Śrīla Prabhupāda Samādhi Diary

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

GN Press, Inc.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following disciples and friends who helped produce and print this book:

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa dāsa
Bhakta Linc Kinnicutt
Caitanya-dayā-devī dāsī
Gopī-mañjarī-devī dāsī
Guru-sevā-devī dāsī
Kaiśorī-devī dāsī
Keśīhanta dāsa
Lalitāmṛta-devī dāsī
Madana-mohana dāsa
Mādhava dāsa
Madhumaṅgala dāsa
Nārāyaṇa-kavaca dāsa
Prāṇadā-devī dāsī
Yamunā-devī dāsī

Special thanks to Aditi-devī dāsī for her kind donation to print this book.

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Persons interested in the subject matter of this book are invited to correspond with our secretary:

GN Press, Inc.
R.D. 1, Box 832
Port Royal, PA 17082

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Printed in India By Janta Book Depot (Printers & Publishers) New Delhi-110001.
For G. N. Press

Originally published in Churning The Milk Ocean, Collected Writings, 1993–1994 by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami.

Artwork by Yadupriyā-devī-dāsī
Inside Photographs by Caitanya-candrodayā dāsa

Contents

Introduction	1
Jagannātha Purī	5
Śrīla Prabhupāda Samādhi Diary	13

there. Later in the day, I would visit the Samādhi Mandir, sit in a corner, and write for half an hour. On the way back to the Guesthouse, I would again visit Prabhupāda's rooms and continue to write. My writing was focused on asking Prabhupāda what he wants me to do and asking him to reveal himself to me. At that time, because of various things that were going on, I felt as if my heart was extended on a wire and pulleys, and I realized that I was dying even while the various ISKCON issues and controversies were being debated. I wanted to feel a deeper integrity in my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda and to learn to read his books as an act of prayer. I also realized that such introspection and the seeking of exacting integrity would cost something, and I tried to understand what that was through this writing.

While I was confident that I was within Prabhupāda's movement and under his general direction, I wanted to ask him to let me know more directly what pleases him most. I was aware, however, that I wasn't asking the question in an unconditional way. Prabhupāda knew it too. But what's the use of living if I do not live according to my spiritual master's desire? This diary was yet another attempt to face my spiritual master. By approaching Prabhupāda, I trusted he would see me. Often, when a disciple actually came before Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda would ask, "Is everything all right?" The disciple could then take the opportunity to ask his question.

"If you see me today, Śrīla Prabhupāda, this is what I would say to you: 'I am trying to physically come to your special places of worship and *mūrtis* so that you will see

me and I will be able to render service. I want you to know what I am doing. Please tell me what you think is best for my advancement as your disciple.'"

I wish I could always be visiting Śrīla Prabhupāda in his rooms. At least while we are in Vraja, we who wish to serve Prabhupāda can feel most comfortable in these two *tīrthas*. We belong here. People come by and throw coins on his altar, and the workmen and nearby *āśramas* and shops are noisy, but this is the heart of ISKCON, our home. We can circumambulate all of Vraja simply by circumambulating these grounds. The white lions standing to guard Prabhupāda's Samādhi will also guard us as we shelter at his feet. "Gurudeva, give to this servant just one drop of mercy. I am lower than a blade of grass. Give me all help. Give me strength. Let me be as you are, without desires or aspirations."

Jagannātha Purī

I want this to be a diary for writing letters to Prabhupāda, talking to him, praying to him, sometimes speaking to him in the first person and sometimes in the third person. Some of my thoughts may be sentimental, but I want to speak to him anyway because good words, good attempts, will lead to good actions.

I just spoke with one of the leaders of the Prabhupāda Centennial committee. It leaves me thinking how I am not alone worshiping Prabhupāda. My relationship with Prabhupāda is not only vertical, but horizontal. I have relationships with all the other devotees, even the nondevotees, and we are meant to help each other serve Prabhupāda. Nevertheless, especially in this diary, I want to speak mainly of my vertical relationship with Prabhupāda. If I am fixed and confident in how Prabhupāda is present in my life, then I will be better able to share that realization with others, and then I will be willing to undergo the austerities of reunions with disgruntled devotees and activities like that.

There is a method of prayer which I like to practice in the evenings. You think of how you contacted Kṛṣṇa during the day, how you served Him, and then you feel some emotion about that. This recall is meant to bring assurance and confirmation of your active relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

When I think of today, I remember back to the morning when I talked with my Godbrother about the Prabhupāda Centennial. We discussed one kind of Prabhupāda consciousness, but it was mostly *ideals*—intellectual.

Today I spoke with Madhu about my desire to again worship a Prabhupāda *mūrti*. He suggested that before I make a commitment, I could start a simple offering of incense and flowers to a picture of Prabhupāda.

Where did I contact Prabhupāda today? He was in the usual places—his books and lectures. I was interested to hear Prabhupāda speaking today to different people in Melbourne.

I sometimes feel challenged when I hear Prabhupāda discussing with different guests and not actually answering their questions. For example, I heard a room conversation where he was speaking to Franciscan seminarians. Twice in a row Prabhupāda didn't answer their questions, but spoke on something else. One man asked something about Prabhupāda saying the chanting of the holy names is the best means of God realization, but what about other paths? Prabhupāda replied as if the man had asked, "Could you tell us about the chanting of the holy names?" He went on to describe the

glories of the holy names without making reference to other systems.

The next question was about the nature of evil. The man said that there are different theories about the nature of evil, and asked Prabhupāda to explain his theory. The man added that some people say that evil is due to our own consciousness. Instead of discussing evil, Prabhupāda picked up on the word "consciousness" and described the difference between the supreme and individual consciousness.

It's possible that Prabhupāda simply didn't understand their questions. Some disciples think of it in a more mystical way and say that Prabhupāda always did know what they were asking, but that he gave the answer they needed to hear. Of course, whatever Prabhupāda said was good for them, and sometimes he did clearly answer with that in mind. Sometimes he purposely didn't answer their questions because they were foolish.

When I think of these things, I feel some sympathy for what it must have been like for Prabhupāda having to face hundreds of seminarians and his own disciples and not only deal with their questions, but with their languages and differing pronunciations of English. Prabhupāda was surcharged with what he wanted to say about Kṛṣṇa, and practically anyone who said anything to him would inspire him to talk more about the subjects that were most urgent for him and for the audience to hear. In that sense, we can say that Prabhupāda didn't care that much about what they were asking. He had his own agenda and that was best for everyone.

There is a humorous example of Prabhupāda misunderstanding a guest. Reverend Powell of Melbourne mentioned to Prabhupāda about the Gospel story of the ten talents. This came up, I think, when they were discussing Communism and the idea that each person should get a share of the wealth according to his needs and his work. The Reverend compared it to the parable of the talents and told the story of the man who gave different people wages according to how they worked. The word "talent," of course, was an old Biblical currency. Prabhupāda's response focused on talent as propensity or skill and how it can be used in Kṛṣṇa's service. The Reverend didn't correct Prabhupāda, but listened to what he said.

How else did I contact Prabhupāda today? I appreciated Chapter Fourteen of the *Madhya-līlā*, how Prabhupāda spoke such deep philosophy about the spiritual world.

I am looking for even closer contacts with Prabhupāda—wisps of memories (I want to catch myself remembering him and record it) and states of prayer, real calling out to him and hints of him responding. I hope to have dreams and remember them.

11 P.M.

I had a dream about Prabhupāda. I was his servant, but I had been called for at the last moment and things weren't arranged. I suddenly realized that I would have

to stay up all night. There hadn't even been an arrangement for Prabhupāda's lunch, although others had lunch, so I ran around the temple asking for volunteers to immediately cook for Prabhupāda.

At one point I entered a place where there was an auction and devotees were standing around. The auctioneer was pulling the head off a chicken. After one of the items was auctioned, I announced that anyone who wanted to cook for Prabhupāda had to have a preparation ready within an hour. After that, I went into a room that was like a warehouse, where Prabhupāda would sleep for the night, to prepare things for him. Then I tried to arrange the buzzer so he could call his servant during the night. I was ready to do whatever was required and I was excited, although frantic, to make arrangements for Prabhupāda.

Later that night I dreamt again that I was in a rush and that I had to dress different Deities, including a Prabhupāda *mūrti*. The Prabhupāda *mūrti* kept turning into Prabhupāda. I wasn't familiar with his clothes. We found a cape that he liked and suggested he could wear it when he went outside. Prabhupāda was about to leave our temple to go look at land that was being offered to him in Virginia. I was impressed with how thorough and dedicated he was. He told us that someone had advised him not to buy the property because it was in Washington, D.C. I explained to Prabhupāda that Washington, D.C. is just a small area and that this property is not near the city. I finished dressing Prabhupāda with a cape (he was the *mūrti* again) and placed

him on a table in the outer room. Then I finished dressing the other Deities and we got ready to go with Prabhupāda.

I'm looking forward to feeling Prabhupāda's presence in his *mūrtis* at Krishna-Balaram Mandir in Vṛndāvana. Deity worship can be seen as external because Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee is manifested in stone or brass or wood. But Deity worship is not external; it has been given to us to facilitate an internal exchange with Kṛṣṇa or His pure devotee. Therefore, I don't want to take the Prabhupāda *mūrti* for granted. It's a problem I sometimes have, especially when the temple is crowded and I feel my worship is too public. How close can you get to Prabhupāda when so many other devotees are there? How long can you pray to him in full *daṇḍavats* before you become conscious of people watching you? Still, I can't expect to have everything to myself. I wouldn't want to walk around the temple with nobody there! Therefore, I should tolerate whatever conditions inhibit my ability to feel full devotion and when I see Prabhupāda, bow down to him with full presence of mind. At the same time, I understand that temple worship is more than just tolerating others. It is sharing our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those people who bow down to Śrīla Prabhupāda are so rare in this world.

Someone said to me, "In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there are no old days." It's true that service to Prabhupāda is eternal and never grows stale, that the present is equally happy and filled with Prabhupāda consciousness, and

that the future is brilliant because we will be with him again. I pray for his mercy and hope to intensify my remembrance of him at the time of death.

One reason I am trying to turn more to him now is that he is the one I want to turn to at the time of death. I don't trust anyone else the way I trust Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda came to us, to our world and language, and he converted us and the Western cities to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then he gave us those Western cities and told us to take care of them. On returning to Los Angeles he expressed satisfaction.

Amazing how thousands could work for him in his mission and feel access to him. It continues today. He gave us real work. Take up that work, whoever you are. Read his books and be with him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Samādhi Diary

Krishna-Balaram Mandir, Vṛndāvana

I wanted to go immediately after *maṅgala-ārati* to Prabhupāda's rooms and write down notes for a letter or meeting with Prabhupāda, but the door is locked. Of course, Prabhupāda is everywhere and a sincere disciple will find Prabhupāda in the heart, but it certainly is something special to be in his room and to sit before him, provided you are not distracted by the presence of the other devotees there.

I am confident that I am in Prabhupāda's movement and under his general direction. I never think that he rejects me. I am asking Prabhupāda to please let me know what will please him most. What can I do? I know I don't ask the question in an absolute, unconditional way. Prabhupāda knows this too. But what's the use of living if I am not living according to my spiritual master's desire? I ask him to take into account my limits, but to let me know how I can please him.



Samādhi Mandir

Let me direct myself to you. I realize I don't have to come here to do that. There are some visitors here this morning. In one group, there is an old man with some old women sitting together. Some of them have stopped to stare at me.

By coming near you, you will see me. Often, before November 1977, when a disciple you knew came before you, you would recognize him and direct a question to

him. You might ask, "Is everything all right? What are you doing? Do you want something?"

The disciple could then take that as an opportunity to speak and ask direction from you. If you see me today, Śrīla Prabhupāda, this is what I would say to you: "I am trying to physically come to your special places of worship and *mūrtis* so you will see me and I can render some service. I want you to know what I am doing. Please tell me what you think is best for my advancement as your disciple."

There are so many *mandiras* and *tīrthas* in Vraja, but this is where I feel most comfortable. I belong here. People are coming by and throwing coins on your altar. There's the noise of workmen and the loudspeakers from nearby *āśramas* and shops. This is ISKCON, your home. I can circumambulate all of Vraja simply by circumambulating on these grounds.

We will all have to follow you soon enough through the portal of death. I want my death to be the death of a Vaiṣṇava servant. Perhaps I won't accomplish such wonderful things during the remainder of my life, but if I can come closer to you, to your lotus feet, then all my purposes will have been achieved. I want *śraddhā*. The white lions that stand guard around your *samādhi* guard me too, your worshiper.

"Gurudeva, give to this servant just one drop of mercy. I am lower than a blade of grass. Give me all help. Give me strength. Let me be as you are, without desires or aspirations."

Prabhupāda's Room

Prabhupāda's picture, how he looked in the last months, last weeks, here in Vṛndāvana. His face gaunt: "These are my last days." His feet were swollen. Our glorious master. He inspired us by his example right up until the end. I don't want to be unfaithful. I think I am in a good position now to be a simpler servant. (My head is cluttered and complicated, but I can be simple in my faith and allegiance to him.)

"I offer you all respects, for thus I may have the energy to know you correctly. Then by chanting the holy name in great ecstasy all my offenses will cease." I want my *rasa* with you.

Chanting as you taught us,
offering *prasāda* as you taught us.
Jaya oṁ prayers and *gāyatrī*,
importance of preaching
and working in ISKCON,
the meaning of *sannyāsa*
as worldwide preacher—
Śrīla Prabhupāda you have given us
a wonderful home to live in
wherever we go.
You said, "Live with the devotees
and if you feel some inconvenience,
tolerate it. Don't go away . . .
Don't l-e-a-v-e
but l-i-v-e."
Teach me, Gurudeva,
how to pray.

September 15, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

It's hard to have the privacy here for prayer. Even my own secretary gets in the way. He says, "There's a beadbag that you can put on Prabhupāda." And two *mātājīs* stand in front of Prabhupāda's door and bow down to me.

I can't go back to those days and don't want to exactly. I want to know you now, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Do I dare? I'm afraid of you and what you might say, what you might order me to do. (I hear the click of a camera behind me. Just see, Satsvarūpa is sitting alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda.)

I cannot expect to live in a vacuum with him, and I cannot disown disciples I have accepted on Śrīla Prabhupāda's order. It was in this room that he said they will be our disciples.

Prabhupāda wants us to live and give all our energy to his movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda was progressive. Time has moved on from November 14, 1977 to September 15, 1993, and it will continue to go on. I can't (don't want to) create a dream that I'm alone in his room and he's here and that Madhu doesn't exist and that the ISKCON devotees are not gathered in the temple listening to Brajabihārī's morning announcements. But I do want to go deeper in my relationship with Prabhupāda. Yesterday I prayed at Govardhana. I repeat that prayer privately to Prabhupāda now.

The letter on Śrīla Prabhupāda's desk today is that long one to Yadunandana (Boston, April 13, 1968), answering his many philosophical questions. I wrote about that letter in my memoir.

I want to come closer to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, in all your aspects—as you taught in 1968, as you lived in India, as you were in this room in 1975, then in 1979, in 1993, as you are in your *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa*. I can know you by service, beginning with hearing from you.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

You told me to encourage the devotees more and more. I tell them to be determined and patient and not to expect to become 100% pure and surrendered overnight. I give myself that advice too. But you are expecting more from your older students. We can't *only* say that it takes time, that surrender is gradual. When one devotee said he could not do as much as you because you are a *paramahaṁsa*, Prabhupāda, you replied, "You also become *paramahaṁsa*!" Work hard, surrender.

I'm sitting before you, writing. If we leave Vṛndāvana early this year, it will be to go and preach on your behalf in the temples.

People are coming into the *mandira* and making *praṇāmas* before your form. You sit and receive them as you used to in your room. Are you telling them about Kṛṣṇa? You said that even if people don't learn philosophy from a *sādhu* but just render him service (as the child Nārada did to the *bhaktivedāntas*), then they still

make great spiritual benefit. You hinted that we should come up to the standard of *bhaktivedāntas*. At least we know you are *bhaktivedānta* and that the people who come to see you with respect get your mercy.

In your golden *mūrti*, you are fingering *japa-mālā* in a beadbag. Today, group after group comes in, mostly simple villagers from Vṛndāvana and Rajastan. Sometimes someone asks me something in Hindi, but I can't reply. I just smile and nod. Hindi is not required you said, not so important for someone like me. But I have to preach fully in American English.

I wish I could write a nice poem, and I tried reading your purports earlier, but it was hot in the room and I was too drowsy. I'll try again. I'm determined to gain the greed to go further and further into your books. Bit by bit I can attain it by your grace.

"When will such mercy fall to this one who is weak and devoid of intelligence? Allow me to be with you."

In the past, I lost the opportunity to be with you. I'm coming back to try again. Someone could call me a hypocrite, insincere, sentimental. They could say, "You failed when you had the chance because you couldn't surrender your false ego. Now you are trying in an easy way, when Śrīla Prabhupāda is not here to reprimand your faults. You can't take the real thing—real surrender in Prabhupāda's presence." Something is better than nothing. I repeat Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's words: "Allow me to be with you."

Every time I look up, I see a new group of your countrymen and women standing in your Mandir. Maybe they're not serious about surrender to you, but they are pious and have a better birth than me. You gave special mercy and attention to Westerners. I want to reciprocate.

"*Jaya* Śrī Rādhe Rādhe." Someone said that to me as he passed me. I reply, "*Jaya* Śrīla Prabhupāda." This is your Mandir, and by serving you, we can serve Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

"Swami Prabhupāda belongs to India?" A man asks Madhu. "Not from America?" I can't hear Madhu's reply. Some of them know so little about you. That's funny, isn't it, to think that you came from America? The truth is that you came to America, but not from India. You came from Goloka. You don't belong to India, although you gave special mercy to the Indians.

More and more people filing in. Madhu told the man that Śrīla Prabhupāda came from the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana and went to America and, "Got people like me to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. He also built this temple."

"Oh," the man said, impressed.

All glories to Prabhupāda.

The streams of people coming to see you never stop. Repair noise doesn't stop either. Let me not stop serving and striving. Allow me to be with you.



Prabhupāda's Room

Your room is more intimate. Some ladies are lounging here. I guess they like it because the fans make it a cool haven, but let me not assume anything. I also like the cool fans and the sense of rest.

I may not stay this year for your disappearance day. The important thing is to represent you well—to be an honest disciple, to try for purity, to cooperate with devotees, and to preach. I can improve in all these areas.

"If you examine me, you will find no qualities. Your mercy is all that I am made of. If you are not merciful unto me, I can only weep, and I will not be able to maintain my life."

Your mercy is all that I am made of. I have no qualities of my own. This is true. I will weep if I don't get your mercy. I will not be able to maintain my life.

What if Prabhupāda asks me, "What kind of mercy do you want? Are you ready to take it?" I become afraid. His mercy may come in a way that exposes me as unsurrendered. I'll cry out, "No, not *that* mercy! Give me palatable mercy."

Prabhupāda, I know you are kind to us. You'll give me your mercy—you are giving it constantly. Now I take the mercy of being honored and served by your followers. That is not a very high order of mercy. Real mercy is to take up preaching tasks and to represent you. Real mercy is when you allow the *viśrambha* relationship—as friends. But I'm not asking for that so much. I want to feel nearness to you, and confirmation, and your order, your trust, your acceptance of me as a servant. I don't deserve it, I know.

I come to your places and find that I have discovered the best thing in Vṛndāvana and thus the best thing in all the worlds. I'm at home here. Allow me to be with you.

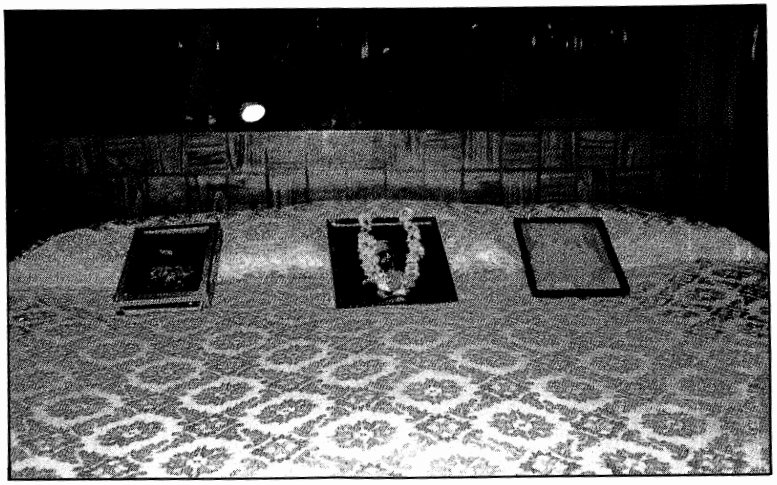
I want to recover my past with you, so I have been looking at your letters to me again. I had the best thing in those days, the assurance that I was serving you. I still have that assurance and shouldn't doubt it. I can pray to you, read your books, encourage them on your behalf, and maybe some day Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's words will be true for me:

"When kindness to all beings will be appearing
with free heart forget myself comforting,
Bhaktivinoda in all humility prays
now I will set out to preach your order sublime.
When, O when will that day be mine?"

Prabhupāda's bed.
Pain of those days.
Me still selfish and not
performing the hardest *tapasya*.
Couldn't get along with your
intimate servants.
Like a stone in my room alone.
Grief-stricken but numb.

As you passed through what seemed
like a painful ordeal, you
went back to the spiritual world.
Please guide me, Śrīla Prabhupāda.
When I die,
let me remember you.

Please dig out
my *anarthas* and attachments
and offenses.
Let me see what I'm doing wrong—
self-comfort
mental indulgence,
false ego artist-writer—
purify me with tears
and let me hold onto your
dhotī and your lotus feet,
then die and go to you.



September 16, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Today I put your beadbag on your hand, took off your old garland, and offered you a fresh one. You are friendly and receive this service from a tiny disciple.

I know you are more than "friendly." You have described that there is *gaurava-sakhya*, friendship in awe and veneration, and another kind of fraternity *rasa*

known as *viśrambha*, friendship in equality. I seek both in you. You are far more grave than I am, so I submit myself to you. I want to receive your instructions. Maybe I want you to encourage me to go on writing, but most important is that I please you. That's the goal. What shall it be, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

At least I'm coming to you in this way, enjoying your presence. The word "enjoy" usually carries negative connotations for devotees, but I want to enjoy serving you. I like your company.

When I left Prabhupāda's presence, I first bowed my head to his foot. Then I scraped the dust from the sole of his foot and put it on my head. How long I have been wanting to do this and missing it. I won't miss it anymore. I also have been wanting to put my hands on his back and give him his daily massage.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's description of first-class devotional service:

> *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ*
> *jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*
> *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-*
> *śīlanaṁ bhaktir uttamā*

When first-class devotional service develops, one must be devoid of all material desires, knowledge obtained by monistic philosophy, and fruitive actions. The devotee must constantly serve Kṛṣṇa favorably, as Kṛṣṇa desires.

> Kṛṣṇa wants everyone to surrender unto Him, and devotional service means preaching this gospel all over the world. . . . The criterion is that a devotee must know what Kṛṣṇa wants him to do. This can be achieved through the medium of the spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. . . . 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. . . . This process is completely manifest in the activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.
>
> —Cc. *Madhya*, 19.167 and purport

Prabhupāda's Samādhi Mandir

There are so many people here that I can't see your *mūrti*, Śrīla Prabhupāda. They keep standing in my way. The marble floor is dirty from the feet of so many pilgrims. It empties out again for a few minutes and I catch a glimpse of you before the next group of pilgrims enters.

I don't have to consider whether I like the architecture of the Mandir or the exact visage of your *mūrti*. I'm a worshiper, not a critic. This is where your divine body was placed in *samādhi*. I don't have to understand the spiritual technicalities of "*samādhi*" when it refers to the spiritual master's body to commune with your spirit. I just want to do that simply. I come here to worship, to see you (take *darśana*), and for you to see me—see me



and plant new seeds in my heart. I want to serve you intimately. I need strength from you. You don't grant intimate service unless we are deserving.

(I'm trying to preserve my private space. Two Indian men are staring at me while I write. I'm ignoring them. Another man is bowing down to me nearby. I return *praṇāmas*, but continue writing. Even when meeting with Godbrothers and serving Prabhupāda together, we each have our private space. I don't think I'm a fanatic

about this, but I recognize that individual devotion can easily get snuffed out or lost. I want to protect it.)

"O venerable Vaiṣṇava, O ocean of mercy, be merciful unto your servant. Give me the shade of your lotus feet and purify me. I hold on to your lotus feet." (*"Ohe! Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura"*)

The Indian pilgrims are looking at Śrīla Prabhupāda and gesturing at the walls of the inner sanctum. They don't know him very well. He's another great *sādhu* to them. They're probably visiting *mandira* after *mandira* without discrimination. But I live here. I discriminate. I stay at his lotus feet.

Nehru hats on men, women carrying bundles on their heads even inside the Mandir, everyone holding tiffins, all standing barefoot—Hindus. A rare birth in this world that simply by habit and upbringing, these ordinary folk worship Śrīla Prabhupāda as a great saint.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, as I write, a group of men come up to me and touch my feet. Do I get their karma? Spare me! Make me yours always. I want eternal service in whatever *rasa* you are in, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Please guide me and fill me with this dedication.

Prabhupāda's Room

I walk around the Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrti* in the *samādhi* and realize that this is the chief *tīrtha* for me. I touch the wall and touch my head. I was here when Śrīla Prabhupāda left the world. I am part of this part of his pastimes.

I can still report to him: Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'm going to visit all the temples in the Caribbean and encourage them more and more.

You gave me the *daṇḍa* and said, "Preach! Preach! Preach!" "Teach me to control my six passions; rectify my six faults, bestow upon me the six qualities, and offer me the six kinds of holy association." (*"Ohe! Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura"*)

This room—I was here when he was here. I didn't appreciate it fully. I was "stoned," I was afraid, I was competitive and *bouncing off others*. I wanted to be a bigshot and get honor. Somewhere along the way, I lost something.

But you never let me lose it all. I always wanted to serve you and please you. You *implanted* that so well in me from the beginning that I never lost it. I haven't grown up and left you. Please form me to your liking. Please accept my service.

Room 42, Guesthouse

I just brought a Prabhupāda *mūrti* to this room. It's the one Bhūrijana Prabhu worships and which presides in the VIHE classrooms. I'm borrowing him for a week. I'll get to know him better as he stays with me. It's a gradual relationship. I can see that he is different than the original Prabhupāda, but Prabhupāda has already expanded into so many forms. How many of his books

have been printed and distributed? "Twenties of millions." Which can be called the original book? It doesn't matter. All the books are valid and all the expansions of Prabhupāda are valid and potent. Everything depends on the sincerity of the worshiper.

September 17, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Dear Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. I must approach you by being friendly with your disciples. I saw one of your disciples in the Samādhi Mandir. He had been away from ISKCON and has now come back. I took the risk of saying hello to him, and sure enough he asked to meet with me. I'll have to do it. But that's part of my desire to deepen my worship of you. "Encourage them more and more." I won't think that I am meant to be in full-time private *bhajana* and that I have no time to meet with Godbrothers.

Still, these times alone with you are special. I will probably leave Vṛndāvana in November after the meetings and lectures and try to spend a little time on my own to read your books.

What will help me increase my consciousness of you? I touch your feet again and again. I see you wherever we turn in Krishna-Balaram Mandir. I try to help a brother remember you and serve you. I try to be genuine. I don't want to be a professional "Prabhupāda man." I can praise you if I have real feelings for this service.

I want to get rid of any cartooned, stereotyped, or simplistic versions of Prabhupāda. I will also leave others to



find their own genuineness, even if they do that in ways different than I do it. We all want you to endorse our projects. We build your museum, your restaurant, teach your children, worship your seat, collect money for you —and serve in your movement, which you said was your body. We all want to follow you sincerely.

Now I am visiting your rooms. You liked it here. Your secretaries and cooks and disciples were always hoping to catch a glimpse of you (and maybe a word with you) when you lived here. "Śrīla Prabhupāda, what should I do?"

Preach in America at the colleges and distribute books. Help maintain the temples. As a *sannyāsī*, travel and preach. Write to help devotees maintain their Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I can write better books if you will empower me. Also, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I want to be friendly to your devotees and when I do so, to deliberately think of you.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

It's obvious, Prabhupāda, that you wanted preaching. A *gṛhastha* may say he has other duties or is not fit for preaching, but a *sannyāsī* cannot make excuses.

"Preach! Preach! Preach!"

I do it and "according to my capacity" means I also have to deal with my headache syndrome. You overcame so many headaches and heart attacks and were undaunted, even at seventy.

But I am not a *paramahaṁsa* like you.

Become one?

Not so many pilgrims today. Puruṣottama-māsa is over. Now it's just the regulars.

Prabhupāda, I say foolish things to others sometimes, and to you too. Let me wash off such dirt and foolishness. Lord Caitanya said, "My spiritual master called me *mūrkha*, foolish." How much that is true of me. I was a fool before and I still am. I am so foolish I cannot chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra nicely, I am so foolish that I act as if I cannot decipher your message and your desires for me, although they are obvious.

"Everything is there. What is the difficulty?"

The difficulty is I don't want to surrender.

"Yes, that is a difficulty."

Devotees come to you with their petitions. I see the temple president of ISKCON Tucson standing before you making *praṇāmas*. And now poor pious Indian people. One asks, "Who is he?"

"Prabhupāda," replies the young caretaker who carries a pole for chasing pigeons.

"Huh?"

"Prabhupāda."

Golden Prabhupāda, they don't know you and they don't know Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They barely know Kṛṣṇa. In the West they don't know anything. There is a great need to preach.

They are circumambulating. *Tyāgi* with big, thick Vaiṣṇava *tilaka*, *bābāji* dress, tiffin, and walking stick. Pretty young wives and daughters and old men and

beleaguered husbands and masses and masses of people like the sacred earth of Vṛndāvana.

Who is he? He is Prabhupāda. I ask that question in a different way. Who is he? Where is he now? How can I come close to him? There are official answers and more private ones to those questions.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I read in your *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* purport that when Sanātana Gosvāmī flattered the jail-keeper, calling him learned, the Muslim jail-keeper accepted it as a fact. You wrote that it is natural when one is praised to accept it. I accepted praise from 1978 into the 1980s when they said I was one of the only pure devotees. Do I still accept such praise, such as when they tell me I'm humble, a genius, an artist, a pure devotee?

I'm just a small person. I have no special qualities. I like to practice writing. I want to be with you. Even the good things I do are motivated and impure. But you accept me.

The writing flows when I sit before you. I'm not yet close to you, but I want to be. I'm taking advantage of the larger-than-life-*darśana* you offer in your *samādhi*.

"I do not find the strength to carry on alone the *saṅkīrtana* of the holy name of Hari. Please bless me by giving me just one drop of faith with which to obtain the great treasure of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa." (*"Ohe! Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura"*)

I ask you for strength. That prayer suits me. No pretense. Please give me the shade of your lotus feet. Give me good qualities. Give me the strength to chant the

holy name. I said I wanted a more equal friendship with you, but what I actually require is closeness, protection, and the intimacy a guru grants his disciple. It doesn't have to be "equal"—how can I claim it? But I am an old student. I want a little time with you; I want to hear your voice with an inner ear, see your form as you are, but with myself enlightened enough to recognize you better—not as equal, but as dearmost friend.

Or should I not say that? At least I'm exposing it here, Śrīla Prabhupāda. You can correct me.

Prabhupāda's Room

Everyone has a right to approach you. I should never be jealous if I see my own disciples desiring to sit close to you and to chant the holy name in your presence. Let them pray to you directly. You are open to everyone. We all need you.

I tolerate it when someone in your room is chanting loud, insistent *japa*, or clashing *karatālas* while singing. People express their devotion to you in different ways. I'm just looking for a little corner to sit in and write, at your lotus feet. (How dare that *mātājī* come and sit so close to you, crossing over the velvet rope while I sit contentedly in the back. She is more greedy than I am and doesn't care how it looks to the pilgrims.)

"Kṛṣṇa is yours; you have the power to give Him to me. I am simply running behind you shouting 'Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!'" (*"Ohe! Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura"*)

A big class of tots just came into your room. The teacher says, "Hare Kṛṣṇa *bolo*!" and the kids recite the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. You allow them to come. You used to give little children sweets. In Bombay you wanted to give them clean clothes and *prasādam* and let them chant and dance with your devotees.

India is sweet that way. You have the power to give Kṛṣṇa to me. You also have the power to give yourself to me. If I have your personal service, then Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are automatically included. I therefore want to serve your *mūrti* and read your books and tell people what you say. *Yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa.*

An old woman whose back is so bent that she can't stand up straight, comes every day to see the Deities at Krishna-Balaram Mandir. She sets a good example. I see all these comings and goings and am amazed at their sincerity.

"*Celo*! *Celo*!" The teacher chases the students out before they swarm around me and watch my strange script. I write in American language, Śrīla Prabhupāda, which is well known to you. I love to write and to dovetail it in prayer to you.

Kṛṣṇa is coming home with
Balarāma and the boys,
surrounded by cows,
dust rising and
the *gopīs* casting their
sidelong glances and He
glances back.
Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa under a tree.

An ISKCON *harināma* party
on Golden Gate Bridge.
Your books on shelves and in cases
all over the room.
Pictures of Deities in
ISKCON temples.
Flower petals on the floor.
Another chance to see you
and touch your feet before
I can't come here anymore.
Another prayer asking for
your inner guidance—
inspiration from you in my heart.
This comes especially in this room—
one of the best places
if not *the* best in the world.
Let me carry it with me everywhere.

September 18, Prabhupāda's Room

Coming to see you personally is the heart of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was like that when you were here before November 1977.

To be called by you was the real thing. It made everything else seem like a preparation to this. I want to remember those days now and I want to store impressions of the sounds outside your room which you also heard when you lived here—conch blowing, the *ārati* bell, worship of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, Rādhā-Śyāma, and Gaura-Nitāi.

"How is the book distribution going?" you want to know. Battling the scientists? The anti-cult? You want to know. But in your last weeks you didn't want to know so much about some things. You surrounded yourself with soft *kīrtana*. Still, up until the last breath you were enthusiastic and encouraged your devotees to preach. You thanked Satyabhāmā dāsī for the woolen blanket and sincere letter written in tears. You called Gītā-nāgarī "our Pennsylvania farm."

Prabhupāda, Rādhā-Śyāma looked especially beautiful today dressed in red and yellow, the cloth folded into wonderful pleats. I can't describe it, but They looked artistic and enchanting. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī wore a *sarī* and a crown. The *sakhīs* looked outstanding. Often my mind is taken up with interactions with devotees and how they will see me—a sense of obligation and not so much spontaneous joy, but to see Rādhā-Śyāmasundara washes all that away.

Prabhupāda, I take it that you are calling me to see you. My desire to approach you more is not only coming from my side.

Today's letter on your desk is to Jadurāṇī, 1971, to Boston, where I also lived. You refer to the "hard-working crew in our Boston art department." That's true. Oh, to work like that, directly under your order and hard-pressed to complete all the paintings you wanted for your books. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you tell them everything must be done with clear intelligence according to *parampara* and "Kṛṣṇa will give you good understanding for the purpose." You are confident in this. You call them intelligent devotees of the Lord. "Go on . . . with

all enthusiasm. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so nice. By painting, your love of Kṛṣṇa will become mature."

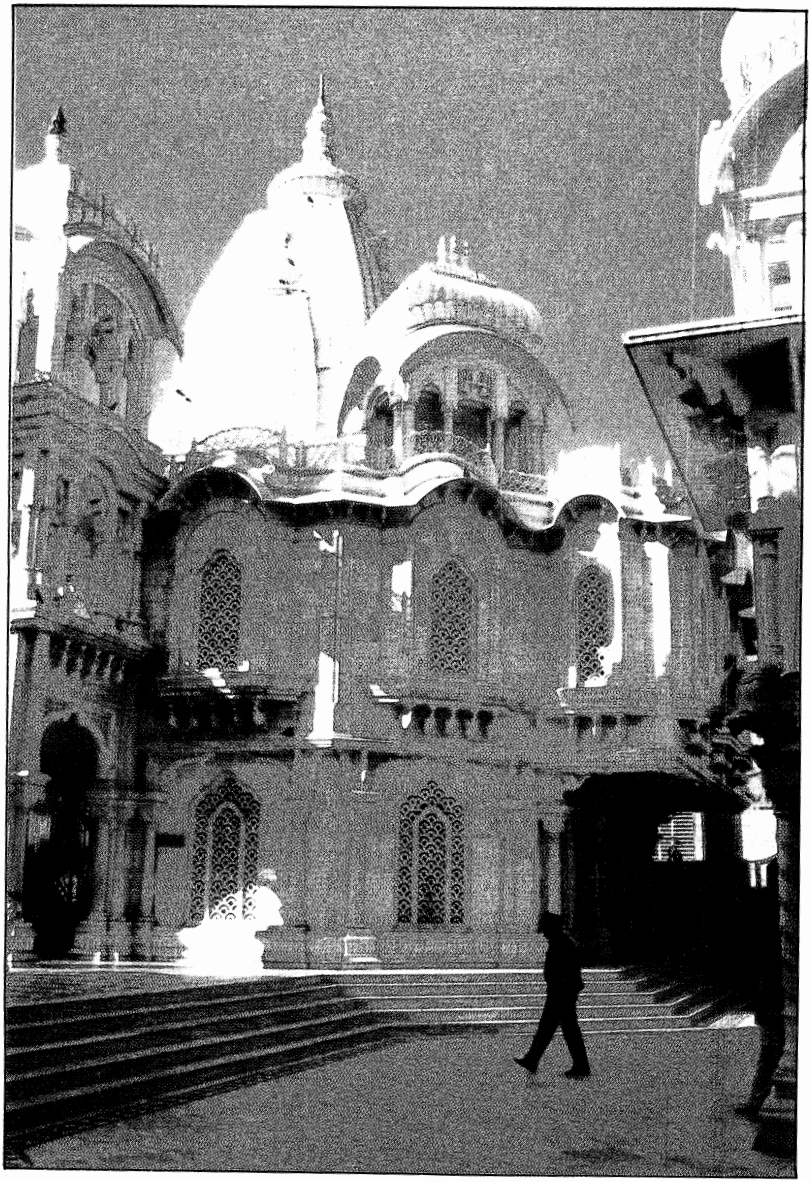
Please let me work like that too—sure that I'm under your order in *paramparā*, assured by you that Kṛṣṇa will help. You bless us with enthusiasm. That's how it occurs.

Prabhupāda's Samādhi Mandir

When I meet so many devotees on the stairs in the Guesthouse and then come here, my mind cannot focus right away on this holy spot. Your form is here, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I don't know exactly what that means. But I see there is a grand *mandira* built here entirely in your honor. You are the only deity here. Through you we receive the entire *paramparā*.

Writing may help me concentrate. I cannot forget, however, that this campus is filling up with your devotees. I cannot expect to be alone. I just met devotees from Gītā-nāgarī saying that Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara are in charge there and it's very sweet. They invited me to come. That is also a part of my meditation on you. Your family is everywhere. But here I want to think of my own essential need and purpose.

The Samādhi Mandir is special because I can think of the spiritual master as he is described in the *Guru-āṣṭakam* verses. You chant the holy names, you dance in ecstasy, you sing and play musical instruments. In your Samādhi, you hold a gong and mallet early in the morning and you chant with us. Now you hold your *japa-mālā*.



You feel ecstasy in the *saṅkīrtana* of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The temple that you built is right next door. Tears flow from your eyes and your hairs stand on end as you worship your Lordships, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Gaura-Nitāi. I offer my respectful obeisances to your lotus feet.

Prabhupāda, I don't own you. The Vrajavāsīs and our ISKCON devotees also worship you and you reciprocate with them. Suddenly the visitors leave and you are alone again, shining out with the brilliance of the sun. You are like the Holy Eucharist, like a Christ, like the light worshiped by Māyāvādīs, and for devotees of Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa, you are the pure devotee spiritual master who comes to teach us surrender. You come to bring us back to Godhead.

Now more brown-skinned men, one in a Nehru hat and all in simple *dhotīs*, come in to pay you respects. I am the rough and yet polished Western *sādhu*. I don't know anything, but I'm yours and you are mine.

I read that Lord Caitanya is merciful to the most fallen. You represented Him in that way and brought us to His devotional service. Who can fully comprehend what you did? We don't find anyone else like you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. You love us and train us up and discipline us and give us work. You speak in English, you write in English, you live in New York City and so many other Western and oriental places—and in the hearts of thousands of followers.

Impressions: the marble squares on the floor have gold lines between them. The Samādhi Mandir is still under construction, but it's almost finished. The early-morning gathering here. The heat at this time of the morning. The ornate roof. The dome of the Mandir proclaims your glories.

Marble elephants. Above them, stylized lions. Columns and more columns. A certain emptiness here, like a tomb. We fill it with our chants and prayers.

They polish your form every day. At first I complained that it was too bright, but now I'm getting used to it. If I can only meet your eyes.

Prabhupāda's Room

Prabhupāda, you saw me cornered by a group of half a dozen Indian guests in your Mandir. They didn't even know you. I told them your name and that you built this temple. "You mean he was the inspiration, not the builder." But I think of you not only as the one who inspired us, but the one who pushed us and built this temple by your desire.

So they asked me about our practices. I told them about the four rules and sixteen rounds. One man wanted to touch my *japa-mālā*. I thought he might criticize my beads because they are made from ordinary wood. He touched the beads that you touched, so he's lucky.

At last I did a little preaching. He smiled and I smiled back. I had to smile at his curiosity and interest and ignorance and what I guessed as his worldliness. He

won't follow you. I'm a strange specimen (white elephant) who told him I won't get married for my whole life.

"The whole life?" Doesn't he know there's not much left when you're already fifty-four? If you have come this far in saffron, you should be able to make it the rest of the way—*by Prabhupāda's grace.*

I found those same words on my lips last night.

He said, "I'll see you tomorrow."

"By Prabhupāda's grace."

The fan sways the flowers on your garland. I glance out the window as you sometimes did and see turbaned Vrajavāsīs, the rough faces of pious villagers.

Why do I chatter in this room?

Am I afraid of the real Śrīla Prabhupāda? ("There are no old days in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." You are eternal and therefore all your pastimes with us are eternal.)

I report from the senses because that information is easily available. The soul isn't easy to know. Prabhupāda, it's not easy to know you in your *nitya-līlā*. Will you reveal more to me? I know it takes more than these solitary visits to your rooms. I have to want to be with you exclusively.

I am reduced in some of my responsibilities in ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda, although I have not decreased my duties with my disciples. I am now free to travel as *sannyāsī* and to write. You gave me this freedom. You give me food to eat, a place (places) to live, and honor as a *sannyāsī*. Let me not forget you and what you expect in return. You want everything that I have.

Today's letter on your desk is to Karandhara, March '71. So many staunch leaders, all gone. But they don't forget you. Prabhupāda, you gave us a little at a time in those days—how to observe Vaiṣṇava holidays, you personally installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. We didn't learn from others how to do these things. We accepted that only you could teach us. I like that spirit, although I have strayed from it. Now I'm coming back. You taught us all we know.

You said you were invited to lecture at a prison in Ahmedabad and you spoke in front of the room where Gandhi stayed when he was imprisoned. You said that room is considered holy, but your rooms are actually holy. I came into this room when you sat here alone one cold morning in February 1974. You were here again after the Māyāpur festival of '74 and I was your servant. I'm an ordinary person from New York, but you gave me a chance to serve you and to learn of Kṛṣṇa. Still you offer that to me and I eagerly take it.

I pray to the Supreme Lord to keep me chaste. Am I being sentimental? I don't care. Please accept me anyway. You are like the sun who can purify even a contaminated place. Let your rays penetrate into my dirty heart.

September 20, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

I look at you and wait. It may take a long time, many lifetimes. But I shouldn't think that I'm not with you now. I am. This is separation. Your *mūrti* eases the

separation. He can talk to me too; it depends on my purity.

You used to sit in this place and tell us what to do. You are empowered and we accepted you as our perfect spiritual master. Sometimes our false egos were hurt. It's not easy to surrender them.

They have not changed the letter on your desk since yesterday. Prabhupāda, a film crew is in the temple this morning shining their bright lights and cameras on the Deities. Your GBC man, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, is visiting Vṛndāvana. I'm sure you'll be meeting with him. You used to say that you so much pushed him to print your books in Hindi that he would not come to see you in Vṛndāvana unless he had a new book printed.

You are here in silence. I imagine you chanting and calling me to see you. Study my books, you said, and distribute them to colleges.

Someone is looking in here to see me.

Prabhupāda, I write notes. I did that in 1966 while listening to your lectures. Now I write whatever is happening, what I feel. It's me-centered, but that's the way to reach my true feelings for you and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda, I love you.

Jaya, and ask Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja to come see me.

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:20 P.M.

Alone with you, they let me in ten minutes before the doors open to the public. The curtains are still closed. It's hot outside, but cool in here under the fans.

I've come to take down your comments. On Rādhāṣṭamī I'll speak what you have said about Rādhārāṇī.

Now they have changed the letter on your desk. It's to Gurudāsa, who was in Vṛndāvana in 1970. "If you can establish one nice palatial temple for our society in Vṛndāvana, that will be a great credit for you."

You pushed us to achieve. You set quotas: "Daily three life members must be made in Bombay, daily two in Calcutta, and daily one in Delhi."

I know there is still your pressure on us to do the right thing. Times have changed, yet your order stands. We have to be intelligent how to follow it.

When I come, Satsvarūpa dāsa, alone, I take the risk that you will focus on me and give me a heavy order. One cannot come before you just to play a game of "imagining I'm with Śrīla Prabhupāda." Coming in to your presence signifies surrender and willingness to accept austerity. Then confidential instruction can come.

I am aware of this, yet I'm foolish. I do come "to play." I come as a little son, as a personal servant who tends to your bodily needs. I used to do that.

I'm aware you want servants to preach and manage your Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I say, "I'm a *brāhmaṇa*, Prabhupāda. I lecture and write and care for

disciples in a personal way. But I get headaches, so don't ask me to do something I can't do."

It's embarrassing to write like that, but it's true.

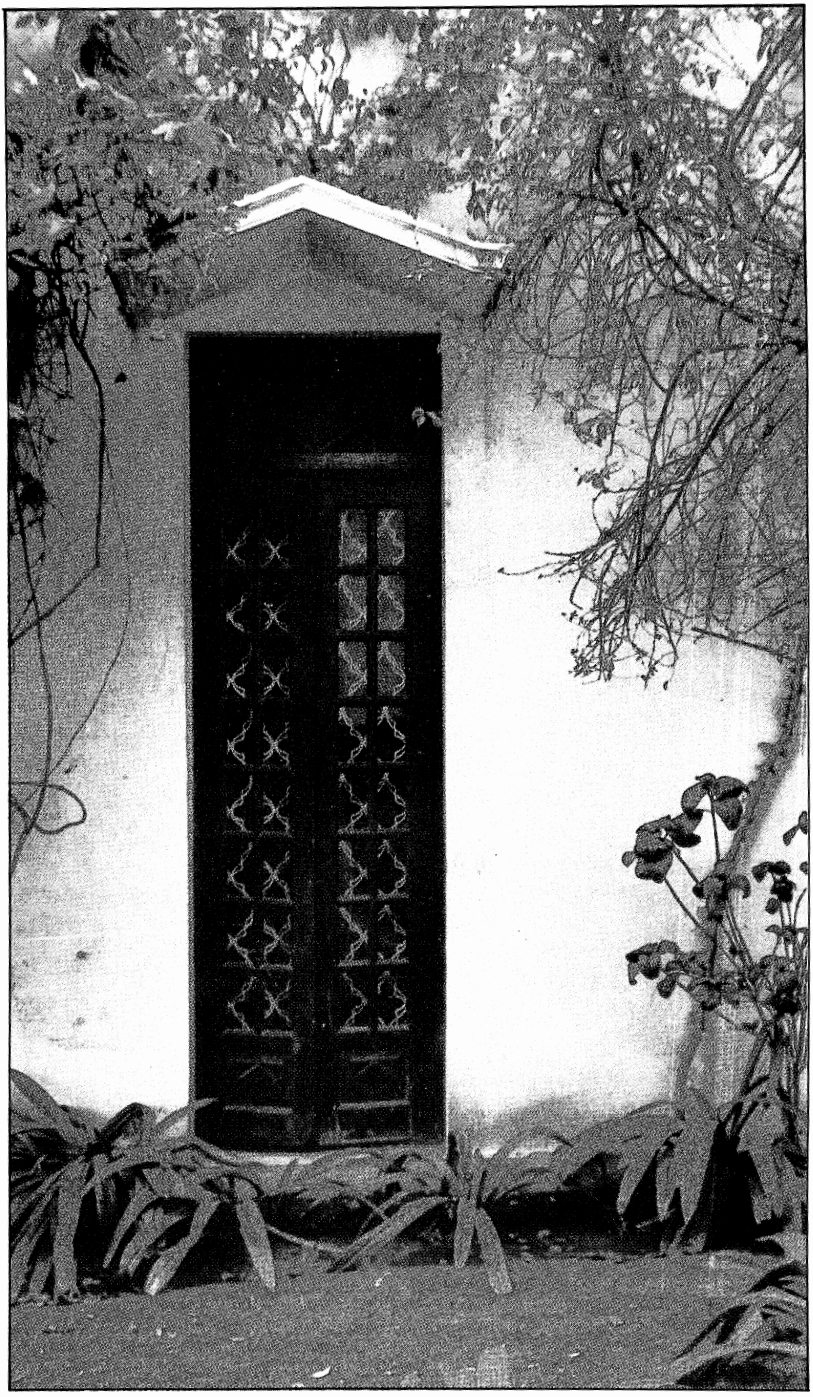
I enjoy the separation from you in that way. I don't have the pressure of your direct order, but at least when you were here, I did accept your order. You said of me, "*He does what I ask.*" Please let it still be true, although I can't manage. Perhaps I'm not entitled to so much direct personal association, so I'll "steal" it in this easy form of sitting with your *mūrti*.

I admit it, I'm a nonsense, but I want to be an asset to you.

Devotees went to Kāmyavana where we may pray for our desires. I achieve the same purpose here in your temple, praying to you. Please let me speak what you said about Rādhārāṇī on Rādhāṣṭamī. Please let me serve you and not deviate. Please let me serve your devotees. All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I hear the bell ringing and the conch for the 4:30 *ārati*. It's hot. In a similar way, you heard and passed the hours in your last months in this world.

They would bring you your lunch here. In the evening, they would have brought you hot milk with the sugar separate and maybe something to eat. You saw devotees and gave forceful directions.



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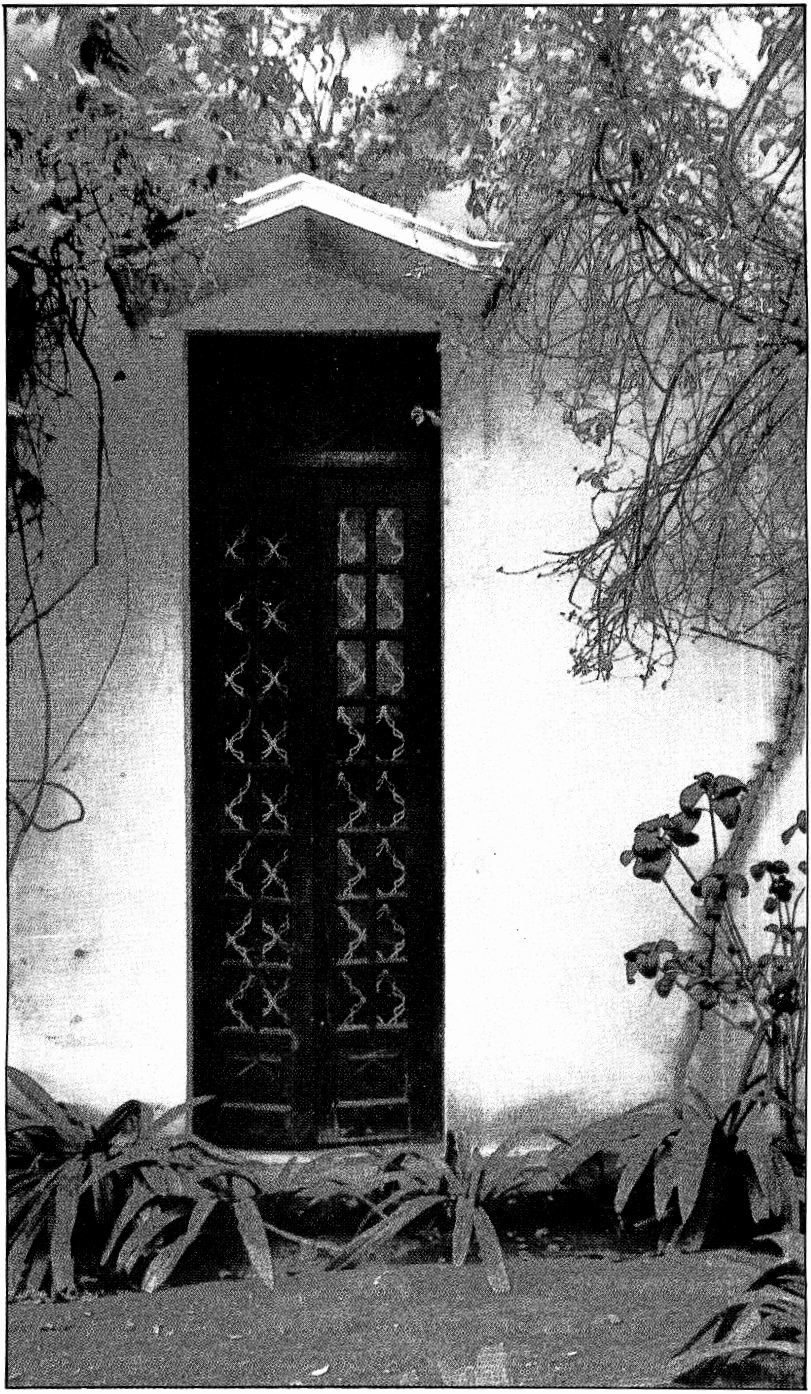
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I'm trying to understand how to follow you. This is not 1970 when you still had no temple in Vṛndāvana. It's 1993. But we should not presume that we are very much advanced.

September 21, Prabhupāda's Room, 10:15 A.M.

Today I touched the *tamāla* tree in the courtyard and took a leaf. Then I circled Tulasī. I will touch your foot before I leave the room.

I don't feel centered right now.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

People are walking past your room. Some are young, some are old. Some will die—all will die. The young in their bright shirts will probably die later, although some of them will die young. Then it will be silent. I mean, we who are now making noise will be silent. New people will make noise. We will also come back in our next lives as noise-makers to be in your rooms again. Yes, let it be. Whatever is best for our eternal devotion and surrender and service to you. If I can't do much more in this life, then let me at least come back to be with you in some capacity.

A person who asked me to give him initiation in ISKCON said, "You're attached to Śrīla Prabhupāda and will go to where he is in your next life. If I am attached to you, I too will go to him." That's the idea.

As I write, a young Indian man wearing denims gets down on his knees and makes *praṇāmas* to you.

September 22, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

You said, "That feeling that you have that 'I am something' is not wrong. But who are you? You are a servant of Kṛṣṇa." Neither am I the direct servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but hundreds of times removed—the servant of the servant of the servant . . .

I'm here before you, weak and tired physically and spiritually. I don't know. You are keeping me anyway. I know that for sure. I'm one of your followers, for better or for worse. Knowing this and feeling secure, let me increase my service to you.

You want to see the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement spread and maintained all over the world. I can contribute to that by my temple visits. My visits seem insignificant, but so is everything else I do, so I'll go to Trinidad or Guyana or Italy or Spain.

Prabhupāda, you said the whole world is made up of cheaters and rascals and that we should try to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the bewildered victims of this age. I'm working for that. Diary and autobiographical writing are literary ways, tools of Kṛṣṇa conscious culture. I leave behind the history and struggle and triumph over the material world. It's the triumph on your order and blessing that converts a sow's ear into a purse.

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa sit on a throne in the picture high over your head and behind you. The letter on your desk today is to Śrī Galim, December 1970, from Bombay to Austin, Texas. I just met Śrī Galim the other day. He is now forty-five years old and has been through a lot of spiritual confusion at New Vrindaban. He's doing much better now—coming clear of it.

You wrote him, "As long as preaching work is going on, somehow or other that is first-class program." You also said, "The test of the strength of our preaching work is that we sell many books and magazines. So what is the difficulty?" By preaching sincerely to anyone and everyone, "The demand for our books will increase."

"Kṛṣṇa will give you all help."

Prabhupāda, please be in my heart and Śrī Galim's heart and guide us all.

I want to be yours in a simple, giving way, obedient, as I was in the beginning. Basic obedience is my virtue. I pray to always keep it.

You have always been my
well-wisher, protector,
guardian angel, boss,
father, patron saint,
model, teacher—he
whose books I read
and whose word is absolute.
You are the source of wonderful anecdotes.

Your *līlā* is divine. We don't know you in your *siddha* form, but we consider your form as a *sannyāsī* preacher to be a *siddha* form. On this day as my body moves lethargically in the heat, I pray to keep my inner devotion and my remembrance of you and offer some tangible service. Please grant me a place in your eternal service.

Prabhupāda's Samādhi Mandir

Golden *mūrti*. Devotees are finishing their daily cleansing of your form, Prabhupāda. You have many forms. Which one is best and original? I don't know

these things. I am grateful to know you and be your disciple. I remember, only barely, when you came to rescue us "plain cats" on the Lower East Side. And I saw you throughout the years of your manifested appearance until November 14, 1977.

"Prabhupāda! Prabhupāda," a man says directing his wife to come into this building. His loud voice catches my attention. His group talks loudly in front of Prabhupāda for only a few moments and then they leave.

Ladies circumambulating. A man with a red streak on his forehead stands complacently and resolutely watching me write in this notebook. Let me not criticize the ways of Hindus, Śrīla Prabhupāda, or you will reprimand me again, "Mind your own business!"

Routine in the Mandir. I hear loud pop music just on the other side of the wall. We'd like to have silence in here, but what can we do? You are a preacher, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and you rarely sit in silent places. Your disciples must have inner resolve to worship you even in disconcerting circumstances.

Here come four little girls with tiffins, looking at Śrīla Prabhupāda for a few minutes. They are special—born and living in Vṛndāvana, their bodies covered with Vṛndāvana dust. They have no knowledge of American T.V. and madness, so people consider them unfortunate.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:40 A.M.

As we enter, the *mātājī* caretaker of this house is preaching to guests in the reception room. Inside, an ISKCON *brahmacārī* is taking snapshots of Prabhupāda

at his desk. Visitors come in and out as they do in the Thoreau Symposium or the Elvis Presley museum. He sits on the pillows and we sit watching him. Sometimes I am more mystically serious, thinking that Prabhupāda may directly communicate to me. This morning I feel less ambitious in that way, but light-hearted, happy and sure of connection to my master.

Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda, breathe in and out.

He is satisfied to see us eating *bhāgavata-prasādam*. I wish I could learn to actually offer the food to him in my mind and prayers.

He is always praising the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their names, forms, qualities, and pastimes.

I want to die here, or wherever I am, in intense, positive, dependent Prabhupāda consciousness. But I feel "not yet." Let me write more books praising him. I haven't run out of steam. I can remember more, surrender more, read more deeply. Maybe I'll never think I'm ready to die. I'm no King Kulaśekhara. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "What is the use of begging or striving to increase your life duration? It means increasing sufferings." Anyway, you can't increase it much. Do you want to live for 7,000 years as a tree in California? No, I do want to attain Prabhupāda consciousness. There is truth in the supposition that it's best we dedicate our life energies to Prabhupāda's mission and then Kṛṣṇa will be kindly disposed when He takes us to our next life.

If we think of Śrīla Prabhupāda as His eternal servant and as a result we go where he is, is that not the

param-gati? Besides, no other path is open to us. This Bhaktivedanta Swami *mārga* is safe, affectionate, enlightened in Vraja-bhāva. It's our identity and purpose.

O Swamijī, tomorrow is the twenty-seventh anniversary of my initiation by you. Please bless me to never leave your lotus feet. I wish to serve you

in sickness and in health,
in joy and unhappiness,
success and failure,
wealth and poverty—

at all times and in all situations, in future lives. Whoever you are in the spiritual world, Prabhupāda, please let me help you in your service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Please teach me whatever is best. I will preach in praise of all Vraja *rasas* and Vaikuṇṭha too, the teachings of Prahlāda Mahārāja, Kuntī-devī, whatever you feel is best. But I need your inspiration to keep me going. Let me achieve for you so that when I die, it won't be bitter and gnashing my teeth like a condemned sinner or an unfaithful *śiṣya*.

September 23, Rādhāṣṭamī, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Today, twenty-seven years ago, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you gave me initiation into *harināma*. I became your disciple. By your mercy I'm still here serving you. I pray to always be your devotee in this life and the next. With all my faults and my faultfinding, still you accept me and engage me in your service. I appreciate that you are

tricking me. I'm so self-centered and bent on artistic expression and writing that I'm going ahead and writing to my heart's content. But you have managed me so that these writings are within the *parampara*. I thank you and the Supersoul for guiding me in this way. But you shouldn't have to trick me. I should be flowing to you entirely for your pleasure. Please let me join you. Let me continue to follow you.

Today I'm pleased to recall my place in your entourage. I don't want to be puffed up, thinking I'm a superior devotee, yet a sense of well-being is natural. I've been saved from *māyā*; I have the best spiritual master—why shouldn't I feel proud and satisfied? I still have so far to go in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but let me pause a moment on this day and reflect on my good fortune.

Materially speaking, I'm not a young boy, but a young old man. Spiritually, I'm eternal. In terms of position or progress, I'm a neophyte. Still, I have a solid, unbreakable connection to you. I don't want to ever get so far away from you that I lose my simple identity as Satsvarūpa dāsa. Therefore, Prabhupāda, I thank you today for giving me initiation, for giving me my beads, and for instructing me to follow the four regulative principles. Thank you for giving me sufficient strength to fight off *māyā*. Please continue to protect me from *māyā* in the form of women, prestige, followers, and whatever other forms she takes. Give me the intelligence to hear only from you and to stay always active in your service. Today is a day to remember that I can't do it without you.

Room 42, Guesthouse

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you allowed me to present your words and attitudes about Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. You said we will have so many *prākṛta-sahajiyās*. Therefore, you didn't indulge in talking about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is foolishness you said—to try to jump over *vaidhi-mārga* to *rāga-mārga*.

My Godbrothers praised me when I sat down after the lecture. I felt as if I had just hit a home run. Now I'm calming down and becoming the little flawed person I actually am again.

5:30 P.M.

It's difficult to leave my room and head for the Samādhi Mandir or his rooms because it's like running the gauntlet. I meet so many devotees, some of whom I haven't seen in years. I always feel obligated to stop and talk. I'm staying in my room this evening, sitting with you in your *mūrti* form here.

My worship is small. Mainly I follow your schedule at eleven o'clock when you took your massage, bathed, and then took *prasādam*. I always listen to your tapes while I give you your massage—first your head, making small movements with my fingers, then your back and neck, then your chest and belly. I still remember the circular rubbing motions and the no-nonsense concentration to do it right. It's a sweet activity for a servant and I do wish to keep it up now, daily, wherever I go. It is what it is; it doesn't have to lead to a further reward,

but is satisfying in itself. Then the bathing. Now the weather is hot, so cool water will please you. Later in the year, I'll warm the water. I pour it on your head, chest, and back—all over—then dry you. You're my master, yet at moments while bathing and drying, you are like my child. I pray that you'll be my guide in *vaidhi-* and *rāga-mārgas*.

I dress you in saffron silk. No *kūrta* at this time of year, just a *sannyāsa* top-piece. You look handsome and graceful. I place you on your seat, put on fresh garlands, and light a stick of incense.

Other than that, I offer *prasādam* by placing a dish before you and reciting your *praṇāmas*. I need improvement in that practice. I have so far to go.

September 24, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Today there is a throne and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in your room, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I don't know if you ever had them here when you used to live here, but They are giving you Their *darśana* on Rādhāṣṭamī.

The letter on your desk is to Sudāmā, June 1971, from Bombay. You wrote to tell him that you received an interesting letter from a boy in Japan. "His letter I am sending to Satsvarūpa and he may publish it in BTG." That's what I want, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to be mentioned and included on your team and in your thoughts. I don't want to think that you are a person from the past, no longer relevant. Neither should you become a legend and not a person. I don't want to turn you into someone imaginary and then contact my imagination. I want to

be in touch with you. I want to pray to you, as I knew you and as you are.

They leave the fan on all night to keep you cool. I imagine your saffron cloth rippling softly in the breeze it creates. Your face is not stern here; but relaxed and serious. Simple villagers sometimes think the *mūrti* is actually you and wonder when you will move out of your *samādhi* trance. You have that fixed position. The villagers are right: Swamijī is sitting here and if he likes, he can move and start talking. But he prefers to be silent and not moving. He receives our prayers. He is listening. He sits and I sit before him.

What is it I want from Śrīla Prabhupāda? I can get it from this *mūrti*. Specific advice for me, little services to do for him, philosophical teachings, a glance of mercy or a warning—he can deliver it all.

Prabhupāda, Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa are here. The letter to Sudāmā mentions a Japanese boy who was planning to commit suicide, but now he's happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There's a buzzer on your desk, Prabhupāda. If you press it, a servant or a secretary or *paṇḍita* or cook will come quickly. "What do you need, Śrīla Prabhupāda?"

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

"Hindi?" the bare-chested *sannyāsī* with *tridaṇḍi* asks me. No, I don't know Hindi. I only know my mother tongue, which happens to be the medium for ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda said English is known practically all over the world. Hindi is not so important. Sanskrit is

important for learning verses, but not necessary for *śabda brahma* understanding.

Dhanurdhara Swami wrote me a note appreciating my Rādhāṣṭamī class. He said it is important to establish Prabhupāda's presentation of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī—his combination of caution and generous giving.

Prabhupāda, if you desire, I could expand on that class and write a scholarly presentation, but I can't do it unless you inspire me. But I'll try. The Rādhāṣṭamī lecture came from my full allegiance to you. It was your reward. As I enter into your books and pray to you, you will allow me to become a *bhaktivedānta* scholar (a lover and servant of, preacher on behalf of).

Madhu reminds me my time for peaceful visits to your Samādhi Mandir and room are limited. In a week or so, we'll move to Tejaḥ's house nearby and the campus will become busier.

Old rickety *sādhu* with a cane and a dirty, *kaupin*-like *dhotī*. He holds a small brass bucket while he circumambulates Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then more young men with their mothers or wives leading the way.

O Prabhupāda, please bless us to do something for you, not in a feverish way or in a way that causes clashes between us. Give us substantial, genuine realization and allow us to present your teachings. You used to say that everything was in your books. Therefore, let me find inspiration by prayerful reading. I'd like to establish that you have your own way of presenting Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* and that it contains anything we might find from other sources. We say, "Just read Prabhupāda's books," but if the reader doesn't actually discover satisfaction, then it's not enough to

demand his allegiance. Therefore, let me help people to read his books and to see how he is leading us from *śraddhā* to *prema*.

The white lions in sunlight. The marble columns and roof sometimes look soft, like soap. The inner sanctum is devoid of color, backdrops, *līlās*. The walls are black with a white marble arch behind Śrīla Prabhupāda. Sometimes I think it might be nicer to paint pastimes in there, but perhaps this stark aspect is best, reminding us of death, reminding us that only Prabhupāda is necessary, and helping us fix the image of his form in our mind's eye. Under this spot is the form the devotees lowered into the ground on November 14, 1977.

Prabhupāda's Room

When I first became Prabhupāda's servant, they said I was like Lord Caitanya's Govinda. But I failed in that. All right, let me make up for it now. Let me learn now how to be Prabhupāda's Govinda or his Śaṅkara Paṇḍita.

Nowadays I write busily in your room, but maybe one day the energy will be transformed into internal life. Maybe I'll be able to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa the way you desired us to chant it. That is the presentation I would like to learn from you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I would like to understand your conviction that *harināma* can save the world and turn *mlecchas* into pure devotees.



Prabhupāda did so many things. He chanted and preached chanting. He composed *bhaktivedānta* purports and ordered his disciples to print and distribute them. He pushed his disciples and managed the temples, especially in India. He did whatever he had to, whatever was necessary to carry out the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, that people everywhere should take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

A devotee is chanting vigorous *japa* in your room. Visitors are filing in and out. Monkeys are running around in your garden. Someone stops to put a few paisa in the donation box. We have discovered a relaxing spot under the fan where we can be with you.

(Write on, even as people stop to examine me. "Hindi?" "*Nahi.*")

In and out they come, glancing at Prabhupāda and the humble objects in the museum cases—his shaving gear, the last bar of soap, his *japa* beads, dictionaries, servant's record book of his medical condition on the very last days. They usually glance quickly and don't stop to read anything or look closely, but they're respectful.

One person tells the others, "This is Śrīla Prabhupāda." A woman asked me in the Mandir, "Is this statue gold?" No, it's bronze. I left it at that. I assume she knows it's Prabhupāda Bhaktivedanta Swami.

September 25, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I come before you with ISKCON controversies in my mind and thoughts about my private writings. I want to hear from you about Kṛṣṇa and

be relieved from doubt and duality. But some controversies we have to face. I want to be true to you.

Today's letter on your desk is from 1970 to Advaita dāsa, the ISKCON Press manager. Advaita had left the association of devotees and Prabhupāda was relieved to hear that he was back. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "I know that Satsvarūpa has got too much other engagement to be able to devote the requisite time for managing the press department." At least Prabhupāda mentions me as busy in his service. Śrīla Prabhupāda told Advaita he didn't have to attend the *āratis*. In other words, he didn't have to be under my complete authority as temple president. Maybe I overdid it. Those were rough days. Advaita loved to work printing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, but he had little taste for anything else in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Those days are gone now. The worries are gone too, faded into ISKCON's history. Some of your instructions and estimations seem different to us now twenty years later. You encouraged Advaita and said that you were confident he would not get ensnared by *māyā*, but he did get ensnared. Somehow, working on your books wasn't enough. You told him later in New York that he had to attend the *maṅgala-ārati* or else the Press could be closed.

Self-aggrandizement isn't for a Vaiṣṇava. I don't claim I was a wonderful and faithful devotee who always stayed true to you. You have kept me, however, and I'm grateful.

Someone wrote a poem and said, "Jesus, I don't know who you are." I do know you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, in a real sense. You are my friend, my guru, the first devotee I

ever met. I do know who you are, although only partially. You . . . (the lights just went out in your room. Now I'm holding a flashlight to the page.) Śrīla Prabhupāda, I know you and I'll sit in darkness until you enlighten me further. Let me be true and cross over all the bridges and rivers ahead and be with you throughout my life.

Prabhupāda's Rooms, 10 A.M.

There's a big-bodied *brahmacārī* sitting close to you on the other side of the velvet rope, Prabhupāda. I'm sitting at a distance from you in the back. When I look up at you, I see him. He just read the letter on your desk. Like me, he seeks your mercy, bows down to you, and now leaves your room.

That letter on your desk, what did it say? I can't remember. Oh yes, it was to Advaita dāsa of ISKCON Press. You told him you were confident that he wouldn't get ensnared by *māyā*. In other words, he *would* get ensnared by *māyā* unless he followed the program of *vaidhi-bhakti*.

I feel head pain and heart pain and nervous tension. Dear spiritual master, please protect me. I don't care—I mean I do care what people think when I say to them, "I have to cancel our meeting, I have a headache." I never cancel my service to you. Thank you.

Prabhupāda, you are wearing a multi-colored flower garland, with red and yellow daisies and roses. You also have a fine garland made of small, white, unopened

buds. You look kind and thoughtful, fatherly and serious. You are ready to give me your attention. An Indian family stands looking at you in your museum setting. They walk on, more pious than I, but I am one of yours.

I cheer up when I think
I'm an insider
to your ISKCON *tīrtha*,
the residence of His Divine Grace
in Krishna-Balaram Mandir.

Prabhupāda, I often get headaches. I have had these headaches for years now. I didn't have headaches when I was face to face with you. Maybe you would have thought I was a nonsense. Instead, I served you vigorously and took Tylenol and Anacin and kept going, sometimes passionately, foolishly, competing for a high post and your attention. Now I'm physically diminished and at least outwardly, you don't demand as much.

Forgive me my thoughts.
I want to serve your high command,
but I'm not a slashing soldier
anymore.
I need time alone and even
if that sounds funny, I will
prove that I can write something worthy.
Then you will say, "Leave him alone.
He's doing as much as you,
but he has headaches."

Maybe you doubt
that I am really sick.
But I am. I don't bluff.
And I'm active in my way.

At this rate, I can't expect to go back to Godhead in one lifetime, but I'm trying to make my claim that I am yours. Wherever I go next life, let it be connected to you. Someone said that in the next life—if we are not 100% perfect—we may be born three hundred years ago among the devotees of Lord Caitanya. And then in the life after that, we may be born a hundred years after Lord Caitanya and associate with Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. I can't help but think that I want my *rasa* with you. Let me be like Hanumān is toward Lord Rāma. This may sound crazy and insincere since I have a craving to write so "freely," but I do it all for you. I desire to be fixed as your *śiṣya* and intimate.

September 26, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

What you are, I am made of. You are a gold ingot, I am a chip. Still, I feel the uniqueness of my own being as spirit soul, so let me utilize that in your service.

The letter on your desk today is to Patita Uddharana. How many different persons wanted to serve, and you somehow encouraged us all. Patita was supervising an ISKCON center in Columbus, Ohio. You told him to do the routine work—chanting, speaking, rising early, cleaning, cooking—and said that these are the backbone of all our activities. If preaching is strong, management

will be strong. "Preaching is our real business, preaching and distributing books."

You repeat the same instructions in many letters. Sometimes your secretaries wrote those words on your behalf and you signed the letters. I am reading your letters again. Let me carefully consider the instructions you gave in this way. After so many years, after hearing it so many times, after experiencing mixed feelings after so many changes in ISKCON and my own life, what does a phrase like, "Preaching is our real business, preaching and distributing books," mean to me? I want to understand the spirit of it and carry it out in my own life. Preaching for me can mean preaching to the devotees, visiting ISKCON centers and devotees' homes, and lecturing on *hari-kathā*. Book distribution also means book appreciation—read your books and encourage book distribution. I can find ways to respond to your words.

Sunday Afternoon, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 P.M.

It's a nice time of day. Late sunlight is slanting into your room, Śrīla Prabhupāda, reflecting through the leaves. There is a sporadic procession of visitors this afternoon. The monkeys are screeching in your garden. Did they used to intrude and screech when you were here? Of course, we know how they took your slipper and interrupted your lectures at Rādhā-Dāmodara.

I spent a mere ten minutes with your books today and then started a reading log. I want to build up the discipline again. My reading schedule has been depleted, but

I'm not without hope that I can institute a reading reform in my life. Without reading your books, these visits to your rooms may be a bit hypocritical or sentimental. At least they are incomplete without the substantial *darśana* of submissive and alert reading.

Prabhupāda, the temple president here said about my Rādhāṣṭamī lecture, "It was fantastic. Satsvarūpa Mahārāja at his best, in the mode of empowered *Līlāmṛta*." I'm at my best and can satisfy the devotees best when I make inspired presentations of Your Divine Grace's life. I seem to be useful in that way. My intentions, my personal campaign of "Back to Prabhupāda" is not just a selfish thing; it will make me a pleasing and effective preacher.

I can relax in your room. I sit in the back, distant yet close. This is all the intensity I can take these days. The devotees are assembling out front for a Sunday afternoon *harināma* party into Vṛndāvana, but I don't feel up to it. No one else is here in your room. You might be sitting here and I'm here with you as your servant and disciple, telling you, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, they're going on *harināma*. Can I get you a drink? Any *prasādam* you would like?" It's Ekādaśī and you might not want anything, but if you do, I can arrange for it.

As I write, I'm brought back out of the past to 1993. I look out the window and see two *bhaktas* from Russia, both named Alex, who want to take initiation from me. They would like to meet with me, but I avoid meetings. What do you think, Śrīla Prabhupāda, of me initiating them and others? Should I stop, or is it my duty? One thing is clear: my only credential for initiating is my bona fide link to you. Today, so many people wanted to

attend the meeting for my disciples that they couldn't fit into the room. I have never even seen some of them before. Later I thought, "Why would anyone consider me a spiritual master?" The only answer is my connection to you.

Initiating disciples is a duty I perform for you. It is how I sacrifice myself and serve your movement, but I'm not always sure, and that's one of the important items I'd like to hear from you about. I say "hear" from you, but I don't expect a letter from the spiritual world or to hear your voice from the sky. If you could enlighten my intelligence so that I could know what you want . . . For now, I initiate only on an exceptional basis, a few a year.

Many of the ones I initiated over ten years ago have gone defunct.

I ask you about initiations, but let me also admit to you my inattentive *japa*. Please give me your mercy. Please help me. I could ask you for direction, but what more can you say? You have already said so much. Chant and hear. Serve the guru and the taste for chanting will come. Control the mind, the stubborn mind.

The sun is going down. Your last days and weeks in 1977 slipped away. The bell rang. You laid in bed and didn't eat. Your body gradually stopped functioning. Long hours of silence. Chanting by your bedside. Young men at your bedside, eager to serve you, and very attached to their preaching zones and assignments in various places around the world. You trained us like that, to be dedicated to a temple or a service. When we came

to see you, after a week or two we were restless to return to our *prabhu-datta-deśas*. Partly, we wanted to be little lords in our zones, but the good result was that we wanted to fight on the battlefield as you ordered—to distribute books and to preach, to change the world into a Kṛṣṇa conscious place.

You didn't like us staying in Vṛndāvana with no real engagement. You wanted us to get out and preach, to go back to our field. I remember these things about you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

September 27, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I led the singing at *maṅgala-ārati*. I'm sometimes afraid that I'll forget the words. To comfort myself against that fear, I remembered how everyone here is my friend—my Godbrothers and disciples, men as well as women, and of course you. You protect me from the material world, which I fear. When there's a threat, I don't want to think of myself as a loner. I'm surrounded by friends, even the flower in your hand and the *pūjārī* and the Mandir itself.

I am just an average person. Please be kind, Rūpa Gosvāmī prays to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. I pray to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, please be kind. Rūpa Gosvāmī knows the Lord and Rādhā are kind, and I know you are also.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

We stride in past a group of Indian visitors. They watch us bow down and take our seats in the rear of the Samādhi. We know our purpose in coming here. They don't make full *daṇḍavats* to your golden form, but we do. Yet how deep does it go? Is my striding in and out of your Mandir just a show? I pray you'll accept me as sincere.

What do you think of the Samādhi Mandir, Śrīla Prabhupāda? In your last days, you asked only that the hole be dug and the proper ceremonies and procedures take place. I don't think you gave any instructions as to what kind of a memorial building should be made. The devotees decided to do it in grand style, but it bogged down over a decade of delayed construction. Now it is almost completed. I think you like it when many devotees gather here as they did this morning, and when visitors come and go during the day. You did not want people to worship you; you wanted people to worship Kṛṣṇa. If you could serve the Supreme Lord as His representative and collect "taxes" as the king's viceroy, you were willing to do that. Thus you have written in your purports to convince us of the topmost position of the founder-ācārya of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

When you left us in New York City in January 1967, we felt keen separation. You wrote back from San Francisco that the main association with the spiritual master is by hearing and following his *vāṇī*. You said that if we felt too much separation, we could put your picture on your sitting places. Those days gave us the first indication of what we now experience all the time.

Then, your separation was only for a few months; now it's much longer.

A poor, skinny man begs Madhumaṅgala to give him *caraṇāmṛta*. Madhu does so gladly. Workmen are making noise and talking loudly on the mezzanine. A female cinema star is warbling over a loudspeaker somewhere, complete with badly played violin. And you sit here, golden Śrīla Prabhupāda. Of course, I must not think that you have to endure the noise. You are transcendental, like the Supersoul who sits even in the beast's heart but is never affected. You are present in the Samādhi Mandir in a mysterious way. I come here to be strengthened by your association.

Prabhupāda, ISKCON has some strange characters, and I am probably one of them. Let us be gentle with each other. One devotee just sat and had his picture taken with his back to your altar—he sat at your feet. When the photographer did something wrong, the devotee got angry, clapped his hands, and shouted in annoyance in Spanish. An Indian family watched all this with interest. I was worried that they would get a bad impression of ISKCON devotees, but when the Spanish devotee left, the Indians also sat just as he did and had their picture taken by a member of their family. This too is a way to observe a visit to your Samādhi Mandir. At least they want to be seen sitting beneath you: "I was there with Prabhupādajī."

May the sight of golden you,
dissuade me from looking
upon the curves of a woman's body
and thinking I can enjoy.
May a few moments here
relieve me of lifetimes of sin.
May I serve you.

(As I write, another group of visitors is intently watching me writing in the notepad. I'm an interesting specimen. They are curious, impressed maybe, and a bit amused.)

May I come here and keep
memories for cold, rainy days
in the West.
In my breast let me
keep a flame
of the golden one
in the inner sanctum,
my St. Francis,
my Jesus Christ,
my lord and master,
Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:30 A.M.

I have your little book first published in India, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. You tell us we cannot go to the spiritual planets with our material bodies and minds. You tell us from Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*

how to practice *bhakti-yoga* so that we can go to the eternal abode. The first item of *bhakti* is to accept a spirtual master "in order to be trained scientifically. Because the senses are material, it is not at all possible to realize the Transcendence by them. Therefore the senses have to be spiritualized by the prescribed method under the direction of the spiritual master." The second is to take initiation from the spiritual master "which is the beginning of spiritual training." It is implied that the same bona fide spiritual master who initiates you (*dīkṣā*), will train you (*śikṣā*). Then item number three:

> The candidate must be prepared to satisfy the spiritual master in every way. A bona fide spiritual master who is fully cognizant of the effects of spiritual science, learned in the spiritual scriptures like the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Vedānta*, *Bhāgavata*, *Upaniṣad*, etc., and who is also a self-realized soul, having made tangible connection with the Supreme Lord, is the transparent via medium to help the willing candidate to lead to the path of Vaikuṇṭha. He must therefore be satisfied in all respects, because simply by his good wishes, a candidate can make wonderful progress in the line.

The fourth is that the spiritual master will teach us in accord with the disciplic succession, not otherwise. The spiritual master doesn't invent or concoct. "The names of such authorities are disclosed in the scriptures and we simply have to follow them by the direction of the spiritual master. The spiritual master is never deviated from the path of the authorities."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you gave us so many nice instructions. I seem less interested in the details right now. I

want to instead fix myself in the substance. Then the details will be revealed. In *Easy Journey*, you tell us we have to change our material "dress" to a spiritual dress if we want to go back to Godhead. "The change of dress will automatically take place simply by desiring it at the time of death. This desire is possible only if we practice it during the conscious state of life." Here, you do not spell out the practices of *rāgānugā* meditation, but it is implied; it will take place at the right time only if we sincerely follow what you teach.

I've been hearing you say these things for twenty-seven years. In recent years, I have heard more of the esoteric details of what this all means. It is good news, but it's dangerous too if one doesn't know how to balance it with your earlier instructions. Right now I want to go back to hearing you teach in your implied way and to work harder at satisfying you so that I can actually become qualified to realize the *rāgānugā-mārga*. I can't attain that stage by memorizing terms or imitating feelings or by prematurely practicing *rāgānugā-bhajana*. You taught in a certain way and that's how I will practice.

It's interesting to see the many devotees growing up in your ISKCON in different moods. There is a lot of *bhajana* and Vraja *parikrama* spirit here among your devotees in Vṛndāvana. In other places, such as Northern Europe, book distribution is the main focus. Somewhere else, it's farm and community development. All serving you. I know my place too and you are directing me. You are training me and the others in the basics of

the gurū-disciple relationship and readying us for more preaching. We feel fortunate. I pray not to lose the delicacy of my faith in you.

From Easy Journey to Other Planets:

13. He must not create unlimited disciples. This means that a candidate who has successfully reached up to the twelfth stage can also become a spiritual master himself, just as a student becomes the monitor in the class with a limited number of disciples.

14. He must not pose himself as a vastly learned man simply quoting statements of books. He must have solid knowledge of the necessary books without superfluous knowledge in the others.

15. A regular and successful practice up to the fourteenth item will enable the candidate to have an equilibrium of the mind even when there is great trial of material loss or a great material gain in life.

September 28, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

They asked me to give another *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class and I chose to do it on Thursday, the day you took *sannyāsa*. I want to talk about how you began *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* right after that, and how you desired to go to America to preach. And I may speak on *sannyāsa*, as you see it and demonstrated it.

The letter on your desk today is to Upendra, December 1971, from New Delhi. He was supervising your temple in Melbourne. You emphasize book distribution

and preaching. Kṛṣṇa's dearmost servants are those who are strong preachers. This is your mood, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I want to follow it.

Upendra put a question before you. Someone told him that human life automatically evolves to a higher stage. You smashed the notion that it could happen without Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You gave him remedies for asthma. He lost his beads and you said that you did not have to chant on new ones. "Once sanctified by the spiritual master, your chanting is eternally blessed."

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am asking you to give me intelligence. Should I initiate more? Is it false renunciation to give it up? It's troublesome and I have my limits, don't I? One can laugh and say that I am unlimited, but that's not true. Anyway, I'll do whatever you say.

You are here and
I am here just
a little longer.
Each day takes away
from my total
of coming to be with you
for a few minutes in your
Vṛndāvana room.
Surely I'm gaining
each time I sit before you.
I hope I don't annoy you
or that you're not tired of seeing my
face. I inquire from you,
but I also want to bring you
good news.

Devotees are reading your
books. Devotees are joining.
Devotees who left you
are coming back.
There's not only good news
but at least I can say
I feel good,
resolute to be yours,
I'm happy with worship
of my Vṛndāvana *mūrti* of you
and I wish to linger with you.

I'll tell Madhumaṅgala dāsa to look at your letter about asthma. I won't forget you have eternally blessed my beads, and I'll cling to the beads you gave me.

The day you took *sannyāsa*—
you were always a pure
devotee.

Sannyāsa is to preach. I am just writing my thoughts out of an urge to feel close as a servant of the spiritual master.

"The best news is that you are increasing nicely the distribution of my books and literature. This is the best activity, to distribute solid information about Kṛṣṇa. Our preaching stands solid on these books."

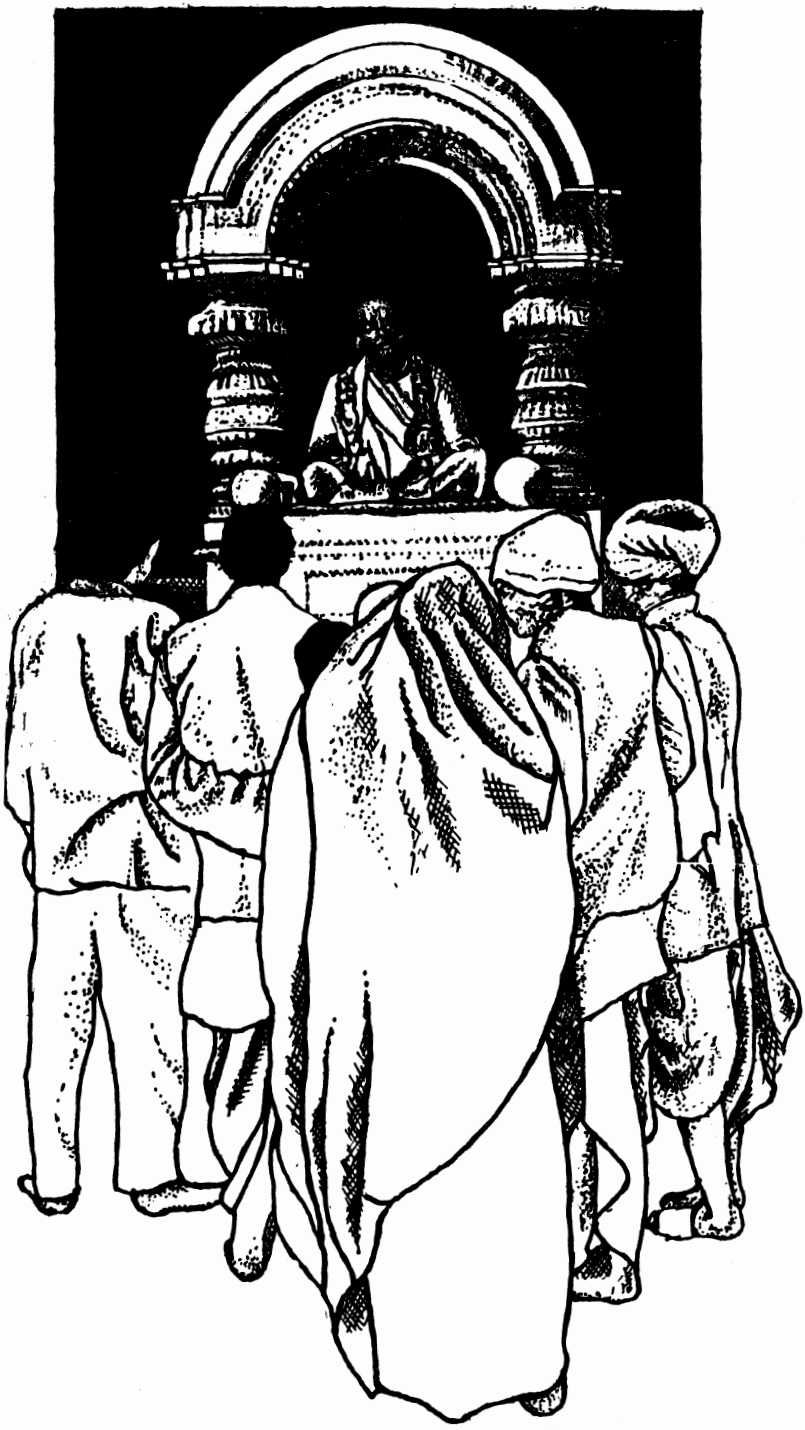
Śrīla Prabhupāda, I dare to include my books in with yours when you say writing books is important. Please accept my writing as an expansion of yours and a service to your books.

Samādhi Mandir, 10:05 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I made an outline from the *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* of the events leading up to your taking *sannyāsa* in 1956 and just afterwards. You turned to writing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and printing books, and you expressed your desires to go West.

Now I'm here in your *samādhi* where your larger-than-life golden form sits in the black-walled inner sanctum. Your disciples wanted to remember you this way and offer the visitors the chance to worship you in *samādhi*, as is customary for great *ācāryas*. The faith and enthusiasm of your disciples to serve you is a strong force in the world. Probably it's the main force driving the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. As Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī ordered you and you went alone to America, now hundreds and thousands of devotees, according to their capacities, try to carry out your order to preach and establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We think you are somehow still present among us, controlling the lives of sincere devotees. You see how things are developing and you also see how we have failed, but somehow your movement continues, is gaining momentum, and is spreading out into many different forms within and without temples.

Today, a *brahmacārī* is chanting *japa* and circumambulating on the white marble floor. It's hot and there are not so many pilgrims. Still, complete quiet comes only in brief interludes. Pilgrims are still arriving regularly. Now it's men in pants and shirts and well-groomed ladies in *sarīs*. They come in, chatter a bit in front of you, not really focusing on who you are. They



stand in a group and don't offer obeisances or circumambulate, then leave after a minute. That's one kind of group, and there are many others. You see them come and go. I take it that the *mūrti* is your expansion and that you have many expansions. You appear to reciprocate with devotees and congregations all over the world.

They are fortunate who sense your importance and especially who know a little of your glories. They are more fortunate who consider you their spiritual master or grand spiritual master, who read your books faithfully, and who serve you with the conviction that you can link them to the all-attractive Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Another well-dressed couple has just entered. They have a young boy in short pants and a clean white T-shirt with them. He wants to offer his *praṇāmas* and looks to his parents for a cue. They don't indicate anything. He climbs up the front before the altar. Within half a minute they leave.

Who stops to look at you, Śrīla Prabhupāda? Who considers what your work is? Who dedicates himself to you? Relatively few. You are another "saint," another statue, to most people. I'm supposed to know better, but the superficial nature of most people's visits here serves to remind me that I also tend to be perfunctory and shallow. Still, something draws me to you. Every morning when the bell strikes ten, you call me here. I circumambulate your form three times. I touch my head to an outer wall of the inner sanctum. I pray to you here.

It's nice that they come to look up at you. I know you are not lonely—you are with Kṛṣṇa—but it's good that

your Mandir is rarely empty. It's good for those who come and certainly good for me. Thank you. I thank your disciples who worked to construct this place.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:30 A.M.

I need help. You spared me all these years from fall-down and ignominy. Sometimes I was not sincere enough (too eager for position) to get clear messages from you on how to avoid mistakes. If I am sincere now, you'll guide me completely.

You wear an all-red rose garland today and another of small white buds. The letter on your desk is to Bhavānanda, 1971. Just seeing that name makes us feel sad and sober. Will those devotees who have left you come back and serve you again as they did when you were here to subdue their passions? You wrote to Bhavānanda your pleasure that the New York City center (at Henry Street) was expanding rapidly and the devotees were enthusiastic. You wrote, "Yes, Mr. Farmarz Attar will certainly be a great asset to our society and I'm glad to accept him as an initiated disciple . . . Atreya Ṛṣi." When and how will they come back? "And Cincetta Bologna has also been accepted. Her name is Bhadra dāsī . . . Yes Svarūpa Prabhu has my permission to get himself married to Suzy O'Neal."

You wrote in *The Nectar of Devotion* that sometimes a spiritual master in the line of Lord Caitanya initiates devotees who are not qualified, but later they become qualified. You tried and risked and sacrificed to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You did it, but along the way, as

you knew would happen, many came and left. You are still waiting for them to return. You sit in many places like a forgiving father who awaits back his lost sons and daughters. Some might come here and pray for new direction as I am doing. We all want to be reinstated.

Things are always in flux. May your residence rooms always be here for us. And—dare I say it?—may I spend my last days here or very close to the spirit of you here. The *New York Times* clipping in the glass case says, "Swami Prabhupāda, Hare Kṛṣṇa head." It's an obituary and has your picture. The implied word is, "Hare Kṛṣṇa head is dead." (I often mistakenly read that obituary headline as "dead," but it doesn't even say that.) You're not dead and neither am I. Not a dead stone.

Now a file of simple people come through. The man carries an old canvas bag and his *dhotī* is that perpetual non-white of the poor. He speaks in a loud voice, but not out of disrespect. The woman with him carries a bundle balanced on her head, even while in your rooms. They come and go. Then young men in Western pants come in. I don't even look up, but glance at their feet and pants. They go into your inner rooms, look around, and come out again, an Indian museum experience. They can go back to where they came from and say, "I have been to Swami Prabhupāda's house." I too.

September 29, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

What do I have to say or do in your room that's so special? Nothing, but I come anyway. Before my busy day begins, I wish to be with you and feel that you are giving me my instructions for the day. You can tell me what you want, considering who I am. You once (or twice or more) said I'm not a good manager; so you'll consider that in your order to me. You'll give me something I can do.

The service I do now is "my" service. I think I'm too busy with it to stop here and see you. But my service is for you and you should direct it. Therefore, I come here before you. I look at you like a small child looking up at his father—I mean a very small child, a one-year-old. What can he understand? He simply likes to be picked up in his father's arms and bounced and humored.

A person goes to where he is loved, just like the widow's son who went to Lord Caitanya. The Lord's assistants tried to keep him away, but still he came. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī says it is the nature of a boy to go to a man who loves him.

The same letter to Bhavānanda is still on your desk. The overhead fans ripple the page, so the *pūjārī* has made the letter secure by placing it under your stainless steel water cup. Ants are running all over the place. I can't write such clear description. The floors are black.

Time's up. One more moment, so I can clarify. Oh, let me touch your feet. Take dust from them and put it

on my head. Today I can remember that I gave my love to my master in the morning. I belong to his feet and entourage. Everything else is secondary.

Samādhi Mandir, 10:05 A.M.

We rushed from our rooms to get here, not preparing our minds beforehand. Even as I stand in front of your golden form, I'm thinking of what Madhu said to the Guesthouse manager, and the cinema star is singing her song of "love." Love, love. It's on all the signboards and in the songs, but actually it's all lust. Love is for Kṛṣṇa and His representative.

Man with a big, bushy, *kṣatriya* mustache, fat belly behind a clean *kūrta* and white pants. He stands surveying Prabhupāda while his wife stands a few feet in front of him, closer to Prabhupāda, and looks up. Well-dressed pilgrims. Young boy wearing a violet "Los Angeles" T-shirt. A younger one comes to stand in front of me, looking down into my notebook.

"*Celo celo*," the older brother tells him. I'm getting used to it.

"Prabhupādajī Mahārāja," one man tells his group.

"Huh?"

"Prabhupādajī Mahārāja." They look up at the ceiling. The paid man claps his hands to chase pigeons, but when they don't dislodge he picks up his long bamboo pole and chases them. At least the place is not infested with nests and bird-turds. These things happen every day. Why am I seeing only the outer forms? His clap

chased my inner mood and the Indians are interesting to watch.

And maybe I have no deep inner purpose. The golden *mūrti* seems far away. His garland is of yellow marigolds and roses. At 4 A.M. tomorrow morning, that garland will be shriveled. The *pūjārī* gives it to me and I wear it for a few minutes and then give it to someone else.

Prabhupāda, I seek active guidance from you. I have a small *mūrti* of you in my room. I search the features of these *mūrtis*, looking for recognition within myself—"That's Prabhupāda." It's like searching for Kṛṣṇa in separation, in Vṛndāvana. "Where is He? I saw Him this morning at Govardhana, but now He is gone." Sometimes I see you and sometimes I don't.

From here, out the side door, I see the Western *mātājī* in the wooden bookstall selling your books. It's her duty to be there every day. My work is to come here, then to your rooms, my room, searching for you in *darśanas*—writing, reading, and lecturing. And you told us to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

You lectured and explained to the devotees in South Africa that after public lectures, no one had questions because you had offended and torn down their sense gratification. You called them *mūḍhas*. If anyone did question you there, you said, they were challenging and not submissive.

I pray to you, Prabhupāda, to help me approach you in a friendly and honest way, full of genuine adoration. You are giving me Kṛṣṇa and that is the greatest thing. Please keep me true and appreciative and alive. I pray to Lord Balarāma to please fix me in *guru-niṣṭhā*.

This "tomb" is a public place, suitable for accommodating large groups of people who don't have much time or presence of mind. At least they can receive your *darśana*. I shouldn't be upset at the casual mood here. They are always respectful. But for them, it's like going into a public monument. The whole country of India can come and go here and everyone will pay respect to you, a great saint, who went abroad and made *mlecchas* into devotees of Kṛṣṇa. I'm beginning to understand the genius and vision of this building.

A Sikh with a pink turban, black beard, and a wife. Men in white, pajama-like pants and *kūrtas*. Children, one infant crying a little. It's hard for them to pay attention, they are so wrapped up in family maintenance and trying to enjoy within religious bounds. We are more serious. On the subtle plane, though, I have the equivalent of these distracted people—a pink-turbaned thought, a fat-bellied woman, a crying child, mosquitoes. Prabhupāda's Mandir, you kindly allow us to be here even though our mood is not concentrated. Prabhupāda is in glowing *samādhi*. We cannot attain an inner *samādhi*, but at least we can observe his mood and take in a little of it.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:35 A.M.

Surprise. We enter and you are not in your place. A girl is changing your sheets on the mattresses. You are sitting on the bed, your hand posed to hold the dictaphone microphone, but there's no mike there. This *mūrti*

is soft in demeanor. I like him. Your head is freshly shaved. Please, self, go deeper, find feelings and memories.

He sometimes played back what he dictated so I could hear. The idea that Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't teach the inner meanings of our philosophy is wrong. Even if we take it that he mostly spoke the basics of pure *bhakti*, consider that. Consider why he did it and how he was an *uttama-adhikārī*, but how he spoke for the understanding of ordinary people. Who am I? What do I need to hear? I need to listen better to the compassion of Śrīla Prabhupāda's strong preaching. Listen to his assertive mood. Be an insider, an intimate who loves his master and appreciates what he's doing and why—and who wants to learn to serve like that also. The servant preaches widely all over the world, to audiences who need to hear.

You sit on your bed, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and hold the dictaphone. In your last weeks, you lay on your back and dictated the thirteenth chapter of the Tenth Canto. When I read that chapter now, let me remember you dictating up until the end. Jayādvaita was holding the microphone. Śrīla Prabhupāda smashed the "four-headed scientists" and told the sweet pastime of how he desired and Kṛṣṇa allowed a temple to be built in Vṛndāvana.

Desert-looking men with old turbans look into your room and hesitate to enter because the cleaning is underway, but we can come and sit by you, even in this unusual situation. You don't mind that we see you in this way.

Outside, they're chasing a monkey over the wall. I bring my mind back to the quiet of the summer and fa

of 1977 in these rooms, but I can't bear to think of the heavy expectation of your departure and the hope against hope. That's all gone into the past. Even on the anniversary of your disappearance, no one really tries to recapture it. They glorify you for your active pastimes. But that '77 period did happen and each of us will have his or her own tiny version of it in our own deaths. Let us remember how you left this world with dignity and in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, preaching until the end.

The letter on your desk this morning is to Nayanābhirāma dāsa. I saw him here a few weeks ago. He's not a young man anymore. Śrīla Prabhupāda was glad to see him and his wife, Daivi-śakti, in New York. "Offer my blessings to all the other boys and girls there in Philadelphia. Their presentations were so nice and they showed so much devotion also." (This letter was written from the Henry Street temple in Brooklyn. Śrīla Prabhupāda was going next to Gainesville, Florida. "The fig tree is not worshipable by us. Try to worship *tulasī* instead. That will include all tree-worship.")

I was there in New York in 1971, visiting from Boston. I look up now to see you on your bed. Your eyes are brown.

September 30, Prabhupāda's Room, 4:45 A.M.

This is the anniversary of the day you took *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Prabhupāda. You are wearing a long-sleeved *kūrta* today, although it's warm. I put the beadbag on your hand.

Someone might say, "He's communing with a statue." Yes, that's right. They can say it. Matter is matter and spirit is spirit. My body is also a statue of flesh and bone. Śrīla Prabhupāda's spirit is in my heart and he is in his teachings. That doesn't mean that Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't exist outside my heart, but it means the person, Śrīla Prabhupāda, is within me because I am faithful to him. I suppose I should say that only a part of Prabhupāda is within me, but I prefer to think that the whole Prabhupāda is in me, just as the whole Supersoul is in me, and He and His pure devotee are waiting for me to purify myself so they can reveal themselves more.

Prabhupāda, today we are going to Mathurā to the Keśavajī temple where you received *sannyāsa* initiation. It's an interesting history, but aside from all history, you are still with us. You're not dead. You're in the spiritual (*aprākṛta*) existence, and we don't know what that means exactly. We still know you as a *sannyāsī*. We remember your *sannyāsa* dress—the saffron cloth, the *tulasī* neckbeads, the beadbag and white *brāhmaṇa* thread and *tilaka*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you gave us the exalted titles, Goswami and Swami. Sometimes Indians laugh at us. Sometimes they also say that you made a mistake when you named Deities, but what do they understand of your mood? You were triumphant when you installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in London after centuries of British oppression in India. You called the Deities Rādhā-London-īśvara. What can they know of your playful name for playful Rādhā-Paris-īśvara?

I've come here to report to you that we are going to Mathurā today and to get your blessings for the *Bhāgavatam* lecture I will give first at Krishna-Balaram Mandir.

A few devotees are circumambulating the temple and chanting *japa*. The air is a soft breeze in your room.

Please, keep me until I die.
Whatever I do,
please let me chant
a breath-mantra of
thanks, praise, and dependence
on Śrīla Prabhupāda. Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the best
and "Śrīla Prabhupāda, please help me."
And going inside oneself,
fingering beads—
and being a friend to everyone,
a worker in ISKCON
for Prabhupāda,
tapasya for him.
If I can do it.

October 1, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

The letter on your desk is to Locana dāsa, 1971. It's his first initiation letter. You advised him to attract the students at Berkeley. Give them *prasādam* and philosophy, you said. "We can challenge any nonsense philosophy. Socrates, Plato, Kant, Darwin—all of them . . . who have misled so many people."

We laugh when we hear Śrīla Prabhupāda smash them, but it's not a joke. "Now it is your task to find

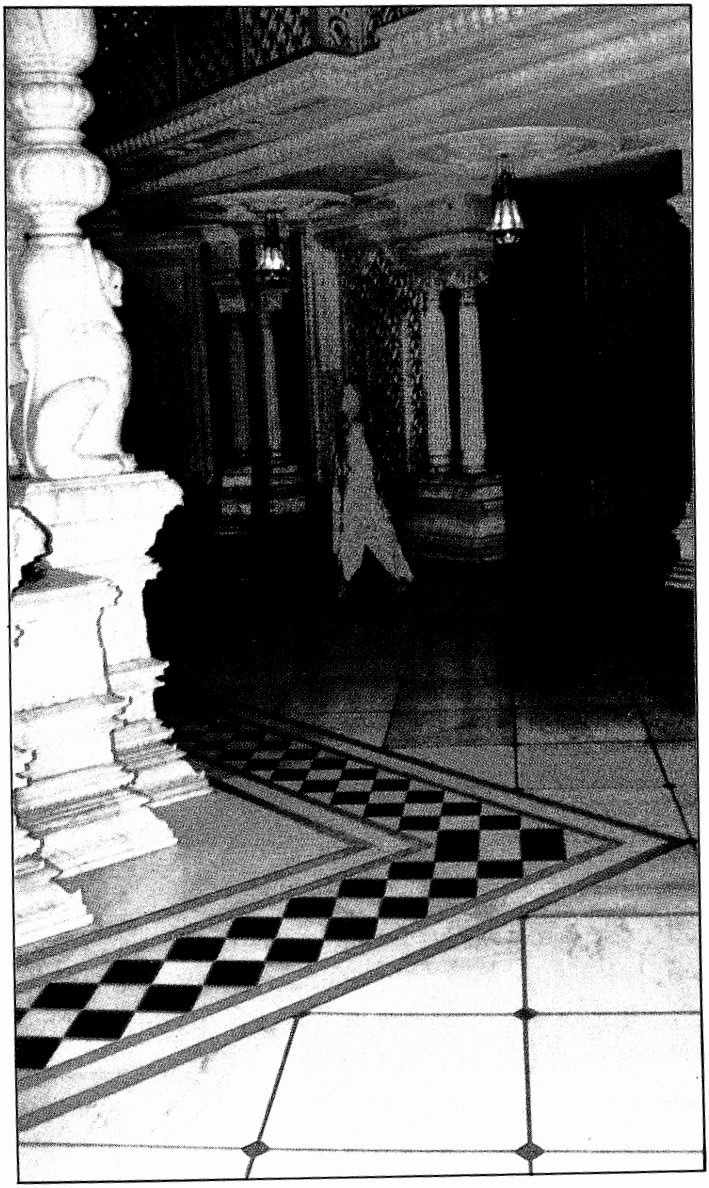
them out and expose them so that the people may appreciate the real philosophy." Be convinced. Sell books. "Kindly assist me in this great work and know for certain that by your sincerely working in this way, you shall very soon go back home, back to Godhead."

Vṛndāvana is a wonderful place. I am your son and servant. My brain is half-blown out by misuse in my youth. The enemies of my mind—lust, anger, illusion, fear, envy—still attack me. I don't know when I'll be free.

Coming to sit with you
a few moments
before the door opens
and I admit that I am not
the only one.
Not the best or worst
but I make my claim.
Let me touch your feet
before someone else enters these rooms.
At least a few moments
each day
I want to be alone with you.

October 1, Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

Madhu says he also has a practice when we go to the Samādhi Mandir and Śrīla Prabhupāda's rooms: he prays to Śrīla Prabhupāda while chanting extra rounds. This made me think, "Am I praying in writing?" Yes, for better or worse.



I start with description: it's hot, workers are hammering, the Mandir is empty except for a few soft *japa* chanters. The blessed Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra was given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He instructed us to chant incessantly.

I seek only the very simple consciousness that "I am yours." Remember *The Cloud of Unknowing* meditation? Maybe that approach is Māyāvāda or at best, *śānta-rasa.* I want active service. But we also want a simple prayer and a sense of identity as followers of Prabhupāda.

A Catholic priest once told a story that when he was a kid, there was a man who stopped into the church every day, even if only for a few minutes. He entered the church and said, "Hello, God, it's me, Billy." When the man was dying, God came to him and said, "Hello, Billy, it's Me, God." The priest was encouraging us to go to church and pray; don't forget God or the house of God. The Samādhi Mandir is Prabhupāda's "church." Hello, Śrīla Prabhupāda, it's me, Satsvarūpa.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:30 A.M.

Prabhupāda, when I came into your room just now, several ISKCON *mātājīs* were talking animatedly in the center of your room. I think they were planning arrangements for your service here, but they kindly exited so that I could be alone. It's a fact it would have been entirely distracting if I tried to sit in a corner while they talked in the middle of the room.

The letter on your desk is to Makhanlal, 1971. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that he could not attend the San

Francisco Ratha-yātrā this year. He went there for three years in a row, but, "This time I have been very fervently requested to attend the London Ratha-yātrā where they are expecting fifty-thousand ... So it is not possible to attend both festivals." He said he would visit San Francisco when he went to America. "So you should go on with the festival more enthusiastically, even in my absence." Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote this from Bombay, on his way to Moscow and then Paris.

Our spiritual master flying all over the world, writing us letters and giving us the hope of seeing him again. He also gave us encouragement and expected us to be answerable. There was no question of other gurus in those days. Our simple desire was to put on a festival or distribute his books or to preach somewhere, and to be accountable. He captured us, whether he was mellow and soft with us or acted like a military general.

You wear a garland of all roses and another of orange marigolds. Your desk lamp is on. Nothing is known to us of the future, and we know very little of the present. We are still stumbling out of the past. Impurities lurk in our hearts. I repeat this theme to remind myself of what I have to do to become more fit to serve you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, here comes one of your *brahmacārī* followers. He is carrying a quilted saffron book bag. He prostrates himself fully before you, then leaves the room. Devotees notice me, an old-timer. Let *me* notice me like that way. Wake up, Satsvarūpa, and live up to your heritage. Be humble, but exult in inner pride and satisfaction that Śrīla Prabhupāda blessed you—not only you, but you too. Now *do* something with the blessing.

October 2, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

My mind is my enemy, as the *brāhmaṇa* of Avanti-deśa concluded. I come to you for relief. Your soft saffron, your kind look upon me, your youthfulness, your mercy. You sit behind your desk and chant on your beads. This is your last room on this earth. You preached all over the world and then came here to leave for the spiritual world.

That mind of mine, Śrīla Prabhupāda, finds fault with Godbrothers, feels the tiredness of my body—my mind harasses me. He tells me I'm the best and then says, of course, that it's not true. He stands alone and criticizes everyone and everything as superficial and flawed. What will we do with him? Why is he so insecure? At least I get relief when I see Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Gaura-Nitāi.

In your last days, you spoke to your disciples about preaching and the basic philosophy of spirit versus matter. You spoke of Kṛṣṇa's will, which would determine whether you stayed in the world. You didn't speak much about where you were going.

We can speculate on that next life or we can be intent about knowing our own places in the spiritual world, but I want to follow your example and preach in this world while regularly chanting and hearing of the name and nature of the Supreme Lord and His entourage as given in the *Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.*

By studying and preaching I can forget the petty concerns of my anxious mind. The mind will be engaged in higher topics. You want this, Śrīla Prabhupāda. There is no good reason for faultfinding or the constant lamentation over superficiality. Simply go to Kṛṣṇa's name, fame, qualities, and pastimes. Simply preach on the order of the spiritual master.

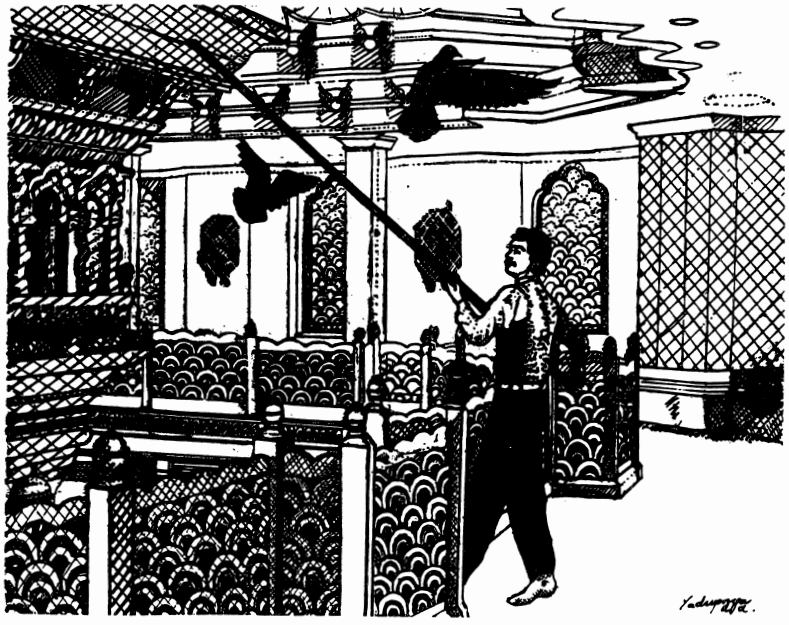
The double bed is low. I remember crowding around it during your last hours. Śrīla Prabhupāda said we have to die like human beings, like Bhīṣmadeva. Think of Kṛṣṇa at the end. Either serve actively as long as we can and retire at the very end or keep going until the last breath.

Where will we go? We may not know. But we will *go*.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

It's Saturday—sparrows chirping loudly, cinema songs, and more visitors than usual. One lady wears an Indian Airlines cabin luggage tag on her bag. Where are they coming from? So many people were outside we had to thread through them before we could enter. Their clothes are all according to their region, but I don't know how to tell which comes from where.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, your Samādhi Mandir is so full of life. The populace is streaming in and out your doors. An ISKCON *brahmacārī* explains to an older man, maybe his father, who you are. The hired pigeon-chaser is active and noisy. One of the Indian *pūjārīs* is cleaning



the altar in front of you. I just came from reading the cleansing of the Guṇḍicā temple pastime.

Imagine if we did that here. Now there are a few leaves on the floor and a puddle of water in a place where we want to bow down . . .

Our *brahmacārī* is sweeping up the leaves and the puddle, cleaning his heart. He wears the Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* clear and artistically in twelve places.

Now another large group enters. Today they are well-dressed, not villagers with worn-out clothes, but city folk—men in fashionable Western clothes, ladies in clean *sarīs*. Some remind you of Americans—blue jeans, caps with beaks, fat mammas.

The crowds move in and out like breathing. Sometimes it's quiet and empty and then it fills up with peo-

ple. Śrīla Prabhupāda draws them in and then lets them go, draws them in and then lets them go.

It would be nice if everyone had more to do with Śrīla Prabhupāda and became his follower, chanting on *japa-mālā* and reading his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. The Centennial aims to increase public awareness of Śrīla Prabhupāda and I'll try to do something too.

He himself says that people are not interested because they are attached to sense gratification. Śrīla Prabhupāda insists, "No illicit sex, no intoxication, no meat-eating, and no gambling. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at least sixteen rounds." For most people, even for a lord of England, this is "impossible."

I look up and can't even see Śrīla Prabhupāda. A solid wall of visitors blocks my view. I wonder what they are thinking as they look up to him. I can't help but feel it's incomplete, the half a moment in which their minds and senses are arrested by the shiny golden *mūrti* and then they're out the door again.

Out of thousands, only a few seek perfection. Out of those who achieve perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth. What is true for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also true for His pure representative. Hardly one knows Śrīla Prabhupāda in truth.

As I watch the visitors, I beg for more enthusiasm and depth. I don't want padding or show-off phoniness in my own declarations of Prabhupāda-sevā. I look for true affection and connection. It's there, I simply have to uncover it. Just as the *brahmacārī* is sweeping the floor with a broom, always attentive to keeping the place clean, so I want to be a serious, simple caretaker of the *samādhi mandira* that's in my heart.

When I leave Vṛndāvana, I want to remember how we circumambulated his *mūrti* here. I want to feel the pull of this most sacred and relevant holy place. I'm a stranger everywhere else in Vṛndāvana. I am expected to give my rupees and keep moving. I'm not welcome. I don't understand the people or the mood. The great *ācāryas* in the past are unapproachable by me. They are so intense. But with Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'm at home. I have no material home, so this is my home. He is my father. He knows me. He won't forget me.

(Today I congratulated the *brahmacārī* who was cleaning the Mandir. He then told me that he's part of a group who are tending to the Mandir for a period of four months. They're all disciples of H.H. Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Mahārāja. This one *brahmacārī* and his friend are from Burma and a few of the others are from Manipur.)

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:30 A.M.

Of course these rooms are less frequented than the Samādhi Mandir. A lot of people probably don't even know they are here. They're not meant as a mass thoroughfare, so they remain an open secret for ISKCON devotees. I'm in a corner where I can't see Śrīla Prabhupāda so clearly—the velvet rope is in the way, and the pictures on his desk and the desk lamp hide him from view, but I know he can see me.

The mood that I wish to keep is always slipping away from me. I want a deep faith and a mystical sense. Remember some private places in Assisi? There's a cave

and a room, solitary places. Once I entered one cave-like place of St. Francis. A nun was alone in there, sitting in a meditative pose. I felt like an intruder and left. But here I am at home. Look for that cave within, that private *darśana* with the saint, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We don't need a dark atmosphere or a sign of extreme *tapasya* performed here. Śrīla Prabhupāda performed austerities everywhere he went. He worried about ISKCON. He heard stories how they were collecting money in Japan and he couldn't concentrate that night on his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* translation. He heard good news too, such as book distribution scores, but then he heard of some of his disciples falling down and of opposition from the nondevotees, such as the Muslim attack on the Māyāpur temple.

These rooms are Śrīla Prabhupāda's home. They feel domestic. The flower garlands are cheerful, and I remember him relishing *prasādam* here and seeing his lotus feet on a white cushion. It's simple here, Indian style, but clean and comfortable. Just being in here pacifies my mind so that I can hear Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders for the day.

The letter on his desk today is to Upendra, January 1972. Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Bombay. The caretakers of this room simulate Prabhupāda's routine. Each day they place a new letter on his desk. Prabhupāda reads the letter, which has been typed by his secretary, and signs it. This proves that letter-writing was an important part of his preaching, a way he managed and inspired devotees all over the world.

Upendra wrote that he wanted to be with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda assured him, "Yes, you may be my

cook when we shall meet." Prabhupāda would soon see Upendra and other devotees in Australia. "Tomorrow I am flying to Africa for Brahmānanda's festival in Nairobi." Prabhupāda mentioned Upendra's wife, Citralekhā, who served him so nicely in India. "She has learned a lot about Deity worship I think, so she may train up the others there in Australian centers."

Things didn't all go smoothly. Devotees fell away. But they may come back.

Center yourself. Forget making something for the
main purpose of presentation.
Look to your own purpose.
I pray my resolution,
which is substantial—
which is the profound hope
and which is right for me—
I pray that it doesn't become like
the bathing of the elephant
which is followed by his
rolling in the dust.

What is that resolution?
To return to Śrīla Prabhupāda and ask
him to revive in me that
exclusive and wholehearted spirit
of service to him which I had
when I was young and he was here.
He's still here and yes
I'm not old and decrepit.
So I'm praying for that.

It has only begun.
I want to protect and
you know, Śrīla Prabhupāda,
what that means.

I have instigated *pūjā* of your *mūrti*,
but it requires life and
attention and centering on
the object with love.
I've declared that I'll read
your books when I have time.
That too requires determination.
I will do whatever is favorable
and avoid what is unfavorable
for unalloyed service to my
dear friend and spiritual master.

Let me revel in my good fortune.
Recall the times with him.
The writing will help with that.
As long as I'm in Vṛndāvana,
with its special Śrīla Prabhupāda *tīrthas*,
I come here to pray,
please reveal yourself to me,
fill me with your presence
so that I may go forth
with great desire to serve
your preaching mission and
desire to find you and
keep you with me
wherever I go.

October 3, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Prabhupāda, the temple is filled with weekend guests. I took the privilege of standing close to the Deities while the crowds were kept on the other side of the rope. The lead singer was loud and not so sweet. I was eager to come here to be with you in your room. Both today and tomorrow I won't be able to spend the 10–11 A.M. hour with you. I'd prefer to be in your *tīrthas*, but I have other commitments. My solace will be to fulfill those commitments as service to you while thinking of you.

The world is full of threats. Noises. Calamities. Intrigues. Unpleasantness. Breakdowns. Disappointments. You and Kṛṣṇa said it would be like this. Kṛṣṇa says as long as we are in this miserable and temporary material world, we should engage in devotional service and plan to go back to Godhead.

There's a noise in the air-cooler in your room. It is disturbing to me and probably to you. Better they turn it off. We try to serve you, but sometimes we create more inconveniences for you. You didn't like noise, but peace and quiet to spend your hours in routine Kṛṣṇa consciousness, preaching strongly in an atmosphere where people could hear you attentively.

I don't take it for granted that I'm allowed the privilege of standing near the Deities or coming early into your room. I know it's rare and I'm not deserving. Still, I have a beggar's greed and I grab what I can. I'm also looking to get a piece of cloth or some object I know you wore or used. I want to keep it with me.

These things have value only when we come close to you for service. The word *Upaniṣad* derives from *upaniti*, which means to come close to the guru. We come close so that you can speak mantras and instructions into our ear. These are instructions for performing more austerities. I want to come close to you in order to serve you and to be willing to perform difficult tasks. That's the price of intimacy.

Prabhupāda, the monkeys are behaving wildly in the dark right outside your room. They are jumping on the roof and even hanging onto your outer window. I just chased one away. But between chasing monkeys and being disturbed by the periodic, weird sounds in the air-cooler (it sounds like a body is trapped in there), I can hardly make a peaceful prayer.

October 4, Prabhupāda's Room

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I'm in your rooms. You know how mental I am. You can smash me or pacify me. I tend to find fault and I just wish to be left alone. People rub against me and the strain of any interaction seems a botheration. But this isn't your spirit. You "rubbed elbows" with the marijuana-heads, the acid-heads, the hippies of the Lower East Side, and you transformed us. You said those who love you will cooperate. I'll continue to try.

The letter on your desk today is to Ranadhira, 1972. He has since gone from your service. You wrote to him that he was senior and serious and if he kept it up, he would "very soon reach the supreme highest perfection."

I look at this now and feel some sorrow. Still, I feel hopeful because what you promised to the devotees is still true, provided we follow your instructions. You wrote, "We must become *so* responsible for seriously practicing this Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because the world is full of degrading elements . . . Save the people." That was Śrīla Prabhupāda's concern. Save the people.

"So I count on you and your Godbrothers among those few men who are treading seriously on the path back home back to Godhead . . . do not fall back."

It will increase if we keep the standard he gave us: "Otherwise it will gradually become mechanical and fade away like every other so-called religious movement."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are still counting on us. We are still only a few men. The world is full of bad elements dragging people down. We can work to save them. We have to keep the enthusiasm and the high standard you gave us. It has in some ways become mechanical. Hardening of the arteries is occurring, but also new life and hope. I'm fighting for my own life and wish to stay as you describe in this letter, a senior disciple whom you can trust and who takes his responsibilities seriously. Now my duties have become refined, but they're even more responsible than before. People look to me to set an example that there is still life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness even after you practice it for thirty or forty years. Actually, the longer you practice spiritual life, the more enlivened you become.

I want to prove myself faithful. I want to be in the spirit that you want me to be in. I think I know what that means and what I should do.

You let me come into your room to write in front of you. It's as if I'm your secretary again, hurriedly writing down something you say so that I can type it up for you later. I'm not exactly receiving dictation from you now, but I'm in that mood.

I want to take the dust from your feet on my head. I'll go now and do other duties for you. I'm your secretary and older student, but still a young boy in spiritual learning who needs to hear from his spiritual master. All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Samādhi Mandir, 4:05 P.M.

The door is closed and we can't see the golden form of Śrīla Prabhupāda with our eyes. The doors are silver inlaid. There is a donation box in front of them. When I'm here, I remember all my misgivings and central blocks to advanced devotional service. Still, I have this one asset called "attachment to His Divine Grace."

I may speculate that I am an *ātmā*. I'm not Stephen T. Guarino, the son of Stephen J. Guarino. I'm an *ātmā* who deserved to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda. That's speculation. What really happened is that he came to New York City to deliver Kṛṣṇa's mercy and I was lucky enough to be there and to take it.

Now I am in Vṛndāvana, India. Sunlight is slanting through the high, marble, lattice-work window. Madhu is chasing mosquitoes from his head with a white cloth. The electric generator is humming. There are no visitors right now. It's hot and sunny.

I've been doing things—dropped into two different rooms at the Guesthouse before coming here for brief chats—and I'm not centered. I come here to pray. Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda. A slight Indian *brahmacārī* is circumambulating your altar, chanting *japa*. Maybe he is part of the four-month crew who are working here on behalf of their GBC man and guru.

Why don't I go deeper? I get a sense of allegiance and identity when I come here. For that, it's even better than a dip in the Yamunā or sitting by the side of Govardhana. And it's easier to do—I just have to walk out of my room and walk for about one minute. Then I can sit on the white marble floor and chant some *japa* or write my notes. Automatically, my heart travels to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I think of him here.

I read in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* of his Jaladuta voyage to America. He was seventy years old and had two heart attacks in two nights at sea. He saw a dream of Kṛṣṇa in His many forms rowing a boat and telling him, "Come on, you'll make it all right." Śrīla Prabhupāda at sea, his only solace reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and deliberating on his spiritual master's order. Writing a poem in Bengali to his dear companion, Kṛṣṇa. Feeling separation from Rādhā-Dāmodara in Vṛndāvana-dhāma. Carrying the strong commitment to his Guru Mahārāja's order—to flood the world with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He arrived in Boston on September 17. At the end of this week, we will commemorate that day.

Prabhupāda and me. I sit in this Mandir trying to actually be myself. I cannot do such nice "Prabhupāda meditations," but at least I'm on his holy ground. I feel the power of that. I want to proclaim it and yet keep it a secret.

I don't want to hear all these other sounds, at least for a moment. Let me worship my spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am spending my afternoon here. No more Saturday afternoons in a quiet Catholic church, waiting to make a confession, and no more wandering around New York City or even Vṛndāvana. I have come here to sit and trust that you know why I have come.

In the Samādhi Mandir this morning, I noticed that the two big bolster pillows were orange colored. Very nice. And Śrīla Prabhupāda's *sannyāsa* top-piece was the right shade for a *sannyāsī*.

It's time to go. The *pūjārī* just gave us some *mahā* sweets offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda. I popped a piece in my mouth. Someone else brought a fresh, wet, cool rose garland *for me*. It was not offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda. It's time to go!

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:40 P.M.

The room was locked, so we opened it. It was like being here in the early morning—the lights were out and Śrīla Prabhupāda's beadbag was on the desk. I went close to him in front of his table and prostrated myself, trying to think of the meaning of the *praṇāmas:* he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa, he fights Māyāvādīs and voidists. I

put the beadbag on his hand and took dust from his feet. Learning to do that is one of the best things I have learned in recent years.

Today's letter is to Madhukara. I thought I knew everyone in ISKCON from those days, but this name is unfamiliar. At that time, he was the president of ISKCON Phoenix. "Now you are being forced by Kṛṣṇa to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness because you must set the perfect example for all others to follow." Good words. I have to do that now for the rest of my life because I have disciples (Śrīla Prabhupāda's granddisciples) and I'm an older student.

He advises the same routine work, "Rising early, cleansing, chanting minimum of sixteen rounds, having *kīrtana*, reading scriptures, Deity worship, like that. . . . Then your all other activities will come out successful and you can be very certain that very soon you will find yourself situated on the highest platform of perfectional stage."

Prabhupāda encourages him to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the schools and colleges. That's one branch of activities. Mine is to encourage a whole range of devotees in various activities and various places. I tell them to do what Śrīla Prabhupāda called the routine work, which we sometimes call "*sādhana*." Some devotees go out and sell books or stay home and take care of children or do business. I encourage all, that the first aim is the "regular activity"—rising early, chanting, reading scriptures, Deity worship, etc.—do these and all else will follow successfully. And that means I must do the routine work myself as an example.

Curtains closed against the sunlight. Fans revolving. Prabhupāda's *kūrta* sleeves moving in the breeze. The *mātājī* caretakers have arrived for their afternoon duty of sitting behind the book counter in the reception area. My head socializing, my body getting ready to leave this room, my hands seeking words to write. But the self stays put for a while, sitting in his room.

I watch the devotees come and make *daṇḍavats*. They are your followers, Śrīla Prabhupāda. One young man holds a copy of *The Nectar of Instruction*. I never want to be condescending to you or to your followers. I'm not an outsider, a critic, and I'm certainly not above others. I could be a rat, staring out from the vantage point of my hole in the wall, or an aspiring devotee giving himself to this movement, honoring it, believing in it, fully participating in it. I also read *The Nectar of Instruction*, I also bow before Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'm also on campus at Kṛishna-Balaram Mandir, I'm also here for purification. And like others, I too have detected my straying mentality and I'm bringing it back in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda's grace. I'm not better than others.

October 5, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I won't say that I cannot offer you anything. I will boldly say I offer you my life. I know I myself tire if the same person comes to see me every day, especially if he has no service or is sentimental or pestering. If someone has functional service and is a dear servant, then it's part of your life to receive him and talk. He may open

the curtains when the sun comes up or bring in your breakfast or talk over travel plans with you.

I hope I am not coming to you in a pestering, demanding way. That's one reason my visits are short. You have already given me so much. Now I need to carry out your instructions and not keep pestering you for special confirmation of our relationship. "Everything is there in my books," you said. And, "What is the difficulty?"

What is the difficulty? Let me serve you in earnest.

I speak with Godbrothers but don't seem to say anything close to my heart or theirs. I hope they will forgive me as I forgive them. We mean well, or at least by your grace, we are willing to work side by side.

How long will anything last? Your bed in this room reminds us. You preached in the West for only eleven years. You accomplished so much in such a short amount of time! Your bed tells us we will have to move along and that we should try to do something for you before it's too late.

You are with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. I know very little of you, actually. All I know is that you want me to serve. You want me to be a genuine devotee. I'm working on that. You want me to become honest and attached to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, then *how* I should serve will not be such a puzzle. One way or another I will be able to lecture or teach or give counsel in writing or speech. That's my duty. If I am fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in

chanting and hearing, and if I have a preaching spirit like Śrīla Prabhupāda, I will be able to help others.

People are in pain, both physical and mental. You knew how to help them, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I want to help you help them. I say this, although it's not yet my actual desire, but I wish—or I wish I could wish—to do the right thing. If I stay selfish and indulgent, what good will that do me at the time of death? You please correct me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I heard that a brother said that he would offer you a Ph.D. I thought it was a bold claim. Someone might think he's getting the Ph.D. for himself, but he's saying he's doing it for you. I know you will accept it. Why don't I declare with confidence like my Godbrother that I want to offer you my writing life? I want to be a poet, a devotee, a chanter, a scholar of your books, satisfied. Whatever I want to achieve, it is for you.

Can we make the whole world Kṛṣṇa conscious? I am no fighter in the usual sense. But I can change myself, if you will let me.

These thoughts in your room. Thank you for the few minutes alone.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

On our way here, we met a *gurukula* boy and his mother. He is just getting over jaundice and is carrying a big jug of water, "because I have to drink a lot of water." Śrīla Prabhupāda, your devotees are trying their best to serve you.

The ghee lamp inside is brass and in the shape of a rooster, not a peacock. I'm trying to describe things to remember later. I've said most of it by now—described the white squares on the floor with the black checks, the elephants in bas relief on a lower border, upright lions as columns. The Vrajavāsīs—one singing a *bhajana*. Now it's quiet for a second and I see a tall tree and a patch of sky framed in the tall doorway.

Your *mūrti*, here, Śrīla Prabhupāda, is larger than life. If we place a flower in your hand, it accentuates the size of your hand. They use counter beads big enough to be *japa-mālā* on your beadbag. Every morning your *pūjārī* gives me the garland that you wore the previous day. I wish I could have deeper appreciation for all these favors.

Now I'm thinking of a lecture to give on the day that you arrived in America. I'll use the verse, *śṛṇvatāṁ sva-kathāḥ-kṛṣṇaḥ* for the group chanting and then speak about your ocean voyage. I mostly want to appreciate and analyze the two poems you wrote. One was to your spiritual master and the other was to Kṛṣṇa. In the first poem, you quote Prahlāda Mahārāja's prayer, "I was falling into the way of the demons . . . my spiritual master saved me. How could I ever leave him?" I'd like to say that we should never leave Śrīla Prabhupāda, but maybe that's not so appropriate on this occasion.

I want to say that he came to America, that he was outwardly an obscure figure but was inwardly meditating on his spiritual master's order. He prayed to Kṛṣṇa when no one knew him. I would like to evoke the feeling

of what it was like on the ocean voyage. But perhaps I can't say much. I'd like to. I still have a few days left and hope to get some inspiration by reading the poems.

The lions—they can tear apart elephantine vices. They are good lions, part of the Mandir, yet they are fierce and their bodies are built for attack. Let them attack any demons that try to enter here. Let them swallow my own demons so that I can look upon Prabhupāda peacefully and pray to him. Let the roar of the lions frighten doubts and superficiality. Please give me the courage not to run away.

The boy is sweeping dirt and flower petals. The pole-boy is investigating holes on the mezzanine roof to see if any birds have made nests. No question of monkeys frequenting this place. Śrīla Prabhupāda would like it that the Mandir is kept clean. There is life in his worship and therefore it's not a burden. The devotees won't abandon it. But you have to be willing to keep a routine. Me too—regular worship according to the clock, cleaning, bowing down, reading and writing. Always be grateful.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:40 A.M.

A new generation *brahmacārī* sits before you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, chanting *japa*. He's so young. I think, "I'm senior." What does that mean? Do I think it means that I should be given honor and privilege? It means I should do more. I should know more and give more. I should

freely tell your pastimes to others and assure them of their relationship with you. I should speak from my own experience and encourage them about the power of reading your books. That's what being senior means. It means taking responsibility.

The letter on your desk today is to Keśava dāsa, January 1972. Big, strong Keśava, Karandhara's brother. Karandhara was the captain of L.A. and Keśava was the captain of San Francisco. Those good old days. He requested initiation for many boys. "I have been receiving so many reports about how my disciples of the San Francisco temple cannot be surpassed in distributing my books. Sometimes they are selling as many as seventy *Kṛṣṇa* books daily."

The beginning of the tidal wave of book distribution in America. By hook or by crook. How did they do it? Keśava used to say, "No secret. Just go out and try." They were determined and enthusiastic.

"By distributing my books profusely, you are giving me great encouragement to translate. And you are all helping me to fulfill the order which my Guru Mahārāja gave me. So I am so much grateful to you and I am sure Kṛṣṇa will bless you a million times over for doing this work."

That famous "million times" line—all ISKCON knew about it. "I hope you all my beloved disciples in San Francisco are in strong health and jolly mood."

Prabhupāda includes his upcoming itinerary in the P.S.—Jaipur, Bombay, Nairobi, Māyāpur, Hong Kong, Sydney, Tokyo, Hawaii "and then return to U.S."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, as I sit here, a young *brahmacārī* interrupted me. Said he's been reading *Nārada-bhakti*

Sūtra and likes it. He said he used to be Steve and now he's Sudāmā Vipra dāsa. I remained stern because he was interrupting me, but I said something. He wants me to look at some of his recent poetry. I agreed. Śrīla Prabhupāda, I will definitely encourage him with words. That's what you want, or what's the use of being a senior disciple?

The day you came to America, you didn't have any assistant! I could never do what you did. I complain of headaches, but you had two heart attacks on the way to America. In Boston the day you arrived, you felt helpless, but then remembered what was written in the First Canto. *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* will cleanse the heart of the Americans too.

I see the light from your desk lamp shining on your lap. Your left hand is touching the mattress. You have fine hands. The mattress is covered with clean white sheets. The bell is tolling eleven.

October 6, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, while seated in this room, you noticed and criticized Nitāi dāsa's hatchet motion of *praṇāmas* to you. You said that he was doing it without love or respect. From this room you walked into the servant's quarters and found them sleeping. That was an earlier year. 1977 was different. You withdrew from us gradually until most of the day you lay quietly on your bed, not talking or communicating.

Today you are still with us. If I cannot understand it, that doesn't mean it's not true. I also don't realize how

Kṛṣṇa is with the *gopīs* in *vipralambha*, even after He left Vṛndāvana.

This morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you saw the young Indian woman dancing extravagantly in front of your golden *mūrti* at *maṅgala-ārati*. She was escorted out, but showed up again in the temple room. In both places she made many full *daṇḍavats* before Your Divine Grace. Crazy woman?

If a disciple is pure and full of yearning, you can be with him. As Kṛṣṇa can talk with us, so can His pure devotee. This is possible due to the internal energy, which can make the impossible possible.

Your finger is pointing out of the hole in your bead-bag. Your gaze is fixed at a point on the table. You might be thinking of what to say next in a purport. Your body is tanned, your cloth saffron, brown eyes, light limbs, and you have great determination and powerful, grave realization. Your methods are expert. You cared. You saved souls. You left India and did the best work and got the most mercy from Lord Caitanya. Preaching is not material. Who can do it except the empowered servant?

I worship you and beg for a drop of your preaching *śakti*. I am embarrassed to even admit it. People might wonder, "Why is he asking that? How is he going to preach? That's not his nature." But something impels me to say it. Being near you and thinking of you, if one wants to please you, if one wants to catch Kṛṣṇa's attention, this is what you recommended. Śrīla Prabhupāda, please never leave me for a moment.

Samādhi Mandir, 4 P.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I cannot center important themes in my life. My viewpoint keeps changing according to the hour of day. I want to be steady-minded like you. Envy and distaste for *sādhu-saṅga*—these are not good signs. Anyway, I come here to be with you. Earlier today when I sensed I was confused, I looked forward to coming here. It's an act that is clear in its purpose and outcome—centering on you and coming close to you.

When all the doors are shut in the Mandir, there is still so much open lattice that the sunlight fills the hall. Air circulates. It's an open hall even when it's locked shut. The emptiness makes it silent. There is no temple quite like it. No pictures on the wall, no inscriptions. Everything waits until the altar doors open and his golden form shines out, dressed as a *sannyāsī*, with garlands and a beadbag. We sit and wait.

The way it is decorated with marble bas relief—a column of elephants is marching left and another one is marching right. They meet in the center with two elephants touching trunks. I hear an *ārati* bell ringing somewhere.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I can't think of myself all alone with you. You have thousands of followers and you yourself are with the associates of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in your *nitya-līlā*. You are also with Lord Caitanya and His many devotees. Yet here I am, with Madhumaṅgala, alone in your temple. Aloneness is also a spiritual truth, or let us say, individuality. Each *gopī* thinks Kṛṣṇa is only with her. Each cowherd boy thinks that Kṛṣṇa is looking only at him. In the miraculous *kīrtanas*

at Jagannātha Purī, each group thinks Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is with them alone. Aloneness with the guru is not simply *māyā*.

Samādhi Mandir, 4:20 P.M.

He opens the side doors to let a worker out, then closes them again. If we want a peaceful circumambulation, maybe now is the time. Please make it clear to me, my lord, how I should pursue my plan and desire to be chaste and dedicated to you. How I can attain your service best in this life and the next?

At the end of a lecture in Nairobi, a disciple asked, "Lord Kṛṣṇa advises we think of Him at the time of death. What if we think of the spiritual master, is that as good?"

"Yes," you replied, "because the spiritual master is with Kṛṣṇa." That's my hope. And who else am I likely to think of at the end? I know that you gave me so much and I can never repay you. I want to fill my consciousness with you as long as I can. Let me remind myself about death. You said it's not chance what we think of at death. Something odd from many years ago may come to mind. Let me think of you. Sincere love crosses all barriers.

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:35 P.M.

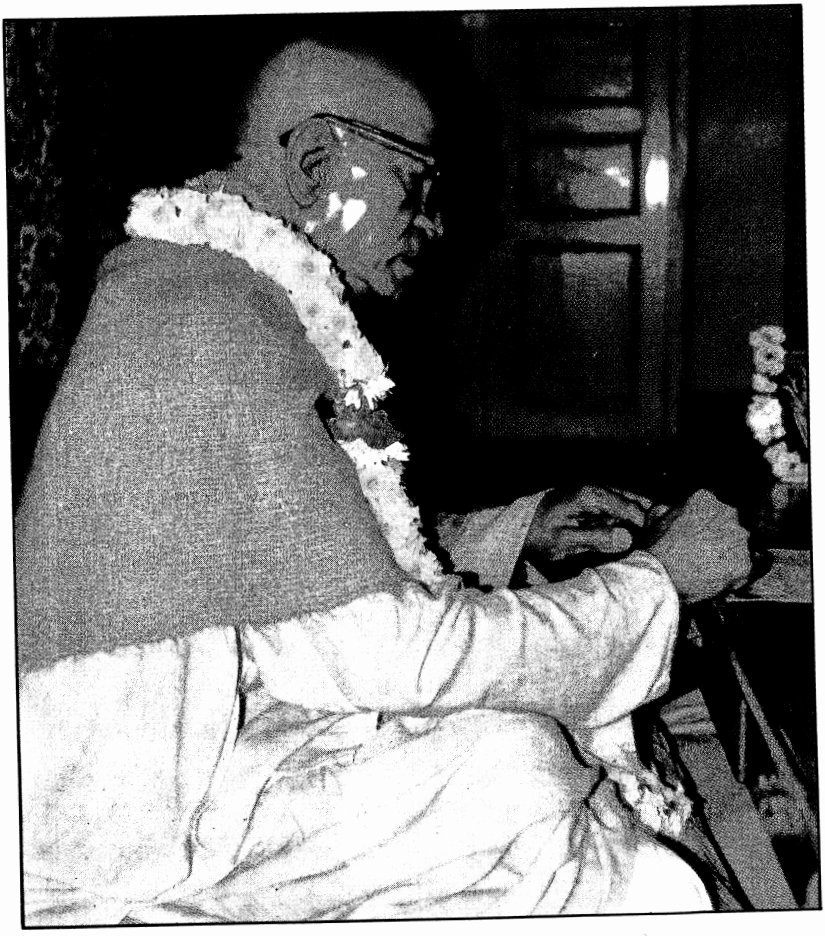
It was dark in here when we entered. We are the first to come after your afternoon rest. I hope you are not unhappy to see us. We sit in a corner so as not to disturb you.

The letter on your desk is to Sudāmā, January 1972. You say to him, "You have always served me very faithfully." You pray that Kṛṣṇa blesses him with a long life to open many temples "and that in this very lifetime you may return back to home, back to Godhead."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you asked Sudāmā to arrange a *paṇḍāl* in Tokyo and speaking engagements in universities where English is understood. You said that his learning Japanese was of first importance. "If you remain patient and determined . . . " Good advice for all of us. To have an order like that from Śrīla Prabhupāda!

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you liked it cool and dark like this. Soon you would ask that we let the guests in. Some of them would not be important people. You get into management, temple construction, restaurant, Guesthouse, book printing . . . Your mail would be read to you by your secretary. It wasn't easy to be the head of a worldwide organization and always have to hear cases, like a judge on the bench, but you were *eka-niṣṭhā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, always serving guru and Kṛṣṇa without deviation. I want to hear from you.

You installed Deities all over the world. Then you traveled all over the world to preach and keep company with your disciples. Do you remember all that, Śrīla Prabhupāda? The whole world was your preaching field,



and still this world has value for your devotees because you taught us how to preach your message and to encourage each other. Rādhā-Gokulānanda, Rādhā-Rāsabihārī, Rādhā-London-īśvara, Rādhā-Dāmodara. I think of you on airplanes and in waiting rooms, in temple rooms and in your quarters around the world, where you were offered a low desk, a water pitcher, a dictaphone. You walked in those rooms in your bare feet. Some of those temples were only rented houses, but you were always interested in the facility and in how the preaching was going, and you always gave ambitious suggestions like the one to Sudāmā to organize a *paṇḍāl* in Tokyo for thousands.

Now a few guests are coming in. They are quiet. The four ceiling fans are rattling as they create a breeze. It's another sweet day of routine. I didn't know what to write before I came here, but your presence always allows me to say something.

Gradually, I'm learning in a simple, relaxed way to think, "I am with Śrīla Prabhupāda in his rooms." I simply state this fact and write a few notes like, "Straw mats on black marble floors. Curtains closed and sunlight seeping through. Memories of you here." I hope to be able to recapture it even when I'm not here.

There is one relaxation exercise that tells you to remember a peaceful place where there is no stress. I'd like to remember being here in your rooms, jotting notes and looking up to see you always there, assuring me of your presence. When you were here and I was here with you, it was sometimes tense. I was nervous that I wouldn't do the right thing or anxious about my own bodily or mental needs. It's different now.

October 7, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

I put on your beadbag in the morning. It's a duty they allow me do because I'm the first one to enter your room each day. I snap on the light (the fans are on all night), come close to you, and prostrate myself while reciting your *praṇāma-mantras*, clinging to some of its meaning.

Where else do I belong? Am I actually a Staten Island boy? No, if ever I was, that's gone now; it may live in dreams and the mind, but there's no reality to it. This place is as much home to me as anywhere. I say I fear Śrīla Prabhupāda, fear to be in India, fear his order for me to surrender. The bell tolls. But this is my home and I want no other.

It's dark outside. A light bulb illuminates some leaves on a tree. Occasionally, I look up and see the shadowy form of a devotee passing by on his way to the temple.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'll go upstairs and answer some letters on your behalf. I am telling them I can't give them reinitiation or initiation. Better they take it from someone else. Should I talk with my Godbrothers about this? Air it? Keep it in me? What do you want?

You want me to sacrifice and get the higher taste, surrender to guru and Kṛṣṇa. You want me to taste the happiness of the surrendered soul. You want me to do something for Kṛṣṇa. We want to get a certificate from Kṛṣṇa that this devotee has done some nice service. You said Lord Kṛṣṇa doesn't need our service, but it's for our benefit that He accepts our sincere offerings.

I make these statements of aspiration when I come in here. I should be more silent and not say all that I'm going to do. Shouldn't I instead simply ask for your help?

Coming to you early for inspiration. Begging for purity. On the Jaladuta you prayed to Kṛṣṇa to enable you to serve your spiritual master. All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Your room is empty right now and I make that same prayer. Others will come now and make their sincere prayers and fill the air with Hari-nāma *japa*. So many love you.

Lizard on wall
ants scurrying on mat.
High ceiling.
My death on the way.

She said, "I came here four years in advance" (of her death). Said one should do this because there is no time to chant and hear in the West. She advises all who get notice of death to come here cheerfully and resigned, hopeful of a Kṛṣṇa conscious departure. I'm not ready for that yet, I say.

I remember in 1966 one night, I was alone with you in your room, asking you a few questions about Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's book and other things. You spoke with me, but then said that I should leave so that you could do your work. I'm not much different twenty-seven years later, but you allow me still to come to you.



Prabhupāda's Samādhi Mandir, 4:05 P.M.

All day on the go. Did I stay faithful? Did I misbehave and use your name to authorize wrong acts? In order to be here and commune with you, I need to be faithful and productive at the times when I'm away from here. I'm not perfect in my Prabhupāda consciousness, so when I come here it's a solace. You accept me even if I'm not the best.

Now I'm asking for more Prabhupāda consciousness for my own life. I want to go where I can get it. If by leaving Vṛndāvana I could be truer to you and could read your books better, then I'd want to leave here. But while I can, I come to these special places.

As we walked here, the blazing 4 P.M. sunlight was crashing onto the white marble domes of this Samādhi Mandir. The marble is strong enough to take the sunlight and the sunlight beautifies the domes as they bravely shine back, unafraid of the sun's rays. Ahead of us, the side door was open. It reminded me of the entrance to a cave. It looked inviting.

The Mandir isn't open yet, but the boy at the door—he's the one who uses the long pole to chase pigeons—sat up when he saw us approach. We have free entrance because we are devotees of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Dear master, please be with me. Please appear in my heart and attract me to you. I circumambulated Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in a temple this morning, and I thought of Prabhupāda in this *tīrtha*. I sat in the *māṭha* and thought of my ISKCON Vṛndāvana home. That's where I belong.

Prabhupāda, tomorrow I will speak about the day you came to America. I've prepared notes, but when I look at them . . . I hope I can recall you sincerely and give my appreciation.

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:40 P.M.

There are two entrances to these rooms, external and internal. They gladly give me external entrance because I'm a recognized disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, but the internal is much harder. It depends on Śrīla Prabhupāda's special mercy. Let him see that I actually depend on him and work for him.

I said it's all right if Godbrothers or Godsisters see me here. Actually, I like to see them here. I'd like to see them enthusiastic to come in here any chance they get, even if it's only for a few moments. It's a beloved chapel and meditation center, a place of wishes and prayer. Here you come to confess to Śrīla Prabhupāda and expect his direction. If ever you are going to receive something like that, it's in here. You work all year in Russia or Brazil or a farm in Canada or Australia, you get roughed up by the material energy, and then you manage to get to Vṛndāvana "for a refresher." You come to this room.

I tried it today, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was sitting on a stone floor waiting expectantly for a stressful meeting that I was supposed to attend. It challenged my spirit. Then I thought of this place where the breeze caresses my face and where I sit with my back to the wall on an ample yellow pillow and look at you. I'm quiet and you're

quiet, but we commune. I can't always say what that means, but it's not empty. I come to be with my master and he reciprocates.

In the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa picture over his head, one *gopī* in the foreground looks like she's picking a *tulasī*. Everyone does service. In a different yet similar way, we come to see Śrīla Prabhupāda to render him service.

Again he asks, "What are you doing?"

"I am considering not initiating anymore, but in any case, serving you with my strength, limited as it is. I want to read your books. I want to hear your lectures."

As I write, a large group of Sikhs in shirts and pants have entered, talking. Let's go.

October 8, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

That person to whom I surrendered in my youth is still my master; this is the same Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the same room in Vṛndāvana; neither do I say that I want to go back to the way it was with him. I am happy to be with him in the present. I am trying to get more access and personal contact. I touch his foot now. I didn't used to do that. Now I have an older man's body and a service befitting my age.

I see a picture of Prabhupāda on someone's T-shirt, a good black and white image, like an etching. "Do you like it?" he asks. "Yes," I say, and I mean it.

What do I want? To be absorbed in Prabhupāda consciousness and trusting and patient that he will and can give me all knowledge and advancement in his own

books, his own movement, his own way. I want to worship him. I want to be a devotee he can be proud of. I want to feel natural affection and flowing reciprocation. I'll work at it even when it's dry or I have some problem with his followers or his institution. I won't quit. He will protect me from falldown.

That's what I want—the enlivened state of the preacher, which Prabhupāda himself exemplified. The connection he had with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the blessings he received from him—why can't I have some of that and the confidence that he's always with me, watching my activities? Śrīla Prabhupāda lives forever by his divine instructions and the follower lives with him.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

The *pūjārī* is high on an aluminum ladder in the inner sanctum, cleaning. The two hired boys who chase pigeons are sitting in a corner chatting while their poles rest against the walls. On the stairs I imagined someone asking me, "Where are you going?" And I replied, "I have a little ritual where I go to Śrīla Prabhupāda's Samādhi Mandir." Is that what it is, a ritual? Please make it more.

Prabhupāda, I tried. I presented what I could in my lecture about your adventures in coming to America. We all know the story, but I wanted to taste real appreciation. How can I come alive? I spoke of your poem written at sea—how you praised your spiritual master and wished to carry out his will. You asked Lord Kṛṣṇa to

give you the strength. You revealed your mind to Kṛṣṇa. In Boston you wrote a poem to Kṛṣṇa as your dear friend. You turned to Him in a helpless way. You recalled the verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the means to convince the people of "this terrible place" that they are eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I am a living witness of your pastimes. I am one of the boys you picked up. When you returned to visit the Boston pier in 1968 you said, "When I first came here, I was alone, but now I have some boys, so if I die, they will continue it." You lived for this mission. You wanted it to continue. That was your main desire. Prabhupāda, it *is* continuing. It is rooted in many countries. I have lived to see it. I want to continue serving you in that role. Please keep me.

After the lecture, a devotee asked, "When Śrīla Prabhupāda visited the Boston pier in 1968, what did he speak of?" I recalled it because I had written notes at that time, "Swami in Boston." I can't write exactly in the same way now because you are not visiting us in the same way. You don't write a letter and say I'll be there by May 1st. Your plane doesn't come in to a roaring *kīrtana* at the airport. We are with you now only by your *vāṇī*. Therefore, these are the kinds of notes I write now, a writing life offered to him.

As I write this, musing on your activities in the West, a group of pilgrims enters the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. Many of the women have shaven heads and wear no blouses under their wrapped *saris*. Most of these people are thin and the men have loose turbans—wizened old men and women. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you lived with these people. You knew *tyāgis* and refined

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and Delhi *wallas* and rich men. Still, you came to us and adapted to our Western ways. Or rather, I should say you came West and were untouched by our Western ways. You made everything transcendental wherever you went, whether East or West. I wish to remember you like that.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:35 A.M.

The letter on your desk today is to Haṁsadūta, January 1972. He's working nicely in Germany with Kṛṣṇa dāsa. You ask why after so many years, nothing has been done to present his books in the European languages. "Translators are there, all facilities of German first-class printing machines are there—simply we are not serious to do it." You ask for it: "That will be a great help to me." And in the next sentence you ask them to purchase a van and drive it to India. There were always so many tasks to do for you. "What do you think?" And the handwritten P.S.: "Please know it always that I think of you and your wife as very sincere devotees and whenever you think, you can ask me everything about your difficulties."

You were always willing to answer the questions that were on our minds. I once asked you when was the proper time to have sex with one's wife. I also asked you whether we should fight with the Hell's Angels and try to kill them. I asked you to come to Boston and install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. I gave you news of the house we purchased in Allston. You answered all these queries and responded to whatever information we gave you about our

services with courage. You told us to take risks for Kṛṣṇa. Do you remember those old days, Śrīla Prabhupāda? I let them flow through my blood. They were the best years of my life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, your "best" years of service to your Guru Mahārāja came long after your spiritual master's disappearance. You kept your conviction alive for many years. You followed the basic, strong, mainstream order of your spiritual master in a personal way. I shouldn't think that all I can do is to relive old memories. I can still deepen my commitment to your mission by deepening my own service career, in cooperation with my Godbrothers. I can write and write and read and read and speak on your behalf.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, it's becoming clearer to me that I should stop initiating for now. It's too much for me. I have too many "followers." I'm caught up now in how to avoid new ones or how to solve the neophyte problems of those I already have. If this makes me freer, then let me use that energy in your service.

Am I the kind of spiritual master who represents you not only in my teachings, but in my caring mood? You cared for us. Please teach me to care for others.

The weather is still hot. You are directing us how to serve in this world and how to go back to Godhead. The cup of water on your desk is stainless steel. Sweet water.

Now we are going upstairs. I have things to say to Madhu, but I feel too quiet to bring them up right now. This place is meant for meditation. Because my mind is too restless to practice silent meditation, I write these notes. The notes are meant to free my mind, to clear out

the static, and to open the channels for spiritual commerce. From me to him and him to me.

When meditation is successful, the pure soul looks over to Śrīla Prabhupāda and asks, "Please fill me with your desires. Please fill this empty cup. Please mend this broken vessel. Please breathe life into your expiring disciple. Tap your cane and keep me in line. Accept me as I am. Tell me what I need. Let me simply be with you."

October 9, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

My own pleasure is not automatically identical with Śrīla Prabhupāda's pleasure. Nor is my displeasure. This morning in the Samādhi Mandir, the man who took the lead in singing turned me off. Halfway through he tried inducing us all to dance, but no one followed. At the end he looked to me to lead the recitation of the *prema-dvani* prayers, but I refused to make eye contact with him. Finally, he touched me with his hand. I recoiled at first, but then I responded and recited the prayers. I felt bad about being turned off by this man and his ways. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you appreciated him. Fortunately, I was able to make it up later by complimenting him on the nice *kīrtana*. But it was a lesson—we are together and I shouldn't be unfriendly or think that I am alone in this movement.

Madhu told me he too now takes dust from your feet and places his head on your feet. He prays that he can help me to please you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Such a

nice prayer. I hope we can achieve our goals together. It's not automatic, but there has to be love and determination. With the help of other devotees, maybe I'll succeed in the *prayojana* of pleasing Prabhupāda.

Samādhi Mandir, 4 P.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you know how ISKCON campuses get controversial with "issues." That was going on even when you were here. In 1976, it was the *sannyāsīs* versus the *gṛhasthas* issue. This year it's something else. I don't come to your Mandir to discuss the issues, but to get away from them.

It's quiet in here right now. Even the pigeon-chaser isn't here. It's blazing hot outside and the radio is blaring over the sound system. This is my bomb shelter, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Please, Prabhupāda, let my inner life continue. I want to remember you and not forget you, just as a faithful wife honors her religious relationship with her husband exclusively. It's called fidelity. Honor.

Some people said they liked my lecture on the day that you arrived in America. Someone said, "We were floating in Prabhupāda nectar. Only you could have done it." Who am I? I do want to be able to love like that, always researching something you have written or some event or significance in your life story. That work is never finished. The work you did goes on for me. I keep finding novel ways to present my meditations of you and to approach you.

As time passes, our tests change. Memories are harder to retain. After all, everything is occurring within a

small span of time, your lifetime and whatever time of my life is left.

In 1966 you told me, "You are a young man. You will live a long time and I will die before long." You asked me to seriously dedicate my "long" life to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By your grace, I am doing it. I am no longer a young man and you have gone on to your *nitya-līlā*.

Please, Śrīla Prabhupāda, give me the strength and endurance to grow in my attraction to your books. Today a Godbrother was telling me that he was reading your Second Canto purports and that they were powerful and wonderful. I liked hearing that. I also want to experience that and then describe it to others. This is what I want to accomplish in this life.

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:40 P.M.

I say so many foolish things, things I don't mean to say. And I allow myself to feel hurts and slights even when people don't mean to hurt me. If they do mean to hurt, or they are merely clumsy or preoccupied, why should I feel so concerned or injured? I have Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. No one can take them away from me as long as I hold on to them.

The letter on your desk is to Gargamuni Mahārāja, January 1972. You gave us the honorable titles, "Swami" and "Mahārāja" and then called us by those names. You created our fortune and status. You drew service from us for Lord Caitanya's mission.

In this letter you said the "Goswami" at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple had illegally usurped your verandah. You told your disciple not to bother the Goswami, but "simply go and come and see that no interruptions on my rooms are made."

Regarding the verandah: "Most likely you will have to fight a case against him with the District Manager of Mathurā."

Today I heard you answer a question about whether one should serve Gaura-Nitāi Deities or Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. You said it is not stereotyped. One has to inquire from the spiritual master and receive instruction. How confident we felt when we surrendered to you and you told us what to do, as in this letter. The devotee could come and go from your rooms without disturbing the temple owners, yet be prepared, if Prabhupāda ordered, to take them to court. What did Śrīla Prabhupāda want us to do? We inquired and then tried to carry out his wishes. We were confident that pleasing him was the best aim of life and the best way to please Kṛṣṇa. The essence of that relationship remains.

I look up and see the sunlight mixed with the open curtains and the shiny leaves outside the window. Scratching a mosquito welt on my arm. My back is tired. The day turns toward 5 P.M.

I feel satisfied to have escaped from the superficiality and turmoil of the day, to come here and to have written in your *tīrthas*. (I remember on the U.S.S. Saratoga, I would escape once a day. I won't write how I did it, but strange as the comparison is, I want to say that I need this visit to your rooms and I appreciate it.)

I don't come here out of my own intelligence, I am drawn here by you. You lived among us, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and therefore these places exist in my memory of you. Because they exist, I am drawn to them. My being drawn to you is as natural as iron filings being drawn to a magnet. As soon as I saw the announcement in your storefront window, I went to see you. I have never stopped. You drew me to you. A guru! India! *Bhakti*! The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, the promise of eternal life, Kṛṣṇa! Your knowledge and words to convince us. A guru for us on the Lower East Side. An escape from our dangerous lives. I must have a relationship with you from my past life. Whatever our relationship is, you draw me to you.

I beg to break through the barriers. "If you love me, then I will love you." As the rainy season creates muddy water in the Ganges and yet people bathe freely there, so the pure devotee is transcendental, despite his appearance of age and infirmity.

It's dark and cool in here. A few visitors wander in. They don't know quite what to make of this room where Śrīla Prabhupāda sits in one corner at his desk, as real as life. They feel as if they are interrupting his intimate life, so they hesitate to go further. He is in the cool, dark of his own room, sitting on the white mattress, chanting *japa* softly. But it's all right, they can enter. They can get one of his books. They can become his follower and sit here and write prayers. They can take up a *prabhu-datta-deśa* anywhere in the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda is aware of every place in the world. As stated in the First Canto, the guru is in everyone's heart. He knows the Lord's heart, and since the Lord is

in all hearts, so is the guru. At least he is in the hearts of all his followers.

You visitors can take up a *prabhu-datta-deśa* and then come to Vṛndāvana to this room and pray to him to bless you. Prabhupāda, your followers are your instruments. Even if we waver or stray or grow stale, please bring us back to your lotus feet.

October 10, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

I had to sneak in here fast to be alone with you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Maybe I won't be able to keep it up once the majority of devotees arrive for the festival and seminars.

They didn't take the beadbag from Śrīla Prabhupāda's hand overnight, so I couldn't serve him by offering it to him this morning. People may think we are crazy always approaching Śrīla Prabhupāda *mūrtis*, but what do I care for them? They don't know our Vṛndāvana and the mood of devotion to His Divine Grace.

There is a new letter on your desk, Prabhupāda, this time to Kṣīrodakśāyī dāsa. He was proposing to print your books in Hindi translation. You approved, but said, "But I can't pay you Rs. 1000 a month from here. That is not possible."

"With full faith in Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, push on this work with full force. We have got a great mission to fulfill, and these books and magazines are the torchbearers of truth which can save the world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, may my books be part of your mission? May they carry some of the torchlight which

you ignited in this world? Are my books not, in a small way, an extension of the original fire I received from you? I hope so.

People used to gather in this room to hear from him. He could walk around in here, but I don't think he did it much. The whole house was his residence. In most places, he had only one or two rooms, but here he has three on the first floor, more on the second floor, and an outside porch, which he sometimes used for composing purports.

Pushing on preaching all over the world. Big problems were brought before him for decision from America and Europe. In India, Śrīla Prabhupāda managed right down to the paisa. Did he like to manage? I don't know, but he did it to serve his spiritual master. Prabhupāda started ISKCON and felt obliged to maintain it. He wanted his devotees to manage it, but everyone wanted their case decided by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have already left the temple to come here and then begin my duties, but I don't want to miss the real point. Coming to your room I see it better. The goal is to please you. What do you want me to do?

Prabhupāda, may I write more to serve you and by writing come closer? Can I help others serve you? Give me the intelligence. I am not a clone or a carbon copy of you. As a unique soul, I do what I can for your cause. That's how you want it.

I returned the letter to your desk. Breathe in here in a rush, hurriedly, no deep prayer mood, but confident that coming here is effective. My master is teaching me and filling me. I will change. I will develop a taste for

better service to him. I can recover what I have lost and gain a new ability to serve him. I am asking for that and surely he will give it.

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:35 P.M.

Dirty, lovable, little kids come out for the 4:30 *ārati* at the Mandir. How glowing Śrīla Prabhupāda was—I looked at him up front, then from the right side, then at a distance from the entrance. You can't capture him, he'll escape. You are not so pure.

An Indian man in stylish Western jeans and a sports shirt comes into the room followed by his young son. The man looks around and goes into the next room. What are they looking for? He seems to have overlooked—barely noticed—the possibility of Śrīla Prabhupāda entering his life right here.

October 11, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I led the singing in your *samādhi* this morning. The *pūjārī* giggles a little when I talk with him—he is a friend and helps me get through "*Gurvāṣṭakam*" without a mistake. It's good to externalize devotion to Śrīla Prabhupāda with loud singing. The *gurukula* boys were there. By the end of the *kīrtana* it was rocking with a good beat.

I am fallen, devoid of deeper feelings, and even theoretical knowledge of *rasa*. Still, I like to stand before

Rādhā-Śyāma and memorize Their features. Rādhā wore a long apron today. Kṛṣṇa's chest. Now I come before you in your room. I turned on the fan when I entered—for *my* pleasure. How foolish and forgetful I am. Maybe it's too cool for you.

The letter on your desk is to Sudāmā, January 1972. Sudāmā was sticking it out in Japan at that time. You wrote to him, "You are setting the example of determination which others may see and follow. In this way, go on increasing and such sincerity is noticed by Kṛṣṇa. He is helping you to approach nearer and nearer to His lotus feet."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, your words imply all the mellows of conjugal *rasa* and any other valuable secrets we may wish to learn. Nothing is missing from your instructions. By following your orders, everything will be revealed to us—when we are qualified.

You also asked Sudāmā to send you blank tapes for recording your lectures in India. "Mark the mail package, 'valueless.'" Śrīla Prabhupāda, you said you heard that Kārtikeya dāsa had returned to our camp. "Engage him artfully; he can become a great preacher."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, when I was singing, I thought of you approving my actions. You are right and devotees are right and my singing is right—everything I'm doing is right, but the quality needs to be increased.

O Prabhupāda, may we live in you until we die; may we serve in this life and the next. May we study your words and repeat them with joy and conviction. May we know Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā through you.

Samādhi Mandir, 4 P.M.

Just before coming here, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I made an outline for a lecture on the last chapters of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā*. It leaves me feeling uplifted—"The Lord's Madness of Separation." I know nothing about it, but just to read those verses and assemble them for class uplifts me.

Prabhupāda, let me be pure. I read in *Śikṣāṣṭakam* how Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī cares only for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. I want to be like that too, but I want to approach that devotion through you.

You said that we are moved by desire. You said you came to America because you had a desire to preach. Desire also carries us to our next body. Under all my rhetoric, what and whom do I love? What do I actually desire to achieve? Who am I? The answer to those questions determines where I will go and in what capacity I will live and serve. Who would be such a fool as to maintain or cultivate material desire? Prabhupāda, you worked to save us, save me. Therefore, you are the personification of the preaching spirit. Please make me in your image.

Prabhupāda's Room, 4:36 P.M.

The door was locked at 4:30, so we sat in an outdoor alcove under the low branches of the trees, sipping water from a coconut which the *pūjārī* gave us as *mahā-prasādam* in the Samādhi Mandir. Now they've let us in.



Selling beadbags and books at the counter. Her duty is to open the rooms and sit there. She wants to do it. We each have some service, voluntary or compulsory. I want to come here. I'm also compelled.

We all hope we can improve. Why else do we come to Vṛndāvana and roll in its dust and go out on *parikramas* to the most sacred places? We ask for a boon. We ask the dust to grant us a drop of appreciation for Vṛndāvana and for devotional service. I do the same when I come to Śrīla Prabhupāda's room. Here it's most direct. I face my spiritual master. One might even say it's frightening to come so directly in front of he who can order you to do whatever he likes. One could also be cynical: "You don't *have* to do what he says. You can make up some excuse and say you didn't hear him or you don't believe he can instruct you after his disappearance. Besides, you get headaches."

I'm not *that* fearful or cynical, although I may have a touch of each. I used to like to come before Śrīla Prabhupāda. I fully trusted him. I knew it was in my own soul's interest to do as he said. That full faith of my youth—I want to recapture it. Maybe I'm more surrendered now. Now I take into account more my total self and I'm more aware of my limits. I act maturely on his order. But there was something nice back then. "What do you want me to do? Where shall I go?" Sometimes the tests were too great. He allowed us to express our inclinations.

I'm waiting for the meetings to end so I can go forth and try to do it, to serve Prabhupāda without the close support of these *tīrtha* visits (I'll miss them).

Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda, the whirring of the fan and its motor remind me that prayer to you is a constant thing. I like to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with a sigh and with a tone that goes deeper than the conversations around me. I chant the *mahā-mantra* in service to you.

The letter to Sudāmā is still on your desk. Someone said if I liked, I could continue to read one of your letters each day when I'm away from here and imagine that I'm in your room. I doubt it will be the same.

October 12, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Prabhupāda, my regular visits to your *tīrthas* are coming to an end. The seminar duties are closing in on me. May Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva protect my devotion to you.

They gave me a piece of a *gamchā* you wore in Vṛndāvana. I will put it on my altar. I had a flash that if death came now, I'd have to accept that too, and the fact that I have no taste for chanting the holy name. I consign my fate to you.

My mind wants to love you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. During *maṅgala-ārati*, I thought how we sometimes use the word "Prabhupāda" and speak of allegiance to him, but it's not personal, it's vague. We actually forget him. We run "our" institution and use his name. This is done by every group with every different shade of opinion. I'm not saying that no one is sincere, but I want to go beyond saying only socially acceptable things

about Prabhupāda *only because they are socially acceptable*. It's better to say something real and sincerely attempted in surrender.

For example someone may think, "I find it hard to accept what Śrīla Prabhupāda says about women." On the surface, that sounds like doubt in the spiritual master, yet it might be said by someone who loves Prabhupāda and who follows him with faith. On the other hand, the pat statement that "I accept women as less intelligent because Prabhupāda said it" might appear loyal, but might be said by someone less grateful and dedicated to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I don't want a cotton wadding instead of the real Śrīla Prabhupāda whom I am trying to love. It's obvious I've failed to love and serve him one hundred percent, but I'm trying to improve.

Samādhi Mandir, 10 A.M.

A dirty beggar woman is standing in the middle of the Samādhi Mandir. They allow her to take *caraṇāmṛta*, which she collects in a clay pot. Then two guards come in and throw her out. One guard gave her a push out the door and the other slapped his stick on the ground. They didn't want anyone begging in the Mandir.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, do you notice the change in weather?

All he does is chase pigeons all day by clapping his hands. Maybe he even does it at night in his sleep. And

I, with a bubbling spring of writing practice, clap my hands to chase away the blues.

You know my fear, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that I will spend my last years coasting and reaping honors as one of your senior-most disciples. "Tell us about the old days with Śrīla Prabhupāda." I want to tell new stories of your presence in my life. Nirañjana Swami, for example, told how he witnessed your potency wherever he traveled in Russia and the former Soviet Union. That's up-to-date Prabhupāda-*līlā*. Prabhupāda in Bosnia, at the Miami airport, on television, at a conference in Poland where Śaunaka Ṛṣi dāsa assures the people that we are not a dangerous cult. Prabhupāda of the Centennial. And my Prabhupāda in the *mūrti* in my room.

I can go back to those old days, but not as a museum piece. We have to be interested in your life in all its aspects. Is he vital and pure in his own movement? Can I help keep peace? Can I help fight *māyā* and work to purge out an anti-Prabhupāda spirit?

Live until you die, as the saying goes. Madhu is going to arrange for some devotees to take photographs of these places for me so I can look at the pictures when I'm traveling. I'm leaving soon. Most important, though, is to plant indelible impressions in my mind and memory. I came here day after day. I looked up to him and saw his shiny features and the light reflecting off the bronze.

Jaya Gaurasundara dāsa just walked in. I stopped and talked to him and his wife for a few minutes about his son's marriage and travel. That always happens—our relationship is so domestic. We're a family and we chat and exchange news. If I were more lofty, I could pick up

our conversation, but instead, I stopped. It didn't feel right to discuss these things in here in front of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Marriage . . . cooking . . . airplane tickets . . . but Śrīla Prabhupāda, these are very dear disciples of yours, rare even among Vaiṣṇava Indian families. So many Gujaratis are born as worshipers of Kṛṣṇa and follow the four rules their whole lives, but how few recognize Your Divine Grace as their guru and see the need to throw off all sentimental Hindu ideas and fully accept Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as the Supreme Lord.

Prabhupāda's Room, 10:30 A.M.

You said that the *brāhmaṇa* is the intellectual. He studies *śāstra* and writes books. He doesn't have to do the *kṣatriya's* or the *vaiśya's* work. Kṛṣṇa doesn't ask Vyāsadeva to fight on the battlefield like Arjuna, you said. He asks Vyāsa to write books. Yet when Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted to teach *bhakti-yoga*, He called for His friend, Arjuna. The writer is employed in service, but he isn't necessarily the dearest friend of the Lord just because he can turn words into print. The friend, the devotee with no self-interest, is the Lord's dearmost. Therefore, I must be careful not to be carried away in sheer writing joy and forget for whom it is intended.

The letter on your desk today is to Makhanlal, January 1972. You accepted the devotees he recommended for initiation. You could initiate without limit. "These are all very nice boys and girls, that I can understand." You told Makhanlal to take charge of the new initiates

and to give them guidance on the path back to Godhead. "Practically the leadership of the Kṛṣṇa conscious society is now in the hands of you, my older disciples, and I am very pleased that you are taking such huge responsibility very seriously. Be sober, cool-headed and always think of Kṛṣṇa somehow or other."

Your immortal words flow through us in the exact way that you said them: "Be responsible, cool-headed, sober, and always think of Kṛṣṇa."

"There is no doubt this movement will one day conquer all over the world." Be convinced of the philosophy, keep up the standards of book distribution, cleansing, chanting, daily worship, study, improve—don't neglect, "And in every way become the perfect Kṛṣṇa conscious example of angel."

New garlands have arrived—all orange marigolds. A small, delicate garland for the pictures—roses alternating with white "*pārijātas*." The letter on your desk, under the water cup, flaps in the breeze. Sparrows chirp outside. The distant thud of a drum, like a heartbeat, coming from the twenty-four hour *kīrtana* in the temple. Black floors, black floors. I will remember this place.

October 14, Prabhupāda's Room, 5 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I think this will be the last morning I'll come here early in the morning to be alone with you.

I am bursting with news, but better I not speak it. Better I hear what you want for me.



I heard you yesterday, Śrīla Prabhupāda. You were speaking on the disappearance of your Guru Mahārāja in 1973 in Los Angeles. You told how you first met him and how he asked all his disciples, especially his educated ones, to preach in the West. At the end of this talk your voice cracked and you cried in gratitude to your disciples. You said, "You are all helping me to serve my Guru Mahārāja. Thank you very much." It was valuable for me to hear such gratitude and feeling. You command us and that is your right. You even said an astrologer read your palm, "Your order will be followed." Yes, we will all follow your order. Now I know a little better how soft at heart you are and how deeply grateful to your disciples when they work on your behalf.

Prabhupāda, one of my disciples is sick. The doctors say he may have tuberculosis. His name is Rāma-rāya dāsa, and he reads your books more than anyone I know practically. He also distributes them. He loves Vṛndāvana-dhāma and to serve Rādhā-Śyāma. I hope he won't die young, but will live to develop his Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Yet, one by one we have to go. Please let Rāma-rāya think of you at the end, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and let him remember Lord Kṛṣṇa. Please allow me to help him.

Prabhupāda's Room

After the class tonight, we went into Prabhupāda's room and had a pleasant surprise. Fifteen *gurukula* boys were sitting around your desk chanting. I think they were really talking among themselves when we entered,

but then they all stood up respectfully. I asked them what they were doing and they said that they chanted *japa* at this time. Then they all sat down and began chanting *japa* earnestly.

I chanted *gāyatrī*, and as I did so, I tried to think of the meaning of the prayers. When I thought of the verse about how Prabhupāda gives pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, I remembered how I used to chant that prayer last year, praying that Prabhupāda would reveal to me his form in the spiritual world. Now I think I should pray to Prabhupāda to reveal to me whatever he wants to reveal to me. I only wish to serve him and to know him more and more intimately.

When I chanted the last two mantras, I almost laughed to myself how little I realize of those prayers. I chant them because they're the mantras Prabhupāda gave me, so I can only hope that someday they will mean something to me. Prabhupāda gave them to me knowing that my faithful chanting of the Sanskrit vibrations would purify me. I want to know more of Prabhupāda's understanding.

After thinking all this, I glanced at Prabhupāda and realized that I simply want to know him as he is, in the form in which he appeared to us—that golden *sannyāsī* preacher who came to us in New York in 1966.

The whole visit to his rooms was a real treat this evening, especially being able to chant with those boys. I chanted a couple of rounds and thought, "*This* is the nectar. I have to leave Vṛndāvana, but when I come to Prabhupāda's room, I will always see this place as full of nectar. This is what I came to Vṛndāvana for, to chant with the devotees in Prabhupāda's presence."