and enthusiasm for his practice of writing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He had the satisfaction toward the end of his life of seeing his works quickly edited and published by the BBT, and then distributed with wild enthusiasm by his *saṅkīrtana* devotees.

But Prabhupāda was not attached to his own writing. He saw it as Kṛṣṇa's writing, with himself only recording what Kṛṣṇa wanted to say. Although he knew it was important to spend as much time as possible producing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—and it also gave him personal peace and satisfaction to produce *Bhāgavatam*—yet he often had to forego his

writing time in order to manage ISKCON. Sometimes, days would go by where he would not touch the dictaphone. We would gently remind Prabhupāda that we hoped he would continue working on his translations. He didn't need our reminders. He loved the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* but he also saw that he couldn't always work under all circumstances. He sometimes spoke of giving up other activities in favor of his translation, but he was never really able to do that.

As Prabhupāda's disciples and followers, we can try to understand Prabhupāda's example in the context of our own lives. Nowadays, we lament that Prabhupāda didn't give us more literature so that we could relish it continually. *Padma Purāṇa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* the later cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* more works by the Six Gosvāmīs, the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* . . . Prabhupāda stated his intention to do all these books with the Bhaktivedanta Purports, but it never came to pass.

There is a message for us in the fact that these works were not completed. One message is that we also have to sacrifice our own interest in order to do the needful. Prabhupāda's unfinished work on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* does not go down in history as an incomplete task. Rather, it speaks volumes in its own way. Now, for all time, we can see the example of Prabhupāda giving up his own interest, in a personal sense, in order to carry out the duties and responsibilities of founder-*ācārya.* He wanted to protect his movement and make it strong, and this required attention. Sometimes the things he paid attention to seemed to be unfruitful. He worked hard at stopping the arguments between devotees—he heard their complaints about each other in the

mail—but the same problems and falldowns continued regardless of his attention. Still, he couldn't give up on ISKCON. ISKCON was his child, and he was an ever-responsible and attentive parent. He wanted to leave us not only with books, but with a strong ISKCON movement.

We who want to please Prabhupāda have to keep in mind that attention to ISKCON was very important to Prabhupāda. As he was willing to put aside other interests in order to further the interests of his movement, we should also be prepared for that sacrifice.

Maybe Prabhupāda could have lived another ten years or more if he had given more attention to his own health and relaxed his elderly body. He certainly could have translated more if he had stopped traveling and if he had withdrawn from interaction with his thousands of disciples in hundreds of temples. But he didn't do those things. We have to pay attention to what he did. Certainly Lord Kṛṣṇa, whom Prabhupāda says keeps accounts of his devotees' activities, is very pleased with Prabhupāda's priorities. Kṛṣṇa doesn't consider that Prabhupāda neglected his duties. Therefore, Prabhupāda's work was not left unfinished. It was complete in the eyes of Kṛṣṇa.

The remarkable thing about Prabhupāda and his priorities is that he really did *everything*. Although we may say that he didn't write as many books as we would have liked, his output was very prolific. For any other person to write as many books as Prabhupāda wrote, he would have had to become a reclusive writer. Prabhupāda wrote his books in a relatively brief span of time, simultaneously founding and managing, organizing and inspiring,

traveling and preaching in his ISKCON movement. His example is one of versatility and amazing productivity, not just as a writer, but in many other ways also.

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We have to do our part
1.6

We want to flourish simultaneously as a person and as a disciple of Prabhupāda. It is sometimes difficult to combine these two needs. Sometimes they seem to conflict. We feel that taking care of our self-actualization, becoming more honest, allowing a healthy balance of emotions, and developing our own tendencies can bounce against our desire to surrender to the spiritual master. Our desires are not the same as Kṛṣṇa's; therefore, we have to submit. The trick is to submit with our whole intelligence, voluntarily, so that our personhood is not challenged as our material desires fall away.

That is one side of it: Yes, our personal tendencies have to be given up in favor of Kṛṣṇa's desires, but what about subconscious resistance to that surrender we haven't put our heart into? In the end, as the psychologists tell us, the subconscious usually wins. It may take years, even decades, but finally the needs of the subconscious emerge and balk at our shallow renunciation. As Kṛṣṇa Himself says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "What will repression accomplish?" Therefore, we have to make peace in our minds and hearts between what we are willing to do for Kṛṣṇa and what He asks of us.

By Prabhupāda's grace, everything is workable. Prabhupāda doesn't want us to be stunted or neurotic as a result of following him. He wants us to be happy. He says a devotee is happy and simple by virtue of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We have to trust that Prabhupāda continues to oversee our activities and that he desires our success in surrendering to him. He knows the difficulties we face. Kṛṣṇa is helping us in the heart as *caitya-guru*. But ultimately, it is up to us as individuals to find our own balance. We have to use our intelligence to understand why we have to submit ourselves to the higher will of guru and Kṛṣṇa, and then we actually have to surrender, even in small increments, on the basis of our understanding. Kṛṣṇa assures us, as He assured Arjuna, that victory will be on our side. He promises to help us at every step, if only we make the endeavor.

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Make me dance
1.7

One of my favorite lines from the few poems that Prabhupāda wrote is, "Make me dance, make me dance, O Lord, make me dance as You like." Prabhupāda declared himself a puppet in the hands of Kṛṣṇa, and he asked Kṛṣṇa to please fulfill the actual meaning of the name Bhaktivedanta. That poem wasn't written as the musings of a reclusive scholar. It was written onboard the Jaladuta, a freighter with one Indian-style passenger cabin. The one passenger, Bhaktivedanta Swami, had no

money, yet he was striking out for America. The poem was written by a preacher, who, although fearless, appeared to be momentarily overcome by his first sight of an American city. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa hesitated when He faced the Aghāsura demon. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't hesitate in his purpose or waver in his determination, but he realized and admitted his helpless situation to Kṛṣṇa, his friend.

Prabhupāda was always turning to Kṛṣṇa, but it is natural for a devotee to turn even more to Kṛṣṇa when he is in a difficult situation. Nanda Mahārāja also did this. When Nanda Mahārāja was returning from Mathurā, he began to fear that something may have happened to Kṛṣṇa, his baby in Gokula, so he began to think of Kṛṣṇa very intensely and chant the holy names. Similarly, Prabhupāda's Kṛṣṇa consciousness was intensified on that boat-crossing as he suffered heart attacks and seasickness. He expressed himself intimately to his spiritual master and to Kṛṣṇa in poems.

The cry, "Please make me dance," is from the heart. Just as a poor man cries out, "Give me money," so the preacher who is faced with the tremendous task of preaching to foreigners, to people who have demoniac habits, also cries out, "Please make me dance. Please fulfill the purport of my name: devotion and knowledge." It took an extraordinary combination of devotion and knowledge to make even the slightest impression on these proud and dirty-minded Americans whom Prabhupāda saw that day with his first glimpse of Boston, Massachusetts.

How would he do it? Prabhupāda found the clue in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In his poem, he selected several verses describing in a systematic way the

Lord's working within the heart of every conditioned soul for his betterment. This takes place, according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* when one hears the glories of Kṛṣṇa. The modes of nature which grip each person's heart are then broken up, and liberation is possible. By recalling these verses, Prabhupāda took heart for the task of preaching in America. He gathered his determination just before officially entering the country through immigration in New York City when the boat docked at its final destination. Although outwardly he may have appeared to be an immigrant, lost in the foreignness of a new country, inwardly he had gained resolve, as expressed in his poem. He was already fully surrendered to the task and awaiting Kṛṣṇa to direct his steps.

"Make me dance!" This is not only a desperate cry; there seems to be celebration in his voice. He wants to dance in ecstasy for Kṛṣṇa! He wants to be Kṛṣṇa's puppet. Lord Kṛṣṇa did make Prabhupāda dance in America. We saw his stately *kīrtana* steps in the storefront at 26 Second Avenue and his dancing in Tompkins Square Park, his "Swami step" before the students at Stanford University and in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, at Ohio State University, and in public halls in London. He danced along with the energetic steps of his disciples in the hand-to-hand rings of bounding hippies at Golden Gate Park. Actually, all the dancing during ISKCON *kīrtanas* was but a response to Prabhupāda's hand gesture inviting them, "Get up and dance!"

Also, if we think of the word dance in a broader sense, as ecstatic, spontaneous celebration, as movement with rhythm and grace, then we can see that

Kṛṣṇa made Prabhupāda dance in many ways. His writing is a dance of the spirit liberated from matter. His expressions were filled with lightheartedness or with the heaviness of guru that only a pure devotee can deliver. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja also used the image of dancing when referring to his writing. He said that his words were like dolls under the puppet master, and that they had danced to their full satisfaction throughout the chapters of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.*

It is also significant that Prabhupāda referred to his work as a "movement." This doesn't refer to political agitation with lobbying and marches on the Capitol; it refers to the dancing in *kīrtana* in the streets, and the movement of gathering numbers of disciples all over the world to create a favorable eddy against the current of Kali-yuga disasters. Prabhupāda's movement is like the dance of a young cowherd boy upon the many, many hoods of the poisonous serpent.

Prabhupāda is still engaged in his movement, still dancing for you and me, and waiting for us to join the dance. To hold back during this dance means to miss the whole purpose of human existence. Prabhupāda is gesturing, "Get up and dance, just surrender to Kṛṣṇa, do as I am doing. Do the 'Swami step' back to the spiritual world with me." Let us take courage in Prabhupāda's words, "If You have brought me here to dance, then please make me dance as You like."

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Fielding questions
1.8

Were there some questions we should have asked Prabhupāda but didn't? Were some questions taboo? Were there some questions he didn't like to answer? Were there some questions he couldn't answer? What was his general attitude toward answering questions—was he very open or limited?

In general, I think we can safely say that Prabhupāda was very open and willing to discuss almost any subject from the Kṛṣṇa conscious point of view. He might point out an impertinent or illogical question, but he would answer it anyway. He considered questions that did not relate to the points he raised in his lecture as improper. Questions after the lecture should be asked to clear up doubts. So many topics can be discussed and questioned, but Prabhupāda chose one area of the philosophy to discuss in his lectures, and he preferred the questions to be relevant to that. Even if someone asked something off the topic, though, Prabhupāda would answer it.

An example of an impertinent question: Soon after Prabhupāda performed my marriage, I wrote him a letter and asked him about sex life within the *gṛhastha āśrama*. Prabhupāda wrote back and said, "I am a *sannyāsī;* this is not proper that you ask me questions like this. However, I know that you have no one else to turn to for answers, so I will give you the answer." Śrīla Prabhupāda was lenient in giving information, even if the questions weren't right.

Some people asked Prabhupāda questions that were too hair-splitting. He considered these un-

necessary for those who were seriously trying to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Other inquiries were too esoteric. I once asked Prabhupāda, "In your *Teachings of Lord Caitanya,* I read that one should follow an eternal resident of Vṛndāvana. Could you tell me more about that?" Prabhupāda replied, "Don't try for this. That is a very advanced topic. It will automatically be revealed to you. Just go on serving." Similarly, when Prabhupāda was asked about the origin of the living entity he said, "It is not important. There is a history to it, but right now you may not be able to understand it. The important thing is that you are now in a fallen condition and you need to go back to Godhead. It does not matter how you came here." Prabhupāda did not evade questions, but like the *ācārya* he himself described in *Kṛṣṇa* book, he sometimes gave information and sometimes withheld it. Prabhupāda knew what the important inquiries were.

Sometimes Prabhupāda would be blunt: "This is not a very intelligent question." "Are all your devotees pure devotees?" "How many pure devotees are there on the planet right now?" Prabhupāda replied, "This is not a very intelligent question."

Other questions were too challenging. "Why don't you send your missionaries to Muslim countries instead of preaching in India?" "Do you accept Jesus as Lord?" "You don't seem to give many teachings about health, why is that?" Prabhupāda could see the motive behind questions, but he always entered the breach to give the Vaiṣṇava conclusion.

Sometimes questions were too personal. "Are you happy?" Prabhupāda replied, "If I told you yes, would you believe me?" Prabhupāda was expert at

not getting trapped by questions and being able to turn them around to put the question back on the person who asked it.

Prabhupāda was especially exposed to challenges and both sincere and insincere questions in public lectures. Over the years, he had heard practically everything there was to hear. It wasn't possible to shock him. Prabhupāda was responsive to intelligent, sincere questions. Like Śukadeva Gosvāmī who became more enthusiastic to speak due to the intelligent questioning of Mahārāja Parīkṣit, so Prabhupāda appreciated solid inquiries.

One time someone asked him, "In *Nectar of Devotion* it says you shouldn't wear red clothes before the Deities, why is that?" Prabhupāda said in reply, "There is a reason as to why you shouldn't wear red, but if I reply to your question by saying you shouldn't wear red because it says so in the scriptures, is that all right?" Prabhupāda always gave the most substantial reply according to time, place, and person. Prabhupāda was instructing us not just by answering our questions, but by demonstrating by his own responses what was important information for us to know. He taught us that the important inquiries were based on service and surrender. In this way, he taught us that our sometimes flimsy questions were missing the point and he uncovered for us our very elementary grasp of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy.

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Thinking of you
1.9

Prabhupāda, tonight I'm in Māyāpura and thinking of you. The *kīrtana* chorus is swelling from below. You used to hear that, too. A generator engine rumbles outside, ensuring an unbroken supply of electricity even if the general power line fails. You wanted the generator and the unbroken electrical current. You also wanted your disciples to come here and be purified. I am here, Śrīla Prabhupāda, because you wanted me to come.

I read about the procedures prescribed for visiting *tīrthas*. One is supposed to fast for three days first, shave his head, and not ride in any kind of vehicle when arriving in the *dhāma*. You were more lenient with the Westerners, although you gave us procedures too. We should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa as much as possible, not get involved in politics or sense gratification, *prajalpa*, fault finding, overeating, nonsense thoughts. We should render service to the devotees in the *dhāma*. I am trying to do these things so that I can be counted among your faithful followers and not be rejected by you.

Tonight I want to report that to you. I want to present to you, please, all these devotees who are doing nicely. Anyone who is sincere is accepted by you. Most of us are more humble now, and probably a little more realistic about ourselves. Sometimes that gives us the appearance of not doing much, but still we all beg for your acceptance and to be allowed to continue chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda, am I talking too much? Where is my gravity? I remember coming to Māyāpura with you. The lights would go out and the room would

be lit only with a kerosene lantern. We would sit there with you, hearing immortal truth. Jananivāsa still comes faithfully, bringing frankincense to discourage the mosquitoes. Prabhupāda, I am just one disciple among many, scrunched up against the wall, hoping to catch your merciful glance.

One devotee told me he wouldn't dream of living anywhere in ISKCON except a rural community where he could help with the development. I thought, "He should be encouraged. He has chosen a project that is bona fide under Śrīla Prabhupāda's direction. Let him work wholeheartedly for his goal." Then I thought, "I have my own angle on service, too. I write to encourage people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, even though I write in my own way." Do you remember me, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as your disciple who, even from the beginning, had the inspiration to write? You encouraged me to write. You also told me not to accept less money for my books just because I was religious.

Prabhupāda, as I sit in your room, it's hard for me not to imagine talking with you about myself and my service. I can see you listening, making me feel accepted, soothed, and then beginning to talk about your own plans for ISKCON, the new projects you want to see developed, how we can help. Then perhaps later, we would all relax as you preached to a group of us. I can imagine you talking about chanting and surrender and realizing the Lord in the heart, things that apply to all of us. I would ask my personal questions—how to be free of envy, how to chant with attention, how to surrender. You would probably answer strongly, especially the question about envy. Asking a question means risking your direct focus on us. You pounce

on our nonsense and defeat it. Sometimes we try to escape this direct focus by couching the question like this: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, the atheists say . . . " or, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, someone else said . . . " But you turned to us as if we were nonsense personified asking a question. We squirmed under your gaze. But I see myself daring to ask a question again: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, how can I give up my envy of my Godbrothers?"

"Why do you *dare* to be envious? Do not be an envious snake. What have you done that is any better?" That is a fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda. What *have* I done?

Of course, I can't really be sure what you would say, but I can be sure that I would feel rectified by your words, ready to be happy and loving toward others. It would get late, and we would all file out of your room. In each of our hearts, we would carry the flame: "Keep Prabhupāda's instructions intact and get back to our service."

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A sketch of Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī: entering a new life, 1966
1.10

I was just on the edge of leaving material life. My spiritual perceptions were still raw. But the new life that I was entering was unencumbered by ISKCON disappointments and politics, unencumbered by thoughts of mixing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in with the reading of other philosophies and other inter-

ests. My approach was summed up like this: "Swamijī says Kṛṣṇa is everything. You don't need to do anything else."

My reading of Swamijī's books was fresh, and my affection for Swamijī was full of wonder and transformation.

Starting with the summer. It was hot. You can smell the feet and socks at the door. You can almost smell buildings. Hallway smells, apartment building smells. The odor of people cooking from the other apartments. Swamijī's room . . .

It is exciting to see him. He is a swami, a guru from India, a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, a self-realized soul. You like to tell other people about it, but you soon find out that they don't understand, they don't even want to hear about it. What can be done? First you go up to everyone, open and excited, and say, "I found a wonderful thing. It is wonderful for everyone. You should come. Everyone should come and hear the Swami." It doesn't take long for you to see that people are blasphemous at worst and disinterested at best. But that doesn't diminish your own feelings. It brings you in closer with the other people who come to see the Swami. That's something special you share with them.

Most people are kind of stupid. People just see the outer thing, that he was a Hindu, an old man, and they have their own religion, or they don't believe in God—even hip people, *your friends!* Your friends say, "Where have you been? What are you into?"

"I'm going to see the Swami over on Second Avenue, and he's doing this kind of meditation called *kīrtana* where he chants and people chant together. It's pretty far out."

You don't mention how within a few days, you're already so into it that your whole thinking has changed. You almost don't dream it could happen—but wouldn't it be wonderful if Murray and Steve got completely into it with you? It's strange, because although you thought you were close friends, this is different. This is your own path. You have to do what you want. You left the Navy, left your parents. Maybe you have to leave your friends, too.

The Swami is jolly and talking about Kṛṣṇa. Everybody asks him questions, and he keeps telling you—all these completely new words come out, *brāhmaṇa*, Kṛṣṇa, chanting, karma, yoga. You can't quite understand what it all is. So many Sanskrit words. You can't pronounce them, and you can hardly understand what he's saying because of his accent. But you want to understand it. And what you can understand, you really go for. Chanting, the soul, Kṛṣṇa is God. Control the mind and chant. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. You can chant that all the time, that's the main thing—you can chant the mantra wherever you go. Some devotees chant on beads. This goes back thousand of years like the Swami's books—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Everything is in there. Swami will speak on these books.

In the evening we chant together with the cymbals, and that's really far out. Everybody chants, and you feel this high of ecstasy. You just keep getting these vibrations out of the body. You feel yourself out of the body, and it is supposed to be the experience of the real self, the *ātmā*. I am going there three nights a week and trying to read his books.

In the *very* beginning, you weren't completely overwhelmed by it, but soon it took over your life. When you weren't there, you were thinking about it, doing the chanting, and trying to read his book. Other things started to lose importance. It was like a magnet—heading for that storefront. In the very beginning, you would sometimes do other things. One night after a delicious time at the storefront chanting and singing and getting into the atmosphere of the Swami, you left the storefront and got a pizza and a coke and thought that was also delicious. It was like part of the same thing, to have a pizza and a coke sitting at the counter in a racy Puerto Rican neighborhood, gobbling down a piece of pizza in the summer, and thinking, "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa and everything."

You didn't have the whole thing together because there weren't any rules and regulations. (It wasn't like nowadays; if you would do something like that you would think, "Boy, I was just at the temple, and now I'm in *māyā*." We had no idea what was right or wrong.) It was just great to be chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Now you go out and think about it while you do all these other things that you always do—play a jazz record . . . but then, bit by bit, Swamijī indicated that all these other things should be replaced. No, you don't eat pizza, you don't drink coke, you don't listen to jazz. You don't even listen to Ravi Shankar. Those things are sense gratification. To love Kṛṣṇa, you can't have any sense gratification. There are right ways to do

things. We innocently took to his instructions. We wanted to do what he said: "Okay, no sense gratification."

Then you decided that there was no way to make such a transformation while living on Suffolk Street, so you moved to a new apartment. It was like a new life. A new sleeping bag (you left behind the bed, all the records, the cats, the marijuana, the LSD). You moved in and painted the walls white, chained your typewriter to the radiator, remembered to bring your work clothes. No sense gratification. Made your own *capātīs* like crackers, and put slices of tomato on them and covered that with a dish. Later you could come back and have your own Hare Kṛṣṇa lunch with a *capātī* and a slice of tomato. At night, some milk.

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Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
1.11

If this notebook is lost,
please return to:

Satsvarupa dasa Brahmacari
c/o International Society for Krishna
Consciousness, Inc.
26 Second Avenue, New York, NY

In this notebook I intend to keep notes I will type down from memory after hearing lectures by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, my spiritual master and founder-acarya of ISKCON.

I should have begun this earlier. Maybe I can still write down some Krishna consciousness thoughts and activities, something about Swamiji and his society.

It can also be a place for trying out poems and things.

Swamiji, I am remembering you.

I am here now and you are here around the corner in your room. Life is freed for me from the karma of the past. I want to learn Krishna conscious philosophy.

Should I do the typing or go see the Swami? Without any notes, I just start to remember what the Swamiji said in his lecture and I type some of it down. I can type pretty good. I don't make mistakes. It starts to come to me, some of the things he said in his lecture. At least I remember the essence of it. I don't attempt to write the whole thing down, just the essence as I remember it.

I don't really do it for him, it's more for myself. It's not that I go to my apartment having memorized what he says, but it just comes out and keeps

my head balanced. I really like to walk through the streets feeling the Hare Krishna mantra and seeing the city in the summer. I feel such well-being as Swamiji's boy.

My yoga is typing. I'm not just typing something for Swamiji. I'm doing yoga. It's for myself. It's the last kind of creative writing I've allowed myself. I've stopped all other writing—my novel-writing and my short-story writing—it was all so corrupt and egotistical. But this remembering and recording short sentences is the fruit of anything I've learned as a writer. I try to communicate what Swamiji said, in my own voice, as concisely as possible. It's Swamiji, but expressed in my own way. I get creative joy out of this writing. It's a good discipline for spiritual life.

Usually as I start to type, something comes to mind. Yesterday I remembered about the three modes of nature. "There are three modes of material nature, raja-guna, tamo-guna, and sattva-guna. We are all under the modes of nature. Krishna is above the modes of nature. Surrendering to Krishna brings freedom from the modes." Just things like that. He also said, "The donkey carries the washerman's load. He thinks the washerman is the source of his food, but he can get grass anywhere. This is the foolishness of the ass.

Materialists are like this donkey." Typing these things down is a nice way to be with Swamiji. I'm starting to grasp the philosophy too.

I think you have to get a special, mystical revelation from Krishna to understand Swamiji. He's incomprehensible. Swamiji said that by service the revelation will come. Note-taking helps.

I am trying to kick off my false ego. Novel and poetry-writing is false ego. I'm ready to make the break with the past for Swamiji's sake.

Hayagriva told me he is going to write for Krishna. I threw my manuscripts into the incinerator. I had to think about that one before I did it though. What if these manuscripts were great works? What if I am a genius, and I just don't recognize it? Still, they had no Krishna consciousness. How could they help anyone? Swamiji says even great literature, if it is without Krishna consciousness, is like the decoration of a dead body.

Now I only want to express Krishna-thought and read Krishna-thought. That is a pure devotee. We shouldn't have other books in the storefront.

From Srimad-Bhagwatam: "Great sages laboring hard under stringent regulative principles for salvation by

suspending semina upwards and thus remaining naked, as well as successful mendicants who have attained the complete satisfaction by purificatory practices—do achieve the transcendental sky of the name Brahman. But so far we are concerned, oh, the Great Mystic! We shall transcend this world of abject nescience simply by vibrating the message of your activities as duty-bound devotees of Your Lordship, although we are moving seemingly on the path of fruitive actions" (Preface, Volume 2).

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Prabhupāda stories, even if you weren't there
1.12

How can you tell a story about Śrīla Prabhupāda if you weren't actually there to witness it? The obvious answer is that you can repeat what you have heard from biographies, memoirs, or from devotees who actually were with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although the direct witness has advantages in story-telling, the re-teller can make up for that by his enthusiasm. A book on writing describes it this way:

> Several years ago I wrote down a story that someone had told me. My friends said it was boring. I couldn't understand their reaction; I loved the story. What I realize now is that I wrote "about" the story, second-hand. I didn't enter it and make friends with it. I was outside it; therefore, I couldn't take anyone else into it. This does not mean you cannot write about

> something you did not actually experience first hand; only make sure that you breathe life into it. Otherwise, it is two times removed and you are not present.
> —*Writing Down the Bones,* Natalie Goldberg, p. 69

Telling any story is a delicate operation. We have to have faith in the story we are telling and enter into it. And it must be accurate. Sometimes we hear a devotee retell a story like this: "One time, Prabhupāda said to Guru dāsa, 'You say you want to be at my lotus feet, but my lotus feet are always moving.' When Prabhupāda said that, he pushed Guru dāsa away with his lotus feet." The difficulty with that last detail, is that no one who was actually present for this episode said that Prabhupāda actually pushed Guru dāsa with his feet. In this way, stories sometimes get blown into tall tales. They may become very different from what actually happened. Therefore, it is good to be enthusiastic when telling Prabhupāda stories, but we should never exaggerate or make up details. Our enthusiasm may capture the ears of some, and may even impress some people, but if the story has untrue elements, then people will have a false impression. The story has to be authentic and the story-teller has to be honest.

If you were never with Prabhupāda, you can openly say, "I wasn't present for this story, but I heard it, and it impressed me." Admitting that you weren't there may be humbling. It shows that you don't appear so prominently in Prabhupāda's manifest pastimes. But even that fact may add a poignancy to your story that will draw your listeners in. The fact is that most of your listeners will not have had direct contact with Prabhupāda either. If you tell the story in a genuine, humble way, it may be even more effective than someone who boasts slightly as

he relates the story of when he was with Prabhupāda. The direct witness may also mistake the facts or exaggerate his role in the story. The honest approach is always best.

Let's give an example. Prabhupāda used to eat lunch with the devotees at 26 Second Avenue. Even persons who were there at that time don't fully remember what it was like. Let's say you were never there, but you want to tell people about those wonderful, old days. Your presentation might be like this:

"It's amazing to think how, in the beginning of ISKCON in America, Prabhupāda used to eat lunch with the devotees. He used to serve them *prasādam.* That's mentioned in the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* and in some devotees' memoirs. Prabhupāda would walk between the devotees seated on the floor, and he would dish out the *prasādam,* just as our *brahmacārī* servers do now in the temples. The devotees would see Prabhupāda's bare feet, and he would ask them what kind of *prasādam* they wanted. It's inconceivable to us now! After a few weeks, some of the devotees learned to cook, and they then began to serve Prabhupāda. But still, he used to sit in the midst of all the devotees. He was like a father with his family. He sat in one corner. I've been to 26 Second Avenue and I saw the room in his apartment where it took place. Prabhupāda used to sit in a corner near a table where he kept his worshipable pictures, including a picture of Pañca-tattva. Prabhupāda didn't have a special mat, but he just sat there, and the devotees came out of the kitchen with hot preparations to serve the Swami and the other devotees. Prabhupāda would look at the

other devotees and encourage them to 'eat more, eat more.'"

So, although this story may not be filled with so many personal exchanges where the story-teller can "dialogue" between himself and Prabhupāda, and he can't notice that his body was shivering and his hair standing on end—still, the story has its own authentic sound. If it is told by someone who is serving within Prabhupāda's movement, who speaks his own appreciation, and who depends on the oral tradition or recorded biographical information, then we should be confident to hear and repeat such stories. Whoever shares a story like this can make as potent a presentation as the presentation of someone who happened to be there personally. The main thing is to tell authentic stories with well-placed details, and to speak your own feelings from your actual position. Basically, telling stories of Prabhupāda means expressing our appreciation and hoping to improve Prabhupāda meditation.

Try this . . .

Can you think of a Prabhupāda story that you have read or heard from someone who was there? Imagine how you could re-tell this story if you had an interested listener. Then, the next time you are with someone who is interested in Śrīla Prabhupāda, try sharing the story.

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Hearing without envy
1.13

Let's talk about some other problems related to hearing stories about Prabhupāda. One problem is becoming envious of the person who is telling the story. Another obstacle might be thinking that the person who is telling the story has too many faults, and, therefore, you don't want to hear attentively from them.

Every devotee knows that envy is poison and that we should avoid it. When hearing someone talk about Prabhupāda, we should apply the same principles as when we hear them speak on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. As the preacher gains momentum, makes strong points which includes his original realizations, and reaches his conclusion, why should we be dissatisfied? Go along with it. We will not lose out. The speaker will get the good result of his speaking regardless of whether we are with him or not. So why shouldn't we get the benefit of hearing his Prabhupāda-*kathā* along with the rest of the audience? It will not diminish us. And if that speaker is going back to Godhead, that is even more reason to listen to him. If he is an empowered soul and is preaching effectively, then we are cutting ourselves off from mercy by dwelling on our envy of him. We have our own service and our own place at Prabhupāda's lotus feet; he cannot take that away from us.

Stories about Prabhupāda are meant for our improvement. It is not fair to be envious of someone who is contributing so much to our lives by speaking about Prabhupāda. He may have waited thousands of lifetimes to get the association of Prabhu-

pāda, or maybe he is a recipient of *kṛpa-siddhi,* the causeless merciful glance given by the pure devotee. If we express envy or act upon it, we will hurt him in that part of his life which is most sacred. No one should take that risk.

It is not that we have to hear without discrimination. If there are flaws in the presentation of his story—if he exaggerates or uses the story to advocate his pet theory—we can note it. We have to become like a swan who knows how to take the milk from the mixture of milk and water. We should ourselves be trained enough to recognize an authentic story about Prabhupāda, and we should have developed our own convictions about Prabhupāda by reading his books. A single story is only an isolated report; it has to be fitted into the total life of Prabhupāda. But stories have their place, just as the person who is speaking about Prabhupāda has his place. Why not sit back and enjoy hearing Prabhupāda-*kathā,* instead of being hung up by the servant of Prabhupāda and his ways that you don't appreciate?

The same thing holds true for judging the speaker's qualifications. Perhaps he has fallen down and is not following his vows, or he has been disobedient, and we are unable to simply dismiss those faults from our minds. When he speaks, we might think, "Who are you to talk about Prabhupāda? Why didn't you do what he said?" But a Vaiṣṇava is supposed to be forgiving. The fact that this devotee, fallen though he may be, is talking about Prabhupāda is to his credit. We can think of Prabhupāda's mercy and hope that by telling about Prabhupāda, this person can revive himself and start to serve rightly again. If we listen with our

own discriminating ear, we will gain a nugget of gold, even from a filthy place.

Also, we should try not to mix up different time periods. The story-teller may be speaking from a time when he was faithful to Prabhupāda, so why should it be ruined just because later he couldn't keep up his sincerity and obedience? He *did* share those moments with Prabhupāda in the past, and if he is giving an accurate account as an eyewitness, then we should be happy to add to our own meditation on Prabhupāda.

Try this . . .

Has this ever happened to you? If so, you might like to think back to the Prabhupāda story you heard and remember what good there was in it. Did you hear any tidbits about Prabhupāda that you hadn't heard before?

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At the bridge: alone with Prabhupāda
1.14

I'm at the bridge again, looking into the water. The rocks under the water are slimy and black, and the Irish countryside is crisp and green in the morning. Dawn is just breaking, so the water is filled with little silver arrows of light. It resembles a dark, fluid mirror, coursing over the rocks in millions of rivulets. I look into that mirror but I can't see so clearly. Where are you, Prabhupāda? Where are the traces of you?

Prabhupāda, now that I have taken a moment to get in touch with you, my impulse is to want to promise to be a better devotee. At least I want to express that desire to be closer to you.

Prabhupāda told us that we can converse with the spiritual master, just as we can converse with Supersoul. "It just depends on your purity." What does that mean, Prabhupāda, that it depends on our purity? If it means that I never committed sins in my past or that I never think of sins now, then I will never qualify for that purity that allows me to hear you speak. But if purity means feeling helpless and turning to you, then maybe there is hope for me. Isn't that helpless turning to the spiritual master a kind of offenseless chanting?

Please guide me back to Kṛṣṇa, to your books and teachings. It is a specific, personal relationship. In the early days in Boston, I used to go to a little hill near the Allston temple. There were a few trees there, but mostly it was just open space. I called it Paramātmā Park. I knew that I could just go out into the night—I could leave the storefront with all its specific activities for Prabhupāda, and the problems and skirmishes between the devotees—leave my own role as president, and try to reach deep into my heart for surrender to Prabhupāda. "Prabhupāda, I am here. I *do* want to serve you. Just let me quiet down for a moment and be alone with you. Please give me that confirmation of touch that only you and Supersoul can give." After, I would feel refreshed and would be able to face the world again.

This is what I see when I look into the dark mirror of the stream. But there is more; there are so many visions of Prabhupāda in the mind. I like this bridge because I can let my defenses down when I

am here. No one can hear me speak above the roar of the stream, but Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa listen from within my heart. I can express to them my fears of Prabhupāda, or my misunderstandings of him or his movement—and I can let them go.

There is a person in me, a gremlin, that wants to see me unhappy and unfulfilled. He tugs at me when I pray to Prabhupāda, grabs at my mind, and threatens my peace. He tries to convince me that I am crazy, standing here and gazing into some silly creek, thinking I am meditating on Prabhupāda. He reminds me that my fingers are getting cold and that my stomach is growling for the breakfast I know will be awaiting me when I return. "Didn't you have a poem you wanted to write?" he prods.

"No! Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda!"

Soon I will be leaving Wicklow, but I hope to find other quiet places to facilitate my meditation on Prabhupāda in other places in the world. And I will come back here tomorrow.

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The wealth of Prabhupāda's lectures
1.15

I have been listening to Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion* lectures from Vṛndāvana, 1972. A devotee can sustain his spiritual life by hearing these lectures. They are not intended as background noise. We should listen to Prabhupāda's lecture tapes with the same attention we would have if Prabhupāda was personally in the room. To ignore Prabhupāda is an offense.

There are always times throughout the day when we can listen to at least part of a lecture. In the old Christian monasteries, the monks used to observe silence while they ate, while one monk read aloud from the scriptures. In one monastic refectory I saw a sign over the door, "Man lives not by bread alone but by every word that issues from the mouth of God." We can also honor *prasādam* while hearing the scriptures directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

A spoken lecture is an important medium for the Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*. Speaking Vedic truth requires special qualification. The more purely the message is spoken, the more potent the result. For example, unless one has memorized and assimilated Sanskrit *ślokas*, he cannot cross-reference and prove his points. And for the audience, what strength is available by hearing transcendental sound vibration from a realized devotee! He calls us with his knowledge and realization of the scriptures, and our souls respond, leaving the critical mind and sleepy body behind. Transcendental sound cuts through matter.

Lecturing is ultimate communication. When Prabhupāda says, "Kṛṣṇa cannot be served with matter. He has to be served with spirit," Prabhupāda feels the weight of his own words. He wants to convey their import to us. Psychologists inform us that it is important to communicate if one wants to develop personal relationships. Dialogue is necessary in order to keep love alive. Unfortunately, most people don't know what to say to each other in order to have a loving relationship. And, of course, they cannot grant each other eternity, bliss, and knowledge. Ultimate communication takes place between Kṛṣṇa and the conditioned soul

hankering to recapture his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. When the *jīva* is awakened by hearing, then he can begin to serve God. Further communication can then take place. This is called *bhakti.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda is a dramatic orator, a real communicator. He communicates on Kṛṣṇa's behalf as the via medium for Kṛṣṇa's love to the conditioned souls who have not yet developed their desire to go back to Kṛṣṇa. His voice was tempered and his points balanced, yet his lectures were powerful. They were quite different from his ordinary speech. His lectures were full of feeling—strong, loud reprimands of the nondevotee mentality, and soft, loving expressions of *bhakti.* His voice rose and fell in sonorous tones. "You cannot understand Kṛṣṇa with these blunt senses," he said, his voice keyed both to his audience and to his own sense of delivering the message. He spoke from the heart. He spoke to wake us up.

Prabhupāda lectured mainly from *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* He didn't title his lectures, and they didn't have a specific subject other than a commentary on the particular verse he was speaking on. He took advantage of the wealth of material in the Vedic scriptures and taught us to lecture. Prabhupāda had to lecture frequently, but he had such a great command of the Vedic scriptures that he was free to speak on a wide variety of topics within the realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We should try to follow his example.

Prabhupāda can mediate between Kṛṣṇa and the individual soul. For example, he explains how we can offer Kṛṣṇa whatever we eat, and how the main ingredient in our offering is our devotion. Prabhupāda comments, "If you offer something to Kṛṣṇa,

'Kṛṣṇa I've brought a very palatable dish for You to eat—no, Kṛṣṇa will not take it. *Nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ*. He is not exposed to everyone.'"

There are different levels of understanding Prabhupāda's teachings. A newcomer will be amazed that Kṛṣṇa will accept offerings of food. Someone who has been hearing and serving Prabhupāda for more years will hear with added depth and richness. Such a person is trained to hear and consider more the subtleties of the philosophy. For example, Prabhupāda quoted the verse *nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ* in the context of offering food to Kṛṣṇa. The *nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ* verse tells us that Kṛṣṇa places a curtain of *māyā* between Himself and foolish persons. To quote that verse immediately after saying that Kṛṣṇa accepts offerings made in devotion produces an interesting contrast. Prabhupāda's point is that if we try to give Kṛṣṇa something materially opulent to impress Him, He will not accept it, because *nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya*—Kṛṣṇa puts a barrier between Himself and such fools.

Often when Prabhupāda quotes the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he spontaneously gives a translation which is not at all literal but interpretive. It is a kind of combined purport and translation. These little purport-translations vary from one lecture to the next and we can appreciate them as added nectar. Problems and *anarthas* in our devotional service can become easily solved when we carefully hear how Prabhupāda attacks those problems.

Prabhupāda's disciples and followers should all be grateful to Prabhupāda for his having the fore

sight to have his lectures recorded even as early 1966 when practically no one was attending. All he asks in return is our undivided attention.

Try this . . .

The next time you listen to a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, note a verse he quotes to support a point he is making. See if you can explain why he quoted that particular verse, and the special importance it has in that context.

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Following
1.16

Śrīla Prabhupāda exposed material life as a defeat. People think they will attain happiness by sense gratification, but in the end they are only frustrated. Prabhupāda taught this repeatedly because this struggle for happiness is so pervasive among the people of the world. Although most people concentrate on money-making as their goal, Prabhupāda instructs them, "No, that cannot make you happy." He also tells us not to seek liberation from material life. One may ask, "Neither sense gratification nor renunciation—what's left?" Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches that the goal of life is service to Kṛṣṇa, *bhakti-yoga*. This is the message of the Six Gosvāmīs, Lord Caitanya, and Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Prabhupāda preached it, and we are following him.

Often our appreciation of Prabhupāda is based on appreciation of the Vedic truths. One may say that

Prabhupāda's teachings are just those of a typical Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsī*. By glorifying Prabhupāda, all we are doing is appreciating Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda would approve of that estimation of himself. In fact, that's how he wanted us to appreciate him—as one who delivered Kṛṣṇa's message unchanged.

One may also say, "You claim that your spiritual master is special for teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but all he is doing is presenting the Vaiṣṇava tradition. Why do you focus on him so completely? Don't you think that's naive?"

But we *heard* from Śrīla Prabhupāda. He is not just an ordinary speaker. He was a vigorous preacher who created a Kṛṣṇa consciousness revolution around the world. It is only natural that we repeat what we have heard from him, and natural that we express our gratitude to him. We note his preaching methods. He knew how to preach to us; therefore, we are especially eager to listen to *him* within the tradition of Vaiṣṇava preachers. We are indebted to him. The Vaiṣṇava conclusion states that one cannot hear directly from Kṛṣṇa; one has to hear from Kṛṣṇa's representative. Prabhupāda is that representative for us.

As we hear from Prabhupāda, we also begin to recognize other preachers and ways of presenting the *paramparā*. We were naive in the beginning of ISKCON. We thought no one knew anything about Kṛṣṇa except Prabhupāda, or we assumed that everyone would teach the philosophy in exactly the same way. Now we know there are other Vaiṣṇavas and other ways to present the same conclusion. But this does not diminish our desire to hear directly from Prabhupāda. Our equating Kṛṣṇa

consciousness with His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is not accidental; we deliberately cultivate this loyalty on the advice of the *śāstras*. Unless we please *our* spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa will not be pleased with us.

The personal presence of the spiritual master is necessary to enforce some of the more difficult injunctions of Vaiṣṇava tradition. For example, Prabhupāda came to America and taught that sex life should be restricted. He told us right from the beginning that our Western emphasis on sex would be very detrimental to our spiritual lives. One should restrict it. If possible, one should give it up entirely. Some devotees mentioned to Prabhupāda that these restrictions would be difficult for the Americans to accept. Prabhupāda replied, "I cannot change the philosophy to suit the Americans." His teaching, of course, goes completely against the hedonist's claims that unless we enjoy sex, we will be frustrated and repressed. How could the devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness adopt such a "mad attempt" unless Śrīla Prabhupāda was personally behind us?

Without compromise, Prabhupāda continues to guide us. He speaks plainly in his books and lectures: if you want Kṛṣṇa, you have to give up illicit sex desire. Sex is a natural drive that can be used in Kṛṣṇa's service. Sex is not easy to give up in any *āśrama,* but if we want to follow Prabhupāda, we have to do what he says.

As we struggle to surrender, we certainly need to focus on the personal inspiration given to us by our spiritual master. We know he teaches from the *śāstra,* but we also know that he follows *śāstra* himself. Because we are personally indebted to him, we

want to please him by following the Vedic truths. Allowing the spiritual master to exert such control in our lives even to the point of controlling our sex pleasure will make us submissive to him. We come to identify ourselves as his followers. This will bring us the actual confirmation and reciprocation from him that we are seeking.

I am personally grateful to Śrīla Prabhupāda for giving us ways to prove ourselves as his followers.

Try this . . .

Think of some changes you have made in your life since becoming a follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Jot down one or two (or more) specific things that Śrīla Prabhupāda (through his books or lectures or personal instructions) inspired you to change.

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Part Two

The Swami's genius: a 26 Second Avenue kaleidoscope
2.1

All glories to that 1966 *kīrtana* which is still going on and is available anytime. I think that those *kīrtanas* were very special because of the degree of reciprocation and attention and focus. Back and forward he chants and we hear, we chant and he hears. The holy name is merciful. Pay attention and hear. It is a transcendental sound vibration. Try it, there is no tax.

Swami pounds the drum. He sings in almost relentless delivery, again and again giving the mantra as if he could go on forever, except the time and place don't allow. We sing back to him. He is patient and convinced. "Just *hear.*" He knows we will take to it if we can only hear it. He has no doubt. The heart of everything is right there even now, even in the beginning, even in 1966—the books, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, India, the sacred Yamunā, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, Sanskrit . . . Everything is here, present in the sound vibration of the holy name and in his own presence.

Remembering early times in New York is nice because it gives us an idea of what Kṛṣṇa consciousness always is and what it should be today—the excitement and ecstasy to get together and chant. When the rhythm starts to build, the many *karatālas* sound like waves. It's a crashing surf of happy emotions.

It was a sign of Swamijī's genius to bring together simple instruments that everyone could play. Just as in a kindergarten music class, not a single instrument requires one to be a musician—there are blocks, triangles, cymbals, a drum, clackers—so it

was Swamijī's genius to bring together all those instruments and hand them out to the children to play. The only instruction was one-two-*three*, one-two-*three*.

The naked light, the black bars on the window behind the Swami. Some girls from the Lower East Side coming in with motivations other than to participate in Hare Kṛṣṇa. New *brahmacārīs*, protective of our celibacy . . . guys with big, bushy beards reminding us of what we used to be.

Each in our small space, a box within a box. In a small room with a lot of people, we have to maneuver while dancing and moving around. There's room for everyone. Shoes in the back, smelly. *Back to Godhead* with many concentric circles on the cover—stenciled, mimeographed copies. A hand-cranked mimeograph machine in one corner. Gargamuni with long hair parted in the middle, looking wistful with his double strand of red japa beads wrapped around his neck. And Swamijī, the center of it all, his pointy white shoes at the door where he left them when he came in.

Swamijī was a bold performer. He was expert at creating excitement. His foreignness is charismatic—his golden complexion, his yellow *tilaka*, his shining teeth and lips and eyes, delicate fingers. Nothing showy. Our attraction is natural. He is plain and yet scintillating. His paraphernalia, a pocket watch put up so that he can see the time as he speaks, a glass of water because he usually starts to cough, the nearby sink for throwing apple cores at the end of the evening, the noiseless tape recorder moving from reel to reel, his *dhotī* and *khaḍi cādar* wrapped around his shoulders. He gives

a few directions to his followers: "Bring this light here. Is this tape recorder working? Where's the book?"

He lectures—India, that far away place . . . Swamijī's India, which he says is spiritual and eternal—sages, *yogīs*, pure devotees. We are simply listening. Hearing about India in New York. "Why are you going to India? India has come to you."

People look in the big storefront window. Swami holds the audience as people stop and read the sign in the window.

A fragile, little, transcendental light within the dark world of New York City, the dark world of the universe in Kali-yuga. That storefront with its slightly tilting floorboards; ragged, Oriental-style rug; posters of Pañca-tattva, Hanumān, Ṣaḍbhuja and the circular Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa over Swamijī's head—that storefront is dear to Kṛṣṇa. It is compact Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everything is here in a small storefront on the Lower East Side.

I was there.

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"He likes my company . . . "
2.2

Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's servants really relished Prabhupāda's company. Prabhupāda said that about Brahmānanda once. When I was with Prabhupāda in 1974, I asked if I could transfer to another service. He asked me who I thought could take over my duties as his personal servant, and I suggested Brahmānanda. Prabhupāda assented, "Yes, he likes my company."

It hurt at the time to think that Prabhupāda might doubt my own liking for his company. But I also recognized it as an affirmation for the person he spoke it about. "He likes my company." We should all like his company, even if our false ego is strained by the constant pressure Prabhupāda puts on it.

Prabhupāda was the symbol of self-sacrifice. He was not overbearing, just pure. He had no desire to win respect for himself, he simply wanted people to recognize the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa. This came out especially in Prabhupāda's writing. Walt Whitman said that everything one is will come out in one's writing. If you are the kind of person who likes to have a servant stand behind you at the dinner table, that will come out in your writing. If you are cruel to your wife, that will come out in your writing. Even if you try to avoid these topics in your writing, still, they find their way into your expressions. In Prabhupāda's case, we see every phrase saturated with his faithful desire to present Kṛṣṇa's message. His writing is not outstanding because he was a great Sanskrit scholar or because he used polished prose. These things are also true, but the outstanding feature is his presentation of Kṛṣṇa as He is. This is very unusual for commentators of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Most *Gītā* commentators cannot resist using the *Gītā* to propound their own philosophy.

Being in the presence of someone who has no other desire than to serve guru and Kṛṣṇa is intense. It puts a lot of pressure on you and your own wishy-washy surrender. You keep wondering where your own needs fit into the picture. You *want* to surrender, but you can't fake it. Prabhupāda

demanded that surrender. You were the menial servant. Therefore, it is not a light statement for Prabhupāda to say that someone likes his company. It means that that person was able to remain the menial servant of his guru. It means the disciple was able to take instruction and to be reprimanded. It means that the person was able to stand seeing the difference between his own false ego platform and Prabhupāda's pure one. All the servant's demands for material comfort and sense gratification were exposed. Could you give up your precious sleep in order to serve Prabhupāda? The willingness to give up sleep—a whole book could be written on this sign of surrender. Prabhupāda gave up his sleep; his servants were expected to do it also.

Until each of us can honestly say we like Prabhupāda's company, how will Kṛṣṇa bring us to Prabhupāda in the next life? Kṛṣṇa looks deep into our hearts at the time of death. As Supersoul, He fulfills our heartfelt desires. He also gives us what we deserve. We may *say* that we want to go to Prabhupāda, but if we do not deserve it by our surrender and service, or if we do not *really* desire it, then Kṛṣṇa will award us accordingly. Of course, Prabhupāda will not forsake us and he will return in some form or other to awaken our Kṛṣṇa consciousness and bring us back to his service. Our duty is to realize Prabhupāda's mercy on the heart level and then to serve the pure devotee. We cannot realize his mercy only philosophically. As we advance more, we will come to relish his company.

One aspect of Prabhupāda's mercy is that he allowed different people to approach him in different ways. Some devotees like to be close to Prabhupāda and want to engage themselves directly in his per-

sonal service; others prefer to serve his order in other ways. There is not necessarily any difference in each person's affection for Prabhupāda. While Prabhupāda might praise a personal servant for his nice cooking, another devotee serving away from Prabhupāda may receive his encouragement when he hears of that devotee's preaching. Prabhupāda himself said that the preacher was more important than the "oil-smearing secretary."

There are different ways to express loyalty and love for Prabhupāda. By Prabhupāda's grace, we can all find a way to like his company.

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Crying in kīrtana
2.3

When I remember our early *kīrtanas* with Swamijī, I mostly recall the bliss, but there was also pain. Life is painful. In order to experience happiness, you have to break through the suffering. Some musical forms, like blues music, express the suffering in a melodious way. The *kīrtana* has some of that too, at least when it is sung in this world by conditioned souls who cry over material unhappiness even while they are transcending it. We want to get out of this place—out of the hell—right now, by singing. *Kīrtana* works like that. We feel relief, but we also experience the pain. Our feet stay in this world while we aspire to go up.

When a pure devotee like Śrīla Prabhupāda looks out at the conditioned souls, he sees Kṛṣṇa's mercy and compassion showering over them. The pure devotee conducts the *kīrtana* for them. When

he hears them singing in the *kīrtana* chorus, he also hears their joy mixed with the material modes, although he can see the *kīrtana* is lifting them out of the material realm all together. Swamijī was not touched by the modes—that was obvious to us from the beginning—but he stayed with us. He came close to us. Only a devotee who is pure like Prabhupāda can understand what he really felt toward the fallen souls. No one else can understand it.

Our *kīrtanas* were not exactly crying the blues. It was more a cry of relief, "Lord, Energy of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa!" By chanting we will get out. If we don't chant, we're trapped. It was a cry of relief from our suffering.

Prabhupāda could see that we were fools. There was no scope for us to pretend we were advanced. In that sense, it was easy for him to be affectionate toward us. We were not spiritual masters or advanced souls. He looked upon us and was lenient and kind. He encouraged us through the chanting and guided us in our spiritual childhood. Since we couldn't hide our infantile state, it made for a good, honest relationship. No pretension that I am a GBC man or a *sannyāsī,* or that I can keep a little aloof from Prabhupāda because I've got my own preaching scene—no, it was obvious where we were at.

In later years Prabhupāda said, "Always remain a fool before the spiritual master. Don't think you are advanced." He would sometimes see disciples thinking that they were advanced, but he preferred that we be fools without pretension.

When we cried in *kīrtana,* maybe that was foolish too, but Swamijī encouraged us. He knew everything nonsense would be washed away in the

spiritual "vibrations." We experienced that too, how the evening *kīrtana* washed away our material attractions and the insults of the day, the grime of the city, the stress. The evening *kīrtana* was like a spiritual washing away of our fatigue.

* * * * * *

Don't become a dry antiquarian of Prabhupāda memories
2.4

While I like to compile many memories of Prabhupāda, I have to be careful not to become a dilettante of past memories and early photographs and miss the main point—reverence, enthusiasm, and loving service. I want to stay focused on this main point as I look at the photographs. The photos can evoke loving feelings in me, but they cannot become substitutes for active remembrance.

Looking at photographs of Śrīla Prabhupāda, images come to mind: Prabhupāda is entering the temple room wearing that rust-colored sweater. His palms are folded as he looks to one side and smiles. I feel the distance between Prabhupāda and me closing.

He is sitting in an airport lounge waiting to go somewhere. I can't tell from the photograph which airport it is. He wears a thick garland of flowers with a fragrant gardenia in the center. I can see a few long hairs straying from his eyebrows, and the loose skin under his neck. I remember his ability to command us and direct us, and I again feel commanded and directed.

Photographs and memories are one thing, but I also have to cultivate remembrance of his instructions. He gave so many philosophical purports and direct statements about how to manage the movement and ourselves. It takes intelligence to follow all his directives, and faith to aspire for that intelligence. Neither do we want to become over-intelligent. Following his directions and remembering him is meant to keep us humble. We are forever his disciples. We will never be greater than Prabhupāda.

That's another point about becoming a dilettante: I cannot simply "study" Prabhupāda as a scientist studies a specimen under a microscope. I have many photographs of Prabhupāda representing many posed and candid moments. Still, I cannot understand the mind of my spiritual master. I *can* study his words and teachings, but even that has to be done with faithful hearing and service. I am not a literary critic or a lawyer who can endlessly dissect his instructions, looking for . . . what? Loopholes? That would be over-intelligent, and it is an offense.

I have my service in his movement like anyone else. But regardless of whether my service differs from yours, we are all students at the feet of the guru. I don't want to become like a jaded sense gratifier, always needing more and more stimulation to get the same "high." *Prabhupāda* is enthusing me. I collect his memories and photographs to remind myself of that.

To stay alive in Prabhupāda memories, while remaining free of dilettantism, is to know that he has a current connection with us. Don't relegate Prabhupāda to the museum in your mind, and

think that you are the antiquarian collector of rare books and artifacts. Prabhupāda is out preaching.

I want to serve those devotees who have that "face-to-face-with-Prabhupāda" realization. I am poor in Prabhupāda consciousness. Am I trying to compensate for that by collecting Prabhupāda memorabilia? It's okay, it works. But let me take the dust on my head of devotees who are alive for Prabhupāda.

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Prabhupāda has formed our present
2.5

We are quite accustomed to living with Prabhupāda in separation. It is not a different Prabhupāda who is with us now than the Prabhupāda we lived with before 1977. Prabhupāda was with us for only eleven years; he left us fourteen years ago. Still, we have to keep his presence focused in our lives.

We are inevitably locked into our present in ISKCON. Our present is formed mainly by our past experience. Let our allegiance to that saintly person who came to New York in 1965 and picked us up form our present surrender to Kṛṣṇa. We were helplessly gripped by the modes of nature before Prabhupāda came, but he easily lifted us out of that life and set us on the spiritual path. He formed our present.

Now we can see that despite all difficulties, it is important to stay with Prabhupāda's followers. They are the only ones who can understand our experience of Prabhupāda; they are the only ones who can understand our feelings of indebtedness to

him. That *saṅga* provides solace. Our spiritual sentiments are soft and vulnerable, and even in the association of devotees they sometimes get bruised. But the benefit of devotee association is so great, the possibilities of Prabhupāda-remembrance so pronounced, that the possibility of a little emotional pain caused by the mixed motives of others is worth the risk. We have to have faith, and most of us have the experience that only devotees can appreciate another's love for Prabhupāda. In this way, Prabhupāda has formed our present. He has bound us by love and duty to preach and pray in the association of those who love him. He has bound us to his society.

ISKCON is not meant to be just a cult for remembering Prabhupāda. Rather, it is a mission meant to benefit the whole world by the distribution of God-conscious knowledge. Prabhupāda knew that ignorance of God was the greatest misfortune in the world. Due to ignorance, people don't know the nature of the soul. Therefore, they base their activities on the temporary body and become entangled in the cycle of *saṁsāra*—they make a big mistake. Prabhupāda understood that education in the basic purpose of life is crucial to world peace and happiness. As his followers, we have to work together to disseminate this knowledge.

But the only way for us either to preach or to work together is to remember Prabhupāda and stay focused on his example. This is the Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta: yasya prasādād bhagavata-prasādo/yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi.*

* * * * * *

Little moments with Prabhupāda
2.6

Sometimes we have what I like to call a "Prabhupāda moment," that is, we connect something in our present-day reality to a memory or impression of Prabhupāda. These things are usually not momentous revelations, so we tend to disregard them. But Kṛṣṇa conscious life is filled with service to the spiritual master, and that service is filled with little remembrances of his personality or instructions, little moments. We don't have to wait for the demigods to shower flowers on our remembrances or for cymbals to start crashing in the sky. We are followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He is *jagad-guru*. We just have to notice and appreciate whatever moments come to us and be favorable toward them.

What does it mean to treat our "Prabhupāda moments" favorably? We can treat them more carefully, for one thing. Just as we tend to plants by watering them and keeping them free of insects and ensuring that they get enough sunlight, we can tend to our connection with Prabhupāda. Paying attention to our "Prabhupāda moments" will make us more conscious of our entire relationship with Prabhupāda. Perhaps we can pray to Prabhupāda as we wipe the dust from his framed picture. Or when we say something like, "All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda," we can stop and think about him for a moment, rather than just rattling it off mechanically.

For example, I like to remember how Prabhupāda used to stop between Calcutta and Māyāpura in a mango grove. He did it a number of times. It was his habit. But it was always something special for the devotees who were with him. The grove

was almost halfway between Calcutta and Māyāpura. Stopping there broke the three-hour journey.

We used to bring tiffins filled with puffed rice and fruits—mango, papaya—and maybe *sandeśa.* Usually two car loads of devotees would be at the grove. The women would sit a little apart, and Prabhupāda would sit with his secretaries and male disciples. *Prasādam* would be served to Prabhupāda first, and then he would wash his hands and mouth. After Prabhupāda was finished, his *prasādam* would be distributed, and we would all eat. We all felt happy to be with him and honor *prasādam* before getting on with the journey.

Even while it happened, the stop at the mango grove with Prabhupāda was just a "moment." Now when we recall it, it is not a "major" event. We have these experiences, and then life goes on, yet what is life but a collection of such moments? Some of them are special, although they may not actually be earthshaking events. Then what is a tremendous event? Usually we think of them as disasters or violence or sudden windfalls. But with Prabhupāda, so many things happen subtly, quietly. For example, the publication of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* will revolutionize the world. It is a tremendous event. But Prabhupāda composed it morning after morning. Although he was internally intense, the mornings were routine for him. Morning after morning, he added a little bit to the entire *Bhāgavatam.* As Prabhupāda himself said, "Little drops of water wear away the stone. In this way I have written all these books."

All of Prabhupāda's ordinary moments are special to us. His rising alone at 1:30 A.M., his turning on the light and opening his books to where he left

off, his putting on his reading glasses, deep in his scholarly mood—he was communing with the previous *ācāryas* just to save us. And then, another volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Prabhupāda said, "When I publish a book, I feel like I have conquered an empire." He conquered more than an empire: he conquered his devotees' hearts.

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Did Prabhupāda Suffer?
2.7

We are aware of Prabhupāda as a spiritual person with a spiritual body. Some devotees approach this awareness in a dogmatic way. It disturbs them to hear or think of Prabhupāda in any way that appears too human. But the *śāstras* say that *nitya-siddhas* sometimes act in this world as ordinary persons, although *they never forget Kṛṣṇa and service to Kṛṣṇa*. Even Lord Caitanya acted like a *sannyāsī*, although He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Let us meditate on Prabhupāda's exemplary tolerance of bodily ills. If he didn't feel any inconvenience at all, then where is the question of his displaying tolerance? In one letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that if you want to know about the suffering of the spiritual master, then ponder the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

We met Prabhupāda in his seventies and knew him up until the eighty-second year of his life—a time when the aging body is breaking down. Prabhupāda used to give himself as an example in

lectures and say, "When you grow old, the body has so many complaints." Sometimes he would even tell about the complaints he had—arthritis, diabetes, and so on—but he never complained. He caught colds and coughed a lot. Sometimes his cough was so aggravated that he could hardly give a lecture, but he would go on anyway.

In a matter-of-fact way, Prabhupāda noted that, although at seventy years old hardly anyone leaves home, he had come to the West and now continued traveling because of his enthusiasm. "Because of this enthusiasm," Prabhupāda said, "you have received the information." And he did this despite sometimes having a cold, sometimes a swelling on his lip, sometimes a swollen eye; his teeth were falling out, his bladder didn't always function properly, he had indigestion, and there were many other discomforts.

Prabhupāda did not take too much care of his body. The fact that he continued to travel so frequently in airplanes, and also the fact that he didn't keep a very strict diet but kept to his regular, Kṛṣṇa conscious *prasādam*, were in his case, transcendental acts. He was more concerned with preaching and did not consider preserving the body for the optimum number of years into advanced old age. Of course, Prabhupāda's life was naturally healthy. He went to bed early and rose early in the morning, took his morning constitutional walk, and his mind was always pure and invigorated. Prabhupāda was full of life. He certainly wasn't like the old person who has lost his purpose in life and therefore dwindles away. There was never even a touch of senility or depression in old age. But it is not wrong if we think of Prabhupāda as suffering for

us. He accepted these things without a complaint, in a manly and philosophical way.

One time, one of his young disciples came to Prabhupāda in Hyderabad and reported that he had jaundice. The disciple said that his stool had changed color. Prabhupāda replied that sometimes his stool was also one color and sometimes another color, but this wasn't very important; it was simply the changing nature of the naturally defective body. This is summed up in Kṛṣṇa's statement to Arjuna, where He says the material world is temporary and changes just like the seasons, from winter to summer. Sometimes you are happy and sometimes you are unhappy, but one should learn to tolerate and not become attached.

We can learn a lot from this attitude. It can free us from many anxieties and from wasting precious time when we worry about our mouth or our back or even our heart. Better to use our time in Kṛṣṇa's service. If Kṛṣṇa wants to protect us, then we won't die from ill health; and if Kṛṣṇa wants us to take another body in another life, then no amount of health cure will save us. We can be responsible and not neglect our health simply by leading the regulated life of *sādhana-bhakti*. But since there is no way to keep perfect or permanent health, we should follow Prabhupāda's example and fully engage ourselves in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Materially speaking, we will be very lucky if we can live as long as he did and keep in active form. As for accomplishing as much as Prabhupāda did in his old age years, that is not possible. But we may worship his example.

Try this . . .

Everyone will become sick at some time in their life. Whether it is a chronic or serious illness, or just an occasional cold, when the body becomes disturbed, it can be difficult to carry on with our regular activities. The next time you become sick, you might like to remember these or other examples of how Śrīla Prabhupāda behaved when his body was causing him disturbances, and practice tolerating the bodily pains in a deeper way. Try to realize more fully the basic principle, "I am not this body." (It can also be good practice for the time of death.)

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Meeting up with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the future
2.8

According to Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, the sincere disciple meets up with the spiritual master in the spiritual world. For the slack disciple, the spiritual master has to return to the material world in some form to bring the disciple back to Godhead.

Meeting with the spiritual master in his eternal form is esoteric information. Some of us are so attached to Prabhupāda in the form in which we saw him, that we don't even like to hear that he has another spiritual form. It seems to diminish our Prabhupāda as we knew him. But as we advance in understanding, we have to at least honor the fact that there is more to our relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda than has been manifest so far in this world.

Prabhupāda accomplished so many things in a relatively brief time. He set a flawless example and gave us volumes of written and spoken instruction. We cannot estimate the value of Prabhupāda's contribution to our lives. Everything he gave us continues to exist after his departure, and it will continue to sustain the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for centuries. All this has come about just from the "temporary" appearance of Prabhupāda.

In a lecture that Prabhupāda gave on the Vyāsa-*pūjā* day of his own spiritual master, he said that the guru comes into this world to perform a certain assignment on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. When he leaves this world, he continues to carry out the same mission somewhere else. That continuing form and mission of the spiritual master is beyond the vision of most of us. As long as we live in this world, the important manifestation of Prabhupāda is the one that we have before us.

We pray with faith that Kṛṣṇa will honor our service and give us the mercy of continued reciprocation with Prabhupāda. Perhaps we once insisted we would only know Prabhupāda in the form of Swamijī in the 1960s, or as founder-*ācārya* in the 1970s. Now we are more willing to hear that Prabhupāda may appear to us in a different form. We ask, "How will I recognize Prabhupāda in the future or in my next life?" The question may also be asked, "How will Prabhupāda recognize *me?*" Prabhupāda's disciples will also not appear in the same bodies in which he knew them—as muscular Hari-śauri, or delicate Govinda dāsī, or slight but intrepid Tripurāri carrying his book bag.

The transcendental system will arrange for us to recognize each other even without these temporary

forms. The universe is personal. We are not going to become particles of light. We will always be persons and we will always be Prabhupāda's followers.

Śrīla Prabhupāda worked in the ISKCON world right up until his last day on earth, but the ISKCON world is included in Kṛṣṇaloka. Perhaps in our next life, we will be participating with Prabhupāda in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. In the very last verse which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote before he entered *samādhi,* he said that he wished to meet his spiritual master in the spiritual world where his guru would have the form of an eternal *gopī-mañjarī.* ISKCON teaches this doctrine, but Prabhupāda's special desire was that while we are in this world, we should concentrate to help the conditioned souls by giving them Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The nondevotees are not in a position to look forward to meeting the spiritual master as a *gopī* assisting Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. They do not even know of Kṛṣṇa or their specific relationship with Him. Out of compassion for them, we have to work in this world, giving them relevant instructions about the spirit soul and the relationship with God. We have to teach them to take up the preliminary stages of *bhakti-yoga.* Only by executing this *tapasya* as given to us by our spiritual master, and by ourselves chanting, hearing, and practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness with determination, will we be eligible for future meetings with our spiritual master in future worlds and forms not yet known to us.

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Explaining the good old days with Swamijī
2.9

Today (in Italy) Matsya-avatāra Prabhu was asking me questions about the early days. Some young men from the neighborhood had gathered to listen in the nice setting of his temple room. He asked, "I would like to know how things developed over the years in terms of the morning program."

It was an interesting question. I said, "In the beginning, there was no *maṅgala-ārati.*" I told how and why the different parts of the program were added by Prabhupāda. There is a saying, "The spirit liveth and the letter killeth." This expression refers to the spirit and the letter of the law. Insistence on the letter of the law kills the life of the law. Swamijī was imbued with the spirit of devotion, especially the spirit to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, to engage his senses in Kṛṣṇa's service, and to teach us how to develop this spirit too. Prabhupāda knew that despite our imperfect application of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, everything would develop if we followed his simple program of hearing, chanting, and working for Kṛṣṇa. That was the spirit. He didn't introduce the "letter" of the law, since he had no disciples who were qualified to carry out the regulations properly.

We would see Swamijī sit down for "bells" every evening. He would bathe and then put *tilaka* on twelve parts of his body. Then he would circulate a stick of incense at his picture of the Pañca-tattva and ring a bell while reciting Sanskrit prayers. We didn't know why he did it or what exactly he was thinking when he did it, but we liked to watch it anyway and participate in whatever little way we

could. Now that we can recognize *pūjā* or *ārati*, we can understand that Prabhupāda was engaging in a private worship. He was intent on preaching, and he had no real temple in America where he could establish a regular altar with regular worship. Therefore, his own worship was very simple.

Deities made a relatively late entrance into ISKCON life. Even when They did appear, Prabhupāda did not tell us too many details of how to carry out Their worship. He kept it simple. When he did his own *pūjā*, he would chant Gāyatrī afterwards. No one else had Gāyatrī then, so we would sit quietly and watch. ("What's he doing?" "He's saying his *brāhmaṇa* prayer.") He always did his private worship in the presence of all the young, curious devotees. We used to do whatever we could do—we put on *tilaka*, tried to recite the prayers Prabhupāda chanted, bowed down. We were his little children imitating what our father did.

Watching Prabhupāda doing "bells" wasn't like attending the Catholic Mass. We didn't have to sit restlessly for long periods of time while Prabhupāda chanted prayers in a foreign language. At any time he would turn and speak to us. Then, his *pūjā* over, he would sit and converse with us again before going downstairs.

The first time we observed Kārttika was in the late fall of 1966. We would go to his apartment in the evening. It was exciting to light a birthday candle, let the wax drop onto the coffee table, and then stick the candle into the hot wax. "Swamijī, why are we doing this? " "To increase your devotion," he said. That explained it perfectly. (We still imagined the flame represented the soul though.

Gargamuni would say to Brahmānanda, "Look, my soul is burning down lower than yours. My soul is going to go out." "Oh, look! Your soul went out!" We saw it as our life burning down.)

Prabhupāda's brief and simple explanation made sense to us, "To increase your devotion." We lit the candles every night for a month, but we didn't observe any fasting or *caturmāsya* austerities.

To this day I cannot take many details seriously. The Gauḍīya Math calendar lists the specific times for *dvādaśī* break fasts—"Break fast by 9:47 A.M."—but I find those details difficult to relate to. Prabhupāda didn't train me like that. He gave us the most important things—the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, a life free from sin, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—but he didn't insist on too many details. He wanted us to concentrate on our devotion.

Prabhupāda did teach us about various fast days. We fasted on Janmāṣṭamī until midnight and on Gaura-Pūrṇimā until moonrise. We didn't know about Vyāsa-*pūjā*, although Prabhupāda gradually added that in too.

I don't want to say that we should only do things the way Prabhupāda introduced them in 1966—times have changed and Prabhupāda himself gradually added to those simple explanations and observances—I just mean that those were special times and we shouldn't forget Prabhupāda's unbreakable concentration on increasing our devotion.

I was married on Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's appearance day, 1968. Now we observe fasting on that day. In 1968, one of the devotees had heard that devotees usually fast on certain days and he asked Swamijī, "Should we fast today?"

"No, there is no question of fasting." Prabhupāda kept it simple.

Sometimes devotees go to India and learn the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava traditions based on the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa.* They contrast all those regulations with the way Prabhupāda observed the various Vaiṣṇava festivals. Some of those devotees become offensive and accuse Prabhupāda of not knowing the proper way to conduct Vaiṣṇava worship. They say he was a householder and never lived in the Gauḍīya Math. I say whatever he knows is perfect. Whatever he taught us is fine. That was our upbringing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, those of us who were in that '66 group. And there is real essence to it, Prabhupāda's expression of devotion through his method of *kīrtana* and *pūjā* and preaching.

Prabhupāda seemed to feel the same way about adding too many innovations into ISKCON. In 1974, a devotee questioned Prabhupāda about the chanting of Gāyatrī: "I understand that you say the Gāyatrīs morning, evening, and noon. But actually, such-and-such Sanskrit books say Gāyatrī should be chanted at exact times according to the sun. The sun's movements change with the changing of the seasons." Prabhupāda said, "Yes, that is true." The devotee then asked, "So should we distribute this information and start to follow it?" Prabhupāda said, "No, leave it this other way because if we change it, people will think we have being doing it wrong. Just keep it that way, morning, noon, and evening." Prabhupāda rarely cared about technical adjustments. This was not whimsical on his part; Prabhupāda was on the spontaneous, *rāgānugā* platform of devotional service. He was not bound by

rules and regulations but was interested in giving his disciples the spirit of devotion.

Another time, in 1973, Prabhupāda was up in his room at Bhaktivedanta Manor. A devotee came up and reported that Pradyumna was chanting the "Puruṣa-sukta" prayers for the fire *yajña*. Prabhupāda didn't approve. He said, "Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is enough, but because some of the *smārta brāhmaṇas* will complain that this is a strange religion because it doesn't have enough reference to Vedic rituals, the Gosvāmīs, especially Sanātana Gosvāmīs, described these Vedic rituals in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* to satisfy them. Therefore, we have this fire, a few bananas and things, but keep it shortcut."

Prabhupāda emphasized all the important things: *yena tena prakāreṇa manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet*, "Keep the mind fixed on Kṛṣṇa." One may argue, "Yes, keep the mind fixed on Kṛṣṇa as the first thing, and *the rules and regulations will come later.* So the rules and regulations have to come, not that you '66 boys—what do you want to have us do, continue to wear *japa* beads around our necks and have beards on our faces just because Swamijī let *you* do that?" No, we have to progress. But we cannot lose the instructive value of Prabhupāda's methods.

One way that Prabhupāda's early teachings can be applied is in preaching. Devotees who are preaching especially in countries where ISKCON is just beginning, as in Eastern Europe, can feel safe to keep things simple by Prabhupāda's example. They are eternal beginning principles—how to emphasize preaching without getting bogged down by the rules and regulations. Rules and regulations can be added later, but the beginning foundation of stressing devotion is how Prabhupāda taught us.

There is a certain sweetness to our exchanges with Prabhupāda in those days when he summed up Kārttika in a sentence: "It is to increase your devotion." He also explained Rādhārāṇī in a sentence: "She is the best devotee of Kṛṣṇa because She loves Him the most." Those are irreplaceable, stripped-bare instructions for the simple people. We should keep them with us forever. We may like to laugh about the early days, but we should never laugh at Swamijī as if he were too primitive. He touched us in a way that I don't think we've been touched since.

Swamijī, please let us remember you and continue to be in touch with the devotion you emanated and gave to us in those early days. You freely dispensed Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the mood of Lord Caitanya from your relaxed, sitting position behind your tin trunk. Sometimes you sat upright, performing your "bells" ceremony. You taught us how to worship Kṛṣṇa by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. You gave us Kṛṣṇa consciousness for life by making it so accessible to us.

Our only purpose in remembering the old days is to share them with others. You were there with us, Swamijī, and we loved you. Please allow me to serve you by making your teachings, even your 1966 teachings, available to everyone everywhere. Let us never forget those days.

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Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
2.10

Swamiji, from you we hear
and see
the sages of the past.
Naked mendicants
who never pass semen,
and by concentration of the soul
on its light
and its glare
they attain the sky of Brahman.
It is not easy.
And we can't do it now.
But even in Manhattan
we can transcend
just by vibrating the Holy Names.

Please lead us to do so.
I'm writing this "poem"
from the floor of my apartment,
two minutes walk from you,
on a hot summer afternoon.
Looking forward to tonight,
when we can see you,
put on Vaishnava tilak and
chant Hare Krishna under your gaze,
then hear your lecture—
and transcend!

Now let me go out and work
at my welfare office yoga
to gather the weekly check
of sacrifice for Vishnu.
I am confident because you are near
and ready to kick free of Maya
in her various forms.

Your servant,

Satsvarupa das

Notes on Srimad Bhagwatam,
Ist Canto, Vol. 2

Swamiji is selling the book (first volume published), but rich men aren't coming forward. They think he's a businessman. But you can do business for Krishna and it's not sense grat.

"So even though we are not in the Himalayas, even though we talk of business . . . because we are 100% servants of the Lord and are engaged in the service of broadcasting the message of His glories—certainly we shall transcend and get through the invincible impasse of Maya and reach the effulgent kingdom of God to render Him face to face eternal service, in full bliss and knowledge" (Preface, Vol. 2).

Swamiji is confident of this and says the readers of SB can achieve the same

just by hearing the glories of the Lord.

Let's get out of this stuff
that holds us back.
Maya is no impediment.
We kick it.
Krishna will win, no doubt about it.

Lecture, September 1966, Bhagwad-gita 6.44, etc.

Swami said there is a chance of failure in yoga. He told the story of Vishwamitra Rshi. He was a king who went to meditate. He became so powerful that Indra in heaven—heaven is also material — thought, "This man may take my seat." So Indra sent a beautiful society girl, Menaka. Vis. combined with her and a child was born, Shakuntala. Vishwamitra was sorry because he was advancing in spiritual life and then this happened. There is a famous picture — Vis. is leaving but Menaka shows him the child and says, "This is not good." He makes a gesture, "Don't show me anymore." And he goes away.

Failure is the pillar of success. It's not bad. The successful yogi goes to the kingdom of God. But the failed yogi (failed student), what happens to him? Goes to heavenly planet. Then comes down to be born in two kinds of good families.

Prabhupāda, may we write you letters?
2.11

I am at the bridge again looking down into the water. I want to be with him and to speak with him . . .

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for letting me write about you, and sometimes in an imaginary way, by "guided imagery" meditation. I did that for the last two days. At a devotee's suggestion, I imagined you had come back to a place of my choice. Somehow I decided you should come to a house we arranged for you here in Ireland. Some devotees gathered and we received you with *ārati* and *kīrtana.* I was able to ask some questions and to give you a massage. It was all done in the imagination, but it was a sweet meditation.

I asked you questions about how to improve my service, and I braced myself. What if you tell me I'm a nonsense? (Am I a nonsense, Śrīla Prabhupāda?) But I didn't dare go so far as to concoct things you might have said. The act of thinking about you was in itself satisfying.

Now I am asking you permission to write you a letter. These letters are also imaginary because I have no way to send them. Still, I am overcoming my inhibitions in approaching you by writing these letters, so let me continue.

We used to write to you letters, and we knew that you would hear our words and then respond and correct us. It's not like that anymore. Prabhupāda, I know my letters are just like a young boy chattering to his father. The child lives in his own world, but he needs his reality validated by the

parent—just to have the parent hear him, just to have the parent nearby.

What are the things that I would say to you in letters? I cannot report to you now about the temples that are in my charge—I no longer have a zone. I could tell you about my traveling and preaching, and making of disciples, or I could tell you about my book-writing. I am still a little shy about that. My letters are not pure. Ultimately, I want to learn how to write to you with my actions and know that everything I do will pleasing to you.

As you know, I correspond with hundreds of devotees. Sometimes they ask, "Is it all right if I write to you?" They say, "I know you have many letters to answer. Maybe I shouldn't trouble you." Or they may say, "I sometimes write to you but then throw the letters away because the things I say are foolish." It *is* a burden for me to read so many letters, and if they are foolish, that makes it even more difficult. But I sincerely encourage them to write if they think they will benefit by our correspondence. I think of my writing to you in the same way as they think of writing to me. I will get benefit and therefore I want to write, but I know it is a big burden to read my letters, especially when they are foolish.

Since your disappearance, our letters may appear to be more like monologues. We won't be able to say, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, I received your letter yesterday and thank you very much for correcting me on my misconception about Deity worship and prayer." It will never be exactly the same as when you were here. But *something* is there: "Prabhupāda, since I last wrote you a letter about Deity worship, I see that you have corrected my notions. I noticed

this while reading your purport in the *Bhagavad-gītā* . . . " We are still able to exchange with Prabhupāda and this can be expressed in our letters to him. Our letters are for expressing faith and love.

Try this . . .

Try writing your own letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even if you are not his direct disciple, is there anything you would like to say to Śrīla Prabhupāda if you could write to him?

* * * * * *

What kind of devotee are you?
2.12

Today Madhu asked me whether I will be doing "Prabhupāda recall" in India. I said I hoped so. That was a rather strange reply, admitting that I wasn't so confident. I am going to India to teach at the VIHE. Why was I saying I *hope* I will do Prabhupāda Recall? Perhaps I meant I hope I will say something inspired.

I got a letter from a staunch book distributor recently. He was criticizing me (and other U.S. ISKCON leaders) for my lack of participation in book distribution. He was accusing me of cheating by talking so much about internal development without personally doing book distribution. He said the leaders should go out. It shook my confidence at first. How can I think I am pleasing Prabhupāda in a personal way when I hear a criticism like that?

But when it comes right down to it, we each have to have faith that Prabhupāda knows our

hearts. We have to have faith that he is accepting our service, even if it is not book distribution (or the myriad of other things other people think we should be doing). It may be true that I am not brave enough to distribute books, and it may even be a real lacking on my part, but that doesn't mean I cannot make another offering to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. I can still please them. Prabhupāda praised book distributors as the foremost preachers, but he also accepted other kinds of preaching. We should all cooperate together, not just tolerate each other.

We all want to praise the book distributors and encourage them, but we also have to encourage many other people. We have to encourage ourselves in our service, too. That may mean that since not everyone will distribute books, less books will be distributed. They may have to accept that fact as something they can't do much about. We may have to accept their insistence on book distribution as coming from their realization of Prabhupāda's pleasure with that service. I try to see it like that. We do not have to be inimical to each other because of our different realizations. Still, this devotee's words shook me up, and maybe that's good.

Another devotee indirectly told me that he didn't appreciate any of my books except the *Līlāmṛta*. "Well," I said, "I am a writer. I have to continue writing books even if they are not so good." He smiled and said, "Yes, our Kṛṣṇa conscious culture is broad enough that there's room for everyone to do some kind of service."

I accept it and it's true. Although there was a note of condescension in his voice, I felt happy that his words were true. There is a place for me and a place

for the particular literary service I am doing. There is no reason to be proud, except that Prabhupāda has accepted me through my service. I know I am not another Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, but Prabhupāda accepts me.

There are some staunch devotees who think my writing service is a tenuous connection to Prabhupāda at best. Similarly, other devotees barely tolerate the service of others. Although in the end we all do tolerate, I wish it could be more than that. For Prabhupāda's pleasure, I wish we could love one another.

It can hurt when someone doesn't appreciate us or our service to Prabhupāda. Although we don't want to be proud—Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the midst of the *gopīs* because they thought of themselves as supremely fortunate—we do want to continue to turn to Prabhupāda. We must be prepared to readjust ourselves sometimes, but we have no other life than to go on serving him.

Try this . . .

Can you think of a devotee whose service you may not have appreciated in the past? Can you see how he or she has done something, no matter how small, that is pleasing to guru and Kṛṣṇa? Can you try and think more kindly about this devotee and their service in the future, and perhaps even say a kind word to them about it some time when you see them.

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Swami in Boston
2.13

Prabhupāda memories, hard to get.
Do you want them?
Desire is the price.
Where there is a will . . .

Prabhupāda came to the storefront
and I was thrilled to see him.
Not fearful or "mental"—
simply thrilled, and my anxiety was
that things go smoothly for Prabhupāda—
who is visiting our temple.

Please him. Make his visit successful.
"Swamijī, can I make an announcement?
Swamijī is now in Boston and
so it's a pilgrimage as far as we're concerned.
Please help us keep it that way.
Give us engagements for Swamijī.
And come to our love feasts in Allston.
And does anyone have a car
to drive Swamijī nine blocks away?"

Swamijī didn't like it that you
canceled Wednesday night at the temple because
of an MIT engagement.
He wasn't deeply displeased,
but he corrected you—
pay attention to it,
don't think yourself the big arranger
for his visit. You are
a bumbling fool.
The whole point is to please him.

After he left and went to Montreal,
Prabhupāda spoke of his Boston stay.
"We must charge. In Boston, all
the lectures Satsvarūpa arranged, they paid
a hundred dollars. At least fifty.
The Massachusetts Technical College and
Eastern University . . . then Harvard
and Boston University and one church,
Arlington Church."
He remembered.

There is the charmed circle and you
are within it, Prabhupāda
is talking about you.
He will criticize you too.
You are on his mind,
you are one of the members
so sometimes you get scrutinized.

He came again to Boston in 1969.
When he saw you in his room, he said,
"You are feeling all right?"
"Yes."
"Yes. You did not go to the airport?"
(He said yes because he knows I love him.)
"You were supposed to give a lecture today,"
I said, "at Boston College, but because
you gave a lecture last night in Buffalo,
we canceled it. I went instead."
Prabhupāda said, "So you lectured there?
That's nice. Now you have to lecture.
I will have to retire." (He chuckles)
That was a rainy day.

We *did* know it was rare and
wonderful to be with you.
You visited us only once a year or so.
It was rarer than we could imagine.
I never thought I would be peering back
in time for just a glimpse
of what it was like to be with you.
Peering, but I can't see—
I catch only a scent of it.

Then another night I told you we found
a new place to rent in Boston.
I assumed that you were interested
and for me it was an obsession,
to "run"
the Boston center for you.
What else did I know?
But I didn't know how
to run it, no accounting,
no source of regular income,
no plan . . .
"Maybe you could look at it," I suggested.
"Oh yes," you said, "what
is the description?"

These were real exchanges with you—
not so esoteric or śāstrically based but
essential service, preaching,
finding a place, and you there to decide
so we don't get cheated.
I told you it was on a second floor.
"Second floor," you said. "So what is the rent?"
"Three hundred a month. But we can
do it. Presently Patita-pāvana is working and
I am, and sometimes the *gopīs* get some money."
The *gopīs?* Yes, that's what we called them then,
and he didn't say it was wrong.

"All right," Prabhupāda said, "Kṛṣṇa
will solve the problems."
He saw that I worried too much,
not depending on the Supreme Lord.
"You have to take *saṅkīrtana* party,"
Prabhupāda said.
"That should be the main business.
. . . sixteen men, four *mṛdaṅgas.*
Practice *mṛdaṅga* like that.
And twelve cymbals and one chanting
and all others responding. Oh, it will be
tremendous. Take some flags, 'ISKCON,'
Hare Kṛṣṇa flag, red flag. And conch shell . . ."

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A letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda
2.14

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

I am trying to start the practice of writing you letters again. I know that you won't be able to answer this through your secretaries as you used to up until 1977, but I want to do it as a kind of meditation. I think that by expressing myself to you, that will also help me to hear your answers to my inquiries in your books. In fact, you speak to us in many different ways, if we could only hear.

My letters, especially when I was a GBC man, used to consist of reports about the different centers and how they were doing. At the end, I would usually ask a personal or philosophical question. Sometimes my questions were very specific. I awaited your answer—can I worship a Deity while I travel to the libraries? Can I give up my job at the welfare office?

I still have specific questions, although the letter-writing circumstances have changed so drastically. But I have to break into this letter-writing gradually. Perhaps in this one I will only be able to state my intention to open correspondence with you again and leave it at that. I really hope I can keep them up on a regular basis.

You know about the trouble that has occurred in ISKCON since your disappearance. You know that many devotees are no longer practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and that some of the leaders have mistreated devotees. ISKCON is trying to purge itself of disease, but we are still going through "growing

pains." But my business in this letter is not to discuss the growth and purging of ISKCON.

In these letters I want to focus on you and me. I want to ask you my philosophical questions, and about how I can make tangible advancement. How can I improve my *japa?* Should I go live in Vṛndāvana? Is it all right how I am behaving these days?

Please forgive me for being unsurrendered. Actually, I am hoping this letter-writing will help me to become a better follower of Your Divine Grace. There is no better way than becoming a real disciple to glorify such a wonderful spiritual master.

I am writing this "first" letter from Ireland where I am writing a book called *Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda.* I am also visiting with devotees here. Ratha-yātrā in Dublin will take place in a couple of weeks and I will also be holding an initiation. Then I will go to India where you are so much present in your Krishna-Balaram Mandir.

Please never leave me for a moment, no matter where I go. And please help me over the hurdle of death to rejoin you in the next life.

When I used to write you letters, I would sometimes ask about your health, or the progress of your writing of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* Or, I would know where you were in the world and ask you how the preaching was there. But I don't know where you are anymore. I know that you are in Kṛṣṇa's internal energy, and that you are always with Kṛṣṇa wherever you are. I don't know what to ask you about your activities anymore. Can you tell me what you are doing? I would be so happy to hear about your activities. Ultimately, I will come to you

as I absorb myself in Lord Caitanya's pastimes and as I hear about Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, because you are always in Vṛndāvana with Kṛṣṇa—and you always serve your ISKCON *saṅkīrtana* mission.

Your eternal servant,

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Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
2.15

Some devotees like the notes I keep on Swamiji's lectures. They are an exercise to help me remember and understand Krishna consciousness. Unless you hear from a pure devotee, you cannot know Krishna. There are some books circulating in the storefront on Hinduism, and even books by Swamiji's Godbrothers. They are all interesting (like Swami Bonn's BRS and Professor Sannyal's book about Lord Caitanya.) Still, the all-important thing is to hear from Swamiji.

I don't know anything else.
I am safe as his student.
I can't go wrong that way.

I want to read his Srimad-Bhagwatam and type for him – that is an excellent way to learn philosophy. You can't learn philosophy unless Krishna reveals

it in the heart. He will do that when you serve his realized pure devotee.
More notes from lecture of BG. 6.40-43

He (the fallen yogi) takes birth in a brahmin's family. Brahmins are very pure, very clean. Or the fallen yogi takes birth in a rich family.

Swamiji told of his own life. His father was very pious and worshiped Krishna. When Swamiji was 5 or 6 yrs. old, he asked his father for Radha-Krishna Deities. His father purchased them, and Swamiji as a child offered his food to Them in imitation of the offerings his father made. They also visited a temple of Krishna. Swamiji as a child watched for hours. These are the gains of being born in a family like that.

Narada says even if you come to Krishna consciousness because you are crazy, all right, still it is good.

The third kind of family the fallen yogi is born into is a family of yogis. This is the best kind. The brahmin may think he has nothing to learn. The rich man's son may become a drunkard. When you are born in one of these families, you start to remember what you learned of Krishna in the previous life.
Swamiji said: "I MAY TELL YOU THAT THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN THIS SOCIETY, KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, VERY SERIOUSLY, THEY ARE NOT ORDINARY PERSONS. THEY MUST HAVE HAD SUCH CULTURE IN THEIR

PREVIOUS LIVES. NOW THEY ARE AGAIN TRYING TO REVIVE IT." The asset is there.

That was very interesting that Swamiji said we must have been yogis in past lives and that is why we are taking to Krishna consciousness now. I don't remember anything from my past life, especially about Krishna, but he said so according to the Bhagwad-gita.

I want to go on listening carefully to his lectures. Umapati keeps exact notes for publishing in BTG. Mine are more for myself. This is the only writing I am doing now.

* * * * * *

Part Three

Prabhupāda's willingness to disturb the sleeping dogs
3.1

The main impression people got when they met Prabhupāda, especially in a private *darśana*, was his strength of purpose and his dedication to serve Kṛṣṇa. His demeanor, however, always impressed others as being gentle and sweet. He didn't use coarse expressions, and his physical movements were graceful and reserved. He was a gentleman.

But despite that demeanor, Prabhupāda wanted to create a revolution. When he went to Pennsylvania upon first arriving in America, they thought he had only come to sell some books and would go back to India in a few months. Prabhupāda was surrendered to Kṛṣṇa's will. If that was all Kṛṣṇa allowed him to do, he would accept that, but he was certainly ambitious to do much more. He wanted to create a revolution in the consciousness of the entire world. He was prepared to work at it, even though he was in advanced old age. Books were the basis, but books by themselves couldn't do it. There had to be people to practice the teachings of the books, people to distribute the books to others, and there had to be money to accomplish these things. Prabhupāda pushed hard to get all these things done.

As soon as he began holding *kīrtanas* at 26 Second Avenue, especially in the morning, the tenant upstairs began banging on his floor. Prabhupāda urged his followers to chant softly, but still the man objected. Finally he began to pour water on his floor so that it dripped down into the storefront. Other tenants signed a petition to have Prabhupāda evicted. Prabhupāda remarked about this during

one lecture. He said that our activities are very innocent, yet still people are objecting and trying to make a dangerous situation. Prabhupāda knew that every single thing he did, every word he wrote, was in direct opposition to the big powers of meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling. There was bound to be opposition. Prabhupāda said that he was surprised he wasn't crucified.

Prabhupāda was not a rabble rouser. He didn't get any particular joy out of people trying to harass his movement; he simply knew that he had to preach seriously and accept the consequences from the materialists who became disturbed. And of course, he pointed to the long tradition of Vaiṣṇavas who were grateful for all troubles that came as a result of their preaching. They knew it was bringing them closer to Kṛṣṇa and accepted it as proof that their preaching was effective. Prabhupāda sometimes gave the example of Jesus Christ on this point of opposition. He called it "the favorite example," that Jesus was willing to disturb people even at the risk of his life. But he also spoke of those in the Vedic tradition—Lord Nityānanda, Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and many others—who were willing to give up their lives for the cause of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda was in this same mood.

Prabhupāda was especially uncompromising in his condemnation of materialistic activities. He used strong language to describe people who are devoid of the inclination for spiritual life, calling them dogs, hogs, camels, and asses. He also referred to them as rascals. He called the leaders of the countries cheaters. He said they were all going to hell for their impious activities. By any standard, this was harsh criticism.

He also protested against the government. He did it in a nonsectarian way, favoring neither the Communists nor the Capitalists. According to the scriptures, he said, any political leader in this age is bound to be the lowest kind of man. And, in a sense, he protested against the material bonds that held families together. When his young disciples joined him, it created friction between ISKCON and the parents of the devotees. The anti-cult movement became prominent and made ISKCON one of its main targets. But Prabhupāda was willing to put himself and his followers on the firing line for the sake of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda met many objections to his preaching personally. When he went to Paris in 1974 and sat in public on a *vyāsāsana*, agitators in the audience yelled at him, "Get down!" Another time in Australia, the students at a university where Prabhupāda was speaking were on the verge of violence.

Every time his disciples were harassed, Prabhupāda felt it in his own heart. He wrote about this harassment in the Tenth Canto purports—"I am afraid that at any moment the movement might be closed in different parts of the world by the whimsically oppressive governments." Prabhupāda heard that all the devotees had been arrested in Argentina and the movement closed down there. He heard Kṛṣṇa consciousness had been forbidden in another place, devotees had been arrested—all of these things caused him sorrow. But these were all examples of his being willing to disturb sleeping dogs, even though they caused him distress.

The devotee is described in *śāstra* as one who doesn't have enemies and who doesn't cause agita-

tion for others. Prabhupāda was not a trouble-maker. He simply wanted to give people the key to their own happiness, but because of their inimical attitude toward renunciation and devotion to God, there was trouble. Despite everything the nondevotees leveled at him, Prabhupāda continued distributing books and propagating the holy name, even to unwilling populations.

In personal meetings, Prabhupāda actually got very little reaction to his strong words. It was hard to be upset with Prabhupāda. He was so pure that anyone who met him immediately felt disarmed by him. No one insulted him back, even if they thought they had been insulted by Prabhupāda. He always explained the philosophical basis of his words and actions, and everyone was satisfied, if not convinced.

As Prabhupāda's disciples, we now carry this legacy of disturbing the sleeping dogs. Although the old adage tells us to "let sleeping dogs lie," Prabhupāda explains the necessity for waking them up in his purports to the verse where Kṛṣṇa tells us not to disturb the minds of the materialists or the ignorant. Kṛṣṇa advised the devotees to prosecute their duties peacefully, and said they should not feel troubled by persons who have no desire to practice spiritual life. Prabhupāda reminds us, "If you give a thief good instructions, he will just become angry."

Kṛṣṇa says elsewhere in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that only persons who are austere can receive the message of *Bhagavad-gītā*. In an apparently different mood, Kṛṣṇa says that whoever distributes the message of Godhead and makes devotees is the dearest servant of the Lord. Prabhupāda clears up

this apparent contradiction by telling us that the devotees know Kṛṣṇa's inner purpose. Although Kṛṣṇa doesn't want to trouble His devotees by exposing them to harassment, His deepest desire is that the conditioned souls be given a full chance to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Actually, they have already had many chances. Kṛṣṇa Himself has appeared in His many different forms, but still the generations of conditioned souls continue to revolve in the cycle of birth and death, refusing to hear the message of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa wants to give them another chance. Now it is Kali-yuga and the conditions are even more unfavorable for coming to spiritual life. Kṛṣṇa and the devotees have to be more accessible, the process has to be easier and shorter. Despite Kṛṣṇa's merciful holy name, which is the only way in this age to attain God consciousness, the devotees are still harassed. And because of the Kali-yuga influence, people are even more violent in their rebellion against God consciousness.

Prabhupāda knew Kṛṣṇa's inner desire. He woke up the sleeping dogs. And he wants us to do the same.

Try this . . .

See if you can think of another example of Prabhupāda "waking up the sleeping dogs," either from a story you heard or a book you read about Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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A letter to Prabhupāda
3.2

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

I know the *śāstras* say that when one comes into the presence of the spiritual master he should praise him. I praise you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, because you are my life. Without you, I would know nothing about God. I would probably be an atheist recycling himself through the lower species of life over and over with no hope of freedom. Praising you is a natural inclination of my heart. You are able to purify me of unclean thoughts. You cut off my inclination for bad association. I have to praise you as my savior. Let me tell the world what a great devotee you are!

I want to give you an update of my activities. You already know what I am doing, and unfortunately, you also know how *little* I am doing. But I remember how you liked us to inform you anyway. Do you remember the time in 1969 when I was typing your dictation tapes and not writing to you frequently enough? You wrote back and said, "Don't keep me in the dark." You are never in the dark, Śrīla Prabhupāda, but you kindly asked us to reciprocate with you.

Having to tell you what I am doing helps keep me on the straight path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If I know that I am going to write you a letter, I won't want to have to report something shameful. I remember when you were present before 1977, I used to think over nice topics to relate to you and how to say them. If I can continue that meditation, it will

help me to remember you in a real way. I know that remembering you is not for your benefit but for mine. Thank you for accepting my service in this way.

In the past when I wrote you letters, I always tried to ask you a philosophical question. Of course, after a while you advised us to look in your books for the answers, and if things still weren't clear, to ask the senior devotees. I don't want to bother you with questions like, "What is the origin of the living entity?" My main question is the one which you asked your spiritual master, "How may I serve you?" You know I often hesitate to ask that, partly because I'm not sure how to phrase the question in a way that covers the range of feelings I experience when I ask it, and partly because I am a little afraid of what you might say. But , I still sincerely desire to serve you. I want to do something that is pleasing and useful to you.

I am determined to carry on the course I am following now, serving you by writing and taking care of disciples on your behalf, but I am always open to your direction at all times. Even if you told me to make an about face and go in the other direction, I would do it. I don't know if I am really bold enough to stand behind that statement, but at least I have dared to write it into this letter so you can know my aspiration.

I hope to be able to hear from you and of your activities in the spiritual world.

Your servant,

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Bitter melon and sunsa unica
3.3

Bhakti-cāru Swami's disciples celebrated his appearance day in Māyāpura this year. They held a feast and invited some of Bhakti-cāru Swami's Godbrothers up to his quarters and served us in several rows. Bhakti-cāru Swami had also invited a distinguished guest, a retired police commissioner from Calcutta, who brought a few friends.

The feast consisted of many Bengali preparations which were served out one after another, finishing with the sweets. About halfway through the feast, we started telling Prabhupāda stories, many of which were about Prabhupāda honoring *prasādam*. I will try to remember some of them here.

Haṁsaduta was there. He told a story about the first time the devotees ever went out to an engagement in India with Prabhupāda in 1970. The Western devotees didn't know anything about the habits of the Indians. They worried whether the food was offered, what they could eat, how to eat it, and so on, so they simply sat in their two long rows with Prabhupāda at the head with his host and watched Prabhupāda. When Prabhupāda reached out and took a preparation, they all did the same. Then when he took another, they all took that one. They did everything Prabhupāda did and did not do anything separate from the way he was doing things. Then when he finished, they all suddenly finished.

Then Dhanañjaya told a story: One time in 1976, he took a urine sample from Prabhupāda to a doctor. Prabhupāda was subsequently diagnosed as having diabetes. A doctor came to see Prabhupāda

and said that he shouldn't eat sweets or ghee anymore. Prabhupāda listened attentively and submissively to the doctor while he was there, and agreed to follow his restrictions. But as soon as the doctor left, Prabhupāda said, "No, this isn't possible. Because I have such a sweet tooth, I cannot stop." He said he would rather die eating *sabjī* and regular *prasādam* than follow these restrictions. "I cannot do it, I will not do it." This reminded me of a similar story about Prabhupāda in Bhuvanesvara. At that time, he had decided he would only eat fruits and nuts, but he quickly gave that up.

Dhanañjaya then told a story how one time Prabhupāda was very sick in England. He was choked up with mucus, so he ate some chili pakoras. He said that seven chili pakoras will create the same heat in the body as a bottle of gin. The devotees who were taking the feast together wanted to know how Prabhupāda knew such a thing. Bhaktarūpa answered, "Well, Prabhupāda *should* know, he was a chemist." The devotees laughed heartily.

Everyone continued to eat and tell more stories. Devotees were getting so excited that there were only short pauses in between one person's story and the next. My mind was also filled with stories of Prabhupāda and the desire to tell them. I waited my turn and told one after another, such as about the time Prabhupāda cooked in Hawaii.

Then Dhanañjaya told a story about Prabhupāda's Rome visit. Prabhupāda called Dhanañjaya in and asked him to make *śukta* for lunch. Dhanañjaya asked, "What's that, Prabhupāda?" Prabhupāda said, "Ask Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, he knows." (It was wonderful for me to hear a story about Prabhupāda where I was mentioned, especially one

I didn't remember. There must be so many stories like that, so many pastimes with Prabhupāda we just don't remember.) Dhanañjaya explained to Prabhupāda that I was sick with jaundice and that I couldn't get up to cook, so Prabhupāda told him, "Go and get your wife. I will teach her." Prabhupāda was so eager to make the *śukta* that he left what he was doing and immediately went to the kitchen to show Dhanañjaya's wife how to cook it. Dhanañjaya reminded me that I had brought dried *kārelā* with me from India and said Prabhupāda used that for his *śukta*.

Bhakti-cāru Swami explained how one can cut *kārelā* into strips and put them in the sun to dry. I remember doing it in 1974 in Bombay so that we could carry them to Europe and other places with us. We regularly brought these little sprockets of dried *kārelā* with us because Prabhupāda liked it so much. How wonderful to remember that little detail again! I had completely forgotten it. The tiny detail revives my loyalty. I want to be loyal to this wonderful person who taught us all these things in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and who we served by carrying dried *kārelā* with us all over the world.

Dhanañjaya told another story of Prabhupāda's visit to Rome. He related how once they were driving to the temple from the airport, and Prabhupāda saw the crops in the fields and asked what they were. "Grapes, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"Oh, they like grapes?"

Dhanañjaya answered, "No, Śrīla Prabhupāda, they grow them to make wine. They like wine in this country."

Prabhupāda then said a little wine is good for digestion.

"But Prabhupāda, they are drinking *many* bottles of wine." Prabhupāda then said, "That's not good."

As they continued driving, they came to a sign on the highway that said *sunsa unica.* In a low voice Prabhupāda asked what it meant. Dhanañjaya explained that it meant "one way." A little later they came to another sign with the same words on it. Prabhupāda turned to Bhagavān and said, "Bhagavān, what does that sign say?"

"What sign, Prabhupāda? I don't see it."

"*Sunsa unica,* what does it mean?"

Bhagavān said, "I don't know Prabhupāda."

Then Prabhupāda said, "It means 'one way.' I know Italian and you do not."

Then I told my famous story about Prabhupāda calling me Sir Isaac Newton. The devotees laughed even though they have probably all heard it before. But I wanted to tell it again to share the sweetness of that pastime.

I wondered how the retired police commissioner was relating to all this Prabhupāda-*kathā.* I glanced over to him. He wasn't laughing as fully as we were. I wondered whether he felt we were sufficiently grave about our spiritual master, with so many stories about eating and food and other funny pastimes. Did he think we were just a band of enjoyers? But I hope he understood the love we were expressing. That love doesn't need any explanation.

Haṁsaduta said that, in the early days, Prabhupāda used to take eggplant *puki* on airplanes with him and would eat them even before the plane took off.

Dhanañjaya told another story of when the devotees were invited out to the home of an Indian

man, Mr. Prajāpati, who originally came from East Africa, but was now living in England. The devotees arrived at his house late. It was around 8:00 P.M. Mr. Prajāpati asked Prabhupāda, "Would you like something to eat?" Prabhupāda said "No, it is too late to eat. I will just take a little milk." Mr. Prajāpati brought the milk and said, "Would you like a little something to go with the milk?" Prabhupāda said, "Well, some *purīs* if you have any." Mr. Prajāpati said they had some and then asked, "Would you like a little *sabjī* with your *purīs?*" Prabhupāda said, "You have some *sabjī?* Not that your wife should cook now, but do you have it already?" Mr. Prajāpati said, "Yes, we have just a little bit."

So then one preparation came out, then two, then three, and then Prabhupāda said, "Do you have enough for the other devotees too?" More was brought out until an entire feast was served, including *halavā*. The devotees didn't finish eating until midnight. Prabhupāda said, "You tricked me. I only asked for a little milk and you provided a whole feast."

None of the devotees could get up in the morning after that feast, although Prabhupāda got up at four, ready to go to the Bury Place temple. The devotees had to hurry—they couldn't even bathe but just got dressed—and they ran off with Prabhupāda to the temple.

Try this . . .

This is an easy one to try the next time you get together with one or more devotees. Just tell a Prabhupāda story and see how contagious it is!

Letting go with Śrīla Prabhupāda
3.4

Lately I've been thinking of "letting go," and then I linked that thought to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Often when there is a big *kīrtana* in the temple, the lead singer pushes devotees into the center, spins them around, and induces them to dance. I don't partake in the dancing, and no one tries to force me to because of my status as a "senior citizen" who gets headaches. But I know the younger devotees like to see senior devotees let go and dance. Even if the older devotee can't jump and dance like the younger devotees, if he at least tries, it gives approval to everyone else's dancing. It shows that he knows he is just another tiny soul like everyone else. He is willing to look foolish as he dances in his body, and he has enough spontaneity and lack of pride to do a few steps. Everyone can see he has some life left in him.

The only danger is that the senior devotee may look silly; he might even do something silly and lose his gravity.

Did Prabhupāda ever lose his gravity? There are examples in scripture of very grave Vaiṣṇavas who did "let go." Rāmānanda Rāya, Haridāsa Ṭhākura, and Advaita Ācārya took part in water sports with the other devotees. They became so "frivolous" in their games that Lord Caitanya sent Svarūpa Dāmodara to ask them to please stop.

As for Śrīla Prabhupāda, he was always ready to make some quiet jokes, even in a serious situation. He liked to see the humorous side of things. Surabhi Swami tells a story that when Prabhupāda was introduced to his opulent Bombay quarters in

the new tower, one of the devotees said, "It's fit for a king." Prabhupāda responded, almost under his breath, "But where is the queen?" He was always making little jokes, turning words around and playing on words. As a preacher, he always had to be sharp with words.

One day on a morning walk, Prabhupāda was explaining Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's verse where he states, "I take a straw in my teeth and bow before you and ask you to hear about Lord Caitanya." One of Prabhupāda's *sannyāsī* disciples said, "That is a very humble statement." Prabhupāda replied, "A humble statement for giving you a slap in the face." Prabhupāda went on to explain that the devotee is only humble so that he can ask you to kick out everything except Lord Caitanya's teachings.

Prabhupāda wasn't always solemn-faced, and neither did he honor every word that was spoken to him. He sometimes made people look silly by punning on their words or turning around what they said and showing its inadequacy. He used people's words as a springboard to go on to something further, sometimes making a joke at their expense in the process. Although Prabhupāda never engaged in any kind of raucous behavior, he was not a stiff or tense person. He was always in the mood to see the humor in life.

One of my favorite examples of this is how Prabhupāda spoke in his very last days and how he lightened one of the heaviest moments of all. At that time, the devotees were in great anxiety because Prabhupāda said he wanted to go on an ox-cart *parikrama*. When some of the devotees pleaded with Prabhupāda to please not go, Prabhupāda agreed because they were in so much anxiety. Then

Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja said, "Actually, Śrīla Prabhupāda, we're so much attached to you that you practically drive us to madness sometimes. Tonight we're becoming mad."

"No, no, I shall not do that," said Prabhupāda. "Bābājī Mahārāja," Prabhupāda turned to Niskiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī and said, "just see how much affection they have for me."

"Śrīla Prabhupāda," said Tamāl Krishna, "the way you deal with us simply deepens our attachment every moment."

"It is my duty," said Prabhupāda.

This remark is almost the climax of Prabhupāda's life, and the explanation of his relationship with all of his disciples. It is a profound and final statement. "That is my duty"—it was his duty to draw us to him in love. But Prabhupāda followed this remark immediately with a light-hearted remark. He said, "That is my duty. . . . My Scottish professors used to pronounce the word 'duty' as 'juti.'" Prabhupāda wouldn't refuse a sweet, light moment whenever it occurred to him, or a reminiscence or a touch of humanness even in the midst of deep and transcendental talk.

Prabhupāda never behaved loosely. No one ever questioned his restraint, and he never acted inappropriately. He was a perfect gentleman. Being elderly, he was also restrained in his physical expressions. Yet one can see in photos of Prabhupāda how he sometimes swung a fist or made exuberant gestures with his cane on a morning walk. He would burst into a radiant smile, and all the devotees around him would also smile. Even at these times, however, Prabhupāda always seemed to be in control. His manner was refined, as was befitting a

world *ācārya*. He wouldn't even sit down on a chair at an outdoor cafe in Paris because liquor was served in that place.

Prabhupāda never overate, and he always kept his diet simple. But perhaps "letting go" might be expressed when he ate a few extra *samosās* or a few extra sweets. None of this was ever seen as excessive by his devotees, but rather it gave them extra delight.

When Prabhupāda wasn't in public, he would relax more. There is a nice photo of him in his Māyāpura room where he's leaning back and has his feet up on the low desk. In most formal photos, Prabhupāda sits in the half-lotus position, but this photo shows a "down home," intimate moment with his servant, Śrutakirti, sitting nearby.

Prabhupāda was also relaxed with some of his Godbrothers or contemporary *sādhus*. There are pictures of Prabhupāda with Hanuman Prasad Poddar and with other aged persons, and pictures of Prabhupāda with Śrīdhara Mahārāja of Navadvīpa. Prabhupāda and the other persons present are breaking into huge grins, and everyone seems to be shaking uncontrollably with laughter at a shared joke. Prabhupāda's disciples certainly considered themselves part of a rare moment when they were included in on such scenes, even if they didn't know exactly what was going on.

Try This . . .

From your own experience of looking at photos of Prabhupāda and hearing Prabhupāda's stories, can you think of other moments of pleasant relax-

ation or humor by Prabhupāda? One area for further discussion on this point is to consider what we mean when we say that a pure devotee's relaxation or humor is "transcendental."

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I'd be with him
3.5

We are ready in the morning
to go to Māyāpura by car,
to stop at your mango grove . . .
Memories of you buried deep in me . . .
I will let others' memories in too—
Śrīla Prabhupāda is for everyone.
But be honest to your own Prabhupāda.

If he were in Calcutta tonight,
I'd be with him at the temple
even if it meant rats roaming
slowly among sleepers on the floor.
I'd be outside your door, Prabhupāda,
and in the morning eager
to accompany you.
I strived to be a leader so I
could please you and be included
in the breakfast stop
in the mango grove.

If you were in Calcutta tonight,
you'd meet some old friends
and give a lecture in Bengali,
and we Americans would sit through it.
We'd follow you to your room.

Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda—
maybe you'd call me in for something.
We would not be afraid of you,
but very respectful.

I can't remember it.
But I know we did
as you said
and trailed after you.
And so tomorrow I'll go to Māyāpura
and seek you there.

Are you in Calcutta tonight?
In your book I read important purports
for forty minutes and then,
just as I reach the most ecstatic
descriptions of Rādhārāṇī, I can't
pay attention. I try the chanting
you taught us. I wonder
if I'm doing all right.
You are in Calcutta tonight
if I'm receptive.

In any case, I'm wearing the uniform,
trying, and I look forward
to going to your place.

Prabhupāda,
let me not berate it—
the little devotion I feel
and the fact that you allowed me near.
They can berate it,
but I will not.

Prabhupāda is with me
in my heart,
as I write and read,
as I rest and as I rise
to go to his place.
I too am
in his movement.

Try this . . .

How about trying to write your own poem to Śrīla Prabhupāda? No one will judge it, no one even has to read it, but it is a nice way to think of Prabhupāda, talk to Prabhupāda, remember Prabhupāda. You just start writing and let the words flow out . . .

* * * * * *

A Letter to Prabhupāda, August 17, 1991,
Wicklow, Ireland
3.6

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. It is only one day since I last wrote you. I need to feel that I have a serious reason for writing to you. If one is fortunate enough to correspond with a great personality, he shouldn't abuse the privilege by writing when he has nothing to say. Although I don't have much more to say than I said yesterday, I don't want to fall into the other extreme and think, "I won't write. I am just wasting his time." That would be a kind of unfair self-deprecation. I need your mercy.

Prabhupāda, do you remember when you liked to hear us read *Kṛṣṇa* book to you in the garden in Los Angeles? If you like, I could do that again. Would you like that? I want to serve you by this correspondence, so if I could recite *Kṛṣṇa* book to you in my letters, perhaps you won't think my too frequent letters are a waste of time. I remember you liked the frequent letters you received from Bhūrijana because he always enclosed a check. He didn't just write flowery words of praise, but he rendered you practical service. You are looking for tangible service from us. If I can write a letter and say, "I distributed some books today, Prabhupāda," or, "I wrote an essay," or, "I helped a devotee in Kṛṣṇa consciousness," then it is good news.

I will end this letter here, although I haven't said much about tangible service. At least you know that I am concerned that, if I am going to write you frequently, there should be some real substance. I know the real substance is ultimately loving service, whether we write letters or not. I don't think a devotee like Jayānanda Prabhu wrote so many letters, but he was very dear to you by his loving service.

Aspiring to be your loving and useful servant,

* * * * * *

Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
3.7

Still the modes of nature hit us
in this world we are,
in the world we are,
but Swamiji can get us out.
Take to bhakti-yoga.

Trying to type while neighbors make noise. I have ear plugs. Rayram says he prefers not to stop up his senses, but the man next door sometimes slams his body (or his wife's body) against the wall. This is the material world.

Early mornings are good for chanting on beads. I have written an essay, "Controlling Sleep." I try those techniques. The main thing is to believe the body has had enough rest. You won't get sick – so when sleepiness comes in the morning, you fight it full force by these methods: (1) strong shaking of head; (2) water on face, etc. Then it goes away.

Up early. Go to the bathroom. Forget the past. You have hours to chant your sixteen rounds and then go to the storefront to see and hear Swamiji. I'm fortunate.

Encourage others to hear from him.

This apartment is noisy, but I am happier than I have ever been anywhere else.

I use the little stove for heating sweet milk at night. I used to make my own hot cereal, but now I take heavenly porridge with the devotees at the temple. And lunch with Swamiji.

I can close my eyes and see him. I go over there more every day. The Hare Krishna mantra hardly stops sounding

inside of me, and so Krishna is dancing on my tongue. Vishnu is in my heart.

I am writing an essay on karma-yoga — my devotional work at the welfare office — for BTG. Rayram says my essays are OK and he will use them.

The most important thing is serving Swamiji — serving Krishna by serving Swamiji — serving Krishna by serving the spiritual master. Service by hearing from him and rendering other services (like in the welfare office).

Lecture notes cont., Bg. 6.40-43

Even if you do only 10 percent devotional service, it counts for the next life. But we should finish. "I shall not take the chance of another birth!"

"I couldn't finish the job in past life, but this life . . . "

"You boys who come here, it is an urge within that 'we want'. So this urge is due to your past spiritual culture. This should be understood if we believe in Bhagwad-gita. No more falldown."

Every step there is danger. "Just see what we are doing. Innocent culture is spiritual life, and yet there are so many complaints. We are not stealing, doing politics, but somebody comes forward and puts some danger: Jesus Christ was crucified." This place is like this. Swamiji's guru maharaja

said, "This place is not fit for any gentleman."

God is in our heart and reminds us: "Begin again. Don't lose this chance."

Swamiji's lectures are sublime. Packed with knowledge. I want to go on typing them and hearing them and appreciating. Don't miss this opportunity to serve the pure devotee.

Rayram told me Swamiji said it took him 30 years to attain his present level of chanting Hare Krishna.

Kirtanananda noticed I got up and danced during Swamiji's kirtana. He said I looked transparent.

Swamiji encouraged me to chant within when I'm at the welfare office.

My visit to my sister's house didn't work out so well. When her husband, Tommy, drove me to the train station, I told him that Krishna consciousness wasn't anything crazy. I said, "It's transcendental loving service to Krishna." He said, "Yes," but I don't think he understood.

Swamiji is kind to come to us on the Lower East Side. He's actually giving bhakti, which is meant for everyone. I am fortunate. Let me work and not miss this opportunity. Work soberly; do all you can.

Notes on reading Srimad-Bhagwatam, First Canto, Vol. 2

There is a special quality to this book which makes it like no other book I've read. For one thing, the author is our living guru. It is the absolute truth. You enter the book, and the words assure you that this book gives direct contact with the Lord. You hear of Him and meet Him in the pages (even the physical book is special – old paper from India, even the spelling mistakes seem to add rather than detract from the magnetic appeal). I read it as quintessence. It tells us additional things to what Swamiji says in his classes and in his room.

"Srimad-Bhagwatam is so made that one becomes at once engaged in the path of self-realization simply by hearing the topics. Although it is specially meant for the paramahamsa or top persons . . . yet it works into the depth of the heart of those who may be worldly men" (SB. 1.7.1, purport).

Swamiji wrote this in India. Now he's continuing, well into the Second Canto. Hayagriva edits what Swamiji has typed and I retype.

* * * * * *

Dealing with our illusory Prabhupāda
3.8

The first time I heard the term "illusory Prabhupāda," it was spoken to me by my Godbrother, Bhūrijana Prabhu. I was startled to hear that phrase. Bhūrijana said he had been serving Śrīla Prabhupāda in separation in Hong Kong while Prabhupāda was in America. Bhūrijana thought that he had subtly begun to do things differently from the way Prabhupāda did them. To rationalize his behavior, Bhūrijana tried to justify his actions based on what he thought Prabhupāda would say. In this way, he felt like he was still in line with Prabhupāda. He never actually forgot Prabhupāda and had no other desire than to serve him, so he began to serve Prabhupāda as he conceived of him in his own mind.

Then Prabhupāda came to Hong Kong. When Bhūrijana went to meet him at the airport, it was a shocking experience. Seeing the *real* Prabhupāda, to have to answer to him and surrender to his instructions was a crushing blow.

To describe one's creation of an "illusory" Prabhupāda is a very honest statement for a disciple—to admit that a duality can exist between Prabhupāda as he is, and Prabhupāda as we want him to be.

We all want to strive to replace any imagined idea of Prabhupāda with the real person. One way to do this is to expose ourselves to Prabhupāda's books and letters. Of course, the letters are sometimes jarring, unless they are read carefully according to person, time, and place. For example, Prabhupāda might strongly reprimand someone

and tell him not to write poetry. A poet may be hurt by Prabhupāda's condemnation of something he holds dear. But one has to consider whether the person Prabhupāda wrote the letter to was misbehaving in other ways—was writing poetry an excuse for not doing other service? Was his or her poetry expressing impersonalistic sentiments? There are so many things to consider. Therefore, it is good for us to expose ourselves to the "real" Prabhupāda as he wrote letters to people, but we have to carefully understand the context from which he is speaking.

There are many "Prabhupādas" floating around our movement. (How often do we hear, "Prabhupāda said" offered by someone trying to end an argument?) Our search for the real Prabhupāda will have to be a sensitive and ongoing one.

We have to be patient with ourselves as we serve Prabhupāda. Even if there is some trace of illusion in ourselves, ultimately, there is nothing illusory about Prabhupāda. It is natural to select certain instructions that we think fit our situations and our personalities when we try to relate to the spiritual master. As preachers, we even encourage newcomers to find something in Prabhupāda's teachings which they can follow wholeheartedly. We just have to be careful not to present a watered down version of what Prabhupāda is teaching. Until we are pure, there will always be some trace of compromise in our ability to follow, but we should always seek to increase our surrender and to know internally who our spiritual master is and what he wants from us.

Neither should we be afraid of the possibility that we have created an "illusory Prabhupāda." It's not

like the "illusory Vasudeva" which the demon Śalva created to dishearten Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield. Śalva said, "Kṛṣṇa, I have your father here, and I'm going to cut off his head. There is nothing you can do about it." Śalva then cut off the head of his mystic illusion. When Kṛṣṇa saw it, He appeared to be unhappy for a moment. But since Kṛṣṇa is never overcome by illusion, He then grew more determined to fight. Any service to Prabhupāda is valid. If we are determined, we will gradually work out our misconceptions of Prabhupāda. And we are never cut off from the mercy.

The Prabhupāda we worship and who appeals to us is our inspiration for devotional service. Śalva used the "illusory Vasudeva" in an attempt to harm Kṛṣṇa. But if we worship Prabhupāda, we will always be benefited. With confidence in Prabhupāda's mercy, we can strive to cut away too much compromise in our service and to respond to Prabhupāda as he is.

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Rādhāṣṭamī in Māyāpura
3.9

As we sat out on the veranda in Māyāpura taking *prasādam*—Bhakti-cāru Swami, Haṁsaduta, Subhaga Mahārāja, Dhanañjaya—many stories about Prabhupāda were passed back and forth. Stories, little snippets, pieces of Prabhupāda remembrance. Bhakti-cāru Swami related how one night in 1977, he was massaging Prabhupāda. He said he was feeling sad that he had only now come to serve Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda had already been with us

for eleven years, but he had not come early when Prabhupāda needed more help. By now, Prabhupāda had thousands of disciples by which to spread the preaching. Bhakti-cāru Swami expressed this sentiment to Prabhupāda, and Prabhupāda replied, "But I was never alone." When Bhakti-cāru Swami heard that, he felt very insignificant. He realized that Prabhupāda didn't need his help.

Each story that was told brought to mind six more, but I didn't want to tell them. I have recorded many of these stories in my books already. I was more in the mood to hear other devotees' stories and to feel the goodwill between us. The formalities fell away as we honored *prasādam.* It also made me see how Prabhupāda-*kathā,* and similarly *kṛṣṇa-kathā,* is such a leveling experience. To sit down hungry for the association of devotees who know about the most important things in one's life and to feel at home with those devotees is wonderful.

Dhanañjaya told us how, when Prabhupāda installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in London, he said something like, "Rādhārāṇī's hand is blessing you so you can approach Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise you cannot approach Kṛṣṇa." Then he told another story about Yamunā dāsī receiving some Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities from a traveling lady *sādhu* named Śyāma. Prabhupāda warned her sternly in a letter that she could not worship these Deities unless he gave permission.

Haṁsaduta then told how Prabhupāda stopped at Gorakhpur and worshiped Rādhā-Mādhava there by singing "*Jaya* Rādhā-Mādhava." I told what I knew about the New York installation of the brass Deities and how there was no flute. Prabhupāda improvised a flute with some sticks wrapped in

cloth. Then I told how Prabhupāda saw the little brass Deities we had in Boston. When we started to dress Them, he said They should be more fatty. Himavatī had made dresses that were too short, but Prabhupāda said, "It is all right, it affords us a view of Rādhārāṇī's feet."

One after another, these stories came out (or at least they passed through my mind). Sometimes we spoke loudly so the devotees across the way could hear us, and sometimes we told a quick aside to the devotees sitting next to us. Meanwhile, the servers were deftly putting savories and sweets on our plates. A moment's inattention could mean you had to eat more than you wanted.

Why should I ever wander from Prabhupāda's lotus feet? There will always be so many discrepancies, but if I stick with this movement, with these devotees who love Prabhupāda, then Prabhupāda will fulfill all my spiritual desires. Without him, we can never approach Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Only Prabhupāda can give us that blessing.

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Prabhupāda now
3.10

When we remember Prabhupāda as he was in the past, we go back to a previous existence. By definition, a memory is a reminiscence. It is a little unreal. One journeys back through time, visits with Prabhupāda, then returns to the present.

Memories of Prabhupāda are nectar. Without them, there would be no substance to Prabhupāda consciousness. If there were *no* memories of Pra-

bhupāda, then he would become only a legend. For example, although I don't have any direct experience of Lord Caitanya's appearance in the world, many persons who were with Lord Caitanya recorded His pastimes in diaries and books. Therefore, I can know who He actually was. Similarly, followers of Prabhupāda hunt for memoirs and encourage Prabhupāda's disciples to compile their accounts before they pass away so that everyone now and in the future can know what it was like to be with Prabhupāda.

But there is a lot more to Prabhupāda consciousness than memories of him. We may enter that "unreal" world of the past, but eventually, we must return to the present and surrender *now*. By meditating on the memories and practicing internal, minute-to-minute surrender, we will be Prabhupāda conscious. This internal cultivation is very important. Prabhupāda recall doesn't mean only remembering what he did in the 1970s, it means recalling our need to serve him now.

It's exciting that there are so many facets to recalling Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is not a matter of thinning out or extracting the same memories again and again, until they get so thinned and refined that it's not really Prabhupāda anymore. That can become a kind of *māyāvāda* meditation. No, Prabhupāda consciousness is personal. It has to do with very basic things like reading his books on a daily basis and understanding when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa that *Prabhupāda* gave us the *mahā-mantra*. It also means referring to him in a basic way as our teacher—our beloved teacher who compassionately instructs us in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda is with us at all times through his *vāṇī*. He shapes our lives to

fulfill his purpose. Also included in this many faceted way of meditating on Prabhupāda is the nectarean activity of recalling what he did when he was here.

Let me share a little experience of "Prabhupāda now." Recently I spoke with the Abbot of a Carmelite monastery in Belgium. He was quite friendly and interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but puzzled as to why a Westerner would take to Indian culture. I tried explaining to him that Vaiṣṇavism is not a sect or an Indian religion, but he still couldn't understand why we have adopted so many Indian styles of dress and prayer.

The real (and simplest) explanation, which I didn't tell him at the time, is that I live and dress the way I do because my spiritual master did. I doubt this answer would have satisfied the Abbot. He would still ask, "But isn't it difficult? You are a Westerner. Why do you do this?"

I don't have another reason though. I do it only because my spiritual master convinced me that this was the best way for me to live. I do it as an act of immediate surrender to him, and I do it as an act of faith in the past and future of his mission. And most of all, I do it because it helps me to meditate on Prabhupāda and see yet another way that he is with me now.

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Self-analysis
3.11

Sometimes I experience a negative reaction when I read Prabhupāda's conversations. I have to overcome that, I know. I hear the voices of his disciples and feel what, twinges of envy? Or that the person he is talking to does not properly appreciate Prabhupāda? Or is Śrīla Prabhupāda imposing his own view on someone else? Is he being too heavy? I shouldn't even admit these things, but I have to face them if I want to overcome them.

I feel like I am making a confession. A nondevotee psychiatrist would say, "Well, if that's how you think of your spiritual master, you have to face it. Maybe he's not all that you thought he was. Maybe you should allow yourself to think this way. Don't repress it." He might urge me to lessen my attachment to Prabhupāda. A devotee psychiatrist would deal with it differently. "Just because these thoughts pop up doesn't necessarily mean they are symptomatic of a deep problem. Don't become paralyzed by these temporary feelings from the surface of your mind." He would convince me that just because I see a little something like that in myself from time to time, it doesn't mean I don't love Prabhupāda or worship him.

Living in the material world means there will always be imperfection. It is either too hot or too cold. One is either experiencing the growing pains of youth or the dying pains of old age. There is no ideal place because everything is temporary. Even in spiritual life the body and mind try to hamper our awareness and stop us from understanding or appreciating the pure devotee. It is not the pure

devotee's fault; therefore, we pray, "My dear Lord, please forgive me. I am offensive when I think of You sometimes. I don't fully appreciate You and Your devotees."

How can I live if I think I have abused my association with Prabhupāda? I have to live by my attachment to Prabhupāda. I won't deny that attachment is there. I worship it.

We all have to worship Prabhupāda, reciprocating with the kindness he showed us. And while remembering the things of the past, we have to live now and in the future only for his mission. Somehow or other, we have to be true to him. This is how we can show our affection, our *real* deep attitudes toward him.

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Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
3.12

Notes from morning lecture, Caitanya-charitamrita, Madhya 21.35

Lord Caitanya taught that Krishna is the origin. He is a youth, but the source of everything. Krishna is the original name of God. Govinda is His name too – shelter of land, cows, and senses. Parasara Muni defined God as having six opulences.

Krishna is "home-ly" – He is proprietor of every place, but He has His own place. We falsely claim a piece of land as ours. Actually, nothing is ours. There is a saying, "I beg

vegetables to eat, and sleep in the marketplace, so where is my home?" We claim land is ours, so there can be no peace. Goloka is His abode in the spiritual sky. Planets are round but Goloka is lotus-like. As sunlight for universe comes from sun, so all light comes from Goloka. All the universes come from Krishna in Goloka; this one universe we live in is insignificant. Within the earth, U.S.A. is a small part, and in U.S.A., New York City is still more insignificant, "and in that NYC, this 26 Second Avenue is insignificant, and we are sitting here. So just see how insignificant we are. And we are claiming we are God."

We laughed when Swamiji said that, we are here at 26 Second Avenue. As he was saying it, we sensed it, getting more and more insignificant. He laughed, too. We are in one tiny corner of everything. It is wonderful that he did that – and we can know it all comes from Krishna. We get in touch with original Krishna by chanting.

I used to doodle these bass players all the time. Now that I'm in Krishna consciousness, I should give it up. Better to have them play in kirtan like the man who played bass when we had kirtan at Dr. Mishra's ashram. Otherwise, I want to let these things

go from my past. I only want to do things approved by my spiritual master.



That publisher from Chicago came to New York City. He published a segment of my novel on Svevo. He was surprised

to find me a disciple of the Swami. He came and sat on the floor with me in my apartment. He wasn't particularly impressed by my "religion." He noticed that the thumbnail on my left hand is filled with grooves and asked me if it had been injured. "I'm not sure what it's from," I said, "maybe nail-biting." It was as if he wanted to say something actual, true and meaningful, personal, and perceptive, so he chose to comment on my pitiful-looking thumbnail. But I am not this body. Talking about my thumbnail didn't bring us much of an intimate exchange.

Anyway, I said to him maybe I can write a sequel to the novel telling how Svevo joined the Hare Krishna movement. He said okay. Rayram came and met him. Then the publisher left. I don't think I even have his address. He'll probably go see Murray and Steve and see what they're writing. His coming here was like a visit from my past self. But I'm fixed in Krishna consciousness now. I probably won't find time to write that sequel. I'm definitely not very interested in reliving the scenes with Eliot and Anna and all the stuff that Svevo went through. But a sequel might be good for preaching purposes.

I asked Swamiji last night about whether I should write the sequel. He said, "Yes, you can do it." I felt foolish telling him somebody wanted to

publish what I had written. I didn't want Swamiji to misunderstand. He understood perfectly well. He said, "But they should pay you. Just because you are religious does not mean you should get less money or no money. You should get more." That's all he said. So let's see what happens about that.

More notes on Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya 21:

Lord Caitanya is describing the principle incarnations. Swamiji said there is a list in Srimad-Bhagwatam. Lord Buddha is there: "Do not think Hindus have disregard for Lord Buddha or Lord Jesus Christ. They have all regard. Anyone who comes as a representative of God or powerful incarnation, they are welcome." They speak differently from Vedic conclusions due to time, place, and persons. They are powerful incarnations.

So Krishna is on this list, and He is like the original candle. Swamiji said, "I have several times mentioned to this room" (he has said before that Krishna is like the original candle).

All incarnations are parts, or parts of the parts, but Krishna is the original. He protects Indra from his enemies. Indra is like the heavenly king. There is the concept of Satan. When there is Satanic influence over

the devotees and the demigods, then Krishna comes. When religion is low, and the laws are disobeyed, He comes.

A layman can't make up religion. God comes and He gives dharma. If people make it up nowadays, that is not real religion.

Days end with kirtan, dancing in a circle with other devotees before Swamiji. That cleanses me of all dirt accumulated during the day. Not just during the day, but for many lifetimes. I believe this because I can feel it.

I've got Swamiji's manuscript to type. I'm fortunate! Ready to work for him at the welfare office on East 5th Street.

Swamiji has allowed me to convert my energy from material to spiritual. O creative spirit of devotional life, please let me serve the Lord and the Lord's pure devotee. Swamiji, I don't know anything but what you teach. You are kind to us. I am a fool of false ego. But you say I can learn Bhagwad-gita.

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Being with Prabhupāda with all your senses
3.13

I remember putting on the thick shoulder strap as I prepared for Prabhupāda's walk in 1974. That tape recorder was so heavy as it was slung across my chest, and I held the microphone forward to record Prabhupāda's words as we walked. Just feeling the weight of that tape recorder again helps me to get a little glimpse of Prabhupāda on a walk. I remember again how sometimes people got too close. Sometimes they would walk so close behind Prabhupāda that, when he stopped suddenly, they caught the back of his shoe or his heel with their foot. He would stop and say, "Do not walk so close." But we always walked packed tightly together around Prabhupāda, always turned toward him, straining to hear every word.

We have pictures of this now, but they are not a replacement for having been there. He would stop suddenly, and everyone else would instantly stop, gathering closer. Prabhupāda stopped like that to focus our attention on what he was going to say. It seemed like he was focusing his own attention too, more intent on his point. We all leaned forward over other people's shoulders, all eyes and ears focused on Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was almost like a huddle, with Prabhupāda as the football captain giving instructions and encouragement, and everyone feeling a boost to their team morale. He would say what he wanted to say and again start walking with all of us in tow.

Walks at the beach were characterized by the sound of the waves crashing, but during any walk,

the crunch-crunch of many shoes could be heard. Sometimes devotees hung back a little talking to each other about something that had to be done for Prabhupāda or something that had to be done when they got back to the temple. But that wasn't so usual. Usually, everyone kept quiet and heard Prabhupāda speak.

The essence of Prabhupāda's morning walk instructions have been recorded on tape and are also now available in the *Conversations* books. Although the *vānī* of the spiritual master is the most important thing, those of us who had that personal association, that full experience of drinking Prabhupāda in with our eyes and ears, are very fortunate. We are not just mental creatures who live off ideas; ideas are wed to people and places and activities. We are creatures of intellect, but we also possess emotions and senses. To have experienced Prabhupāda's association not just as an idea, but as a living person, made him *real.* Without that association, we could not have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I was thinking about this recently when I was listening to the tapes of Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion* classes in 1972. I was not there when he gave those lectures. As I listen now twenty years later, I become acutely aware of all the background sounds—the *kīrtana* in the background, the sounds of birds, monkeys, pilgrims coming and going at the Rādhā-Dāmodara Mandira. And I hear Prabhupāda speaking. I am listening now, hearing Prabhupāda's eternal instructions, but aware that I am missing so much richness of what it was like to be with Prabhupāda at that time. It was another dimension, something that will never be recaptured in quite the same way even on tape. It is

more convenient to listen to his lectures now while I shave or take *prasādam*—I don't have to go through the austerity of living in India in 1972 before the guesthouse was built. But to have been with the guru!

We have been reading in *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* how Śrīla Prabhupāda met with his guru only a few times, but every meeting he did have with him was of great significance to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The first time they met on the roof in Ultadanga, in Calcutta, Prabhupāda was impressed. His whole life was changed. They met again at Kośi in Vṛndāvana. At that time, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī noted that Prabhupāda was hearing very attentively. Then they had other meetings, including one at Rādhākuṇḍa where his *guru mahārāja* told him, "If you ever get money, print books." Prabhupāda is the perfect example of one who made the utmost of his meetings with his spiritual master. There were no tape recorders in those days (although there were books). A meeting was very important to Prabhupāda, as well as his letter exchanges with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

We can also meet Prabhupāda, even now, by hearing from him in an open and loving way. The receptive disciple is compared to a fertile woman becoming pregnant by her association with her husband. The spiritual master can impregnate the receptive soul with the *bhakti-latā-bīja,* the seed of devotion. Individual speaking and meeting can have such an effect.

Try this . . .

Try taking a walk with Prabhupāda. Listen to one of his morning walks and really deeply concentrate, try to put yourself there. Close your eyes and hear the background sounds, whatever they may be, and imagine yourself walking with Prabhupāda, listening carefully to his every word, hearing from him in person. See if you can get the feeling of what it was like to be there with Prabhupāda that day, and take his instructions into your heart, as you might have done had you been there.

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Prabhupāda preferences
3.14

Prabhupāda is a person. Like anyone, he liked his *prasādam* in a certain way and expressed his preferences about various things. We may wonder, are Prabhupāda's preferences absolute? Does his expression of personal preferences make him a relative person?

The first time I encountered this question was in 1966. The devotees were taking lunch *prasādam* with Śrīla Prabhupāda one day when a young, rather unsubmissive man came into the Swami's apartment for lunch. I remember that Prabhupāda was sprinkling hot sauce on his meal. This young man asked Prabhupāda why he was eating this sauce. He replied that he liked it.

The young man became doubtful when Prabhupāda said that. He said something to this effect: "You use hot sauce just because you like it? You

mean there's no special spiritual significance?" The young man looked around at us as if to show that he had caught Śrīla Prabhupāda in some relative position or as if he had defeated him in a debate. I remember thinking that this man's attitude was ridiculous and offensive, but I also saw the point he was trying to make. The pure devotee gives us so many details about Kṛṣṇa and the process of devotional service. He tells us what Kṛṣṇa likes to eat, and what He doesn't like to eat; he tells us how to behave under all circumstances and how to think. The pure devotee spiritual master represents Kṛṣṇa absolutely. Therefore, don't we have a right to look into the pure devotee's life and demand that everything be governed completely by Kṛṣṇa's indications? If we can detect in his life any personal preference for doing something just because "I like it," is that a defect in the pure devotee?

But the pure devotee is a person. Like any person, he will have personal preferences. What we notice if we minutely examine the life of a pure devotee is that *all* of his preferences are favorable to devotional service. They are each individual expressions of his meditation on and service to Kṛṣṇa. This may not always be comprehensible when we examine the pure devotee without the requisite faith. There are nine principles of devotional service. If a devotee chooses mainly to hear about Kṛṣṇa or only to chant, we cannot accuse him of whimsical behavior. There are also five primary *rasas*. A devotee in the liberated state serves Kṛṣṇa in a particular way according to his realization of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Rather than consider this fact whimsical, we should understand that

these preferences are the perfection of devotional development.

Is Prabhupāda's sprinkling of hot sauce on his meal in this category? Who can know Prabhupāda's inner meditation when he sprinkled that sauce? Also, Vaiṣṇavas are not extreme *tyāgis*. They do not have to prove their devotion by sprinkling ashes on their food or not eating at all. They accept Kṛṣṇa's mercy in the form of *prasādam*. What is the harm if they add seasonings to their food? Prabhupāda himself ate very simply. He was elderly and ate things that stimulated his digestion.

His preferences were expressions of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to us. We were always intrigued and happy to find out all the little things Prabhupāda liked. It brought us closer to him and allowed us to serve him better. In fact, an expert disciple was one who knew exactly how Prabhupāda liked his room to be arranged, how to cook for him, how to arrange his schedule, and so on. Even today, the more things you know about how Prabhupāda conducted things, the more qualified you are to serve in ISKCON.

Neither does this absolutely bind the disciple to liking everything Prabhupāda liked. For example, Prabhupāda didn't much like Western confectionary desserts. He was offered fancy cakes and glazed donuts, but he preferred Vedic sweets. (In Hawaii, when a *mātājī* served Prabhupāda glazed donuts, he accepted them and ate a little bit, but then he privately expressed that she should try to learn how to make *sandeśa*. He preferred *sandeśa*.) Should we automatically prefer *sandeśa* over Western sweets? I think the point is debatable. Prabhupāda made allowances for his disciples' individual

expressions. Another example from Hawaii: Sudama once began a *kīrtana* in Prabhupāda's room. There were just a few of us present. Then he stopped himself saying, "I wasn't singing the tune the way you do." In this instance, Prabhupāda encouraged Sudama to sing the tune he had chosen. He said, "That's all right, that is your own ecstasy."

We like to do as many things as possible the way Prabhupāda did them, but we cannot be artificial. We are not on the level of Kṛṣṇa's son Pradyumna, who automatically liked something as soon as he heard that Kṛṣṇa liked it. And whenever Pradyumna heard that Kṛṣṇa didn't like something, then Pradyumna also disliked that thing immediately, even if previously it had been something he had preferred. However we view Prabhupāda's preferences, we can meditate on them to increase our own Prabhupāda consciousness.

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Nṛsiṁha-guru
3.15

Ātmā-tattva Prabhu gave the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class today. His presentation was impressive. I was especially inspired by how he presented Prabhupāda. Ātmā-tattva Prabhu is a comedian and also a Vaiṣṇava scholar. During his lecture, he presented a scene from Prabhupāda's room in Vṛndāvana. It went something like this:

Prabhupāda was receiving two *paṇḍitas* who were wearing big turbans. In Hindi he asked them, "Who is God?"

One of the *paṇḍitas* replied, "Oh Swamijī, how can you ask a question like that. You just can't ask it so abruptly, 'Who is God?' He is so many things."

Prabhupāda replied in a heavy tone, "You say He is so many things but you tell me one thing that He is."

That *paṇḍita* had nothing to say. Then Prabhupāda turned to the other *paṇḍita* and asked, "Who is God?" The *paṇḍita* responded by saying that it was a very big topic that cannot be discussed.

Then Prabhupāda called in a *gurukula* boy named Līlā-smaraṇam. Prabhupāda often called this boy forward to give him a sweet, so Līlā-smaraṇam went up to Prabhupāda and stuck out his right hand. Prabhupāda took a piece of *burfi* out of a bowl on his desk, but before giving it to the boy he asked, "Who is God?" According to Ātmā-tattva, Līlā-smaraṇam was thinking, "Who is this God who is coming between me and the *burfi?*" But Prabhupāda wouldn't give the *burfi* until the boy gave the answer. Reluctantly, Līlā-smaraṇam answered, "Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda gave him the *burfi,* then reached into the bowl and took out another one. Līlā-smāraṇam immediately stuck out his left hand. Prabhupāda asked, "Who is Kṛṣṇa?"

Līlā-smāraṇam replied, "Kṛṣṇa is God."

Prabhupāda then turned to the *paṇḍitas* and said, "Just see, even a child can tell you who is God."

"Swamijī," one of the *paṇḍitas* said, "the boy says Kṛṣṇa is God, but he doesn't *realize* it."

Prabhupāda rose to the occasion and in a voice filled with transcendental anger said, "Even God does not know He is God."

I don't think I have ever seen a disciple mimic Prabhupāda so well. We don't usually dare to mimic Prabhupāda, but Ātmā-tattva did it with so much affection that it didn't seem wrong. It made me feel as if Prabhupāda was suddenly there, and I became inspired to remember that Prabhupāda was heavy for a good reason. Prabhupāda traveled all around the world and then came back to India just to expose the many nonsense frauds, incarnations, scholars, *prākṛta-sahajiyās,* and any other pretentious people. Prabhupāda understood devotion to Kṛṣṇa. He was a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa who wholeheartedly embraced love of God. Therefore, I should never allow myself to become disturbed when I see Prabhupāda's heaviness, even if it is directed toward me. Prabhupāda had to be that way. He is entitled to be as soft as a rose or as hard as a thunderbolt. Prabhupāda has Kṛṣṇa in his fist, and he can give Him to us. He is teaching us love of God. It is up to us to develop that simple devotion that develops with devotion to guru. We want to be sheltered by Prabhupāda, our *nṛsiṁha-guru.*

I got a flash of all this today when Ātmā-tattva Prabhu gave class. Prabhupāda is perfect. He is glorious the way he smashes illusions. He knows Kṛṣṇa. He can give us Kṛṣṇa in the most direct and simple way. But I also understood that simplicity is not always so easy. Devotion means wholehearted surrender at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Only then can we really understand anything. People who aren't actually surrendered to Kṛṣṇa the way Prabhupāda was may recite so many things about higher *rasas* and love of God, but they cannot give you Kṛṣṇa.

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Part Four

Prabhupāda will go on
4.1

Prabhupāda, you are definitely here in Māyāpura. I especially feel your presence in the old building that was the first structure built here. As I walk up the first steps to the gate, there are two benches for people to sit. Tonight I sit here with Subhaga Swami. He, too, was there in the beginning days of Māyāpura with you, Prabhupāda. Tonight he is preaching to some guests. We are in the same Māyāpura. The same Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* is swelling out from the temple room and filling the evening air. The same sound of the crickets is here. And at this time of the year, there is the same threat of flood, the same possibility that the Muslims might attack just as they did so many years ago.

As I sit on the bench, I think of all the devotees who were here with Prabhupāda in the old days. So many of them are gone now, scattered by time, changed in so many ways. The past haunts me for a minute, and then I feel Prabhupāda's presence. Prabhupāda is still here despite the changing times.

But I am left with the awareness that I will change too, that I have already changed in so many ways. The whole arch of time is passing right over me. Soon it will be time for me to leave my body. Māyāpura will go on without me, as will the rest of ISKCON. Prabhupāda will still be here in his room, sitting and looking at the bas relief sculpture of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Devotees will still be carrying out their routines in the coming years. People will still be remembering Prabhupāda in authorized, official ways, but he will be the beacon in their hearts, too. New realizations, new problems, new faces. Pra-

bhupāda's work will never be erased over time. He will not be forgotten.

I wander up to his room. Many of his books in different languages have been arranged on the shelves. Prabhupāda was so happy to see his books in the different languages. The translation work is still expanding by the hard work of his devotees. I remember sitting in his rooms when he was here, the devotees all gathered together to hear his instructions and to have their mistakes corrected only by him. He kept his hand strongly on the rudder of the ISKCON ship, even though it was so uncontrollable, all those hundreds and thousands of people all over the world permanently afflicted by sex attraction and competition.

An evening in Māyāpura to remember Prabhupāda while the drums and *karatālas* beat out the rhythm of the twenty-four hour *kīrtana.* Generals may fall, new people come and then make the same mistakes. Still, his movement goes on. It is Lord Caitanya's movement, His desire, and Prabhupāda remains his extraordinary representative and dear to all of us. We can only cling to his feet or to the dust where he walked or to a piece of his *dhotī.* We can only ask Prabhupāda, "Please accept us. Please accept the work we are doing to maintain your movement."

Although we may misuse Prabhupāda's authority in so many ways, or we are imperfect in what we do, Prabhupāda's purity keeps going ahead like the prow of a ship. Nothing can stop him. Nothing will stop him for the next ten thousand years. What do we know of Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda, please help us. Don't let us be washed away by time. Please allow us to cling to

you in our eternal relationship. Please preserve our faith and our status as your disciples so that Kṛṣṇa will recognize us. Please bring us to you in Māyāpura.

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The qualities of Śrīla Prabhupāda
4.2

My friends and I are reading about the sixty-four qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Nectar of Devotion.* When Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja gave his seminar on *Nectar of Devotion,* he invited devotees to speak about the qualities of Prabhupāda. He read each of the fifty qualities of Kṛṣṇa which a living entity can at least partially attain, and asked the devotees to tell how Prabhupāda manifested these qualities. It was a nice exercise for remembering Prabhupāda. Similarly, devotees can take any list of Vaiṣṇava qualities given in the *śāstra* and glorify Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda walked among us, and he is the only one we know who has fully manifested all these wonderful qualities. He is also the one who personally saved us, so, in gratitude, we like to praise him. We like to affirm the fact that our leader is qualified in these ways, and to enliven ourselves by hearing of his qualities and how Prabhupāda fulfilled them.

Let's consider the first of the twenty-six qualities of a devotee: friendly. Was Prabhupāda friendly? Yes, of course. People who met him sensed this. He wasn't aloof or icy in his dealings with others. No one could say he was unfriendly or unconcerned. But Prabhupāda was friendly even to those he

never met. He was friendly to all living entities because he distributed Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He gave his life to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. Prabhupāda was friendly in the deepest sense. He came to the world as a true friend of everyone because he had something which should be of great benefit to whoever accepted it. He didn't have the kind of friendliness that we associate with "service with a smile," commercialized cheer—the kind of friendliness you get on the airlines from the stewardesses who help you "fly the friendly skies." Prabhupāda was sometimes very heavy. It is incomprehensible, his friendliness. He worked for everyone's benefit and that often meant knocking down their illusions and shaking them out of their foolishness. Yes, Prabhupāda was friendly.

Try this . . .

Write your own essay describing Prabhupāda manifestation of the twenty-six qualities, or any other application of divine qualities you find in the scriptures. If you don't have time to write, why not keep a notebook and add to it once a day or even once a week? Even if you can only write one sentence, it will be a nice way to remember Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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A letter to Prabhupāda
4.3

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

Recently I have been reading *Message of Godhead,* an old manuscript you wrote in 1955, which the BBT published and distributed last year. At the time you wrote this small book, you weren't sure whether it would ever be printed and distributed. Your main writing outlet at that time was *Back to Godhead* magazine. You were such a prolific writer in those days, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and, although you wrote your monthly magazine, the overflow in the form of books was too much to be printed through *BTG.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I admire your writing voice, although I am unfit to read your words carefully. Other devotees also have problems with paying careful attention to your books, and some of us are trying to carry out a "reading reform." By that I mean we are trying to reform our bad reading habits.

We formed many of our bad habits in our youth, before we came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We were never fortunate enough to receive proper training under a spiritual master in the traditional *gurukula.* Although we learned to read, we never learned to study Vedic scriptures. Nowadays, there are very few illiterate people in America, but as you have pointed out, what is the use of being literate if one reads only nonsense? It is better to be illiterate and to hear the Vedic scriptures recited by realized Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are still like giddy children; our intelligence is untrained for the work of becoming Vaiṣṇavas. When I should have been spending my youth pursuing questions of the spirit, I was voraciously consuming novels and books—there were so many books that I can't even

remember all the titles—and even when I *can* remember the titles, I don't remember why I thought they were so vital to my life. I also spent my time cultivating a desire to become a writer like these authors I can no longer remember.

Prabhupāda, when you came to us, you brought not only your books but yourself. You were so charming. I thought that from the moment I met you. I was deeply influenced by you. Your books were as charming as yourself. Despite my many disqualifications, you influenced me until my frenzied brain slowed down and I began to taste the sweetness of the *Bhāgavatam.*

I wonder why it is that we become restless reading your books now? Sometimes I put it down to repetition. We have read, "You are not this body" so many times. Why do we have to hear it again? But you wanted to make a deep impression on us; you wanted us to *realize* it. Unfortunately, we still haven't learned the first lesson. We still identify with our bodies. What is the question of going on to the second lesson until we master the first?

You have also given us your own example as a patient writer and hearer of the Vedic message. You were always enthusiastic to speak the same message. It didn't bother you that you had said it before. You understood that the Vedic message is never repetitious. The same verse from *Bhagavad-gītā* can be used to illustrate all kinds of subtleties and can bring out new lights. Your books are not novels, with a central theme or plot to entice us along. Each one is a meditative commentary that gives us the opportunity to absorb ourselves in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even one page of your books, when read carefully, can make us perfect.

Prabhupāda, sometimes it gets confusing. You told us to read your books, but at the same time, you told us to work hard to maintain and spread your movement. Sometimes the two duties seem to be in conflict: contemplative reading and active preaching. I once asked you if reading was a duty. You responded, "Unless you read, how can you preach?" You also told me that whenever I get time I should read your books. It is the first duty of a *sannyāsī.*

Thank you for this encouragement, Prabhupāda. With your support I am going to continue my studies. I especially want to prepare myself to read either alone or with others, by first calming our minds. Then we try to enter the transcendental ocean of *Kṛṣṇa* book or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* One of us reads aloud. Then we share our impressions and appreciations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. We want to think how to apply ourselves to serve Kṛṣṇa and our spiritual master.

There are many other ways to study your books. I hope to pursue all the methods that help me to stay in contact with you through your writing for the rest of my life.

Thank you for presenting these books, which many of us think are your most important contribution. But, especially, I thank you for coming along personally with these books and immersing me in your kind, gentle guidance. You are my best friend, my true father. Because you came, I am interested to read your books. They help me remember you. And, of course, they are the best and the only way for me to approach Lord Kṛṣṇa.

As you know, I also aspire to be a writer in your service. Whatever I write is based on your books. I

hope in this way to introduce people to more appreciation of your books.

Hoping to hear from you and to be with you in spiritual life always.

Your servant,

Try This . . .

There are many different ways to read and study Prabhupāda's books. If you are not presently doing it, you might want to pick one way (such as getting together with one or more friends and reading) to get into Prabhupāda's books again. Prabhupāda said his books are like sugar dolls: wherever we taste them, they are sweet. Taste a page, or even just a paragraph, if you like.

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The Important Thing
4.4

I look out at a desert—
no memories, no memories,
not even a mirage—
not even a desert of hills and sands,
just a cluttered void . . .
but I know he will visit me
not just in dreams—those concocted versions
of Prabhupāda thrown together
from who knows what and where—
but visits of memory wisps.

I didn't have to be there in person—
I can read *Conversations with Śrīla Prabhupāda;*
he is asking his servant to
cook a simple lunch, rice, *dāl,*
sabjīs, bitter melon and two, three *capātīs,*
"Not cumbrous," Prabhupāda said,
but the rice should be well-cooked.
"*Samosās?*" they asked.
"Not necessarily," he said, although
another time he praised *kachori* and
reminisced of the days when *brāhmaṇas*
always cooked for themselves.
Cook for yourself and you will not get disease.

Let the calf come near the cow
when the cow is milked.
In New Māyāpura he said the cucumber
wasn't fresh—they brought them
from the market instead of from the garden.
Live like this he said, not
like in Paris famous for its prostitutes.
In our childhood, even then,
Paris was world-famous
for prostitutes.
Not like that,
but come and live purely
on the land,
don't be extravagant,
use just enough,
and be married to a faithful wife
and send your children to *gurukula.*

Prabhupāda, why can't we do it?
Why do we botch it up?
Because we are rascals.
I don't mean to escape the blows
of your rightful reprimands.
But I am remembering here
with a positive desire to
ease myself into your presence,
and to remind your followers
how sweet you are—
yes, and how strong you are,
and that we shouldn't water it down.

But Prabhupāda it has become very hard
to know what to do
according to time and person and place.
The most important thing is faith in you
and keeping your followers in loving exchanges.
Other things may vary.
You said there should be *gurukula*
but you also said parents could
teach their children at home.
The important thing is to follow you
one way or another.

* * * * * *

Prabhupāda's manifestation of steady bhāva
4.5

The Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* have minutely delineated all the various manifestations of ecstasy. In this regard, there are eight kinds of bodily symptoms which occur when a devotee feels love of Kṛṣṇa, and Prabhupāda mentioned them in one of his first

essays published in New York City (which went along with the record album of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa). "In the beginning, there may not be the presence of all transcendental ecstasies, which are eight in number. These are: 1. being stopped as though dumb; 2. perspiration; 3. standing up of hairs on the body; 4. dislocation of voice; 5. trembling; 6. fading of the body; 7. crying in ecstasy; 8. trance."

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī comments that even if a pure devotee does not manifest these eight symptoms of ecstasy, he may still be fully qualified to chant the holy names. Sometimes pure devotees restrain their ecstatic symptoms because people who do not understand them may become afraid or blasphemous. Also, sometimes people who recognize these symptoms, but who have not attained *bhāva* themselves, will imitate them in order to get a good reputation as an ecstatic devotee. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī concludes that it is more important to demonstrate detachment. Furthermore, the steady symptoms of *bhāva,* as described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (Nectar of Devotion),* are important criteria for knowing if one is advancing in spiritual life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda fully displayed these steady symptoms of *bhāva* at all times, although he only occasionally manifested the different bodily manifestations of the eight symptoms.

One symptom of steady *bhāva* is proper utilization of time. Śrīla Prabhupāda followed a daily schedule of his own making. He was almost always on time, although he was not fanatical about it. For example, he usually took his morning massage around 11:15 or 11:30. But when I was Prabhupāda's

servant, sometimes I would come in to give the massage, and he would be in the midst of preaching to a guest. He would continue preaching and not be a slave to the clock. He was always using his time to serve Kṛṣṇa no matter what he was doing.

It is not so difficult to be situated at least *somewhere* on the map of *bhakti-yoga.* One can usually see some connection between what one is doing and Kṛṣṇa's service. But a pure devotee isn't satisfied with only a nominal connection to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He wants to experience a mood of intense service and surrender to Kṛṣṇa in everything he does.

While Prabhupāda felt that a schedule enhanced his own meditation and practice, he also followed a schedule to set a good example for his neophyte disciples. A schedule is important for us. Around 1970, ISKCON devotees began to follow more rigid schedules for the temple programs. Prabhupāda encouraged us. He told us that if we followed this schedule, there would be no peephole for *māyā* to enter.

Pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa meditate on Kṛṣṇa's schedule. Kṛṣṇa performs various pastimes with His eternal associates according to the time of day. Kṛṣṇa's day is divided into eight main periods, and within those eight periods, there are minute divisions. Pure devotees fill their minds with remembrance of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by meditating in this way.

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's daily schedule is well-known to his devotees. We can meditate on Prabhupāda at different times of the day. For example, Prabhupāda rose around 1 A.M. to write. He took *prasādam* at specific times, chanted his Gāyatrī at specific times, and had scheduled meeting times

for guests. He took a noon bath and a little nap afterwards, and he was usually prepared to lecture in the evening. As we go through our own day's activities, we can meditate on Prabhupāda's schedule and even try to do some of the things he did at the times he did them. That will fill our minds with remembrance of Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda also manifested the other symptoms of steady *bhāva,* including always expecting the Lord's mercy, pridelessness, attraction for living in a holy place, and attraction for chanting the holy names. Prabhupāda manifested all these symptoms with full, Kṛṣṇa conscious emotion and with the strong awareness of a preacher. He was a pure devotee. Prabhupāda wanted his followers to also become pure devotees. Therefore, we can please Prabhupāda not only by meditating on him throughout the day as he performs his *bhajana,* but by performing it ourselves. This is the perfection of Prabhupāda meditation.

Try This . . .

Another way to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's schedule is to worship his *mūrti* and serve him throughout the day in that way. If you have a *mūrti,* you may find that your schedule is already formed around service to your deity. But you can make it even more personal by trying to serve the *mūrti* according to Prabhupāda's actual schedule.

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Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
4.6

Go to Swamiji. No one who has been involved in my life up until now encourages me or even understands what's happening with me. I can't think of even a single person. I gave up trying to share it. My parents rejected me over Krishna consciousness, even though they didn't reject me when I was strung out on LSD and speed and had long hair. But now they have completely rejected me.

I wrote a letter to Uncle Sal and Aunt Mary, but they never wrote back. My sister rejects me, too, and so does her husband. And Murray, my real friend, is not even interested in this journey. We parted on the street. He went into the bar I used to go to with him. Goodbye, his face frozen in time (like a movie still) as he turned back to face me one last time. Other friends acted the same.

I am strongly pulled toward Krishna consciousness, but it has withered up all my friendships. So many people can't relate to what I am doing, to the Swami or to God or a "foreign religion." But I see now that no one really matters <u>that</u> much. I felt an initial sadness at the break of each

friendship, but now my life from before I met Swamiji is completely over. Now I have new friends.

Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya, continued

" . . . When Krishna comes, the miscreants are killed. The Lord incarnates in each of the innumerable universes. We don't know which one He is in now. What do we know of even this one universe? There are so many stars, planets, etc., but we don't really know about them. Anyone who says he is God is fool number one." (Swamiji said this strong and convincing.)

In every place there is a director. In New York City there is a mayor. (So here is God for all places.)

According to how the sun moves, we say it is a different time of day in different places on the earth. But the sun is always there. So Krishna is always there, but it takes power to see Him. At a certain time, when He appears in the world on His schedule, then we see Him. "Just as a motor car passes. It is going on. But when it passes in front of my storefront, then I can see."

Jnana, yoga and bhakti are the three ways to approach the absolute truth. JNANA: Those who understand the A.T. through knowledge come up to Brahman. YOGA: Those who meditate approach

Krishna up to His plenary portion, Supersoul. BHAKTI: Those who practice principles of devotional service can directly approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "Krishna . . . is everything . . . and somebody realizes Him as the supermost reservoir of all pleasure, the Personality of Godhead, and associates with Him in relationship and enjoys eternal blissful life" (end of lecture).

Midday, you stop in yr. apartment, on the way to see clients. Do a little typing. I can go tonight to the kirtan and hear Swamiji speak. I'll be back here in an hour to get some more typing done.

The old life is gone. I leave it for good. No more going back. I seek the protection of the Lord in bhakti-yoga and the blessings of the Swami to lead us through. It's in the books. He says if we chant, there will be no problem to overcome the karma and relinquish the false ego. I think I am this body, Stephen T. Guarino, son of Stephen J. Guarino and Catherine (Sullivan) Guarino, my mother. No, that's the body. That's this lifetime only. Go into this truth and hold it true. You are spirit soul—you don't die, you can go to Krishna after this lifetime if you realize pure love. It comes by devotional service. Human form of life is the chance.

So let me go out and remember my purpose and come back here and type the sublime knowledge given by Swami. To hell with the others who don't understand. What do they know?

On Going into the Street
Lord Vishnu, guard this boy as he goes out
or if You want me to die today, take me.
I can't fall in the street or be crushed or stabbed.
That can only happen to the body.
Let me chant the Lord's Holy Names at the end and right now.
And here is my identity in case no one knows, a disciple of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.
Tell him I was on an errand for him.
But I don't want this to happen.
I am only beginning to learn bhakti and my heart and brainstuff is dirty.
I'm going out now, Lord Vishnu, and I pray to stay within You.
All glories to You and to those devotees
like Swamiji and Narada and Vyasadeva, who tell us how to join with Krishna in the eternal blissful world.

Lecture on Bhagwad-gita, Chapter 7.8-14
Krishna is teaching how to become Krishna conscious at every step. When you drink water, the "juice" of it is

Krishna. It comes from God; you can't drink gold. That which you can't produce by any human being, that is God. And illumination is Krishna. (As Swamiji spoke, a guy came to the front door with a loud, portable radio. People in the storefront turned to see. Swamiji said, "That's all right.") The mantra omkara is God. Whenever you hear some sound vibration, that is a reflection of spiritual sound. Therefore, you can remember God as the sun, as water, as mantra, and as any sound – where can't you remember God?

The best way to associate with God is by hearing. Our material contamination gets reduced by hearing. As the sun can purify you, so association with Krishna takes away contamination. (Swamiji said more how the sun cures disease.)

Try it, associate with Krishna. There will be no problem. Do it by sounds (Hare Krishna) and practice this consciousness, "The water is Krishna," etc. Our present stage is forgetfulness. We have to revive.

People who are not interested come into the storefront and stand at the doorway. Last night Swamiji stopped his lecture just as he was talking about "Krishna is illumination," and he said, "Do you want to come here?" A person was standing at the doorway, but was uncertain whether to come in. Sometimes

they go away and come back. Sometimes they are high, wandering around on a trip. They don't know what they are doing when they come into the storefront. We devotees should control some of this, but mostly Swamiji lets it happen. Krishna protects him. But we disciples have a responsibility.

I have to discuss this with others.

I was feeling left out and envious that I didn't get something published in the first issue of Back to Godhead. Rayram said he would put my essay on karma-yoga in a future issue.

I know what my notes on Swamiji's lectures are: they are a way of expressing my writing within the limit of Krishna consciousness. They are just notes, but by trying to make the sentences simple and by sometimes using my own words, I try to bring out what Swamiji is saying — I mean, bring it out for my own better understanding. In this way, I fulfill my desire to write.

I wrote a few poems. Hayagriva said they were okay. He said our poetry could be like poems of Buddhist monks living in a monastery. He meant the poems can express the everyday reality of our lives in bhakti-yoga. He said that after reading my poem on the ISKCON bullets. I had written that sometimes the ISKCON bullets (sweet balls) were the only thing keeping us from going to smoke a cigarette or

drink a coke. Swamiji kindly keeps a jar up in his worship room and he told us it's okay to take one even between meals. It may not be the highest standard for a renunciate to go in there and take one as we do, but it <u>is</u> prasadam, and it saves us.

Our poems are free verse American idiom. It's nice to read Godbrothers' poems. I hope we keep it up, sharing like that. When I read theirs, I don't think they're great poems; no doubt that's what they think of mine. Still, we are all trying to write sincerely. It could develop into a whole school of "monastery poetry" or "American bhakti" poetry by Swamiji's disciples. Here are some of my recent ones.

THE ONE REAL ELOQUENT ART OF THE WORLDS

Saraswati
is playing on her vina
inspiring the
speech makers and musicians
But
only God-praise is
sweet. Somehow they get at
her, though, - the others -
from her generosity flows
measured lyrics, sounds, forms
of swan and river and
lotus and dye.

But for me, the pure One,
Krishna, is all
I want to know,
and my divine teacher
is he who shows
me Krishna-direction.
First teacher is my Spiritual Master
Swami Bhaktivedanta, father of light,
and then my Godbrothers and sisters,
by their slightest
actions in His favour-
'All we want to do
is please Him.
Anything else is
less than that.'
Also bugs are teachers
running up the sides of
bowls accompanied
by God.
And sunlight is a teacher.
Everything shows me
I am God's,
all atoms are His.

Every painting reflects a piece of His
Nature,
Every voice is raised by Him,
He knows the minor spirits and demons,
He observes the wasted lives.
He is all - and you Mr. Artist,
what is <u>your</u> proficiency?
Grab a broom and sweep
the temple floor.

Learn - know God is in clear
water and fragrant air
and beyond all the suns
and moons.

Begin serving the Lord-
and you can know what it is all
about
He is within you
He is everywhere
He is the Supreme
Person and He dwells in the
Spiritual Sky.
Everything you need is in the
Bhagavad Gita and
can be learned at the feet of a
Spiritual
Master who is a pure servant of God
like Swami Bhaktivedanta.

Very soon you'll
learn the topmost eloquence
- it's Hare Krishna
(God Praise)
Good wherever you go.
If you learn it
you'll see the Promise
God made to man. Learn it now,
for wherever you go.
Chant it always, -
the one real art of the worlds:
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare.

ON INSTALLATION OF THE NEW DEITY
to Hayagriva das and Upendra das

I don't know
if it's Monday
Wednesday or Friday
I'm up on my feet
dancing
-- our temple has a
new Murti!

Blackish Krishna
Lord of the Dance
-- oh now we can
really sing and play
-- this Murti is
real God-brother!

His toes and palms are pink and
His foot is black
His leg is crossed in curving posture
His robes are bright yellow
His chest is grand
His eyes are huge
His crown is gold
His arms are bent holding a black flute
He stands in the heart of our
temple surrounded
with incense and flowers
and barefoot dancing servants
wearing faded yellow robes
play cymbals and organ,
Sing His Kirtan
Hare Krishna!
Hare Krishna!

Take heart, here's new
singing to the evergreen
Cupid.
He is Shyamasundar and
shining like a fresh rain cloud.

THE HIGHEST SENSE

"Every second of human life is meant for making an ultimate solution of the problems of life, i.e., repetition of birth and death and revolving in the cycle of 84 lakhs of different species of life." --Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta.

We have only minute
independence but it
overwhelms us. The
energy of our body we
run like crazy machine
to hear it roar only--
the fingertips, the ears,
the monkey we are--what
nonsense without <u>spirit soul</u>!

Like a dog we run
2 miles one way and
return 2 miles the other way,
stopping at hotels and
motels, slamming and opening
the car door and eating
any junk put on the counter and talking
about the newspapers and
the radio--what

rubbish without cultivation of the soul!
We are driving the
machine but we're so obsessed
we think "I am the machine,"
and we waste our power and only a few times a day
we have to think "What is God?"
But we dismiss it, "Who cares?
Throw Him away! We are God!" And
the highest pleasure is to
park our machine in some
garage with another machine
and run our engines
together and we
call that Love.

The aim of life is spirit.
Even the hogland fools should know it.
This is the highest pleasure:
the soul as the only Sense.
Drive those cars into towns
in the morning and at night
and use the hotels--for kirtan parties to stay overnight
and chant Hare Krishna and give our great
prasadam feasts of sweet rice, halavah and pouris
offered to Lord Sri Krishna's Senses
and use the main ballroom and the hall and the theater
and the public park and the downtown road
for mass dancing to the sound of voice

and cymbals
and drums of kirtan and let the neons
light up:
GLORIES TO GOVINDA
and speed the cars and planes
to cities like Dwarka built just to
please Him
and turn the Love for cats and dogs
and machines
into Krishna Who reciprocates His
devotees
as Friend and master and Lover--He
will hear the rejoicing of
victory over matter
and will release us from this
nasty world, which, even if transformed,
will have to perish
when only Krishna will be standing
in a nicely curved position,
dark blue like a rain cloud,
and playing His flute.

* * * * * *

Walking and talking with Prabhupāda
4.7

One of the nicest pleasures in life is to be able to walk before dawn in a place like Ireland, ready to recall Prabhupāda. I am very grateful to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda for allowing me to do this. And I am thankful these recalled memories can be preserved and shared with others.

It has been fourteen years since Prabhupāda left. You can almost see the life lines, like lines drawn on a piece of paper. You can see where Prabhu-

pāda's life begins in 1896, and where it ended in 1977. Then you can see our lives, starting at much later points, then running along contemporaneously with Prabhupāda. His line stops and our line continues. That's what is going on now. To say that Prabhupāda's line stops doesn't mean he is finished. It means he has gone somewhere else, perhaps in a different form. Our line may be continuing in this world, but it will not continue forever. It's all relative. As Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, "Before you were born you were unmanifest, now you are manifest for a little while, after this you will be unmanifest again. So why are you lamenting?"

Don't lament that your contact with Prabhupāda was so brief. Don't lament that he has been gone so long that you can hardly remember him. And don't think that you will never see him again. The time that you were with him, although brief, is precious; that association continues through his *vāṇī*. You feel his absence, you feel separation, and you anticipate joining him wherever he is. All this will come true for one who has faith. You *will* go to Kṛṣṇa, and you *will* be with Prabhupāda. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "Only by devotional service can I be known as I am, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And when one is absorbed in such consciousness of Me, then he will be able to enter the kingdom of God."

In his purport to that verse, Prabhupāda says that by devotional service, the devotee will "eventually" reach the Lord in Kṛṣṇaloka. The pure devotee will also be present. Kṛṣṇa is never alone. You will be with your spiritual master again when you attain the perfection of life.

If the spiritual world is the real goal, then why do I keep going back to that infinitesimal span of time—the 1966 days? Prabhupāda's *līlā* was so sweet then, and it was also a special time for me, the time when he lifted me out of the cycle of birth and death. I cannot help remembering it now. That remembrance reinforces my conviction not to fall back into material life. I am not clear yet, I am surrounded by temptations. I have not completed the process. My material desires can still attract me, especially if I forget how implicated in the material world I was before I met Prabhupāda. But I gratefully remember those days in 1966, the first days of my spiritual life and the first days of Prabhupāda's mission in the West, by falling on my knees and thanking him.

Nothing duplicates our own experience with Prabhupāda, but any genuine story is valuable. Recently, I heard my Godbrother Umāpati Swami say that when Prabhupāda served hot *dāl* with chilies, he also served a sweet made from crushed bananas. Prabhupāda said this would cool the taste buds after the spicy meal. Umāpati told this anecdote in a letter he sent to the grand re-opening at 26 Second Avenue. Umāpati Mahārāja was in China preaching for Prabhupāda and couldn't make it to New York, but he said he was thinking of our gathering. In his letter he wrote, "I hope at the grand reopening you will have one of those hot summer days in New York City like we had in 1966 when we were first coming to see Swamijī. And I hope the feast that you have includes some of the things Prabhupāda cooked like the hot spiced *dāl* and the sweet preparation." Hearing this reminiscence also helped me to remember little things, and it pro-

duced that altered state of consciousness where suddenly we are with Prabhupāda, at least for a little while.

I remember in the very early days when Swamijī started looking for a new building in New York City. We didn't get one, and we had to stay at 26 Second Avenue. But there were adventures connected with the search. One time, we saw a place on the second floor somewhere that required a lot of work. The room was filled with lumber and was very dirty. After we checked it out, we went back to 26 Second Avenue and sat with Swamijī in his room. Swamijī turned to me and asked, "Mr. Secretary, what did you think of the place?" I gave my opinion, feeling important because of the way Prabhupāda had addressed me. I was touched that he asked my opinion.

I also remember Prabhupāda's letter from India where he had gone to recover his weak health. I had written, telling him I missed him, and that I was looking forward to his return so that I could type for him again. Prabhupāda wrote back that it was an honor for him to have a secretary like Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī, and he would soon come back and overload me with typing tasks.

Why do I *ever* forget these little exchanges? Why don't I *always* remember them and know that Prabhupāda loves me, that my real relationship with him consists of typing for him, writing for him, always being his affectionate servant?

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"Who are you?"
4.8

We didn't know where Swamijī came from. Bit by bit, we asked him: "Where did you come from? Who sent you?" He told us of his *guru mahārāja* and the tradition he represented. Nowadays we speak with confidence about Prabhupāda's background and his intentions to spread Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement, but in 1966 we didn't know anything about these things. We knew only Swamijī. "Who are you? What do you want us to do?" First came Swamijī; everything else came later.

It was amazing how he delivered Kṛṣṇa consciousness three nights a week in New York City without any preliminaries. He just started singing. He explained later. You walked off the street and saw the Indian Swami singing. Then you waited because he would explain everything later. That was his preaching spirit, his greatness.

Vaiṣṇavas who live in India may take their enormous cultural facility for granted. Their culture accepts Hinduism, being Indian, following the *Vedas*, the gods, *sādhus*. To be a Vaiṣṇava in India is similar to being a Catholic priest in the West. Of course, even in India *sādhus* have difficulties—people are materialistic and confused—but still, the facility is there. No one finds it strange to see someone in saffron singing mantras. Prabhupāda had a different experience in New York City. He endured so much. He has to be given credit for his preaching spirit.

Of course, in 1966 we had no way of knowing that Prabhupāda had crossed the cultural barrier by

coming to America to preach. We just saw him. He was inviting us to participate in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We took him seriously. It didn't occur to us that he had come out of hundreds of thousands of Vaiṣṇavas to fulfill the prediction of Lord Caitanya. We didn't worry about the philosophy. We cared about Prabhupāda. Philosophy was something we got from him. It came from him. He was our only supply. He had the book, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* It was hard for us to penetrate, impossible actually, without him. We knew *that* much even then.

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Satsvarūpa dāsa brahmacārī diary
4.9

Bhagwad-gita lecture, 7.8-14, cont.

Speculating about God is useless. You can never find the Supreme. We should think, "What I am? An insignificant creature in the universe." (And in the universe, earth is insignificant, and in that, U.S., and in that, NYC.) So be submissive. Don't be artificially puffed-up by frog philosophy.

"I have seen the Atlantic Ocean."

"What is it like?"

"A huge, vast span of water!"

"Oh? It may be double this well . . . triple . . . "

All right, I'll be submissive. Then what?

Just try to hear the message of God, like Bhagwad-gita, Bible, as you like.

Hear from realized souls. The truths of Bible are spoken by Jesus Christ, or hear from Krishna, as you like. But hear of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and nothing more. But — I'm poor. It doesn't matter. I'm rich. It doesn't matter. I'm European. It doesn't matter. I'm Indian. It doesn't matter. I'm born low. It doesn't matter. Simply hear. God, who can never be conquered, will be conquered by your love. Krishna became the driver of Arjuna. As a child, Krishna became the son of Maharaja Nanda and took His father's shoes on His head.

I was about to die,
now I am living.
It is better this way.
I can breathe fresh air even in
Manhattan.
I am happy on a mission wherever
I go.
My spiritual master teaches me
as he sits behind his trunk.
He doesn't need furniture, and
neither do I.
Even in the sound of cars passing
we hear Hare Krishna
and we chant Hare Krishna;
we taste Him in water.
He is the life-air in our bodies.
He is conquered by love.
Let's be submissive
and spread His message.

It's been raining today. It used to depress me. Now I'm sitting indoors chanting on my beads and feeling bliss. Spiritual life is self-satisfying. The sage experiences happiness within. Swamiji writes that in a Gita purport, 6th Chapter.

We go out too, even if it rains. Gargamuni is putting BTGs in the head shops. Swamiji likes us to stay always active in Krishna's service, one way or another.

Just a little thing like offering your food to God makes all the difference.

Tonight there is no kirtan and lecture. I'll go over and hope we can sit with the Swami for a while. I have trouble understanding something in the karma-yoga sections of the Bhagwad-gita. Is the self inactive when the body is moving? But if a devotee is acting, isn't it different than a karmi? When does a karmi really act? When he plays karatalas or dances, do we say, "His body is moving, but he knows it's just the modes acting?" Sometimes I don't understand something, and because I don't understand it, I can't even ask a clear question.

Swamiji said some things get answered by time. Just be patient and hear and read. The Supersoul, when He's pleased with you, will let you know.

Bhagwad-gita lecture, 7.8-14, continued:

People say, "Can you show me God?" Yes, but not if you close your eyes. You can see God in many things. Any penance is God. And in the eternal sense. If one can understand the soul, he must be very intelligent – that intelligence is Krishna. One who is influential, that is also Krishna. One who is stout and strong, that is also Krishna. Bhima was stronger than 10,000 elephants. Don't disbelieve it. There are many degrees of strength, and Krishna is those degrees. He can give someone the highest degree; therefore He can give it to Bhima.

Krishna is also desire without attraction. How can this be? It is Krishna consciousness – I desire for Krishna's benefit, not mine. Lust that is not against religion – all other sex life is not religious. Sex in marriage is religion.

Sometimes, when I come back to my apartment in the middle of the day, I feel peeved if I see a couple of guys crashed out on the mattress. I think I'm working hard and they're not. But all in all, I wouldn't trade my former "housekeeper's" solitude for the association of Vaisnavas.

Swamiji likes it too, I think, that I share what I have. He knows the devotees use my place (it's not "my"

place anymore. It never was). It relieves Swamiji too, because now people don't have to use his bathroom. They come over here in the morning.

In the morning I don't mind it. It's nice. I chant japa sitting up straight in my space, and, one after another, devotees come into the apartment and use the bathroom. When they are waiting for the bathroom to get free, they sit with me and chant. It's a nice camaraderie.

I don't expect Swamiji would ever come here, but it's his place. They call it an "extension" of the storefront.

Sometimes we have some good talks here. Acyutananda came over once, and he said he is taking to Krishna consciousness because it is the best thing he has ever found. He said he always wants the best thing. Theoretically, he said, if there was something better than this, he would go to that. But this is the best, the Absolute Truth, and Krishna is the original form as the all-attractive.

Rayram encourages me about my parents' rejecting me. Hayagriva sometimes uses the place to do editing. (He's the one that also crashes out the most.) Brahmananda and Gargamuni come too. Everybody comes by. The little French janitor curses under his breath when he sees the devotees. He says the

landlord didn't rent this apartment to so many people. But I don't care. We just walk past him.

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Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda in Detroit: a kaleidoscope
4.10

I remember that Śrīla Prabhupāda flew into cities and flew out of cities wearing a sweater. We also wore sweaters, and life was happy walking with him on cool mornings on some island near Detroit. Prabhupāda and his cane. Prabhupāda and his followers. We bow down to him. We hear from him. We read his books. He says, "Kṛṣṇa is not a stone. Do you think we are worshiping a stone idol?" We believed him.

Devotees led by Govardhana dāsa found a building for a temple in Detroit, but it is in a bad crime area. Prabhupāda, you said, "It doesn't matter. We will go there. We will go there and convert the criminals to become devotees. Then they will come, but they won't steal. We will invite them to chant."

We went for walks. "Look, Prabhupāda, there is a deer." Someone said, "The deer have gathered to see you, Prabhupāda." Then we kept walking. I am among those young men with *daṇḍas*. Prabhupāda told us, "All of devotional service is within the realm of *bhakti,* and it can be considered like a raw mango progressing to a ripe mango."

You loved that new building, Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was so opulent. You reasoned purely and simply,

devoid of any taint for sense gratification, that the devotees should serve the Lord in this place, invite the public on a grand scale, use it for preaching. So you sat by the pool with the owner of the building and asked him to give it to us for free. He declined. Your two rich disciples came forward and combined their resources to buy the building. Then you walked through each room and said, "Each room is worth the total price." Archways and a main ballroom just suitable for Deities to be installed with three separate altars. A big marble floor suitable for a *kīrtana* hall.

To the outsiders, you roared your defiance and say, "No one except a sane person will accept Kṛṣṇa. What is the reason *not* to believe in Kṛṣṇa? Do you have any reason? Can you refuse this? Can you refute this, that Kṛṣṇa is God, He is the master, and we are servant? Can you refute this?"

You challenged a reporter until he realized you were speaking to him personally. He said, "No, I cannot refute it."

"Then," Prabhupāda said, "this is the only religion."

Prabhupāda said, "If you live at home, there is no facility. You won't rise early, but you'll think, "Oh, why should I get up early." But if you live in the temple, you will rise early, go to *maṅgala-ārati* and see the Deity." Prabhupāda spoke strongly. The devotees were laughing because they were already living in the temple. His anger wasn't directed at them. We were like little Prahlāda Mahārājas with our Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.

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Kṛṣṇa's books
4.11

Prabhupāda knew the value of his own books. He said they were spoken by Kṛṣṇa, not by himself. If someone reads one page, his life could become perfect. Prabhupāda also said that history would prove that his books had saved the world from barbarism. Without receiving the message of Kṛṣṇa, people are degraded to less than animals—eating, mating, sleeping, and defending. Prabhupāda's books make the difference.

Prabhupāda understood by personal experience that his books were needed. Although he knew that the *Bhāgavatam* described humanity devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a species of "two-legged animals," Prabhupāda had personal experience with this in the cities where he traveled. He saw the neon signs for topless and bottomless dancing. On the airplanes he saw the cover of *Time* magazine: "Crime. Why and what to do?" And he heard, with the rest of America, about the downfall of President Nixon. He personally saw the degraded students and hippies living in the parks of Amsterdam, so fallen that they wouldn't even respectfully listen to Prabhupāda when he began to speak in public. He rode in cars and saw the traffic jams on the highways. All these experiences impelled him more and more to give Kṛṣṇa's message to the people. He was convinced it would uplift them.

Prabhupāda was ambitious to help the world in a substantial way. But he recognized that it could only begin with the implementation of God conscious education. He wrote:

> Due to the shortcomings of limited national activities, such a general mass welfare program for the whole world is not practically possible. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, however, is so nice that it can render the highest benefit to the entire human race. . . therefore, Rūpa Gosvāmī and other learned scholars agree that a broad propaganda program for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement of devotional service all over the world is the highest humanitarian welfare activity.
>
> —*Nectar of Devotion* p. 8

Prabhupāda's books were not his invention—there was nothing whimsical about them. It was Kṛṣṇa speaking according to time and place, through Prabhupāda's words. Prabhupāda's nonegotistical attitude as an author is expressed in the *Nectar of Devotion*:

> The author of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, very humbly submits that he is just trying to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, although he humbly thinks himself unfit for this work. That should be the attitude of all preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, following in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. We should never think of ourselves as great preachers, but should always consider that we are simply instrumental to the previous *ācāryas*, and simply by following in their footsteps we may be able to do something for the benefit of suffering humanity.
>
> —*Nectar of Devotion*, Introduction, p. xviii

Although the BBT books were actually spoken by Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda's followers definitely saw them as Prabhupāda's books. We liked to see him reading his books. And it was a great pleasure for the devotees to produce and distribute the books. We saw that it gave our spiritual master tremendous satisfaction. He said that he felt he had conquered an

empire whenever a book was published. Assisting Prabhupāda in producing his books was like the fast lane for pleasing guru and Kṛṣṇa.

By associating with Prabhupāda, we all shared the ecstasy of book production and book-reading. The objects themselves, the newly published volumes, were a delight to the senses. Devotees became proficient in all aspects of book production—photo reproduction, layout, editing, grammar, copy-editing, and printing. They also became expert salespersons. And to some degree, they became proficient scholars of what Prabhupāda had presented in Sanskrit and English.

Prabhupāda ushered his followers into the consciousness of living for his books, of loving his books. We will never be able to forget him because we have his books. As long as we have the books, we will be close to Prabhupāda. Just looking at the books' layout—the boldface print, the Sanskrit, the synonyms, and then the purports—will bring us close to Prabhupāda. Because Prabhupāda personally oversaw all the details of his book production, we can appreciate how they were done according to his own vision.

It is a spiritual act to hear one of Prabhupāda's purports read or to speak on them in an ISKCON temple. The same effect can be achieved by any person sitting in his home and opening the book, reading it respectfully with eager attention.

One time when a group of devotees were traveling and distributing Prabhupāda's books, they went to see Prabhupāda and asked if they could also worship a Deity as they traveled. Prabhupāda said no, he didn't think they had the time and means to do

it. But he told them they had the books; the books were their Deities.

Prabhupāda liked to read his own books. They amazed him because they were written by Kṛṣṇa. When he revealed his feelings about his own books to us, we were always astonished. It was another aspect of Prabhupāda's relationship with Kṛṣṇa and we were being invited to witness it.

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His chorus
4.12

Whatever happened to the chorus of boys who sang with Prabhupāda in 1966? There have been so many changes over the years. Some are serving in different parts of the world, some are dead, some are no longer reputable, some are in jail, all are grown up. Nowadays, devotees sometimes chide old-timers, "Don't be sentimental about these people who were with Swamijī back then. We can't claim they were all great devotees, or even that they have *become* great devotees now." But I still think they are special. They were Prabhupāda's chorus, personally gathered together by him. They sang together.

These were Prabhupāda's first disciples. Most people Prabhupāda had met up until the summer of 1966 were unwilling to follow the rules and regulations he was preaching about. They were not disciples. But this group took him seriously. They changed their lives for him. That makes them a holy group. You cannot discount the time someone spent under the influence of the pure devotee,

even if they later fall away. This was a period of purity and of purification. They surrendered to Prabhupāda.

And when I hear all those voices singing together—Umāpati, Hayagrīva, Kīrtanānanda, myself, Brahmānanda, Rūpānuga, Acyutānanda, Gargamuni—all young men, I hear us crying out to Kṛṣṇa. Each of us was eccentric in his own way, definitely battered by the material energy, yet we were all submissive to the Swami. If someone listens to those early choruses, they would have to note them as significant, the sound of those boys singing the first *kīrtanas* in America.

We paid attention to the chanting then. We had many things on our minds just like everyone else, but somehow we were drawn by the power of the spiritual master to listen and respond, listen and respond, as if nothing else mattered. We wanted something from the *kīrtana.*

Attentiveness is not something one can take for granted, even today. Attention, desire, expectation—we wanted something from our chanting sessions, and we were going to attain it by paying attention. We had no real philosophical knowledge, and we weren't brahminical, or even clean. But we wanted Kṛṣṇa, and we believed He was present in the *kīrtana.* You can hear it in our voices.

A music critic might comment on our dissonance with Prabhupāda's sonorous voice. I don't know about that. But Prabhupāda brought us together and turned our lack of harmony into a real *kīrtana,* an offering to Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda was pleased by it because it was a sign that the *saṅkīrtana* movement was taking hold on American soil. Our *kīrtana* gave him satisfaction.

Prabhupāda gave a lecture in 1966 in which he answered the question, "Why does Kṛṣṇa expand?" Kṛṣṇa expands to enjoy. Then he said, "Take, for example, myself as spiritual master. Suppose I have some disciples. What is the meaning of this disciples? It is to enjoy. I take disciples so that we can be together and have *kīrtana* and *prasādam.* We eat together, we have *kīrtana,* and we talk together about Kṛṣṇa. It is to enjoy." Prabhupāda offered this as an analogy to Kṛṣṇa's expansion. It was a particularly suitable analogy for those days. Nowadays, if someone asked, "What is the meaning of a guru and his disciples?" one might reply, "The guru has to deliver his disciples from birth and death." Or, "Guru and disciples should push on the *saṅkīrtana* movement together and distribute many books." Prabhupāda said the meaning is to enjoy—not in the forbidden sense of sense gratification, but to enjoy spiritually. It was like that in those days. We didn't have to come up with any other reason to be together than that we enjoyed his *kīrtanas* and his cooking and his talks about Kṛṣṇa. He enjoyed saving us.

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A letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda
4.13

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

The last time I wrote you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I talked about reading your books. Today, if I may, I would like to reveal my mind to you about follow-

ing your most important instruction, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I am grateful that you have given me the holy name. I take the vow of chanting sixteen rounds daily as most important. You have protected my vow over the years and allowed me to keep it. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is the *yuga-dharma*—we can read many, many references to this in the Vedic scriptures—but no one would be chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the West on their own. You came and brought us the chanting. You have such faith in the holy name! It is impossible to think how the holy names of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, which are not names familiar in the West, could have been introduced and accepted. It is impossible to conceive of. This could only be done by a pure devotee of the Lord. Thus it is written in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta:* "Unless one is empowered by Kṛṣṇa, he cannot spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa around the world." You spread this chanting, Śrīla Prabhupāda, by chanting with us and instructing us in the importance of the mantra.

I have been chanting for twenty-five years. It is impossible for me to analyze where I am at in my progressive attempts to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Sometimes I think I have made no progress at all; other times I think I was making more progress in the past, but now I have fallen back. Sometimes I just feel stagnant. But I know that despite all these feelings, I am rightly situated. Even though I am not chanting *śuddha-nāma,* the pure name, I am still rightly situated. I know that chanting always brings deep benefit. I must have this faith. Haridāsa Ṭhākura affirms that even shallow chanting produces liberation.

So I feel good about my chanting. I know that it is a very deep and essential part of my surrender to you. Still, I am frustrated that I cannot chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and experience the promised taste of the holy name. I am not chanting in pure devotion.

Prabhupāda, by writing this letter to you, I put my dilemma before you for your deliberation. Please speak to me in a personal way and tell me what you think. Please know that I am not trying to be humble when I say my chanting is not good, I am not looking for flattery. *I don't chant with attention.* Sometimes I wish you had given us more instruction and training in our *japa*-meditation. How do we control the thoughts that come into the mind? My *intention* is to be attentive, but then my mind takes over. Whenever you were asked about this, you always gave the basic instruction to "just hear." The chanting itself will control the mind, you said. Still, I am asking you again. How can I help myself be more attentive in chanting?

I know you will not send me a letter in reply to this. Please speak to me through whatever agencies you wish to use. I will be listening for you with all my heart. I need your instruction to give strength and inspiration to my vow to chant. I want to make significant improvement. I can keep telling myself forever that chanting is a gradual process; I can keep being lax. But I really want to be able to fall at the feet of the holy name and pray, "O Lord, O Energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your service." I want to be engaged in the service of chanting.

I feel solace being able to speak like this before you. At least I know I am doing something crucial, inquiring from you about how to chant the holy

name. Unfortunately, I cannot come before you like Lord Caitanya came before Īśvara Purī. I haven't come to you to tell you that I am feeling great ecstasy and that I want to know about the madness that has been produced by my chanting. I cannot give you such pleasure right now. But at least I can assure you that, as your disciple, I am steadfast in chanting my quota of Hare Kṛṣṇa *japa*. I know it is essential. Exactly what is happening within myself when I chant, I don't know. Neither do I know whether my chanting is wretched, is far behind what it should be, or is just going along as might be expected in a gradual process. Please let me know how I can improve.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* that if one can be in the association of devotees who relish the chanting of the holy name, that will be of great help. Therefore, I am trying to gain *your* association more. I listen to your *japa* tape when I chant, although we hear that you say that we should hear our own chanting more than yours. Still, I like to be with you daily and chant *japa*, just as you used to chant one round with us at 26 Second Avenue in 1966. Do you recall that time, Śrīla Prabhupāda? We all had our big, red beads that we bought from a store in New York. We sat around you, and you led us in chanting one round. I still feel the inspiration you gave me at that time. I hope to keep that inspiration forever. All my other duties must rest on the solid foundation of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Please allow me to help you in your mission. But I also realize that to serve without the taste for chanting doesn't seem possible.

All glories to the holy name! All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for bringing the holy name! Although I am admitting my weakness to you, still, I am happy to have received the holy name from you. I wouldn't trade it for anything else in the world. The *mahā-mantra* will take me to your lotus feet in this life and in future lives, and will carry me back to Godhead. I hope that I can hear from you on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and about your own activities in the spiritual world.

your servant,

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Friend or father?
4.14

Prabhupāda compared the relationship between guru and disciple with the relationship between father and child. In this sense, we can refer to this relationship as a *dāsya* relationship. The spiritual master is our lord, birth after birth. He is our spiritual father eternally. Rāmānanda Rāya described the relationship of servant to master to Lord Caitanya by quoting verses expressing both the ecstasy and the ideal nature of the *dāsya* relationship. The following verse was written by Yamunācārya in his *Stotra-ratna:*

> By serving you constantly, one is freed from all material desires and is completely pacified. When shall we engage as your permanent eternal servants and always feel joyful to have such a perfect master?
> —*Stotra-ratna,* 43, quoted in *C.c. Madhya,* 8.73.

After hearing this verse, Lord Caitanya asked for something higher. Rāmānanda Rāya then proceeded to, "Loving service to Kṛṣṇa rendered in fraternity is the high perfection." In the purport to this verse, Prabhupāda describes the limits of the servant-master relationship:

> As long as loving service is rendered to the Lord in the master-servant relationship, there is some fear, for the servant is always afraid of the master, despite the intimacy of self-interest. In this stage the servant is always afraid of the master and respectful of him. When the devotee is further advanced, he has nothing to fear. He considers the Lord and himself on an equal level. At such a time, the devotee is fully convinced that Lord Kṛṣṇa is a friend and cannot at all be dissatisfied if the devotee lives with him on an equal level.
>
> —*C.c. Madhya* 8.74, purport

All the *rasas* are absolute, but if they are scrutinized, we can understand that one is more advanced than another. With the diminishing of respect, and the increase of affection, one progresses from *dāsya* (servitorship) to *sakhya* (friendship), then to *vātsalya* (parenthood), and finally to *mādhurya* (conjugal).

I recognize my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda as in the *dāsya-rasa.* He is the master and I am the servant who is filled with respect. This is the natural relationship between spiritual master and disciple. As a disciple, I am afraid of Prabhupāda's displeasure because I am so dependent on his mercy for my spiritual life. He is my link to Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master should be honored as good as God, and therefore, a disciple will offer *daṇḍavats* upon seeing his guru; a disciple will also pray to be accepted by the guru and will realize that the guru can save one at the time of death. The guru gives

faith in Kṛṣṇa. Without Prabhupāda, I can't have faith in Kṛṣṇa. I can't please Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, Prabhupāda and I do not have an equal relationship as peers.

But what about Prabhupāda's purport stating that fear and respect may limit a loving relationship? One way to view this is to understand that within the fear and respect there is friendship. The *Bhāgavatam* states that the *brahmacārī* in the *gurukula* should have a firm friendship with his guru. Just as one has a friendship with the father based on respect, so this is the case between guru and disciple.

Also, whatever fear exists in the mind of the disciple should not cripple his ability to relate positively to the guru's directions. The disciple should not be afraid of the guru himself, but he should be afraid of the guru's displeasure. That fear should act as an impetus to save the disciple from misbehavior. We are all in need of instruction and correction by the spiritual master. Not being afraid of the spiritual master's correction will make us reckless. But fear and respect should be based on love. We must know that Prabhupāda loves us just as we love him; he will never disown us or reject us. Our love should make us secure enough to hear what the spiritual master has to say to correct us.

In the beginning of a guru-disciple relationship there may be some insecurity. Prabhupāda points this out in another purport: "In general, love of Godhead is devoid of the intimacy of ownership. In the case of loving servitude, there is a want of confidence" (*C.c. Madhya* 8.79). The lack of confidence Prabhupāda is referring to is the disciple's insecurity that the guru truly loves him. He also implies

that the spiritual master may not fully trust the disciple. The word "confidence" could also be taken to mean "confidential." There may be an officialness to the relationship that doesn't allow for heart-to-heart disclosures. Each side is a little afraid that the other person may not honor his confidence. In the surrendered guru-disciple relationship, however, this lack of confidence does not exist.

Prabhupāda says that in the higher relationships, there is no formality, only friendship. There is a complete assurance that this person is always my friend. He loves me as I am, and I love him as he is. In my own case, I am aware that my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda is lacking. Perhaps I lack the confidence that he will accept me and accept my service. I am afraid he will see my wrongs and that he will reprimand me for them. It's not wrong to feel that way but I know my fears may be limiting me in my attempts to be an intimate disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The guru-disciple relationship is based on *dāsya-rasa*. There should be oneness in interest between spiritual master and disciple, and there should be a oneness in service ideal too. We can examine Śrīla Prabhupāda's service to his spiritual master to understand these points. The disciple just wants to carry out the instructions of the guru as his life and soul. He also knows that he will always be a fool before the spiritual master, that he will always be subordinate to him. This attitude is the culmination of the guru-disciple relationship and is fully satisfying.

This *"dāsya"* relationship is vital in spiritual life because we need correction. Only the spiritual master can give us the direction that we need. We need

the discipline that only a master can impose on us. Although Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were intimate friends, that friendship disqualified Arjuna from hearing instructions from Kṛṣṇa. A friendship is not based on one party having authority over the other person. Friendly discussions are rarely conclusive in the way discussions between a guru and disciple are. Prabhupāda writes of Arjuna:

> He is asking Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme spiritual master, to make a definite solution. He offers himself to Kṛṣṇa as a disciple. He wants to stop friendly talks. Talks between the master and the disciple are serious and now Arjuna wants to talk very seriously before the recognized spiritual master.
>
> —*Bg.* 2.7, purport

This is an interesting case of where a friendship limited someone's progress. To be a friend of the great devotee does not mean seeking an artificial equality with him; we should ask him to solve our problems in life. This is how he becomes our best friend. A friend should be a well-wisher; he should bring out the best in us. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa smiled to see that His friend, Arjuna, was accepting him as guru.

I want to continue my service to and meditation on Prabhupāda and, at the same time, overcome whatever limits are restraining me from further intimacy. I have my own ideas in spiritual life, but I have to be prepared to abandon these ideas under Prabhupāda's direction. Arjuna had to come to this conclusion also. He had to become submissive to Kṛṣṇa's vision of how he should live and think. Servant means to accept the order of the master on one's head.

Why do I hold back? Do I want a friend and not a guru? Prabhupāda says that one who wishes to solve the perplexities of life *needs* a guru. There is no other way to understand the absolute truth except by accepting service under and instruction from a guru. Every loving relationship takes work, and my relationship with Prabhupāda is no exception. Therefore, Prabhupāda has given us his books and his mission.

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"A lifetime in preparation"
4.15

Prabhupāda memories are part of Kṛṣṇa conscious culture. We may even see them as entertainment. Just as the *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyana* are forms of entertainment which also mold character and infiltrate into the lives of the listeners, so memories and anecdotes about Prabhupāda can change our lives while they entertain us.

After a full day's work, the nondevotee watches T.V. or goes to the movies. Other nondevotees get their entertainment through books or by doing any of these things in conjunction with intoxication. Devotees, on the other hand, use their leisure time for *hari-kathā.* Like-minded friends in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can read *Kṛṣṇa* book together or spend an hour with the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta.*

A good place to start when we choose to read about Prabhupāda is the first volume, *A Lifetime of Preparation.* Usually when we think of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we conjure up images of Prabhupāda in America, either as a lone preacher, struggling alone in

New York, or as the grand founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. But when we read the first volume of the biography, we glimpse Prabhupāda's life in India, before we met him, before he came to preach.

Even when Prabhupāda was a young businessman traveling around India, he was still our Prabhupāda. He said about himself, "I don't remember a time when I ever forgot Kṛṣṇa." Kṛṣṇa was waiting to fulfill the preaching mission through Prabhupāda, and Prabhupāda was preparing himself.

Sometimes Prabhupāda would present himself humbly, saying he wasted most of his life, even after meeting his spiritual master, "but better late than never." Prabhupāda said, "I wasted so much time. I realize that now." These are statements of humility. But Prabhupāda also said, "Actually, I was preparing myself. I was looking for the opportunity."

When Prabhupāda was in householder life, he had to do business. He felt duty-bound to provide for his family. Neither was there any opportunity to preach in the West, as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had encouraged him to do.

As it is relishable to think of all the little things Prabhupāda did in the 1960s and '70s, so we can relish his activities before we even met him. In a sense, his earlier life is obscured from our view. There is a special taste in hearing about the life of a famous person, an artist or writer, when they were still preparing themselves for the greatness that would follow. We can empathize with his or her struggle as they move in the world, unappreciated. The years when Prabhupāda was traveling around India in the third-class compartments of trains,

maintaining his household, faithfully keeping the Vaiṣṇava principles which his father had taught him, thinking about his spiritual master as "such a nice saintly person"—these are precious meditations for us. Prabhupāda was so patient and dutiful. Our spiritual master was such a nice saintly person.

When Prabhupāda came to us in his seventieth year, he had already spent a lifetime preparing himself, not only by preaching, but by practicing self-discipline and the many other qualities of an advanced spiritualist. We joined him handicapped by our so-called hippie freedom and by so many other weaknesses in our characters. Prabhupāda encouraged us simply to add the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa to our lives, and our *anarthas* would fall away. But our *anarthas* remain. Even after many years of practice, we are *still* trying to throw them off. In Prabhupāda's case, nothing of his earlier life was extraneous or had to be thrown off. Everything was useful in his preaching—his business sense, his ability to size up a worldly situation, his courage in living in New York City, his fearlessness in the face of crime, noise, and dirt. He was able to maintain his integrity and go about his pure purpose even while living in Manhattan. He was trained by his years in India, and strengthened by all the renunciation and austerity he had to perform just by living there and trying to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One may ask, "If Prabhupāda's early years are so important, why don't you talk about them more in your meditations on Prabhupāda?" One reason is that we don't have so much direct information. We only have what Prabhupāda directly told us. Also, it is improper to investigate the previous life of the spiritual master. Prabhupāda's earlier life was liber-

ated—he did not *become* a pure devotee after coming to the West—but still, family and business activities are not the essence of the spiritual master's mission and are, therefore, not meditated upon by his disciples. It is correct for us to emphasize Prabhupāda's role in our lives as Bhaktivedanta Swami, to remember him as we knew him. But his lifetime in preparation has a special sweetness to it that can be found by reading *A Lifetime in Preparation* and discussing it with friends.

Try this . . .

Would you like to try the obvious? Think of one aspect of Śrīla Prabhupāda's early life, and how it helped him prepare for his preaching mission that followed, and then tell someone.

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Part Five

Irreplaceable Swami
5.1

Every night we were listening to that bongo drum, Swamijī's fingers on that drum. I remember one guy who came, that rascal named Eliot who I knew before I started coming to the storefront. He said, "The Swami gets some good licks in; I want to hear him play." They came to hear Swamijī just as they went to the park to hear the bongo drummers there. I used to apologize to them, "The Swami is a very proficient *mṛdaṅga* player. You can't judge him by what he's doing right now. He's doing the best he can with this little drum. He doesn't normally play a one-headed bongo, but we don't have any of the drums that he plays in India."

"All right, granted, but let's hear what he can do with this one drum."

So you can hear him. His fingers walk on the drum. People speak of Olantunji and his talking drums. Prabhupāda's drum talks from his walking fingers (tick-tick-tick, tick-tick-tick, one two, one two three four, one two.) It's a simple thing he's got going with his fingers on the drum, accentuating his walking beat, along with his own singing and the *karatālas* and *tamboura.* It seemed that sometimes he played it strictly, like a metronome's measured beats. But sometimes it was uneven, more human-like, hitting his fingers in rougher beats. None of it was very fast. He played that drum to accompany his own singing. I thought, "Gee, he's over seventy years old and thumping on that drum to his own singing." Yes, you could come to the storefront just to hear him play the drum. Of course, he had a lot more to give than that—Lord

Caitanya's philosophy, *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

The drum is for *kīrtana*. You chant over the drum, but still you can be fascinated by hearing Prabhupāda's very simple fingers walking on the head of that brownish and already worn bongo head. There will never be anything like it, even now that we have many accomplished *mṛdaṅga* players in ISKCON. Nobody plays a bongo drum like Prabhupāda did—simulating a *mṛdaṅga* and yet not simulating a *mṛdaṅga*. Just playing on that little drum.

And his voice. It was not velvety smooth like cream, but a little rough, some grating there. Not unpleasant, but a man is a little bit rough. Like a man at the end of the day with a stubble of beard, or the way a leader of men is sometimes a little rough in his speech. It is an appealing roughness that comes from working and from singing, not a pampered, delicate thing. An old man's singing. And not a "man"—but an aged, pure devotee. His singing has its own appeal. It goes along with the drum, the uneven finger beat, and the rough voice. We were entranced by these things, almost hypnotized by each thing he added.

Try this . . .

The next time you hear a '66 *kīrtana* tape where Śrīla Prabhupāda played the bongo drum, listen to how he played the drum, and meditate on how expert Prabhupāda was to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness so attractive to the Westerners, even with so little resources available to him. Do you have any more realizations of your own about those early days?

A letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda
5.2

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

I am very thankful that you are letting me write in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in my own way. It gives me deep satisfaction. I hope the pleasure I experience in rendering this service is an indication that Kṛṣṇa and my spiritual master are also feeling pleasure by my service. The *Bhāgavatam* states, *yenātmā suprasīdati.* Only devotional service can give true pleasure to the self.

Now that we are serving in separation, I execute my service without hearing directly from you whether or not you are pleased by it. Still, I feel threatened when others speak in your name and give absolute decisions based on what they think you would want for me. Therefore, you have arranged that your disciples may serve according to their heart's understanding. We have to take the risk that our service is pleasing to you. Even if we do please you in a general way, what specifically you find the most pleasing is only something you can know and communicate to us. As Kṛṣṇa says—and this is also true of our relationship with you—"As they surrender to Me, I reward them accordingly."

I hope I am not making a mistake in my analysis of this point, and I pray that if I am mistaken, you will please correct me. Sometimes the guru *does* speak through other persons, not just trustworthy Vaiṣṇavas and *śikṣā-gurus,* but through ordinary persons, or through odd moments in life. Even a

stone or blade of grass can teach us. I want to be open to however you may instruct me, sincerely wanting to understand, "What does Prabhupāda want me to do?"

The saddest part of my life is when I think I know what you want, but feel incapable of carrying it out. This shouldn't happen. Sometimes I can carry your instructions out partially, and then I have to look honestly at how painstakingly I am willing to serve. You have given us plenty to strive for, plenty to think about. Our lives in your service are full of thought and surrender, full of adventure.

I pray to follow the mood of all true devotees. If I fail to attain you in this life, then I request that in the next life I can resume my remembrance and service without interruption. Please, somehow or other, take me to you in my next life.

But as I write this letter today, I don't want to deny my satisfaction in serving you. Although my service is bound to be faulty because I am faulty, it still makes me happy. There are at least a few signs that others are being helped by the service I am doing, and that is certainly part of your mission. Another good sign will be if I feel generous toward others' services and try to encourage everyone in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I am not personally capable of making a great offering at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, even if I feel personal satisfaction by doing it. The important thing is my spirit of devotion and my awareness of my tiny place. Whatever good I have, whatever talents, they all come from Kṛṣṇa. Without your constant guidance, Śrīla Prabhupāda, my so-called talents would be dragging me to hell.

I don't know how much time I have left in this body, but I am trying to employ the "work ethic" we Westerners were raised with. I want to use that training in devotional service as long as I have health and intelligence in this body. Please never take away my desire to serve you. Please allow me to live only for your service. Now let me end this letter while remembering your words to me at my *sannyāsa* initiation: "Preach, preach, preach."

Your servant,

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Wisps of remembrance
5.3

I was thinking this morning about those persons who don't understand the English language. I was trying to imagine what it was like. I looked at a picture of Prabhupāda and thought, "If I didn't know what he was saying, he would be the great spiritual leader who spoke in a language I didn't understand. Sometimes I hear the sound of his voice, but it makes no sense to me."

At first, I thought, "Oh, I would be at a great disadvantage if I couldn't understand his language," but then I tried to realize how it is hard *not* to appreciate Prabhupāda as a great spiritual master. These devotees who don't speak English have some of Prabhupāda's books translated in their languages, and although no translation can do justice to the original language in which something was written, there is no lacking.

When we walked with Prabhupāda, we always tried to ensure that everything was done nicely. There should be no branches on the path that he might trip on, no low-hanging branches to possibly lash him in the face. If he needed it, there should be a car or taxi to take him where he wanted to go. There should be no inimical persons around who could harm him, and everything should run smoothly. We tried to be attentive to his every need.

When we walked with Prabhupāda, the world was full of excitement and possible danger. We had to be alert with all our senses, completely absorbed in serving him as he so mildly and humbly walked through the world. Sometimes we were awkward and fumbling beside his grace. We always took pleasure in just being there with him, although there was no time for relishing that while we were walking. We were serving him, and we didn't want our "ecstasy" to get in the way. We were happy to face anyone and anything on his behalf, and therefore, we were concerned that our appearance was neat and our mood surrendered.

"All right"

After a lecture, Prabhupāda sometimes asked for questions from the audience. When he felt that he had answered enough, he said, "All right." Sometimes he said it with resignation, almost sadness. He seemed to mean, "All right, I've tried my best." Sometimes after answering many questions, Prabhupāda's utterance of "all right" sounded disgusted. He had just given a wonderful *parampara* speech, and yet people were raising their hands and asking challenging, doubtful, or crazy questions. He looked out

at the audience before him, sensing that they were not asking intelligent questions. "All right," he said, "let us have *kīrtana.*"

I remember Swamijī sharing an apple with us as the last act of the evening at 26 Second Avenue. When he said, "All right," it meant we had to leave. It was sad. Although we had just had such a nice meeting, it had to end, just like everything else in the material world. "All right," those souls who want to can return to their *māyā* in Manhattan.

Go on hearing

When you feel that you are not a good devotee, that should not prevent you from appreciating Prabhupāda meditation. Don't deny yourself—because by hearing about Prabhupāda, the relish and appreciation that you feel will itself be devotional credit, *śṛṇvatāṁ sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ/ hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇī vidhunoti suhṛt satām.* Hearing is called *punya śravaṇa;* hearing is pious. When you do that pious activity, Kṛṣṇa cleans the dirty things in your heart. Then you feel inspired to go on hearing. So even a fallen person who hears about Prabhupāda is engaging in at least one pious activity. It is one of the nine principles of devotional service, *śravaṇam.* We hope that people will pick up a book like *Prabhupāda Meditations.* Even if someone doesn't feel qualified to be a strict follower of His Divine Grace, just to read something pleasing about a great soul and his many qualities will help them. No one is excluded.

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Bhagwad-geeta, chapter 7.8-14, continued.

There is no harm in being a householder. No difference between a householder and a sannyasi. But a sannyasi can't talk with a woman in a lonely place. Swamiji gave a practical example. Fifty years ago, when his guru maharaj was fifty years old, a young man (a disciple, Dr. O. P. Kapoor) and his wife were talking with Swamiji's guru maharaj. The wife, who was about 22 years old, said to his guru maharaja, "I want to speak with you confidentially." His guru maharaja was about fifty years old. This woman was like his granddaughter. But he said, "Oh, I cannot speak privately. Whatever you like, you can speak here."

Swamiji said that any American gentleman can read Bhagwad-geeta, but "I am afraid whether they are reading Bhagwad-geeta scrutinizingly" (because they don't understand or follow Krishna's teachings that He is sex according to religious principles. They do whatever they like and claim to study the Gita).

Someone may say, "So, Krishna, You say that anything good is You. Are You Supreme Goodness? But what about other things?"

Krishna replied, "Whatever is there is an interaction of only three qualities: goodness, passion and ignorance. They are all produced from Me. But I am transcendental." Here is an example: The electrical engineer produces electrical power from the powerhouse as pure energy. But you use it in your home to cool (in your fridge) or to heat (on your electric range). In its original state, it is electrical energy, and you transform it. So Krishna is the source of all energy. If Krishna acts in what looks like ignorance, it is not so because it is Krishna.

Swamiji brought us to the U.N. building for prayer. He stood beside some official person who said something about Gandhi and then introduced Swamiji. We went there instead of having our usual morning class. I went with some devotees by bus. We met Swamiji there. The soft wind from the East River blew and rustled his saffron dhoti and top piece. He spoke about the peace formula! Krishna consciousness. The nations must recognize God before there can be peace.

Swamiji was in his room. I asked him questions. Then he gave me some little tasks to do. And the main tasks for me – typing his essays and the Bhagwatam

and Geeta. It's the best way to be with him all the time. I'm immersed in his teachings day and night. All the devotees are. One way or another--as he wrote on an announcement that's posted in the storefront--"do some work, and if you have none, chant Hare Krishna." He said we could spend all our time simply chanting Hare Krishna as Haridasa Thakura did. But that's not possible for us. Therefore, we have activities like producing BTG-writing, typing the stencils, printing it on the machine, selling them. He said that in one sense, we do other things because we can't just chant.

Rupanuga asked him about the importance of the philosophy. Swamiji had said all you need is love, bhakti. Swamiji said philosophy is for preaching to the atheists. Otherwise, a devotee doesn't need it. The residents of Vrndavana didn't use philosophy, they simply loved Krishna and played with Him. What an answer!

Swamiji said Krishna comes home in the evening and everyone talks about His activities. The boys tell of the demons Krishna killed. The parents and friends hear their stories and say, "Oh, Krishna is so wonderful!" The gopis talk of Him all the time, and everyone, even the animals and the trees, everyone in Vrndavana is mad

after Him saying, "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna." Swamiji said it, and we got a perfect picture of it in his words. He, too, is mad after Krishna. He says we can be also.

He told Allen Ginsberg that. He showed Allen Ginsberg the list of the twenty-six qualities of a devotee. Allen Ginsberg said I'm slowly developing all these except "sane!" Swamiji said, you can be mad after Krishna.

Caitanya-charitamrita, morning lecture.

The Absolute Truth is one, but seen differently according to a person's capacity. There are three aspects of the Absolute Truth. One is Brahman, which is like the rays of the sun. (After the lecture, we devotees discussed what he said, and there was confusion and disagreement about the word that sounds like Brahma. So we asked Swamiji in his room. He made it clear. There are three words that sound alike. I think I've got them right. Brahma is the name of the demigod, Lord Brahma. Brahman is the impersonal feature of the absolute, the rays. And a brahmin is the higher class person who knows the Vedas.)

Someone may say the sun is just fire, but it is a planet containing varieties of life. Vedic literature says every planet has variegated life. On the sun,

the fiery element is prominent. The living entities are made of fire.

The original effulgence is from Krishna. That Brahman effulgence contains all the spiritual planets. We cannot study even a millionth of His energy. It is futile to deny Krishna because we cannot estimate His energies.

The Brahman effulgence is without transcendental bliss. It is the eternal aspect. Peaceful shanta-rasa. Krishna says I've described in a nutshell some of My potencies, but you can know by one part of My energy I sustain all universes; and I'm in the hearts of all living entities.

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Everyone can be with him through service
5.5

Most devotees living now in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement did not associate with Prabhupāda in his physical presence. This does not mean that they are disqualified from having a deep relationship with Prabhupāda, or from developing devotion for him even beyond those who had the fortune of being with him in his physical presence. Those of us who did have a direct relationship with Prabhupāda when he was here, sometimes regret that we did not spend as much time with him as we had wanted to, and that we did not relate to him as purely as we should have. Since Prabhupāda's

disappearance, we are trying to compensate for our deficiencies in approaching Prabhupāda. Similarly, those who did not meet Prabhupāda can certainly compensate in the positive sense and develop their relationship through service in separation.

Regardless of the fact that some devotees knew Prabhupāda before and some did not, we are now all equals in the sense that we all have to go to Prabhupāda. The main method of associating with him is through his books, his recorded lectures, and our service to him. Service to Prabhupāda creates a spiritual medium which may not feel as tangible as Prabhupāda's presence in his books; yet service produces a deep connection. It pleases Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda communicates with his devotees.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion* lectures which he gave in Vṛndāvana in 1972, he commented that all his disciples could have a direct relationship with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Prabhupāda said that anyone who reads Rūpa Gosvāmī's book worships him, and associates with him directly. He also said that anyone who serves Rūpa Gosvāmī by serving the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement gets added realization. The same thing is true with Prabhupāda. We can be with him directly by reading and worshiping his books.

Book-reading itself is a very important service. The problem is that we can't read all the time. In extreme and advanced cases, a person like Mahārāja Parīkṣit rendered service only by hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* and he attained perfection. Most of us, however, read only a small amount of the time. Therefore, we have to render service in other ways, with our bodies, minds, and words.

In the *Nectar of Devotion* lectures, Prabhupāda urged his disciples to chant sixteen rounds. He said, "Sixteen rounds is nothing. In Vṛndāvana, there are many devotees who chant one hundred and twenty rounds," but Prabhupāda knew that this was too difficult for his Western disciples. Prabhupāda wasn't criticizing us for not being able to chant more, but he recognized that our situation was different. Therefore, in addition to reading books and chanting at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, we have to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda in other ways. This is how all of us can be with him.

Try this . . .

Aside from reading his books and chanting sixteen rounds, can you think of another way you can "be with Śrīla Prabhupāda" without being with him physically? The next time you perform that activity, you might like to take a minute to remember Śrīla Prabhupāda and how you are with him through that service.

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Prabhupāda answers your questions in his own way
5.6

Śrīla Prabhupāda answered questions in his own way. This would be especially evident with someone who didn't really know Prabhupāda or how to relate to him. Often, Prabhupāda wouldn't even speak to them directly. He would call upon his secretary to translate the person's question for him: "What did he say?" This wasn't a sign of pride on

Prabhupāda's part, but people often phrased their questions with jargon or vocabulary Prabhupāda wasn't familiar with, or, because their questions were sometimes obscure, they could not state them clearly. Prabhupāda would ask, "What did he say?" and the secretary would respond, "He wants to know whether a soul, once it is fallen, can come back to perfection."

Sometimes people would ask mental or involved questions. Although they had something very specific in mind, Prabhupāda would not always understand exactly what they wanted. He would answer in a different way, always on the transcendental level. There is an amusing example of this. Once, Prabhupāda was talking to a Christian priest in Melbourne. The priest said, "Yes, the story of the talents tells us about that." He was referring to one of Jesus's parables in which a master distributes talents to three people and tells them he will be back to collect them after a certain amount of time (talents were the form of currency used during Biblical times in that area). Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, talents," and he began to describe how one can use his talents in the service of Kṛṣṇa. The minister let it go and didn't try to correct Prabhupāda or redirect Prabhupāda to his own point. Occasionally, people would insist that the specific form of their questions be answered, but more often, people seemed to realize that Prabhupāda was speaking about something more profound than what the conversation seemed to be about. In his own way, he addressed the subject.

Sometimes a person would only get the question half out before Prabhupāda would begin to answer it. In cases like that, Prabhupāda was often respond-

ing just as much to the person's proud or challenging attitude as he was to his question. Prabhupāda would grab at the half-formed phrase and immediately defeat them before they had even fully expressed their ideas.

We should also understand that Prabhupāda was usually speaking to a whole roomful of people, not just one person. He had a responsibility to strongly represent the *parampara;* his answer to one particular question served as a vehicle for him to do that. Many questioners were testing their own doubt against the Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta.* Prabhupāda had to be very conscious of how he responded. As an expert preacher, he tried to satisfy both the needs of the particular inquirer and the needs of all who were present listening.

If someone was disappointed in their exchange with Prabhupāda, thinking that they had asked something relevant to themselves, but Prabhupāda didn't answer directly, this was usually a sign of their mistaken approach. One has to approach the guru with service and submission; then inquiry will be successful. Anyone who approached Prabhupāda in the mood of hearing his realized responses was satisfied. I also once heard one of Prabhupāda's secretaries handle someone's disappointment nicely: "You may think that Prabhupāda isn't answering your question, but if you listen, he is actually answering all your questions." Those who are looking for an excuse to avoid Prabhupāda's instruction will find fault with his way of dealing with their questions. Rather than pursue their question in a more humble, submissive mood accompanied by service, these persons reject the need to inquire from Prabhupāda at all.

Prabhupāda was not a question answering machine. "A thousand times asked, a thousand times answered." Prabhupāda was on the liberated platform. He spoke to his audiences and answered their questions as he was inspired to do so from within.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was always willing to have a sincere question brought before him again. If someone felt he had not directly answered their inquiry, the devotee could find another way or another time to broach the subject again. A disciple could say, "Prabhupāda, today I asked you a question, but I think I did not express myself clearly, and it wasn't understood."

I once asked Prabhupāda a question in a letter that was misunderstood. I wrote Prabhupāda asking, "I am traveling and preaching, nowadays. I am going to the colleges traveling around the country in a van. I would like to worship Gaura-Nitāi Deities. What do you think?" Prabhupāda wrote back, "Don't bring the Gaura-Nitāi Deities into the college classroom. That is not good. People will think that we are idol-worshipers." Prabhupāda thought I was asking if I could bring the Deities into the classroom, but actually, I was asking if I could worship Gaura-Nitāi privately. I wrote again and this time Prabhupāda said, "Yes, that is a very nice idea." So, sometimes a disciple had to clarify his point; it was our *right* to clarify our inquiries, but it could only be done by those who were regularly serving Prabhupāda and who were open to exchanging with him. Because we were inquiring with the understanding that we would obey whatever he ordered, it was important to be sure that the communication back and forth was clear.

Taking Swamijī out
5.7

One morning Prabhupāda left the house in Boston to take a walk. A devotee joined and said, "Swamijī, where are you going?" He replied, "Where are you taking me?"

Prabhupāda wasn't just playing on words. He sometimes said, "You are my young fathers taking care of me in my old age." He would go wherever we took him. When we listen to morning walk tapes, we can hear the devotees commenting to Prabhupāda on the weather or on the best place to walk: "Prabhupāda, it's too wet. Shall we go this way?" "Shall we go back now?" "Prabhupāda, would you like to see this?" These were the simple dealings of escorting Prabhupāda through the world.

Prabhupāda didn't have to go shopping, and he rarely had to go on any other kind of outings. Mostly he went for walks. Occasionally, he went out to see a lawyer or to record his *bhajanas* at the recording studio. He also went out on *harināma* to places like Tompkins Square Park. He went on speaking engagements. We rarely had a car in the early days, so we usually took him on the subway or the bus. It was a chance to be his assistant, to be protective, to try to make smooth arrangements for his travel. It was such a contrast to be with him and to see the world, and to watch him look at the world.

I always felt almost fearful when I saw big, rough people sit next to his slight form. It was painfully embarrassing to see the dirty things that we accept as part of life in America move past his vision.

And there was always the possibility of getting lost. Prabhupāda was so precious to us. But nothing much ever happened because he was protected by Kṛṣṇa.

It was special to go out with Prabhupāda. When the Gītā-nāgarī farm Deities, Rādhā-Dāmodara, go out, They take on a special glow in the sunlight. Similarly, it was unusual for us to see Prabhupāda anywhere but in the storefront, yet when he went out, he didn't take on the appearance of an ordinary person in his old, checkered suburban coat. For one thing, he always wore his *dhotī*. He was elderly and Indian. But these were all external. He burned with an inner flame that was visible even as he sat in the subway. He was always intensely focused on Kṛṣṇa. His eyes were different than other people's eyes; they shone with inner vision. He was always a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

It was also always a test for us, so recently rescued from the material world. "Here I am beside Swamijī on the subway. I have to behave properly. I no longer belong to this world, although I feel like I do. But Swamijī needs me to stick by him as closely as possible and to be his disciple."

When Swamijī went out, he was not so relaxed. He was grave, conserving his energy. He showed no signs of nervousness or fear, or even uncertainty in the unfamiliar city. Still, he was different than he was in the temple room. He seemed aware that this was the material world. He had made that temple room into a kind of Vraja.

It was so jarring to sit on the subway or bus seat, look up, and see a half-naked woman on a poster or sitting across the aisle jiggling her leg. Whatever tendencies we might have had to try to enjoy those

things were eradicated when we were with Swamijī. Our vision was more like the vision of a disciple. His presence protected us from sense gratification. We remained fixed on our purpose: to get Swamijī where he needed to go and then back without incident. We were supposed to know this culture, to know how to ride trains and how to talk to people to find out where we wanted to go. Finally, all that street-sense had a real purpose. We could use it to guide the pure devotee through. Don't get stuck in the subway turnstile, put the token in, do everything right. And through all our anxiety, Prabhupāda was there, absorbed in his own Kṛṣṇa consciousness and asking, "Where are you taking me?"

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"Big Prabhupāda" and "little Prabhupāda"
5.8

Developing any relationship takes time. Developing a relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda also takes time. Those who didn't have the opportunity to meet Prabhupāda may feel unsure how they can become acquainted with Prabhupāda now, but we all recognize that we must become acquainted with Prabhupāda in order to love him.

The personal relationship with Prabhupāda is always a very important factor in a person's coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are each deeply affected by someone who makes Kṛṣṇa consciousness real for us. It may be a particular devotee (who may later become our *śikṣā-* or *dīkṣā-guru).* It may be a friend, or it may even be one of the items of *bhakti* like *mahā-prasādam* or the process of hearing and

chanting. All these things have a very definite connection with Prabhupāda, and this soon becomes obvious to a newcomer. Even though we may not have had Prabhupāda's personal association, we still have to feel gratitude and appreciation for his preaching. And it will also be obvious that all the devotees who are now serving in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are simply here by Prabhupāda's preaching, just as we ourselves are.

As one is introduced to ISKCON, one will constantly hear about Prabhupāda's greatness. Unfortunately, one may suffer from knowing Prabhupāda only in an official way, as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON or as the *mūrti* in the temple. One will also hear Prabhupāda's statements used to justify devotees' activities or in debates. This may give you the impression that Prabhupāda is an official authority figure without too much personal presence. Prabhupāda *is* an authority figure, he's the guru, but that image of him should not replace our vision of him as the loving father. All devotees have a relationship not only with "Big Prabhupāda," with the looming figure who founded ISKCON; there is also a "little Prabhupāda," a Prabhupāda who is sensitive and personal enough to come and be with little you. This is also one of the symptoms of Lord Kṛṣṇa's greatness—He is not only the controller and maintainer of everything, but He is "smaller than the smallest." Prabhupāda is also small enough to be the friend of the smallest aspiring devotee.

Therefore, it is not unusual to meet devotees who never met Prabhupāda who strongly feel his personal presence in their lives. No devotee is barred from associating with Prabhupāda and serv-

ing him in a tangible, surrendered way. Prabhupāda is a moveable "feast." He is our constant companion. We just have to accept him as teacher and follow his instructions and he will teach and instruct us.

What we are talking about here is Prabhupāda meditation. We have to be thoughtful, attentive. One process of meditation is to chant Prabhupāda's name over and over. Prabhupāda has affirmed for us that as we chant Kṛṣṇa's holy name, so we can chant the names of the devotees. Lord Caitanya Himself exemplified this principle by chanting the names of the *gopīs*. Let us chant Prabhupāda's names many times, or at least a few times with heartfelt feeling. "Prabhupāda"—just by chanting that name, we can be saved from *māyā*.

Try this . . .

And since we are emphasizing the idea of "on the move meditation" when there is not enough time for our regular practices, then why not keep some of his statements written on cards and take them out? Prabhupāda's statements have a special flavor. They are uniquely different from the Sanskrit translations composed by Vyāsadeva. We can take small statements or sections of purports by Prabhupāda out with us wherever we go.

And if we are fortunate enough to have the association of at least a single follower of Prabhupāda, then we can speak remembrances of Prabhupāda. Just to be able to say that Prabhupāda did a certain thing or that Prabhupāda thought a certain thing can bring you relief from *māyā* at any time and any place. There are so many ways to meditate on

Prabhupāda. It is open to everyone. *Prabhupāda Meditations* is only intended to record a very few out of the many different memories and ways to think of Prabhupāda, to remind us that it is an unlimited field open to everyone.

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Prabhupāda and holy places
5.9

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he was not so interested in visiting holy places. He was more interested in preaching and writing books on behalf of his *guru mahārāja.* I was with Prabhupāda once in Bombay when a guest invited him to go to Dvārakā. The man made the prospective visit to Dvārakā sound so attractive that Prabhupāda showed interest. It was never scheduled though, so he never went.

There are many holy places in India, especially in the south, but also in the north in the Himalayas. Although all these *tīrthas* are associated with Viṣṇu in His different expansions, these holy places are not as dear to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as Māyāpura and Vṛndāvana. These are the holy places Prabhupāda frequently visited.

Prabhupāda had a special relationship with Māyāpura and Vṛndāvana. They had deep spiritual meaning for him. And as a world preacher, Prabhupāda wanted to build an American house, as he called it, for his students in Vṛndāvana. That American house eventually became the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. He wanted to build something very gorgeous and large in Vṛndāvana, India. His

ideas for Māyāpura were even grander—a world headquarters for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Prabhupāda said that Māyāpura was his place of worship and Vṛndāvana was his personal residence.

We can take Prabhupāda's example in going to *tīrthas*. Naıottama dāsa Ṭhākura said that in the age of Kali, visiting *tīrthas* is a bewilderment. The *tīrthas* are contaminated by many Māyāvādīs. (When Prabhupāda was constructing New Vrindaban in America, he first said that New Vrindaban was as good as Vṛndāvana, India. Then he said that New Vrindaban was better than the original Vṛndāvana because there were no Māyāvādīs or *sahajiyās* in New Vrindaban.) The holy places in India have become contaminated by materialists who come and dump their sins in the holy place without changing their hearts. Saintly persons go to the *tīrthas* in order to purify them.

Prabhupāda didn't *need* to go to a *tīrtha*. Wherever Prabhupāda was, there was Vṛndāvana. He could be anywhere and be in Vṛndāvana consciousness. And by creating ISKCON centers, Prabhupāda was creating transcendental *tīrthas* in Western countries. This was a far more important service on behalf of Kṛṣṇa than touring His established holy towns in India. Prabhupāda said he could have stayed in Vṛndāvana without any anxiety, but he went to the West to preach.

Most of Prabhupāda's followers are preaching in different places all over the world. Lord Caitanya predicted that His holy name would be distributed "in every town and village," and Prabhupāda fulfilled that prediction and sent his disciples everywhere. But Prabhupāda also set the example that

going on pilgrimage was important to purify his disciples. And as those same disciples get older, it becomes more and more important to visit places like Vṛndāvana and Māyāpura and to fix the mind firmly on Kṛṣṇa. Preaching in the West may be considered the best service, but it is wearying. For those of us who Prabhupāda rescued from our Western culture of *māyā*, it is easy to become too influenced by Western ways when we never allow ourselves to experience the alternative of the pure atmosphere of the holy *dhāma*. To experience real Kṛṣṇa culture, one has to go to Vṛndāvana and Māyāpura, mix with the people and the land, and feel the presence of the Lord. Rejuvenated, one can then go back to preach.

Prabhupāda did not need rejuvenation. He thought of Kṛṣṇa no matter where he was. He was enlivened and inspired by preaching in the West. But in his later years, he seemed to be drawn more toward India. He spent more time there, partly to manage the establishment of his ISKCON centers in Bombay, Māyāpura, and Vṛndāvana, but partly because those lands were so close to his heart.

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Because he likes it
5.10

"Don't be ashamed," Prabhupāda said. He meant don't be ashamed to be seen in public as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda didn't force us to wear *dhotīs* and shave our heads, but he liked it. He preferred us to appear as Vaiṣṇavas and remind people of Kṛṣṇa. To the average Westerner, our Vaiṣṇava

dress is certainly strange, but when we dress like this in public, it is a way for us to link up with Prabhupāda. We have to go within ourselves and ask, "Why *am* I wearing these clothes? Why *is* my head shaved? Why *have* I set myself off so much from regular society?" The only possible answer is that we are followers of Prabhupāda. A follower of Prabhupāda happens to dress like this. As time goes on, our self-questioning becomes less formulated, but that internal meditation has to be there in order for us to do it.

We cannot fully surrender right away; nor can we become completely pure immediately. But we can perform little acts of sacrifice and commit them to Prabhupāda. In this way we will gradually commit ourselves more and more to him. If the only price to pay is a little embarrassment, then it's worth it. The '60s are long gone, and with them went the age of swamis and yoga and the idea that it is "in" to be a member of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. But our identities do not change with the passing of time. We persevere and move to ever-deepening commitment.

We don't want to dress publicly as a devotee out of dogged obstinacy. People see us as crazy when we dress in our robes. I don't continue to dress this way to defy them. Prabhupāda doesn't want us to appear crazy, he wants us to change people's minds in favor of Kṛṣṇa. By his calculations—the calculation of *guru, śāstra,* and *sādhu*—if someone sees a devotee and thinks of Kṛṣṇa even unfavorably, it will be of benefit to him. We have to have faith in this. It is not that Prabhupāda told us to go around walking on our hands with our feet in the air. He asked us to dress as devotees, if you like, if you are not

ashamed—so that people will think of Kṛṣṇa and benefit.

Of course, there are many reasons why devotees *don't* dress in their *sarīs* and *dhotīs* in public. Sometimes devotees are sensitive and shy. It is too great a sacrifice to go against social opinion. Some devotees are working in the world and do not have the freedom to dress in their devotional clothes. Others find that dressing in Western clothes enhances their preaching. People are more willing to talk to them if they don't look too "strange." But for those who can endure it or who have the freedom to dress as they like, there will be no real loss or embarrassment, but instead a deeper meditation on Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda.

We were especially able to endure the sometimes scathing public opinion when we walked with Prabhupāda. We were proud to be with him, walking beside him on the city street and trying to protect him from any disturbance. Who cares how people looked at us? We wanted to be presentable as Prabhupāda's servant, not to embarrass *him,* but we had no concern at all for what others thought. Walking beside Prabhupāda was already the most prestigious position anyone could have, not only among the devotees, but in the entire world. People would see the elderly, saintly guru. Beside him was the person they could approach to find out about that guru, the guru's assistant. We can still meditate like that, that we are walking beside Prabhupāda and ready to represent him at any moment.

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A report from Prabhupāda's quarters, Bombay
5.11

There are so many wonderful things to remind us of Prabhupāda in Bombay. Perhaps the most wonderful is the *mūrti* of Prabhupāda writing in one of the inner rooms. I sat before that *mūrti* today and felt like I was sitting in front of Prabhupāda. I couldn't help myself—I began wishing he would look up and recognize me, although I knew it was silly. Why should I expect such a miracle? Whatever intense experience I have of Prabhupāda's presence has to take place in the heart. I realized that much while sitting in front of that *mūrti:* I desire to have communication with Prabhupāda in my heart. I am not looking for sensationalism.

The pillars here are thickly carved wood. Chandeliers hang from the high ceilings. Prabhupāda only stayed here briefly in his last year, a few days or a week, but there are remnants from earlier times. They have the old *vyāsāsana* that he sat on when I was his servant in 1974. Inscribed on that *vyāsāsana* it says: "This holy seat was used by Śrīla Prabhupāda from 1972–1977 at Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsabihārījī's temporary temple. From this exalted *āsana,* His Divine Grace preached in both Hindi and English to hundreds of thousands of souls who drank the nectar of the Absolute truth as it flowed from the lips of a pure devotee and world *ācārya.*"

I bought a picture of Prabhupāda sitting in that *vyāsāsana.* He looked grave with his cotton *dhotī* and his feet touching the ground. He looked pensive. I found another photo also, showing only his lotus feet. I can see that he was sitting on the same *vyāsāsana,* his bamboo cane resting against the side.

Prabhupāda's quarters in Bombay consist of three or four open rooms. It strikes you that you are looking at a big hall with these wonderful pillars. The doors are all woodwork, just like ornate wood Deity doors or the carving one often sees on *siṁhāsanas*. Prabhupāda's *mūrti* in this room is sitting at the low desk where he used to greet guests. There is another smaller desk to hold his dictaphone and his references books where he used to write in the mornings. I don't know whether he actually used them in these particular ways or not, but I think so, since they have arranged them this way.

I wandered around the room chanting my rounds and commenting aloud like some kind of Walter Cronkite doing a TV news spot. I want to tell people who cannot come here that I am in Prabhupāda's room, to give them the news that these rooms are still here, still a holy place of pilgrimage, still open for inspiration. I will also be meeting Girirāja Swami, Prabhupāda's very stalwart and intimate devotee in Bombay. What could be better than that? How can I render service to these devotees to help them in their service? I don't want just to come here, grab some inspiration, and move on without giving anything in return. The only way I can get Prabhupāda's mercy is to serve his devotees.

I also want the thing most dear to my heart to be obtainable by me. I am looking for mercy. I want to *hear* Prabhupāda speaking to me in my mind and heart. I want to leave here with renewed strength and with better focused direction. It takes courage to dedicate our lives to Prabhupāda in spiritual life. He wants us to have that courage, but we are dependent on him to give it to us.

Am I afraid that Prabhupāda will ask me to do something I really can't do? It *is* possible. And how will I know that the voice I hear as Prabhupāda *is* Prabhupāda? I can't always be sure I'm hearing Prabhupāda's voice even when it sounds like something he would say. I tend to distrust the subtle messages I think may be coming from Prabhupāda, even though I want to hear from him conclusively in this way. Therefore, I must be resigned to do what I think I need to do in my service to Prabhupāda. There will be a result to my service and hopefully that result will be his satisfaction. Visiting Prabhupāda's rooms helps to tune into all these things. It becomes easier to make a decision.

These rooms in Bombay remind me of Prabhupāda's last days. Thinking of Prabhupāda's last days makes me reflect on the fact that I will soon have my own last days. Old age means the body will have to live through difficulties as it makes its last changes before death. People will be less sympathetic toward me. I am no longer lively or attractive. I require more physical care. Prabhupāda even said, "They think I am contaminated and they are not coming to see me." Prabhupāda went through considerable difficulties for more than his last year. Similar difficulties are in store for us. We will only have Prabhupāda's example to guide us. Prabhupāda was noble. There was no diminution of his spiritual awareness at any time. These rooms inspire me to remember those times.

In one picture, I can see Prabhupāda's swollen feet and ankles. His mouth is also swollen on one side. But his eyes are shining with spiritual light, although we can also see the pain in his body. He is fixed on Kṛṣṇa.

I left the rooms after offering my obeisances. I know my mind is filled with distractions and that I am self-centered and not so surrendered. I am in a dangerous position because the end is approaching. But I want to be in Prabhupāda's shelter. I have a photo of him where he looks like a serious general, a leader of many men, an *ācārya* who could deal with anyone's nonsense. Seeing him in that mood, I realize Prabhupāda had to deal with so many nonsense disciples like myself. He could not always be sweet and tender if he was going to cure us. Prabhupāda, please tell me what to do.

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Otherworldly
5.12

Prabhupāda was definitely otherworldly. By this I mean that he wrote and taught that this material world is temporary and unhappy, and that real life is in another world, the spiritual world. Prabhupāda taught this because it is Kṛṣṇa's message in *Bhagavad-gītā.*

And yet to those who knew Prabhupāda, the term "otherworldly" may not strike them as exactly appropriate when describing Prabhupāda. We picture otherworldly as someone who is always gazing heavenward as they wander around this earth in a trance. Otherworldly people don't relate to other people, to earthbound beings, because they are so ethereal. An otherworldly person is often like an absent-minded professor. This is not a description of Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda said he was a Calcutta man. He used his practical intelligence to manage the ISKCON institution. When he met with nondevotees, he was present with them; he was able to examine their mentalities and attack their mistaken logic or atheism in a very direct way. Therefore, we can appreciate these two aspects about Śrīla Prabhupāda: that his philosophy and teachings were very much otherworldly, pointing to eternal life and the soul, and stressing the unimportance of this spot of life on earth; and that his preaching intelligence made him seem very much a part of this world, very much present in it.

Trying to inject any otherworldly philosophy into present day Kali-yuga America is a near impossible task. Prabhupāda was successful at establishing Vaiṣṇavism because of his practical preaching methods. For example, he founded the Bhaktivedanta Institute, whose basis is to convince materialistic scientists of the otherworldly proposition of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:* there is a soul (although the materialist cannot perceive it) and there is God (although the materialist cannot perceive Him). The Bhaktivedanta Institute doesn't try to prove these points by quoting *śāstra,* but rather they attack the very roots of scientific theory, and then show those theories in the light of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Prabhupāda was practical in other ways. He taught *varṇāśrama,* farm development, education, and so on. He was interested in the relief of world suffering, although he knew that the only relief would come from "otherworldly" Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda was always after the ultimate interest of the soul. He was compassionate, but he

knew that there is no possibility of happiness in the material world. In this, he was very practical.

Another example of Prabhupāda's mix of worldliness and otherworldliness is his emphasis on book distribution. Prabhupāda was not content to write his books on a palm leaf and just let them sit. He used book printing technology, although he said he was simply "blindly" following the order and example of his spiritual master. It took both spiritual acumen to write the books and down-to-earth practicality to transfer the spiritual message into type and then bind it and have artwork and an index done. Then he encouraged his disciples to distribute the books, another apparently worldly endeavor. To distribute books, his disciples had to go out into the world and stop the materialists to ask them to buy books. The book distribution *yajña* is not a worldly activity, but again it requires practical intelligence and hard work to accomplish.

How was Prabhupāda with his disciples? Did he appreciate more the otherworldly side, or did he like to see more the practical intelligence side for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness? I have seen Prabhupāda in both moods. When I was traveling with him, but wasn't able to keep financial records, for example, he looked at me in a reprimanding way. I felt I was not fit to be his traveling companion if I couldn't do practical things nicely for him. It appeared that the inability to deal with the world on the spiritual master's behalf was a disqualification. One shouldn't be foolish. One may have received no training or experience before becoming a devotee, but for Kṛṣṇa's service, one should be prepared to learn and execute any kind of service that is asked of one.

On the other hand, I have also seen that the difference between Śrīla Prabhupāda and myself (there is a *huge* difference) is that I belong to this world and he was in another world. He always had Kṛṣṇa on his mind. He could withdraw into himself and become so grave that he wouldn't be present with us anymore. Most of us, when we are sitting together, are all relating and thinking more or less the same way. But Prabhupāda reserved the right to meditate internally on Kṛṣṇa. He wasn't think what we were thinking. He didn't always laugh when everyone else laughed, because he didn't have the same passing, sensory attitudes that other people did. He was not of this world. We could perceive that by the way he looked, the way he always thought of Kṛṣṇa and not of material things.

Therefore, he would sometimes demand that we be more in touch with the world. Keep our feet on the ground, take our heads out of the clouds, do things nicely for Kṛṣṇa. But other times we were aware that we were stuck in our bodies while his consciousness was in Goloka, a place we could hardly imagine, which for us was theoretical, but was real to Prabhupāda.

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Why not talk to Prabhupāda?
5.13

I have been going too long without trying to talk to Prabhupāda. We shouldn't refrain from talking to Prabhupāda out of a lack of faith. If a Christian can talk to Christ, and a *yogī* can talk to the Supersoul, why can't a Prabhupādānuga speak his mind to Prabhupāda? It just takes faith and hope that he will hear us—hope that Kṛṣṇa will hear us. We may say, "Well, I definitely have faith in Kṛṣṇa as the Supersoul." But that faith may be more an acceptance of the scripture than direct realization of the Lord in the heart. But the same scriptures tell us that the pure devotee, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, can be just as present as the Supersoul in the heart of his disciple. We do not have to doubt that, even if we don't have direct realization of it. If we do doubt it, then we have to pin our hopes on a prayer to both Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, "Please, Kṛṣṇa, deliver my message to Prabhupāda. Please, Prabhupāda, deliver my message to Kṛṣṇa. Please, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, forgive me for my offenses, and let me become a devotee of my spiritual master, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and You."

Let us have faith in our ability to talk to Prabhupāda. We should place ourselves as his eternal servant and say, "Prabhupāda, I am trying to remember you. My place in spiritual life is only to be your servant. Please allow me to serve your movement." Whatever recent things you have heard about Prabhupāda or thoughts you have had or places you have seen—each can be the stimulus to bring us closer to him. "Prabhupāda, today I came to your Bombay temple . . . "

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, let me talk to you wherever I am. Don't let me become one of those people who think there is nothing to say and who let their communication with you lapse. You are present everywhere and in so many different ways. I cannot tell you anything you don't know, but I can offer you my heart. Let me remind myself that you are the real shelter.

Try this . . .

Sometimes a devotee may feel lonely or as if no one else fully understands his position. When this occurs, it might be helpful to talk to your best friend, Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Go before a picture or *mūrti* of Prabhupāda and tell him your "story." Prabhupāda's presence can give us all the strength to go on, and as he is present in his picture and *mūrti,* if we understand we are actually talking with him, he will reveal himself to us. Why not talk to Prabhupāda?

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Prabhupāda is not ordinary
5.14

The *śāstras* warn us not to think of the spiritual master as an ordinary man. That is very hard for the nondevotees to comprehend. They think the spiritual master is an ordinary person because they see him growing old or they see him show anger. They misjudge him in many ways. They have no idea what is ordinary and what is extraordinary. It

takes spiritual vision to appreciate the pure devotee, but the *śāstras* tell us the truth.

The *śāstras* list certain qualifications of a spiritual master, yet even among those who possess these qualifications, Śrīla Prabhupāda is extraordinary. What is it about him that makes him extraordinary? Or, we can ask, "There appear to be some ordinary things about Prabhupāda, so what is it about Prabhupāda that makes these things extraordinary?"

Dr. Harvey Cox said, "Prabhupāda is one in a million." He founded the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement which continues to grow and establish roots in countries all over the world. It was seen as a near impossible task by other Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs*, to fulfill Lord Caitanya's prediction that His name would be known in every town and village of the world. Prabhupāda fulfilled the Lord's prediction. He must be an extraordinary person, someone fully empowered by Kṛṣṇa, to possess so much pure devotion and determination.

One should not see the spiritual master as an ordinary man. This is not only the proper etiquette prescribed in the *Vedas*, it is reality. The spiritual master is never ordinary, even if he appears to be growing older or seems to forget a Sanskrit verse. The disciple should never doubt his spiritual master because of these things. Prabhupāda explained that his perfection was that he was always preaching and was fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The guru is not the Supersoul who knows all things, but he has an intimate relationship with the Supersoul. Śrīla Prabhupāda was always dedicated to Kṛṣṇa's mission. He produced amazing tangible results. He is extremely dear to Kṛṣṇa. All his dis-

plays of anger or illness or humanness are transcendental. They are meant to bring us closer to him in loving exchange.

The spiritual master lives in the internal energy. He always desires to talk about Kṛṣṇa and glorify Kṛṣṇa, and to engage himself and others in Kṛṣṇa's service. To be in his presence is intense and purifying, and this can be difficult for a neophyte to take. Therefore, when he acts in apparently "ordinary" ways, it relieves his neophyte disciples and enables the beginning devotees to feel intimacy with the exalted pure devotee. When the ordinary devotee can do simple things like heat water for the guru's bath or cook him his favorite sweets, his affection is aroused. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda occasionally used to engage his disciples in conversations and activities just to bring them closer to him. He used the same psychology an adult uses when he plays on the level of a child. It is a way to gain their trust and affection.

Ultimately, nothing is ordinary or mundane when sanctioned by the pure devotee and engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. Therefore, whenever we think of Prabhupāda as ordinary, meaning mundane or conditioned like other karmic-bound souls in the world, we commit Vaiṣṇava *aparādha.*

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Remembering Prabhupāda favorably
5.15

When I read *Conversations With Śrīla Prabhupāda,* I find that, although one can come close to Prabhupāda by reading them, they give a very stripped

down picture of him. We don't see how he looks as he speaks, how he moves, what his non-verbal language is. We see only his words printed in black and white. We could get the wrong idea about Prabhupāda by seeing only the words. But it's also true that, as we read one conversation after another, Prabhupāda's presence seems to accumulate in our minds, and we begin to see all the non-spoken gestures too.

It takes faith to hear from Prabhupāda. Don't think that Prabhupāda's presence can be gained without faith. Don't think it is wrong to be faithful or to feel favorable toward Prabhupāda. Don't think feeling these things is in competition with anything else in your life. You *want* your love to be revived. There is no logical calculation involved, no other persons to please, no prerequisite emotional objectivity. You simply have to satisfy your own sense of service and inquiry at his lotus feet. You have to satisfy your own sense of truthfulness by engaging your intelligence and your heart in understanding what he is saying to you. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja tells us to use our intelligence dynamically to study the qualities and character of Lord Caitanya. Don't argue with yourself (or with your spiritual master). And don't find fault.

This is remembrance of Prabhupāda in a favorable mood. There is *work* to be done—we have to throw aside everything unfavorable to our remembrance. Therefore, we have to understand the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the nature of the work to be done. If we don't know the difference between weeds and flowers, how can we expect our garden to produce fruit? If we don't know the difference between unfavorable meditation and favorable

meditation, how can we expect our spiritual life to increase?

Selecting between favorable and unfavorable can sometimes be painful. Again, we have to approach this process with faith. Prabhupāda will help us, he *wants* to help us, clear our hearts. We have failed him many times, but he is still accepting us. Let us serve him with full faith and consciousness and study his character and qualities with dynamic intelligence. Let us pray to him to reveal to us the difference between the flowers and the weeds.

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Part Six

September 21, Vṛndāvana, India

It is the appearance day of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. I am in Vṛndāvana starting a Prabhupāda notebook. I hope. I haven't been writing. I have somehow been thinking that I can't do it or I won't do it or I'm not interested in doing it. I was more successful when I was walking in Ireland, and I am trying to look back at that time.

This morning when Prabhupāda's *samādhi* doors opened, I saw the large brass *mūrti* of Prabhupāda again for the first time in two years. His mouth is slightly open . . . the same *pūjārī* who has been here all these years is still here. Prabhupāda, you are my worshipable guru, and I am before you again, trying to remember you.

Some devotees are starting to inquire more about how to be part of the intimate pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. We should never think that Prabhupāda didn't teach us this. We should always know that only when *he* allows us can we enter the *dhāma* and our eternal relationship with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their associates are mysterious, transcendental persons beyond this material existence. They will allow us to come to Them when we are qualified by sincerity and purity. We cannot simply pick up a book on internal Kṛṣṇa consciousness and expect to be allowed to enter. You have to please your guru, the representative of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. By his grace, you can make progress.

As far as that topic is concerned, although there is a lot more interest in it these days in ISKCON, I am trying to remain always faithful to Prabhupāda. The real substance is service to Prabhupāda. His

service does include the higher topics, but like anything in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, inquiry into these topics is a gradual process. We have to be careful not to hear from anyone who tells us Prabhupāda was deficient or incomplete in his teachings. In fact, it would be better not to know anything than to hear from someone who teaches us that Prabhupāda didn't give us what we need. Better to continue as he wanted us to, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and praying to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the temple. We can always please Them with our wholehearted efforts.

Work continues on Prabhupāda's *samādhi*. It has now been over fourteen years since he disappeared. Slowly, slowly, the marble domes get coated . . . It has become almost a bad joke in ISKCON that the *samādhi* will get finished. But it will. The devotees here say they think it will be finished within a year or so. Bhūrijana explained, "Just as a generation of Americans grew up set in an idea of the inimical relationship between the Soviet Union and the U.S., and it was almost unthinkable for them to revise it, yet events did change and they have revised their views. Similarly, it may be impossible for us to think that the *samādhi* will be finished, but it will be finished."

This morning we had a *pūjā* for Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. His picture was up on Prabhupāda's grand *vyāsāsana*. Prabhupāda was placed on a lower position. I offered my obeisances, and then I offered the *ārati*. I rarely thought to actually look at Prabhupāda and think of him as I worshiped him. What was on my mind? To wave this article seven times around, then purify the next article, wave it this many

times to this part of the body, that many times to that part of the body. Try to time yourself so you finish when the devotees are finished singing *"Śrī Guru-caraṇa-padma."* Where is the worship? Prabhupāda, please forgive me.

Because of the occasion, we sang a few of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's songs—*"Gurudeva," "Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura,"* and some others from the songbook. The words were appropriate for the appearance day of such a great soul, for we who consider ourselves his disciples in *parampara*. "Gurudeva, I don't have any strength. All I have is your mercy. I am so fallen. If you don't accept me, then I will just leave and give up my life. Please accept me." That much I read because I was feeling so unworthy, feeling too tired, wanting to rest my spine against the marble column, unable to sit cross-legged, but putting my knee up. When I read those words, "Gurudeva, I don't have any credits. Please give me your mercy," and then another line on a page next to it from Gopīnātha, "Gopīnātha, my mind is crazy and I don't accept any authority," I felt grateful to the Vaiṣṇava poets for expressing my own mood so concisely as I think of my own spiritual master.

Vṛndāvana is very special. At the same time, however, coming here makes one aware that other places may be equally good, or in some ways even better, because in Vṛndāvana you can't live alone. So many devotees come here, especially at festival times, and the socializing can be demanding. As if to drive this point home to me, this morning, after not having been here for two years, I finally entered the *samādhi* again. I entered through the front doors just before 4 A.M. I had planned just to go up to the

closed Deity door and wait for the *ārati* to begin, but right in front of the doors sat a very staunch *sannyāsī* Godbrother. He looked at me, and I looked at him. I hadn't seen him in years. I bowed in front of Prabhupāda, but while saying his *praṇāmas* I kept thinking, "What am I going to say to this devotee? What's his name again?" Then I stood up and greeted him, "Are you still preaching in South India?" "No, I've come up north now."

That little exchange robbed the moment from me. I had wanted to enter the *samādhi* with proper concentration and meditation on Prabhupāda. I wanted to *feel* something. But at the same time, I had to recognize that the devotees of Prabhupāda are also Prabhupāda, and I have to go through them too. Nonetheless, I did lose the intimacy of the moment, and even now (I've been here two days), I haven't gone to Prabhupāda's room because I doubt I could be alone. There will be other people there. I will think of them instead of Prabhupāda.

I also tend to think I already know what Prabhupāda's room will be like and that there will be nothing new for me to see or experience. I have to overcome that. Anyway, I am in my room at the guesthouse, and at least I can have my precious solitude. Having the right attitude in thinking about Prabhupāda is more important than being in the place where his relics are or where his actual pastimes took place. Going to the pastime place is best when no one else is there.

I think I will try to find out when that is. Perhaps after *maṅgala-ārati,* before I come up to my room and chant, I can stop in there and greet Prabhupāda first. Just take a moment to be with him.

September 22, Disappearance day of Nāmācārya Haridāsa Ṭhākura

Let me examine how I've been thinking about Prabhupāda throughout the day. I went before his *mūrti* in his room, alone. I went up quite close, but then wondered whether it was all right for me to sit so close. When I chanted *gāyatrī-mantra* I thought, "I am living. I have not died yet. The important thing for someone who is alive is to go on with regular duties." Therefore, I was being pragmatic in using my time with Prabhupāda in his room to chant Gāyatrī.

The point is that we sometimes spend so much time going on with our regular duties that we forget about Prabhupāda, or we don't think of him enough. "Business as usual" for an ISKCON devotee is always something done in Prabhupāda's service, and it is true that Prabhupāda preferred us to be fully engaged. However, we have to be careful of self-centered passion as we drive on in the present with our project. To actually stop and focus on Prabhupāda as a person, the person who was here, is beneficial. We have to become still enough, quiet enough, to be able to remember him.

I didn't focus on this point so much in my morning visit to his room. I looked over in the direction of the bed where Prabhupāda spent his last months, and finally his last moment. I couldn't really contact my feelings about it except to think, "Oh yes, this year I will be here for his disappearance. Devotees will gather, and I will try to remember those times." But even while I was sitting watching Prabhupāda, the *mātājī* who takes care of his rooms came around and did some of her daily duties. She

slung a garland of small buds around Prabhupāda's neck in an efficient, matter-of-fact way, lit incense, and placed one of Prabhupāda's letters in front of him. They do that every day, change the letter. She is very dedicated to her service for Prabhupāda, and she has been doing it for years. No doubt she has a special relationship with Prabhupāda in his rooms. Yet I couldn't help but notice the external, quick, efficient movements of putting the garland on, and moving on to the next thing and the next thing as she went through her daily rounds. If Prabhupāda were actually present, one would have garlanded him more slowly. Not with one hand, but with two.

The point I am making is that although we pay our respects to these memorials, we tend to be moving quickly through the present. When we relate to the memorials, we do so like the present caretaker, or like the present preacher, who is stopping here, but thinking of his own activities. Yet the fact is that we, too, will be finished up. We will join Prabhupāda in our next life, wherever that may be. *We will go on to a next life.* We tend to be almost arrogant about the fact that we are living now, as if that gives us a superior vision of Prabhupāda, as if he is among the dead and we are among the living. Actually, we have a feeble hold on this life. In this tiny amount of space in time, we will each disappear.

And even now, the consciousness we command and the space we live in—why do we think this is more important than where Prabhupāda is? Is it because we think our world is manifest and Prabhupāda's world is unmanifest? Prabhupāda's world is *not* unmanifest. Prabhupāda is with Kṛṣṇa in Go-

loka. That world is the only real manifest world. We may not see him in the material world, but that is because *we* are so insignificant. In relation to Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda is in the real world, and we are in the kingdom of death.

Our attitude should be that Prabhupāda has gone on to participate in his intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa and I have been left behind. He came here and developed a relationship with us, gave us adequate instructions on how to follow him, but ultimately left us stumbling behind. We are trying to figure out the meaning of his books, how to act, how to get along with one another. Sometimes we make serious mistakes. But we are also calling to him, running after him, "Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda!" This is our actual position. Therefore, don't be complacent. Visit his room and try to taste a little of our own deaths, then feel the need to catch up to him, the need to perfect ourselves.

It is only human to remember him as he was in this world. Not long ago, Prabhupāda enacted his pastimes on the earth. He was never an ordinary human being suffering under the spell of illusion, although he appeared to us as an elderly Indian *sannyāsī*. If we forget Prabhupāda's pastimes among us, then where is our connection to Prabhupāda at all? Maintaining Prabhupāda's rooms is meant to help us focus in this way. We can look at the paraphernalia he used when he was here and worship his *mūrti*, and we can remember how he appeared among us with love.

Tonight I spoke with a devotee about Prabhupāda's books. We were discussing some complicated things about the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philo-

sophy and how Prabhupāda expressed it. The main point is our faithfulness to Prabhupāda and believing that whatever he gave us is what Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura taught. This is our basic conviction, but that loyalty is not easily gained. To understand what Prabhupāda really means and what he is saying, one has to read the books deeply. One has to understand them in relation to the teachings of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Lord Caitanya.

As we go on in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the meaning of Prabhupāda's books will change for us. A twenty-year old looks at things differently than a forty-year old, who doesn't see things the way a fifty-year old would see them. As we mature, we see new lights in the books. We hope to become especially attracted to the more advanced stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to realize them before death. All of this information is present in Prabhupāda's books. We just have to find it with clarified understanding.

So I am hoping to visit, at least briefly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's rooms every day while I am here. I want to be able to ask Prabhupāda, "Please direct me." A meditation of coming before him in his rooms, greeting him, saying good morning, giving a report, or asking him for directions for the day is a nice feature of living in his house in Vṛndāvana. Prabhupāda called all of Vṛndāvana his residence, but his rooms are particularly his home. His actual form is in the big *samādhi* temple building, but Prabhupāda himself never saw that building when he was with us. He lived in these rooms.

I spoke with Yaśomatīnandana today. He explained how he thought ISKCON has to figure out how to implement *varṇāśrama* and how to have faith in the GBC, how to manage, and so on. Then he spoke about when Prabhupāda was present. When Prabhupāda was here, everything was different. We all had such tremendous confidence that there was a pure devotee at the head of things and that, no matter what happened, everything would turn out all right in the end because we were under his shelter. It's true, we all felt that way when Prabhupāda was with us. I remember even preaching to guests saying, "The thing about this movement is that we have a pure devotee at the head. There is a pure devotee on the earth now who we can take shelter of." If our movement seemed to be going wrong due to outside pressures or internal impurities, we all still felt assured that everything was going to be fine. Whatever we had to do, if we were following Prabhupāda's order, then we would be all right. Prabhupāda even said once that if we had to go to jail because of our street-chanting, we would go to jail. We would simply continue our chanting there. And we had the confidence in Prabhupāda to follow him anywhere. It was nice to remember that confidence.

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September 23

Today we went to Govardhana and Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Later I spoke to my disciples about it. One of the realizations I got at Rādhā-kuṇḍa was based on simplicity in relationship with the guru. I went to

Rādhā-kuṇḍa thinking I would pray to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, but as I bowed down, I realized the only one I can pray to is Prabhupāda. I don't know anyone else.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* describes *arjavam,* simplicity. Those descriptions can be connected to simplicity in relation to the guru. Life seems so complex and precarious. We can't analyze it fully. Even a devotee has to deal with some of the complexities of the world, and there is bewilderment in trying to underderstand spiritual topics. So many people have so many different opinions. Life is complicated. Therefore, better to cultivate simplicity. Prabhupāda said Kṛṣṇa consciousness is easy for the simple and difficult for the crooked.

Concentrating on simplicity helps me understand my service of initiating disciples into the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Certainly, they regard Prabhupāda as their *śikṣā-guru,* but it is not a small thing to have a reliable guide to lead one to Prabhupāda. Whoever can perform that service is also a guru. If one can trust someone to guide them to Prabhupāda, and if one can keep one's relationship with Prabhupāda simple, obedient, reverent, and based on following his instructions, we can become Kṛṣṇa conscious. No one can take initiation directly from Prabhupāda after his disappearance. Therefore, one wants to have a simple relationship with a guide who is equally simple in his obedience and reverence for Prabhupāda.

Simplicity is not necessarily easy to attain. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is also considered a simple process of God realization, but it is not that easy to do it properly. Simplicity means to be free of diplomacy, duplicity, and cheating. It means to be open and

honest. We have to approach the spiritual master with simplicity. I want to approach Prabhupāda in that way.

Parikrama is a good place to realize all this. You bow down and feel sand grains sticking to your forehead. The flies bother you and the heat. And you realize you know nothing about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Although you bow down in places associated with Them, you have no entrance into the pastimes. Sometimes you bow down before a Deity, but you don't even know who it is. The *bābājīs* stare at you because you look so strange to them. They don't accept you as a bona fide devotee. At times like that, you feel foolish and dull. The only thing that is clear is your connection to Prabhupāda. If no other realization comes from visiting all these holy places, at least you understand that.

We walk around Govardhana, and someone tells me the trees are five thousand years old. What should I reply? Is it true? Then someone begins to narrate stories about Kṛṣṇa. I accept the ones from scripture as true, but they all seem so far away from me. I am in India. What do I expect from myself?

We drive through some village named after one of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. I try to think of the pastime over the barrage of present day sensual impressions—noise, chaos, dirt. Where is Kṛṣṇa? See Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. All that clings to me is my identity as a follower of Prabhupāda. I practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of him. I am here in India, in Vṛndāvana, because he asked me to come here. What else is there to know?

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September 24

I am hoping to write little things describing Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana. I also want to describe my own experience of Vṛndāvana now. I want to describe my memory of Prabhupāda as it comes to me today and I am mixing that in with Prabhupāda memories and Prabhupāda's instructions from all different times.

I want to demonstrate a practice that everyone can follow: at a set time of day, meditate on Prabhupāda. When I meditate on him in the morning, I find I range out to memories of him from all different times. In the evening, I tend to remember my own contact with Prabhupāda in the day that just passed. We first have to give ourselves the assurance that we *were* with Prabhupāda during the day.

Let me give an example: today I was asked to give the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. In my lecture, I certainly repeated his teachings. The verse was about transcendental variegatedness. I prepared by looking through various sections of Prabhupāda's books where he speaks about this subject. I spoke on how impersonalism teaches oneness without variety, but Kṛṣṇa is full of transcendental variety. Then I thought of the different examples Prabhupāda gave to illustrate this point. He said that one kind of flower in a vase is nice, but a bouquet of different flowers is more beautiful. He also said that impersonalism is like staying alone all day in a field in Māyāpura which is just made up of dirt clumps. We would find that oneness so boring that we would prefer the activity of even a nasty city like Calcutta, because of the variegatedness. Another

example: in Montreal, a young woman asked Prabhupāda, "Why do people worship the four-handed form of Viṣṇu?" Prabhupāda replied by asking her a question: "Why do you care for that one child when there are so many children?" She asked, "Is it because she was given to me?" "No," Prabhupāda said, *"because you love her."* Similarly, we worship different forms of the Lord according to our inclination to worship that form. Lectures bring out so many nice instructions by Prabhupāda. We go through the computer of our minds to pull out relevant stories to support our points. That is one way I contacted Prabhupāda today, through the *Bhāgavatam* lecture.

Later, I connected with Prabhupāda again. I was talking with a devotee about Deity worship, and I told him that now, in ISKCON, there are so many elaborate ceremonies, but I tend to do things simply because that was how Prabhupāda trained me. I described how we installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in Boston as early as 1968 under the directions Prabhupāda gave us in a letter. The directions were very simple—chant the "Govindam" prayers, offer as opulent foodstuffs and flowers as you can afford, and have *kīrtana.* This will install the Deity. He didn't write up lists of *mula-mantras,* or describe the sixteen items that had to be offered. There was no *arghya* or *madhu-parka.* These things were all added later. They're nice, but I still have a tendency to resist elaborate ceremonies and prefer the simpler way.

The devotee I was speaking to looked at me intently as I related all this. It made me appreciate what a nice moment it was to be talking about the early days with Prabhupāda. I was happy to remem-

ber that I am at home with simple things because I had a lot of personal direction by Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda used to tell us that Sanātana Gosvāmī introduced all these ceremonies just to pacify the *smārta-brāhmaṇas*. The six Gosvāmīs were on the liberated platform. They didn't need all these ceremonies. Prabhupāda said the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa was all we need, and he told us to keep the ceremonies "short cut."

I spoke with another Godbrother earlier this morning and showed him my photo of the original Pañca-tattva painting Prabhupāda brought with him to America. This Godbrother asked me details about Prabhupāda's altar and worship.

I described how he didn't have a picture of his guru, but only this one picture of Pañca-tattva. As we spoke, it occurred to me that Prabhupāda wasn't doing *pūjā* per se. He wasn't setting up a *brāhmaṇa's śilā* or anything like that. We have to remember that just before Prabhupāda moved to 26 Second Avenue, he was staying in a house where he had to keep his *bhoga* next to the cat food in the refrigerator. He wasn't able to keep *pūjā* standards. That was another delightful little moment where we both laughed and shared thinking about Prabhupāda.

And I was again inspired in a morning talk with a *sannyāsī* Godbrother. He said that people tend to say Prabhupāda taught only *vaidhī-bhakti*. They claim they have to go elsewhere to get the higher teachings about the *rasas*. But it is not true. Everything is there in Prabhupāda's books. Then this devotee gestured with his arms pointing up and said, "Prabhupāda is on the highest, highest platform. He is way up there." He meant that Prabhupāda is very advanced in his love for Kṛṣṇa and

that he has a very intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. He said we should never mistake that. My Godbrother also said that the word "Prabhupāda" is reserved for only the most exalted devotees. It is an appropriate name for Prabhupāda. It is such an exalted name that we can understand why his Godbrothers were startled to hear his disciples referring to him that way. But it was right for us to do it.

Like this, we can go through our day, and at least briefly think of the different ways we connected with and can remember Prabhupāda. If we can't think of anything, we should change our lives or surround ourselves with people who will remind us of Prabhupāda. But anyone who reads Prabhupāda's books will remember Prabhupāda.

In addition to assuring ourselves that we did contact Prabhupāda on a given day, we should also review how we may have failed him by our lack of surrender. How about our *japa,* was it attentive? How about our service attitude with the other devotees, were we loving? Did we push on? Did we preach? Did we distribute his books? Did we do what we were supposed to do? Did we refuse to give someone our time? In this way, we can see how we failed to serve Prabhupāda properly, and we can make a plan to improve. We can also beg for his mercy and forgiveness.

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September 25

It is nighttime. How did I think of Prabhupāda today? That is the purpose of this diary. Perhaps I can go further into the past and remember something I heard about Prabhupāda or some instruction of his that moved me.

I have heard more talk about understanding *rāgānugā-bhakti.* There are many different sources of information about this—the *rasika śāstras* and the *bābājīs,* the teachers in the Gauḍīya *sampradāya.* Even among Prabhupāda followers there are different shades of opinion and practice. It can get bewildering. The one important message is to stay faithful to Prabhupāda. By faith in guru, we get Kṛṣṇa. Not otherwise.

I was thinking about all this while reading today. I came across Prabhupāda's statement that you cannot enter Vṛndāvana without the mercy of Lord Nityānanda. This is also described by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura in one of his songs. The mercy of Lord Nityānanda comes through Prabhupāda. Also, Narottama sang, you cannot enter Vṛndāvana as long as you have *viṣaya chāriyā kabe,* attachment for the demands of the senses and the body. You cannot enter Vṛndāvana except through the line of the six Gosvāmīs. Prabhupāda told us all these things, although we may have missed their import before because of our lack of interest.

Now I am reading his books again and benefiting from the various sections where he talks about the Vṛndāvana mood. Prabhupāda quotes all the previous *ācāryas* right after the most important information about *mādhurya-rasa.* Nothing is lacking.

Right now I am a little too tired to write at length. I want to take rest and get up and write for Prabhupāda. I was thinking that since Prabhupāda's disappearance, the Supersoul seems to gain more importance as one kind of guru, the *caitya-guru.* We also have *śikṣā-gurus,* and we continue to have the presence of Prabhupāda, but Supersoul is guiding us too.

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September 26

Tonight I went with some other devotees for a walk to the Yamunā River to bathe. Afterwards, we read from *The Nectar of Devotion.* Then, on the way back, I started remembering anecdotes about Prabhupāda. One's audience is a very important factor in being able to remember stories about Prabhupāda, as is the place and time. Everything was ideal—the place was perfect, Vṛndāvana (which was finally cool after a hot day); the time was perfect because we had just bathed in the Yamunā and shared reading *The Nectar of Devotion;* and the company was very friendly, mostly my disciples and a close friend and Godbrother, Śeṣa Prabhu. I felt relaxed enough to tell one story after another. I didn't feel I had to connect them by a particular theme, but I just went from one frame of reference to another easily.

One story I remembered: Prabhupāda was walking in Montreal. He was being challenged by a boy who thought the vegetarian diet wouldn't make a man strong. Prabhupāda replied, "You see this boy here (indicating Brahmānanda), if I asked him to,

he could kill you with his bare hands, and he is a pure vegetarian."

Each story I told reminded me of another, especially morning walk stories. I found myself telling a string of stories about being faithful to Prabhupāda because this is so much on my mind. I saw how stern he was in some of the statements he made. When I was traveling with Prabhupāda in '74, he was disturbed to hear that one of his disciples was leading others away from Prabhupāda's strict practices. They weren't worshiping the Deity or having a morning program. They were claiming that a particular disciple of Prabhupāda was the most advanced. Then when we got to Japan, the guests bowed down on seeing Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda exclaimed, "This is an advanced devotee, who bows down before the Vaiṣṇava or the spiritual master. Not a disciple who goes away and claims he is more advanced but who doesn't follow strictly anymore." Advertising oneself as advanced means you are not advanced, especially if you lessen your tie with your spiritual master.

Then I told the incident of when Prabhupāda spoke in public before hundreds of devotees at a Māyāpura festival and said, "One of our devotees, he has gone away from our society. He says there is no *bhajana* here. And he has asked me to please bless him that he may find a guru." I added a purport about how any thinking that you are better than Prabhupāda is devastating to your spiritual life.

As we walked, we saw the Vṛndāvana cows coming home, raising dust. Walking through the land surrounding the ISKCON Goshalla, we saw many calves in an open pen. They were all beautiful.

Passing down the lanes, we met Vrajavāsīs and exchanged "Rādhe, Rādhe" and "*Jaya* Rādhe." with them. Everything led to another story about Prabhupāda. I told how in Boston in '68, Prabhupāda was once sitting in the house we had rented for him, when he began to tell us about Vṛndāvana. He looked toward the back of the house and said, "In Vṛndāvana, if someone was calling for me from outside, he would say "*Jaya* Rādhe." And I from within my house would call back to him, "*Jaya* Rādhe." Everything can remind us of Prabhupāda.

I am grateful to the devotees who encourage me in this way to remember him. I can keep alive. All glories to the devotees who want to hear Prabhupāda meditations and give life and share anecdotes.

I thought about Prabhupāda today while I was in the *samādhi* during the *maṅgala-ārati,* but I wish I could think of him more. Specifically, I would like to concentrate on Prabhupāda during the singing of "*Gurvaṣṭakam.*" I wish I had more devotion. I feel that regret at the end of the day. I know that my whole life is contained within his shelter and within his movement, and that his teachings are vast enough to encompass everyone. I am one part of a large family that is branching out as time goes on. We try not to offend each other in our sometimes rambunctious family dealings, but we bounce up against each others' opinions and sufferings and successes and failures. There is so much pressure and so much love. We are only together because of Prabhupāda; our love starts with him. Prabhupāda wants us to love Kṛṣṇa.

Everything is clear here in Vṛndāvana. Prabhupāda is beautiful high up on his *vyāsāsana,* and the Deities are gorgeous on Their altars under Their *siṁhāsanas.* Sometimes you look to one and sometimes the other. Sometimes the *kīrtana* leader directs his singing to Prabhupāda, and sometimes to Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma or Gaura-Nitāi or Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. Even when you are looking intensely at Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, it only takes a quick turn to face Prabhupāda. "Yes, through this person Prabhupāda, only through him, can I get the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and see the beauty of Kṛṣṇa."

Prabhupāda personally installed the beautiful Deities of the Krishna-Balaram temple. What mercy! He was present for the triumphant opening in 1975. Everything was prepared by his disciples, then he brought in *brāhmaṇas* from outside and conducted the ceremony. Now we are all here, benefiting and trying to contribute and develop in his movement. We have seen many excesses and leaders with puffed-up notions of themselves trying to build powerful empires. They all crashed down, one after the other. We have seen so much trouble. But Prabhupāda's movement continues as we try to develop our Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to advance. Kṛṣṇa sees everything, including our attempts to please Prabhupāda.

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September 28

We went to see Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja today. I asked Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja this: "It seems to me that after the disappearance of my spiritual master, I am

putting more trust in the *caitya-guru*. Is this normal? How can we develop more the ability to take guidance from Kṛṣṇa in the heart to help us serve our guru? I want to respect the advice of my Godbrothers, but they have many different opinions. Therefore, I try to surrender to *caitya-guru*."

He replied that Śrīla Prabhupāda is still available. He said that one shouldn't ask the question I did. Such a question never occurred to him for a moment. Guru is always present. It depends on the guru and on the disciple. He gave the example from *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta* when thousands of years later, the guru came and helped his disciple. Prabhupāda also spoke like that when we asked him if we would be able to get guidance from him after his disappearance. He said, "It depends on your purity."

I felt corrected by Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, and I realized that my question intimated a lack of faith in Prabhupāda. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja didn't negate the fact that Kṛṣṇa is in the heart and that He will always help us. But the idea that after the disappearance of the spiritual master the guru is absent and one has to shift his faith to Supersoul is an exaggeration and can be considered a lack of faith.

I was satisfied to hear this. I could have defended my desire to talk to Kṛṣṇa in the heart and said that Prabhupāda encouraged us in this, but I let it go. Even one who fails to appreciate and internalize the teachings of the guru will get Kṛṣṇa's help from within in the form of spiritual intelligence. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said that Kṛṣṇa always takes care of the fallen souls. We don't have to specifically petition Him.

What Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja detected was a lack of thinking of Prabhupāda. If I examine the question

and the words I used, I suppose that doubt was there. The whole idea of intensified meditation on Supersoul by one who already has an eternal guru is not proper. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said that he always thinks of his *gurudeva.* That reminded me how Prabhupāda also said he always thinks of his spiritual master.

Let me take Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's instruction to heart. Prabhupāda is as good as God. Let me turn more in my prayers to him. He can continue to communicate with me and help me in the same ways he did before. I don't have to go to the all-knowing, all-pervading Godhead, thinking that my spiritual master is limited. No, go to Prabhupāda and ask him, "How can I serve you? Please guide me. Please let me please you."

Don't avoid Prabhupāda. Don't go to God thinking, "Oh, God is more of a grandfather figure, and He has so many people to deal with, so he won't get on my case!" Sometimes youngsters play one authority off another and try to get their way. Am I thinking, "Well, Prabhupāda is a heavy disciplinarian. Let me go to his boss, Kṛṣṇa, and maybe I will get a better deal. He won't know my real *anarthas* and lack of surrender. I can fit in easier without being noticed as a nonsense"? Am I really thinking that? Kṛṣṇa won't accept that! Surrender to Prabhupāda is the only way I can surrender to Kṛṣṇa. He is the way. He is still available. It depends on my purity. Purity doesn't only mean that I am free of mistakes and completely transcendental. But it means that I purely depend on my guru and wish to serve him.

Therefore, I hope to take this instruction to heart, and pray to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda to please protect me and to please let me know how to serve him. I know that he is not always going to give me easy answers. I have to go on writing and serving and taxing my brain. Kṛṣṇa *will* always help me, but Prabhupāda is my main connection. That is how Kṛṣṇa wants it.

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October 1

I am tired. I keep thinking my brain and body are too tired to remember Prabhupāda, but it's not true.

We go out and visit the Vṛndāvana *tīrthas* because Prabhupāda sent us here. I just read a purport by Prabhupāda in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* where he said he has constructed the Krishna-Balaram Mandir so devotees from all over the world can visit Vṛndāvana. At the same time, he has created temples in the West so they can be in Vṛndāvana wherever they are. When I think of these things, I am amazed at Prabhupāda's accomplishments. Who could do that for us, create an environment where we can always think of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana even in the middle of New York City? The future is brilliant for those who can apply themselves to Prabhupāda's instructions.

It is possible to be in Vṛndāvana consciousness, especially by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda taught us that too.

Although my Prabhupāda consciousness may be absent from moment to moment as I travel around Vṛndāvana, actually, Prabhupāda is sustaining these activities. At the same time, we should apply ourselves to remember him.

Today we went to Ter Kadamba and saw the *bhajana-kuṭir* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. I remember Prabhupāda, as early as 1966, telling us the story of Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *bhajana-kuṭir* or "jungle" in Vṛndāvana. He said that Rūpa Gosvāmī desired to make a feast for Sanātana Gosvāmī, his older brother and guru. A beautiful girl came and gave Rūpa Gosvāmī the ingredients, and he then served Sanātana Gosvāmī a nice feast. When Sanātana Gosvāmī inquired where the ingredients for the feast had come from, Sanātana Gosvāmī could ascertain that the girl had been Rādhārāṇī. Sanātana Gosvāmī became very unhappy, thinking they had taken service from Rādhārāṇī. Prabhupāda related this story feelingly: "Oh, you have murdered me! We want to serve Rādhārāṇī, and you have accepted service from Rādhārāṇī? Oh, you have made a great mistake." And they both cried.

I told this story the way I heard Prabhupāda tell it on the '66 tape. When we try to reproduce Prabhupāda's inflections, we do it in our unrealized voice. The devotees like it anyway. There we were, just above the *sarovara* used by Rūpa Gosvāmī, and the same tree, and the same *bhajana-kuṭir*. But I was remembering Prabhupāda and the story he told.

That's how it should be. Whatever we do in Vṛndāvana should be guided by Śrīla Prabhupāda according to his books and instructions. He says that we should approach Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa only through the Six Gosvāmīs. Prabhupāda has set up the Deity

worship here. You worship Gaura-Nitāi and then you worship Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma and *then* you can worship Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. You cannot enter Vṛndāvana's *mādhurya-līlā* by any other method.

Prabhupāda is the revealer of the *dhāma,* the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana, the *dīkṣā-* and *śikṣā-guru,* the manager who made this all possible by securing the land and directing his disciples to build. He is still with us. It is Prabhupāda whom we serve and please, even today, after his so-called disappearance. He is here to meet us when we come to Vṛndāvana to catch up on lost time, trying to become fit for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am trying to remember you and be faithful to you, going back to the days when you were the guru for all of us who came to you at 26 Second Avenue. Continuing now, we are supposed to be a little grown up. We are supposed to be trying to understand more about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. We are supposed to always be serving you. We are never supposed to give up the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa or the general directions you gave us in ISKCON. Therefore, I found in your purport where you described Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana* in Vṛndāvana, that you mentioned book-writing as the spirit of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Rūpa Gosvāmī lived under a different tree every night. He lived very austerely, and he didn't eat much. He hardly slept. He wrote books. Prabhupāda said that in Vṛndāvana today, *prākṛta-sahajiyās* say they are too advanced to read books, but this is nonsense. Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote books. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said that book-writing and publishing were the *bṛhat mṛdaṅga.* It is part of Vṛndāvana-*bhajana.* Do good to

others by giving the general populace Kṛṣṇa conscious books. That is Prabhupāda's mood.

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October 2

Usually I favor meditating on Prabhupāda as we knew him. As an expression of loyalty, I almost scoff at the possibility of Prabhupāda having a form other than how he appeared to us. But I know he does. Still, I prefer to think of Prabhupāda as I knew him, and anyway, I can't really know Prabhupāda in any other form. At least not now.

Lately, as I have been hearing more about *rāgānugā-bhakti* and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, I am coming to understand that it is possible for a disciple to know his eternal relationship with his spiritual master in the spiritual world. It is possible to meditate on that eternal relationship. This no longer seems scandalous to my loyalty if I think like that.

I have never been able to understand whether Swamijī (the form we met Prabhupāda in during 1966) is eternal. Is there an eternal 26 Second Avenue? But now I tend to think there isn't. That doesn't make it any less sweet or memorable for me, and I feel comfortable continuing with my Prabhupāda recalls and my memories of life in the storefront with my spiritual master. But now I want to pray that the other form is revealed. I cannot imagine it or concoct it, but I hope one day Śrīla Prabhupāda will reveal how I can be with him as he assists Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. Just as we sing every morning, *nikuñja-yūno rati-keli-siddhyai* and *śrī-rādhikā-mādhavayor apāra-mādhurya-*

līlā-guṇa-rūpa-nāmnām/prati-kṣaṇāvādana-lolupasya vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam. These two verses are meaningful. I pray that I may one day realize them.

Meditating on Prabhupāda in his eternal form in Goloka Vṛndāvana would not be negated. Understanding his other form would be a graduation, the fruit of remembering Prabhupāda in this world. Furthermore, we can continue to meditate on Prabhupāda as he appears in this world, but with the understanding of how he is eternal. These points are becoming clearer.

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October 3

One should pray to Prabhupāda, "Please bless us for advancement," with confidence that everything we desire in spiritual life can be achieved by his mercy. His mercy comes in many forms. It comes in his books. He gave us his books, but we have to enter them. If we pray for understanding when we read, Kṛṣṇa will give us the intelligence.

Prabhupāda can also help us through the heart. The pure devotees are just as good as Kṛṣṇa. They can expand in different places at the same time. They are inconceivable in their power. They are not limited by material circumstances. Prabhupāda's mercy can act in many ways. The *śāstras* tell us of gurus who come back to help their disciples.

We want to reciprocate with Prabhupāda by fulfilling his intentions for us. He intends that we become pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, we can take *śikṣā* from someone who is also in line with

Prabhupāda, someone who can help us better understand Prabhupāda's teachings.

Prabhupāda, you can tell us everything we need to know if we pray to you. Sometimes we think you left us too early. We thought you were going to leave us in 1967. At that time I thought, "Swamijī, if you leave now, I am just barely attached to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I may be blown away by *māyā*. I think I won't, but it *could* happen. I know so little about Kṛṣṇa. How can I continue if you don't come back from India?" Swamijī did come back and then he stayed another ten years. We are still not mature, and he has still not revealed everything.

It has been almost fourteen years since Prabhupāda left us. We are getting older physically, but we are still spiritual infants. We have so much to learn. We pray to Prabhupāda for better vision. Arjuna prayed for the eyes to see the Universal Form; we need the eyes to see what is in Prabhupāda's books. We need to understand the deeper meanings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This doesn't mean that Prabhupāda didn't give us everything. It only means that we have failed to recognize it.

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October 4

Tonight I spoke with devotees in my room. I read from things I had written about Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana when I was with him. Prabhupāda didn't suddenly start speaking extensively about *rāsa-līlā* or Kṛṣṇa's Vraja pastimes just because he was in Vṛndāvana. But he did seem to be in a special mood. The first time I went into his room after

we had arrived, his eyes were shining. He looked more mystical when he was in Vṛndāvana. We could see he was at home. Even his silence on the subject of *rāsa-līlā* made us feel his potency. We recognized by his power that we were in the holy *dhāma.* Kṛṣṇa's pastimes took place here, although at present they were *aprakat,* not manifest now. Prabhupāda knew about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

Sometimes devotees would ask Prabhupāda esoteric subjects about Vṛndāvana, but he would cut them short. He could read their mentalities. Rather than answer their questions directly, he would address their mentalities. A devotee asked, "What's the difference between Goloka and earthly Vṛndāvana?" Prabhupāda replied, "No difference, but your mind is in America."

Even while in Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda stressed worldwide preaching. Prabhupāda was here when enthusiastic devotees attended from all over the world. They were happy in their own *prabhu-datta-deśas.* They reported to him about their book distribution and temple development, and Prabhupāda encouraged them. He didn't call everyone to Vṛndāvana to sit and chant; he encouraged worldwide preaching.

One day in Vṛndāvana, in 1975, I told Prabhupāda that the European and American devotees were going back to the West. Prabhupāda said, "Yes, this is the real life, preaching and book distribution. You have learned to keep Vṛndāvana in your heart." We pray to make this true.

While reading tonight, I began to appreciate Prabhupāda's strength. Sometimes he is a thunderbolt, other times a rose. I felt suddenly proud to have such a guru. I also began to understand why he had

to adopt the chopping technique of his own spiritual master. He was a powerful guru who was trying to save the world.

At the same time, he was fully capable of understanding Vṛndāvana-*bhajana-rasa*. After all, he lived in Vṛndāvana for years, wrote his books here, and lived alone at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. He was very, very sensitive to the atmosphere in Vṛndāvana. Sometimes, if devotees were sincere, he would reveal a little of it to them.

When I spoke about Prabhupāda cutting people down who inquired too much about the *rāsa* dance, one devotee asked, "What about devotees who come to live now in Vṛndāvana in ISKCON? They become familiar with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa here. It is natural for them to inquire into Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and to absorb the Vṛndāvana mood."

"Well," I answered, "when Prabhupāda thought a devotee was sincere, he would fully answer their questions." In 1967 a devotee asked, "Please tell us about Lord Caitanya diving into the ocean." Prabhupāda told her it was a good question and went on to answer it ecstatically. So even when we were ignorant, if he thought we were innocent, and if he felt inclined, he would answer.

The *Kṛṣṇa* book describes the spiritual master as a waterfall which sometimes flows in the rainy season and sometimes is still. When I asked Prabhupāda what this meant, he said that the spiritual master is not obliged to speak. When he feels inspired, he will speak to his disciple in a relevant way. He will not give the disciple information he is not ready to receive. But he never handles his disciple roughly. He is interested in the disciple's wel-

fare, and therefore, he is willing to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to the disciple's needs.

Prabhupāda was like this. He was not obliged. He spoke what we could understand and withheld what we couldn't. He kept us in check by engaging us in service to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. That service made us happy. We knew we had expert guidance. Even the fact that he didn't speak so much Vṛndāvana *kṛṣṇa-kathā* in our presence was his mercy, his expertise. At the same time, he gave us everything, including knowledge of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Nectar of Devotion, Kṛṣṇa* book, and so on.

I am in Vṛndāvana. By studying what advanced Kṛṣṇa consciousness is, I am appreciating that Prabhupāda was in that state. I have been reading *Raga-vartma-candrikā* by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, which describes *rāgānugā-bhakti.* The *rāgānugā-bhakta* performs *sādhana* which is helpful to him. There are other kinds of rules and regulations, some of which he is neutral to, some of which can be dropped, and some which must be dropped. I can understand that Prabhupāda conducted his life in that way. His only concern was for things that fostered the preaching and spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the cultivation of essential spiritual life. He even told us that Vaiṣṇavas don't always follow the rules and regulations as strictly as Māyāvādīs. Sometimes they are a little slack. I wondered what he meant by that, but now I realize that advanced devotees only follow those practices which nourish pure devotion. Pure devotion is not vague. God consciousness means Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which specifically means service to

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The more I study texts about the most advanced Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it exists between the Lord and His eternal associates, the more I see that Śrīla Prabhupāda was in that league.

Also, the more I study and hear about *mādhurya-līlā*, the more I can understand Prabhupāda's expertise. He introduced us to the forms of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa from the very beginning. In fact, even in those 1966 days, Prabhupāda freely told us about Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

But he also demonstrated gravity and privacy in his emotions. He taught us that even if one is above the rules and regulations, he should still follow most of them to set an example. Prabhupāda was sober. He didn't give vent to many ecstatic expressions; we rarely saw him cry or go into trance, although occasionally they overpowered him. I'm sure he didn't think we were qualified to witness his internal feelings. Lord Caitanya was also careful about revealing His internal emotions when He was near superficial, ritualistic *brāhmaṇas* while He was speaking with Rāmānanda Rāya. Prabhupāda was always in the presence of doubters and atheists while preaching in the West. And his mission was to free us from the most gross contaminations so we could work for Kṛṣṇa. He knew work would be good for us and would help us become attached to Kṛṣṇa. He also knew that we would be helpful in spreading the preaching mission. Therefore, he didn't encourage us to become *bābājīs*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, please reveal more to me about your eternal position. I want to serve you and worship you in that way. I have awakened to this now, but in the name of learning more about the inner nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I don't want

to in any way slacken my attraction and appreciation for you, my *dīkṣā, śikṣā,* eternal guru. I want to understand how you are the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana whom I may follow to learn of my eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

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October 5

I was reading the symptoms of *śānta-rasa.* The qualities of a *śānta-rasa* devotee are listed: he likes to be a hermit, he doesn't have excessive affection for the devotees, his main mood is peacefulness. He has many attractive qualities, but he lacks intense, specific attraction for Kṛṣṇa. He doesn't want to serve Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotees very actively. By reading the *śānta-rasa* description, it struck me how great Vaiṣṇavas like Śrīla Prabhupāda so much want Kṛṣṇa to be glorified that they leave their hermitage and don't consider peacefulness as important. Such great devotees want to use everything in Kṛṣṇa's service.

Prabhupāda manifested such internal, deep states in his activities. I am seeing that more now. He was so selfless to come to America and engage in the kind of preaching he did. And the extraordinary thing about Prabhupāda's apparent outwardness is that it all came from the inside, from his devotion. He didn't do anything for his personal gratification, but only pushed on with his preaching. Prabhupāda's thoughts (as expressed through his writing) often reflect his intolerance for the ignorance that existed in the world. He wanted to save people.

Prabhupāda felt great compassion, the compassion of Lord Caitanya. He was saturated in it.

We sometimes say Lord Caitanya manifested *audarya* (compassion) in Māyāpura, and in Vṛndāvana we see the *mādhurya* or the relish of sweetness between Kṛṣṇa and His associates. But Prabhupāda definitely revealed both. He was particularly strong in his desire to spread the glories of the Lord. As we read the descriptions of people who experience internal meditation on Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and the different qualities they have, we see that Prabhupāda is never lacking in devotion to Kṛṣṇa in any of those ways.

He was also well aware of the practices of various Vaiṣṇavas in India, including *bābājīs* and persons who were meditating on *aṣṭa-kalīya-līlā*, and so on. Prabhupāda followed his spiritual master, who followed Gaura-Kiśora dāsa Bābājī. These teachers worked to eradicate all pretension. They were extremely humble and completely devoted to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Their intense meditation should always be appreciated.

Prabhupāda's beating on the *bṛhat mṛdaṅga* (and the clay *mṛdaṅga*), sending devotees around the world, managing men and money, and working with the GBC, were all manifestations of the internal energy. Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee desired to do wonderful work. He was like Lord Nityānanda and Lord Caitanya. Just to be near Prabhupāda inspired so many people to take up the charge. If you wanted to be his disciple, then you wanted to help him in his work.

Prabhupāda also evolved over the years. In the beginning, he had more time to deal with us personally; but later, he must have known his time

was getting shorter. He wanted to do as much as possible, and Kṛṣṇa was giving him tremendous facility to spread the movement—he had thousands of disciples. With so much to do, he met with disciples and engaged them quickly and fully in whatever work they were capable of. The emphasis was on working to please Prabhupāda and on keeping the awareness and conviction that only by his pleasure could we advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whatever realizations we have now came from serving Prabhupāda through those years. Let's never desert Prabhupāda.

Maybe we can take some time to internalize the teachings, to study more in his books and the other books of the *gosvāmīs* so that we learn the deeper aspects. Associate with *śikṣā-gurus* who tell us more about *rāgānugā-bhakti.* But let's not be long in recycling back to the hungry devotees what we have learned. They are waiting for more sustenance, more direction. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not meant for our own enjoyment, although it is enjoyable. It must be shared with others.

As I write this on the ISKCON Vṛndāvana campus, I am looking over at the *gurukula* building. It is about 7:20 P.M., and many of the rooms are lit up. It is a three-story high building. The temple bell is ringing, the *kīrtana* going full blast. Outside the walls of our *mandira,* we hear harmoniums and drums and the *ārati* bells of other temples. But one gets an image of ISKCON as a big home. We all have to work together to find room for everyone and to keep up the spirit of our spiritual activities. We each have a little bit to contribute, either by actually building with cement, or by sculpting

dioramas, or by building in words. We all have something to contribute to Prabhupāda's house—to teach about *bhakti,* to enliven each other, to keep this place and ourselves alive. Keep the wheels moving. Prabhupāda meditation should be comprehensive like this, starting with the personality of Prabhupāda and always coming back to that personality, pleasing him by work.

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October 9

I haven't written in my notebook in a few days. It is difficult because of the spiritual changes I am going through. But Prabhupāda should always be the rock, the anchor, the basis. There is a prayer by St. John of the Cross where he says, "In this life which is so stormy and shaky, may God be my one steady factor." Allegiance to the guru must always be there.

I am grateful that I am able to give a class on *Kṛṣṇa* book in the evening. Never depart from the original flavor that Prabhupāda gave us. At the same time, don't remain stuck on the preliminary things Prabhupāda gave; rather, we should strive to please him by our advancement. As a preacher, following his example, we may teach the basics to people, but in our own lives, we should be attracted to Kṛṣṇa and become greedy to know our relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

This is a subtle point—we should be loyal to Prabhupāda in a dynamic way, not in a regressive or over simplistic way. Capture the spirit so that in the end we can make as much spiritual advance-

ment as possible toward love of Kṛṣṇa. When Prabhupāda was asked in a big assembly of enthusiastic devotees what pleased him the most, he said *"Your loving Kṛṣṇa."* That is what we have to do.

We have to advance by hook or by crook, but we also have to remember that we will never advance beyond our spiritual master. Don't follow the advice of someone who is telling you to minimize your spiritual master or that you can advance beyond him.

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October 13

Devotees suggest that one should *pray* to Prabhupāda. One good place to pray is in the *samādhi-mandira* or in Prabhupāda's rooms. We use this word "pray" frequently in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Pray to Prabhupāda." But what does it really mean? How do you do it?

One way to pray to Prabhupāda is to sit in a place where his presence can be felt intensely. We might be able to see him in his *mūrti* form in his rooms or we may go to a place where he performed some pastime that is easy to meditate on. We can then attempt to engage in sustained conversation with him. We can help ourselves by making notes on a piece of paper first, or we can just sit quietly, although our minds will have a greater tendency to wander. We can also sit in our chosen spot and chant *japa,* although there are specific advantages to planning our prayer-time ahead of time and going prepared to spend that time with Prabhupāda.

Prayer to Prabhupāda presumes we have the faith that he is present and that he can hear our prayers. It also presumes that we have the faith he will bless us in our endeavors on his behalf. The Lord and Prabhupāda already know what is in our hearts; technically, we don't need to pray to report to them. But we want to speed things up the way Nārada Muni sped things up in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. We *need* to speed things up because our time in this body is short and we have a lot of distance to travel. We are not satisfied with our progress. There are also immediate points and crises and times and pathways facing us with different alternative routes to take on the road. We need to pray for direction.

Vṛndāvana is a good place for concentrated prayer. I am praying to Prabhupāda to please direct me in the best way for my spiritual life. In one sense, we are waiting for an immediate response from Prabhupāda, although we must also understand that prayer is itself a process. It is an ongoing meditation, rather than an isolated event with a set result.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please allow me to have the presence of mind to pray to you, and please allow me to find a peaceful place where I can be in your presence. I want to be faithful to you, but I realize faithfulness takes creativity and courage and inspiration. I can't be faithful only by carrying out the program you gave me—the basic *sādhana* and *guru-sevā*—in a mechanical way. I pray that you will give me the courage and the intelligence how to enter deeply into my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I have already encountered how my false ego gives me so many problems, but I know you can kick out all these obstacles very quickly. Therefore, I pray to

you. I am here in Vṛndāvana. Let me realize Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a way that is pleasing to you.

I spoke with a Godbrother who is trying to practice *rāgānugā-bhakti.* He told me that he has been thinking lately of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his eternal relationship with him. This Godbrother said that this kind of meditation on Prabhupāda is enlivening to him and he tends to do it even more than remember specific encounters he had with Prabhupāda in the past. This makes sense to me, although I used to resist this kind of thing. I thought people were attacking my precious memories of Prabhupāda. So we have to admit that the specifics of our relationship with Prabhupāda were temporary, though the essence is eternal. If we admit this, it stands to reason that we have to *meditate about Prabhupāda,* and not just try to recover the past. Memory is valid, but it makes sense to me that, in some ways, it is more important to think of my spiritual master in the present. What is my relationship with him right now? What will my relationship be with him in the future? If I am always trying to remember the past . . . I am beginning to reconsider my personal emphasis.

Also, I heard some talk today that one should not criticize great *ācāryas* like Prabhupāda. In fact, a Vaiṣṇava shouldn't criticize anyone. Therefore, when people bring up controversies, our reply should be not to want to think about them, but rather to avoid them. We should try to see the people bringing up the controversies as also practicing spiritual life and not commit the offense of criticizing a Vaiṣṇava. That is the real Vaiṣṇava spirit.

October 14

In the *Kṛṣṇa* book class, I played a tape of Prabhupāda speaking, then we talked about it. It gave us a nice feeling of Prabhupāda. I shared with the class a little about Prabhupāda composing *Kṛṣṇa* book and then *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in 1977. He was doing the Tenth Canto up until he left his body. One devotee read along while listening to the *Kṛṣṇa* book dictation tape I was playing. He noticed how in two paragraphs, so many of Prabhupāda's words had been changed. I told him that this was the nature of editing. A good editor will not lose the original flavor of the writer's voice. (I am noting these things to prove to myself, even if I didn't notice it, that we are absorbing ourselves in Prabhupāda today.)

Sometimes we feel guilty that we are not thinking about Prabhupāda enough and think we should try to increase the Prabhupāda-*kathā*. But we should also observe in a positive sense that we are always engaged in Prabhupāda's service. Be confident of that; be aware of it; enter into it more.

My *Kṛṣṇa* book class is nothing but appreciating Prabhupāda as the speaker of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and relishing his narration of it. The section we read tonight was the opening section on the chapter, "The Killing of Aghāsura." Prabhupāda tells, with his own unique expressions, how the boys played in the forest by calling ill names into the well and hearing the echo. We are thankful to Śrīla Prabhupāda for giving us *Kṛṣṇa* book and for giving us the confi-

dence and faith that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In this class, we break into seven groups of about six or seven devotees each. Each member of the group takes a turning speaking *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. All seven groups are talking at once. Everyone likes it. I also read Prabhupāda's statement that this kind of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* can cure all the world's ills. That may seem farfetched, but we have to have faith in it. And we can start by curing the ills of ISKCON. Prabhupāda says that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is full of Vāsudeva-*kathā*, so if it is not, then we should try to increase that Vāsudeva-*kathā*. Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, thank you for letting me teach this *Kṛṣṇa* book class and in this way stay close to your lotus feet. Please let me always be faithful.

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October 16

Tonight I went to Prabhupāda's *samādhi-mandira* to pray to Prabhupāda. I propose to do this on a daily basis.

The *mandira* was busy—it was a noisy time of the evening—but it was my free time. I found a quiet place up on the balcony where it is not fully constructed. I was able to sit facing Prabhupāda's *mūrti* and take *darśana* from above. There is so much light reflecting off the *mūrti* that I couldn't see Prabhupāda's features very well, but still, I have Prabhupāda's image in mind from when I am here during *maṅgala-ārati*.

It is inspiring to sit up there and try to think of Prabhupāda. I had a pad in front of me and tried to

write to get myself to concentrate. In the future, I think I may use earplugs too. The noise of the marble cutters was distracting.

I pledged to continue writing books like *Prabhupāda Meditations*. I don't want to give up sharing my realizations about Prabhupāda. By taking on this writing assignment, I can prove to myself and to the world that it is impossible to exhaust the glories of Prabhupāda. That was a nice fruit of my prayer session.

I also placed before Prabhupāda some of the things I am trying to decide in my life. I know that Prabhupāda already knows my deliberations, but I put it before him in writing in the little notebook I plan to use for this purpose whenever I go to the *samādhi* for prayer.

One shouldn't come to Vṛndāvana and neglect Prabhupāda's *samādhi-mandira*. We should come here more often than the half-hour *maṅgala-ārati*. We should come alone and pray to him. My prayer is that I can return there regularly. Although we can consult directly with *śikṣā-gurus* and with *śāstra*, we should make this our main focus on approaching Prabhupāda: "Although there is so much other information coming in, I just want to be by myself before you, and pray to you, 'Please direct me. Please keep me. Please let me write your glories.'"

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October 17

I just want to write a bit now before taking rest. I went to the *samādhi-mandira* for the second time to pray to Prabhupāda. I made some little resolutions as a result of that, similar to the night before when I

promised myself to continue writing *Prabhupāda Meditations* or similar books.

Today I read a statement where someone said they were in anxiety because they had so little association with Prabhupāda. They wondered if that was a spiritual lacking in them. Of course it's not; they can make up for it. But if one has had association, he should treasure it and review it and not lose it. Although we want to know about Prabhupāda through prayer and we want to know his eternal form, we also have tangible memories. The *sādhaka* form of Prabhupāda is a perfected form.

I also thought today that perhaps I will not be able to reach the higher stages of *rāgānugā* practice in this lifetime, although I can learn about it and relish the *śāstras* that deal with it. I have already gained some knowledge about them which increases my understanding. If it is possible to reach a higher stage, that will be by Prabhupāda's grace and *śikṣā-guru's* grace (which is another way of saying Prabhupāda's grace). The main thing is to be faithful to Prabhupāda. Even if I remain on the platform of *guru-niṣṭhā* without taste, I will be safe. It is more than just playing it safe. It is solid. It is my love for my spiritual master.

I feel enlivened when I hear devotees talk about their services in ISKCON. I spoke to one devotee tonight (I barely know him) and asked, "How is your Govardhana-*śilā* in Houston?" He said, "I serve Him every day. Although I'm here in Vṛndāvana, I am thinking I want to go back to Him and serve Him there. I don't know if that's right." I said, "Yes, it is right. Prabhupāda wanted us to come to Vṛndāvana for inspiration, and then go back and

serve the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in different parts of the world."

So there are many "ordinary" devotees who have very solid realizations about Prabhupāda and their place in ISKCON. In the name of gaining higher realizations, I shouldn't lose that strong basic connection. The two go together: service to Prabhupāda's mission enables us to understand higher things, and when we do understand higher things, we become more enlivened to serve in his preaching mission. My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am grateful to understand that my connection to you is the most important thing in my life. *Yasya prasādād bhagavata-prasādo.* Whether I get higher realization or not, I must attain and keep my *guru-niṣṭhā* and my service connection to you.

That also means personal affection, seeing your *mūrti* form, reading your books, relishing your way of saying things (as in *Kṛṣṇa* book). Keeping alive in that. Appreciating your particular stamp on things. Associating with your devotees, reminding them about Prabhupāda—these are some things I am thinking of.

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October 20

I missed writing here for two days in a row.

I have been serving Prabhupāda in the temple by teaching the classes, and tonight I had a meeting with my disciples. I was feeling humbled by the class I had heard earlier that made us aware of our fallen, hopeless condition. Our only hope is to be picked up by guru and Kṛṣṇa. To hold a disciples'

meeting after that seemed a little contradictory. How can I assume to be a guru?

I spoke on the topic of humility and tried to purify myself, as well as to remind the devotees of the importance of a humble demeanor. I read the section from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* where Dabir Khasa and Sakara Mallika approach Lord Caitanya and ask that He please accept them. I tried to remind us all of our disqualifications in this lifetime. Our sinful activities before we joined this movement have a permanent effect on us. We shouldn't become proud and think that we have any qualification. We should be aware that we are dependent on the mercy of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. Not that we should become depressed, but rather we should be happy that we have been given contact with this movement despite our disqualification. We should accurately assess our position as tiny, smaller than a blade of grass. That is the *mahā-vākya,* humility. Go forward in this way, vigilant against envy.

One devotee asked me whether we should avoid situations that are likely to make us proud or envious. "Yes," I said, "but how can we avoid all those situations? Sometimes we will be honored because of the service we do, so we have to remain humble." I guess being a spiritual master is one of those situations that are likely to make us proud or envious. There are so many risks we have to take.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, today I asked a devotee how to pray to you. The answer I got was that we should speak in prayers composed by the previous *ācāryas*. I thought one of the most obvious prayers is the *praṇāma-mantra* which you yourself gave to us. "I offer my obeisances to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Kṛṣṇa on this earth, having taken shelter at the lotus feet of the transcendental Lord." And sometimes we pray to you spontaneously in our own words, "Prabhupāda, please help me," "Prabhupāda, thank you for allowing me to serve and function as your assistant."

Now we are trying to pray that you give us the mercy of your association eternally. We have to realize our eternal relationship with you in the spiritual world. It is difficult, Prabhupāda, because I don't want to be pretentious. Yet we must do this. Please guide me, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to serve you in your *sādhaka* form as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, as the dear person who was so kind to me in this life, who gave me so much association and who sustains me now. But also guide me to worship you in your eternal spiritual form. I appear to be quite experienced in ISKCON, but when I think of my relationship with you in your eternal spiritual form and *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa, then I realize I am completely inexperienced. I am a baby, a neophyte. That is one of the reasons I hesitate to inquire into it, because I don't want to give up my prestigious position as a teller of Prabhupāda stories and an old devotee. But I am willing to do that also. I am willing to go ahead and admit that I know very little, I don't know the Sanskrit terms for all the stages of *rasa*, I don't know your name in the spiritual world,

I don't know anything. But I aspire to be with you and to serve you. However, I have to prove myself by continual, solid service to you in your *sādhaka* form and in your ISKCON movement. As you write in so many purports, by preaching we attract the attention of Kṛṣṇa. Let me preach and please you in that way. Then you will reveal to me the higher truths. Please protect me.

I went and saw Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja again today. He gave me real encouragement for my remembrances of Prabhupāda. He said that we should always remember our *gurudeva* in separation from him. To remember him properly, we shouldn't emphasize the awe and reverence or the fear, but we should think of him as our near and dear friend. Then, thinking of him in separation, we should weep. He said this is so important, but unfortunately we neglect it. We have so many other things to do, but we should arrange our lives in such a way to increase our remembrance in separation from Prabhupāda. And how should we think of Prabhupāda? We should think about his pastimes and his activities, how he was kind to us. He was talking about Prabhupāda in the form that we knew him, in the *sādhaka* form. This is why I am encouraged.

It made perfect sense to me. Although we want to know Prabhupāda in his eternal form, and although it is certainly true that Prabhupāda will be pleased by our advancement into the higher stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just the plain remembrance of Prabhupāda as I have been doing was also being mentioned today as very important. How else can we feel separation except that we are parted

from the person we knew? If we don't know Prabhupāda in his eternal form, we can yearn for that realization, but can only yearn for Prabhupāda through our experience of him. Remembering Prabhupāda as we knew him is definitely a form of *vipralambha.* And when it increases and increases, when we think of Prabhupāda as our "near and dear friend," the person who helped us so much in spiritual life, then we will learn to cry for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, we can't. I took this as a very valuable and encouraging validation of my Prabhupāda recall work. Now I pray to continue with my remembrances of Prabhupāda and to always increase my love for him.

I am dictating this a few nights before the beginning of Kārttika, the special month to increase our love of Kṛṣṇa. I am happy to be here in Vṛndāvana, to be teaching the course, and to be experiencing real auspiciousness in my life. Auspiciousness means there are deep changes happening; I have to be careful and not make a mistake. Enthusiasm should be guided by *śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pañcaratra-vidhiṁ vinā.*

Prabhupāda, please let me serve you, please let me remember you, please guide me. I want to especially concentrate on that prayer—please guide me.

Prabhupāda, please let me go forward in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Please let me go forward as far as possible into this mood of praying to the *vrajavāsīs,* reading the rasika literature again and again, being attracted to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Their conjugal pastimes, and developing greed.

Prabhupāda, I know that these things are all confidential. You yourself were so confidential, private, and grave that you didn't even tell us about it. You knew that preaching to us meant stressing the *Bhagavad-gītā* and convincing us that God exists. But you also gave us the "post-graduate study," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* and beyond that, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.* You gave us the truth that Kṛṣṇa came to taste Rādhā's love in the form of Lord Caitanya. You explained to us that Lord Caitanya wanted to distribute that love, the love of the *gopīs,* to the whole world. You introduced us to the six Gosvāmīs. But you were also careful. You didn't want to confuse us. You wanted to protect us.

Prabhupāda, please bless us to be ready for higher Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Let us pursue love of God and enhance our faithfulness to you. Let us become better servants in your mission by becoming touchstones, or the moons you wish you had in your star-filled sky. That is our whole purpose, dear Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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October 22

Tonight in my *Kṛṣṇa* book class, I read a letter by Prabhupāda in which he criticized a crude sketch of Kṛṣṇa stealing the *gopīs'* clothes. This sketch originally appeared in a 1967 *Back to Godhead.*

I have been trying to give Prabhupāda's version of everything. He said we shouldn't go only to *kṛṣṇa-līlā,* but we should study all the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. If we hear some teachings that are different from what Prabhupāda usually taught, we have to

understand why Prabhupāda taught according to time and place, and appreciate and accept it. Understand deeply what he said. If, for example, he said something for beginners, that doesn't mean we will always be beginners, and therefore, that particular instruction is the only relevant one for our lives. He gave more advanced instructions too. Similarly, the spiritual master may say not to read the Tenth Canto, but he means we should first qualify ourselves before reading it. There are many statements by Prabhupāda that describe the Tenth Canto as the perfection of our reading. Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

It is so nice to be able to do things Prabhupāda's way and to hear his lectures.

Prabhupāda, your devotees in different parts of the world are trying to serve you and to realize Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I heard that one Godbrother has taken a Kārttika vow to chant one hundred and eight rounds a day. I know another devotee in Bombay who works for the BBT. He is on a marathon morning till night. He doesn't attend *maṅgala-ārati* because he is working so hard to print your books. He has to supply all the temples so that they will have enough books for the Prabhupāda marathon. Another devotee is going on an extensive tour of cities to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with a band. Other devotees are teaching in the *gurukulas.* Everyone is trying to get your mercy, Prabhupāda, trying to please you and be happy by surrendering themselves in this way. I am not the only one meditating on Prabhupāda and trying to surrender by overcoming all doubts, I am not the only one who loves Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda, please protect this lowly servant who wants to be true to you. I want to take help from advanced devotees who are favorable to you and to my own Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I am staying close to you; I want to be sensitive to the way you teach. You are my teacher.

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October 24

I gave the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class this morning. I was enthusiastic because I was prepared to speak on the verse. I knew I would be depending on Prabhupāda's purports and statements. It is certainly enlivening to be talking to Prabhupāda's disciples, including some of his senior men. Because I was confident and had interesting subject matter from Prabhupāda's books, they were attentive. I saw them looking up with interest.

I gave Prabhupāda's example from the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where he says, "Let there be a temple." He explains that the Lord glances at His pure devotees and injects the desire for devotional service into their hearts. I also mentioned Prabhupāda's purports about the *tamāla* tree in the courtyard and how it is flourishing. I was able to look up while lecturing and see the *tamāla* tree before me with its rich green leaves and branches. It is filling the whole courtyard and pressing up through the screen on the ceiling. I turned to Prabhupāda's purport in the First Canto, the section about the talks between Nārada and Vyāsa, where he says that everything, every bit of knowledge, should be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa. He

mentioned psychology and art, even fiction writers and litterateurs. It is inspiring to see how everything—science, philosophy, psychology—should be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa. At a time when senior ISKCON devotees are looking for esoteric subject matter and higher studies, it was also assuring to be able to lecture on such a basic thing as how to use the creative urge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And to be able to take it straight from Prabhupāda with enthusiasm and confidence, and to get some interesting response from the listeners.

So it was a rare day, a good day, because in the morning I was able to lecture on Prabhupāda's teachings.

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October 26

Bhūrijana asked me if I could teach a course on Prabhupāda next semester. I have been teaching courses regularly, and usually they take months to prepare. I wasn't planning on teaching next time. He suggested I teach a course on Prabhupāda with minimum preparation, just basing it on *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* and the poetry synopsis, *Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda.* I like the idea. It would be nice to read remembrances of Prabhupāda and have devotees speak their realizations without much preparation.

Prabhupāda remembrance is like going to a *kuṇḍa.* It takes a little effort to get into a bus or car, arrive at the *kuṇḍa,* put on your *gamchā* and bathe. There may be turtles in the water and *bābājīs* who stare. We should disregard the austerities involved

and just get the benefit of taking the water on our heads and bathing.

This is a *kuṇḍa*. You choose a Prabhupāda remembrance. Then you go down the steps of remembrance, counting down from the top, deeper and deeper—ten, nine, eight, seven, six—trying to remember Śrīla Prabhupāda as you go into the water. When you reach the bottom step you lean forward into the water and begin to swim. Wait for the first memory to come. Relax into it. Float into it.

Here in Vṛndāvana we tend to remember Prabhupāda's very last days, how he stayed on the bed and was cut off from us. We didn't know much about Prabhupāda's inner spiritual life. He was always so grave, and he didn't speak to us about it. He just hinted now and then that he would go when Kṛṣṇa wanted him to go. Devotees said, "Prabhupāda, your palace is ready for you in New Vrindaban. Prabhupāda responded, "We will see which palace I go to." And he spoke occasionally that he had promised Kṛṣṇa he would be enthusiastic to the end. He prayed for that. He continued to inspire us, instructing us to preach in this world. Prabhupāda was so compassionate, and we were so dependent on him to go on with his mission. It was a touching situation. We had so many heavy feelings about him leaving. Some devotees were even angry at Kṛṣṇa for taking him.

But the real meaning of Prabhupāda's disappearance is that he re-entered Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. We are happy to think of him again joining Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in eternal Vṛndāvana, even though we know so little about it. How can we continue to lament over our own loss? And yet we do, and that is natural.

We see in such a limited way when we talk of Prabhupāda memories. We can spice those memories with the knowledge we get from *śāstra,* to the degree that we realize it, about the eternal nature of the spiritual master. In other words, there is the *prakat,* or Prabhupāda's manifested pastimes, and there is the *aprakat,* or his unmanifested pastimes. For myself, I only know what I saw and witnessed. I only know what I am able to comprehend as his disciple. If I have faith that Prabhupāda is eternal guru, *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa,* then I should understand with faith that he goes back to the spiritual world. My faith should help me follow him to the spiritual world. I should also acknowledge on faith that he never left the spiritual world.

Whatever lacking or emptiness I feel in my relationship with Prabhupāda is not an isolated lack of faith. It is symptomatic of my lack of absolute faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I see a lack of faith in my chanting, in my attraction to the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, in the movement, and in the efficacy of preaching, everything. Everything has to be strengthened.

I definitely don't like to remember Prabhupāda's last days, how painful they were and how dry, how embarrassing it was to be worried about my own bodily condition—the heat, my suffering in so many ways. I suffered in my relationships with my Godbrothers, and I especially suffered due to my inability to reach out to Prabhupāda in more intimate ways. It was good to go through those things and be forced to face the reality of my surrender. At least it was good to endure it so that I can have the memory, the impression of being with Prabhupāda in his last pastimes.

Sitting in his room playing those very small *karatālas*. He didn't talk much, and then suddenly he would talk a little, usually about preaching in different parts of the world. I can gradually remember those things, the slow routine of the day, the bell marking every hour. Little else seemed to be going on.

We would talk among ourselves outside his room. Would he get better? Time weighed heavy on our hands and we wanted to go back to the West, to our preaching, our niches and comfortable offices, or our temples somewhere else in the world. We couldn't just stay in Vṛndāvana for months. We went back, but after a while, we wanted to return to Prabhupāda in India. I have those memories. I witnessed it. And it gives you a kind of faith. It should be used. It shouldn't just be left alone. It should be worked at.

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October 27

Devotees gather from different parts of the world in Vṛndāvana. Some are seeking to rise above mechanical devotional service and enter the higher appreciation. At the same time, we have been appreciating how Prabhupāda himself taught us higher realization. Today I was appreciating how Prabhupāda provided us the means to deal with the very basic doubts of a neophyte.

It occurred to me that when we read the literature of the six Gosvāmīs about *rāgānugā-bhakti*, they are mainly addressing those who have dealt with their skepticisms and doubts. If the reader ex-

periences too many doubts, then he shows himself ineligible. It means he lacks the greed and purification for *rāgānugā-bhakti.* In that case, he is encouraged to continue practicing *vaidhī-bhakti* until he becomes more qualified.

But the fact is, although we may be seeking higher stages, we do (at least I do) still get visited by skepticism. I occasionally have doubts even in the existence of the spiritual world and the Personality of Godhead. Now that we are discussing Kṛṣṇa's intimate entourage, we can doubt whether Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa affairs are really taking place and are the complete goal of all spiritual life.

Where should one go with such shameful doubts? Therefore, I appreciated that Prabhupāda was always available for us to hear our most basic, obnoxious doubts. We often expressed them on morning walks in what appeared to be a mock debate. He often invited us to take the roles of scientists and theologians. Prabhupāda would say, "What do they say?" He was inviting us to bring out our own skepticism. In the name of giving scientific arguments, we eagerly expressed our doubts. Then Prabhupāda would directly confront them and defeat them. He defeated us with direct, simple logic and *śāstra.* Prabhupāda never shied away from dealing with us, even when we were doubtful; he never told us we had no right to be doubtful, but instead dismantled our skeptical thoughts and built our faith. It was refreshing.

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October 30

Prabhupāda, tonight in my course I spoke on the *rāsa* dance. Please don't think I spoke prematurely—we have been building ourselves up to this pastime, and I spoke just according to *Kṛṣṇa* book. We read a section of how Kṛṣṇa danced with the *gopīs*, and then, immediately afterward, the section where Mahārāja Parīkṣit asked why Kṛṣṇa should dance with other men's wives. We gave all the answers that Śukadeva gave and then elaborated on them. Occasionally, we offered some new information from Viśvanātha Cakravartī. We gathered this information from the BBT's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Tenth Canto, chapter 32, and other sources. But the foundation of everything and the main substance was your *Kṛṣṇa* book. So, Prabhupāda, I think you will be pleased in the way we heard the *rāsa* dance tonight and even discussed the pros and cons of hearing it.

I felt a glow after the class and was happy walking back to my room. This Vṛndāvana-*dhāma* is so nice. I have so many friends here. And the Guest house is a nice place for a Westerner to stay in difficult India. As I write a few lines before taking rest, I can hear Jagadīśa Mahārāja singing *"namam īśvaram . . ."* in the temple room, and I am satisfied. Please, Prabhupāda, let me be your devotee. Whatever I can add to my present Kṛṣṇa consciousness, any advances I make, let them just be to help me become a better disciple of yours. Let me always remember your examples and teachings.

In the *rāsa* dance class tonight, I remembered many of your examples, like the story about the cow who saw red and thought it was a fire, and an-

other example you gave about people prematurely giving out information about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. You said even if they give us warnings, they are still not proper in giving this subject matter. You compared it to warning a young child about the dangers of a razor blade but then handing him the razor blade anyway. I just thought of one example after another, all from you, all apt and strong. Therefore, I can dare to say that I thought the class went well because it was based on you.

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October 31

I have to decide on my airplane travel. I wonder when I can practice *rāgānugā-bhakti*. I hope I recover from my head cold—if you just go like this from one thing to another without specific praying to Prabhupāda, it's not good.

One could ask, "How are you going to insert Prabhupāda consciousness into all these things?" You have to take time out just to think about Prabhupāda. Don't do anything else during that time. There should be specific projects, such as writing about him, or a time when you pray to him, such as in the *samādhi-mandira*.

So keep alert and up-to-date in your Prabhupāda consciousness. You keep it up-to-date by regularly reading his books and hearing his talks and by mental practice. It means being aware of his conclusions and opinions on different matters. If you want to know, for example, how you should live in Vṛndāvana, then refer to how Prabhupāda says we

should live in Vṛndāvana. In a similar way, you have to adjust to all your experiences.

I am trying to see Prabhupāda's message more deeply for myself. How to take instructions for further stages in Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Prabhupāda told about all the stages, including the most advanced stages. It may be that he emphasized the early stages more, the work for the movement and the practice by obligation. But he also emphasized serving by *bhāva*, by enthusiasm. He told us things wouldn't last if we based them only on some initial sense of obligation. He said we would later resent them. So now that I am hearing of the need to go beyond obligatory service, I have to appreciate that Prabhupāda wanted that too. This is an adjustment to my Prabhupāda consciousness. I don't want to force Prabhupāda's message into some shape of my own choosing, but neither should I think that my current state of Prabhupāda consciousness is the last word. Even ISKCON's current consensus isn't necessarily the last ultimate word on what Prabhupāda means. Prabhupāda is accessible to all of us through his books, yet there is both an outer and an inner meaning. Being faithful to Prabhupāda doesn't mean just keeping the party line; it means making your own advancement, making your own changes, and at the same time, staying faithful to Prabhupāda. Always find a Prabhupāda instruction to live by. Don't serve him out of sense gratification. Improve yourself to improve your service to Prabhupāda.

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November 1

I was interviewed today by a devotee for the Swedish radio station, Radio Rāma. He asked me, "You have been a devotee for many years. What are some of the big changes that ISKCON is going through?" I said the biggest change occurred when Prabhupāda disappeared, and we had to try to follow him without his direct presence. All other changes seem minor compared to that. But Kṛṣṇa wanted Prabhupāda to go back to Godhead. Prabhupāda wanted to go back because he was submissive to Kṛṣṇa's desire. But Prabhupāda also wanted us to learn how to take care of ourselves. Somehow, devotees are doing that, doing what they have to do. I mean, we are doing what we want to do, or we are doing what our karma directs us to do, and our true colors are being exposed. We couldn't expect to remain Kṛṣṇa conscious only because Prabhupāda had us in his grasp. When you grow older, you have to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness because you want to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Everyone has to make their own choice in this regard.

Aside from this, even those who stayed in Prabhupāda's movement and worked for its goals have made mistakes and shown material motivation. One wonders if it wouldn't have been better if they had left the movement rather than stayed in it with so much personal motivation. So some are in and some are out, but most of his followers remember him.

It is hard to speak in a general way about Prabhupāda or to talk about many people's appreciation for him. We feel on sure ground talking about our own appreciation for Prabhupāda, but we each have

such a tiny version of him. It is good when we can appreciate Prabhupāda in some universal way. Then it has substance. Maintaining ISKCON with its book distribution and Deity worship and international centers is a group effort. People work together because they want to please Prabhupāda. Even now, at a time when Prabhupāda's disciples have disciples of their own, the central focus and motivation is still to please Prabhupāda. One group may think, "To please Prabhupāda, let us distribute books." Another group may think, "To please Prabhupāda, let us maintain his centers." I like to reflect on these group appreciations of Prabhupāda. At the same time, when within a group one person speaks his own realization, that can touch all of us. When we see how Prabhupāda touched a single person and how that person is able to articulate it, we can feel a part of that realization. What I want to do in Prabhupāda consciousness is to bring Prabhupāda's presence more into the forefront.

In the last class tonight in the *Kṛṣṇa* book seminar, I advocated that people continue reading by the methods we used. I said that when there are details like the dust being raised from the hooves of the cows in Vṛndāvana at sunset, it brings us right into the picture and there we are in Goloka. We are sentient beings. When Śukadeva Gosvāmī describes something sensually, we can be there. One of the devotees asked, "Can this be done with other books besides *Kṛṣṇa* book?"

"Yes," I said, "but analytical books don't lend themselves as easily as the *Kṛṣṇa* book." It made me think that we can participate more in our reading about Prabhupāda. We can try by memory and by reading Prabhupāda's biography, and by hearing

from persons who have had Prabhupāda's association, to come into his presence. We can find him where he lived in the past on this earth. He is also present now in his *vāṇī*, and we continue to reach for him in that way. We also find him in our prayers and in our desire to understand his eternal form. But one accessible place to find him is in his pastimes when he was with us.

Every morning we go to see the golden form of Prabhupāda in the *samādhi-mandira*. No matter how many times I go, I can't seem to keep my mind fixed on the verses of *Gurvaṣṭakam*. Such a sad case. At least my feet stand there and my voice sings to him. After the *samādhi-mandira ārati*, we immediately go into the temple room. There we bow in front of Prabhupāda. When I look up at Prabhupāda's form covered in a gray *cādar*, I can't see his lotus feet. Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, let us stay in your shelter. We see so little of Kṛṣṇa in our lives, but we want to see more.

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November 2

I want to remember Prabhupāda while serving in the mainstream of his movement. I am confident that Prabhupāda is with Kṛṣṇa. I wish I could understand what his particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa is. We can be pretty confident that Prabhupāda's relationship is of a particular nature like all the *ācāryas* in our *sampradāya*. But since I cannot fully understand it at present, I serve him in his *sādhaka* form by remembering him in this world,

doing his work among us. That is the way to qualify to be with him in the future.

At the time of death, I will really have to depend on Prabhupāda as my *guru mahārāja* for whom I worked in this world. I may not know then where I am going next. I will just reach out my hand to him and say, "Prabhupāda, just take me where I have to go, and let me be connected with you again. If possible, I want to be with you, but I know I don't deserve it. Nonetheless, I am dependent on your mercy. Please engage me in devotional service."

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November 3

Scan quickly over the day that has passed and see the most prominent Prabhupāda remembrance. It often consists of something I have heard from another devotee. This morning in the class, Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja was speaking on the verse *titikṣavaḥ kāruṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām.* He gave Prabhupāda as the example of *titikṣavaḥ kāruṇikāḥ.* Prabhupāda was so merciful that he left Vṛndāvana at an old age and went to America. I have heard this many times, but today it aroused my loyalty and appreciation for Prabhupāda as merciful.

We have to overcome our constant use of Prabhupāda's sayings and language which may begin to sound phony. In the family of Prabhupāda, everything is for Prabhupāda's glorification. To the degree that we are not surrendered, these things can become hackneyed. We have to be honest.

Today: there was that mention of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the class, and then I saw him in his *mūrti* form several times. In the evening we had the last meeting of the VIHE. All the teachers and students gathered together and spoke about the importance of Prabhupāda's books. Jagadīśa Mahārāja asserted that everything we need is in Prabhupāda's books. I thought about that and how I have to read and appreciate his books in that way. These reminders, when they are spoken by sincere devotees who themselves practice what they preach, are effective. They can help us.

Jagadīśa Mahārāja told a story about a devotee in the West who was kidnapped by a deprogrammer. Jagadīśa Mahārāja went to Prabhupāda and asked how we could stop people from attacking our members like this. Prabhupāda replied that in a war, there will be casualties on both sides. Then Prabhupāda added, "But we should train our people in such a way that they don't become casualties." Jagadīśa Mahārāja related this statement by Prabhupāda about reading his books, and the importance of knowing the philosophy so we don't fall a victim to *māyā*.

In the same meeting, Prahlādānanda Mahārāja said that whenever he was with Prabhupāda, he always noticed that Prabhupāda was meditating within on Kṛṣṇa, while externally arranging to preach and to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Bhūrijana told a story about Yaśomatī-suta, the first Chinese devotee who was recruited in Hong Kong. He said that they brought Yaśomatī-suta to meet Prabhupāda in Māyāpura. Prabhupāda had previously told them that there is one devotee

there, and somehow you can find him. Out of billions of people, they weren't finding any, but Prabhupāda said they would find at least one. Yaśomatī-suta was the one. When Prabhupāda met him, he ordered him to translate the *Bhagavad-gītā* into Chinese. When he finally finished translating the *Bhagavad-gītā,* he went to see Prabhupāda in Māyāpura. Prabhupāda asked him to read aloud in Chinese. As he read, Prabhupāda faced the sculptured form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa on the wall. He listened for some time as Yaśomatī-suta read in Chinese and then said, "How sweet it is."

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November 4

I was driving in a van today with a number of devotees. It was noisy and I had a headache. I couldn't really hear the conversation the other devotees were having, but it seemed to be a debate about whether the eternal *rasa* is something that is within us in seed form, or whether it is planted in us from an outside source.

I overheard one devotee say, "This is inconceivable, but I just have to follow whatever Prabhupāda says." His statement penetrated the noise of the traffic and the van's engine—this one devotee's conviction which sounded so inspired. Of course, it is common for devotees to say they just follow what Prabhupāda says. I hear it as often as anyone, and it doesn't usually move me. But this moved me because it was a statement of ultimate, convincing proof, especially for an inconceivable subject. There are so many references and ways to juggle

the Sanskrit, but I felt reassured and inspired and thought, "This is what I want to do also." You can't go wrong if you base your life on what Prabhupāda says.

I am writing this about a week before Prabhupāda's disappearance day. Devotees will be expected to speak homages about him. I feel a little intimidated by the upcoming festival when people expect one to speak eloquent praises of realization and appreciation. At first I thought, "What can I say? I feel as if I am in a transition state, and also I am not a good devotee." But then I remembered that I could still speak simple, straight Prabhupāda-*kathā*, and that would be satisfying to everyone.

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November 5

It's going to be difficult to sleep tonight because of the fireworks. Amazing how in India they can get these fireworks that practically sound like bombs going off. Prabhupāda, when I get upset or jealous due to whatever reasons, I must remember to think of you, my *gurudeva*, my spiritual master.

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November 6

Another night for loud fireworks. I don't want to use that as an excuse why I cannot deeply meditate on Prabhupāda. The number of devotees on campus has swelled as the festival times approach. I

don't go out of my room now so much. I can't go to Prabhupāda's rooms or the *samādhi-mandira* anymore without it becoming a social outing. I have been staying in my room, busying myself by preparing my lectures, choosing names for initiates, and other Kṛṣṇa conscious activities.

But I am also aware that my meditation isn't very deep right now. One thing I have to do is prepare for an introductory talk to be given in a week and a half at a session called "Churning the Nectar." This session will be held the night before Prabhupāda's disappearance day. Devotees will relate their memories of Prabhupāda, and I will also be expected to tell some stories.

One thing I thought of saying is how "Prabhupāda said" is the ultimate scriptural reference for Prabhupāda's followers. Therefore, Prabhupāda meditations are important because everything comes from him. He is the basis of our faith in *Bhagavad-gītā* and spiritual life. To know about this person and the different things he did is important. We fill our days with so many busy things on Prabhupāda's behalf, but we also have to think of him. A more advanced stage is to *always* think of him; not just that we set aside an hour a day as "Prabhupāda's hour," but that our whole life is spent in meditation on him. And when we do think of him, we should cry. The advanced stage is to think of him and to cry out of separation.

Braja-bihārī dāsa, the manager of the VIHE, just came by and gave me some gifts as an honorarium given to teachers. One of the gifts was a tape recording of Prabhupāda singing in a recording studio in Bombay. He said it was a very rare tape. I could hear

a studio organ and commercial-sounding musical instruments. Prabhupāda sang some of the *bhajanas* and, at other times, other devotees sang in chorus.

The rhythm instruments began. They were the usual, almost rowdy, sloppy, clashing drum and *karatālas* that devotees played in the early 1970s. It sounded like they were out on the street banging away. The studio atmosphere seemed to confine Prabhupāda. It sounded like he wasn't able to sing the way he wanted to. The chorus wasn't well balanced. It went up and down the octaves and keys. Every time the chorus sang even a little off key, it grated on my ears. That is the nature of a studio recording. It wasn't professional at all, not like some of the studio recordings Prabhupāda did in the West.

When I caught myself analyzing it so critically, I managed to turn my mind around to appreciate the historical moment captured by this recording. It was a special recording, even though it was so unprofessional. Just to think of Prabhupāda in that studio, the great world preacher with his flock of foreign disciples, in India making a recording. Why was he there? Without knowing the details, I can easily surmise that Prabhupāda was trying to make a record for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Despite the recording mistakes, he was singing strongly. It was a nice gift.

I was grateful that all of sudden this tape came into my room, because usually I don't think I have time to listen to Prabhupāda singing on tape. But on the pretext of it being a new tape, I listened. It helped to drown out the fireworks. I listened carefully, sitting on the floor. I continued to play the

tape while I wrote letters. Although I wasn't close, although my listening wasn't deep, still Prabhupāda was there, and I was there with him as he sang *bhajanas*.

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November 7, Govardhana-pūjā

It was a busy morning. We held an initiation ceremony in the early morning in Prabhupāda's *samādhi-mandira*. It was followed by a lecture for Govardhana-*pūjā* and then the festivities. The initiation was witnessed by the bigger-than-life-sized *mūrti* of Prabhupāda. In front of him, mounted on a golden throne, was a Govardhana-*śilā*. There was a difference of opinion among devotees whether the *śilā* should be presiding. I thought that, even without the *śilā*, we could have performed the initiation in front of Prabhupāda. That would have been sufficient. He was the witness to the initiation.

Three gurus, all disciples of Prabhupāda, held the initiation. It was like a joint family of gurus with their disciples, all at the feet of Prabhupāda. Other senior disciples of Prabhupāda were also present.

After that initiation, we moved over to the temple room, and I gave a Govardhana-*pūjā* lecture based on the *Kṛṣṇa* book. Again, all references were from his books. Hundreds of devotees were present as I read from *Kṛṣṇa* book how the Govardhana festival should be held. Five thousand years ago, Kṛṣṇa told Nanda Mahārāja how to worship Govardhana Hill. Prabhupāda instructs us in the *Kṛṣṇa* book that it should still be held in the same way, and that this ceremony is celebrated according to

Kṛṣṇa's directions in all the temples in Vṛndāvana. We read the instructions, and then the devotees arranged to celebrate the festival in that way. We worshiped a cow at the ISKCON Goshalla, then returned to the *mandira* and to a big *prasādam* hill and circumambulated it. Then the food was thrown. Everything was done as Prabhupāda desired.

I began to feel physically weak during the ceremonies, so I went to my room and read *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. I read one verse and purport after another, not trying to study by any particular note-taking system or memorization. I absorbed at least a little of it. You can call this *vaidhī-bhakti* if you like, because it was done without any love. But I do have a *desire* to love and not just follow regulative practices. I do have a desire to be close to Prabhupāda. By reading his books, you get as close as anyone can get. So with those motives, I read and tried to understand *bhakti* in the verses.

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November 8

Today, three of us went to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Many groups of ISKCON members also went to Rādhā-kuṇḍa today, and we saw quite a few devotees there. Some devotees bathe at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, but some devotees don't. The question has been raised whether Prabhupāda permits us to bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We know that without his being pleased by our activities, no spiritual activity can be effective for us.

Our little group bathed in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We make our case in favor of bathing by Prabhupāda's

purports in *Nectar of Instruction.* He repeatedly recommends that one bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. When Prabhupāda was present, he heard that some devotees were behaving frivolously in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He became angry and forbade them to bathe there. We take that instruction as temporary. Prabhupāda was responding to some devotees' misbehavior. If devotees bathe reverently and prayerfully in Rādhā-kuṇḍa in the mood Prabhupāda recommends in his books, we think it is not only permissible, but necessary to do so. One who bathes prayerfully in Rādhā-kuṇḍa can attain *kṛṣṇa-prema.* We can at least pray for *kṛṣṇa-prema.*

My purpose is not to bring up arguments as much as to demonstrate how Prabhupāda was with us as we tried to understand what he wanted us to do.

While we were there, we also read from *Nectar of Instruction* the glories of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The very fact that Western devotees come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa is only Prabhupāda's mercy. Sarvabhāvana Prabhu, in his dedication to *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam,* mentions Prabhupāda's influence in this regard: "The Occident is today ready to receive this divine knowledge and the *Vedas* only because of the tireless and patient missionary efforts of His Divine Grace."

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November 10, Prabhupāda's Disappearance Day

It is 6:40 P.M. In about twenty minutes, I have to go downstairs to Prabhupāda's room. They have asked me to perform the *ārati*. This is an annual event here. Vṛndāvana is the best place in the world to observe Prabhupāda's disappearance because it is the place where it happened.

I have been understanding more that Prabhupāda's disappearance wasn't a sad time, although it seems that way for us. Prabhupāda was going back to the spiritual world to join Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes. It was blissful for him, finishing up the tremendous preaching he was doing in this world. We should have been happy for him. On the other hand, our lamentation is natural. It is also spiritual. But at the time, "spiritual happiness in separation" seemed abstract to us. We only knew our grief and our numbness in the suffering of what we thought was death.

When we remember these times, they are always mixed, and we cannot forget the pinch of it even though we learn the higher truths about the immortality of the soul and the blissful entrance of the pure devotee into his *nitya-praviṣṭha-līlā*. We are realizing more, especially this year, how little we have known of Vaiṣṇava spiritual life and how special it is, even compared to other world religions. Only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness do we know about the conjugal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Only now are we finding out that Prabhupāda came to teach those pastimes to us. He can lead us back to that specific goal (back to Godhead). We have started to become more educated even as we feel the simple emotions of a disciple of Prabhupāda.

In any case, I am very much a neophyte in my devotion to Prabhupāda. It is he who is blessing me, not that I am rewarding him in any way by being loyal. Remember: Don't think that you are so wonderful and that you are a great credit to your spiritual master. The fact is that he picked you up and he continues to maintain you despite your fallen background. Prabhupāda's mercy is all I am made of. He has Kṛṣṇa, and I am running after him calling, "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!"

I'm going to go downstairs and spend the time watching the moments go by as we approach the exact hour the *ārati* should be performed in your honor. The *ārati* will be performed to your bed which will be completely covered with flowers. Devotees will be packed into every possible space in your room. It won't resemble the grief-stricken scene of 1977. We will all be solemn, but, at the same time, satisfied to be serving you in separation. I pray to be detached from my bodily needs and absorbed in the needs of the soul.

Prabhupāda, you were a liberated soul. Please help me to understand that I am also eternally liberated, although I am now covered by this body and its attachments. Therefore, I cannot see what is the goal of life. Please save me, please liberate me in your devotional service.

Now, it is after the *ārati*. Where has he gone? He has left us. Yet he has gone back to Godhead. During the *ārati* I felt some of these mixed emotions. I think all the devotees did. The bed was beautifully decorated with flowers, but there were

no flowers in 1977. The decorative flower bed commemorates his entrance into Goloka Vṛndāvana.

We were infants crying in 1977. Prabhupāda meant everything to us; we depended on him so much for our spiritual life. Now he was going away. We had to learn, painfully, how to depend on his instructions and not just on his personal presence.

Tonight it felt good to be in the company of stalwarts and to accept everyone as Prabhupāda's followers—Hari-śauri, Mahānidhi Swami, Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja. Bhūrijana was going around with Prabhupāda's *cādar* placing it on everyone's head. Jagadīśa Mahārāja was singing. To be in their company was special. We all felt bereft. We all lost our father.

I also felt how little we experience of reality, whether material or spiritual. We can only hear such a small range of sounds and we have such limited vision. In spiritual life, we can only experience a drop of the ocean. So, during his actual disappearance, all we knew was the grief of children being separated from their father. Although we tend to think that now, in 1991, we know more, I wonder if we really do. Why aren't tears constantly flowing from our eyes? Where is our emotional depth?

Again I thought of my own mortality and the mortality of those in the room. The flowers on Prabhupāda's bed will be gone by tomorrow, or at least their freshness will have faded. Our freshness has already faded, and soon, one by one, we will all be gone. And then we will all come back again. For whoever is born, death is certain; for whoever dies,

birth is certain. One of these times we may join Prabhupāda in the world he was pointing us toward, the world Kṛṣṇa was showing to Balarāma: "See, my dear Lord Balarāma, this wonderful Vṛndāvana forest . . . "

November 11

We went to a function at the Gauḍīya Math today. The speaker introduced the history of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as it descended from Lord Caitanya down through Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He said, "ISKCON is also part of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, but unfortunately, you say that you are not. You don't admit that you are part of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, and I am sorry that you say this." As soon as the speaker said that, several of us denied his statements. ISKCON is proud to claim affiliation with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. It turned out that this speaker had heard from an inexperienced devotee back in 1967 that ISKCON doesn't admit connection with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

The talks were mostly in Hindi. I thought we might be invited to speak, but the audience was mainly Hindi-speaking. Still, anticipating that I might lecture, I began to prepare some points.

I planned to explain that ISKCON certainly admits our connection with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Prabhupāda taught us that from the beginning. Anyone in ISKCON who says we are not Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is misinformed. Perhaps, however, some of the members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava movement don't recognize ISKCON as connected to them. Prabhupāda warned us about this. This

may have caused feelings of alienation in ISKCON from the family of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, but it is just a superficial alienation. There were people during Prabhupāda's time who couldn't accept the Western-born *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs,* and they didn't accept other differences in Prabhupāda's preaching, such as his allowing women to join and become initiated disciples. Some members of the Gauḍīya societies have also been disturbed because ISKCON addresses our spiritual master as Prabhupāda.

Anyway, both sides should recognize that ISKCON is part of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and that we in ISKCON do hope to find friendly reception among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. We know also that we are not very qualified and that we ISKCON members should not be proud of our Western background at all. We should be very humble. Prabhupāda always taught us that we are not this body. So no one—whether Indian or American—should think, "I am American Vaiṣṇava," "I am Indian Vaiṣṇava," "I am Indian Gosvāmī," "I am American Gosvāmī." I rehearsed my speech, but never got a chance to give it.

Still, I was glad to be thinking of Prabhupāda's strong teachings. The speakers' lectures were in the context of the Gauḍīya Math, and they were filled with references to the preaching that has gone on there. My references were to Prabhupāda. While I sat there thinking over the Hindi, I was happy in two ways: happy that I was at the Gauḍīya Math on Prabhupāda's behalf, something I think would have pleased him very much. He would be happy to see me trying to experience the real India rather than always looking only for Western amenities

and comforts. He would be pleased to see me becoming familiar with the ritual practices of the Gauḍīya temples. ISKCON has its own ways of doing things, even eating and *acamana* and particular *bhajanas* that we sing with their particular tunes. I think Prabhupāda would be satisfied to see us learning this other way. So I felt like a Prabhupāda man in that sense.

On the other hand, I maintained my ISKCON Prabhupāda identity, and that also made me feel good. These functions are always tedious since they are almost completely in Hindi. And it *was* difficult for me to be away from the amenities I am accustomed to in the ISKCON temple, which is geared more to us Westerners. But going to the Gauḍīya Math was definitely an occasion to be Prabhupāda conscious and to be aware that I am really only made of Prabhupāda's teachings and direction. He picked us up, and he allows us to function as devotees. Other Vaiṣṇavas may see us as oddities, they may even reject us, but we remain a special hybrid created by Prabhupāda. Nothing can change that identity. I can learn so many things about the advanced nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but I will always remain Prabhupāda's creation. Those who realize that and want to protect our Prabhupāda consciousness are our real friends.

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November 16

I have been reciting prayers in the early morning, starting with prayers to Prabhupāda. I have been feeling attracted to praying without recording my

words in writing because this eliminates the idea of praying in public. Praying with the subtle idea in the back of my mind that one day an audience may read these prayers removes some of the genuineness of the experience.

I have gone over this with myself many times. Since I am a writer, I tend to see everything in my life as writing material, even if it's prayer or *japa* or temple worship. Anyway, I have come to terms with it, and I see my dovetailing of the creative urge with my cultivation of inner life as a form of preaching.

It can be discouraging when devotees in ISKCON quarrel so much among themselves. It can also be discouraging to see the strong conservative element in ISKCON that doesn't look kindly upon anything that doesn't follow the straight and narrow path they have chalked out. I want to look at these things with charity. After all, everyone *is* trying to please Prabhupāda. I can only hope that we all become free of our *anarthas* and learn to work together to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as Prabhupāda desired.

I am actually coming to enjoy going to the *samādhi-mandira* at 4 A.M. I relish seeing that large golden form of Prabhupāda. It is cold enough now that Prabhupāda not only wears a *cādar,* but the *cādar* is put over his head. This morning he looked so dark and mysterious with the dim light shining on the golden form and the gray *cādar* draped around him.

I can never remember to concentrate on the *"Gurvaṣṭakam"* prayers and see their relationship with Prabhupāda, but at least I am there, looking up to Prabhupāda. The Prabhupāda mood is so strong at that time in the morning that even a dull person can experience it. After his *ārati,* we hurry to the temple, again bow to his *cādar* wrapped form, and by his grace, approach Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. This is the way to begin the day.

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November 18

It is now Bhīṣma-*pañcaka,* the last five days of Kārttika. I went alone to offer a lamp to Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, and then returned alone. As I walked past Prabhupāda's house, I had a sudden desire to go inside. *"Go in the room, there is no one there."*

The room was fully lit with all the chandeliers on. The caretaker, Nṛsiṁha-devī, was in the entranceway with another lady where they sell books and paraphernalia. Prabhupāda's rooms themselves were empty. I went behind the velvet cord which keeps people from getting too close. I went right up beside Prabhupāda and sat opposite him at his little desk. I almost leaned my elbows on the desk to look at him and just be with him, but then thought that was too familiar. I felt the limits of the *mūrti.* The *mūrti* represents just a frozen moment of Prabhupāda. The *mūrti* is genuinely Prabhupāda, but it is not the flowing, living, talking Prabhupāda with his tremendous presence that could evoke so much awe and fear and love and trust in us.

We have become accustomed to the *mūrti*, and like everyone, I am grateful to have this form of Prabhupāda now. I looked at this *mūrti* in Prabhupāda's Vṛndāvana rooms and thought, "You are the boss. I am trying to become a better devotee of Your Divine Grace. I want to deepen my understanding of your books." Then I tried to remember the old days. I looked at the letter on Prabhupāda's desk. It was a letter Prabhupāda wrote while at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir to Rāmeśvara. "Hmmm, those were funny days." I couldn't help but let a little feeling of irony pass through me. Still, those days were genuine, and they have become part of Prabhupāda's history. Probably every great guru has had some kind of difficulties in trying to conduct a movement; probably all great gurus have worked with disciples who helped them, but who later couldn't follow anymore.

My mood was not so deep, but I was happy to have a few moments alone with Prabhupāda. I kept sitting there trying to meditate on him, but then I decided I could benefit by visiting an ISKCON museum, so I began to look at all the different displays in the rooms. In one case, they have things like the last piece of soap Prabhupāda used, and in various cases around the room, things like an envelope containing the last *brāhmaṇa* thread he wore, the slippers he wore on the airplane on his last trip to London, some homemade toothpaste, and so on. I recollected how one of my Godbrothers who was Prabhupāda's secretary at that time said that he gave away most of Prabhupāda's remnants, but he kept Prabhupāda's tooth for himself. He now wears a reticule around his neck containing that tooth. I don't have any wonderful remnants of Prabhupāda

that I can keep near me. There must be something I can have. The thought even passed through my mind that maybe I could break into one of the museum cabinets and take something, but they are all locked. But I wanted something tangible to keep with me.

In one of the museum cases, I saw the three original volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. They were signed by Prabhupāda with his notes inside. One case had no padlock. I tried to pull it open, but it was locked. I do have my own *Bhāgavatam* at home, yet I was grasping for something more tangible to confirm my allegiance to Prabhupāda, my discipleship. I wandered into another room, looked at the palanquin that carried Prabhupāda, at the rocking chair he used to sit in under the *tamāla* tree in his last days, a tape recorder that he used in 1977, some swabs used for cleaning the ears, pills, some conch shells which were said to be used for massaging him. I also went to his bed, placed my head at the foot of it, at the spot where I sat in the last hours.

I had been there no more than five or six minutes when another devotee came in. He was a young devotee, and he began chanting loud *japa*. That was the end of my reverie. I stayed a little longer in one of the other rooms where there is another Prabhupāda *mūrti*, but then decided to go upstairs to be alone. Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please let us remember you and serve you.

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Vṛndāvana, November 20, 1991

I went to Brahmaṇḍa *Ghāṭa* where the Vraja-*maṇḍala parikrama* devotees are a hundred strong, gathered on their next to last day of *parikrama*. I spoke there from Prabhupāda's books. After the lecture, the devotees discussed how rare it is to enter Vṛndāvana. One devotee related how Brahmā and Uddhava and others prayed that in many, many lifetimes in the future, they might take birth here so that they could associate with the dust of Vṛndāvana. Then I asked, "If it's so rare, how is it that we are able to enter?" The devotee replied that the dust of Vṛndāvana shouldn't be taken in an external sense; it means attaining service to the Vaiṣṇavas, the associates of Kṛṣṇa. In other words, entrance is not just physical entrance.

Then Lokanātha Mahārāja answered the question in another way: we have access to Vṛndāvana, even though so many great souls don't, by the mercy of Prabhupāda. When he said that, several devotees said, *"Jai!"* It's as if none of us had thought of that. We were speaking as if we don't have entrance, but Lokanātha Mahārāja reminded us that we do have access by Prabhupāda's grace. It was a nice moment of Prabhupāda remembrance. Who else could have dragged us to Vṛndāvana from our Western backgrounds and mentalities? And even if we had come here on our own somehow, we would have seen only poor, rural, backward India. But now we see flashes of *kṛṣṇa-līlā* and *kṛṣṇa-prema*, and we appreciate the dust of Vṛndāvana, by Prabhupāda's grace.

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November 21, Last day of Kārttika

Bhūrijana and I went out today. On our way back, he walked me to the bottom of the guest house stairs. Suddenly the lights went out. While we were waiting for them to come back on, I told him an anecdote about Prabhupāda. When I was with Prabhupāda in India in 1974, the lights would often go out. One morning I said to Prabhupāda that, in India, things don't work as well materially, and yet they have spiritual advancement. But in America things work well, but there's no spiritual knowledge. Prabhupāda liked my statement. Then when we went on the morning walk, he started by saying, "What did you say to me about India?" I repeated it, and Prabhupāda discussed that point on his walk. As I told this anecdote, the lights went on again.

Bhūrijana told me that yesterday he spent several hours speaking with Abhirāma Prabhu who was telling many intimate memories of Prabhupāda in his last days in 1977. He said just listening to that reminded him of Prabhupāda's great spirit of giving everything for the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

There are many important esoteric books to read in Kṛṣṇa consciousness that weren't published during Prabhupāda's time. Prabhupāda has also encouraged us to read some of them, such as *Kṛṣṇa Bhāvanāmṛta,* which he recommends in the *Kṛṣṇa* book, and other books he recommends in purports to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.* But still, Prabhupāda's own books are strong contenders for our best attention. They can give us all the nectar of *mādhurya-rasa.* It

was so nice on the Vraja *parikrama* this morning, to stop several times and read from the *Kṛṣṇa* book about the *gopīs'* comments on Kṛṣṇa's flute, and what Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma about the glories of Vṛndāvana.

Prabhupāda has given us such an enjoyable life, but the real center should be our discipleship. This is the standard of pure devotional service. The *gopīs* in Goloka Vṛndāvana have this focus to perfection. They try to attract Kṛṣṇa because ultimately they want to please Him; they know He will be pleased by them. Similarly, let me be happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for Prabhupāda's pleasure. Let me share that happiness as a preacher-disciple reporting to my spiritual master how we are all pushing on his movement together.

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November 22

Tonight I gave a class to the older *gurukula* boys. In their regular evening class they are reading *The Hare Kṛṣṇa Explosion* by Hayagrīva dāsa. Although they usually just read it without comments, I stopped here and there to make comments to keep up their interest.

I read the section about the first initiation in New York City. I first asked the boys what the name of the storefront was before it became a temple. One boy said, "Matchless Gifts." I said that almost all Prabhupāda's pastimes from these early days emphasize his compassion and patience. He took great risks to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to us. He was

more interested in preaching than in following the rules and regulations. And that's the real meaning of all the funny stories about Prabhupāda—that we meditate and appreciate what he had to do and how great he was to bring us Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

When I got to the part about the beads, I lifted my beads out of the bead bag and showed them the big, red beads that Prabhupāda gave us. New York City is not like Vṛndāvana where you can go to the market and buy *tulasī* beads and *tilaka* and Deities. Prabhupāda had to improvise everything. It was fun to read that section and to tell how Prabhupāda was depending on Kṛṣṇa in the early days.

"Any questions?" They had the typical kind of questions little boys have: "Do you have the same string in your beads from 1966?" Another boy asked, "How did they make the first beads that we got?" He couldn't quite understand when I said that in New York City, there was a store called Tandy's, and that we bought the beads there. He was an Indian boy.

After the class, young Jaya Gurupāda walked with me to my room. He's a very sincere, soft-hearted boy. He told me he thought it was really nice when I said that Prabhupāda depended on Kṛṣṇa in the early days.

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November 23

I had some time today, so I read in several of Prabhupāda's books selected sections about Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana and *mādhurya-līlā*. I read about Lord Caitanya expressing the mood of Rādhārāṇī at the

Ratha-yātrā in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* and I looked randomly through other sections too. But I also put in some good time with Prabhupāda's purports. I found it encouraging that Prabhupāda wrote about things which are in the mood I have been pursuing lately. He said that Rādhārāṇī is so important that it appears that Kṛṣṇa is Her decoration. Rādhārāṇī is the enchanter of the enchanter of Cupid, and the residents of Vṛndāvana still call out, "*Jaya* Rādhe."

Prabhupāda also describes how Lord Caitanya engaged in a kind of competition with Lord Jagannātha at the Ratha-yātrā. Lord Caitanya would go behind the cart, signifying that Rādhārāṇī wanted to see whether Kṛṣṇa forgot Her. When Lord Caitanya did this, Lord Jagannātha would stop in His cart, and when Lord Caitanya would go ahead (signifying that Rādhārāṇī wanted to take Kṛṣṇa back to Vṛndāvana) Jagannātha would slowly begin to move again. In his purport, Prabhupāda says that in this competition, Lord Caitanya came out victorious. This means that Lord Caitanya was displaying the mood of Rādhārāṇī. This is what He came to do, He came to teach us service to Rādhārāṇī. That is a hidden message. Anyway, we see this message in Prabhupāda's purport.

I also took time today to meet with devotees. I tried to help one devotee see through the growing pains and changes and doubts in ISKCON and its leadership. It was refreshing to serve Prabhupāda in this way, and to realize that by serving Prabhupāda by serving his devotees, the right to higher advancement becomes yours.

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November 24

Here in Vṛndāvana I would say there are four principle *mūrtis* of Prabhupāda, although there are more deities. At least we see these four the most. The first one you see is the *mūrti* in the *samādhi-mandira*. It is bigger than life, and now in the cold he sits in the black inner sanctum, the black marble room with one light shining on him, his *cādar* placed over his head. The devotees huddle around outside on the cold marble floor singing "*Guru-aṣṭakam.*"

Then, in the temple, there is a very handsome *mūrti* of Prabhupāda sitting high up on his *vyāsāsana*. The third *mūrti* is on Gaura-Nitāi's altar, the white marble Prabhupāda. He usually wears a sort of light-colored knit cap and *cādar*. He strikes me as a spritely little Prabhupāda compared to the others. He is smaller and made in a different style. Each *mūrti* has a different style, a different mood. And then the fourth Prabhupāda *mūrti* is in his rooms, sitting behind the desk using the dictaphone.

This afternoon I met with my disciples and read from Prabhupāda's purports to *Ādi-līlā*, Chapter Nine, about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In his purports, Prabhupāda describes Lord Caitanya's tree of Kṛṣṇa consciousness spreading all over the universe. Then he describes ISKCON as a branch on that tree. So I gave my point of view about preaching in ISKCON and how everything is part of the preaching movement.

Another devotee of Prabhupāda might say it in a different way—he might emphasize book distribution more than other forms of preaching; he might

strongly criticize ISKCON members who don't preach. My approach is more to encourage all ISKCON members to feel that they *are* preaching. I also like to encourage the leaders to encourage others.

During that class I answered questions and referred to a letter Prabhupāda wrote. This is a letter in which he said we shouldn't say one service is better than another. That is childish. But it depends on our sincerity. We should try to be enthusiastic and perfect our own service. It was meaningful to grasp one of Prabhupāda's instructions and convey it to others. Everyone benefits from this kind of exchange. This is our whole preaching life: to actually remember something or read it, and with conviction based on our own practices, give it to others for their benefit.

That's a wonderful chapter (*C.c., Ādi* Chapter 9). Prabhupāda was himself such a great preacher. His words are inspiring. He says that everyone should try to use this life to help others by saving people from birth, death, and suffering. Give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness, especially the chanting of the holy name and the nectarean love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa which Lord Caitanya exemplified and taught. The followers of Lord Caitanya eat this nectarean fruit, become intoxicated by it, then give it to others. This is how everyone will become merged in love of God.

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November 28, Bombay

The *vyāsāsana* in the Bombay temple looks like a marble gazebo. Prabhupāda wore nice, shiny silk in the warm weather. Many flowers were placed in front of him. I noticed one of the ladies touching Prabhupāda's feet—both feet, first the right and then the left. I was offering the *guru-pūjā ārati* at the time.

Usually I don't like seeing people touching Prabhupāda's feet. We never touched his feet like this when he was present, and I tend to think it is excessive when people do it with the *mūrti.* It's too much physical contact. These thoughts went through my mind this morning as I offered the *ārati,* but then I realized my opinion has changed. I want more affectionate contact with Prabhupāda. So starting today in Bombay, I decided to touch his feet too. When I finished the *ārati,* I touched Prabhupāda's feet, and it felt right. After all, the *mūrti* is like that—it offers more accessibility than we might have with the great soul in person. Touching the feet of the guru is a long-held tradition in Vaiṣṇava culture. We didn't touch Prabhupāda's feet when he was with us mostly because we didn't dare. We had so much respect and even a little fear of him. But now, after his disappearance, we can increase our affectionate exchanges with him through the *mūrti.*

Two *Bhāgavatam* classes are given at the same time in the Bombay temple, one in English and one in Hindi. The Hindi class is given in the temple room and the English class is given in Prabhupāda's quarters on the fifth floor of the hotel tower. The acoustics are good in there, so there is no need

to use a microphone. The devotees all sit around Prabhupāda, and he oversees everything. It made me feel happy to speak near him like that. The verse was about how the material nature is very entangling and complicated. I asserted that we need to be grateful to Prabhupāda for taking us out of the entanglement. He has given us freedom all the way up to *prayojana* or pure love of Kṛṣṇa.

Bombay is a very busy temple. The phone rings constantly. I feel distracted from my attempt to study. Neither have I had much time to think of memories of Prabhupāda. I did go to Prabhupāda's quarters this morning to give the class, and saw his *tulasī* beads and books. A glimpse of Prabhupāda's presence flashed by me on my way in. But perhaps I can go back later and linger over some of those museum pieces.

From the fourth floor room where I am staying, I can see into the busy activity of this ISKCON Juhu Beach Hotel temple complex. I saw a truck roll in with BBT on the side, and then another *saṅkīrtana* bus come in. The hotel itself is quite busy with a whole fleet of auto rickshaws parked outside. I got a sense of the business of it, the *development* of it—of the money that's available now in this Bombay institution. Although I was not part of the early days, I remember being with Prabhupāda here in 1974. The devotees here were struggling so much in those early days; things have developed so much.

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November 30

Vīrabahu Prabhu gave the English *Bhāgavatam* class today. He commented that we would never have accepted Kṛṣṇa consciousness as anything more than "Indian mythology" except for Śrīla Prabhupāda. We might have found some translations of Jīva Gosvāmī's books or a translation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by chance, because many of us were reading so many books. But we would never have taken these books or this philosophy as a nonsectarian, universal teaching. And who would have ever dreamed of dressing like a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee or shaving his head like this? Vīrabahu said, "Maybe after we died, we would have considered having our corpse dressed like this, but we would never have appeared in public like this alive." It was Śrīla Prabhupāda alone who had the power to tear us away from our worldly entanglement and engage us in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Vīrabahu Prabhu also made the point that Prabhupāda had two tasks before him when he came to the West: to encourage detachment from matter, and to instill attachment to Kṛṣṇa. It is very rare that someone could have accomplished both of those tasks, but Prabhupāda was successful.

This is the beginning of the December book distribution marathon. In his class, Vīrabahu Prabhu was leading up to praising Prabhupāda's books and asserting their importance in transforming people. Therefore, we should distribute them to others.

Let me think how else I was with Prabhupāda today. I bowed to his picture when I offered *prasādam*—the small picture of him at the back of the

Indian edition of *Nectar of Devotion.* I thought of Prabhupāda in 1966 at one time today. I imagined I was telling someone about it. I spoke to this imaginary devotee like this: "You see, those were very simple days. We didn't even call Prabhupāda by his title, Prabhupāda. We called him Swamijī. We had so much affection for him. Everything was very simple. Prabhupāda had no real followers then, just a few people coming forward. We were young men, not following any religious life at all. There is something very sweet and simple about it—those days in New York when Prabhupāda first came and reached out to us."

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December 1

Today was a big event in the Bombay temple—the inauguration of the Gītā-Jayanti month. The temple has pledged to distribute one hundred thousand *Bhagavad-gītās* in one month. The mayor came, and various devotees spoke on the stage (including myself). The festival managers introduced me as an old devotee who was there with Prabhupāda in the beginning in New York City. I tried to approach the subject of the *Bhagavad-gītā* from that stance, telling incidents about book distribution in the early days. Prabhupāda would be pleased by the numbers of his books being distributed, and by how his temple was such a vital place that the mayor came to speak.

The atmosphere in the Bombay temple on a Sunday is social, not so much a deep, internal mood of worship. Yet all these nondevotees who think

mainly of business, family, and sense gratification, come on Sundays and enthusiastically take *darśana* of the Deities: "Jaya Rādhā-Rāsabihārī, Jaya Sītā-Rāma." Afterward, they flock into the auditorium and pledge their money to distribute the *Gītās*. Prabhupāda is pleased to see these people acting religiously. As full-time devotees, we have to encourage everyone to serve Kṛṣṇa according to their capacity, and for this, we have to give credit to the ISKCON managers here in Bombay.

There was a real hotel banquet air to the evening. The devotees had set up a long table for the speakers with microphones and name tags. Free pens were handed out and special stamps and brochures. Everything was done very efficiently and on a high material standard for prosperous Bombay. But it was all connected to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. I didn't feel very deeply involved, and I didn't feel able to meditate deeply on Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa either, so I got out as soon as I could. I gave my lecture and instead of returning to my seat, I went upstairs and took *prasādam*.

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December 2, ekādaśī

On *ekādaśī* in Bombay, it is traditional to read from the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* or the *Conversations* books. This morning we gathered in Prabhupāda's room on the fifth floor of the tower and read from a 1967 conversation where Prabhupāda described scenes of Caitanya-*līlā* for a dramatic performance. He wanted Hayagrīva to write the play and

then the devotees to act it out. Devotees asked me to read the section. As I did, I felt moved by it.

I also told this story in the biography. It was humorous because of the contrast between Hayagrīva and Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda is obviously tasting the ecstasy of Lord Caitanya's *līlā*. He was in the mood of the different *līlās*, sometimes very jolly and sometimes transcendentally sad, as when he described the disappearance of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Hayagrīva was hearing these pastimes for the first time and obviously didn't understand so much of what Prabhupāda was describing. For example, when Prabhupāda told him about Kṣira-cora Gopīnātha, Hayagrīva thought it was Lord Caitanya as a *sannyāsī* who stole the condensed milk. He also had trouble pronouncing all the names.

I listened to a Prabhupāda lecture tape while I took *prasādam* today. This tape was from 1969. He had devotees reading aloud from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and then he would interrupt them to comment. One devotee read from the purport that there is no void anywhere in God's existence. Prabhupāda said that this was a fact. Wherever you go on land or air or sea, there will always be some form of life.

I think this is also true about Prabhupāda consciousness. There is no void of Prabhupāda's presence for us in ISKCON. We're never without Prabhupāda as long as we're following some duties. Today, for example, I talked with a disciple about his service; later I spoke with a Godbrother who is on the GBC about how I can help him in his zone as a *sannyāsī*. All of these things are connected to Prabhupāda, even if specifically we were not re-

counting memories of him or repeating what he wrote in his books.

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December 3

This morning, the devotee giving class gave a heavy book distribution lecture to enthuse us about the Prabhupāda marathon. Later in the day, I read this in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta:* "Without accepting a bona fide spiritual master coming in disciplic succession, one cannot find out the real purpose of devotional service. Therefore, one has to accept the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and agree to be directed by him. The first business of a pure devotee is to satisfy his spiritual master, whose only business is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness" (*C.c., Madhya* 19.167, purport).

Prabhupāda's statements about spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness make us wonder, "How will I do this?" Sometimes we may become turned off by devotees who stress preaching as the only service if they have a narrow-minded conception of what preaching is, yet we cannot avoid Prabhupāda's emphasis on spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In this way Prabhupāda arrests us. He stops us and asks us what we are doing to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we reply, "Nothing," then we cannot expect Prabhupāda to be pleased. We cannot have favorable "meditations" without satisfying the spiritual master "whose only business is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

But we also have to recognize that that response within us may come in different ways. We have to

begin preaching immediately or at least prepare ourselves to preach. We also have to develop our internal Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with external action.

I appreciate the way Prabhupāda stops us. He is right, of course. We don't need to be guilty about our lackings, or fearful that we won't be able to come up to Prabhupāda's standards; we simply have to find a way to respond that works for us. Prabhupāda is not narrow-minded. He wants to evoke within us some kind of response so that, according to our capacity, we can "tell everyone we meet about Kṛṣṇa." One other point: our response should be as simple and direct as we can make it.

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December 4, New Delhi

Today was a day of distractions as my morning program was interrupted by airplane travel. Toward the afternoon, however, I managed to pick up Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and look at it. I had a motive; someone suggested to me that I might be asked to lecture at the house where we are staying. But by Prabhupāda's grace, I found more than just some lecture preparation when I read the book.

I was able to sense the great power Prabhupāda actually had to convert nondevotees into lovers of Kṛṣṇa. Even today there are many devotees of Kṛṣṇa (we might even say many pure devotees) living in holy places like Vraja. But these devotees mainly live within a small orbit of influence over others. One can philosophize and say that on the

highest level, everything is already perfect and within Kṛṣṇa's control. But the fact that billions of living entities are suffering without knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is reality. Therefore, all glory should be offered to the Lord's mercy by which He grants release to those who are suffering in *saṁsāra*. All glories to the agent He uses for this purpose, our Śrīla Prabhupāda.

From Prabhupāda's preface in *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is:*

> The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is essential in human society . . . everyone should know how God, or Kṛṣṇa, is great, and everyone should know the factual position of the living entities. Everyone should know that a living entity is eternally a servant and that unless one serves Kṛṣṇa, one has to serve illusion in different varieties of the three modes of material nature and thus wander perpetually within the cycle of birth and death . . .

Prabhupāda wrote about this and then he came to America and persuaded us to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I also realized how many devotees have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by reading the *Bhagavad-gītā*. We had no intention of becoming devotees, but somehow Prabhupāda was able to get through to us. He was able to convince us in a nonsectarian way about the fact that we are suffering under the modes of nature. Kṛṣṇa is our only relief. It is this wonderful *śakti*, this compassion, the effectiveness of Prabhupāda's preaching that made me feel deep appreciation as I read the *Gītā's* preface. It made me want to tell others about Prabhupāda.

As for preparing for a lecture, I turned to the eighteenth chapter and plotted out some points to

make from verses 18.67 to 18.71. One could say how the message of the *Bhagavad-gītā* should not be preached to people who are not austere. But people who are not envious can be told. The pure devotees hold open classes to tell others about Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, I want to tell people about Prabhupāda. But that means I have to myself be appreciative and realized and faithful. I am eternally his disciple.

Recognizing Prabhupāda's compassion in his writings also gives deeper meaning to my new awareness that Prabhupāda has an identity beyond what I know. I can only pray to him to save me. I am glad to return to his standard *Bhagavad-gītā* teachings. Just to read his righteous indignation against those who misinterpret *Bhagavad-gītā*, his strong assertions that *Bhagavad-gītā* is for the whole world and that the whole world is in illusion, and his direct guidance to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, are very relishable and nourishing. Prabhupāda is the great *ācārya* for introducing people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As he writes, "This knowledge constitutes a great science, and each and every living being has to hear for his own interest." And Prabhupāda is also the *ācārya* who will take us past our initial faith to the higher stages of *niṣṭhā, bhāva,* and *prema.*

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December 11, Vṛndāvana

Finally back in Vṛndāvana. This morning I went to Prabhupāda's rooms. There was only one other person there, but she was sitting up straight right in front of Prabhupāda's desk. I couldn't see Prabhu-

pāda, and neither could I go up close to him to offer obeisances.

Sometimes Prabhupāda seems to be blocked from our view by different things, even by another of his disciples. We can only be patient about it. There will always be another opportunity.

After the class this morning, when the lecturer asked for questions, I made a point which supported something he said. I gave an example from Prabhupāda. The lecturer had said that the Supersoul is with us in the material world, but when we go to Kṛṣṇaloka, He is no longer there. I gave a supporting example: Prabhupāda explains in a purport how at Kumbha-melā, a big city suddenly arises and a governor is appointed to see to its concerns. But after the Kumbha-melā, the city is dismantled and the governor goes back to his previous duties.

I then raised my hand a second time and said something about Prabhupāda teaching that devotees who practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness can get help from the Lord in the heart. The lecturer then asked me if I knew any particular examples of this. I said yes, Prabhupāda used to encourage the ISKCON artists, when they asked for directions on how to paint, to pray to the Lord in the heart. Prabhupāda would give some specific directions, but then he would say, "You are sincere. Kṛṣṇa will tell you in the heart how to do it." The lecturer told a Prabhupāda story of his own.

Later in the day, when I had a little time and wanted to read *rasika* literature, I felt inclined to read something *rasika* that was presented by Prabhupāda. So I turned to some *Antya-līlā* sections

of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. That is the ideal combination, the *mādhurya* pastimes as discussed by Prabhupāda in his purports.

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December 12

It's almost 7:00 P.M. I felt ill today, so I didn't attend the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class. I mention this because in scanning over the day's activities, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class is the obvious point where I can get remembrances of Prabhupāda. Today I slept. Another obvious place is when I read. I did do some reading today, Prabhupāda's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* purports.

A devotee wrote me and asked why we say Kṛṣṇa is the source of Viṣṇu rather than the other way around. I wanted to find a quote to answer this letter with, so I referred to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* section where Lord Caitanya teaches Vyenkata Bhaṭṭa. Once I found the reference, I read the whole section.

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December 14

I'm going through a transition which I hope will deepen my appreciation for Prabhupāda. What does it mean to be in transition? If one can't always turn to remember him in the ways that one is used to, in ways that one used to count on, and one hasn't yet developed a more advanced understanding of Pra-

bhupāda, then it can be said that one is in between stages. Being afraid or refusing to go forward is known as *niyamāgraha*. I am trying to go forward. At least that's positive.

I gave *Bhāgavatam* class today. I was able to recall some Prabhupāda stories like the time he was on television in New York City so long ago. During the question and answer period, I suddenly remembered something about Prabhupāda. A devotee sparked the memory by asking, "Could you give some suggestions how an ISKCON manager can keep clear consciousness?" I started speaking about Prabhupāda's routine and how he kept his schedule. I said Prabhupāda was a liberated soul, but he also acted like a very strict *sādhaka*. He kept the temple schedule and chanted *japa* every day. Then just by glancing at Prabhupāda on the *vyāsāsana*, I felt inspired to describe his daily schedule.

He took rest around 10 P.M. and got up around 1:00 A.M. to translate *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. After that he chanted *japa*, then went on a walk, then came back and gave the *Bhāgavatam* class. He did everything at specific times during the day. He didn't easily stray from that schedule in the name of an emergency. *We* might do that, "Oh, I didn't chant my rounds today. I didn't do any reading," but Prabhupāda rarely did. Prabhupāda's disciples knew that he did more management than anyone, and yet they were astounded by how he could keep following the spiritual schedule. The atmosphere in Bombay when they were fighting for the land and consulting many lawyers was intense. Usually in the evening, the devotees would meet with Prabhupāda and discuss their strategy for the law

case. Right in the midst of all these managerial discussions, Prabhupāda would look at his watch and tell them it was time for class and *kīrtana*. The devotees would think, "How could Prabhupāda possibly go to class and *kīrtana* in the midst of all these heavy events?" But he did.

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December 16, 1:30 A.M.

A little Prabhupāda moment: Yesterday in the late afternoon, Madhu and I were walking on the *parikrama* trail. I told him of my desire to return to Vṛndāvana next year to teach a course in the VIHE. I have pretty much decided to teach on Prabhupāda's life. When I said this, Madhu replied, "Yes everything always comes back to Prabhupāda." If one studies *rāgānugā-bhakti,* then one soon comes to the point of understanding the importance of worshiping, following, and pleasing the spiritual master. That is the foundation of *any* form of *bhakti.* Ultimately, one has to pray to Prabhupāda to know his eternal identity and to follow him to Vraja. Similarly, any direction one takes in writing or preaching or temple management has to be in relation to Prabhupāda, his person, his mission, the source.

Tonight I sat with my disciple Navadvīpa and prepared an outline for a course on Prabhupāda. I felt enthusiastic just by talking about it. Off the top of my head, I made a list of nineteen classes on the life of Prabhupāda. One of the main things I want to stress are the two sides of Prabhupāda: the *sād-*

haka form as he was manifested in this world, and his form in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Another main theme is that everyone has a living relationship with Prabhupāda. It's not that I want to set myself up as the main authority on Prabhupāda, but I want to invite devotees to discuss their own feelings and realizations. In that context, I will also give my own interpretation and impressions of Prabhupāda.

I have an idea of how this might work. We might be discussing why Prabhupāda left America in 1969, and someone might say, "I read the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* and I don't agree that Prabhupāda was driven from America by the misbehavior of his disciples. I think he thought it was time to go preach in India and that's why he left." But then another devotee could say, "Certainly Prabhupāda wanted to preach in India, but you can't disregard the whole list of facts as to the difficulties that were going on in America. Prabhupāda himself wrote a letter and actually said he was going to India to get away from the offensive mentality of some of his disciples." In this way, different opinions may surface in the class, and one opinion doesn't have to hold sway over another opinion in the absolute sense.

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December 18

I think today I felt some kind of resurgence of identity as Prabhupāda's disciple. In other words, whatever advanced association or advanced knowledge I have gained here in Vṛndāvana, I know I have to assimilate it within the context of being

Prabhupāda's disciple. I didn't experience this so much in an intellectual way, but rather as a feeling of security. It probably had something to do with the fact that I am nearing the end of my stay in Vṛndāvana. I will soon be going back to my duties in the West, those duties that are part of my identity as Prabhupāda's disciple, my writing and traveling and being with disciples. I think I have a better sense, after having been here, that my service *is* actually service to Prabhupāda. It is mainstream activity in ISKCON. Prabhupāda's movement is not just an institutional structure; there is room for all of us to make a real contribution.

I now feel assured that I am not just serving in a faulty institution, but I am working in a movement that is enduring at heart. I feel more conviction that I *want* to follow my spiritual master by working in his movement. In other words, whatever discrepancies exist in ISKCON are just like so much debris floating on the holy Ganges.

The earth sometimes shifts deep under the ocean. These shifts are very important to the whole planet, but they usually aren't noticed immediately. Or we can think of the ice shifting at the poles. A big ice sheet breaks away and starts to move to sea; the movement is so slow and imperceptible. I feel like I have experienced such an imperceptible shift in my feelings toward Prabhupāda. I think these feelings are coming within the context of my bigger, more long term Prabhupāda consciousness. This is not a revolutionary change, just a quiet shifting of my focus that will increase my devotion to Prabhupāda.

I was alone most of the day, reading in my room. I read the last chapter of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta;*

then I read a translation of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Stava-mālā*. I feel secure.

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December 19

I ordered some pictures of myself with Prabhupāda from the Bhaktivedanta Archives. They may be ready for me when I go back to America. When I inquired, I heard that there were two hundred and fifty photos of Prabhupāda in which I also appear. I couldn't afford all of them, so I asked for fifty in which there appeared to be some relationship or closeness between Prabhupāda and I. I hope to be able to carry a small album of these pictures wherever I travel, and that they will remind me that I actually walked beside him and was with him.

Memory is certainly a decaying faculty. One tends to forget the essence of things. We tend to forget what a great privilege it was to be with such a great spiritual teacher who was empowered to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. A spiritual teacher who was so dear to Kṛṣṇa that he was given the *śakti* to write so many books and establish a worldwide movement. *Kṛṣṇa-śakti. . . . prarvartana.* I pray the pictures will remind me.

Every day we meet people who were affected by Prabhupāda. Either they became his disciples, or they are now serving in his movement by serving his servants. There are others who never took initiation into ISKCON, but who have been serving Prabhupāda, remembering Prabhupāda, for decades. And there are others who have been deeply affected

by reading his books. I heard that a senior Godbrother is writing a collection of memories of his times with Prabhupāda. He is doing it in a creative way by stringing the stories together on a literary garland.

It's a fact that Kṛṣṇa conscious teachings are my life work. I either speak the teachings or I write the teachings or I live my life according to them and try to realize their nature in myself. So the form of Kṛṣṇa conscious teachings which I live by is the form in which Prabhupāda presents it. I live my life according to his expressions and particular way of presenting the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. Although I may now read translations of books by the six Gosvāmīs, I feel safe with the foundation Prabhupāda gave me. I am trying to add more stories on the building he created in me. He has sheltered me with the *siddhānta.*

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December 20

Today while walking on the *parikrama* trail in Vṛndāvana, I tried to drink it in a little more than usual because I realized I have only two more days left here. Thinking like this, I looked at the Rādhā-Madana-mohana temple domes ahead of me and then at other sights, even at nearby hogs which seemed to be a necessary part of the picture. When I turned and started walking in the opposite direction, I saw a peacock fly by. "Peacocks really belong in Vṛndāvana," I thought, "and they are part of the same eternal Vṛndāvana that we hear about in the *rasika śāstras.*" Peacocks in the West in ISKCON

country *āśramas* never seem like they belong there. They sit up in the trees like big fowl, but I just don't think of Vṛndāvana when I see them.

Immediately, my mind went to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda actually liked the peacocks at the Detroit Deva-sadan temple. He remarked with amusement that the peacocks used to eat the flowers and that was the only problem. So if Prabhupāda approves that Vṛndāvana can be exported to ISKCON temples in the West, why should I say that it's not true? Prabhupāda wasn't so conservative or so limited. He used to describe people who couldn't appreciate the widespread preaching efforts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as crippled-minded.

Thus this meditation while on the *parikrama* trail turned into a fuller appreciation of Prabhupāda. Certainly Prabhupāda tasted Vṛndāvana much more deeply than I do, but as he began the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and saw to its spread around the world by repeatedly visiting his centers, he also encouraged the bits of Vṛndāvana he saw springing up in his Western temples. He even called little hills Govardhana Hill and small ponds New Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Prabhupāda was dynamic. Vṛndāvana wasn't just a rural village in India to him, and neither was it a place that could only be appreciated if one went to India. All glories to Prabhupāda's broad vision.

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December 22

Riding in the van today, some devotees were talking about how they don't feel so much excitement or ecstasy in doing service. We agree that we shouldn't blame Prabhupāda for this, that it's our own lacking. Then some of us remembered old days when it was so exciting to serve Prabhupāda. I shared a memory of a time when Prabhupāda was in Canada and he wanted me to go to the U.S. immigration office in Boston and find out why his papers were delayed. I dressed in my suit and tie and went there on Prabhupāda's behalf. It was a simple task, but I felt ecstasy as I carried it out.

Bhūrijana then recalled the time he visited Prabhupāda on 26 Second Avenue. He was sent out to purchase something called "Tiger's Milk" for Prabhupāda. He remembered how happy he had felt, wandering around St. Marks Place trying to buy it for the Swami.

I'm sitting in my room on my last night in Vṛndāvana. I didn't go down and see Prabhupāda in his rooms enough. Although I see him every day in his *samādhi-mandira,* it's not the same as going to see him in his residential rooms. But if I go now, there's a good chance I'll meet someone on the stairs and that person will want to see me. Then I'll have to come back to the room and talk, and I won't end up seeing Prabhupāda. It's probably better for me to stay here in my room and think about Prabhupāda than to attempt to see him.

I want to thank Prabhupāda personally for taking the anxiety to build this Vṛndāvana Krishna-Balaram Mandir. It cost him so much. He had to

push to get it done, push the devotees to think of cement and raising money, etc. Someone can criticize and say Prabhupāda should have paid more attention to *bhajana* or to *rāsa-līlā,* or that he should have been more in Vṛndāvana consciousness, but he knew he had to provide adequate shelter for his Western disciples. And he had to teach us carefully what thinking of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana meant and didn't mean so that we wouldn't become *sahajiyās.* Whatever Prabhupāda did is perfect and complete. We can still build on that structure to realize more fully what Vṛndāvana is, as Prabhupāda wants us to.

Another memory from today—a devotee told a story of when Prabhupāda first came to India and traveled with his disciples in a group from one home to another. When they arrived in one place, Acyutānanda asked Prabhupāda, "What will our program be here?" Prabhupāda replied, "Our program is to cry for Kṛṣṇa."

I hope I can return to Vṛndāvana. I beg Prabhupāda and the *dhāma* to please forgive me for any *sādhu-nindā* I committed while I was here, or worse, *guru aparādha, nāma aparādha.* Please forgive me for all the *aparādhas* I probably did commit here in the *dhāma.* I wish to be able to come back under the auspices of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and serve in Vṛndāvana-*dhāma.* All glories to Prabhupāda. Please forgive me. Please also set me right so that I can be a better servant for you and always be a part of your movement .

This is Prabhupāda's home. The bell is ringing for *sundara-ārati.* It's the same bell we hear about in some Prabhupāda stories. Prabhupāda had to push his disciples just to get that bell properly installed. He worked with such effort to get Vṛndāvana together, and although there may still be discrepancies, it's going on. I thank the managers of the Vṛndāvana temple, and I thank the devotees for allowing me to come here, even though I don't make such a big contribution. Prabhupāda, please allow me to come here for *bhajana* in the future, and more writing, more lecturing, more attempts to be a better example. I really do want to become qualified and yet not proud. I want to be humble and surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Only you can teach me this. Please let me read your books. Let me never neglect them.

A younger devotee was saying today how it takes many years to build up one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness in different ways. When he said that, I thought of the twenty-five years I have spent as Prabhupāda's devotee; something precious has been built up, and I don't want to ruin it. I don't want to ruin my *guru-niṣṭhā.* It's all I have. So in the name of reaching further for a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, please protect me, Prabhupāda, because the real thing is *gurupadāśraya.* Even in the spiritual world, that *gurupadāśraya* continues. One should never tamper with it. Please let me always build on that, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Godbrothers who are writing memoirs asked me for tips how to write. I gave them technical advice—how to write flashbacks, how to do narrations, how to structure their writing, how to ex-

press themselves. I was also thinking of something I didn't tell them. From time to time in the midst of your story or memoir, you can break into prayers to Śrīla Prabhupāda and speak honestly and openly.

The lights have gone out again. My sitting in the dark is symbolic, it seems. *Oṁ ajñāna timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā*. Light a candle. I can think of Prabhupāda even in this darkness and pray for the inner light of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in his service. I leave tomorrow, but let me do everything as service to Prabhupāda.

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GLOSSARY

A

ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.
ahiṁsā—nonviolence.
ārati—a ceremony for worshiping the Lord with of ferings 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

BBT—the acronym of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, the publishing house for Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.
bhajana—worship.
bhakta—a devotee.
bhakti—devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON and the son of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.
Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura—a great spiritual master in the line of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.
bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.
bhāva—the stage of love of God characterized by intense emotional love.
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.

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.
dīkṣā-guru—initiating spiritual master.

G

Gauḍīya sampradāya—the chain of spiritual masters coming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
gāyatrī-mantra—private mantras given to second initiated devotees to be chanted three times a day.
gṛhastha—regulated householder life; the second order of Vedic spiritual life.
gurukula—a spiritually-based Vaiṣṇava school.

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, charac terized 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 ap proximately to mid-thigh.

L

līlā—a transcendental "pastime" or activity per formed by the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees.

M

mādhurya—"sweet"; refers to the conjugal *rasa*.
mahātmā—a "great soul," a broadminded, liberated devotee.
maṅgala-ārati—the first worship ceremony in the morning, usually performed by 4:30 A.M.

mantra—a sound vibration that can deliver the mind from illusion.

māyā—(*mā*-not; *yā*-this), illusion; forgetfulness of one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

mūrti—literally, form. Refers to the deity form of Kṛṣṇa or the pure devotee.

P

Pañca-tattva—"the five truths"; Lord Caitanya, Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Advaita, Gadādhara Paṇḍita, and Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita.

Paramātmā—the Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the heart.

parampara—the chain of spiritual masters in disci plic succession.

parikrama—walking circumambulation of holy places.

praṇāmas—prayers offered to the spiritual master.

prākṛta-sahajiyā—those who pretend to be experiencing deep spiritual ecstasy, and who thus cheapen the process of devotional service.

prasādam—food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa, literally, "Kṛṣṇa's mercy."

pūjārī—one who performs *pūjā*, worship, of the Deity form of the Lord.

R

rāgānugā-bhakti—devotional service performed out of spontaneous love.

rasa—spiritual relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

rāsa-līlā—Kṛṣṇa's dancing with the *gopīs*.

Rūpa Gosvāmī—the leader of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, the principle followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

S

sabjī—a spiced vegetable dish.
sādhana—regulated spiritual practices.
sādhu—a saintly person.
samādhi—trance, complete absorption in God consciousness. Also, the tomb of a great *ācārya.*
saṁsāra—the repeated cycle of birth and death in the material world.
Sanātana Gosvāmī—one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, disciples of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who wrote many books on devotional principles and excavated Vṛndāvana's holy places.
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.
śikṣā-guru—instructing spiritual master.
smaraṇam—devotional remembrance (of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee); one of the nine basic forms of *bhakti-yoga.*
śravaṇam—devotional hearing

V

vaidhī-bhakti—devotional service performed according to rules and regulations
Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.
varṇāśrama—the social structure in which society is divided into four occupations and four *āśramas* or spiritual orders.
Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

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