

# Nimāi's Detour

A Story

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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CARE OF GITA-NAGARI PRESS  
RD #1, BOX 837-K  
PORT ROYAL, PA 17082.

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Printed in the United States of America  
Limited Edition: 2,000 copies

ISBN 0-911233-47-4

Cover design and illustrations by:  
Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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## NIMĀI'S DETOUR

Preface

(by N.d.b.)

My name is Nimāi dāsa brahmacārī and I was written up in the book *Nimāi dāsa and the Mouse*, which told about my friendship with three devotees in mice bodies. I was with them for six months until I left them in Guyana. Now my Gurudeva has asked me to write my own account about the stuff that has happened to me in the last six months ending with my coming to be his servant. (Mercy!) Gurudeva thought that if I write down exactly what happened I'll be better able to see where I went off and prevent it in the future. He said maybe it would also be helpful for others.

The writer, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, said he also wanted to write more about me. I don't know why so much attention should be paid to an insignificant *jīva*-soul, but I suppose it could be instructive. There's a *Bhāgavatam* section that says even animals can be seen as *gurus*. For example, we can learn from the dog because he's faithful and we can learn from the bees because they are after the nectar. As for the story, I'll tell some and S.d.g. will tell some. My main concern is to do the right thing and follow my superiors. So that's what I'll do by writing this.

It all starts when I left Guyana after I let Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna (my mice) free to preach. But before I go into the details of who I met, where I went, and what happened, I want to admit that I've really

been in *māyā*. I'm not trying to blame anyone. Somebody said I'm a victim of bad association. But I don't think that the people I met are bad. They're not. The fact is they didn't know much more than I did, and yet they acted as if they did and so they influenced me. That's one thing I think I've learned: it's better to stick to myself and my *guru* and not get swept up in other people's trips. Anyway, I admit that I've been in *māyā*. But I was looking for the right thing, and I still am. By now you're probably wondering, "What has this to do with Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

## CHAPTER 1

(by S.d.g.)

It took Nimāi dāsa about a day to discover what he had lost. When he said good-bye to Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna, he did not expect to be so devastated by their absence. At first he was preoccupied with traveling. He and Keśava Prabhu had to wait three hours at the Georgetown airport, due to the usual Guyanese delays, before the flight departed. Then he was busy talking for an hour with Keśava. Keśava was going to disembark in Trinidad to do more business, and Nimāi would continue alone. They spent their time talking about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and especially how Nimāi could improve himself to merit his wife.

“It’s not just material qualifications,” Keśava said, “but it’s getting ready for a serious lifetime’s service. Somebody who thinks he’s ready to get married just because he’s sexually agitated is not at all ready. You have to be sober and prepared to expand your service and in a practical way take care of other living beings, starting with your wife and family.”

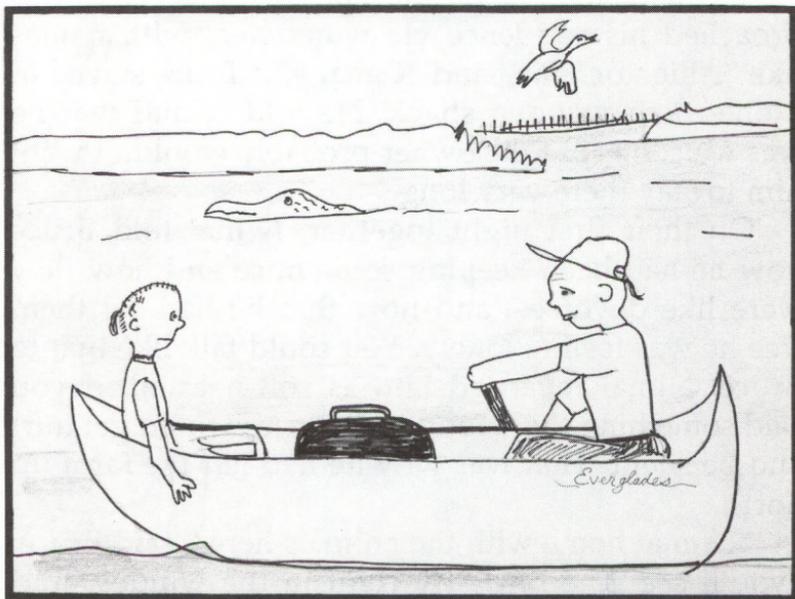
These talks, as well as sharing *prasādam* with Keśava, kept Nimāi occupied until Keśava left. But then it hit him. The plane was on the ground, and Nimāi was completely alone in the rear section. Previously whenever he was by himself, he would turn to Choṭa. But now he was alone. Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna were not there. The first thing that occurred to Nimāi was that he had lost his best friend. Then it occurred to him that he had lost his devotional service,

which was to train the mice and supervise their preaching. He also felt as if he had lost his inner life. Talking with Choṭa had been Nimāi's method of introspection as well as his prayer to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. By cheering up the subordinate mice, Nimāi was always able to pull himself out of depression. In intimate friendship with Choṭa he could speak his heart. Now that was all gone and he didn't know what to do. He could not check his tears.

"I should have asked Gurudeva about this," Nimāi thought. "I didn't know everything would change! What should I do now?" He thought of writing a letter, but his emotions and thoughts were too jumbled.

When the plane landed in Miami, Nimāi decided not to take the ongoing flight to Pennsylvania. He felt too empty and would not be able to explain himself to Vibhu Prabhu and the other devotees. Neither did Gurudeva or Keśava Prabhu order him to return to the farm; they just assumed that he would. Nimāi thought of his friend, Bruce the Hermit, who lived in the Florida everglades. Bruce used to live with the devotees on the farm where he was known as a hard worker, but he had some disagreements and decided to live alone. He had found a place deep in the everglades where he was employed as a caretaker and was mostly left undisturbed. Bruce lived like a hermit, chanting fifty rounds daily, writing his Kṛṣṇa conscious observations in a diary, and sometimes sending letters to friends like Nimāi. Nimāi thought

maybe he could go to Bruce's for a while, chant extra rounds, and read Prabhupāda's books while waiting to recover from the empty feeling. Nimāi phoned and Bruce agreed, although he said it would take him a full day to paddle a canoe from the swamps out to the nearest bus stop.



"You're the first devotee I've ever brought here," said Bruce, as they paddled back into the everglades. "Mostly I spend my time alone, chanting my rounds, working in the garden, or building for the owner of the place. But I like it that way. I feel more peaceful now than I ever have."

Bruce was in his forties and about 6'4" tall. He had spent most of his life in Florida, where he held jobs similar to the one he had now, caretaking for remote

campgrounds or boating outposts. He said the local people tolerated him and even accepted his "religious ways." Although he was living by himself, Bruce wore the shaven head and *sikhā* of a Vaiṣṇava, and he dressed in saffron pants and a saffron T-shirt. Nimāi felt at ease listening to Bruce's assertions of peace and God consciousness in the solitary life. They approached his residence via waterways with names like "Alligator Way" and "Canal #3." Bruce stayed in a one-room wooden shack. He told Nimāi that he was welcome, but the owner probably wouldn't want him to stay there very long.

On their first night together, Nimāi told Bruce how he had been keeping some mice and how they were like devotees, and now that he had set them free he was feeling lonely. You could talk like that to Bruce. Nimāi regarded him as soft-hearted. If you said something the wrong way, Bruce would get hurt and be silent. That was why he had left the farm up north.

"I am at home with the animals here," said Bruce, "you'll see. The birds fly right in the window and they're not afraid of me. I even let the alligators walk around. I don't hurt them and they don't hurt me."

In the morning, they chanted *japa* together for four hours, and then Bruce went out to work in the garden and on the house he was building. Nimāi stayed indoors and read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Nimāi was drawn to read the story of Nārada Muni in the First Canto. He had always liked that story, and Gurudeva had mentioned it during their last talk. Nimāi was looking for a particular purport

he seemed to remember, how Nārada had been close to the Lord, but then had lost the vision and felt bereft. He found it in the Sixth Chapter, Eighteenth verse:

The transcendental form of the Lord, as it is, satisfies the mind's desire and at once erases all mental incongruities. Upon losing that form, I suddenly got up, being perturbed, as is usual when one loses that which is desirable.

Although he was only five years old, Nārada had learned from visiting sages how to meditate on Kṛṣṇa. After Nārada's mother died, Nārada was all alone, and when he meditated on Kṛṣṇa, he directly saw the transcendental form of the Lord and felt great ecstasy. But when he tried to meditate again, the Lord did not appear. Prabhupāda had written, "Nārada Muni got a glimpse of this, but having not seen it again he became perturbed and stood up all of a sudden to search it out. What we desire life after life was obtained by Nārada Muni, and losing sight of Him again was certainly a great shock for him." Nimāi couldn't help but compare himself to Nārada, although he knew any exact resemblance was ridiculous. Nārada had seen Kṛṣṇa, and Nimāi had seen only a small miracle of Kṛṣṇa's. "It was by Kṛṣṇa's grace," thought Nimāi, "that I was able to talk with those mice, and now by His grace, it's gone."

Nimāi read on. The *Bhāgavatam* explained that the Lord did not appear again to Nārada but spoke and said, "I regret that during this lifetime you will not be able to see Me anymore. Those who are incomplete in service and are not completely free from all

material taints can hardly see Me." It was just to increase Nārada's hankerings for Kṛṣṇa that Kṛṣṇa disappeared from him, and when Nārada understood it, he felt grateful. After that, Nārada began chanting the holy name and traveling all over the earth "fully satisfied, humble, and unenvious."

"Easier said than done," thought Nimāi. "I'm no Nārada. I don't even know what I should do." Nimāi did know that sooner or later he should write his spiritual master for directions, but he didn't want to do that yet. He thought that Gurudeva might like him to think this one out for himself so that he would have a deeper realization.

After a quiet week in the swamps, Bruce remarked that the owner would be coming to check up and Nimāi had better move on.

## CHAPTER 2

(N.d.b.)

I heard that Prabhupāda said in a letter we should not eulogize *māyā* so much but should praise Kṛṣṇa. I should follow that because I'm always writing about how *māyā* bewildered me, so if you listen to me, you'll just be hearing about *māyā*. But I don't want to do that. I wish I could just talk about Kṛṣṇa and think about Him and that's all. But I can't imitate.

I would like to explain more how I felt after Choṭa left. I dreamt of them. I dreamt the mice were being chased down a road by a big hog and Choṭa was calling to me and I was trying to help them find a hole to run into. When I remembered the good times we had together, I would sometimes cry. When I lost my association with the mice, I reverted to what I was before and I started remembering how people used to bother me at the farm. (That's why I didn't want to go back there.) I also started thinking of stuff from over five years ago before I was a devotee, like rock music I used to listen to, and I thought of my mother and father. I was even about to phone them, but I didn't. No one would be able to understand. But I needed to talk to someone. I could only go so far with Bruce. He thought that all animals were nice and should never be killed and that they were as good as humans. He was much more fond of animals than I am. I was never really that close to animals, just to Choṭa. Because he wasn't an animal really, but a spirit soul.

Now I'll tell you something that will make you

laugh. I looked into the *Bhāgavatam* section where Arjuna feels bereft after Kṛṣṇa left the planet, because I identified with him. I never had *powers* like Arjuna, but I could identify with the painting where Arjuna is crying and telling Yudhiṣṭhira that he lost his powers now that Kṛṣṇa's gone. Śukadeva Gosvāmī said that Arjuna was overwhelmed and distressed because Lord Kṛṣṇa was out of his sight; his lotus-like heart had dried up and his body had lost all luster. Arjuna said, "I am bereft of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by whose influence I was so powerful."

But Arjuna was a great devotee and so he was able to remember again the instructions of the *Bhāgavad-gītā*, and then he got better and found relief for his burning heart. My problem was that I couldn't remember any relevant instructions. So I was in *mā-yā*. The very thing that was causing me sorrow was something that I could not express to anyone. With Gurudeva in a couple of meetings I'd gotten *close* to saying it, but to no one else.

Actually it's no mystery what I experienced, and I know I'm not special. If you have ever loved someone in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and that person went away for some reason, then you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you can also understand now why I didn't want to go back to the farm. They'd have to invent new names to describe the state I was in. "Nimāi the gnome" would be too good for me. Sometimes they call me "Nee-mind." That means my mind takes over; the restless, powerful mind. I hope you don't mind my saying all this. Unless I can relate my life *in some way* to Kṛṣṇa, what's the use? I don't

want to eulogize *māyā*, although I know she is supremely powerful.

When I left Bruce's, I met another devotee. He was on his way to India and said he had an extra ticket. He was a devotee of a *guru* in our movement, but the *guru* left and joined the Marines. So this devotee, Pūjā dāsa, was bitter. I met him in Govinda's restaurant in downtown Miami where I went because I didn't know where else to go.



Pūjā said, "You've got to think for yourself." That was his motto. He said, "I blindly followed authority and look where it got me." I told him what I had been doing, but not about the mice. It's not that I was

going around telling everyone *that*. When someone asked me what I was doing, I said, "I've been traveling with my Gurudeva in the Caribbean, and now I am not sure what I'll do. I'm a little burnt out."

I was burnt out, but not like Pūjā and the others I started meeting who said that they were burnt because of following the authorities. But I started getting influenced by him. I told him that my temple president, Vibhu, was a real heavy authority. I think I was offensive to say that about Vibhu, but being with Pūjā made me say it. No, I take that back—it was my own fault. Pūjā said, "Grow up, Nimāi." He kept saying *grow up* and that impressed me. He made me think maybe I shouldn't follow authorities.

Pūjā was going to India to do what he thought best and he said that all devotees should just do whatever they feel in their heart. That way a person wouldn't be misled and he could grow up.

I asked him what he was going to do in India. He said maybe travel to holy places, but he was thinking of going somewhere to live in seclusion and chant and worship his Deities. He said some far out things. He said nobody in our movement has really advanced, and that was because we were all agitated from living in the cities in the West, and by too much opulence.

I said, "Prabhupāda says that things can be used in Kṛṣṇa's service, for preaching."

"Yeah, but look," he said. "Look at how many devotees have fallen down. I think if Prabhupāda had seen so many falldowns he would just tell everyone to go to India and chant and live very simply."

I said, "But Prabhupāda writes that we can't imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura and live alone."

Pūjā had an answer for that too, although I can't remember what it was. But at the time I was affected. I thought, "Maybe this is what I need." It also seemed as if Kṛṣṇa was making the arrangements. Here was Pūjā offering me a free ticket to go to India with him. So I thought this might be the best way to get away from my feelings of loss and, as he said, to grow up and find out what I wanted to do.

Pūjā never spoke against *my* spiritual master, but sometimes he generalized about "those guys on a *guru* trip." I didn't consider that as a blasphemy, but now I see it wasn't good. The proof is I didn't think that I should first ask Gurudeva's permission before going to India. I figured it was too difficult to get in touch with him in Guyana and I rationalized that it would be okay.

Pūjā carried Deities with him, and I was attracted to Them, so that was nice. And Pūjā was serious about reading Prabhupāda's books as well as other Vaiṣṇava books by Prabhupāda's Godbrothers and different Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*. I figured if I traveled with him it might be good for me to learn different things about the Vaiṣṇava philosophy in general. I didn't think much ahead about what I would do in India. At least it was something to do and it was bold. I admit I liked the idea of being a little rebellious, not that you have to ask five temple presidents and six *saṅkīrtana* leaders and other department heads in a temple for permission before you do something. With the books and with Supersoul, a person ought

to be able to decide for himself. That's how I was thinking, after spending an afternoon with Pūjā.

## CHAPTER 3

(S.d.g.)

Nimāi could hardly believe that he was flying to India, at night, with no clear destination and no specific devotional service awaiting him. He knew it was reckless, but since there was nothing that he really wanted to do in the United States, or anywhere, what did it matter? At least he had his *japa* beads so he could chant and he had his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and maybe like Pūjā dāsa, he would do solitary chanting in a holy place in India. According to Pūjā, you didn't really have to know exactly what you wanted to do. You just went ahead and explored. Too many devotees, Pūjā said, claimed to know exactly what to do—but they were either lording it over other devotees, or they were victims being manipulated by the authorities. So to wander and maintain your own Kṛṣṇa consciousness wasn't such a bad thing. The more Nimāi heard, the more he became confused. He couldn't figure things out, but thought that Kṛṣṇa would reveal everything in time.

He inquired more from Pūjā about his plans.

"The plane lands in Delhi," Pūjā said. "So we can visit Vṛndāvana."

"Will we stay at Prabhupāda's temple?"

"We can visit there," said Pūjā. "But if we want to stay there they'll charge us ten rupees a day, unless we do full time service. I'm not opposed to working, but as soon as you stay at a temple the authorities think that they own you."

Pūjā proposed to ration out his few hundred dol-

lars and stay at an inexpensive *dhārmāsala* where he could conduct his own spiritual program without interference.

"I'll stay with you if that's all right," said Nimāi.

"Sure," said Pūjā. "We can have our own little *ku-tir*."

When the plane stopped in London, another devotee boarded. He was instantly recognizable by his *kūrta*, *dhotī*, and *sikhā*. He said he was also going to India, and he was also a disciple of a spiritual master who had given up the regulative practices of devotional life. His plane seat was in a different section, but they talked with him for a while. He said he was planning to meet up with a devotee from Italy, and they would visit the temples in South India. Like Pūjā dāsa, the English devotee was not connected to any temple or serving any authority, and he didn't think that he wanted to be connected in that way in the foreseeable future.

Previously Nimāi had only heard briefly about such things as spiritual masters leaving their disciples. He never inquired into such matters, nor were they discussed much on the farm. But now he heard all about it from Pūjā. During the long flight, Pūjā told Nimāi about many scandals in the Movement. He said the leaders took advantage of their power and misspent money and misguided devotees by engaging them in activities like selling paintings instead of distributing books. And he told much more shocking things. He said a whole book had been written by a reporter about the crimes and bizarre misbehavior by the Movement's leaders, and so all of this was

common knowledge.

Nimāi was about to say, "None of the devotees I've worked for have done any terrible things," but then he thought that Pūjā might know some things Nimāi didn't and that he might tell stories about Nimāi's own leaders. Pūjā seemed to know all the dirt. No wonder he was disillusioned.

Nimāi didn't want to hear the bad stories that Pūjā might know about the farm, and besides Nimāi hadn't seen any scandals in his three years there. But still, you never knew for sure what was going on ....

Nimāi at least spoke up and praised his Gurudeva who was preaching purely on *pāda-yatra* in Guyana. Pūjā conceded that he had heard that Gurudeva was "one of the few exceptions." Pūjā then began to express that he had been badly hurt when his own *guru* had left. "I really worshiped him," said Pūjā, "just like you're supposed to worship the *guru*. My faith was shattered. Now I am like a cracked bell and I don't think I'll ever be the same. How can I fully trust anyone after that?"

By the time they landed in New Delhi, Nimāi was convinced that it wasn't safe to report into a temple for service as a menial *b. ahmacārī*. If he did that, he could easily be misled. Nimāi had also developed a sympathetic feeling for Pūjā, who was suffering from a hurt that Nimāi felt was similar to his own, or actually much worse. Hearing of Pūjā's sufferings helped Nimāi to get a clearer view of his own. He thought, "I was given a special taste of spiritual life and now it's gone. But at least I wasn't cheated."

## CHAPTER 4

(N.d.b.)

I want to make it clear that I never forgot Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna. I always expected to see them again. When we first parted it was a shock, probably for them too, but I started recalling them in substantial ways. If you have a Kṛṣṇa conscious relationship with someone, you benefit even when you're apart. This is the Vaiṣṇava philosophy of separation. Devotees used to joke with me and say I'd become a mouse in my next body for thinking of them, but I don't think of "mice." When I recall Choṭa, I think of preaching to conditioned souls and of valuable instructions for my own spiritual life and Vedic stories of devotees inducing animals to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. You wouldn't say, would you, that Ajāmila became a child in his next life just because he thought of his own child, Nārāyaṇa? No—because when he said Nārāyaṇa he said the name of God. (And Viśvanātha Cakravartī says that Ajāmila thought of the original Nārāyaṇa when he said his child's name.) So by thinking of Choṭa, I don't meditate on dumb rodents running out of holes to scavenge food. Thinking of them turns me from my usual *māyā* to more responsible devotional behavior and a spirit for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I know that sounds odd (or crazy), but that's how it works.

For the first few days after I left my mice, I missed being with them all the time. But when I saw how truly empty Pūjā dāsa was, it helped me count my own blessings and pick up the positive side of my

feelings of separation. For example, it was Choṭa who helped me to appreciate that you can think of Kṛṣṇa and render service to Him even in little ways. I learned that lesson when I had been thinking that the mice were small-time devotees. Choṭa was tiny in size, and the other two were even more untrained and unable to do much. So I thought, "What is the preaching value in this?" I told Choṭa that I was depressed because none of us were doing big service. He then told me how hard it was to live as a mouse, with danger at every step. And then he started to preach to me in a wonderful way. He said it's not the bigness of the service that pleases Kṛṣṇa, but our sincerity and devotion. It was from that point that Choṭa also began to express his desire to preach to other mice. He had great hopes, even though his body was so limited.

When I'm in a bad situation, or just in the normal routine, I think of how Choṭa was grateful to have *any* Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and how he tried to do little things for Kṛṣṇa. We can't imagine, for example, what a big thing it is for a mouse to control his sense gratification while eating. To "honor" *prasādam* instead of just ripping it open and eating it is itself devotional service. And if a person can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa nicely, that also is very pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. So no service is "small time" if by "small" you mean stupid and displeasing to Kṛṣṇa. I usually forget how to render even little acts in a way to please Kṛṣṇa and *guru*, but when I do remember, it's usually by remembering how Choṭa preached in little ways. When I think of the mice, I think of their humble,

grateful, enthusiastic service. Does it sound like I'll become a mouse by thinking of Choṭa? I don't think so. Whenever I think of them I get fired up to pray to Kṛṣṇa and remember that I want to be His friend and servant. At least I realize better how insignificant I am.

Those mice are devotees. Kṛṣṇa allows some creatures in lowly species to teach us valuable things. You can learn devotion even from the snakes, dogs, birds, and butterflies, so what to speak of, as sometimes happens, a creature who is able to chant and hear. It's possible.

I like the way Gurudeva deals with me in this regard. He has never said, "Nimāi, you have to prove to me scientifically that these mice can talk to you. Until I hear it I won't believe it and I forbid you to keep these mice or think about them." No, he just saw the gold in the filthy place (me). It did not seem important to him *how much* Kṛṣṇa consciousness was being communicated between me and the mice. But Gurudeva knew that something good was there. So I want to be like that. I mean, I just want to be happy with the ability Kṛṣṇa has given me to remember Him and to serve Him, even in little ways, and *all the time* if possible. And when I think of Choṭa, that helps me to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. So why should anybody object and why should I think I have to *prove something*?

When I first parted from my mice, it was hard because I couldn't talk with other devotees about my feeling sad. Everyone thought of me as someone who missed his pet mice. I became too attached to

wanting people to understand me and appreciate me. But if I know my relationship with Choṭa is Kṛṣṇa conscious and that it can continue in separation, why is it so important that I convince others? It's not. If I learn something Kṛṣṇa conscious, I should share it rather than try to prove to them that I have a wonderful, unusual relationship with Kṛṣṇa, as if He has empowered me and everyone should listen to me.

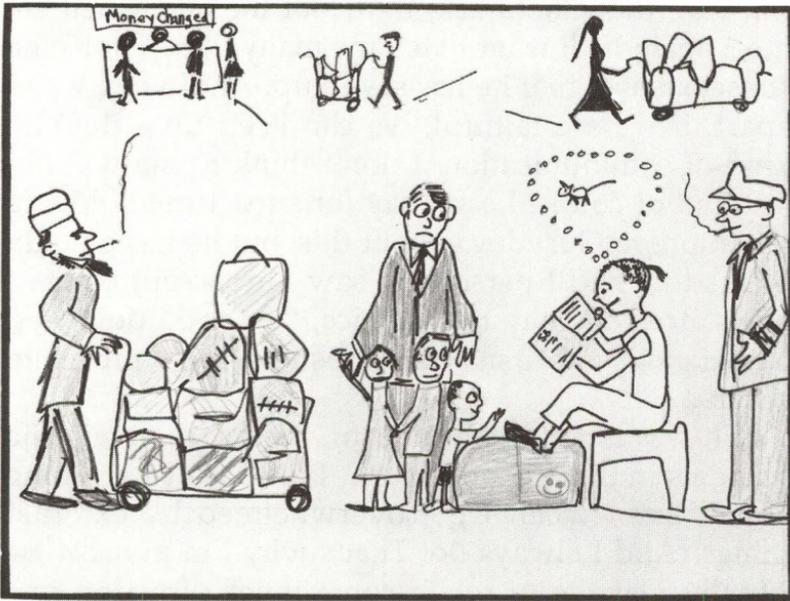
There was no need for me to feel devastated in separating from the mice. I agreed to go back to see them after six months. And I should have known that I could always think of their encouraging example. I'm sure that Choṭa also thinks of me and when we meet again he'll want to tell me many things in Kṛṣṇa consciousness that he has saved up. And when we're apart, if we are faithful, we can keep up a definite kind of communication. I don't think Kṛṣṇa will object, but of course I can't say for sure. I *would* like to talk more to Gurudeva about this, but he has already blessed us and I personally saw him accept Choṭa's obeisances and say to the mice, "Be good devotees. Nimāi gave you Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so go preach to others."

This was more important to me than all the scandals in the Movement that Pūjā dāsa was talking about. Even when I get overwhelmed by external things (And I always do! That's why I'm in *māyā!*), I usually manage to retain some inner direction and *that's* why thinking of Choṭa and communicating with him is valuable.

## CHAPTER 5

(N.d.b.)

When I arrived in India, although I was much further away from Choṭa by physical miles, I felt closer. I think we have some kind of mental telepathy between us. It's not like a telephone you can talk back and forth on, but Choṭa is sometimes present in my thoughts. So he was suddenly right there when I was waiting for the luggage in the Delhi airport while all these crazy things were going on around us at two in the morning.



I am unsure of this, and so I intend to confirm later when I meet with Choṭa, whether he experienced the same thing at the same time. It seems that if two people are intently thinking of each other, they can connect.

Since it was unusual, and I don't want to get into trouble, I thought again of the remark that Bhīma made once in the *saṅkīrtana* van. He said that I would take my next birth as a mouse, just as Mahārāja Bharata had to take birth as a stag, because he was thinking of a deer at the time of his death. So while waiting with Pūjā dāsa for the luggage, I got out my one-volume edition of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and looked up the story of Mahārāja Bharata.

First of all, Mahārāja Bharata was a great devotee; all of India was named after him and I'm named "gnome." So there's no comparison. And yet as elevated as Mahārāja Bharata was, his relationship with the fawn wasn't auspicious. The fawn used to butt him with its head when Mahārāja Bharata was meditating, and then he would stop his devotional service and play with the little deer. He stopped all his religious regulative duties because of this deer. When Mahārāja Bharata was preparing a sacrifice, the deer would come and pollute the *kuśa* grass. But with me and Choṭa and Yamala and Arjuna, our friendship was spiritual. Maybe there was some "pollution" because they couldn't do everything as nicely as a human *brāhmaṇa*, but they tried their best according to time and circumstances. With Mahārāja Bharata,

when the deer went away, the Mahārāja became extremely attached and lamented. Well, *that did* happen to me and I realize it's illusion. Mahārāja Bharata worried that the deer might be killed by ferocious animals, and I do that too. But at least I don't carry them with me anymore and try to protect them. We're just doing our service and depending on Kṛṣṇa. But Prabhupāda writes something very heavy on this point of attachment:

Even such an exalted personality as Bharata Mahārāja, who had attained loving affection for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, fell down from his position due to his affection for some animal. Consequently, as will be seen, he had to accept the body of a deer in his next life. Since this was the case with Bharata Mahārāja, what can we say of those who are not advanced in spiritual life but who become attached to cats and dogs? Due to their affection for their cats and dogs, they have to take the same bodily forms in the next life unless they clearly increase their affection and love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.8.12, purport

So it's risky. But the test is whether I am Kṛṣṇa conscious. And I think that whatever little Kṛṣṇa consciousness I have, it is helped by preaching to the mice. Even the devotees at the farm noticed that when I first met Choṭa. I've just got to be very careful not to get sentimental or on the bodily platform.

I want to be perfectly honest in this writing because, dear Gurudeva, I am actually writing this for you. You're the one who asked me to write it. So in order for this to be helpful to you in judging my case—whether to tell me I'm a complete nonsense or

whatever—I should really state all the facts. Therefore, another thing I sometimes do is talk out loud. It's really a simple thing, and I've noticed other people do it. It's thinking out loud, that's all. It especially happens when you're in anxiety, or if you're lonely, and of course most people only do it when they are alone. If you do it around other people, they think you're crazy. I've heard that even great and famous people have been known to do this. And the *gopīs* did it also. I was just about to write down "Lord Caitanya did it also," but if I do that, it will look like I'm trying to say I'm like Him. What I'm saying is, I regard Choṭa as a Vaiṣṇava. If a devotee sometimes has a favorite devotee and when they're not together one of them thinks out loud about the other, is that so wrong? So I did it, not at length but I just said spontaneously, "Well Choṭa, here we are in India."

I've been defending all these activities, but now I want to admit that I know they need to be judged by a higher authority. Because, even if it's true that my mental telepathy with Choṭa is not bogus and even if talking out loud is spiritual affection between Vaiṣṇavas—the question still remains, "*Why don't I just do all these activities directly in relation to guru and Kṛṣṇa?*" I think that's a good question that I have to face and try to answer.

I'll leave the decision up to Gurudeva. But I *can* say that just because I think or even "pray" to Choṭa, doesn't mean that I don't also pray to the Lord and to my spiritual master. Talking to my devotee friend is a natural thing that can lead to higher thinking. Maybe this is all pride and mental madness, but if anybody

who doesn't know me is reading this and hasn't quit so far, I ask that you please consider my situation kindly, because I don't mean harm and I'm talking about someone very dear to me.

There was a long delay waiting for the luggage. I sat alone while Pūjā stood in line to change his money. Then I decided to write a letter to Choṭa and put all these feelings of separation into a concrete form of communication. Here's my letter:

February 20,

2:30 A.M.

Dear Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda .

How are you? I have been devastated by losing the spiritual taste of associating with you. This especially happened almost immediately after I was alone on the plane from Guyana. Now I have started to recover by cultivating feelings of separation. Choṭa, tonight you were present in my thoughts. That is one reason I'm writing this letter, just to put down the date and time so that when we meet again, you can see if you were also thinking of me.

I think you will be surprised to know that I have come all the way to India, for the first time in my life. It happened very fast, when a devotee offered me a free ticket. I don't know exactly why I'm here, except I didn't want to go back to my old temple. I am hearing some different things about the Movement,

and I think I just have to work out my own plans for a while.

In case you are feeling sad (like me) about our not being together, I have some advice. Remember the teachings about *vapuh* and *vāṇī*? The Vaiṣṇava conclusion is that although being personally present with a devotee is very relishable, it's more important to be with them through instruction. Prabhupāda has said that we live together through the sound vibration. That means the instruction and, of course, the chanting. When we chant, even if we're in different parts of the world, we're together. Which is more important, the *vapuh* or the *vāṇī*? I'm sure you'll give the right answer and this will help you when you apply it.

I think of your preaching activities. Sometimes I feel very protective, but I know there's nothing I can do and also that Kṛṣṇa is protecting you. You are very brave souls, braver than me. I don't know why it is that Kṛṣṇa puts me in the position of giving you advice, since I should follow your example. Actually I do follow your example, especially when I think how you are very tiny creatures, but you have big hearts like *mahātmās* and you risk your life for Kṛṣṇa by going out to preach. Even though I can't do the equivalent of what you do, I take heart in the fact that even if you are in one sense doing little things, you are offering them sincerely to Kṛṣṇa. I am limited in a different way, due to my own timidity (I don't know why they say mice are timid!), but I'm hoping that I can be sincere and that Kṛṣṇa will accept me and help me to improve.

Anyway, I know you like to hear some advice which I can pass down because I've heard it from the older devotees and Prabhupāda's books. So Prabhupāda would sometimes advise preachers not to overendeavor. You should always stay peaceful and do the types of *sādhana* that I taught you, especially in the morning. Don't become so passionate about preaching that you just run here and there. Also, you don't have to unnecessarily risk your lives. Try to do things in a calculated way. There will be dangers enough without your making wild risks. Prabhupāda use to quote, "discretion is the better part of valor." Another thing I thought of is that if you do find favorable response among the mice there, you should try as soon as possible to find a more serious one and train him up. If you can train up at least one local devotee-mouse, then the mission can be assured of continuing, even if something should happen to you.

Maybe when I come to Guyana we can go somewhere else and stay together permanently. Maybe we can do as Yamala suggested and stay on the farm and you can live free, but we could be together.

Have you talked to any other humans? Or do you have any better understanding of how it works? I haven't. But when I see different animals, I am much more aware now that they can hear the holy name and so I chant to them. And I feel more inclined in that way towards humans also. That is the mercy of your association.

I'll let you know what happens with me. Here is another nice passage I found from the scriptures. It's from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* section describing Lord

Caitanya's chanting to the animals. When Lord Caitanya saw that the tigers and deer were following Him, he quoted a verse describing Vṛndāvana. It goes like this:

Vṛndāvana is the transcendental abode of the Lord. There is no hunger, anger or thirst there. Though naturally inimical, both human beings and fierce animals live together there in transcendental friendship.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.13.60

In the same section, it's described how Lord Caitanya was followed by peacocks and different birds who were all maddened by the Lord's chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. And when He chanted "Haribol!" even the trees and creepers became happy to hear Him. In this connection Prabhupāda writes the following purport:

The loud chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is so powerful that it can even penetrate the ears of trees and creepers—what to speak of animals and human beings. Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu once asked Haridāsa Ṭhākura how trees and plants can be delivered, and Haridāsa Ṭhākura replied that the loud chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* would benefit not only trees and plants but insects and all other living beings. One should therefore not be disturbed by the loud chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, for it is beneficial not only to the chanter but to everyone who gets an opportunity to hear.

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 17.45, purport

Bye for now, I'm thinking of you in the service of  
*guru* and Kṛṣṇa,

Nimāi dāsa

## CHAPTER 6

(S.d.g.)

Nimāi entered Vṛndāvana like many other pilgrim-tourists, filled with awe and excitement for everything new. Even the little things thrilled him and enlivened his senses, such as the odors of the earth and the dung smoke and the sight of big black hogs walking the streets, and the monkeys! And almost everyone you met was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. If you greeted them with, "Hare Kṛṣṇa," they would call back, "Jaya Radhe!"

With little trouble Pūjā and Nimāi entered into a comfortable routine. The room they rented in the "*Prema Bhakti Asrama*" was very inexpensive. It had no toilet, but they would pass stool in the field like many Vṛndāvana residents, and they planned to do all their bathing in the Yamunā. They would be supplied *dāl* and *capātīs* once a day at the *āśrama*. Although life was austere, the new arrivals were ready to embrace it. Pūjā dāsa had been to India once but only for a three-week visit, so he didn't claim to know much more than Nimāi. But he was quick to point out the advantages of living on their own, rather than reporting in to the Movement's temple.

"You'll see," said Pūjā, "it will be very peaceful here without temple pressures. In a few weeks when the Movement's devotees come for their pilgrimage, the town will be filled with them, and you'll see men and women mixing together and devotees shopping constantly in the bazaars. And politics. But this is the real Vṛndāvana that we've come for."

Nimāi agreed. "I think I'm *really* going to like it," he said smiling. "Just the fact that all the people recognize you as a spiritual person, and they're all carrying beadbags and wearing *tilaka*. You feel like you'd like to stay here forever, like you're home."

"Maybe we can stay a long time," said Pūjā. "But it's up to Kṛṣṇa. You can only stay in the holy *dhāma* by His permission and the permission of Rādhārāṇī."

Pūjā and Nimāi kept similar schedules, with allowances for their particular tastes. Nimāi planned to spend at least two hours a day reading Prabhupāda's books and maybe extra time chanting. These were the most important things, and for years he'd never been able to do them with attention. Pūjā was keen to go out and see the holy places and Nimāi wanted to go too.

"The last time I was here," said Pūjā, "there was a nice *bābājī* named Gopidāsa Bābājī and he used to show the devotees around. I think I know where he lives."

Nimāi had been warned about *bābājīs* in India and how they could mislead you. He had heard Prabhupāda in his lectures mention *prakṛta-sahajiyās*, or persons who took the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa very cheaply and led people to assume that they could also very quickly enter a relationship with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

"This *bābājī* isn't a *sahajiyā* is he?" asked Nimāi.

"No, he's nice," said Pūjā. "He has some of Prabhupāda's books. Anyway it's not like he's our *guru*. He'll just show us around and he doesn't charge money. Anyway, he's one of the few who speak good English. We can just be careful in case he says

anything strange." Pūjā went on to encourage Nimāi to be broad-minded and not to think offensively toward any of the sages living in the *dhāma* and that he shouldn't think that the devotees in the Movement are the only Vaiṣṇavas.

"Prabhupāda has written," said Pūjā, "that for the people who live in Vṛndāvana, their *guru* is Kṛṣṇa."

"Yeah, I've heard that," said Nimāi.

And so the two new pilgrims prepared themselves to love Vṛndāvana.

Nimāi didn't think he was ready yet for a systematic study of Prabhupāda's books, so he turned to sections that particularly interested him. He wanted to understand more the proper attitude that he should have toward Choṭa and toward Gurudeva. He also hoped that by reading he could get inspiration from Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda as to what he should do, now that he had no regular service. Maybe *this* could be his service, living in Vṛndāvana and reading and chanting. But then, what about preaching? When he was with Choṭa, Nimāi had been more involved in preaching than he had ever been in his life. That was probably another important reason, Nimāi thought, why he felt so bereft. How could he ever expect to reach the peak of preaching as he had when instructing the mice, or when guiding them in their preaching? As hints of topics came to his mind, Nimāi tried to find them in the indexes and from whatever he could remember of his reading of the *Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

He remembered a purport that he wanted to read about preaching and seclusion. It was after a verse where Lord Caitanya had said that He wanted to stay in a very solitary room at Jagannātha Puri:

At the present moment we see that some of the members of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness are tending to leave their preaching activities in order to sit in a solitary place. This is not a very good sign. It is a fact that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has condemned this process for neophytes. He has even stated in a song: *pratiṣṭhāra tare, nirjanera ghare, tava hari-nāma kevala kaitava*. Sitting in a solitary place intending to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is considered a cheating process. This practice is not possible for neophytes at all. The neophyte devotee must act and work very laboriously under the direction of the spiritual master, and he must thus preach the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Only after maturing in devotion can he sit down in a solitary place to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself did.

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 11.176, purport

When Nimāi read this purport, he wanted to get up at once and show it to Pūjā dāsa who was also reading, sitting outside. But then Nimāi thought that, of course, Pūjā would have his own interpretation. Maybe it was better to read on his own and keep some things to himself. At least Nimāi was sure what Prabhupāda was saying: *a devotee shouldn't give up preaching*.

Nimāi then tried to think if there were any sections he could remember which would give him some encouragement about his relationship with

Choṭa. It was hard to think of more sections about human devotees with animals because there weren't so many of them. But if he just thought of Choṭa as a devotee—maybe there were some encouraging things about friendships. . . . Of course there was an important verse and purport in the *Upadeśamṛta* about the six loving exchanges among devotees. But Nimāi didn't have that book with him. The entire *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* was about friendships between devotees and Lord Caitanya and friendships among Lord Caitanya's devotees. Could his friendship with Choṭa qualify as that? Nimāi turned to "friendship" in the index to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and found items like, "between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa," "between *Param-ātma* and *jivātma*," and "a devotee with Kṛṣṇa." What about "ordinary devotees among themselves?"

Nimāi turned to the famous verse in the Tenth Chapter, where Kṛṣṇa says that His devotees dwell in Him and derive bliss "enlightening one another and conversing about Me." Prabhupāda had written there and the purport that followed:

Devotees of the Supreme Lord are twenty-four hours engaged daily in glorifying the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Their hearts and souls are constantly submerged in Kṛṣṇa, and they take pleasure in discussing Him with other devotees. . . . the association of devotees and a bona fide spiritual master are important. We should know that the goal is Kṛṣṇa, and when the goal is assigned, then the path is slowly but progressively traversed, and the ultimate goal is achieved.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.9-10, purports

Friendship among Godbrothers was very impor-

tant. Nimāi reflected how he was never good at making friends. Maybe, he thought, that was why he so highly valued his relationship with Choṭa. Choṭa was maybe the first and best friend he ever had. So it was natural that he was missing him and thinking of his good Kṛṣṇa conscious friend.

When Nimāi had read the phrase “the association of devotees and a bona fide spiritual master are important,” then he turned to different sections about the importance of a disciple’s relationship with his spiritual master. And he thought fondly of his recent meetings with Gurudeva. It seemed as if his relationship with his spiritual master was only beginning, and he should do what he could to deepen it.

Nimāi was happy to read Prabhupāda’s books in a personal way in the atmosphere of Vṛndāvana. Everything seemed more meditative; you could think more clearly and you felt close to Kṛṣṇa. The *japa* was also like that, much better than when he was agitated by the teenage boys teasing him on the farm, or when he thought of women, or marriage, or authorities in the temple.

At the end of their first day in “*Prema Bhakti Asrama*,” when Nimāi was alone for a moment, he said out loud, “No doubt about it, Choṭa, Vṛndāvana is a great place for devotional service.”

Pūjā dāsa brought Nimāi dāsa to see Gopidāsa Bābājī. He has his own room within an old *āśrama* and temple that housed about twenty or thirty inmates, mostly old men. Gopidāsa Bābājī was an alert,

brown-skinned *sādhu* with bright eyes and some missing front teeth. He greeted Nimāi enthusiastically with folded palms and said “*daṇḍavats*.”

“See? He’s got Prabhupāda’s books,” said Pūjā gesturing to two shelves of tattered-covered *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s and *Caitanya-caritāmṛtas*.

“Some books are missing,” said Gopidāsa Bābājī. “If you could kindly help me to get the other copies, then I will be complete.”

The Bābājī produced an old ledger and asked Nimāi to sign his name and place of residence. Bābājī pointed to the names of many important leaders in the Movement who had signed endorsing the services of Bābājī as a good guide for Vṛndāvana. As Nimāi was signing, he noticed, in a corner of the dark room, a small photo of the Bengali monk Rāmakṛṣṇa. “Who’s that?” asked Nimai. “I thought you were a Vaiṣṇava.”

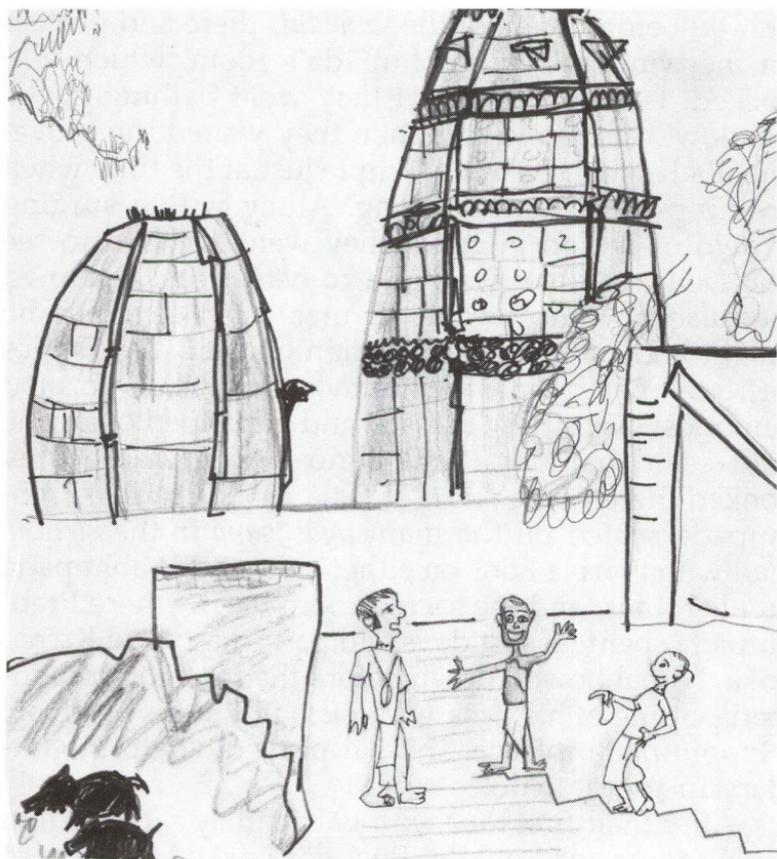
“Oh I *am* Vaiṣṇava!” Bābājī laughed. “This picture is Rāmakṛṣṇa, because when I was a youth I first entered spiritual life by hearing about him. This is called *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*.”

Nimāi was confused, because he had never heard of that kind of *guru*. He knew that Śrīla Prabhupāda had said Rāmakṛṣṇa was a *Māyāvādī*. But maybe it wasn’t so important if this man had only met him in his youth, something like a old relative of the family. Besides, you never knew what to expect from some of the *sādhus*. And Pūjā had said they should be respectful “to all the sages.”

They gave Bābājī a donation, promised to try to get him more of Prabhupāda’s books, and set out

with him for a morning tour of Vṛndāvana.

Bābājī was good at bargaining for a rickshaw and getting a man to wait while they visited different temples. Nimāi thought their guide talked too much, but at least with him they knew where they were going and they heard different stories of the places and saints.



Nimāi found something attractive and wonderful

at each holy place. On their first day they visited some of the major old temples. Nimāi's favorite Deity was the small, almost dapper Kṛṣṇa at Rādhā-ramaṇa temple, and he liked the walk up the cobble-stoned hill with the Madana-Mohana temple tower looming in front of them, and he liked the story Bābājī told there—of the well used by Sanātana Gosvāmī.

They visited the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple and bowed before many of the *samādhis* there and peeked in the windows of Prabhupāda's room, which was locked. Before the sun set they went bathing in the shallow Yamunā River. Then they visited the Movement's Krishna-Balarām temple just at the time when evening *ārati* was beginning. Along with a surging crowd of Indian pilgrims they went forward to see the Deities. Nimāi was glad to be lost in the crowd because he didn't want to meet any devotees he might know and have to explain himself. The Deities of Kṛṣṇa-Balārama were the most beautifully formed and most beautifully dressed and garlanded of any he had seen that day. And almost everywhere they looked there was a *mūrti* of Śrīla Prabhupāda—Prabhupāda seated on the main *vyāsāsana* in the *kīrtana* hall with marble lions on either side, and Prabhupāda in his rooms, and the sacred room itself, where Prabhupāda spent his last days and passed away to Kṛṣṇaloka. Nimāi bowed down before the *mūrti* of Prabhupāda sitting at his desk with his hand in his beadbag. "Prabhupāda, please," Nimāi prayed, "help me understand what to do."

After their first tour with Bābājī, they sat with him in his room for a while. Pūjā dāsa asked him about the different *rasas* with Kṛṣṇa but Nimāi had trouble staying awake, which he thought was probably due to jet lag. When they finally returned to their own

room and were eating some bananas and nuts they had purchased, Pūjā dāsa said, "That was interesting, what he said about the *rasas*, wasn't it?"

"I didn't hear much," said Nimāi.

"He said that in most of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*," said Pūjā, "a person is told his *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa at the time he gets initiated."

"Well, we're not told that," said Nimāi. "I thought that was something you only realized when you were perfect."

"I know, I know," said Pūjā. "Prabhupāda has written against something called *siddha pranai*. This isn't exactly the same. Bābāji said it's not exactly your full, eternal *rasa*, but it's a kind of practice."

"I think I better just practice to stay awake during *Bhāgavatam* class," said Nimāi. "Then later I'll find out about my *rasa*, if Kṛṣṇa wants."

"I'm going to ask him more about it tomorrow," said Pūjā, "there's no harm in trying to make advancement. I'm sure Kṛṣṇa wants us to know our eternal relationship with Him, and the sooner the better." Nimāi sensed that Pūjā was somewhat displeased with him for his slowness and sleepiness, and for not agreeing. So Nimāi sat up and tried to be a more agreeable companion. After all, it was only by Pūjā's generosity that he'd been able to come to India. "Yes, we can find out more tomorrow," said Nimāi. "I feel very grateful to be here, in Kṛṣṇa's abode."

## CHAPTER 7

(N.d.b.)

Don't worry—I didn't find out my *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa from the *bābājī*. I never asked him. But I think Pūjā did. He had a long talk with him alone. I didn't do it, but by being with Pūjā I condoned it, I suppose, and other things like that. My mood was, "Persons have to find out on their own what they want to do." But of course there are authorized ways to do things. It's not that any path is okay as long as you're sincere. But when I was in Vṛndāvana I was a little like that. My attitude was, "Leave me alone and I'll leave you alone." Even now, it's not my business to criticize someone like Pūjā personally. He is sincere. But on the other hand, if in the name of experimenting you make a mistake, it can be very costly. It could cost you your life. So we need good guides in spiritual life. And the fact is, I had come to India without the blessings of any guide, except I knew the Lord is with me in any case, and my spiritual master is always my well-wisher. But that didn't mean that everything I did was approved by them. No, actually I was running away from them. I'm still trying to understand it all, although it's becoming clearer. If you read this, you probably can see it a lot clearer than I could at the time.

At least I didn't inquire into my *rasa* with Kṛṣṇa. I was, however, feeling closer to Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana and I don't think *that* was wrong. Even if you're a nonsense and you may have some wrong motive for being in Vṛndāvana, you can benefit. But they say it's

a dangerous place to commit offenses. If you die doing sinful activities in Vṛndāvana (I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say this on a talk he gave in Vṛndāvana in 1972), next life you may be born as one of Vṛndāvana's hogs or dogs. That's how dangerous it is to do something wrong in Vṛndāvana. *But*, although you are condemned to be an animal in Vṛndāvana, in your following life you get liberation from birth and death. So the stakes are high in Vṛndāvana; it's not a place where you can fool around or experiment in. Even Lord Brahmā learned that, when he came to Vṛndāvana and tried to test his mystic power against Kṛṣṇa's. But when I was there, my activities in themselves weren't sinful—I read a lot and chanted what I thought was improved *japa* and lived austerely—but the basic reason as to why I was there wasn't clear.

When the devotees from the Movement began arriving, the way Pūjā and I were living outside the temple on our own became more of a contrast. Pūjā started increasing his critical talk when he saw so many devotees. It was all because he was so shattered on account of his *guru* leaving. He had lost faith in the entire Movement. And he took out his hurt in a general way. We would be riding on a rickshaw and maybe we would pass a devotee doing something wrong, like arguing with a local person, and Pūjā would say, "Just see." And even when we saw a large group of devotees visiting a temple he said, "How can you go on a peaceful *parikrāma* with so many people?" And we kept congratulating ourselves that we had free time with no authority to pressure us.

Then one day a devotee I knew from the farm came to see me at "*Prema Bhakti Asrama*". He was Nanda dāsa, a devotee I never got along with. I wish Kṛṣṇa had sent someone I liked better, because from the start, Nanda and I started arguing.

"What are you doing in this place?" he asked. "Who authorized you to come to India? Do you know that Vibhu thinks you're still in the Caribbean with Gurudeva?" Everything he said was accusative, so I tried to be peaceful.

"We're just living in Vṛndāvana," I said. "What's wrong with that?"

"If you're not authorized," said Nanda, "there's plenty wrong with that."

Then Pūjā said something in my defense and he and Nanda got real heavy with each other. In a few minutes they were shouting and I thought for a moment that they would have a fist fight. Indians in the *āśrama* were gathering around looking and even people from the road heard it and stopped to look from a distance.

"You're bogus!" Nanda would say, and Pūjā would shout back, "No, *you're* bogus!" And then Nanda would say, "You're going against Prabhupāda!" And Pūjā yelled back, "I'm following him more than you do! I read his books two hours a day!" Then Nanda said, "Oh yeah? Well you can read ten hours a day and still be in *māyā*. The proof is that you're living in this bogus *āśrama* and seeing a bogus *bābāji!*"

The whole thing was very unpleasant and I was glad when it was over. It didn't help me to want to

leave Pūjā and turn myself in at the temple. The whole time they were arguing I was half-thinking, “If I am doing something wrong, why doesn’t Kṛṣṇa send someone better able to convince me?” But He sent Nanda, or at least it was Nanda who came, and he was the only devotee in Vṛndāvana at that time who knew me from the farm. I couldn’t figure it out, but I felt bad. Afterwards I tried to calm Pūjā down and get us back into our peaceful routine. But despite his criticisms, what Nanda had said did have an effect on me. I wasn’t so sure anymore, because I know that I’m not above making mistakes, sometimes big ones.

My relationship with Pūjā dāsa became strained because I didn’t follow him with the “*rasa* practice,” or whatever it was. Whatever he was thinking about it, he kept to himself, because he couldn’t share it with me. But one day while we were both reading, he showed me a verse in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* where Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja mentions something about serving Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in a particular way.

When an advanced realized devotee hears about the affairs of devotees of Vṛndāvana—in the mellows of *śānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *mādhurya*—he becomes inclined in that way, and his intelligence becomes attracted. Indeed, he begins to covet that particular type of devotion. When such covetousness is awakened, one’s intelligence no longer depends on the instruction of *śāstra*, revealed scripture, logic or argument.

... The advanced devotee who is inclined to spontaneous loving service should follow the activities of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. He should execute service externally as a regulative devotee as well as internally from his self-realized position. Thus

he should perform devotional service both externally and internally.

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

The devotee should always think of Kṛṣṇa within himself, and one should choose a very dear devotee who is a servitor of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. One should constantly engage in topics about that servitor and his loving relationship to Kṛṣṇa, and one should live in Vṛndāvana. However, if one is physically unable to go to Vṛndāvana, he should mentally live there.

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 22.155,158-160

There were no Bhaktivedanta purports to these verses, and so for me, since I didn't understand it, I took them as something to ask an older devotee about, or to write to Gurudeva about. But with Pūjā dāsa, since there was no one he trusted, he wanted to do things on his own, or find a different authority of his own choice.

"Maybe this is a very advanced stage," I said, "and we're not supposed to try it."

"Then why did Lord Caitanya teach Sanātana Gosvāmī to put this in his books?" said Pūjā. "This is the whole point of coming to Vṛndāvana: to try to go beyond the mechanical stage of rules and regulations and develop spontaneous attraction. But you can't do it by yourself. So he says here, according to your choice, you should choose a very dear devotee who is a servitor of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana and think about him. That means one of the liberated servants of the Lord in one of the *rasas*. You choose it according to

your taste.”

“But how do you know your taste?” I asked. Sooner or later I knew he would have to say, “Because Bābājī told me,” and I was afraid of that, because I didn’t want to challenge or upset him like Nanda dāsa did. I mostly wanted to drop the subject and, for myself, just put it on file and ask someone like Gurudeva at a later time. Pūjā must have sensed what was on my mind because he didn’t push it any further. He did say that you can know your relationship with Kṛṣṇa if you think about it and pray in Vṛndāvana for Kṛṣṇa to reveal it to you.

What struck me later when I thought about this was that *I also* was thinking of something that I couldn’t share with Pūjā, something confidential and strange—my friendship with Choṭa. I was thinking to myself that he was “off” with his “*rasa*” with the Lord, but he didn’t even *know* the strange things I thought of. For a moment I even thought, “Maybe everyone has a strange thing that to them is special and that others can’t believe in.” But then I thought no, many people may not have anything like that. Or they may have something less unusual: they may think no one appreciates how nice they are or that no one knows how much they suffer. In that sense, everyone has a feeling of self which is theirs alone, and they think no one else can really know that feeling. But Kṛṣṇa knows what everyone thinks.

Out of this, I decided I ought to write to my Gurudeva. There were several important things that I wanted to ask him.

I continued to go around seeing Vṛndāvana with Pūjā and Bābājī and sometimes just with Pūjā, and sometimes by myself. I liked watching the people and the animals and I liked thinking how, according to scriptures, every living being in Vṛndāvana is very special. Of course, you have to be on your guard, or people will steal things or cheat you, and you just can't walk up to a filthy hog and embrace him because he's a *brijabasi*. But still whatever they do, you have to remember that they're living in the dust of Vṛndāvana. And there are so many people besides the ones who live there. Hundreds and thousands of Indians come to Vṛndāvana every day, and especially when there are festivals. You see them walking on the trails on *parikrāma* and in one sense they're ordinary, but again they're special because they've come to Kṛṣṇa's land just to be near Him. I began to realize that I couldn't stay permanently in Vṛndāvana, but I tried to imbibe some of its mercy. In fact, for people like me they say it's best not to stay long in Vṛndāvana, or you'll become an offender. I hadn't come to Vṛndāvana with an authorized purpose, and I was committing offenses to devotees while staying there, but even I was getting some benefit, or I felt like that while walking barefoot in the soft, sandy *parikrāma* trail where thousands of others had come and gone. When I would be forced to leave Vṛndāvana, I thought, at least I could do as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja stated and live in Vṛndāvana in the mind.

My dearest Gurudeva,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda .

You may be surprised to hear that your insignificant son, Nimāi dāsa, is writing to you from Vṛndāvana, India. At least I am here physically, although they say you can't enter Vṛndāvana just with a travel ticket. You have told us disciples that we will all eventually go to visit Vṛndāvana. So now I have come, as you wished, although not on direct order.

After I left Guyana and you, I felt depressed about giving up my devotee-mice. I can say this to you because you know of my attachment for them. And as a pure devotee you also blessed them as we parted. Maybe you did it in a spirit of kindness to my own whims, but I also appreciate that you have done that.

I met a devotee who had a free ticket for me to go with him to India. So I just took it. What I should have done was to call up my temple president, Vibhu Prabhu, and ask him what he wanted me to do. But I didn't and I'm also feeling a little guilty about that.

The devotee I am with, Pūjā dāsa brahmacārī, is a disciple whose spiritual master has gone away. He's a sincere devotee, but he's very bitter now and doesn't trust any authorities in the Movement. Maybe in certain respects he's not good association, but he's pretty strict in his *sādhana* and we have been getting along well so far.

One reason I am writing to you is to tell you my situation so you can decide what you want me to do.

Also here in Vṛndāvana we met one Gopidāsa Bābājī who was teaching something about practicing our *rasas*. Pūjā has taken him seriously and he showed me a section in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* where it says that you should follow a resident of Vṛndāvana. I thought that this was probably something only for very advanced devotees, but Pūjā said we should aspire to this and think of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. So I am asking for your authoritative decision on this. At this time, I am not practicing my *rasa* or anything like that.

But I am not going to the Krishna-Balarām temple except to visit. One of the devotees from the farm, Nanda dāsa, is here and he came and chastised me for living outside the temple. He was probably right, but he did it in such a harsh way. Anyway I feel obliged to stay with Pūjā dāsa to keep him company, since he bought me my ticket. So that is my report, in case anybody asks you about me.

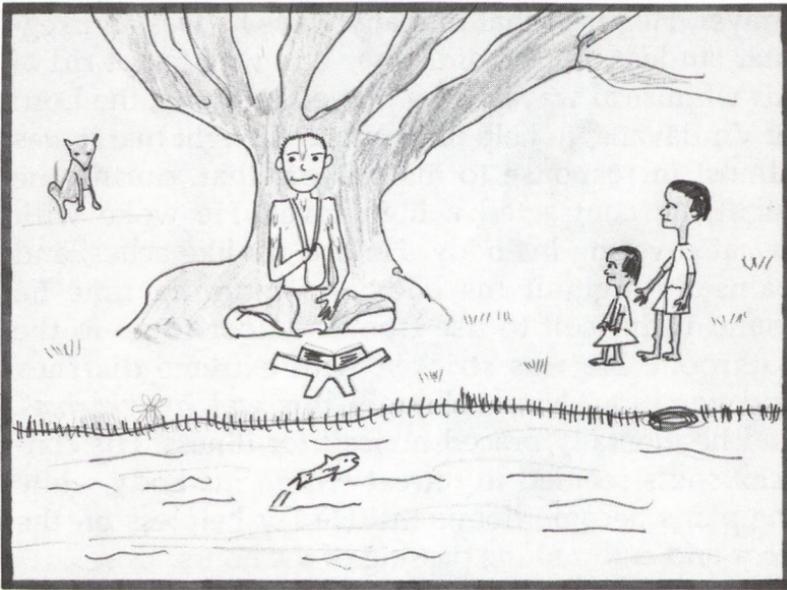
Your wayward son who needs to be corrected,

Nimāi dāsa

## CHAPTER 8

(S.d.g.)

One day Nimāi was feeling particularly calm and in touch with Vṛndāvana *dhāma*. He had spent an afternoon sitting on the bank of the Yamunā reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with a *gamcha* wrapped around his head to prevent sunstroke. He also thought a lot about Choṭa and even sometimes spoke out loud.



That evening Nimāi and Pūjā talked together, avoiding any controversies. They had spent some of their dwindling funds to purchase milk and had a small feast of milk and bananas.

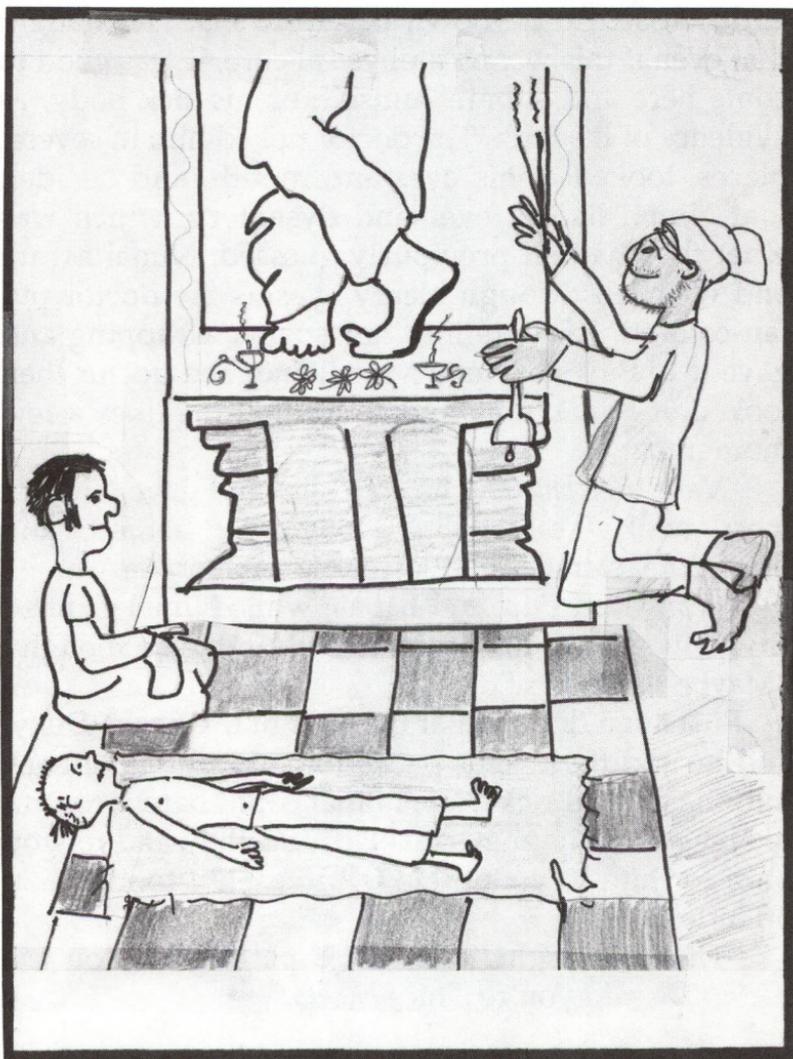
“Maybe some day,” said Pūjā, “my wounds will heal. I should be grateful that I came in contact with Prabhupāda.”

“Yes,” said Nimāi, “if we can just serve in Vṛndāvana, all our wounds will be cured.”

Before taking rest, Nimāi remembered to say a prayer. He knew that in many ways he was an irregular student, but he didn’t see any way to get rid of his whimsical ways. So he prayed to Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Vṛndāvana, to help him. Nimāi thought that it was almost in response to his prayers that, during the night, he contracted a high fever. He woke with sweat covering his body. He had flu-like aches, and pains throughout his body. By morning time he found it difficult to rise from the floor to go to the bathroom. He was stricken with extreme diarrhea and vomiting. Nimai thought this was his “*karma*” and he mentally braced himself for illness. His consciousness seemed to retreat within his body while the pains became dominant. He lay helpless on the floor and endured the passing of the hours.

Pūjā told Gopidāsa Bābājī about Nimāi, and together they put him into a rickshaw and took him to a doctor recommended by the Bābājī. The “doctor’s office” was a small temple amidst the congested population of inner Vṛndāvana. He was a *sādhu*, similar to Bābājī, but even more unshaven, and more jolly. He embraced Nimāi with both his arms and invited

him, as an initial treatment, to lie down on his back in full view of a Kṛṣṇa Deity.



The Deity was a crude plaster statue, but still, it was bluish Kṛṣṇa smiling and with a flute. Nimāi slightly groaned but was pleased although somewhat embarrassed to lie down before Kṛṣṇa. He thought that even if this wasn't a physical cure, it was good to come here and submit himself, or his sick body, as evidence of his faith. The doctor poked him in several places, looked at his eyes and mouth, and decided that Nimāi had a fever and dysentery, which was what they had all previously guessed. Nimāi sat up and watched through bleary eyes as the doctor put tan-colored powders into newspaper wrapping and gave it to Pūjā as Nimāi's medicine. The doctor then looked at Nimāi's palm and studied the lines a few moments.

"Very nice *bhakta*," he chuckled and gave Nimāi a merry wink. "You will live a long time," he said, "and do big preaching as a follower of Prabhupāda."

"*Jaya!*" said Pūjā and Bābājī, while Nimāi grinned shyly. In spite of his desire to be humble he thought, "Maybe he knows."

Pūjā left a donation at the altar of the Kṛṣṇa Deity, and he and the doctor packed a painful Nimāi back into the painful rickshaw. Nimāi could barely control his bowels while they traveled, and they had to stop once for him to vomit. He felt himself a fool and an offender.

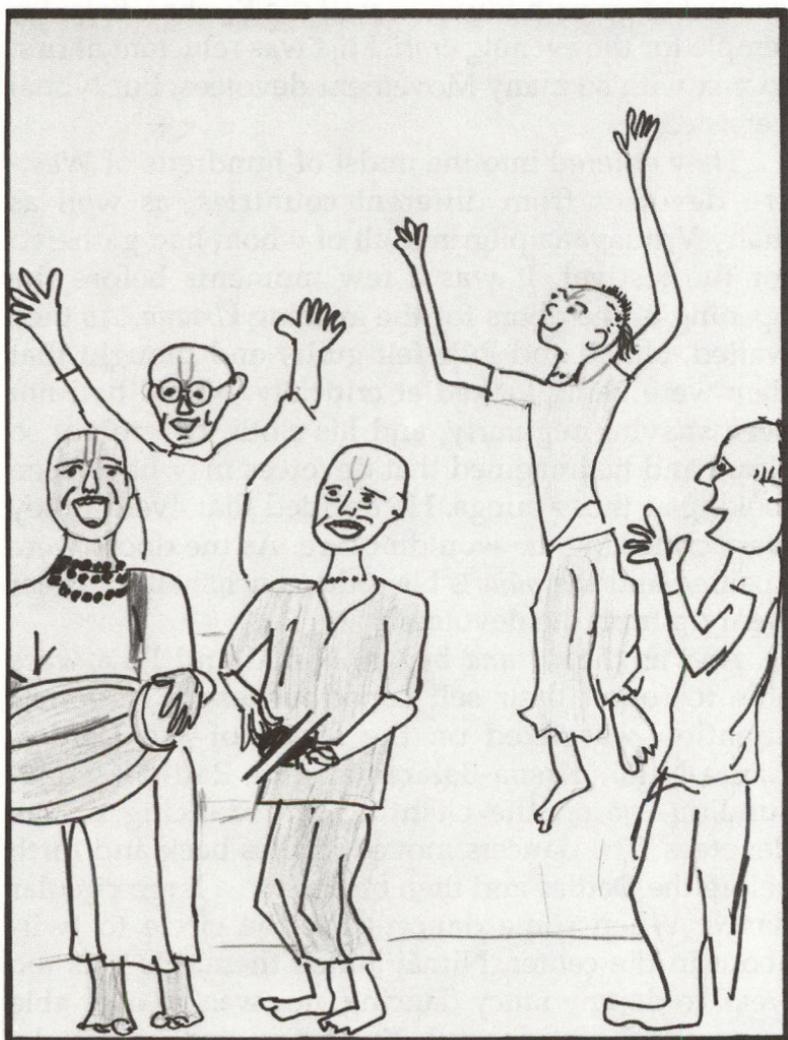
"That's all right," said Pūjā patting him on the back. "He said you're a nice *bhakta*."

After taking the bitter tasting powders, Nimāi

thought that he was getting better. Since it was the appearance day of Lord Nityānanda, he very much wanted to go with Pūjā and visit the Krishna-Balarām temple for the evening *ārati*. Pūjā was reluctant at first to mix with so many Movement devotees, but Nimāi persisted.

They entered into the midst of hundreds of Western devotees from different countries, as well as many Vṛndāvana pilgrims, all of whom had gathered for the festival. It was a few moments before the opening of the doors for the evening *kīrtana*. As they waited, Nimāi and Pūjā felt guilty and thought that they were being looked at critically. Nimāi had not been shaving regularly, and his clothes were not so clean, and he imagined that devotees may have been looking at those things. He decided that even if they were criticizing, he wouldn't care. As the doors were opening and the *pūjārīs* blew the conchshells, a cheer went up from the devotees.

And as the *kīrtana* began, Nimāi and Pūjā were able to forget their self consciousness. Everyone's attention was fixed on the forms of the Deities, Gaura-Nitāi, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, or on the chanting and dancing of the devotees. The dancers moved in files back and forth before the Deities and then broke into a large circular dance. When some dancers left the circle to twirl about in the center, Nimāi joined them. He was too weak to do any fancy dancing, nor was he ever able to do anything graceful. But he moved as best he could, a clumsy shuffle accentuated with leaps up and down as if on a basketball court.



The lead singer was skilled, but his voice was piercingly loud over the microphone. There were also

many drummers and *karatāla* players. Those Indian devotees who were regular members of the Movement took part in the wild dancing, but others packed the walls and outer borders as curious spectators. The dancers changed into different patterns and the lead singer varied the melodies of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and sang *bhajanās* specially chosen for the appearance night of Lord Nityānanda. Sometimes all the dancers grouped themselves in front of the altar of Gaura-Nitāi, Who were dressed in the high standard of the Krishna-Balarām Mandir, tonight in tones of red and green. The Deities' upraised arms showed Them clearly as the leaders of all the dancing and chanting, and sitting at Their feet were the unique forms of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, both wearing soft silk saffrons, and smiling mildly. The dancers moved to the middle altar and beheld the large forms of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Everyone knew that Balarāma was also Nityānanda, and relished, at least theoretically, the connection between the two Deities, and the way Lord Balārama leaned jauntily on the shoulder of His younger brother, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The dancers moved to Rādhā-Śyāmasundara in *mādhurya-līla*, and then back again to the middle of the floor where they could see all the Deities at once.

The formal *ārati* stopped after the blowing of the conchshells, but the *kīrtana* players continued. The leading *kīrtana* men were shining with perspiration and beaming with energy. Nimāi recognized only one or two devotees from America, but he felt he was with his family. They were all followers of Prab-

hupāda and shared the confidential understanding of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. And at least in the *kīrtana*, disagreements were put aside.

After a full hour, some of the ladies and gentlemen retired from the *kīrtana*, but a large core of singers and dancers continued. Nimāi felt faint. He had deliberately ignored his bodily pains in order to join the fun, but now the discomfort came back persistently—aching joints, a loose feeling in the bowels and stomach, and nausea. He sought out Pūjā dāsa and asked if they could go back. Pūjā had been standing in the more staid ranks, but nonetheless he had been chanting the whole time. At Nimāi's suggestion, they left.

As they rode on their rickshaw through the mystical night, Pūjā remarked, "You dance pretty well for a sick man."

"It was nice to be with all our Godbrothers," said Nimāi.

"Yes," said Pūjā. "But I saw hardly any of the leaders. They were probably up in their rooms making politics."

On returning to their *āśrama* they found their room had been robbed. The door locks were broken and their possessions—tape recorders, sleeping bags, and suitcases—had been cleared out. Pūjā cursed and lamented at the loss of their return plane tickets, travelers checks, and his passport, which he had left in a suitcase. Pūjā decided to go at once to tell the police. Nimāi lay down on the cement floor and covered

himself with his *cādar*. But within minutes he had to rise and go to the latrine because of diarrhea. When he returned, he was shaking with chills. "Well, Choṭa," he said, "at least we got to go to the *kīrtana*."

## CHAPTER 9

(N.d.b.)

If I go ahead and tell about my delirium you'll really think I'm eulogizing *māyā*. When I was trying to decide whether it would serve Gurudeva's purpose for me to write what happened, I concluded that it would probably help, just like a patient who tells his dreams (I've heard) for a psychiatrist to analyze them. Even to this day it scares me to think of it, but if Kṛṣṇa shows you things that frighten you and then you want to reform, that is also beneficial.

The worst thing is that I was alone. Pūjā went to Delhi to try replacing his tickets and passport, and no one in the "*Prema Bhakti Asrama*" spoke English or cared that I was sick. They probably see people getting sick all the time and with me they thought, "There's another one." In India everyone is expected to get these sicknesses and you just have to go through it on your own, so no one is going to hold your hand or ask you every hour, "How are you, prabhu?" But when it happens to *you*, and you lie there all alone, you feel neglected.

First I woke up completely covered in sweat, but then a little later I was shivering with chills. I saw things that weren't actually there. It's like having a waking nightmare. I heard the running of mice's feet, and then I saw them. It wasn't Choṭa but ordinary rodents. I thought I saw them, but I wasn't sure. Then I thought I saw Gopidāsa Bābājī standing over me and he was laughing, not nicely but like a demon, and he said, "Your *rasa* is to be a mouse! Ha! Ha! Ha!"



I felt that I was being judged and that I was guilty of worshipping mice. Somebody was saying that my friendship with Choṭa was like a perverted, black-art

religion, and so I was getting what I wanted—reincarnation as a mouse. I felt terrible guilt that I was a deviator. “You prayed to mice instead of to Kṛṣṇa, so this is your reward. Ha! Ha! Ha!” So this was it—I would actually have to become a mouse for my deviation and now the mice were coming and running up and down my body. I felt a presence of evil and that I had done wrong—it was all a joke on me because I was a mouse worshipper instead of a Kṛṣṇa worshipper.

I saw angry faces—Gurudeva and Vibhu and my mother and father and lots of Indians looking down and accusing me, “*This is what you are.*”

I probably called out, but nobody came. Or sometimes men came and looked in the room and said something in Hindi and then went away ignoring me like a dead object. When it got really bad, I heard the running steps of something heavier than mice, and I thought the room was being overrun with rats and I was helpless because I couldn’t even get up from the floor. I was either sweating or shivering. I was very thirsty. I saw worms come out of the floor. I saw green grass suddenly wither and turn yellow and die and I smelled stool everywhere.

I couldn’t collect myself to think deeply about what was happening, but mostly I was helpless against the delirium and pain. But I did feel bad and guilty that I had misplaced my worship and that I was not a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. One nice thing happened, though, when I was suffering. I heard a *kīrtana* coming from within the *āśrama*. It wasn’t a big rhythmic *kīrtana* like we usually have, but it was definitely the

*mahā-mantra:*

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

And it gave me a feeling of security and appreciation for the Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*. I couldn't move from the floor, but my spirit or mind went out to that *kīrtana* and took shelter. I was crying and thinking, "Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda, Gurudeva, forgive me. I don't want to be a mouse. I didn't mean to pray to them. I want to pray to You. Please forgive me."

But mostly it was a nightmare. I don't know how long I lay there like that, but it was day after day, night after night. Once or twice an old man came in and offered me something to eat, but when I did eat, my body rejected the food almost immediately. And that left me even weaker and dehydrated.

Finally, Pūjā dāsa returned, and at least I had companionship. He assured me that I would get through it. But it didn't go away. He took me to see the *sādhu*-doctor again, who said that I had jaundice or malaria or both. Without him telling me, I knew I had something else—boils. One was on my buttock and it was like my whole consciousness became focused on it as it gradually swelled and grew more uncomfortable and painful.

One week went by and another. I was sick and losing weight. I couldn't chant all my rounds although I tried, and the ones I chanted weren't very good. I was thinking, "What happened to sweet Vṛndāvana?" But devotees say that this is also a

regular part of Vṛndāvana: the purification. Okay, I thought, then let me be purified.

When I was out of the delirium, I tried to understand it. It made me want to be more attentive to Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda as the objects of my worship. I didn't think it meant I had to reject Choṭa. But I can never mix up the two—my worship is to the Supreme Lord and everything else is a service to Him. I have to be always detached, ready to give up anything that's detrimental to His service. That's what I got out of it.

While lying on the floor day after day, I often thought of being back at the farm. I remembered it in a very favorable way, instead of my usual complaining. I desired to be there again and to be a simple servant of Rādhā-Dāmodara. I remembered back to even before I was talking with Choṭa, how I used to feel sorry for myself. But now I just felt grateful to have lived with the devotees and I wished I could go back. With so much time to pass, I was able to meditate on all the different moods of the farm. I mentally entered the barn and saw the friendly cow Lalitā with all the other cows lined up beside her, and the small pens where the newborn, white calves are kept, and then some heifers down at the end, and the bull who grinned when you petted him. In my mind I walked out into the corn fields and watched men plowing with oxen, and I walked up to the hill where you can see the whole farm with the twin silos and the barn with the slightly sagging roof. And then in my mind I walked down by the creek toward Gurudeva's house, and then I went to the temple and bowed before

Prabupāda and saw the Deities, who were wearing outfits of a chocolate brown color with white Irish lace. I felt grateful and fortunate to have ever been there, and I wanted to go back even if it meant being teased or chastised, which is, after all, what I deserve.

But although the sickness had made me realize I was part of the Movement, it had created another detour, and it wasn't easy to get off it. They all expected me to recover my health after a few days or a week, but when I continued to have diarrhea and vomiting and to lose weight, they took me again to see the doctor with the Kṛṣṇa Deity. This time he shook his head. He didn't like what he saw, and he said I was seriously ill. He said I had malaria, jaundice, and dysentery, and even today I'm not sure whether I had one of them or all of them. My boils were also increasing—one of them had opened up and was very messy, but others were growing in new parts of the body. After lying down in front of Kṛṣṇa, which I liked to do, the doctor suggested that I should go for special treatment under another doctor he knew in South India. He straight-out said that otherwise I might not live. We paid a donation and Pūjā and I went back to the *āśrama* to talk about it. The place where I was supposed to go was called the Hindu Naturepath Sanitorium and it wasn't inexpensive. Pūjā was very kind and lent me some money, and he even went over to Krishna-Balarām temple and borrowed some money from Nanda dāsa, although it must have been hard for him to ask. Pūjā said he couldn't come with me because he still had to go to Delhi to try to get his passport and ticket replaced. So

one day, when I really wasn't any better in health, he took me to the train station with instructions on how to travel on trains for the next few days, and he left me alone.

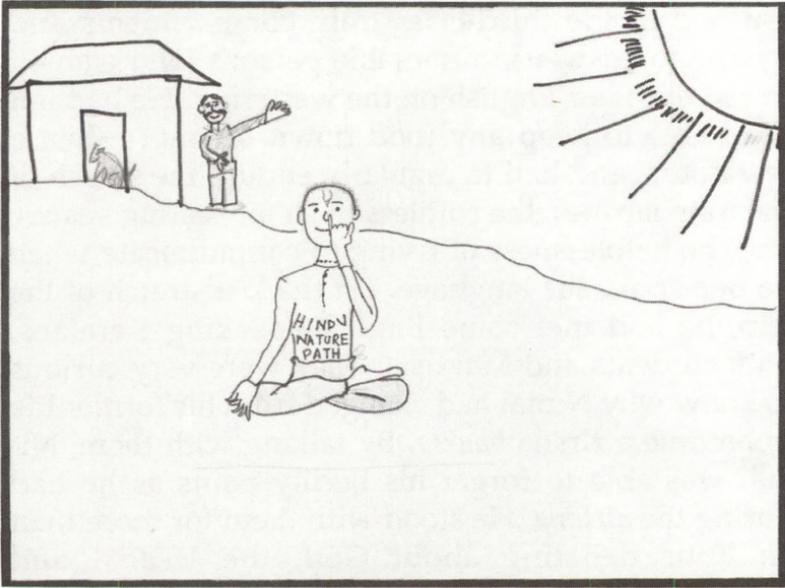
## CHAPTER 10

(S.d.g.)

Nimāi arrived at the Hindu Naturepath Sanitorium in Kerala, South India, after a week of travel. The journey had been prolonged because he had missed a few train connections owing to his inexperience. His mind was half-delirious from his being crushed in the third-class train compartments and having to answer innumerable persons who wanted to test out their English on the westerner. He had not been able to keep any food down for more than a few hours, and had to regularly endure the stench of the train latrines, the ruthless push for seating spaces, and the helplessness of trying to communicate when no one spoke his language. On the last stretch of the trip, he had met some English-speaking Keralans, both students and Marxists. They were very curious to know why Nimāi had changed from his former life to become a Kṛṣṇa *bhakta*. By talking with them, Nimāi was able to forget his bodily pains as he had during the *kīrtana*. He stood with them for more than an hour debating about God, the *Vedas*, and communism. When he finished speaking with one set of students, someone else approached him for more of the same. They stopped only when they saw that Nimāi was about to faint on his feet, and so they helped him sit down and drink some water.

Dr. Jyotir Anand's sanitorium consisted of ten small cement huts in a hillside grove, plus his own

house where he lived with his wife, children, and pet dog. His patients stayed in the huts, where for ten thousand rupees per month, Dr. Anand's family provided them with meals and the doctor administered the Nature-path cure.



When Nimāi arrived, it was obvious that he needed treatment, but since his clothes were torn and dirty and he had no possessions, the doctor wasn't sure if he could pay. In the awkward first moments, while standing at the doctor's front door, Nimāi said

that he had been recommended to come by the *sādhu*-doctor in Vṛndāvana.

"Did he inform you of our fees?" asked Dr. Anand.

"Oh yes," said Nimāi, and reaching into his moneybelt he produced ten thousand rupees as a first installment and placed it into the doctor's hand. "I will write to my father for more," said Nimāi. "He's got money."

The doctor then became pleasant and friendly. "I'm shocked at your appearance," he said with concern. "You need emergency treatment. But don't worry. You will be perfectly well in a month." Nimāi was always ready to hope for the best, and since he wanted to believe in the doctor's words, he resolved to become a submissive patient.

Dr. Anand was a moustached man of medium height, with straight black hair and a droll, wily smile. He immediately took charge of Nimāi with a confidence that seemed to go beyond mere medical treatment, as if he were prepared to give spiritual guidance as well. He assigned Nimāi to a hut and the doctors' sons brought in sheets for the cot, drinking water, and a bottle, which they told Nimāi was for thrice daily enemas.

After Nimāi bathed and rested a few hours, the doctor paid him a visit and sat at his bedside. He began explaining Hindu Naturepath treatment. He said it was a great science—he called it "Vedic wisdom"—and said it couldn't be explained all at once. Some of the basic precepts were that there is only one disease and only one treatment; diseases are all forms of a

low state of health, and by raising the health level through natural methods, any disease can be cured. "But actually Kṛṣṇa will cure you, not me," said the doctor. Nimāi noticed that the doctor was acquainted with the Movement and knew some words from Prabhupāda's books. It turned out that a few western devotees had been treated in his sanitorium.

"This is actually Prabhupāda's teachings," said the doctor. Nimāi was somewhat skeptical to hear that, but his main desire was to get well. He felt as if he had been beaten all over and maybe was near death. "I'll be like his disciple," Nimāi thought, "and just do what he says, just to get better. No arguments." Nimāi was told he would be put on a diet of raw vegetables, he would take frequent enemas and special baths. There would be prescribed times for sun-bathing, *yoga* exercise, and rest.

"Good," said Nimāi, "I'll follow it strictly."

In a few days, Nimāi began to feel slightly better. By bodily instinct, it seemed to him that his disease was abating by itself, but he thought it would be good to recuperate under care and try this interesting system of "Vedic wisdom." As far as Dr. Anand was concerned, Nimāi's cure was entirely due to Hindu Naturepath methods. Nimāi willingly accepted the daily regimen, which included, at least for the beginning, an hour's talk with the doctor. Thinking that it would help their relationship if he took the traditional position of the student, Nimāi offered obeisances and touched his head to the floor when Dr. Anand en-

tered. After the first day, the doctor asked Nimāi if he had written his father to send money. Nimāi said it was a little difficult since he hadn't communicated with his father in several years, but he would try. The next day the doctor asked again, but still Nimāi had not written. Finally he wrote the letter although there was not much to say except, "I am very sick in India, please send one thousand dollars for my sanatorium fees."

Dr. Anand said that the mind had a great deal to do with physical disease, and he told Nimāi that he would help him to develop a totally optimistic outlook towards life. "In this world," the doctor said, "your body is *the* vehicle for obtaining spiritual life. You must make it healthy and happy. Health comes from the powers within, which are actually the source of everything. And life is for living, so be happy."

Nimāi was accustomed to hearing Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, which he accepted as the Absolute Truth. What Dr. Anand spoke to Nimāi is what Prabhupāda called "hodgepodge Hindu philosophy." Nimāi had heard some of this on the train in an argument he had with a man who said that all the gods were equal and everything was one. Dr. Anand spoke in a similar way, but added "this is the same thing Prabhupāda says." Nimāi began to dislike the daily talks. He felt like saying, "Just tell me about health treatment, but don't mix in your philosophy,"—but he didn't want to abandon his position as a submissive patient. Dr. Anand seemed more interested in speaking philosophy than in physical health. If Nimāi wanted to know more about the

science of Hindu Naturepath, he could read some books which the doctor provided.

One day the doctor taught Nimāi a method of total relaxation. Under the doctor's verbal commands, Nimāi relaxed one part of his body after another and then he was told to relax his mind. At the doctor's request, Nimāi began to intone the word OM and he also repeated, at the doctor's instruction, "Every day in every way I am getting better and better." Nimāi was so embarrassed to say this that he almost snickered out loud. What if one of the devotees heard him saying these things? The doctor then asked him to say, "The source of good health is Mother Nature, I turn to her, turn to the sun, and I turn to the source within. I love my body and I want it to get well. Everything is peace."

Since Nimāi was in a state of relaxation which had taken them a half an hour to develop step-by-step, he didn't wish to rudely break it, and so he repeated the words. But he promised himself that at the beginning of their next meeting he would tell the doctor that there were certain things he couldn't do.

At their next meeting, when Nimāi brought this up, it gradually developed into an argument. Nimāi asserted that Lord Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the doctor disagreed. Dr. Anand said that the demigods were the source of health and happiness.

"But they are the servants of Kṛṣṇa," said Nimāi, "that's what it says in *Bhagavad-gītā*."

"I know they are the servants," said the doctor condescendingly, "but they are one with the source.

He is God for some and for others, as for me, our deity is Gaṇeśh. Everyone worships and thinks his God is supreme and all are supreme in the *Brahman*."

"No," said Nimāi, "Kṛṣṇa says, '*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*,' the impersonal is subordinate to Him."

"You may think that to enhance your worship," said the doctor, and he smiled to pacify Nimāi's intense look. "You may say that, but in the *Upaniṣads* it is said that all gods come from the one. One God in many forms. *Tat tvam asi*, you are also that."

The phrase *tat tvam asi*, spoken by the doctor, set off an alarm within Nimāi. He felt he was in danger, because now he knew that Dr. Anand was an impersonal *Māyāvādī* and if one listened to a *Māyāvādī* he could lose his devotion to God.

Dr. Anand saw that Nimāi was likely to bolt and run.

"We should not discuss these philosophic technicalities," he said. "I may not have expressed myself so well, but I am actually Kṛṣṇa conscious. I am a devotee of Kṛṣṇa too." Nimāi and the doctor at least agreed that they should not discuss these topics but stick to the treatment, which Nimāi admitted was a *sāttvik*, harmless cure. So they made a pact of conduct. If Dr. Anand would refrain from speaking *Māyāvādī* philosophy, Nimāi would remain and take the treatment and follow faithfully what the doctor prescribed.

After that, Dr. Anand visited Nimāi less frequently. His sons performed the ordinary functions of bringing the one meal a day of raw vegetables and supervising Nimāi's participation in daily sunbathing,

exercise, and enemas. Dr. Anand stopped by only for brief, cheerful visits and inquired whether Nimāi had received a letter from his father. After two weeks, Nimāi received a letter in which his father said he had wired the money. It became a complicated matter, involving much discussion daily, as to where the money had actually arrived and how they could get it. Finally it was processed through a bank, and the doctor received the Indian equivalent of one thousand dollars, for a month's stay at the sanatorium.

"Your case was more serious than I thought," said Dr. Anand. "It may take a few months before you're one-hundred percent fit. It all depends on your mental attitude. Relax more and learn not to worry. Turn to Mother Nature and the sun. This is what we do in our Vaiṣṇava culture." Nimāi smiled wanly and lay his head back on the pillow. "This is too much," he thought. "How did I ever get *here*?"

## CHAPTER 11

(N.d.b.)

Once I knew that the doctor was a *Māyāvādī*, how come I didn't leave? I couldn't—I was too ill. But I knew it wasn't good. At least the situation drew out of me a strong attachment for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I had to preach (at least to myself) in order to survive. Although the doctor kept asking me to relax, I was becoming more alert and appreciative of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But I also felt lost and far away from where I was supposed to be. I thought this must be my *karma*, to be sick and living in such a place. I thought, "I secretly want this, but now I have to reverse it and go back to straight Kṛṣṇa consciousness." I wanted to live in a favorable place under the direct shelter of Gurudeva. But I had discovered that once I went off a little bit, *māyā* threw me on a long orbit going away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and only by special mercy could I come back. I was swimming against a strong current.

I'll tell you some little deviations (and some not so little) I started doing under this new influence. For example, they wouldn't let me drink milk. At first I thought that's all right, maybe I'm too ill. But the doctor and his books and other people I met at the sanatorium, all said that milk was no good. They were supposed to be Hindus, but they were against drinking cow's milk. So I was not taking any milk products at all and thinking that maybe it was good not to. And yet I knew that Prabhupāda said without at least a little milk, how can you develop fine brain tissues to

understand Kṛṣṇa? And the food I was eating, although the ingredients were harmless, wasn't offered to Kṛṣṇa. They would allow *me* to offer it to Kṛṣṇa when they brought it to my room, but I didn't have any Deity, just a picture of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, and the food wasn't really *prepared* for them. The doctor and his staff just humored me and allowed me to offer the food, but they weren't doing it themselves. I even started getting lax and not always offering it. Sometimes I would be embarrassed to do it in front of someone, and I would think, "All right, I'm a devotee so it must be already offered."

Their whole attitude was non-Kṛṣṇa. The doctor said he was "a Vaiṣṇava," but that was a joke. He probably told other patients he was whatever *they* were just to keep them satisfied. And he could do that because he believed everything was the same anyway.

I could make a whole list of the things I did there that were deviations, and maybe I will let you know the full extent of it, but the main point is, it was not a Kṛṣṇa conscious environment. There was no temple program, no *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, no nothing—nothing but health and relaxing and bogus philosophy.

I had thought when I was with Pūjā dāsa that it was nice not being pressured to attend the morning program, but now I missed it and understood the need for it. I did my own reading and chanting, but it wasn't as good as when you're with like-minded souls. Some devotees may do well living away from others, but at least for me I saw that I wanted to live with devotees.

I didn't even have much time to myself, what with doing enemas, exercises, and talking. Even when I was relaxing it was their kind of relaxation and it didn't feel right. I knew that what they really would like me to do was relax and forget Kṛṣṇa and maybe not be so strict about following the four rules. The doctor even said he thought my vow to chant sixteen rounds was not so important, that it was better to say one round slowly. He had his own opinion about everything and yet he claimed his opinions were "our Vaiṣṇava way," or even "what Prabhupāda said." I had to choose either to argue with him all the time or overlook everything that was going on.

Another way I deviated was to stop thinking so much about Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna. The delirium had made me unsure of my feelings of separation for Choṭa, because in the hallucination I thought I was punished for "worshipping" mice. I didn't know whether the delirium was just that or whether there was some truth to it. But as a result, I became somewhat detached from thinking of Choṭa. And in the sanitorium I couldn't go past that doubt. It was another thing I wanted to talk with Gurudeva about. In one sense I thought maybe detachment isn't bad. I wish them well and I would have been happy to see them, but what could I do for them now? Let Chota be under Kṛṣṇa's protection in Guyana and let me be here. We can prosecute our own duties with no undue attachment.

While I was staying in the sanitorium, I also received a letter from you, dear Gurudeva. You wrote it from Guyana and it was forwarded from Vṛn-

dāvana. You may remember it, but I want to quote some of it here:

Yes, I am surprised that you have gone to India so suddenly and without permission from your temple president. I can understand that you were in a disturbed state of mind, but there will be so many disturbances in life, and we are still expected to act soberly and not fly off when there are troubles. This is the whole message of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Arjuna was upset and wanted to leave the field of action, so Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* to him just to direct him back to his duty. If this becomes an established pattern with you, that whenever you feel troubled you act on your own, then what will happen to you?

Of course I am pleased that you have entered Vṛndāvana *dhāma* and that you appreciate the atmosphere. I promised you you would go one day, and so somehow it has come to pass. But I am concerned about the person you are associating with who does not trust any authorities in the Movement. Are you going to become like that too? You know you have a tendency to be easily impressed by others. This tendency can serve you well if you are impressed by the leadership of Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, and by His devotees, and want to emulate them. But you have to protect yourself and not become influenced by every wind that passes in one direction or another. I'm concerned that your nice attitude towards serving the devotees and serving in Prabhupāda's movement does not become spoiled by those who have themselves unfortunately been victims of bad examples.

As for the Vṛndāvana *bābājī*, the "practice" of the *rasa* which he may be teaching is not bona fide. The real practice is to serve the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇava. We should keep ourselves fixed up in the lower position and, if Kṛṣṇa likes, He will bring us up. It is not our business to invite ourselves into the eternal

*rasa* by speculation or listening to the advice of another person who himself is unqualified to speak of *rasas*. Anyway, there is no question of *rasa* for a conditioned soul. Now in the name of being interested in *rasas*, you are loosening your attachment to *kṛṣṇa-seva*, or service, in which you were properly fixed up. I refer to your ongoing service at the farm, which you have now abandoned.

I will be going to India myself in a few weeks, and if necessary I will seek you out and speak with you. I like your association, and I'm sure whatever disturbance has occurred can be cleared up. In the meantime, I suggest you go to live at the Krishna-Balarām temple and take up some service there. Go on with your reading and chanting and now that you are in Vṛndāvana take full advantage of the wonderful atmosphere. But don't act in an independent way.

While writing this letter and thinking of you, I was just about to ask you "how are your devotee-mice?" But then I realized that you have left them to go free here in Guyana. Perhaps the *bhakti* which they received from you in the form of chanting and *prasādam* is now being transmitted to others. What do you think?

Of course I was happy to receive such nice chastisement from my Gurudeva. It was like pure nectar relieving me from the nonsense influence of Dr. Anand's *āśrama*. I knew I would do what Gurudeva said, as soon as I got well again. But what struck me most of all was what he wrote at the end. I could hardly believe it. Here I was suspecting my relationship with Choṭa as being a deviation, and Gurudeva asked in such an interested way, "How is your devotee-mouse? ... What do you think?"

Gurudeva, I wish I could have spoken with you right then and there. The mice whom I knew in a

Kṛṣṇa conscious way may not be benefited from any further association with me, but I am *your* eternal “mouse” in need of constant protection. You won my heart once again by your letter and your thinking like that about the mice-devotees. It made me feel that I wasn’t going to be condemned to hell for whatever I had done. I still couldn’t see my relationship with Choṭa so straight and I wished I could have talked with you more (although since then I have gained a better understanding). When I got that letter I began to think that maybe if my spiritual master came to India, he would come and rescue me just as Lord Caitanya once rescued His servant Kṛṣṇadāsa in South India when he left the Lord and went to live with some gypsies. I began to cherish that idea, although I know it wasn’t proper to think of my spiritual master coming to serve me in my distress. But it was a solace when I became influenced and when the detour I was on seemed to increase in a tangent away from the true path. I would think that when I am at the last gasp, my spiritual master will come and grasp me by the hair and save me.

I also wrote a letter to my Dad. He wasn’t pleased that I had asked him for money. I never asked him for money in the five years that I’ve been in the Movement, because I knew he would think that that’s all I wanted from him. So I felt bad that now I had asked for money just to put it in Dr. Anand’s pocket rather than having it help the Movement. Therefore I wrote him a letter explaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness in

terms that I thought he might appreciate. Dad calls himself an eclectic, which means a mixture of different philosophies, so I tried to appeal to him that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is another very interesting way. I put in some quotes from the *Bhagavad-gītā* and wrote an essay just suited for my Dad. It was fun and made me think I ought to preach more like that.

I thought I should also train myself against *Māyāvādī* philosophy. So in my daily reading of Prabhupāda's books, I looked at the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* section where Lord Caitanya talks with the *Māyāvādī* in Vāraṇāsi. Dr. Anand wasn't a classical *Māyāvādī* follower of Śaṅkara. In fact most *Māyāvādīs* that I have met are a mixture of many different things, including *Māyāvādī*. For example, I met a hippie on the plane when we were going to India who said he was a Christian. I thought, "All right, we can agree that God is a person, and we all worship Jesus Christ as the Son of God." But once he started talking, I realized he wasn't actually a Christian. He said that Christ says God is in your heart, and since God is love, then we are also Love and we are also God. I think that's what he said. Whatever it was exactly, it was impersonal. Pūjā dāsa explained to me later that what this "Christian" was actually saying was when he enjoyed sex life, that was Love, and therefore he has attained love of God. I don't think Pūjā dāsa was concocting, because later I saw the hippie in the back of the plane with his girlfriend, kissing and embracing in front of everybody.

Even if most people aren't classical *Māyāvādīs*, it's good to understand what Śaṅkara said. In India,

they're a little more inclined to Śaṅkara because they quote from the *Vedas*. That's what Śaṅkara did. He avoided the direct meaning of the *Vedas* and gave his own indirect interpretation. His philosophy is so dangerous that the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* says "Śaṅkara has misled the world by commenting that Vyāsadeva was mistaken. Thus he has raised great opposition to theism throughout the entire world." It could be that all the hodgepodge impersonalism that we find also comes from Śaṅkara, because he was so potent, being an incarnation of Śiva. As I read this, I began to think of myself as a representative for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a *Māyāvādī* camp, but I wasn't so sure of my own powers to convince anyone. Prabhupāda writes,

"The *Māyāvādī* philosophers have presented their arguments in such an attractive flowery language that hearing *Māyāvāda* philosophy may sometimes change the mind of even a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or a very advanced devotee. An actual Vaiṣṇava can not tolerate any philosophy that claims God and the living being to be one and the same."

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* *Adi-līlā* 7.110 purport

I couldn't argue with some Sanskrit *paṇḍita*, but at least I know a *Māyāvādī* when I hear one, and I *should* know enough to stay clear of them. In reading Prabhupāda's books, I also looked for references about cows' milk. Dr. Anand said he was once giving a lecture and a man challenged him and said, "Why do you speak against milk, since Kṛṣṇa recommends it in the *Bhagavad-gītā*?" Dr. Anand said he replied, "I have read the *Bhagavad-gītā* fifty times and I don't find that Kṛṣṇa says you should drink milk." I pointed out

to Dr. Anand that Kṛṣṇa says the *vaiśya* should protect the cows, and in another chapter Kṛṣṇa says that He is the *surabhi* cow. Dr. Anand said that that still didn't mean that we should drink the cows' milk, because her milk was only for her calves. Hearing these things was contaminating for me. Then I remembered that the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the philosophy in brief, and we can't expect everything to be there. If you look in the *Bhāgavatam* there are different references to milk and milk products. There's one reference where Lord Viṣṇu says that He's very pleased by offerings which are made to Him by feeding *brāhmaṇas* with food that has ghee in it. And in the *KṚṢṆA* book, Kṛṣṇa is always drinking milk and yogurt and giving an example in that way. You often read of *sādhus* drinking cows' milk, like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who drank only cows' milk. Dr. Anand says that if there's any milk to be drunk it should be goats' milk, but Śukadeva drank cows' milk and so did Prabhupāda.

I was thankful I still had my books, because I was able to find some good quotes:

Human civilization means to advance the cause of *brahminical* culture, and to maintain it, cow protection is essential. There is a miracle in milk, for it contains all the necessary vitamins to sustain human physiological conditions for higher achievements. *Brahminical* culture can advance only when man is educated to develop the quality of goodness, and for this there is a prime necessity of food prepared with milk, fruits, and grains.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.16.4, purport

The mercantile class is also required to give protec-

tion to the cows in order to get sufficient milk and milk products, which alone can give the proper health and intelligence to maintain a civilization perfectly meant for knowledge of the ultimate truth.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.5.37, purport

Sure, too much milk or too much *anything* can make you sick. But it's not "our Vaiṣṇava way" to avoid cows' milk. When I got my quotes together I think the doctor became a little leery of me, especially when I talked to other people at the sanitorium.

I also looked up some references about health. I remember seeing in Prabhupāda's letters how he often encouraged the devotees to stay healthy. He used to end all his letters "I hope this meets you in good health." On the other hand, Prabhupāda indicated there was a limit to how much you should strive to maintain your own health. He said just lead a regular life and you'll be healthy. But at Dr. Anand's place the ideal of staying in good health was like a religion. They weren't interested in offering food to Kṛṣṇa; they only wanted to eat to satisfy the demands of their primitive nature. That's why they didn't like to cook. I was able to find quotes where Prabhupāda shows how you can overdo health consciousness.

At a Bombay *pandala* in 1977, a well-dressed, middle-aged Indian man stepped forward and asked, "Swamiji, what is the importance of health and life, and how do you advise people to maintain health? And how does it connect to your mission?"

Prabhupāda: What is health? First of all you have to understand that however healthy you may be, you must die. So what problem will you have solved? *Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhiduhkha-doṣānudarśanam*, Kṛṣṇa

says. It is not my manufacturing. Although you may try to remain very healthy, nature's law is that you must die. How can you help yourself? After all, you have to meet death. So as long as you have got this material body, there is no question of health. You must suffer . . . Foolish persons bewildered by false egotism think, "I am improving my health, I am improving this . . ." He is improving nothing. He's completely under the clutches of material nature.

—*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Vol. 6.

I became fired up when I started researching these things in Prabhupāda's books, but I didn't always follow what they said myself. I was very weak in health and since I was paying (or my Dad was paying), I thought I should take the full treatment. But the problem was, it was hard to take the nectar of bona fide health teachings out of the pot of *Māyāvādī* poison. When I started becoming a little bit stronger, the doctor insisted I participate in some of the group functions. So I did it. I began to do yoga *āsanas* including *prāṇāyāma* and even "meditation." I worshiped the sun, avoided all milk products, and talked a lot about health—but I didn't become a *Māyāvādī* (I hope).

## CHAPTER 12

(N.d.b.)

If anyone reading this thinks I'm a sincere devotee he'll have to revise his opinion. I'm telling this part only because Gurudeva said the *māyā* should be exposed.

The sanatorium wasn't so bad as long as I was very sick and allowed to rest all the time in my hut. But when I started to recover a little bit and I went outside and saw what the sanatorium really was, I became disturbed. There were different kinds of people living there and they were all doing their own thing. I usually met the other inmates only at the two times for compulsory group exercise. We were also supposed to eat together outdoors under the banana trees, but I insisted on staying alone and I paid Dr. Anand's son some money to bring my meal indoors. People soon learned that I was a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee and they also regarded me as a bit anti-social, just as they do in the Movement. So they humored my eating alone. But sometimes people would drop by to see me, and after a while I also sometimes looked in at the other huts and chatted with the guests.

Another time you met with people was during sunbathing or when soaking in the special tubs which were to improve your spine. Since there were some women attending, I sunbathed on my own, although everyone else mixed. Dr. Anand liked people to mix and be happy and share good vibrations. Probably I didn't fit so well with the vibrations, but at least I was quiet and I was paid up for one month, with another

letter on the way to my father for another month's rent. As for the exercise, we did it in a circular dirt clearing, in the morning and at sundown, and Dr. Anand led us. I liked the bending and stretching, but I disliked anything that sounded like meditation, because I figured he was trying to get us to become one. I don't think anyone else there even understood my objection. Their attitude was, "It's okay if you're a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and we're a devotee of something else. But when we get together, we can transcend our different gods and become One." If I tried to explain that the Supreme God is Himself a transcendental person and the source of the impersonal oneness and that our meditation should be to seek union with Him person to person, they would think that was "another idea." What they really wanted was to enter the impersonal One in a short meditation and then come out again and be themselves. I don't think I'm being unfair to say this; it's just what they wanted. They didn't want God in any overwhelming way. Unfortunately, I didn't want Kṛṣṇa in an overwhelming way either (*laulyam*), but I know that that is the goal. Any other practice which goes by the name of meditation is cheating. So either I stayed in my room, which was not allowed, or I came out but kept interrupting Dr. Anand and everyone else by saying, "No, that's speculation," or I sat with them and became an accomplice of the *Māyāvādī* tinged exercises—which is what I did most of the time. I suppose there were other alternatives open to me, such as leaving the place, but I wasn't up to that.

In order to tell you how I became influenced, I have to describe a little about who it was that influenced me.

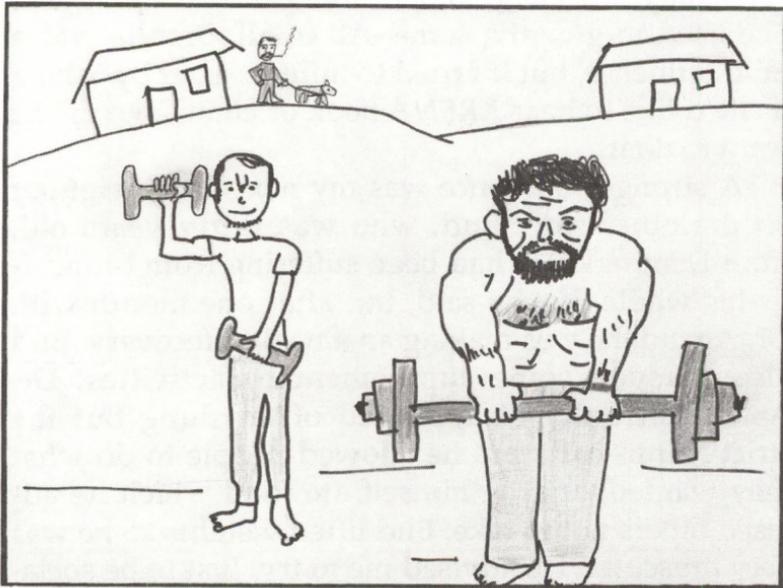
My hut was centrally located. In the hut next to mine was a very old lady from Switzerland. She spoke a quaint kind of English. She took an interest in me and my *japa* chanting. I know you're not supposed to sit alone even with an old woman, but at this place it was impossible to follow all the rules. So I would sometimes sit with her on the bench in front of her hut. She knew about auras, the energies that some people can see emanating from a person's body. She claimed that by seeing someone's aura and then meditating on it very deeply—which she said she could no longer do because it was so physically taxing—she could tell all kinds of things about a person's past lives and what their present weakness or strength was. I thought, "Uh-oh, she's going to tell me about myself." Whenever I meet a person like that who knows astrology or some psychic art I half want to find out about it and half want to run away. But she was my next door neighbor. "You have a very pure aura," she said, "many brilliant colors." She told me that I was a master *yogi* in my past life and long ago I had even been a personal associate of Gautama Buddha. That seemed interesting because the *Bhagavad-gītā* also says that if one practices Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this lifetime he must have been a spiritualist in a past life.

But when I talked with Brenda (that was her name) I became puffed up. I tried to tell her about

Kṛṣṇa and how to chant. Although she seemed amused to watch me chant, she thought that she knew all about it and that I was just a kid. But she liked my aura and would sometimes tell me how "it" looked or when I had a problem. She said I had special abilities to communicate, but I wasn't using them. Brenda also ate a special supplement that she had brought with her which was a rare algae that grew only in Iceland and would guarantee long life. She used to give me some. All in all, Brenda was a mild influence, but if I tried to influence her by asking if she'd like to hear KRṢṆA book or chant, she didn't want to do it.

A stronger influence was my next-door neighbor on the other side, Bud, who was thirty years old, from Denmark. He had been suffering from bronchitis his whole life, he said, but after one month with Dr. Anand, he was making an amazing recovery. Bud also pursued some supplementary activities. Dr. Anand officially disapproved of anything but the strict Naturepath, but he allowed people to do what they wanted, and he himself ate food which he advised others not to take. Bud lifted weights so he was very muscular. He advised me to try. Just to be sociable I started working out with a ten-pound barbell he lent me and I watched the progress on my biceps.

He also knew about massage and had a portable, battery-run machine that sent a low frequency electric current into your body for healing the cells. He said it would help my diarrhea problem and so I tried it a few times, but I didn't notice anything except a dull shock.



I didn't get very far in talking with Bud about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When I asked him what his philosophy was he said, "I don't have one. I just live." He took a supplement of special bee pollen which he said will give you extraordinary energy. I was particularly low on energy, and so I tried some of it. But I never noticed anything. Whatever special thing I

take, I never get the result that people say you're supposed to get.

In two other huts were respectable Indian businessmen. They used to sit together between their huts and smoke cigarettes when Dr. Anand wasn't looking. Apparently they made a visit to the sanitorium every couple of years to overcome hypertension. I think sometimes at night they would also drink liquor.

There was also a young man and woman from France, who lived together in one hut, and who played music on their tape recorder. The music was very interesting, such as Bach or Mozart or sometimes Bob Dylan, but they didn't ask anyone whether they wanted to hear it or not. They played it loud. I mentioned it to Dr. Anand, but he smiled and said he couldn't do anything.

Everyone knew I was a devotee, but it didn't seem to make much difference. I wore my Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* faithfully, but eventually I stopped wearing a *dhotī*. Most of the men there, as advised by Dr. Anand, went around wearing a *gamcha* and no shirt. One of the doctor's books even recommended nudity. At least at this sanitorium things didn't go that far. But you were supposed to wear as little clothing as possible so that the air could circulate on your body and you could get the sunshine. And as part of the back-to-nature mood, most of the men didn't bother shaving. Just by association I also stopped shaving. I had never grown out a beard, so I became curious to see what I could do. We each had a little wall mirror in our hut, and I began watching my

beard's progress and flexing my muscles. This all goes to prove that Hiraṇyakaśipu was right when he said that association is like crystal glass; it reflects the color of whatever comes near it. Although my intentions were always to regain health so that I could return to devotional service, I was becoming subtly and grossly transformed by my association outside of the society of devotees.

## CHAPTER 13

(N.d.b.)

I am making this a separate chapter because it's the worst. I hoped that S.d.g. would write it because I am ashamed. But he and Gurudeva thought it would be better for me to tell it from the inside. I've read adventure books where people get in a lot worse jams than I got into, but my life has been pretty sheltered. At least since I became a full-time devotee, I've been in the shelter of Kṛṣṇa. As stated by Prabhupāda in the heading of his "Back to Godhead" magazine, "Where there is Godhead there is no nescience." The opposite is also true. As soon as you step a little bit out of the shelter of the Kṛṣṇa-sun, you get thrown into the darkness.

Because it's painful for me to talk about my fall-down, and I don't see any real profit in describing the details, I won't dwell on it. But I won't minimize the facts either.

What happened is that Bud put some intoxicant in a drink of juice he gave me. Before I became a devotee, I tried some drugs and so I think what he gave me was LSD. I'm surprised that he did such a malicious thing or maybe he thought it was fun or wanted to give me a good time. But he knew my strict principles, so there was something destructive in his mind. Maybe he thought I was too highfalutin'.

At first I thought I was becoming delirious again, but there was no fever. It didn't make sense, why I should feel all these rushes of power and perception. But it was all material, *māyā*, and I recognized it from

the past. Then Bud came into my hut and told me what he had done. I told him to get out and leave me alone. He looked like he was deciding whether to beat me up, but then he left. He said something blasphemous that I won't repeat.

I've read in the *Nectar of Devotion* that when a gentleman gets intoxicated, like Lord Balarāma, he lies down. But a low-class man shouts and is sometimes violent. I used to wonder why the *N.O.D.* spoke of a gentleman being intoxicated. Not that I am a gentleman. Then, again, I didn't purposefully take this, but it was acting on me. So I thought maybe I should lie down. However that didn't work because everything was spinning around and I felt an urgency to *do* something and prove myself.

I was very sorry. I felt as guilty as if I had willfully taken it myself. That was the worst part of it, feeling guilty. I felt as if all the pious activity I had accumulated was just being thrown away within a few hours. I had heard of some devotees in the past taking things like LSD or mushrooms in an attempt to get full realization of Kṛṣṇa. I knew that that was stupid. I would never do such a thing. Prabhupāda says you can't know Kṛṣṇa by taking a pill. He told that to Allen Ginsberg who was trying to argue that maybe Kṛṣṇa came in the form of a pill in Kali-yuga. Prabhupāda said Kṛṣṇa is spiritual not material, and He doesn't reveal Himself to someone just because he takes a pill. So whatever anybody sees in a drug state is hallucination.

In one sense I wasn't doing such a bad job controlling myself if I could have just stayed in bed. I

knew it would wear off in a few hours, or at least the worst of it. But one feeling was getting stronger and stronger, and that was a fear that I was in bad association and I should leave as soon as possible. When I looked in the mirror and saw that I had a beard, I knew that I was in complete *māyā* from staying in this place. So whether it was by rational decision or by exaggerated fears, I decided I had to go at once. I was wearing a pair of *yogī* pants and a T-shirt and I just gathered up the few other things I had with me and left the Hindu Naturepath Sanitorium without talking to anyone and with the intention of never coming back.

By Kṛṣṇa's grace, the effects of hallucination started to diminish sooner than I thought they would. I began to chant with more sincerity than usual,

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

That always happens when you are afraid. We don't ask for fearful situations, but when they happen we immediately become more dependent on Kṛṣṇa. I was definitely afraid and was also depending on Kṛṣṇa, or at least I was chanting to Kṛṣṇa to please help me.

I didn't have much money and I couldn't think straight about where I should go. If there was a Prabhupāda temple nearby I definitely would have gone there, just like you read in Prabhupāda's biography,

how the hippies used to turn themselves in at the temple in Haight-Ashbury. I was ready to turn myself in not just for the night, but for good, for life. I was ready to serve in a menial way for the rest of my life if someone would just let me work in the kitchen or in some way serve the other devotees, whatever they wanted. I wanted to be part of the Movement. I thought of Pūjā dāsa and how he had influenced me, but I didn't want to be like that any more. Within my heart I didn't have any big cynicism towards leaders. I had my spiritual master and as for the other devotees I had served, they had never done any horrible scandalous things to me, such as written about in anti-cult books. So why should I pretend that I was better off outside the Movement?

I was paranoid as I walked into the nearest town. I realized that, with my beard and nondevotee clothes, I looked like a vagabond and not like a *brahminical* devotee. I kept thinking, "This is what you wanted." Otherwise, why was I dressed like this and with a beard? No one forced me. Definitely I was getting kicked by *māyā*, I knew that. But at least now I wanted to be a devotee, if it wasn't too late.

Since I had so little money and it was getting late, I decided to just lie down somewhere and sleep. Then in the morning when I could think more clearly, I would plan where I was and maybe find someone to talk to and find a way to get to a Prabhupāda temple. At least I could tell people I was a devotee although they might not believe it to look at me.

I knew in India it wasn't such a big deal as in America to just lie down outside somewhere for the

night. Many poor people sleep just on an open cart or on the ground under a *cādar*. So I walked off the road away in the dark and tried that.

I was lying down but not asleep when four men came up to me. When they got close, two of them took out knives and grabbed at me. I gave them all my money. They took my passport too and then one swung at me and hit me in the face with his fist. They weren't much bigger than me, so I tried to scare them and fight back, but I don't know how to fight and they could see that. One of them cut me on the arm with his knife. I thought, "They're *gundas!*" They pushed me down and kicked me in-between the legs and in the head. Then they went away.

After that, it was like when I was very sick in Vṛndāvana. I couldn't think much except to see how badly I was bleeding and how badly I was hurt. I sensed that it wasn't so bad, so I sat up and chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa.

When it was daylight I went into town and asked for the police. No one in the police station spoke English. It was a foul place. Then they put me in jail.

## CHAPTER 14

(S.d.g.)

Gurudeva arrived in Māyāpur, India, just a few days before Lord Caitanya's appearance day. Once again he mixed with old friends among his Godbrothers, and with devotees from all over the world. The Māyāpur festival always leveled him and made him aware that he was just a tiny devotee in a world movement. He may have been a leader of the *padayātrā* in Guyana, but when he was thrust into the assembly of many preachers, it was a painful but welcome blow to the false ego. The festival was also a time of intense socializing. While walking from the temple to the Ganges, he would stop dozens of times to talk, sometimes making promises for future visits or business exchanges.

While fasting and bathing in the Ganges on Gaura-pūrṇimā day, Gurudeva met his Godbrother Nanda dāsa who had just come with a group of devotees from Vṛndāvana. Nanda told him how Gurudeva's disciple Nimāi dāsa had been "acting like a rascal," hanging out with one Pūjā dāsa who was associating with a *bābāji*. Gurudeva already knew this from the letter he had received from Nimāi and so he toned down the alarmist edge to the report given by Nanda. But then Nanda said, "Nimāi got very, very sick. They had to take him to a sanitorium in South India."

Gurudeva listened sympathetically. Getting sick in India was par for the course, but it sounded like Nimāi had gotten an extra dose. "Where is the

sanitorium?" Gurudeva asked, but Nanda didn't know. So there was nothing to do about it but depend on Kṛṣṇa. Probably Nimāi would get well.

That same evening, Gurudeva stood on the roof of the guesthouse overlooking thousands of pilgrims filing into the Māyāpur Mandir. He was watching the sky for the appearance of the full moon. A smiling *brahmacārī* approached Gurudeva, greeted him, and said that he was a member of the Movement's temple in Trivandrum, South India.

"Do you have a disciple named Nimāi dāsa?" the *brahmacārī* asked. Gurudeva replied "yes" and the *brahmacārī* told him that Nimāi was in jail in Trivandrum. He had been arrested as a "vagrant" and there was a rumor that he was a C.I.A. agent.

It sounded too incredible to believe, but the *brahmacārī* showed Gurudeva a photo of Nimāi dāsa in jail.

"He has a beard!" cried Gurudeva.

"Is he your disciple?" the *brahmacārī* asked.

"Yes, that's him, but...."

The *brahmacārī* said that the police had contacted their temple, but when they went to see Nimāi in the jail, their temple president was a bit doubtful. Was this young American with the beard and *karmī* clothes actually a devotee or someone trying to take advantage of them? When they talked with Nimāi, he *sounded* like a devotee. But the police were serious about holding him as a criminal, and the Trivandrum devotees were hesitant to get one of their life members to vouch for Nimāi. So Nimāi asked them to try to see his spiritual master, Gurudeva, or some devo-

tees who knew him, such as Pūjā dāsa or Nanda dāsa.

“Now that we know he’s your devotee,” said the *brahmacārī*,”when we go back we will try to get him out.”

The news distracted Gurudeva for a while, and he wondered whether he should become directly involved. Should he send someone to South India? Should he go himself? But as the Gaura-pūrṇimā evening swelled to its auspicious climax, with the appearance of the moon of Gaurāṅga, and when the devotees insisted that he go join the *mahā kīrtana* in the temple, Gurudeva put Nimāi in the back of his mind.

The next morning, Gurudeva woke thinking of Nimāi dāsa. That boy was really getting his kicks from *māyā*. Gurudeva couldn’t meddle with *māyā*, but still, he had his duty as spiritual master. As the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* stated, “If by chance a servant falls down and goes somewhere else, glorious is that master who captures him and brings him back by the hair.”

He considered flying to Trivandrum and dove-tailing it with a visit to some Viṣṇu temples. That wasn’t so important, but Nimāi . . . Gurudeva wrote a letter on official letterhead and brought it to the Trivandrum devotees in Māyāpur. Maybe this would be enough and he wouldn’t have to go personally. But then he decided to go. Getting Nimāi out of jail was only the first step. Why was he wearing a beard? Why was he a “vagrant?”

Nimāi sat in a small jailhouse cell. Materially speaking, he was at the low point in his life. But he felt better, and had confidence that things would turn out all right. At least he could think more clearly and more deeply into the issues which had confused him for months. He knew he had committed a falldown by taking intoxication, he had broken one of the four prohibitions of his vow. But he had not done it willfully. Yet he was implicated by living in such a strange place. He knew his own guilt and was sorry, but felt assured of Kṛṣṇa's forgiveness. Being isolated and misunderstood in a South Indian jail was no picnic, but Nimāi felt resigned to it. "Eventually I'll get out," he thought, "and then I will go back and join a temple. Or I'll go to Gurudeva first and ask him what he wants me to do."

On his second day in jail, Nimāi was questioned by a police officer, who threatened to beat him. It had taken them two days to speak to him in English. He told them that he had just come from the Hindu Naturepath Sanitorium and that he was a devotee of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and an American citizen. His father was a lawyer and worked in New York City. The police returned him to his cell and checked out his story at the Hindu sanitorium. Dr. Anand said that Nimāi had been staying there, but he could not vouch for his character. Nimāi had left abruptly leaving no notice, and owing two week's fees. The police officer informed Nimāi of this through the bars and said that it was another point against him. "How will you pay your fees at the sanitorium?"

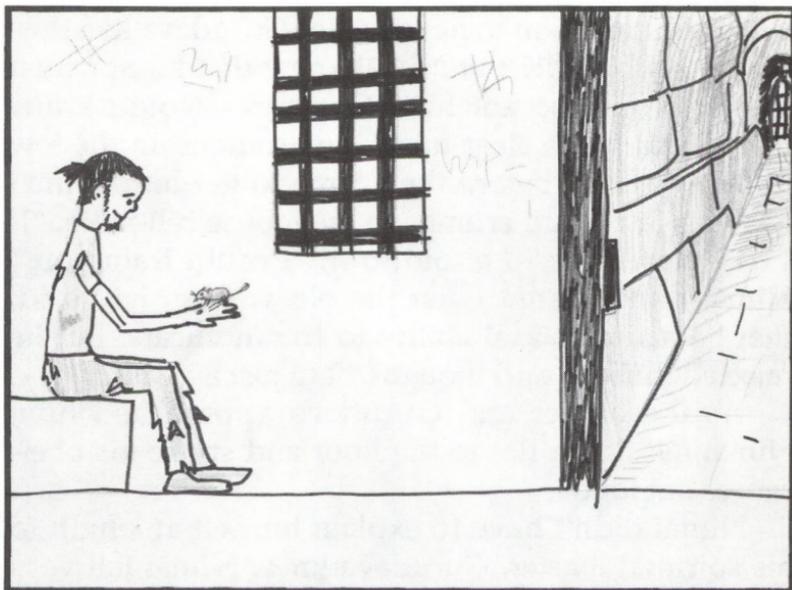
"My father will pay."

“Your rich American father?” they laughed. “Where is he now?” Why did Nimāi have no ID, no passport? If he was a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee, why didn’t he look like the *bhaktas* in Trivandrum, with shaved head and *sikhā*? No, they would not allow him to use the phone. No, he could not shave his face. They would keep him in jail as long as they liked, they said, until he decided to tell them the truth about his purpose in India.

But mostly they left him alone, and he only overheard from his cell the bureaucratic dealings of the police office routine from morning to night. Nimāi turned to his inner resources; he had no others. His chanting of *japa* had been markedly improved ever since he left the sanatorium. Now he clung to the holy names with quiet fervor. His thoughts were reverent and fairly steady, considering the aridity and anxiety of living in jail. He thought of his spiritual master, and he thought of different sections from Prabhupāda’s books.

On the first day in the cell, Nimāi was visited by a small gray mouse. Nimāi placed a bit of bread in his palm and eventually coaxed the mouse to come into his hand. The mouse sniffed out Nimāi’s body scent, cautiously approved it, and consented to be fed. Since food was not so plentiful elsewhere, the mouse began to appear at mealtimes. Even when there was no food it walked about without timidity. Nimāi chanted and spoke to the mouse, and although it never made a reply, its presence filled Nimāi with remembrance of Choṭa. Even if this mouse wasn’t special, it was more peaceful and friendly than the humans in jail.

“Yes,” Nimāi thought, “an animal can take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I’ve done this before.”



By the time Gurudeva arrived in Trivandrum,<sup>4</sup> Nimāi had been in prison for five days. Gurudeva, along with the Trivandrum temple president, explained the situation to the vice-mayor of the city, who was a regular visitor to the temple. In the presence of the devotees the vice-mayor phoned the local police station and told them to release the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee. Gurudeva also reprimanded the police officer and threatened to make an inquiry as to why they

had so detained a foreign citizen with no formal charges.

Nimāi suddenly heard the sound of Gurudeva's voice and a police officer replying in courteous tones. He leaped with joy. But then he clutched at his beard. What a humiliation to have to face Gurudeva like this! How to explain it? But Nimāi knew that his spiritual master would accept him. Gurudeva would know that Nimāi had a clear mind to surrender. In the few minutes it took before they came to get him, Nimāi gave his last bread crumbs to the mouse cell-mate. "If I had more time," he said to it, "I could train you." Nimāi remembered what the old woman had said, that he had a special ability to communicate. But he rejected the idea and thought, "I'm just a jailbird."

As the officer and Gurudeva approached him, Nimāi fell down flat to the floor and spoke his obeisances out loud.

Nimāi didn't have to explain himself at length to his spiritual master. Gurudeva knew Nimāi felt very regretful that he had deviated from his straight and simple devotional service. He had learned a lesson. And so with minimum words, they took him to the Trivandrum temple where he promptly bathed and shaved his face and head.

Nimāi then appeared before Gurudeva and asked, "What do you want me to do?" Gurudeva said that Nimāi should become his assistant and travel with him wherever he went. Nimāi was happy to receive the order, and he prayed that he could carry it out with fixed determination. He knew that intimate service to Gurudeva would be demanding. He thought

that he could do it. Now by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, and the direct supervision of his *guru*, he would learn for good how to stay free of *māyā*'s detours.

A few days after Nimāi's release, Gurudeva called him into his room. Gurudeva said, "Nimāi, I know you sometimes think of your mice, Choṭa and the others, right? Do you sometimes think of what they might be doing, whether they're involved in Kṛṣṇa conscious acts and preaching?"

"Yes," said Nimāi. "Or I think of things I did with them or heard from them."

"In either case," said Gurudeva, "I was thinking of a way you could remember them without being distracted from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a way to dovetail your propensity. Maybe you can fashion some *stories* about the mice or even other creatures. You know, like in *Hitopadeśa*, but for *gurukula* children. What do you think?"

"You mean...fairy tales?"

"You wouldn't have to call them that," said Gurudeva. "Fables—Kṛṣṇa conscious fables for children."

"Would they be imaginary?"

"You can believe in them," said Gurudeva, "or half-believe that they could happen. But you should take them seriously and make them into some kind of story that a child would like to listen to, and that mothers would like to tell to their children."

"They've got true stories," said Nimāi, "of Kṛṣṇa in the *KṚṢṆA* book."

"Yes, they're the best," said Gurudeva. "But they want more. Stories about people nowadays who are devotees of Kṛṣṇa and of Prabhupāda. *Saṅkīrtana* stories and Kṛṣṇa conscious stories for children."

"I don't think I could qualify," said Nimāi, "to teach children."

"You wouldn't have to be a teacher," said Gurudeva. "Just write stories and others can tell them to the children."

"What about grown-ups?"

"The stories can be told for children," said Gurudeva, "but the grown up person may be allowed to listen as well. Or some of them may be more appealing to adults."

"But is it all right," asked Nimāi, "to make up stories for devotees?"

"Yes, I think so," said Gurudeva, "as long as you evoke the Kṛṣṇa conscious *paramparā* without deviation. And don't 'make up' stories of Kṛṣṇa-*līlā*. You're not so advanced for that, are you?"

"Gurudeva, I'm not advanced at all. I can't do anything unless you empower me. It's a fascinating idea. I'd like to give it a try."

"But don't go on a binge," said Gurudeva. "Just do it sometimes, like when you can't control your mind otherwise, or when the stories just come into your mind almost without asking. Mainly I want you to serve like the other devotees—chant, go to the morning program, read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and do regular services. Would you like to go back to the farm?"

"I think I would like to," said Nimāi. "But what

about the idea of going back to Guyana? I was supposed to go back in six months to see that girl's father. And also ... I had some agreement with my mice that I would see them again." Gurudeva wasn't ready to answer about Guyana. He had only wanted to express his idea for story telling. So Nimāi didn't pursue it. Gurudeva wanted him to think over what he had already said.

Nimāi didn't give the storytelling suggestion much thought that day. He mostly felt very satisfied to have had such an open talk with his spiritual master. He remembered a purport where Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the *guru* as capable of knowing the tendency of his disciples and being expert to assign them a suitable service—"You should work in the editorial department, you should work in the kitchen." It seemed as if Gurudeva had been manifesting some of that potency, and Nimāi was pleased to see it.

The next morning Nimāi woke early, by one o'clock, and the beginning of a story suddenly came to him, just the way Choṭa would sometimes come to him and perch on his knee. The story even had an opening line, "Once there was a *gurukula* boy named Anu dāsa, who could talk to butterflies..." Nimāi felt a gentle but insistent invitation to get up from bed, put on the light, and write a story for children, as ordered by his spiritual master. So he did it and later that day placed it under his spiritual master's door.

## Preaching to the Butterflies

by Nimāi dāsa

Once there was a *gurukula* boy named Anu dāsa who could talk to butterflies and flowers. They also spoke back to Anu dāsa, and he could understand them. But they spoke to him so gently that no one else heard it. Or sometimes if a person came very close to where Anu was talking, and if the wind was right, they could hear the soft voices of the yellow and black butterflies and the red roses in conversation with the boy. Although Anu liked to talk of games and silly things and about eating when he was with the other boys, yet when he spoke to the butterflies—and sometimes he would also speak to birds who came and landed in the rose garden—he would speak only Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He liked to preach to them.

Anu's father asked his son, who was only six years old, "Anu, why do you talk to the butterflies?"

"I'm preaching," said Anu, hoping his father would approve.

"You should preach to humans," said his father. "That's more important. What good could a butterfly do as a devotee, even if he could understand you?"

Anu replied, "They're easier to talk to." Anu remembered that he had once seen a man throw a bottle at devotees when they were chanting in a park. It had hit the devotee on the head.

"Anyway," his father said, "I don't mind if you do it. You can talk to the flowers and birds as practice.

Then when you grow up, you can preach to humans." So his parents allowed him to talk in the backyard garden, which he often did. In the summer he told the butterflies about Kṛṣṇa, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, who protected all the residents, even the animals, birds, and plants, from the flood of India. He also told them of Lord Caitanya's merciful chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa which even the birds and butterflies appreciated. In the winter months, Anu told the chickadees, who were quite friendly, how to chant and sing Hare Kṛṣṇa. It seemed to Anu that the birds were peeping back to him "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa" just like a parrot that Anu's uncle kept in a cage which actually did say "Haribol! Hare Kṛṣṇa!" and which everyone heard. Anu's teacher also told him that there were parrots in Vṛndāvana, one of which spoke about Kṛṣṇa and another which spoke about Rādhā.

But when Anu became a few years older, and he still only talked about Kṛṣṇa to the lower creatures and not to the humans, his elders became a bit worried.

"He will be retarded," his father said.

But his mother said, "Leave him alone, he's only eight years old."

Anu's father was a very good preacher. He used to speak Lord Caitanya's philosophy in college classrooms and on the streets. He also distributed Prabhupāda's books, even though sometimes people cursed at him and the police said that they would put him in jail. His father was like Prahlāda, who wasn't afraid because he knew that Kṛṣṇa would protect him. Even if someone did try to hurt a devotee, it was

possible only to hurt his body, because the soul can never be cut or wet or burned or made sad or afraid—as long as a devotee remembers Kṛṣṇa.

Anu's father became more worried when the boy was ten years old and still preferred to talk alone in the garden, rather than in front of people. When Anu did talk to people he usually only said a few things like "Please pass the salt," or "Yes I did my mathematics homework. Five times seven is thirty-five." So people thought that Anu was funny.

One day when Anu was eleven years old, or maybe twelve, on a beautiful summer day in the garden, several Monarch butterflies came to him and fluttered onto his hand.

"You have always been kind to us, to tell us of Kṛṣṇa," they said. And then a robin came by and said, "Yes, that's true." And the flowers nodded in agreement. By now Anu was so friendly with the creatures in the garden that even animals that normally killed each other did not do so by his influence. So on this day all the creatures were expressing their thanks to Anu. Then a particularly gorgeous red rose opened its petals and said softly to Anu, "The other flowers and birds have asked me to say to you that we think you are practiced enough and now you can try to tell about Kṛṣṇa to the humans. Whenever you attempt to, if you just remember us, we will help you as best we can."

Anu was very satisfied with the well-wishing words of the birds, butterflies, and flowers that he would be able to preach to humans, although humans were certainly harder to speak to, and they

sometimes threw bottles.

Anu's father had been patiently waiting for Anu to come and join him in his preaching, which *he* did everyday. Everyday his father would go out with a bag of Prabhupāda's books and come back at night with the bag empty or almost empty. By distributing books his father was satisfied in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Anu knew that the books were meant especially for human beings and in fact the birds and animals couldn't understand them. And that was another reason why it was so important to learn to preach to humans.

When Anu told his father that now he was ready to preach, his father asked, "How did you finally grow up?"

"I practiced as you told me," said Anu. "And the butterflies and birds and flowers told me that I should go now and speak to the humans. They said if I became afraid, that they would help me if I remembered them."

"That's a *fancy* story!" said his father. "But if it helps you to preach now, then it's all right with me."

And so the father and son went out together preaching, and although they did meet with difficult people, and even people who called the police and threatened them, the father and son made a good team. And Lord Kṛṣṇa was pleased with them.

Later that day, Gurudeva passed Nimāi dāsa in the hallway and said, "Not bad for a start. But don't

go on a binge.”

Nimāi knew that his “fable” was not much of a story. Gurudeva was just encouraging him. But it was good that Gurudeva had warned him, “Don’t go on a binge.” Because it seemed to Nimāi that once he caught the knack of how to tell Kṛṣṇa conscious stories, he would never want to stop.

## CHAPTER 15 (N.d.b.)

When Gurudeva asked me to try writing some stories for devotees (he called them “fables”), I thought he was just trying to engage me in service. I don’t want to second-guess the spiritual master and say why he recommended this for me. He didn’t say he thought I was crazy or “hearing things.” He just said to do it, although he did bring it up in the context of my experience with the devotee-mice, and at a time when I had just been on a detour into *māyā* and away from devotional service in the company of devotees.

I must admit that when I began the stories I had to face some basic questions about myself and devotional service—and the role of imagination. I suppose Gurudeva wanted me to face these things. He said a story didn’t have to be historically accurate as long as it carried the truths of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he warned me not to link my characters or stories to Kṛṣṇa-*līlā*, because that’s way over my head spiritually. So I thought maybe it could be stories that showed devotees struggling and succeeding in their attempts to serve the Lord in Kali-yuga. Gurudeva said a fable, if successful, could entertain, refresh, and encourage the devotees and nondevotees.

But as soon as I started to write I thought, “Who am I to play like God or *guru* and describe what people are doing? I am not a liberated soul who can write transcendental literature.” Here’s what Śrīla Prabhupāda says about a writer of transcendental literature:

It is not possible for a common man to write books on *bhakti*, for his writings will not be effective. He may be a very great scholar or expert in presenting the literature in flowery language, but this is not at all helpful . . . The secret in a devotee's writing is that when he writes about the pastimes of the Lord, the Lord helps him; he does not write himself.

—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* *Adi-līlā* 8.39, purport

Does this describe me? No. Then? I'll show the stories to Gurudeva, and if he doesn't like them he can throw them all away, or maybe save a few. I am working under his direction and trying to tell the truths from Prabhupāda's books. I know it's strange for someone like me to even try. My conditioning is bound to show through even if I try to be a transparent via media to give some interesting stories.

As for imagination or make-believe, that really gets me wondering. If I live in a world of make-believe (sometimes), does that mean I should invite others to do it? Is it escape? Is it bad? When I think about it, I get puzzled. On the one hand I like to make up things in a fable, about talking animals for instance, because it allows me to speak more truthfully and freely. Maybe that's one reason Nārada Muni told such a long, make-believe story about a king who lived in a city of nine gates, and who had a serpent who was the chief of police of the city, and who was finally attacked by soldiers of the days and nights. That's a particular kind of storytelling which is called allegory—it's not the literal truth but it points to a higher truth.

When I began to write, I had not resolved the

questions about whether my stories would be make-believe or realistic, and whether they were really for children—not to mention my other doubts. I just proceeded with the hope that a dumb man could speak Kṛṣṇa consciousness, by the grace of the spiritual master.

### Remembering Prabhupāda at 26 Second Avenue

The ISKCON officers in New York considered it a very fortunate day when they were able to once again rent Prabhupāda's old apartment at 26 Second Avenue. Prabhupāda had lived there in 1966 and visited there a year after that, but then the apartment had gone into the hands of nondevotees for over twenty-five years. To celebrate repossession of the apartment, devotees gathered for a Prabhupāda memory night. Their plan was to turn the apartment into a museum. Devotees who had paraphernalia from Prabhupāda's early days had agreed to donate it in an attempt to set up the apartment just as it was when Prabhupāda was present.

Some of the original "storefront boys," like Mukunda Mahārāja, Rūpānuga prabhu, and Brahmānanda prabhu, attended and treated the other devotees to their firsthand experiences of Prabhupāda in the apartment. Brahmānanda recalled how he first met Prabhupāda in this room. He had been telling Prabhupāda about his psychology

professor at N.Y.U. who interpreted everything in the Freudian way, and about a girl he met in India. Brahmānanda said that while Prabhupāda spoke to him he was looking over Brahmānanda's head with a loving glance. Brahmānanda then looked up and saw that he was looking at a picture of Lord Caitanya.

As the stories were told in the original setting, the devotees looked at different parts of the room and tried to savor what it had actually been like. Mukunda Mahārāja took the devotees into the second room of the apartment and told how his wedding had been performed there, and how the room had filled up with smoke from the fire *yajña*, but Prabhupāda would not open the windows for fear of disturbing the neighbors. The floor was scrubbed clean, so that it looked pretty much like it had when Prabhupāda walked there and spoke with devotees in 1966.

One of the devotees had donated Prabhupāda's original three-tiered brass cooker, and a meal was cooked on it in Prabhupāda's kitchen. Prabhupāda's small Indian trunk, which he had used as a desk, was also restored to its original place, and a typewriter, which seemed to be the same one he had used, was also there. The New York temple had donated one of its prized Prabhupāda relics, his original white rubber slippers, which had since been gold plated. Remembering Prabhupāda in the association of his followers, and in his first apartment in America, made for a memorable evening. When they left, the devotees promised to have Prabhupāda meetings like this at least monthly.

After all the devotees had left and the lights were turned out and the door locked with a double lock, the rooms fell into silence. But the remembrances of Prabhupāda had been so sweet and intense that Prabhupāda's various paraphernalia began speaking among themselves just to continue the Vaiṣṇava-*kathā*.

The first to speak was the trunk, which was battered and painted yellow.

"It's so nice to be back with all of you," he said. "I remember how Prabhupāda used to sit behind me and sometimes touch me with his lotus feet. The devotees would sit over there by the wall. Everyone noticed me, although I'm just an ordinary Indian trunk. I can never forget those days when I served Prabhupāda as a writing desk and so many other things."

"Yes, I remember you," said Prabhupāda's rubber shoes. "No one knew at that time that later Prabhupāda would have many elegant desks. You were the first, at least in America. Now, of course, my memories range far and wide. I bore the lotus feet of the pure devotee when he walked the streets of New York. It is very extraordinary, because I am just a humble pair of shoes from India."

"I read about you," said Swamiji's spectacles, which were sitting in a glass case on the desk. "There is mention in the biography of Prabhupāda that the lady in Pennsylvania saw her child going to bite into Swamiji's shoes, and she thought, 'Oh, these shoes have been all over India.'"

"Yes, little did she know," said the shoes, "how

fortunate I am. Prabhupāda used to walk the streets of Manhattan, sometimes through the snow, and I would get all wet! How I wished I could protect his lotus feet! But he never complained. And you know, Swamiji actually treated all of his paraphernalia very tenderly, he never slammed things down or abused things. Because he saw us all as Kṛṣṇa's energy, something to be used in devotional service."

"I can vouch for that," said the stainless steel letter opener on his desk. "Swamiji used to open his letters very carefully. He used me in a way that very few letter openers are used. He not only opened the letter but slit all the corners of the letter and then turned it inside out and used it later for writing notes. He handled me so delicately and placed me down gently, always in the same place. He was methodical."

"Don't forget us," said the walls. "We have observed so many things. One time Prabhupāda even said that his spiritual master said if no one else listens you talk to the four walls. And many times early in the morning Prabhupāda would get up and speak to the four walls. Actually, he was speaking and chanting and singing to Kṛṣṇa in his heart, but no persons were present except us. So we were able to see Swamiji in the very beginning of his days in New York. Before anyone else really appreciated, we heard him, we four walls."

"What a relief it is!" said the floorboards, "not to be walked on by nondevotees! We always languished and were sad, just like mother earth herself, after Prabhupāda left this apartment, and so many disgusting things took place in this room and on

these floors. Now to be able to remember with all of Prabhupāda's paraphernalia is beyond expectation. But for the sake of reminiscing, we may remind you how Prabhupāda used to walk so nicely with his bare feet all the time across the floor. Sometimes he would be going into the other room to perform *ārati* which the devotees called "bells," or he would stand in the hall to open the door and let in yet another hippie to sit down and talk with him. His walking in this way, from one room to another, was heaven for us."

"Listen to my story," said the three-tiered cooker calling in from the kitchen. "I am celebrated all over the three worlds for being the original cooker on which Śrīla Prabhupāda made his rice and *sabji*. How deftly, like a chemist, he put in the right proportions and stacked in each vegetable in just the right place in my compartments. After a while, Prabhupāda began to cook so much that I was not big enough. But I was with him in the early days, and I am a symbol of when Prabhupāda was so much alone that all his meals could be prepared in a single cooker.

In this way, one after another, every object and nook and cranny of the rooms at 26 Second Avenue spoke out in testimony that the pure devotee had lived and walked within these rooms for many months, and had begun a worldwide Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement here. The rooms and paraphernalia spoke and heard from each other until it was almost dawn, and then they became quiet again, like dumb objects, but retaining the aura of association which could never be forgotten.

CHAPTER 16  
(S.d.g.)

Dear Nimāi,

Please accept Prabhupāda's blessings from me. All glories to Prabhupāda.

I like your story, especially the fact that you were remembering Prabhupāda. Allowing the paraphernalia of Prabhupāda to speak out is not only an interesting device for the fable, but it moves us to consider also that these paraphernalia are actually valuable, and should be considered valuable.

There are statements in the scriptures about the paraphernalia of the Lord, as well as the paraphernalia of the pure devotee. Your story reminded me particularly of a verse spoken by Lord Śiva to Pārvatī in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Lord Śiva said as follows:

*ārādhānām sarveṣāṃ  
viṣṇor ārādhanaṃ param  
tasmāt parataram devī  
tadīyānām samarcanam*

—*Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 2.4

The meaning is that the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is the best of all worship, but beyond that is "worship of things in relationship to Viṣṇu." The word *tadīyānām* means things in relationship to Kṛṣṇa, and it has the primary meaning of a person who serves the Lord. But it could also refer to the paraphernalia which are used either by the Lord or by the devotee

of the Lord. The devotee himself is a living instrument in the service of Kṛṣṇa. And when he uses other instruments, they become surcharged with spiritual association. Perhaps the best example is Kṛṣṇa's flute. The *gopīs* say that the flute is just a dry wooden stick, a descendant of the trees on the bank of the Yamunā. But because the flute is touched by the lotus lips of Kṛṣṇa, it shares a position which even the *gopīs* envy. Similarly, when Mahārāja Pratāparudra wanted to worship Lord Caitanya, the Lord at first did not want to meet with the king, but He consented to give a piece of cloth to Mahārāja Pratāparudra. The king received this with joy and worshipped it with full faith that it was nondifferent from Lord Caitanya. And this faith was approved by the Lord.

Therefore, the museums which display the personal paraphernalia of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda are worshipable *tīrthas*. Those who are followers of Prabhupāda have many things to do to carry out his mission. They are not always sitting and pondering over Prabhupāda's paraphernalia in museums. But there is a time for that too.

I know that you are concerned whether your imaginative flights are bona fide. We are just beginning this little experiment of your fable writing, so I do not want to discourage you, but neither in the beginning do I absolutely endorse it. I think that even if I told you not to think imaginatively, it would not be possible for you to curtail it. So it is better to find a way to use it in the service of Kṛṣṇa, if at all possible. I've asked you to channel your metaphors and allegories and imaginative flights into Kṛṣṇa

conscious fables and show them to me, and later we can see if we want to share them with others. Write as a way to render service to the Lord, not with the thought of becoming a famous writer. Śrīla Prabhupāda has encouraged writers, and he said that whether we know it or not we write for our own purification. That should be the first purpose. By applying your mind to Kṛṣṇa conscious themes, you can purify the quality of the mind and even reject, through the process of writing, materialistic motives.

Write from themes you really care about. Express even your doubts and problems, and then try to defeat them by the weapon of knowledge. But only when writing is purified of flaws, and when it is free from any attempt to surpass the previous *ācāryas*, can it be considered "literature in pursuance of the Vedic version."

I'm looking forward to seeing more of your stories. You may write them at a designated time without disturbance to your other important duties, such as attending the morning program in the temple, chanting your prescribed rounds, hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (which is the best, all-perfect form of philosophy and narration), and taking part in the preaching of the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Don't be puffed up thinking you are "a writer," but try to think of yourself as a servant of the servant of the servant of those who are trying to serve the Lord. As you write your stories, please send me copies, and I will tell you whether or not I think it would be proper to send them around for the pleasure of the devotees and their children.

CHAPTER 17  
(N.d.b.)

The Boy Who Wanted to Become a *Gṛhastha*

Once there was a gurukula boy who decided that, when he grew up, he would probably get married. After all, his father had been married, and in fact even those sages who never married were themselves sons of married persons. So it seemed inevitable. This boy, whose name was Dhīra dāsa, was too young to think very seriously about marriage. But if an uncle or older devotee asked him, "Are you going to be a *brahmacārī* when you grow up?" Dhīra would reply, "No, a *gṛhastha* devotee." The parents were amused that a young boy had decided to become a *gṛhastha*.

When he grew up, it wasn't so easy to get himself married. One reason was he belonged to a society for pure devotional service unto Kṛṣṇa. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa don't like to marry persons who have no affection at all for Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes people ask devotees, "Are you allowed to marry people who aren't devotees?" But devotees think, "What a strange question!" It's not that someone forbids them to marry a nondevotee, but how could you love someone who doesn't love Kṛṣṇa? Since there are so few people who love Kṛṣṇa, it is sometimes hard for devotees to find a husband or wife when it is time to get married.

Another reason it was hard for Dhīra to get married was because he wasn't very big or handsome, and girls generally like someone who is at

least a little bit like Rāmacandra or Lakṣmaṇa. Although devotees are supposed to love everyone, you can't expect an innocent young girl to marry someone who looks like a Yamadūta or a Ruru. But then there is the history of Vyāsadeva. He was considered ugly. Even some of the women who married Vyāsa couldn't bear to look at him. One wife closed her eyes when she went to see Vyāsa, and as a result she conceived a child who was blind, Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Another wife turned white when she was with Vyāsa, and she bore a child who was very white, Paṇḍu. But when a *śudra* woman accepted Vyāsa and served him nicely, she bore a child who was a great devotee, Vidura.

Intelligent girls know that "beauty isn't only skin deep," and so they look for good qualities in a boy they want to marry, such as whether he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa *japa* with attention, and whether he has a good reputation among the Vaiṣṇavas as a surrendered soul. If you could find a husband who was considered a good devotee, even if he wasn't handsome, that would still be fortunate. Ideally, devotees should mainly consider whether the person they marry is a serious devotee. Prabhupāda writes this in a purport:

A devotee is transcendental and therefore in a marriage between devotees, the boy and girl form a very happy combination.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.2.26, purport

Some girls count high in their estimation the ability of a devotee to protect them by strong

financial income, or they look for a man who is sensible in how to survive in the material world. For example, if a young man was very good looking and a good devotee, but was poor as Sudāmā Vipra (who was so poor that his wife didn't get enough to eat, and they lived in rags), that might be another disqualification in a husband, at least for some girls.

Dhīra dāsa lacked in all these qualifications, and so he couldn't find a wife. Still, he thought that he probably should get married and that there was a girl somewhere who would appreciate him. Maybe there was a girl who also wanted to get married, and who had been passed up by other men, and Dhīra and this girl might just like each other and be what is called "compatible." Sometimes Dhīra became quite concerned about this, especially when he reached twenty years of age and he still didn't have a wife.

Because too much talking or thinking about marriage is definitely *māyā*, and a devotee should concentrate his thoughts, words, and deeds in the service of Kṛṣṇa, Dhīra decided not to talk about it anymore. But he continued to think about marriage, and sometimes he dreamt about it.

One night in a dream, a Matchmaker appeared to Dhīra dāsa and said, "I have the power to marry you to any girl according to your wishes. As a reward for your devotional service to the Supreme Lord, I will arrange this for you."

Dhīra doubted whether this Matchmaker was himself a devotee of the Lord, because he had never heard of such a person in Vedic literature. He had heard of matchmakers, and there was even such a

person who appeared in Caitanya-*līlā* and arranged for the marriage of Lord Caitanya and Lakṣmī-devī. But that was different.

“Will you be able to fulfill my request for a girl who is a good devotee, in addition to other qualifications?” asked Dhīra.

“You request and I’ll comply,” said the Matchmaker. “What more do you want?”

Dhīra thought for a moment and then said, “What I mean is, are you aware of the ultimate goal of life?”

The Matchmaker laughed. He was a short, heavy-set man dressed in a business suit. “That’s a strange question to ask,” said the Matchmaker, “for one who calls upon a matchmaker to arrange a wife for him. If you’re so highfalutin’, then why are you asking to get married in the first place? As for the ultimate goal, yes I understand it is to be liberated from birth and death and to become free from the miseries of material existence. But it is a gradual process. By a happy marriage a man may prosecute his *varṇāśrama* tendencies, control his desires, and prosecute spiritual service all at the same time. Now, if you’re finished questioning my knowledge, we can proceed. That’s if you really want ‘the girl of your dreams.’ I can’t spend all night just on you, you know. There are plenty of other conditioned souls who require my service.”

Dhīra was sorry that the Matchmaker was offended, and he didn’t want to disturb him further. He was afraid the man might go away and he would miss a big opportunity. But Dhīra wanted to be cautious about his Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He did have more

questions, and they were questions about the Matchmakers credentials. How could Dhīra trust him with such a highly personal and important matter when he didn't know the man and his position in relation to Kṛṣṇa and pure devotional service? But then marriage was worldly. You were supposed to be unafraid of its worldly aspects, or—as the man had said—why get married? But that remark, about “highfalutin” had also caused Dhīra concern. The Matchmaker had seemed to slight marriage, as if it were merely “a license for sense gratification for those who are less intelligent.” Dhīra liked to think of marriage in a positive light, as something which had been performed by seven out of the twelve Kṛṣṇa conscious *mahājanas* and by all five members of the Pañca-tattva. Those *grhasthas* were not diminished spiritually just because they became married.

“Well?” asked the Matchmaker, and he glanced at his watch. He had taken out a portable computer and was typing at its keyboard.

Dhīra decided to plunge ahead. Beggars can't be choosers, he thought, which was something his mother used to say.

“I would like a beautiful girl who loves me and who is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa,” said Dhīra.

The Matchmaker then pushed some keys on his computer and looked at its screen. He made a tight expression, reminding Dhīra of airline agents when they type your name into the computer and then wait to see if your reservation is confirmed.

“Your case is a bit unusual,” said the Matchmaker, sitting back in his chair. “I would suggest you avail

yourself of another service which I can perform for you before we try to call up the girl of your dreams."

"What's that?"

"How would you like to be ten times more handsome than you are at present?"

"You can do that?" asked Dhīra. But even as he asked, Dhīra felt himself slipping into illusion. As Dhīra dāsa was dreaming this whole encounter with the Matchmaker, a faint part of him observed the dream and saw it as *māyā*. It was another one of those dreams in which he didn't cry out, "Kṛṣṇa! Save me!"

"What do you want?" the Matchmaker asked.

"All right, do it," consented Dhīra. The next thing he knew he was looking into a mirror and seeing himself as a different person, strong and handsome. He was still Dhīra—or was he? Dhīra became attracted to the features of the young man he saw in the mirror. "He really is good looking! He'll have no trouble attracting women," thought Dhīra. But at the same time, Dhīra was repulsed at what he saw and felt. He had never considered himself a very humble person, but now he realized that although he wasn't an advanced devotee, still he had attained, by the grace of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, some humility. In fact he used to feel much more humble than he felt looking in the mirror at this good looking "prince." "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth," he thought, which was a saying he had heard from his father.

The Matchmaker allowed Dhīra a few moments to get used to the sudden transformation.

"Like what you see?" asked the Matchmaker. "I think you can understand now that we don't fool

around. We know our business. Now, with your permission, we can proceed to find you a suitable match." The Matchmaker was already typing pertinent information into the computer.

"Wait a minute," said Dhīra.

"What's the matter now?"

"This really isn't me!" Despite his attraction to the handsome form in the mirror—that young man with the square jaw, beautiful teeth, courageous manly demeanor—Dhīra felt an overwhelming desire to return to his former self.

"If you're a real matchmaker," said Dhīra, "can't you just get me the wife I want without changing me? This bodily change seems contrary to the laws of *karma*."

"Who do you think you are?" said the Matchmaker. He was angry. "Are you implying that I have done something illegal? I'll have you know that my business is fully authorized. I do nothing contrary to the laws of nature! You asked for a beautiful wife, and I made the best logical adjustment for your case. Do you want to get married or not? Just tell me so I don't waste my time."

"I want to get married," said Dhīra. "But I want to be ... who I am."

"I already told you that would reduce your chances to find your dream girl," said the Matchmaker. "But if you insist, I'll do what I can." The Matchmaker then consulted a thick reference book. He worked with a pocket calculator for a few moments, resumed typing and peering into his computer screen, and then said, "You must be

passing through a good astrological period. I've been able to arrange a wife for you, and she is immediately available for a betrothal interview."

Dhīra went to meet the lady, whose name was Mātājī, in a semi-public place, a park near a temple. As soon as he saw her, he liked her. She was dressed in a *sarī* and was quite beautiful. She was perhaps a bit older than Dhīra, but he thought that was nice too. She was somewhat motherly.

"What I would like in marriage," said Dhīra, "is companionship and all the things that Prabhupāda says in his books. I would like a strict marriage in regards to following the principles, but Kṛṣṇa conscious fun too. It is written that the wife and husband can live together like Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, but if it doesn't work out well, the wife is like a tiger or witch. I prefer the Goddess of Fortune. We would live together peacefully and raise children and keep Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master in the center. If we have any fights, we would not take them seriously."

"Yes, I think I would like that too," said Mātājī. "But of course there are many practical aspects to marriage, such as getting to know each other, being compatible, deciding whether to live in a temple or apart from one, how things will be financially managed, and so on. Most of these things can be worked out if the husband and wife are sincere. It shouldn't be too difficult. One of the main things is not to have overly romantic conceptions, but to become actual friends. You know what I mean?"

"Yes," said Dhīra. "I agree. Mātājī, do you like to read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?"

"Oh, I love it!" said Mātājī.

Dhīra and Mātājī spoke agreeably for about half an hour, and then she said she had to return to her regular service.

Dhīra walked back to the Matchmaker. He found him with that tight expression around his mouth, which meant things didn't look well on the computer screen.

"I like her," said Dhīra. "I think I'll accept her."

"Unfortunately, she has rejected you," said the Matchmaker. The Matchmaker looked down sorrowfully because he had failed to arrange a successful match. Dhīra was about to blame him, but he didn't. He thought, "At least I didn't know Mātājī long enough to become deeply attached to her."

"This has never happened to me before," said the Matchmaker. "Your case is a real challenge."

Meanwhile, the actual Dhīra dāsa, who was dreaming, wished that he could wake up from the illusion. His limbs and especially his face, eyes, and brain all seemed very heavy, as if he were drugged by sleep. A thought passed faintly through his mind that he should get up and chant the holy names, even if it meant losing sleep. But his body seemed so heavy and helpless that he could not move. His closed eyes moved rapidly and he continued dreaming.

This time he dreamed of a girl who was perfect in almost every respect. In his dream Dhīra sensed that his life was passing by quickly, and he didn't want to keep getting disappointed before finding the girl of his dreams. So he didn't even go through the Matchmaker, but by his desire a girl suddenly

appeared at a table in Govinda's restaurant, and he approached her. She was young and pretty and lively and, of course, she was a devotee.

"I like you," she said, as girls sometimes do in dreams, "because you're a controller."

Dhīra was amused by that remark. It was mysterious and made him feel cheerful. "Why do you say I'm a controller?"

"Well you are, you know," she laughed. He sat beside her, and they got on very well together, like intimate friends, although they had just met. She said her name was Māyā.

"That's a strange name for a devotee," said Dhīra. "Why don't you change it?" But she didn't bother to answer.

They soon married and had three children. Dhīra managed to make money without too much endeavor and everyone congratulated him that he had a nice wife—he was lucky.

Dhīra dāsa, who was dreaming, thought, "This is good," and his eyes moved more rapidly.

But then the girl turned out to be a witch, not a witch who flies on a stick but a very unpleasant, unfaithful person. She was so unpleasant that it's not even pleasant to write about her.

Although Māyā dāsī had seemed nice and even perfect at first, she became inimical to Dhīra and began to find many faults in him (which weren't very hard to discover). She also began to make friends with other men, and she became disinterested in her own spiritual practices. How all this came about, since in the beginning it seemed otherwise, is simply the

nature of material life.

"Why did you marry me in the first place?" asked Dhīra.

"Because you forced me!" she said, which really wasn't true.

"I must have been in *māyā* when I married you," she said. "You are not exactly Prince Charming, you know."

Dhīra sighed, "Why is this happening?" He wept, but things got worse. The temple could not pay him any longer, and he had to find a job and an apartment. In Dhīra's case, this caused him much difficulty. Then Dhīra's children started having trouble in school. The teacher reported that they were cheating and lying. Dhīra dāsa fell behind in his daily quota of rounds.

He cried, but no one heard him, just as when a man falls into an old well in a field and no one hears his call for help.

Then Dhīra dreamed that he had actually fallen into a well. "Why is this happening?" he called out. The face of a *sannyāsī* appeared at the top of the well and said, "It's happening because you tried to be the controller. If you had been more patient and just accepted things as they happened, everything would have turned out much better. You should have left your marriage up to Kṛṣṇa."

"But ... " Dhīra thought of a million replies in his defense. It all seemed unfair. But it was too late. Dhīra fell down again to the bottom of the material pool.

When Dhīra dāsa awoke from his nightmare, he

felt very relieved that it wasn't really happening. He prayed and resolved never to complain about his fate. He saw everything very philosophically and clearly and accepted his life as Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Even after the immediate effects of the dream wore off, Dhīra maintained a better attitude. And that is the result of a good lesson.

Soon after, Dhīra also found a passage while reading a Bhaktivedanta purport, which made him think that God had informed him in a dream. The passage stated:

"The fulfillment of desires, therefore, should be entrusted to the Supreme Personality of Godhead; that is the nicest solution. . . If we depend on the choice of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we will receive benedictions in greater opulence than we desire."

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.28 purport

## CHAPTER 18

### Big-Hearted Mice

Once there was a boy named Mānasa who was fortunate to have a bona fide spiritual master, and so he sought his guidance. But when the boy spoke to his master, the *guru* noticed, "You talk just about yourself and your own problems. You should try to have a broader vision for helping others, because that is the meaning of *mahātmā*, one whose heart is big in love of Kṛṣṇa."

Although Mānasa was absorbed in his own little world, he tried to expand his vision for the pleasure of his *guru*.

As he sat down to think of a world beyond his own, Mānasa began to see the activities of some very rare souls who were devotees of Kṛṣṇa, although they were in mice bodies. Mānasa *dāsa* could not actually see them with his eyes or hear them with his ears, because these mice-devotees lived in a far distant country. But he began to imagine their activities. Mānasa's imagining was not like that of a Māyāvādī philosopher who imagines the nature of God independent from what is stated in the authoritative scriptures. (As for the Māyāvādīs, Prabhupāda has said "their imagination only leads to more imagination.") Mānasa's thinking of mice-devotees was different—it was based, as strange as it may seem, on actual experience and was in line with the Vedic scriptures.

This is what Mānasa thought when he tried to expand his heart:

Three devotee-mice were living in Guyana and trying to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness among the mouse population. These mice had been born in North America, but were brought to South America by their friend, Mina dāsa, after they had been trained in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. How the mice became devotees of Kṛṣṇa is a story which can be told another time. But in case anyone is wondering how it is actually possible, the answer is "by the inconceivable mercy of Kṛṣṇa and *guru*." As stated in the Garuḍa Purāṇa, even lower living beings, such as insects, can become surrendered servants of the Lord.

The mice, named Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna, were quite lonely when they were first left in Guyana by their human friend, Mina dāsa, but remembering his instructions, they took heart and began preaching. At that time, the human devotees of Guyana were conducting a *pada-yātrā*, or walking tour. So the mice walked along with the *pada-yātrā*, or sometimes they rode on the carts. Whenever the devotees stopped to hold festivals and lectures, the mice also stopped and tried to preach to the spirit souls of their own species.

One time the devotees stopped at a leper colony which was a hospital. Some of the lepers had lost their hands, and their faces were disfigured by the disease. Hardly anyone ever visited the lepers, and so they were happy when the devotees came with the loud musical chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. The lepers freely joined in the singing and even brought their disfigured limbs together in a clapping rhythm. Sometimes when devotees chant, the nondevotees become quickly bored by it. But the lepers were

genuinely interested in the *kīrtana*, and even after the devotees had chanted for an hour, the lepers were not bored but continued to sing:

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

When the *kīrtana* finally ended, a devotee explained the meaning of the names of God and encouraged the inmates to chant every day on their own. When they left the hospital, the devotees felt sure that Lord Caitanya was pleased that they had extended His mercy into quarters which are usually neglected.

The mice had observed this unusual *kīrtana*, and it gave them courage and inspiration to extend themselves and try to reach those who are normally rejected. Among the mice community there is a group known as “waltzing mice.” Human beings are sometimes amused to see the way these mice spin around, and they have given them the name “waltzing mice,” because the mice look like they are happily dancing in a ballroom. The actual fact is that such mice are suffering from brain damage. Healthy mice sometimes attack the waltzing mice and they reject them from normal communities. So Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna began to include visits to waltzing mice whenever they found them, although they did not neglect approaching normal mice. As Mina dāsa had informed the mice-devotees, all persons in the material world, whether they consider themselves normal or healthy, are all more or less

crazy and diseased, because that is the nature of material life. No one is free of birth, death, disease, and old age.

The preacher-mice found that the waltzing mice were more receptive than the normal ones. They heard the chanting and received sanctified food from the preacher-mice with gratitude, and this gave the preachers much satisfaction.

After a day of active preaching, when the devotee-mice were resting and sipping milk, they spoke among themselves how their *sañkīrtana* would be pleasing to their human instructor, who was known as Mina dāsa.

"Mina dāsa would be very happy," said Choṭa, "to hear that we made some inroads with the waltzing mice."

"Is there some way we can tell him?" asked Yamala.

"It's not necessary," said Choṭa, "and anyway what can we do? But if we actually please him, then even if we are not able to write him a letter or talk to him on the telephone, our purpose is achieved, isn't it? If we try to please him, then Kṛṣṇa, who sees everything, will be pleased. That's what Mina dāsa told us in the story of the *brāhmaṇa* in South India. Remember? He offered Kṛṣṇa articles like sweet-rice within his mind, and the Lord in Vaikuṅṭha was pleased." As the mice spoke, their feelings of separation from their human instructor increased. They became convinced that if they tried to please him, he would somehow know of their activities.

While the mice were thinking of him, Mina dāsa,

who was ten-thousand miles away in India, was also thinking of them. He was busy with his service to his spiritual master, but he had not forgotten his friends in Guyana. As he meditated thoughtfully, he imagined and pictured what the devotee-mice were actually doing. He did not feel that he was superior to them, but that they were his friends. He was therefore inspired by their compassionate activities and their determined preaching. Because Mina dāsa was a human being and had more access to the Vedic literature, he had shared quotes from the scriptures with the mice. And in their kindness, the mice had invited Mina to speak to them from his own realizations.

In Guyana, the human devotees were discussing whether it was advisable to attend a festival in honor of an Indian paṇḍita who was visiting Guyana.

"I don't think we should attend this festival," said one devotee. "It's dangerous to hear from a *Māyāvādī*. This paṇḍita teaches people not to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but he quotes the *Vedas* in an attempt to prove that "everyone is God" and that we are all one in the impersonal Spirit.

But another said, "We're not going to hear from him, so don't be afraid. Thousands of people will attend, so we should at least go to the entrance and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and give out books and magazines." The devotees disagreed whether they should go and decided to telephone their regional director, who was at that time in India, but they could not reach him.

They agreed to go to the festival but not enter the

tent to hear from the *Māyāvādī* or his students.

The mice decided they would go also, but in their boldness they wanted to go inside to hold a meeting of their own.

Usually at these festivals, a stage was erected at one end and the audience sat on folding chairs facing the stage. The devotee-mice would move through the crowd and pass the word among the attending mice (and many mice came because there was food to be found at these meetings) that a special mouse meeting was being held at the other side of the tent. But this time when they entered they could not find any mice. Finally one mouse told them, "All the mice are gathered at a *sat-saṅga* in the rear. There's a swami mouse from India who came with the paṇḍita. He's the real thing— from India!"

Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna moved to the edge of the crowd of mice. The "swami" was the first mouse they'd ever seen wearing a beard and turban. He had shiny eyes, and the mouse audience seemed to be in awe of him. Mice in the front row were sitting in a *yoga* meditational pose. Although the mice-*bhaktas* knew that the Vaiṣṇavas should not hear from the *Māyāvādīs*, they decided to hear a little in order to know what was going on.

The *Māyāvādī* mouse was finishing up his lecture, advising people to practice daily meditation "to become God in three months." He said that even if they could not actually become Gods, they would be able to increase their life duration by the *yoga* exercises taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He especially recommended deep breathing, head standing, and

chanting "I AM THAT TOO." The mouse paṇḍita finished his talk and asked if anyone had questions. Choṭa dāsa raised his paw.

"You have just cited *Bhagavad-gītā* as authority," said Choṭa. "But the speaker of the *Gītā* is Lord Kṛṣṇa, and His conclusion is 'surrender to Me.' You have not mentioned Kṛṣṇa." Mice in Guyana are usually familiar with Hinduism, and they respect the *Bhagavad-gītā*, so the mice in the crowd became interested in Choṭa's question. They turned to hear what the turbaned mouse would say.

"It is the One within Kṛṣṇa" said the paṇḍita mouse, "that we have to surrender to. The person Kṛṣṇa is a human God for humans to worship. But the impersonal Brahman is for everyone, and that's why it is best for mice to worship the One!" When he said "the One" the paṇḍita mouse raised his voice in squeaky fervor, and many mice applauded.

"What you said about Kṛṣṇa is not true!" said Choṭa loudly. "Kṛṣṇa is for everyone!" The paṇḍita mouse looked annoyedly at Choṭa, and some mice in the audience began to hiss. Someone shouted to Choṭa, "Sit down!" and they would not let him speak anymore.

When the mouse meeting ended, a few mice in the audience approached Choṭa and said confidentially, "What you said was right. That is the real meaning of the *Gītā*." The three *bhaktas* then began to mix among the crowd to distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious magazines. Since the audience was interested in *yoga*, Choṭa said, "Please take this magazine which teaches you about the highest *yoga*

and meditation." After they had distributed most of the magazines, each of the devotee-mice met up with one of the trained followers of the *Māyāvādī* mouse. Choṭa, Yamala, and Arjuna were each engaged in separate intense conversations which lasted about an hour.

Late that night, when the mice had returned to the temple, they discussed what had happened.

"That wasn't so bad," said Choṭa. "At least we distributed magazines, and they heard about Kṛṣṇa. But their philosophy is disgusting. It's a shame that all those mice were being misled.

Yamala and Arjuna didn't have much to say. When they had talked with the *Māyāvādī* representatives, they had mostly listened, unlike Choṭa who had given many arguments.

"I would never become a *Māyāvādī*," said Yamala, "but I don't think there's anything wrong with increasing your life duration through *yoga*."

"Yes, what's the harm in that?" asked Arjuna. And the two mice proceeded to stand on their heads. "You are that too" said Yamala. Choṭa was shocked to see it.

"That's not necessary," he said. "Our life duration will be as long as Kṛṣṇa wants it to be, and we can't extend it."

"But aren't Kṛṣṇa's teachings mostly for humans?" said Yamala.

"What!" said Choṭa, and he hopped up and down. "Kṛṣṇa is the original form of God, He's not a human! He says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the 'foolish deride Me, because I appear in human form. They do not know

My supreme dominion over all that be.' What nonsense are you thinking?"

"Don't be angry," said Yamala. "A *sādhu* shouldn't get angry. After all, there are many paths to reach the same goal."

"Yes," said Arjuna and he smiled dreamily, "We are all One." Arjuna and Yamala then inhaled deeply and held their breaths with half-closed eyes.

Choṭa became very frightened to hear what his fellow *bhaktas* were saying. They had been infected by the *Māyāvādī* preaching, which Choṭa knew could be fatal to the spirit of devotion. But when he began to argue with them, they said they did not want to listen. It was late at night and they wanted to sleep. Although his brother and cousin loved Choṭa, their relationship was quite familiar, so they would not listen to Choṭa as an authority.

While the cousins slept on their straw mats, Choṭa paced nervously back and forth. If only Mina were here! He would be able to speak to them and show the serious defects in the *Māyāvādī* philosophy. Choṭa had never felt so alone and vulnerable as he did now. There was no one he could turn to for help among the other humans, and so he prayed to Kṛṣṇa and chanted.

While Choṭa was pacing and chanting, the temple phone rang nearby. After about six rings, one of the women came and picked it up.

"*Haribol*. Who is this? Mina dāsa! What? Mahārāja is there and he wants to talk to the temple president? Just a minute."

Choṭa's hairs stood on end. As the matajī walked

away, Choṭa leaped up to the telephone and spoke.

"Mina!" Choṭa squeaked. "This is your mouse Choṭa speaking. Please accept my obeisances."

Mina was astounded and pleased to hear the voice of his mouse friend from thousands of miles away.

"Kṛṣṇa's mercy!" said Mina. "I never expected to hear you from so far away. All glories to Prabhupāda. How are you and Yamala and Arjuna?"

"We need you, Mina!" said Choṭa. But before he could say more, the lady returned to the phone. Choṭa had just enough time to hide behind the phone book.

"Hello Mina? The temple president is sleeping in his house down the block. It's late at night here. Would you like to phone in the morning?"

"No, wake him up please," said Mina. They both had to shout over the long distance connection to be heard. "Mahārāja said it's important, so please go and wake him up. I'll hold on the line."

"All right," she said, "it may take me a few minutes." And she ran off.

Choṭa leaped back to the mouth piece and shouted as loud as he could to Mina in India.

"We went to a *Māyāvādī* festival last night to preach!"

"*Jaya!* Wonderful. Did you distribute many books?"

"Yes, but something terrible happened. Yamala and Arjuna became affected after speaking to two *Māyāvādīs*. Now they want to meditate on the impersonal Brahman! They won't listen to me."

"Bring them to the phone right away." Choṭa ran

as fast as if a cat were chasing him. He woke up the two devotee-mice and brought them sleepy-eyed to the phone. All three mice were able to listen together to the sound of Mina's voice through the phone speaker.

"What are you thinking?" said Mina. Unlike Choṭa, Mina did not sound angry or excited with the other mice. They were all glad to hear whatever he had to say.

The swami said that Kṛṣṇa is the god just for humans, not for mice!" shouted Yamala.

"Then he doesn't know Kṛṣṇa," said Mina. "Kṛṣṇa and His incarnations did associate with the animals. Don't you remember the spider who served Lord Rāma, and the dog that Lord Caitanya liberated, and Gajendra, the king of the elephants, and Garuḍa? There are many. Besides that, are you a mouse?" Mina paused to hear their reply.

"No!" all three mice called out. "We're spirit souls!"

"That's right," said Mina, "we all have spiritual bodies. I'm not a human and you're not mice. So Kṛṣṇa is not just for humans. In the spiritual world everyone has a liberated spiritual body to serve Kṛṣṇa. The cows serve Kṛṣṇa, and the *gopīs* and the *gopās* and even the grass of the Yamunā. Please don't misunderstand Kṛṣṇa. The *Māyāvādī* does not know Kṛṣṇa, because he is envious of God. You should learn about Kṛṣṇa from *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, not from a *Māyāvādī*."

"What about increasing life duration by *yoga*?" asked Yamala. The two mice felt ashamed but

relieved to get it all out.

"By leading a life of devotional service," said Mina, "you'll live the longest life possible. *Bhakti* is good for your health too. But in the end, we all have to die. Our energy should be spent in extending our duration of life to eternal life, not in adding a few more years. Just depend on Kṛṣṇa for as long as He wants you to live, and then go back to Godhead. Is that all right?"

"Yes!" all three mice replied. "When are you coming back here? We need you!" shouted Choṭa.

"I don't know. I'm traveling with Mahārāja. Maybe soon."

"Please come soon," said Yamala.

"We're sorry we caused you trouble," said Arjuna. "Don't worry about us. We won't become *Māyāvādīs*."

"Let's all chant Hare Kṛṣṇa always, and in that way we'll be together. Just see how Kṛṣṇa has brought us together to talk!"

The telephone connection was then taken over by Mina's spiritual master in India, and the temple president in Guyana. Mina and the mice were spinning in bliss.

Mahārāja had phoned Guyana because they had phoned him the day before but had not reached him. The temple president explained that they had been trying to decide whether to attend a *Māyāvādī* meeting, but they had gone ahead and done it. They had chanted outside the meeting and sold many books. Mahārāja was glad to hear this and encouraged them in their preaching.

When the phone call was completed, Mahārāja turned to Mina dāsa.

"You seem very enlivened, Mina. Have you been trying to help others as I suggested?"

"Yes, I've been appreciating the preaching of Kṛṣṇa's devotees all over the world. I've been trying to serve some devotees in Guyana by telling them your instructions."

"That's very good," said Mina's spiritual master. "And you yourself should also preach directly. If you like preaching to others about preaching, you should do it yourself."

"Yes, Mahārāja," said Mina. In the glow from his talk with the mice-devotees, and in the presence of his spiritual master, Mina felt inspired to surrender. He went down to the temple book table and began distributing Prabhupāda's books. It was a Sunday evening and hundreds of guests were in the temple. Mina circulated among them and went outside along the street to find more people. "This is the direct way," he thought, "to expand my heart." As he spoke to people on the street, Mina thought of his friends in Guyana. He hoped that they were also preaching and that he could help them by his example. "If I am chanting and preaching," Mina thought, "and they're doing the same, we can be together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness wherever we are in the world, and in the next life we'll be with Kṛṣṇa in eternity, bliss, and knowledge."

CHAPTER 19  
(S.d.g.)

Dear Nimāi,

Please accept Śrīla Prabhupāda's blessings from me. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I have selected a few stories from those you have written. You can send these to your friends to share as Kṛṣṇa conscious fables. Some of the stories I didn't select, because they didn't seem to have a strong enough Vaiṣṇava conclusion. Even the ones I selected left me a bit puzzled in parts, but I think you have good intentions. You seem to have a knack for telling stories, and I hope you get better at it.

In this connection, I may tell you a story of my own. Once there was a boy who possessed an Aladdin's lamp. The lamp's name was The Mind. The boy's name was Nitāi dāsa. When Nitāi dāsa rubbed the lamp a huge, powerful genie appeared.

"You have called me?" said the genie. "Now give me some task to do. I will do anything you ask, but I cannot remain idle. If you leave me idle I will attack you."

Nitāi dāsa was both delighted and afraid to see the genie.

"For a starter," said Nitāi, "you can write a big book. Write a book of tales for spiritual life."

Within a moment the genie had composed a book of a thousand pages filled with lively and instructive stories and illustrated with many colorful drawings. Not only had he written it, but it was printed in ten

thousand copies.

"Now what else do you have for me to do?" said the genie, with a menacing smile.

"Uh ... please clean up the temple and the temple grounds so that there's not a speck of dirt anywhere."

In an instant the genie had scoured the entire area so that it was sparkling clean, like the heart of a pure devotee.

"What next?" asked the genie. "Don't keep me idle. If you do, I'll attack you."

"If I give you something that will satisfy you and that you can never finish, will you leave me alone?"

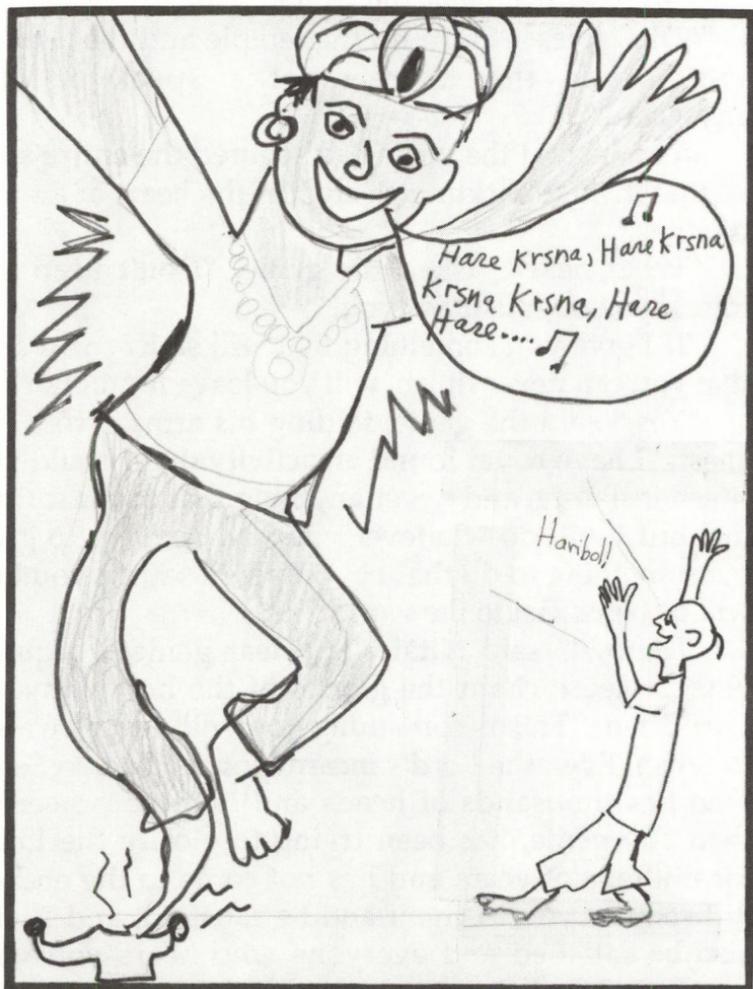
"Yes," said the genie, folding his arms across his chest. "I have never found an activity that I could not finish instantly, and never anything that could satisfy me. But I will do whatever you say. And try to give me something to do that not only will satisfy you but will be beneficial to the world."

"I know!" said Nitāi. "My dear genie, I request you to please chant the glories of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is something you will never be able to finish. Even the Lord's incarnation as Ananta Śeṣa, who has thousands of heads and is more powerful than any genie, has been trying to glorify the Lord for millions of years and has not come to the end of it. I request you to chant and be satisfied, and I will also be satisfied and everyone who hears you will benefit." "What chant is that?" asked the genie.

Then Nitāi gave him the holy name:

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

The genie, whose name was The Mind, then began chanting and soon understood that he was the



eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa and that there would be no tiring—and never completion—of chanting the glories of the Lord.

Yours in the service of Prabhupāda,

“A Kṛṣṇa conscious person does not make any distinctions between species or castes. The *brāhmaṇa* and the outcaste may be different from the social point of view, or a dog, a cow and an elephant may be different from the point of view of species, but these differences of body are meaningless from the viewpoint of a learned transcendentalist. This is due to their relationship to the Supreme, for the Supreme Lord, by His plenary portion, as Paramātmā, is present in everyone’s heart. Such an understanding of the Supreme is real knowledge.”

—*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, 5.18, purport

## Glossary

### A

- Ajāmila**—devotee who fell down from spiritual life but was saved from hell at the time of death by chanting the holy name of the Lord, Nārāyaṇa
- ārati**—a ceremony for worshiping the Lord with offerings of incense, lamps, flowers, fans and other paraphernalia
- Arjuna**—one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers; great devotee of Kṛṣṇa to whom He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*
- āśrama**—the four spiritual orders of life: celibate student (*brahmacārya*), householder (*grhastha*), retired life (*vānaprastha*), and renounced life (*sannyāsa*); a dwelling place for spiritual shelter.

### B

- bābāji**—one who retires from society to practice solitary prayer and meditation
- Bhagavad-gītā**—literally, “Song of God”, a discourse between Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotee Arjuna in which Kṛṣṇa explains devotional service to the Supreme Lord as the ultimate goal of life
- bhajanas**—devotional songs glorifying the Lord

*bhakta*—a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa  
 Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—spiritual master  
 of A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda  
 Bharata Mahārāja—king who renounced his kingdom  
 and became very advanced in spiritual life, but  
 became attached to a deer and thus had to take  
 two more births before achieving liberation  
 Brahmā, Lord—the first created living being and  
 secondary creator of the material universe  
*brahmacārī*—celibate student; member of the first  
 spiritual order of Vedic society  
*brāhmaṇa* —priestly order wise in the *Vedas* who can  
 guide society; the first social order of Vedic society

## C

*cādar*—long cloth wrapped on the body similar to a  
 shawl  
*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*—Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's biography  
 of the life and philosophy of Lord Caitanya  
 Mahāprabhu  
 Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord—the incarnation of Lord  
 Kṛṣṇa who appeared in West Bengal, India, in the  
 15th century to teach love of God by chanting His  
 holy names, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*  
*capātī*—griddle-baked flat bread usually made of  
 whole wheat flour and water

## D

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

*dāśya*—the devotional process of rendering service to the Lord; relationship with the Lord in the mood of servitorship

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

*dhāma*—place of residence usually referring to a temple or the Lord's abode

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

## G

*gamcha*—men's lower garment (usually similar in size to a towel) worn for bathing or in hot weather

*gopīs*—Kṛṣṇa's cowherd girlfriends, His most confidential servitors

*gṛhastha*—householder, the second spiritual order of Vedic society

*guru*—spiritual master

*gurukula*—school of Vedic learning

## H

Haridāsa Ṭhākura—great devotee of Lord Caitanya known as “Nāmācārya” or chief instructor of chanting the Lord's holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

Hiraṇyakaśipu—demon who conquered the universe and tried to kill his son, the great devotee Prahlāda. He was killed by the half-man, half-lion

incarnation of God, Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.  
*Hitopadeśa*—one of the Vedic scriptures

## J

Jagannātha Purī—holy city in India where Lord Caitanya performed many of His pastimes; location of major temple of Deity of Kṛṣṇa known as Lord Jagannātha

*japa*—chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* individually on beads

*jīva*—living entity (the soul)

## K

Kali-*yuga*—the present age when quarrel and hypocrisy are predominant

*karatāla*—hand cymbals used to accompany devotional singing

*karma*—fruitive action for which there is always a reaction, good or bad

*kīrtana*—congregational chanting of the holy names of God

Kṛṣṇa—the original name of the Supreme Lord (literally means “the all-attractive one”)

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja—great devotee who wrote biography of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu entitled *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*

*kṛṣṇa-kathā*—literally, “topics of Kṛṣṇa”

Kṛṣṇaloka—supreme abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual sky

*kūrta*—upper garment worn by men in Vedic culture

*kuṣa* grass—auspicious grass used in Vedic rituals  
*kutir*—place where one performs his spiritual practices in solitude

## L

*laulyam*—greediness to attain pure love of God  
*līlā*—pastimes of the Lord

## M

*mādhurya (līlā)*—relationship (or pastimes) with the Lord in the mood of conjugal love; the highest relationship of Kṛṣṇa and His consorts, the *gopīs*  
*mahātmā*—literally, “great soul,” one who is spiritually advanced  
*mandir*—temple  
*mantra*—a pure sound vibration that can deliver the mind from its materialistic inclinations  
*māyā*—illusion; the external energy of Kṛṣṇa which allows the living entity to forget his original position as a loving servitor of the Lord, due to his own desires to enjoy separately from God  
*Māyāpura*—region where Lord Caitanya was born  
*Māyāvādī*—impersonalist or voidist adhering to the philosophy that ultimately God is formless and without personality  
*mūrti*—form of God or His pure devotee worshipped in the temple or at home

## N

Nārada Muni—pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa who travels throughout the universes in his spiritual body glorifying the Lord

Nārāyaṇa—the Supreme Lord, who is the source and goal of all living beings

## P

*pada-yātrā*—a walking festival to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness

Pañca-tattva—Lord Caitanya and His four principal associates, three of whom are His expansions (and thus also God) and one who is His pure devotee

*pañḍita*—a scholar

*Paramātmā*—the Supersoul or the form of the Lord who resides in the heart of all living entities

*paramparā*—a chain of spiritual masters in disciplic succession

*parikrama*—walking tour of holy places of pilgrimage

*prabhu*—literally, “master”

Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami—Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Prahlāda—great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa rescued from his demoniac father by the half-man, half-lion incarnation of God, Nṛsiṁhadeva

*prakṛta-sahajiyā*—pseudo-devotee who takes spiritual life cheaply and pretends to be on the highest platform of love of God

*prasādam*—literally, “the Lord's mercy”; food or other items which have been sanctified by being offered

to the Lord

## R

**Rādhārāṇī**—the eternal consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa  
**rasa**—one of five relationships between the Lord and His devotees: neutrality, servitorship, friendship, parental affection and conjugal love

## S

**sādhana**—regulated spiritual practices

**sādhu**—saintly person

**sākhyā**—relationship with the Lord in friendship

**sampradāya**—line of disciplic succession

**Sanātana Gosvāmī**—one of the Six Gosvāmīs, chief followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu

**Śaṅkara**—incarnation of Lord Śiva who propagated the impersonal Māyāvāda philosophy which maintains that there is no distinction between the Lord and the living entity

**saṅkīrtana**—congregational glorification of God, especially by chanting of His holy names

**sānta**—relationship with the Lord as a neutral worshipper

**sāstra**—scriptures

**sikhā**—remaining tuft of hair on a Vaiṣṇava's shaven head

**Śiva**—partial incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who is in charge of the mode of ignorance and the destruction of the material cosmos

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—Vedic scripture composed by  
Vyāsadeva to describe and explain Lord Kṛṣṇa's  
pastimes  
*sudra*—one in the laborer class, fourth social order of  
Vedic society  
Śukadeva Gosvāmī—sage who originally spoke  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to Mahārāja Parīkṣit just prior  
to the king's death

## T

*tilaka*—sacred clay used to mark a devotee's body as a  
temple of the Lord  
*tīrtha*—holy place

## U

*Upaniṣads*—philosophical sections of the *Vedas*

## V

*Vaiṣṇava*—devotee of Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa)  
*vaiśya*—merchant or one who protects cows, third  
social order of Vedic society  
*vānī*—instructions of the *guru*  
*vapuḥ*—physical presence of the *guru*  
*varṇāśrama*—Vedic social system which organizes  
society into four occupational and four spiritual  
divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*)  
*vartma-pradarśaka-guru*—the devotee who first  
introduces one to Kṛṣṇa consciousness

*vātsalya*—relationship with the Lord as His parent  
*Vedas*—original revealed scriptures, first spoken by  
the Lord Himself

Viśvanatha Cakravartī Ṭhākura—Vaiṣṇava spiritual  
master and commentator on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in  
the disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya Maha-  
prabhu

Vṛndāvana—Kṛṣṇa's personal abode in the spiritual  
world; also holy village where He appeared in  
India, which is non-different from the original  
Vṛndāvana

*vyāsāna*—seat of the spiritual master, who is the  
representative of Vyāsadeva (the original com-  
piler of the *Vedas*)

## Y

Yamunā—holy river in India where Lord Kṛṣṇa  
performed many of His pastimes

Yudhiṣṭhira—eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers who  
Lord Kṛṣṇa established as emperor of the entire  
earth

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa dāsa  
Caitanya-rūpa devī-dāsī  
Mādhavendra Purī dāsa  
Mānasa Gaṅgā devī-dāsī  
Nāndīmukhī devī-dāsī  
Ṭhākura Haridāsa dāsa

Many sincere thanks to Rūpa Raghunātha dāsa and Śatarūpa devī-dāsī for financing the production and printing of this book.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REPUBLIC OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FROM 1776 TO 1876

BY  
JAMES M. SMITH  
OF THE  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY THE  
AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
1876

