

“This Is My Heart”

Patita Uddharana dasa, Editor / Compiler

“This Is My Heart”

Remembrances of ISKCON Press

...and other relevant stories

Manhattan / Boston / Brooklyn

1968-1971



Essays by the Assembled Devotees

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1968-1971*

Patita Uddharana Dasa

Vaishnava Astrologer and Author of:

- The Bhṛigu Project** (5 volumes) (with Abhaya Mudra Dasi),
- Shri Chanakya-niti** with extensive Commentary,
- Motorcycle Yoga** (Royal Enfield Books) (as Miles Davis),
- What Is Your Rashi?** (Sagar Publications Delhi) (as Miles Davis),
- This Is My Heart** (Archives free download) (Editor / Compiler),
- Shri Pushpanjali –A Triumph over Impersonalism**
- Vraja Mandala Darshan – Touring the Land of Krishna**
- Horoscope for Disaster (ms.)**
- Bharata Darshan (ms.)**

“I am very pleased also to note your appreciation for our *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and I want that all of my students will understand this book very nicely. This will be a great asset to our preaching activities.” (-Shrila Prabhupada, letter to Patita Uddharana, 31 May 1969)

*For my eternal companion
in devotional service to Shri Guru and Gauranga*

Shrimati Abhaya Mudra Devi Dasi

*A veritable representative of Goddess Lakshmi in Krishna’s service
without whose help this book would not have been possible*

“We are supposed to take our husband or our wife as our eternal companion or assistant in Krishna conscious service, and there is promise never to separate.”
(Shrila Prabhupada, letter 4 January 1973)

(Shri Narada tells King Yudhishtira:) “The woman who engages in the service of her

husband, following strictly in the footsteps of the goddess of fortune, surely returns home, back to Godhead, with her devotee husband, and lives very happily in the Vaikuṅṭha planets.”



“Shrila Prabhupada” by Abhaya Mudra Dasi

**“Offer my blessings to all the workers of ISKCON Press because that is my life.”
(-Shrila Prabhupada, letter 19 December 1970)**

Table of Contents

Introduction “Books Any Man Would Be Proud to Have”	8
Shrila Prabhupada on Printing	16
The Business of ISKCON Press (Rameshwara dasa)	28
Prabhupada Instructs the Artists	43
Prabhupada Visits Boston December 1969 (Nityananda dasa).....	50
Shrila Prabhupada’s Boston Initiation Lecture	69
History of ISKCON Press (Swarupa dasa)	
Introduction	83
1. The Big Mridanga	84
2. The Washington Peace Rally	86
3. Saving the World from Godlessness	89
4. The Cast of Characters	92
5. Why the Press Moved from Boston Back to New York	95
6. “North, East, South and West”	97
7. 32 Tiffany Place, Brooklyn	101
The MacMillan Miracle (Satyaraja dasa)	105
George Harrison and the Krishna Book (Shyamasundara).....	111
Reminiscences of a Pandit (Pradyumna dasa)	119
Thus Spake Krishna’s Artists:	
(Govinda, Jadurani, Baradwaja, Pushkar, Bhargava)	127
From Proofreader to Devotee (Mahamaya dasi)	135
How I Met Swami Bhaktivedanta (Madhusudana dasa)	144
Two Poems from the Early Days (Patita Uddharana dasa).....	146
I Just Want the Truth (Patita Uddharana dasa)	153
Letter from a Bookbinder (Patita Uddharana dasa)	163
His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada:	
Wedding Ceremony and Lecture Boston, 6 May 1969	168
In2MeC (Diary Entries of HH Suhotra Maharaja)	
1. How I Almost Missed My Initiation	180
2. Meeting David Allen	184
3 Why Don’t You Write?	188

4. “My Name is Prabhupada dasa”	189
Letter from a Friend (Prabhupada dasa)	206
The Story of Kushakratha Das (Pushkar Das Adhikary)	210
Crazy Peter (Giriraja Swami)	219
Prabhupada’s Lecture at M.I.T.	221
Shrila Prabhupada's Indexer (Satyaraja dasa)	236
ISKCON Press Bulletin Board (Patita Uddharana dasa)	256
The Letter that Saddened Shrila Prabhupada (Govinda dasi)	264
The First of Many Lessons (Rameshwara dasa)	267
“You Will Take Stones to Eat?” (Hari Sauri dasa)	271
The Purport behind the Purport (Shrutakirti das)	272

Nectar with a Touch of Printer’s Ink

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**To: Their Graces at Shri Bhaktivedanta Archives
2015**

Dandavats Eknath dasa Prabhu and Nitya Tripta Mataji,
May His Divine Grace, our beloved Guru Maharaja whose lotus feet alone must be served, continue to shower his divine benedictions upon us and upon ours, upon our better halves who are veritable incarnations of Lakshmi, and upon our other family members. Which includes families we have been born into in lives past as per the authority of the prayers of Shri Prahlada and the Bhaktivedanta Purports thereupon.

Jai to you both.

Prabhu, *This Is My Heart* (attached) is ready to go into the Archives if your goodness will be kind enough to accept this humble offering for the sake of Shrila Prabhupada's divine dispensation of joyful Krishna consciousness. I will

share with you privately the letters from the devotee authors who have kindly allowed their historical works to be included herein. A big thanks to all of these exalted Vaishnavas for allowing their brilliantly scribed offerings to Guru Maharaja find their places here in the literary history of the Gaudiyas and ISKCON Press!

Please accept in that light this humble effort of compiling the finest eye witness accounts to an important era that Shrila Prabhupada named by saying of the press, "This is my heart." Therefore, this book is an offering from us to the lotus feet of the archives of which you both represent so nicely. Once I hear from you I will be ready to send it.

Please let me have both of your thoughts on these matters. Thanks again for being there for the coming Golden Age. Your work is so very important.

Always the insignificant servant at your feet by the grace of Guru Maharaja, praying for the best for you also
Patita Uddharana dasa

Dear Patita Uddharana Prabhu, Obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Thank you for your kind blessings and well-wishes. Yes we will be happy to store "This is My Heart". Thank you for the offer. I'd love to read it and we are looking forward to receiving the book. Please extend our obeisances and respect to Mother Abhaya Mudra. Jaya Radhe! Thank you.

Your servant,
Ekanatha dasa

Introduction

“These Are Books Any Man Would Be Proud to Have”

When the first hard bound books, *Shri Ishopanishad*, came out of ISKCON Press, we bookbinders—Vaikunthanatha and I—sent copies to Shrila Prabhupada. From Los Angeles in a letter dated 9 May 1970 His Divine Grace replied:

My Dear Patita Uddharana,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 24th April, 1970, along with the typical examples of hardbound editions of Shri Isopanisad, and thank you so much for them.

This binding work is so nicely made. You have done it very well, and I am completely satisfied. I very much appreciate your efforts in our ISKCON bindery, and if such binding is done we will have sure success with our books.

So you can bind our books in this way, and although it may go slowly just now it is being done very nicely. Then in future you may be able to do our binding here instead of in Japan. You write to say that these are some nice typical examples of your binding work, so it is a great credit because these books any man would be proud to have. I beg to thank you once again for your kind appreciations and excellent work.

Hope this will meet you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

ACBS:db

When Shrila Prabhupada visited ISKCON Press in late December of 1969, he stayed in a tiny room in the temple. A friend of the movement had rented the penthouse suite in Boston's finest hotel, The Four Seasons, for His Divine Grace. But Prabhupada objected, “Oh, I will not stay in a hotel.” Quoting one of

the millions of verses at his command, he instructed the devotees, “The country is in mode of goodness, the city is in the mode of passion, but a hotel is a brothel.”

The work force of assembled devotees was a motley crew that hung together based only upon our collective faith in the message of Shrila Prabhupada. Basically we were a kaleidoscope that had very little in common—except that each of us was convinced that only the message of our spiritual master could save the world from the false values and deception that plagued its every corner. We had absolute faith that our Guru Maharaja was the direct representative of Shri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and we desired nothing other than to spread the news of his divine message through the medium of his printed words.

As Shrila Prabhupada sauntered like a great king into the pressroom and for the first time saw the Chief 29 offset, he affectionately pointed to the machine and said, “*This is my heart.*” I was standing just behind His Divine Grace and witnessed that every devotee in the room was affected by that simple declaration. Our Guru Maharaja impressed upon us the importance of his “Big Mridanga” and each one of us felt honored that we were involved in such an important project as ISKCON Press. To compare the press to his heart was tantamount to preparing this machine to God Himself. And that is because the message carried by ISKCON Press through the medium of the Lord’s pure devotee was indeed non-different from Krishna.

The tour of ISKCON Press is recorded in *Shri Prabhupada-lilamrita* by Satswarupa dasa Goswami:

A hundred devotees, straining to see and hear Prabhupāda's responses, followed him as he went downstairs. Although the crowd surrounded him, he remained relaxed and unhurried. He entered the press room, a long hall directly beneath the temple room. A large old offset press, a paper cutter, a folder, and flats of paper stock filled the room, which smelled like a print shop. Advaita, the press manager, bowed down in his green khakis before Prabhupāda. He rose up smiling, and Prabhupāda stepped forward and embraced him, putting his arm around Advaita's head. “Very good,” he said.

Standing before the printing press, Prabhupāda folded his palms together and offered a

prayer to his spiritual master: “Jaya Om Viṣṇupada Paramahaṁsa Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda ki jaya!” Advaita asked Prabhupāda to give the press a transcendental name. “ISKCON Press,” Prabhupāda said matter-of-factly, as if it had already been named.

“Keep all the machines very clean,” Prabhupāda said, “and they will last a long time. This is the heart of ISKCON.”

“You are the heart of ISKCON, Prabhupāda,” a devotee said.

“And this is my heart,” said Prabhupāda.

Leaving the main press room, Prabhupāda toured the other press facilities. Squeezing in, ducking under, standing on tiptoe, the crowd of devotees followed him step by step. He peeked into a little cubbyhole where a devotee was composing type. The typesetters, he said, should proceed very slowly at first, and in that way they would become expert. Turning to Advaita, he said, “Everyone in India who speaks Hindi has a Gītā Press publication. So everyone who speaks English should have an ISKCON Press publication.”

Compared to most authors, Prabhupāda's literary contribution was already substantial. But he wasn't just “an author.” His mission was to flood the world with literature glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's ISKCON was now three years old, yet his disciples were only beginning to execute his plans for printing and distributing transcendental literature.

Printing was an important step—the first step...

And just prior to coming to Boston he had written,

Now ISKCON was printing fifty thousand copies of *Back to Godhead* per month, and Prabhupāda hoped to increase the sales more and more.

Standing in the crowded, chilly basement, surrounded by devotees, press machines, and transcendental literature, Prabhupāda described how he wanted ISKCON Press to operate. He said that after dictating a tape he would mail it to Boston to be transcribed. The transcription should take no more than two days. During the next two days, someone would edit the transcribed manuscript. Then another editor would take two days to edit the transcript a second time. A Sanskrit editor would add diacritical markings, and the manuscript would be ready for composing.

Prabhupāda said he could produce fifteen tapes—three hundred manuscript pages—every month. At that rate, ISKCON Press should produce a book every two months, or six books in a year. Prabhupāda wanted to print at least sixty books. Therefore his press workers would have plenty to do for the next ten years. If the devotees simply printed his books incessantly, he said, even if they had to work twenty-four hours a day in shifts,

it would give him “great delight.” He was ready, if necessary, to drop all his activities except for publishing books.

This was the special nectar the press devotees were hankering to hear. Printing books was Prabhupāda's heart; it was the thing most dear to him.”

Soon the demand for Shrila Prabhupada’s revolutionary message became so profound that by 1972 all ISKCON printing had been shifted to Japan and ISKCON Press shut down. And for many years the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, which ISKCON Press evolved into, has been the world’s largest indological publisher with millions of books sold all over the world in over 50 languages.



l to r: Devi dasis Kasturika, Saradiya and Lila Sukha collate a mountain of pages. Photo: Uddhava dasa

In the decades that followed many disciples have gone on to write books about what their spiritual master means to them. Indeed it is significant that more books have been written *about* Shrila Prabhupada by his disciples than the sum total of all the books written *by* all the *yogis* who came from India to America to sell manufactured enlightenment to a gullible public during the sixty years up to our Guru Maharaja’s appearance in the west. The books of the disciples of the pure devotee are expressions of the initiate’s love for the transparent via

media to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Written glorifications of the Sat-Gurudeva Maharaja demonstrate the ability of the bona fide representative of the Supreme Lord to empower the sincere student with the ability to carry on the message of Krishna consciousness, a process which begins with surrender to the bona fide spiritual master.

The true disciple does not approach the bona fide *guru* merely to impress others that he keeps a *guru* as an ornament or personal success motivator, as is fashionable in some circles. The process of *guru parampara* is one of self-willed submission, surrender pure and simple, that the disciple begins to fathom his or her debt to Shri Guru. The disciple's debt is eternal and can never be repaid. Devotees' books about Shrila Prabhupada are eye witness testimonies to the spotless character and divine intelligence of Krishna's pure devotee. Each written legacy proves the potency of the authorized disciplic succession coming from Lord Krishna through Lord Brahma, Narada Muni, Veda Vyasadeva, Madhvacharya, Ishwara Puri, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Six Goswamis, Shrila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakura through Shrila Prabhupada to his disciples.

Here is a partial list of the growing biographies and glorifications of Shrila Prabhupada:

The Hare Krishna Explosion Hayagriva dasa
Shrila Prabhupada Lilamrita (7 volumes) Satswarupa Goswami
ISKCON in the 1970's Satswarupa Goswami
A Transcendental Diary (5 volumes) Hari Sauri Dasa
Memories (4 volumes) interviews by Siddhanta Dasa, edited by Vishakha Dasi
Prabhupada Stories Govinda Dasi
By His Example Gurudasa
Miracle on 2nd Avenue Mukunda Goswami
What Is the Difficulty? Shrutakirti Dasa
Shrila Prabhupada Uvaca Shrutakirta Dasa
My Memories of Shrila Prabhupada Bhakti Vikas Swami
Jaya Shrila Prabhupada Bhakti Vikas Swami
My Revered Spiritual Master Gour Govinda Goswami
Prabhupada's Krishna-Balarama Temple (Daivishakti dasi, compiler)
My Glorious Master Bhurijana Dasa

Shrila Prabhupada is Coming Mahamaya Dasi
Our Shrila Prabhupada: A Friend to All Mulaprakriti Dasi
Shrila Prabhupada's Miracle Vaikunthanatha Dasa
The Great Transcendental Adventure Kurma Dasa
Shrila Prabhupada in South Africa Riddha Dasa Adhikary
Mission in Service of His Divine Grace Riddha Dasa Adhikary
Shrila Prabhupada with His Disciples in Germany Vedvyasa Dasa
Blazing Sadhus Achyutananda Dasa
TKG Memories (3 volumes) Tamala Krishna Goswami
Watering the Seed Giriraja Swami
Swamiji Satyaraja Dasa
Mentor Sublime Satyaraja Dasa
Prabhupada at Radha-Damodara Mahanidhi Swami
When the Sun Shines: The Dawn of Hare Krishna in Britain Ranchor Prime
Captured by Love Tejiyas Dasa (in progress)
Prabhupada in Malaysia Janananda Goswami
Acarya Shesha dasa

ISKCON Press was founded to broadcast the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Shri Krishna. Yet Krishna Himself becomes most pleased when His devotee is glorified. In fact, the first big book that we printed at ISKCON Press, *Nectar of Devotion*, instructs:

“In the *Ādi Purāṇa* there is the following statement by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, addressed to Arjuna: ‘My dear Pārtha, one who claims to be My devotee is not so. Only a person who claims to be the devotee of My devotee is actually My devotee.’ No one can approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly [Cc. Madhya 13.80]. One must approach Him through His pure devotees. Therefore, in the system of Vaiṣṇava activities, the first duty is to accept a devotee as spiritual master and then to render service unto him.”

The essays that follow demonstrate the genuine adoration of the servants for their master. The reader will experience a different taste or mood in the words of each one. Though united in a singular faith, the difference in each relationship that we share as devotees is proof that the bona fide spiritual master has a unique bond with each disciple; something that each follower understands

well. Some of the essays are intimately connected with the operation of the press while others, like second cousins at a large family gathering, are more concerned with issues that are related to the writing, publication and dissemination of Krishna conscious literature. Editing has been kept to a minimum. Those essays that were not edited with diacritic marks were left as is. This is not a work for scholars; it is meant for devotees of the Krishna consciousness movement to read freely and to understand their own history.

Today ISKCON has fantastic castles, palaces, giant temple complexes, mansions, estates, schools, colleges and temples in hundreds of cities world wide. The astrologer's prediction at Prabhupada's birth that he would become the wealthiest man in India has been fulfilled in a remarkable yet spiritual way. Yet Prabhupada's movement started in a storefront one block off the Lower East Side's Bowery, the skid row slums of Manhattan. Likewise, ISKCON Press was hewn out of a rented former funeral home in Boston in which the devotees did not have money for proper heating in winter. But if you ask any surviving member of ISKCON Press which experience they prefer, to a person they will declare that there was nothing like the pioneering days when we lived for the dream of the coming world *sankirtana* renaissance. By the grace of Shri Guru and Krishna we pushed on this movement on a shoestring budget motivated by the undying faith that the books of His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada were destined to save the world.

I am thankful that some of my Godbrothers have even remembered me from those days despite (or more likely due to) my personal eccentricities:

Shriman Baradwaja dasa Prabhu, the famous artist, describes an incident during Prabhupada's Boston visit: "There was a devotee named Patita Uddharana, tall and lanky and very unconventional in many ways. He danced in his own way, he sang in his own way and he talked in his own way. He obviously didn't fit into the narrow category of a book distributor. After a nice, big *kirtan* in the temple, Prabhupada lectured and then suddenly said, "Are there any questions?" Out of the blue Patita Uddharana said, "Shrila Prabhupada we are all eager to hear what you want the most. There are so many different types of service that are dear to you. Will you tell us dearly what service is the most dear to you?" Prabhupada said, "Chant Hare Krishna and become simply wonderful. Eat

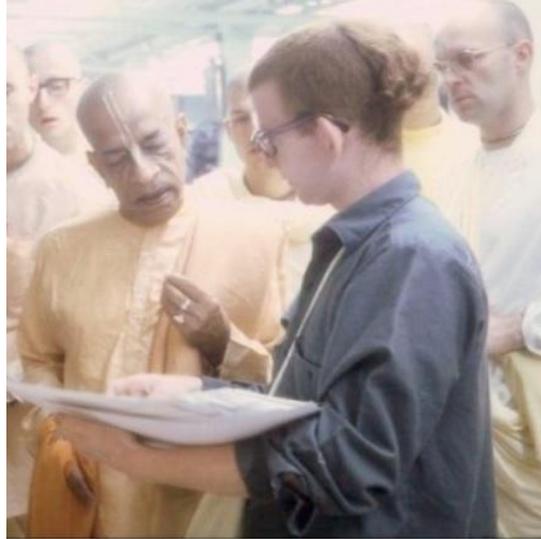
simply wonderfuls and become simply wonderful. That is all. Hare Krishna.”
(from *Memories*, volume 1)

Shriman Soma dasa Prabhu describes a moment that explains what it was like to share a small temple’s living quarters with the spiritual master at ISKCON Press, Boston: “I was in the hallway with Patita Uddharana waiting to use the bathroom when Shrila Prabhupada came out wearing his *gumcha*. Patita Uddharana threw his hands up in the air and yelled really loudly, “All glories to Shrila Prabhupada!” and offered full *dandavats*. Patita is my elder Godbrother and I followed his example. We got up and just looked at each other, thinking how sweet that was. The hall was quite narrow and Shrila Prabhupada barely walked around us into the bathroom. About thirty seconds later, Shrila Prabhupada came and again Patita Uddharana threw his hands in the air and yelled “All glories to Shrila Prabhupada!” This time when we stood up Shrila Prabhupada was standing right there looking at both of us—and it’s really one of my favorite remembrances of Shrila Prabhupada. I had just been initiated a few hours earlier, and here Shrila Prabhupada was standing in the hallway in his *gumcha* and the expression on his face was just so incredible. He was like a little kid, almost a little embarrassed, from Patita yelling like this, and he had this really compassionate smile that really like melted you. He had all that compassion and love, and all of a sudden to be that close and intimate with Shrila Prabhupada my heart just wanted to surrender to him and dedicate my life to helping him.” (from *Memories* DVD, volume 50)

My thanks to each of the respected devotees, my Godbrothers and Godsisters, for their kind permission to print their unique and insightful contributions to *This Is My Heart*. Indeed, my Godbrothers and sisters are my heart. Indeed, let us raise our hands to the sky and proclaim in one voice:

All glories to Shrila Prabhupada!

Patita Uddharana dasa (aka Patita Pavana dasa Adhikary)
New Gauda Mandala Bhumi, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria



Shrila Prabhupada consults with Shriman Adwaita dasa Prabhu, his chief printer, during his 1969 visit to ISKCON Press Boston.

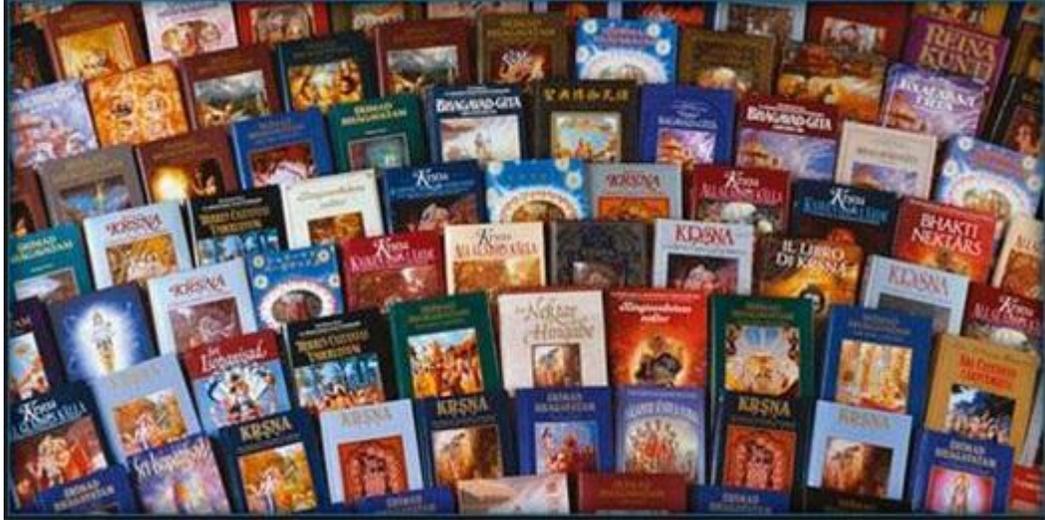
“We are not meant for presenting any literary masterpieces, but we have to inform people that there is a fire of maya which is burning the very vitality of all living entities.” (Letter to Krishna dasa, 13 February, 1969, LA)

Shrila Prabhupada on Printing

Once There Was No Need for a Press

So in the Vedic literature, in India, you know there were many saintly persons, great scholars from time immemorial. Even not very recently, say, five hundred years ago there were such men, personalities. Now it is almost finished, but still, if you find, you will see there are great sages, saintly persons, who understand the meaning of Vedic literature, and they live up to the standard of Vedic life.

So that is the definition given by great saints and sages, this definition given by Parāśara Muni, a great sage. He was the father of Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva is called Veda-Vyāsa. His other name is Veda-Vyāsa. Before the advent of this present age, which is known as Kali-yuga he compiled all Vedic knowledge... Before that, there was no necessity of book writing; neither there was facility for printing books .



“Go on printing, go on printing” –Shrila Prabhupada

There was no press. People had no necessity of keeping knowledge in writing. There was no necessity. Their memory was so sharp that once heard from the spiritual master, they remembered. But in this age, in this Kali-yuga, memory, duration of life, mercifulness, stature of the body, and so many things, they are reducing. They are reducing. We are not advancing. That is wrong idea.

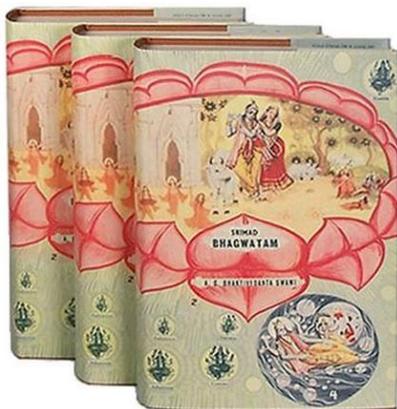
For example, in your country the stature is also reducing. Formerly in our childhood, I saw Europeans and Americans, they were very tall. But not only in your country, every country the stature is reducing. The memory is reducing. The duration of life is also reducing ... (Lecture, Los Angeles, January 19, 1969) ♪

Worshipping Shastra as a Deity

This is the information given in *Brahma-saṁhitā*, the prayers offered by Lord Brahmā. *This Brahma-saṁhitā* was accepted by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who copied it when He toured South India. Formerly there were no presses to print these literatures, and these important Vedic writings were written by hand. These literatures were not very cheap, and only highly qualified *brāhmaṇas* were able to keep them. They were worshiped in the temple as the *śāstra* Deity. It is not that they were available everywhere. Now, of course, the printing press has changed all this, but nonetheless we should always understand that the granthas, the scriptures, should be worshiped as God because they are the sound incarnation of God. One should not consider

Bhagavad-gītā or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to be ordinary books, and one should take care of them just as carefully as one takes care of the Deity. (*Teachings of Lord Kapila*, 370) ♪

Very Serious about Printing



One thing that I beg to bring to your notice regards the printing of my books. In 1954, I left my home, and for five years I lived as *vanaprasthi* here and there, and then in 1959 I took *sannyasa*. Of course even when I was a householder I was publishing *Back to Godhead* since 1947. But then my Spiritual Master dictated that I should take to writing books which will be a permanent affair. So after my acceptance of *sannyasa* I began working on *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* and when the first canto was finished, with great difficulty I published the first volume in 1962, after leaving my home and after taking *sannyasa* and spending whatever cash money I had with me during the five years of my staying alone. Practically in 1960 I was penniless. Therefore I had to quickly take to publication of the first volume and after this I got some money just enough to pull on. In this way I published the 2nd volume in 1963 and the 3rd volume in 1965. Then I began to think of coming to your country, and somehow or other I was brought here. Now since I have come I am unable to publish the 4th volume of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, but with your help and assistance, since 1965 this one book only has been published, and I do not know what this Dai Nippon Company is doing.

Anyway, I am very much anxious for getting my books published. The manuscripts which I presently have may be converted into eight different books of the same size which I generally publish, (400 pages). But I do not know how I will get them published. Last year when I was in India, I thought that Acyutananda would publish them in India but this boy could not help me in the least, and the net result is that I have lost my typewriter, and Rs 2000 are now in the dark well of Hitsaran. Acyutananda was sent about Rs 1000 plus he has collected a similar amount from the Dalmia Trust Fund. All of this has been lost for nothing.

Whatever is done is done. I am now very much serious about printing my books. There may be three sources for their printing. One source is that if the MacMillan Company is interested to publish my books that will be a great relief. I do not mind for the profit concerned. But I want to see them published. Another source is if MacMillan isn't interested, we can get them printed from Dai Nippon, but the delaying procedure of this company in Japan is not very encouraging. Therefore the next step would be to start our own press at New Vrindaban, because Hayagriva is ready to start a press there immediately, taking responsibility for the investment. He has told me that he could take a loan from his friend, Dr. Henderson. In this connection of purchasing a press I sent a list to be filled by the press men of New York telling of the prices of printing machines but there is no response. So I ask you what to do in this connection. Ultimately, if nothing is done, I shall be obliged to return to India for getting them published there. (Letter to Brahmananda, LA, 9 Jan. 1969) ८

His Life Will Be Successful

We are printing so many books for spreading this knowledge. That must be distributed. Home to home, place to place, man to man, this literature must go there. If he... If one takes one book, at least one day he'll read it: "Let me see what this book is that I have purchased the other day." And if he reads one line his life will be successful, if he reads one line only, carefully. This is such literature. So therefore book distribution I am giving so much stress. Somehow or other, small book or big book, if it is given to somebody he'll read someday and he'll derive. (*Bhagavad-gita* 16.9 lecture, Hawaii, 5 February 1975) ८

Change the Interest

"We shall secure money for printing for Kṛṣṇa." The same thing, the same printing, same working, same dancing, same eating—but for Kṛṣṇa. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Simply you have to change the, what is called, interest. (*Shrimad-Bhagavatam* 1.5.33, lecture, Vrindavana, 14 August 1974) ८

People Keep it and Read it for a Lifetime

Shrila Prabhupada: Every day your employer (the *New York Times*) is printing so many newspapers. On Sunday, especially, the paper is so big that one can hardly carry it. But after reading it an hour, people throw it away. Here is this book, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and people keep it and read it for a lifetime, and in

this way it has been read for the past 5,000 years. Give such literature that will be taken and kept forever.

John Nordheimer: (laughing) It's already been suggested that we are not divinely inspired.

(Interview with *New York Times*, 2 September 1972, New Vrindaban) ♪

Don't Publish Rubbish Literatures

Paper you can make from grass, from cotton, from so many other fibers. You don't require wood. You grow grass, sufficient quantity, and you make paper. Why should you publish so many rubbish literatures? Just like you were telling. *The Times of India*, the newspaper. So paper, if we don't produce unnecessary paper, there is no scarcity. From grass. You produce grass, huge quantity of grass, you will get paper. Cotton also. First-class paper. In India also, the rejected paper. From rejected paper you can get another paper also. But they throw it away in your country. Collect this rejected paper and again put it into paper.

And why should you publish all rubbish literature? Simply publish *Bhāgavata* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, that's all. What is the use of this newspaper, nonsense newspaper, huge, huge quantity? So everything will be nice provided you become ideal. Live in community. Produce your own food. Even you can produce your own paper. You don't require printing of so many books. If there is one book, others can imitate, or copy. There is no need of printing. Formerly they used to do that. (Morning Walk, May 27, 1974, Rome) ♪

Mundane Newspapers are Sinful Activity

In the Western countries, newspaper is very popular thing, a huge bundle of newspaper. Although he'll not read, the newspapermen supplies huge bundle of newspaper. And wasting of paper, printing, unnecessarily cutting the trees, for running on the paper mill. This is sinful activity. They are not reading so many nonsense books and newspapers, but paper is required, there is demand. So paper mill requires cutting of the trees unnecessarily. (Room Conversation, 9 June 1976, Los Angeles) ♪

We Are Printing Vedic Scriptures

Shrila Prabhupāda: But that you can utilize for spreading Kṛṣṇa

consciousness, not for sense gratification. That is the defect. They are simply wasting time in sense gratification. If the telephone and the telegraph, television is used for propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then it is all right. But they are not doing that. We are utilizing the modern press facilities for printing Vedic scriptures. But they are utilizing the press for sex literature, Freud's philosophy. (Morning Walk, February 21, 1975, Caracas) ♪

Immediately Take It

Mimeograph. I was printing. Yes. Then he inquired this Dai Nippon, many places. At last he said that “Unless we print twenty thousand, they will not take up this work.” I said, “Immediately take it.” From three thousand to twenty thousand immediately. At that time they were giving us ten cent or less than. (Morning Walk 20 January 1976, Māyāpura) ♪

No Question of Material Profit

Shrila Prabhupāda: We are increasing our movement. We are opening centers. We are printing more books. This is my books. I have made a Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. That is my will, and I have given my will that fifty percent of the collection should be spent for reprinting the books and fifty percent should be spent for spreading the movement. So there is no question of material profit. (Room Conversation, April 20, 1976, Melbourne) ♪

The BBT Formula

Our Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, the formula is therefore as soon as you get money: fifty percent spent for printing and fifty percent for temple. This is the basic principle of our Bhaktivedanta (Book Trust)—no saving. As soon as you have got some money, print books, print books. Don't keep it. If you print books, some day somebody will read. But if we keep money, it creates disturbance. I am therefore always insisting, “Print books, Print books.” Or construct temple, this building, that building. There is no need of keeping money. (Garden Discussion on *Bhagavad-gita* Chapter 16, 26 June 1976, New Vrindaban) ♪

No One Is Crying for the Bhagavata

Shrila Prabhupāda: No, we are prepared. Just like horse is not prepared to take the medicine. But four men force him to take the medicine. Nobody was

crying for this edition of *Bhāgavata*, but we are forcing, “You must read. You must take.” We are printing and forcing everyone. French edition, *Bhāgavata*’s edition, they were not dying for this book, but this is our force. (Meeting with Italian Printer, 5 August 1976, La Nouvelle7 Mayapur, France) ॐ

Print One Copy

My Guru Mahārāja wanted to publish *Govinda-līlāmṛta*. He asked permission of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. So first of all Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “I’ll tell you some day.” And when he reminded, he said, “Yes you can print one copy. If you are so much anxious to print it, print one copy. You’ll read and you will see that you have printed. Not for distribution.” So we are printing all these books for understanding properly. Not that “Here is Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Let us go.” Jump over like monkey. “Here is *rāsa-līlā* immediately...”1976 (Room Conversation – 16 August 1976, Bombay) ॐ

\$60,000 a Day

Shrila Prabhupāda: You can show how in the American industrial process we are printing our books. I made the Book Trust, sixty thousand dollars they are selling. So as author, I could have derived from them at least six thousand, ten percent minimum. Six thousand dollars per day. Six thousand dollars means sixty thousand rupees. That could have been my daily income. But I take little *khichari* from them, that’s all. (Conversation, 24 August 1976, Hyderabad) ॐ

640 Editions of Bhagavad-gita

Shrila Prabhupada: And all over the world... There are many *Bhagavad-gītās*. There are about six hundred and forty different editions. But still ours, this *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, it is being accepted very widely, and therefore we are very much hopeful. And as practical example you can see so many European, American, they have taken to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness very seriously. And before this movement, many *swamis*, *yogis*, and scholars went to the foreign countries, but not a single person became a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. That’s a fact. Not a single person. But now, because *Bhagavad-gītā* is being presented as it is, so many thousands, they are becoming devotees of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So this movement has practical effect, and both in the scholarly and people in general circle. And as advised by Caitanya Mahāprabhu, India should take this movement very seriously and send many

trained teachers so that India's glories will be enhanced. People will take it very seriously. (Press Interview, 16 October 1976, Chandigarh) ✍

Sublime Gospel of Krishna Consciousness

My blessings are always with you. You are very sincere boy trying your best to serve Krishna and by His Grace you are quite fit for this business, and considering all these points, I have entrusted Back to Godhead in your hand. Because this paper is the beginning of my spiritual life. During the time of my Guru Maharaja's passing away, His last instruction was to me that “You try to preach whatever you have learned from me in English, and that will do good to you and the people who will hear you.” This instruction was given to me in 1936, and I started this paper in 1944. So during my householder life I was printing this paper and almost distributing free, and some of them were paying me subscription, and some of them not. But I was trying my best at my cost. You have seen the old articles about my tendency in this regard, and please try to follow this principle and improve the condition of this paper as you think best. You have got full liberty to make it acceptable to the general public, keeping pace with our principles of Krishna Consciousness. And as I have told you several times that from India this paper has been brought to America, with this hope that American young boys like you will take interest in spreading this sublime gospel of Krishna Consciousness. (Letter to Rayarama, 12 June 1968, Montreal) ✍

Engage All Draft-age Boys in Press Work

Of course, in Montreal there is sufficient place, and more students are coming here, being chased by the draftboard, under the circumstances, if it would have been possible to have a nice press here, then we could engage all the draft-age boys in the press work. But you say that NY is the best place, so we must start the press in the best place. That is first consideration and, so I shall request you to qualify yourself for such work as soon as possible, and with Krishna's Name, let us start it as soon as possible. (Letter Balai and Advaita, 19 August, 1968, Montreal) ✍

No Need to Keep a Cow

I think that now that Vaikunthanatha and Patita Uddharana are in NY to help you you should utilize their labor to arrive at some figure. As you know, Dai

Nippon is printing our books for a price of approximately \$1.20 per book with shipping paid so I do not know if our own press will be able to compete with such price. I there is good milk available plentifully in the market place there is no need to keep a cow. So similarly, if we can get our books printed and cheaply and with no trouble of labor then it is an adequate arrangement. From the beginning Advaita and yourself have been very sincere and enthusiastic about this project but now I think we must be very businesslike in investigating the price which will be required to print our books. (Letter to Uddhava, Los Angeles 19 December, 1968) ↗

No Advertisements in Back to Godhead

Regarding advertisements in *Back to Godhead*, I am not at all in favor of it. I was obliged to suggest you take advertisements because the magazine was not coming regularly due to lack of funds, but practically I see the magazine is not improving by accepting these advertisements. So in the future, say after the next issue, we shall stop taking advertisements because it is not satisfactory. If we print, however, 20,000 copies, we can accept one page of advertisements, fixing up our rate at not less than \$100 per page. And this advertisement also must be to our scrutinization. We cannot accept advertisements from anyone and everyone, rather it will be our motto to avoid advertisements.

So far as I know, in India, the *Kalyana Kalpataru* paper edited by Hanuman Prasad Poddar, does not accept any advertisements. Nor do they review any nonsense book published by others, and they have got respectable position. Similarly we have to create a respectable position for our *Back to Godhead*. Actually, it is the only single paper of its nature, describing the science of God in full detail, published in the western world. Our Vaishnava religion is so vast that we can supply millions of pictures and hundreds and thousands of literary contributions in this paper. (Letter to Brahmananda, 5 February 1969, LA) ↗

Translate As It Is

When a person is willing to help with our mission, he is also a devotee, so here is no question of his being a nondevotee. But they must translate as it is, they must not deviate. Anyway, our motto should be to somehow or other express the objectives of Krishna Consciousness to the German-speaking people.

There is a verse in *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* that a book or poetry in which the Holy Name of Krishna is depicted, such language is revolutionary in the matter of purifying the material atmosphere. Even though such literature is presented in broken language or grammatical inconsistency or rhetorical irregularity, still, those who are saintly persons adore such literature. They hear such literature, and chant it and adore it, simply because the Supreme Lord is being glorified in this literature. In other words, we are not meant for presenting any literary masterpieces, but we have to inform people that there is a fire of maya which is burning the very vitality of all living entities, and they should guard against the indefatigable onslaught of material existence. That should be our motto. (Letter to Krishna dasa, 13 February, 1969, LA)

I am very glad to learn that your Sankirtana Party is taking shape, and you hope to inaugurate the on the streets program in a few weeks. Now you should also start program for selling our *Back to Godheads* along with the Sankirtana as Tamala Krishna is doing here. Along with Sankirtana Party, they are selling daily not less than 100 copies. Sometimes the sale is 120-30 copies. Besides that, Purusottama is distributing *Back to Godhead* to some distributor in Los Angeles. My next program is to distribute at least 20,000 copies of *Back to Godhead* from four centers, namely New York, London, Los Angeles, and San Francisc. So each of these centers will contribute \$750 and they will get 5,000 copies free delivery to destination. That means they will get the copies at 15 cents each, and the price fixed up will be 50 cents. So even by wholesale distribution the centers will get at least 30 cents per copy, and that means a 15 cents profit. If all the 5,000 copies are not sold, then we shall distribute the remaining copies to schools, colleges, libraries, institutions, etc. free of charges. This propaganda has to begin immediately. Please let me know your opinion. Los Angeles has already agreed, and I am very much encouraged. I hope you will also agree and encourage me. So on receipt of your confirmation, I shall immediately arrange for printing 20,000 copies beginning from the latest April, 1969. (Letter to Mukunda, 17 February 1969, Los Angeles) ✍

Back to Godhead is Different from All Other Magazines

Now (regarding *Back to Godhead*) our policy should be as follows:

1. The layout should be done by us,

2. There should be no advertisements,
3. Under different headings we shall publish articles from *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, *Brahma Samhita*, *Nectar of Devotion*, *Vedanta Philosophy*, *Upanisads*, etc. as well as comic pictures when possible.

Besides that, if some of our students write as they have assimilated the philosophy that also should be welcome. You say that Rohini Kumar is an artist, so he can do comic work. There are other girls there such as Indira who can also do this. So we shall fill up the pages simply with Vedic ideas.

Now the policy should be straight that this *Back to Godhead* is completely different from all other magazines. As there are different magazines for different subject matters, this magazine will be simply devoted for Vaisnava philosophy, or Krishna Consciousness movement. That should be our policy. (Letter to Rayarama, 22 February 1969, LA) ✍

Against All Foolish Impersonalist, Atheistic, Agnostic Philosophies

We may note herewith that the MacMillan's publication of the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* and our publication of *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* is the difference between heaven and hell. If MacMillan Company can invest their good money for publishing our *Bhagavatam*, they must take the standard as we have presented. The first canto cannot be reduced less than 200 pages. In the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, we have cut short the pages under the instruction of the MacMillan Company, without explaining many important verses. We are presenting a new philosophy to the world against all foolish impersonalist, atheistic, agnostic and all other imperfect philosophies. Therefore we must have sufficient chance for explaining the purports of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. So if MacMillan agrees to these conditions, then we can entrust the publication of the *Bhagavatam* in their hands. Such a big company, world famous publishers, and we are giving them the topmost transcendental knowledge in the world. (Letter to Brahmananda, 6 May 1969, Allston, Mass) ✍

Radha Press

I am glad that you have named your printing press the Radha Press. It is very gratifying. May your Radha Press be enriched in publishing all our books and literatures in the German language. It is a very nice name. Radharani is the

best, topmost servitor of Krishna, and the printing machine is the biggest medium at the present moment for serving Krishna. Therefore, it is really a representative of Shrimati Radharani. I like the idea very much. (Letter to Jayagovinda, 4 July 1969, LA) ॐ

Edit Three Times

In every publication house all printing matters are edited at least three times. So we should be very much careful about grammatical and printing mistakes. That will mar the prestige of the press and the institution. (Letter to Brahmananda, 10 December 1969, London) ॐ

Modern Paraphernalia are Just So Much Rubbish

Yes, we are fighting impersonalism and voidism with pure devotional service. Impersonalism and voidism kills the natural aptitude of devotion which is lying dormant in everyone's heart. Therefore we are printing books like our KRISHNA book so that people may know it that the supreme absolute truth is a person. The perfection of every living creature is to render transcendental loving service to that Supreme Person and thereby go back home, Back to Godhead. Krishna has said in *Bhagavad-gita*, “Whoever explains My transcendental glories to others is most dear to Me in this world and never will there be one more dear to Me than he.” So go on with your organization for distribution of my books through press and other modern media and Krishna will certainly be pleased upon you. We can use everything—television, radio, movies, or whatever there may be—to tell about Krishna and outside of devotional service all these modern paraphernalia are just so much rubbish. (Letter to Bhagavan, 24 November 1970, Bombay) ॐ

Fifty Years to Finish Shrimad-Bhagavatam

I am very much stressing at this point that all of my students shall be very much conversant with the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness, and that they should read our books very diligently at least one or two hours daily and try to understand the subject matter from varieties of angles. We are holding our morning class here in Los Angeles in the temple and I am speaking from 7 to 8 am, and the process is that we are going through some chapters of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* by taking one sloka each day, and reading the Sanskrit aloud, each word is pronounced by me and repeated by the students and then

altogether we chant the *shloka* several time until we have learned it. And then we discuss the subject matter very minutely and inspect it from all angles of approach and savour the new understandings. So you introduce this system in all of the centres in your zone, and you will discover that everyone becomes very much enlivened by these daily classes. Read one *shloka* and discuss and then go on to the next *shloka* on the next day, and so on, and even you discuss one verse each day it will take you fifty years to finish *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* in this way. So we have got ample stock for acquiring knowledge. And if the students get knowledge more and more, they will automatically become convinced and very easily perform their duties for *tapasya* or renunciation of the material bondage, and that will be their successful advancement in Krishna Consciousness. (Letter to Madhudvisa dasa, 16 June 1970, LA) ✍



The World Acharya

ISKCON's first marathon is described in a talk delivered at the Shrila Prabhupada Festival, Los Angeles, 24th May 2015 ...

The Business of ISKCON Press

Ramesvara dasa

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**

Jagat Guru Shrila Prabhupada Ki Jai! Before I begin, I would like to just ask the Vaishnavas and Vaishnavis who are present that in case I make any mistakes in telling this story, please kindly excuse me. For those who are from the class of 1968 and 1969, and who were direct participants, please correct me privately afterwards.*
Hare Krishna

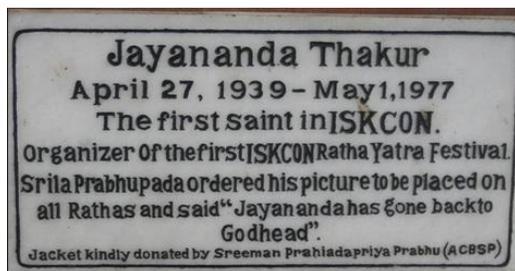


Okay, the story begins in 1968. Shrila Prabhupada has just recovered from his heart attack and has returned to America (from India). He has finished translating the second canto of the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* and he is in the midst of the third canto of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, but there is no money in ISKCON which had six or eight centers. There is no money to even print the second canto. There are barely enough funds to reprint the original *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* volumes that Prabhupada came to America with. So even though there is no money, Prabhupada is very busy translating because, as we know, the sixty volumes of books, the thousands of disciples and the hundreds of centers and the millions of books being distributed—are just separated by a little bit of time.

In Prabhupada's vision it was always going to happen, it was just separated a little by time. So, Shrila Prabhupada had this plan in following the orders of his spiritual master, who declared the printing press to be the great *mridanga*. The

greater *mridanga* ... a *mridanga* whose sound can be heard at a greater distance than the playing of a *mridanga* in a *kirtan* party. So in pursuance of that vision, Shrila Prabhupada wanted to have his own press. He needed disciples who would be trained in the craft of the art of printing and that involves running a printing press, running a folding machine, running binding machines, doing composing, doing photography ... there were many different aspects to the printing industry in the 1960's.

But Prabhupada did not want to start a press in a rented building; he didn't want to make the investment unless it was in a building that ISKCON owned. And at this point in time every temple that we had in the world was rented. The classic model was the storefront, although we also had houses we were renting in Hawaii and in Montreal. But they were just rentals and, because the funds were so scarce, each temple president pretty much had to go outside and have a full time job just to pay the rent on his rented temple. Dayananda Prabhu was



paying the rent by working an outside job in Los Angeles, Jayananda Prabhu was paying the rent by driving a taxi cab in San Francisco and Satswarupa was a social worker paying the rent on the Boston temple.

Prabhupada wanted to create a centralized ISKCON press for printing the books that he was translating and for printing *Back to Godhead* magazine. He would only want to do that in a house that we owned. So he decided to initiate the first ISKCON transcendental competition. In later years we had competition for book distribution. Prabhupada used to say that for whoever distributes the most books, I will come and stay in that temple. So for those of us who are in the class of 1970, 1971 and 1972, we thought that was the first transcendental competition in ISKCON. But it wasn't. The very first transcendental competition in ISKCON's history began in 1968 when Shrila Prabhupada wrote letters to all the temples in North America. London wasn't part of this—he wrote letters to Boston, Montreal, to Kirtanananda and Hayagriva in New Vrindavan, to Jayananda in San Francisco, to Tamal in LA, to Govinda dasi and Gaura Sundara in Hawaii. And all the letters said the same thing; he wanted to establish ISKCON press and this would become the heart

of ISKCON. This was so important. In the letters he said, “Whoever will buy the first building, that is where I will put ISKCON Press. Then he said as an extra incentive, “That is where I will stay to write my books.” That was the real prize of this transcendental competition. So all through early 1968 and 1969, all these devotees in all these centers were going crazy about how to get enough money to buy a temple.

Whatever they were doing to collect money they were putting it aside and looking for a temple. You would need five or ten thousand dollars as a down payment back then to buy a building. But that was a tremendous amount of money. Just to give you an idea of how hard it was to have that kind of money, in ISKCON in 1969 the only literature we were distributing primarily was *Back to Godhead*. Prabhupada had arranged with a printer in Japan named Dai Nippon that if he placed his first order every month then we guarantee that we will purchase 2,000 magazines a month. That’s it, you will ship 2,000 magazines a month and we will have a line of credit. Then as we sell them we will pay for them. Eventually we will also print our books with you, so you will also give us a second line of credit. We will have a magazine line of credit and a book line of credit.

It was so hard in 1968 to sell 2,000 magazines, Prabhupada finally wrote these very firm and strong letters to the different temples telling them that this is what I’m going to do: I’m going to have Dai Nippon send five hundred magazines a month to your temple and you are going to pay for them. I don’t care how, I don’t care if you have to get a job. I don’t care!

You will pay me ten cents a copy. You will send the money to me which is managed by Brahmananda. And then you can sell the magazine, and by selling magazines you can somehow or other support your rent. But you must pay for 500 magazines or 250 magazines. And he divided it up amongst the North American temples so it added up to 2,000 magazines. And I can tell you that by the end of 1969 we had such a big debt with Dai Nippon on this line of credit for the magazines that they were ever reluctant to start printing the *Krishna* book because we owed so much money on the magazines. Later Prabhupada ingeniously told them the magazine printing is a whole different department. One has nothing to do with the other. I’ll get to that when we get

the *Krishna* book.

So that is how hard it was and those of you who were in that class of 1966, 1967 and 1968 will remember how austere and how hard things were. There was no money and Prabhupada had launched this transcendental competition of buying a building which needed a minimum of 5,000 or 10,000 dollars for a down payment. So, anyway after a year of this transcendental competition and this anxiety and everybody saving up money, Tamal was thinking he was going to buy a house in Beverley Hills with a \$5,000 down payment, and it didn't happen. Gaurasundara was trying in Hawaii. Hansaduta thought he was going to buy in Montreal, Kirtanananda and Hayagriva were negotiating but you couldn't lug the press equipment up the hills (of New Vrindavana). So there was a house next to what we originally called New Vrindavan and they were in negotiations and they were so convinced that they were going to buy this house right next door and it will become the ISKCON Press.

The transcendental competition was won by Satswarupa and Giriraja in Boston. Somehow or other Giriraja convinced his father to give us \$5,000, and they put the down payment. I think it was originally a funeral parlor that went out of business—I know it had an elevator (for caskets). By September we owned the first building in ISKCON's history at 38 North Beacon Street. So we are now into 1969 and while waiting for this transcendental competition to bear fruit, Prabhupada is in the middle of translating the third Canto of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*—yet there is still no money to print the second canto. We can barely print the first canto and he is already writing the third.

In the middle of the third canto of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* something amazing happens. Prabhupada feels something extraordinary—I don't know how to describe this as I'm not a poet. I don't have the right words, but somehow Prabhupada hears the desperate, desperate cry of people who themselves do not even hear it in their own souls. He hears the crying of hundreds of millions of souls throughout the world who are crying out because they have no idea of who God is. He hears this and stops translating the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. He decides that he is going to give the world for the very first time the truth of who is God, what He looks like, what His activities are, where He lives and what His pastimes are. For Prabhupada to stop translating *Shrimad-*

Bhagavatam was a monumental event that can only be caused by Prabhupada feeling this desperate, desperate need of all those souls who have no idea of what God is.

He announces to devotees that he is going to start writing the *Krishna* book. Now, I was not there so I don't know how much or how little the devotees in 1968 or 1969 knew about Krishna. I don't know, but I suspect that most of the pastimes of Krishna that we all love and know now were not known to the devotees of that era. They may have heard a few stories about Krishna that Prabhupada has shared but the whole *Krishna* book, the whole tenth canto, how could you know that? So the devotees were so ecstatic to hear this.

So even before Prabhupada started dictating his tapes for the *Krishna* book he has this other transcendental vision that, in order to truly show the world who God is, he is going to start a school for spiritual art—transcendental art—amongst his disciples. He would create great artists who will be able to paint the unlimited beauty of God, the unlimited power of God, the unlimited beauty of God's abode. He is thinking of this and about how he will plan his cultural conquest of the world through Krishna consciousness. So, even before he starts dictating the *Krishna* book, he writes a letter to Jadurani who is in Boston—this is in the beginning of 1969. He writes, "I will need you and others to paint for this book, here are the first five paintings that I want." Then he lists them and describes the pastime in detail and adds, "I want you to start painting from this letter."

Two weeks later, Shрила Prabhupada sends her the second letter. He hasn't started dictating *Krishna* book yet, and he describes the four paintings that he wants for the *Krishna* book. No one has heard the tapes yet and no one had heard the stories yet ... just these letters. Prabhupada explains how he wants Krishna's pastimes to be revealed to the world. So Jadurani starts painting at the beginning of 1969.

To make a very long story short, she gets very sick and is ordered by Prabhupada to stop painting. In fact, he sends her to Hawaii to try to recover. She doesn't get well enough to return to Boston until the summer 1969. Even then Prabhupada is still a little reluctant to let her start painting again as he

thinks that it is the painting that is making her sick. But once the house was acquired, Prabhupada's master plan could be formed and he could then start sending devotees from his different temples to Boston. He sent Pradyumna and his wife who were in Columbus, he sent Bhakta Mark who became Muralidhara, and Devahuti who was in LA. He sent Bharadwaja and Rukmini who were in Montreal. He sent different devotees to start staffing the ISKCON art department.

Prabhupada was already envisioning how this was going to happen. In New York Prabhupada had sent or set up four or five key devotees who, in his vision, were going to be the core of ISKCON Press and had to learn how to operate a press, how to operate a binder, how to operate this, how to operate that. So Prabhupada told them, "Instead of going on *sankirtana* everyday, you are going to go and get a job in a printing house, you are going to go in a photo house, you are going to go and get a job in a book bindery."*

So I am going to tell this story from my understanding, and from reading Prabhupada's letters. Plus yesterday an amazing book was placed in my hand called *Shrila Prabhupada's Miracle: Transformation From Matter Into Spirit* written by one of those core devotees from ISKCON press, Vaikunthanatha dasa. I'm going to just read to you one or two pages from this amazing book.



"In November of 1968 while in Montreal I wrote a letter to Shrila Prabhupada asking him how I can best serve him. Immediately a letter came back, informing me that he was establishing a press. This was in 1968 and the competition was still going on and we didn't have a house until September of 1969 so it is almost a year early.

"He informed me that he was establishing a press for publishing, Advaita was skilled at running a printing press, Uddhava was skilled at photography and layout and other devotees had other skills. But the book binding department was needed. Shrila Prabhupada requested me to go to the New York temple to be with the other press devotees. They were already called press devotees yet we didn't even have a press yet. To learn the art of book binding,

simultaneously Prabhupada requested Patita Uddharana to go to New York to learn book binding. Arriving in New York, I met my new book binding partner. We each found jobs in the city working at book binderies—we would work with one book bindery for several weeks and then switch to another company and learn as much as we possibly could.

“Patita Uddharana began gold leaf, embossing, cover making, and other aspects of fine book binding—it was fascinating working in these various book binderies, many of them small and quaint operations. There was another fine bindery on 24th street where I learned from a master craftsman whose family had been making fine book bindings for generations. He showed me the art of folding the book spine, applying the end sheets and finally gluing on the cover, he was just happy to find a young person still interested in learning the craft.



“In the evening I took local classes in the printers union at Astor Place. There I studied the operation of the folding machine. After the large printing sheets came off the press, a folding machine was needed to fold these printed pages into signatures or units of eight or sixteen pages. The folding machine required a special skill to adjust the rollers just right otherwise the pages would not be perfectly straight. Then the signatures were sewn along the spine using a book sewing machine. So I began how to learn and set that operating machine.”

These four devotees could have written their own paragraph on how they went on to learn their trades. Through the early months of the first half of 1969, Prabhupada has devotees who didn't really have a background in learning how to operate this very complicated machinery. When it all comes together and Prabhupada sends them all together to Boston in 1969, there is a whole story which I don't have time for, this amazing way that Prabhupada raised money to buy the press equipment, another time, another talk.

Okay, so now Jadurani is back and the press is up there, and we have to have a quick footnote about Nara Narayana's role. The press and the bindery machine were placed on the ground floor of the new temple and there was a basement in this building. But the equipment was too heavy for the construction of the

ground floor. In order for the equipment not to crash through the floor rafters and into the basement, Nara Narayana—who was considered the master engineer of ISKCON at the time—was called to Boston. He was called to develop a system for bracing the floor so the equipment wouldn't fall through. So hats off to Narayana for that.

Now we come to the next chapter of this amazing story, which is the first ISKCON marathon—and for years I confess that I thought I had started the first ISKCON marathon. I really believed that the first one was the 1972 Christmas book distribution marathon. And, by the way, the marathon I thought I started lasted three whole days. We did sell 18,000 books and magazines in three days but you know, it was only three days. What I came to learn and marvel at is the marathon that Prabhupada started lasted for two years. It was a two year marathon that I had never heard of!

So, starting the paintings for the *Krishna* book, we all know that none of the books had paintings in them. They had painted the cover of Vishnu for *Shri Ishopanisd*, and the only other art work that was going on for books were cartoon line drawings for *Back to Godhead*. The purpose of the painting department was to produce five paintings for every ISKCON center. Every temple needed the *acharya* paintings, then needed the Pancha-Tattva paintings, they needed Lord Chaitanya *sankirtana* paintings and they needed paintings of Radha-Krishna and the *gopis*. Prabhupada wanted all the temples to have those five paintings. Whoever had any art skill had been painting at their different temples, but when things became centralized in Boston the devotees who were inclined to paint were sent to Boston. They practiced painting these copies and these paintings were sent to the growing world of ISKCON temples, that's twenty temples that had these paintings and that also times five.

The artists that weren't painting for the books produced approximately one hundred paintings that were shipped to temples all over the world. So that was their own marathon. But for the books, however, there were Jadurani, Bharadwaja came from Montreal, Muralidhara and Devahuti came from LA. Prabhupada said he wanted a painting a day. Try to picture this: you are an artist and you've been a devotee for two or maybe three years ... or even six months like Bhakta Mark, Muralidhara. You are tasked with painting

something that is supposed to exceed the greatest works of art ever known to man. You are supposed to paint something that is more beautiful than Raphael or Da Vinci or Rembrandt has ever painted in their lifetimes because you are painting the beauty, the unlimited, infinitely unlimited beauty of God. So what is the beauty of Mona Lisa compared to God ... what is anything compared to that? So these poor artists are shuddering: “How in the world can we accomplish this?”

What Prabhupada is giving the world is so great and our skills and our abilities are so small they don't match. It is not even close—and then a letter comes and now he wants a painting a day? So, there was a lot of concern, and as they were talking amongst themselves they wrote to Prabhupada that they did not feel adequate or up to this challenge: “We think that our skills as artists are not that great, and we think we need to study seriously and go to an art academy. We need to learn the greatest techniques of the greatest art in the world, and maybe then we will be able to do something that might be slightly worthy of what Prabhupada is going to give to the world. A vision of God: how can we paint that? We barely know even how to paint.”

So Prabhupada explained to them—and this is so extraordinary—he said, “Your whole concept of beauty is mundane. Actually you don't even know what real beauty is.” Prabhupada started to teach these devotees the definition of beauty. He said, “There are two parts to understanding real beauty.” The first part is that everything in the painting must be authorized and authentic. There can be no imagination, no fabrication, no fanciful imagination like poets and artists of the world who are trying to create something that is beautiful based on what they have seen in the world.”

We have all heard Prabhupada saying that on the Govindam record album. But here Shrila Prabhupada said. “No—nothing in the paintings can be inaccurate. It must all be correct and authentic from *shastra* or from the living *Bhagavata*. But you cannot know beauty, you don't even know what beauty is, you have to be told how to present Krishna. For example classic male beauty has muscular forms and so on. Prabhupada had said that this is not beauty. The beauty of a spiritual body is soft and you don't see the muscular body as it is very soft. Everything has to be authentic; it is not up to the artists to paint what they feel.

That was the first definition of beauty that Prabhupada gave them. It is quite different to what they thought beauty was.

The second definition Prabhupada gave them is this: “The only way you are going to achieve beauty is through your heart, through *bhakti*—devotion to God and not through anything mundane.” Not even through feeling love for the mundane because it is only through *bhakti* that a painting can become beautiful. “If you don’t paint with *bhakti*,” he said, “I don’t care what it looks like it will not be accepted”. So this is Shрила Prabhupada’s definition of beauty.

So now we come back to the problem that the artists had and how they proposed that they wanted to go to art school. And Prabhupada had said that was not how they were going to learn how to paint beautifully: “They may teach you how to paint in a mundane way, but that is not what I am looking for. This is how you are going to learn how you are going to paint. You are going to sit in front of your canvas, eight, ten, twelve hours a day. Day after day and the entire time you are going to be painting, you are going to be chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. I understand that you feel helpless and totally inadequate and you are in great anxiety that you cannot do this. Yet that is exactly the mood that I want you to be chanting with. I want you to be in so much anxiety, so anxious, in so much desperation that when you call out to Krishna it is from the core of your heart.” It should be the greatest desperation that anyone has ever felt in life. That is how I want you to chant Hare Krishna while your hand is moving, and if you do that day after day, crying to Krishna for help, every single day then you will learn how to be an artist, that is all the training you need.”

Let me set one more scene for you; this marathon is starting in the fall and going into the winter Boston in 1969-70. I looked this up in the historical content to confirm. That winter was supposedly the coldest winter in Boston since they have been tracking weather. The artists were in the attic of the building and everyone who was working at the press on any floor, the basement, ground floor or attic or even typing, were wearing gloves as the temple had no heat since there was no money. Now try to picture this, they

scraped up enough money for the canvas, the canvas was either leaning on the wall and the artist sitting on the floor or the canvas is on the floor and they are leaning over it trying to paint fine lines of art wearing heavy wool gloves and that is how this marathon was done.

Let me show you, these are the first five paintings that Prabhupada described before there were many tapes or any stories. What I want to show you by looking at this is the level of art that we started this marathon with. Very sweet but very childlike, simple but very accepted by Prabhupada by his definition of beauty. Now watch what happens as this chanting process goes on. Almost every aspect of these paintings required going back and forth with Shрила Prabhupada by letter. For example what does Nanda Maharaja look like? Mother



Yashoda, what does she look like? How do you show the universe when Mother Yashoda looked in Krishna’s mouth? Prabhupada explained in his letters how to do this: “I want mother Yashoda, I want Krishna, I want a blue circle outside.” Prabhupada designed these paintings personally and the amazing thing about Prabhupada is that whatever questions were coming up, Prabhupada would answer such as “What does Mother Yashoda look like or what does Krishna look like? What does Sandipani Muni look like? What does everything look like? They kept asking Prabhupada because all they had were a few Indian prints, and they had no idea whether they were even authentic or acceptable to Prabhupada or not.

Look how this style is improving, look at the effect of chanting Hare Krishna and the desperation the experienced—desperation that we may not have experienced in our own spiritual lives. I can’t imagine how desperate they felt. This is in a matter of month or so—look at what happened. What do these demigods look like? They had no clue, they had to ask Prabhupada every question and one of the amazing things about our Shрила Prabhupada is that no matter what question you asked him, what is life on this planet like? Anyone else would not know or research and look up many books and say “I’ll get back to you in a month. “ But Prabhupada instantly gave the answer as the

question was asked.

At least you can try to visualize human form, animal form, natural landscapes, but the *Gita* was much harder ... fine art showing abstract philosophy. Prabhupada had to design every painting in the *Bhagavad-gita*. It became impossible to do a painting a day, or even a painting a month practically. So what happened is that Prabhupada gave them a tape composed and edited by different devotees simultaneously.



As he described how he wanted the book production to work it really sounded like an assembly line, so from those letters to the press devotees, the artists said that we can't keep up, there is no way we can keep up, maybe we need to do the unthinkable for an artist. Have an assembly line? So somehow or other they buried their ego. Once Prabhupada had answered all the questions Bharadwaja became the designer of composition for each painting. Jadurani filled in all the colour and form. Then Muralidhara came along to fill in all the fine finishing touches, all the lights, highlights, the jewelry and all the fine details.

Most of the paintings that you are seeing in the *Krishna* book were painted by three artists working on each canvas with this technique. Devanhuti had her own style, so she was allowed to paint her own paintings by herself. But working in this way the combination of the four of them produced an averaged of two paintings a week for two years—and I will show you how I got to that number.

Look at what is happening by chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Devahuti's style is very unique and distinct as you know. Assembly line, I mean they have a painting of the demigod of the oceans and they had no clue what he looks like, was he supposed to look watery? I mean think about this: Prabhupada had to explain how to paint each personality. Okay this is the one print that we

used, Prabhupada liked it and authorized it that we could actually use in the *Krishna* book and everything else is in original. From the first painting to this, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.



Devahuti, look at that. So you get the idea. There are eighty-seven paintings in volume one and volume two, this marathon started a just at the beginning of 1969 and it was completely interrupted when Jadurani got sick. It picked up speed again at the end of 1969, and when did George give the money? And when did Prabhupada get the book printed? 1970. Not a lot of time to paint all these paintings. Isn't that amazing—non-stop marathon!

If it wasn't for George Harrison there would have been no *Krishna* book because Dai Nippon was not so happy that we owed so much money on the magazine line. So when Prabhupada said to them that this is a separate department, it half-way convinced them. Prabhupada said "I'll tell you what. I'll pay up front for the first book printing, and after that we'll use the book line of credit." Dai Nippon agreed to that. Prabhupada wrote to Shyamasundara to go get the money from George—and I'm sure you have all heard of that story of how that happened. Early in 1970 the *Krishna* book came out, volume

one. I'll just show you a bit more, look at this from where we started.

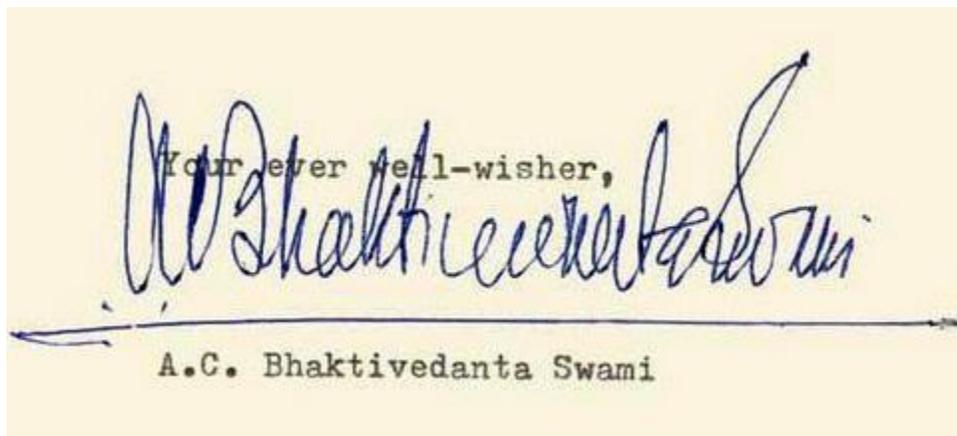
Not bad for no art school. That is the power of the order of the pure devotee because embedded within the order is the potency to carry it out, the empowerment to carry out the order. There is no other way to explain this miracle. Eighty-seven paintings in the *Krishna* book, forty-eight paintings in the *Bhagavad-gita* and that had to be finished by the end of 1971. And in between they had to paint the second canto, two volumes so seven paintings each. They had to paint for the *Nectar of Devotion*, and because Prabhupada was introducing art in the books they had to now reprint the first canto, 1st volume and three paintings in those. So there are eighty-seven paintings in the *Krishna* book, forty-eight paintings in the *Bhagavad-gita*, twenty-one paintings in the first canto and fourteen paintings in the second canto. And all of this had to be finished by the end of 1971 because then they had to return to the third canto because Prabhupada was already translating the fourth canto. So they painted one hundred eighty paintings in two years, which is unbelievable. By being empowered by Shrila Prabhupada, these paintings have a type of *bhakti* that is impregnated into them by Prabhupada's order. I'm not saying it could never exist again—it could if this or that artist is surrendered and has that much in love for Prabhupada and that much love for wanting to do this for Krishna. If you could ever reach that level of desperation again and of pure chanting then, yes: this could happen again. But these paintings are unique in the entire world, and our eyes cannot see the level of beauty that is in these paintings. As we make more and more spiritual advancement, we will actually be able to see the levels of *bhakti* that our material eyes have never seen. And then we will know the truth about these paintings and this amazing marathon, the first marathon in the history of the Hare Krishna movement. Thank you very much. Hare Krishna! 🌀



**In the beginning of the talk Rameswara requested that if any of his elders had a comment, they should do so privately. He has stated that the press devotees did not go out on sankirtana, but learned the craft in the factories instead. As far as I Vaikunthanatha and I are concerned, we worked in the factories by day and went out on sankirtana till ten or eleven at night, and all day Saturday. We never neglected sankirtana in favor of work. And our collections paid for the used press equipment we purchased.*

The written instructions of the pure devotee were enough to plant the seed for the transcendental windows to the spiritual Sky ...

Prabhupada Instructs the Artists



Seattle

21 October 1968

My Dear Muralidhara,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter undated, but I know this letter was received a few days ago, and I could not reply earlier on account of heavy pressure of so many letters. Anyway I may inform you it does not matter that you cannot paint one picture daily, but you go on doing it as many pictures as you can finish in a month or in a week. Do it nicely and I don't press upon you. But the idea is that I wanted so many pictures from Shrimad-Bhagavatam but

Regarding your question, what color is the ocean of milk, it is white. You can make it bluish shade in order to distinguish that it is water. Vishnu's color is sky blue, and Lakshmi's color is just like gold, molten gold. Lakshmi is not always with Vishnu, there are many Vishnu forms who are alone. That form is called Vasudeva Vishnu. No demigod remains with Vishnu. Demigods are destined to live within the material world. In the spiritual world there is no place for

the demigods, but who are elevated to the position of pure devotee, they can be promoted to the spiritual world. In the material world, either ordinary living entities and the demigods, they belong to the same category of jiva tattva, the marginal potency of Vishnu. The marriage ceremony of Vasudeva and Devaki, the daughter Devaki was offered by her father named Devaka, to Vasudeva, and Devaka had eight daughters, and all the 8 daughters were offered to Vasudeva. The marriage is performed generally by priest. Sacrificial fire you have seen in our ceremonies, it is in the same way, but there are some decorations, just like a canopy is made with 4 pillars and it is decorated with green foliage and flowers, and water pot, under each stand, and in this way, it is decorated. And just outside the canopy, the relatives and other Brahmins they sit down to see the marriage ceremony going on. The omen was heard while Kamsa was carrying his sister and brother-in-law in the chariot. There were hundreds of other chariots also, given in dowry. The omen was heard that it was addressed to Kamsa that My dear Kamsa, you are so joyfully carrying your sister but you do not know that a son, the 8th son of your sister will kill you. The 8th son of Devaki was Krishna Himself, and before Krishna, all the sons of Devaki were taken by Kamsa and killed.

I am going to Montreal on the 23rd and from there I shall go to Santa Fe, then I shall come to Los Angeles. I shall be glad to know what is your program. You propose that you shall go to reside with Gargamuni. Is that idea still going or have you changed your ideas. I shall be glad to hear from you.

Thanking you once more for writing me,

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Los Angeles

13 December 1968

My Dear Jadurani,

Please accept my blessings. I have received your letter of December 9, 1968 and have noted the contents. As soon as possible, But the artist must be very quick. Two or three pictures must be done every week. These pictures will be used for my new book, "KRISHNA'', which I will begin as soon as I get the assistance of a quick painter. I am sure that you could do this but you are already engaged with so much work. There is one girl in Seattle, Joy Fulcher, who is nice artist. Would you like her to go to you to do this work under your guidance? I think that you know this girl. If you think this idea is alright, you can call her at Boston. As usual, I shall send "KRISHNA'' tapes to your husband with hints for you about the pictures so you and your husband can send me the complete materials for the final printing. Please consider these suggestions and do the needful.

Kindly convey my blessings to Devananda, Saradia and Rukmini. I hope you are all well.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Los Angeles

25 December 1968

My Dear Jadurani,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter without any date. Purusottama says that this is a particular specialty of your letters that you write without any date. I think that you are right, because you are eternal. There is no beginning and no end and your enthusiasm is also eternal. You never get tired of serving Krishna, so I hope you shall eternally be engaged in serving Krishna because there is no end of such service.

I am very glad that you are taking the responsibility of doing pictures for "Krishna," and if Joy Fulcher has already gone there she may help you. The pictures should be paintings and if you prefer, you can make larger paintings so that when they will be printed they can be reduced to the size of the

book, 8 1/2" x 11". The tenth canto contains forty chapters about Krishna in Vrindaban, and 50 chapters of Krishna in Dvaraka. The tenth canto contains forty chapters about Krishna in Vrindaban, and 50 chapters of Krishna in Dvaraka.

1. Pregnant Devaki is sitting in a palace room and some glaring effulgence is coming out of her body. Almost near the ceiling of the room, the demigods are surrounding her and praying for the Appearance of Lord Krishna. Some of the demigods are throwing flowers upon her.

2. Devaki is sitting in a different palace room and Vishnu with His four hands (conch, club, wheel, lotus) in yellow dress appeared before her. In this scene, Devaki and Vasudeva are bowing down to Lord Vishnu and praying.

3. Krishna is lying happily on the lap of Devaki just like He is an ordinary child.

4. Setting of the scene: Vasudeva saw that all of the doors were opened and that the gate-keepers were asleep so he went outside of the house and came to the bank of the Yamuna. He sees that the river is inflated with rainy season water and he thinks, "How shall I cross?" Then he saw a jackal crossing the river and Vasudeva realized that the river was shallow and only up to his ankles. So Vasudeva, holding little Krishna in his arms follows the jackal across the Yamuna River. So this night scene of walking across the river is the fourth picture.

5. Across the Yamuna River, Vasudeva came upon the house of Nanda Maharaja, where Yashoda was lying asleep with her little girl baby. The fifth picture is where Vasudeva exchanges babies with the sleeping Yashoda.

So please do these pictures very beautifully. I am enclosing a photograph of a painting which is in a very nice style that you should also paint your paintings. When you are almost finished with these five paintings then inform me so we may assign you further.

Please convey my blessings to the other devotees there

in Boston. I hope this finds you looking very carefully to maintaining your health.

Your ever well-wisher,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

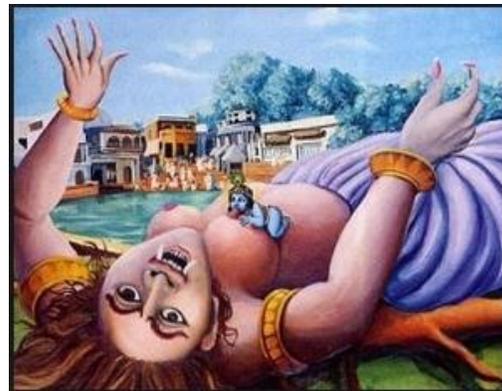
Los Angeles

15 January 1969

My Dear Jadurani,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated January 6, 1969, and I think that you may immediately send these pictures to me in Los Angeles. So far as photographing these pictures for the book, I think that it is essential that these pictures be with bright attractive colors, so please do them in this way.

1. Nanda Maharaja (an old man of not less than 50 years) is observing celebration. Many cowherd boys are coming with milk and curd on a balancing stick on their backs (see enclosed picture). Nanda Maharaja, who is the chief amongst the cowherd men, is



giving them presentations of cloth, ornaments, fruits, etc., and there is feasting going on. Some of them are enjoying by throwing butter upon their friend's bodies.

2. The demonic Putana witch has come to Yashoda looking just like a very nice young woman, and congratulating Yasoda for her beautiful child. She said to Yashoda "You have such nice baby, kindly let me hold Him." Yashoda was very simple and allowed this, but when Krishna sucked the witch's breast the demon showed her true gigantic form which was actually miles long and she died. In the picture, Krishna is playing on the breast of this gigantic dead demon.

3. Krishna was lying underneath a cart which was actually a

demon who had taken the shape of a cart so Krishna would not suspect danger. Krishna was lying underneath the cart, but then He kicked it while playing, and a great giant came out and died.

4. One asura Trinavarta whirlwind took Baby Krishna into the sky and was fighting with Him. The idea was to take Krishna into the sky and drop Him. But once in the sky, Krishna fought with the whirlwind, and the demon fell down dead while Krishna was lying happily on the ground. Yasoda was praying in thanks that "God has saved my Boy."

Regarding your question about placing an effulgence around Krishna's head in all of these pictures, yes this should be done. I hope to be receiving the previous paintings you have done soon. Kindly convey my blessings to all others at Boston temple.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

New Vrindaban

2 June 1969

My Dear Bharadwaja,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated May 28, 1969, and I have noted the contents carefully. I can understand that you are having some difficulty in finding time to paint because of your other duties, but I think that all of these duties may be stopped so you can devote your full energy and time to painting. There is no necessity either for you to go out on sankirtana if this will take away your time from your real work. I understand that you are also very musically talented, but this talent is not so much required on sankirtana party because for chanting Hare Krishna it is not necessary that all instrumentation be so much polished or complicated. If it is necessary for you to work part time to earn money for artist supplies then you should do it, or else if Ishana dasa can continue to help you in this connection, that will be

better. Both you and your wife, Rukmini, are very nice artists, so please tell me what ideas you have so that you may get as much artistic work done as possible.

For the time being, you should complete your sankirtana painting, and then as you have asked about the Krishna Book, I am enclosing an idea for a painting of Krishna showing the universe within His mouth to Mother Yashoda. So you may complete this painting also as soon as possible. I have so many ideas for paintings, and we will be requiring so many expert paintings as you are able to do, so please be very serious to do this work nicely and quickly. It will be great service. In our Krishna Book we are showing the Western World for the first time what is God. So it is no unimportant task, and try to help us out in this as far as possible.

I hope this will meet you in good health

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami



“If you can actually print our books in your ISKCON Press there a great problem will be solved.” (Shrila Prabhupada, 12 June 1968, Montreal)

Prabhupada Visits Boston and ISKCON Press (December 1969)

Nityananda dasa

November 12, 1969: I did not take my being transferred from Detroit to Buffalo very well. It was very different from my happy few weeks at the Detroit temple.



But I had just received my first letter from Shrila Prabhupada, who replied from Bury Place, London, dated November 4, 1969, and this supra-special event in my life carried me through the dark, cold Buffalo winter of separation from the Detroit devotees. In those early days of the movement, every new devotee was encouraged to write to Shrila Prabhupada whenever they wanted, and so I did also right after arriving at the Detroit

temple. I cannot remember exactly what I wrote, but it was a general introduction of me, an appreciation of Prabhupada, the Detroit temple, and the leaders there. It was my first personal connection with Prabhupada, and I treasured the reply from my compassionate *guru* as a private message from the spiritual world.

My dear Nico Kuyt,

Please accept my blessings. I thank you very much for your letter dated October 17, 1969 sent from the Detroit temple. I am very much pleased to note your sincere attitude towards our Krishna consciousness Movement, and this sincerity will lead you to the highest spiritual consciousness if you continue in this way. That is the special Grace of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In former ages the processes of

spiritual elevation were very difficult and long enduring. But in this age of Kali Yuga our lives are so short and our minds are so restless that the process for spiritual realization must be very simple in order for success to be achieved. Therefore, Lord Krishna appeared on this world as Lord Chaitanya to show the fallen living entities the easiest and most sublime method of achieving Krishna consciousness. His formula is that everyone, in any position of life, should chant the Hare Krishna Mantra. So this is what we are teaching, and any benefit you are feeling from this process is simply the mercy of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu acting. I am glad that you are very much appreciating the association of Bhagavandas and Jagadisha. They are both very nice devotees, so when you have any questions about our philosophy, you consult with them, or else I am also at your service in this connection. Please continue to live at our temple, follow the regulative principles and chant at least 16 rounds daily. Most likely this December I shall be staying at our Boston temple for some days, and if it is possible, you may then come there to meet me. I hope this will meet you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami

After the Buffalo temple morning program, there was a very loose schedule, and things were disorganized and random. Some devotees were doing nothing and others couldn't cope with what they needed to do. The old building had leaks everywhere and the cold air seeped in around doors and loose window sashes. It was a run-down house with old carpets, uneven floors, and cracked window panes. It was difficult to keep one's own clothes as they were constantly shifting owners. I struggled to protect my items from being used or confiscated by other devotees who were either without basic wintertime requisites or could not manage their own things, resulting in their always needing something. I seriously disliked this ashram situation. Sometimes we would leave the temple around noon to go to chant downtown, but then had to return in an hour for lunch. It was hardly worth the effort, especially when something essential had been forgotten, such as the *Back to Godhead*

magazines or the instruments.

After a week or two of such chaos in the temple, my mind became very agitated, and I went to speak with Rupanuga. Fortunately he was a kind listener. I described the lack of organization and leadership and pointed out the many tiny disasters that added up to being serial non-productive days. We were collecting at best \$5 a day going out selling literatures, and the kitchen was short of funds to feed the devotees nicely. The Sunday feast was meager, guests were few, and there were only a handful of devotees living in the temple. Rupanuga was thoughtful and assured me that he would do something about the dire temple circumstances. He resided a block away in his own apartment with his wife Kalindi and 5 year son Ekendra, and he was somewhat aloof from temple affairs.

The next day Rupanuga gave his solution: I should become the *sankirtana* leader. He explained that because I could see what needed to be done, I should be the one to do it. This was a shock to me and I protested that I did not want to take this responsibility, and that the other devotees should simply improve their work. But Rupanuga insisted that I should take this service and that he assured me I could do well. Finally I had no choice but to agree, and I regretted having complained. Reluctantly and timidly at first, I tried to better arrange the daily downtown chanting parties. Gradually I became more comfortable and confident. Within a week, we were collecting \$30 a day and selling more literatures, more devotees were going out, and their attire in public had improved. No more devotees with different colored socks, clothes that obviously did not fit, or someone without *tilaka*, unshaved, or proper devotional dress. Seriously wrinkled, torn, or worn out *dhotis* and *saris* were done away with also.

I assigned the best singer to lead the *kirtanas*, I chose the place we would stand on the street, lined up the devotees neatly, and regularized our techniques for approaching people with magazines, how to ask for donations and what to say. We developed standard lines that proved more effective to improve our communication with the public. Previously devotees often would give literature for free, or speak to old Polish and Italian women in hippie language, saying something like, "Would you like to get high forever and never come back

down? Chant Hare Krishna!” Or, “Look at our groovy book about ending all bad trips and reaching full enlightenment!”

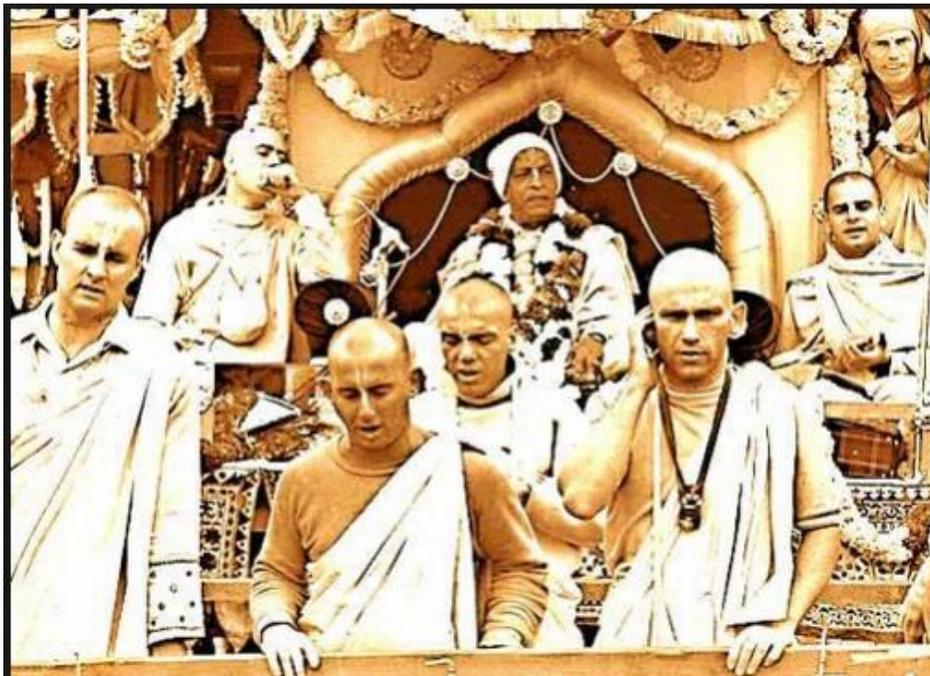
Very quickly we sold our stock of one box each of *Back to Godhead* magazines and *Krishna: the Reservoir of Pleasure* pamphlets. These literatures were all that was available to distribute at this time, and they had to be ordered well in advance so our supply never ran out. We rush ordered by bus a fresh supply from New York temple. Now we had a more enthusiastic crew and we were getting decent results. I felt satisfied that things were now more organized, and kept myself busy by constantly improving the *sankirtana* party. I could not tolerate mismanagement, and my natural inclinations as a practical manager began to develop.

Rupanuga and I began to meet in the evenings when he came back from work. We discussed about how to expand the preaching of Lord Chaitanya’s message and the distribution of literatures. I complained that we had no reliable transportation, and thus our *sankirtana* excursions were limited to bus routes and the occasional offered ride. Rupanuga spoke about how the west coast devotees were traveling in vans from place to place, city to city, state to state, and I was expressed eagerness to do the same from Buffalo. This was the pioneering spirit that excited me. The searching out of souls interested in *bhakti yoga* and Krishna consciousness was our transcendental mission, and we were like daring swashbucklers invading *maya*’s territory- hit and run style. Perhaps due to my enthusiasm, he quickly arranged financing for a Ford Econoline van as a full-time *sankirtana* vehicle. No more begging rides or riding the bus. Now we could go anywhere whenever it was the right time to do so. We now regularly went to the SUNYAB campus, Buffalo University, our original downtown spot, and new destinations as we could think of them.

The Buffalo winter was bitter and I purchased socks and long johns for everyone, marking each with the devotees’ names. From the temple kirtan instruments I set aside separate *karatals* for going out on street chanting and arranged for some flags and a decorated placard on a stick with Prabhupada on one side, Lord Chaitanya on the other side. We had definite times for leaving and returning to the temple, and due to the cold, I had devotees take turns going inside the department stores to warm up and thaw out. Thirty minute shifts in

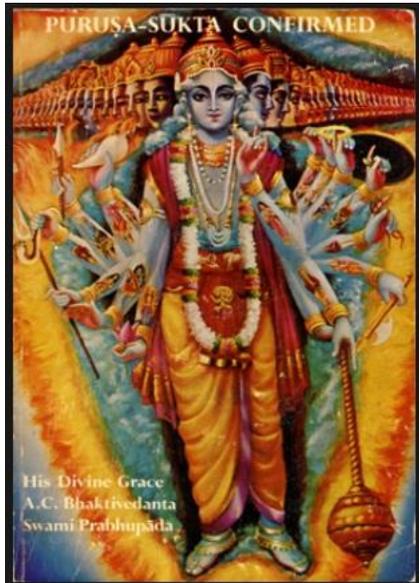
the biting wind was relieved by a ten minute break inside the lobbies of the warm stores in front of which we chanted and sold magazines. Gradually Detroit faded from my memory as I became absorbed in my demanding responsibilities for the preaching mission- public chanting and literature distribution.

Then Nara Narayana Prabhu from Los Angeles appeared one day. He was traveling around the American temples to assist in improving the *sankirtana* parties. Immediately I could see that he was a very intense person, and there was to be no discussion about whatever he dictated as the proper and necessary style, procedure, or miniscule detail which was to be implemented perfectly. As his eyes were transfixed onto mine like a hypnotist, he spoke as though he were revealing great secrets from other dimensions, and he betrayed no hint of any flexibility or possible variance in exactly how our *sankirtana* party would be conducted in the future. He had a divine mandate.



In the late sixties and seventies Nara Narayana, the Vishwakarma, traveled temple to temple building altars, organizing festivals and construction projects. That’s him “on the cell phone” above at the 1970 San Francisco Rathayatra (though cell phones would not be invented for another several decades). Others are Jayananda (left), Tamal (on mic), Purushottama (with Prabhupada) and Hansaduta.

All this seemed acceptable, because, after all, this was how the devotees in Los Angeles were doing things. The acclaimed Vishnujana had arranged their west coast chanting groups in this manner (with perhaps some embellishments by Nara Narayana), and they were having great success. We had heard stories and news from San Francisco and Los Angeles about how fast the movement was growing there under the enthusiastic leadership of several noted devotees. Nara Narayana was like a drill sergeant or a symphony director when we went downtown on the street,

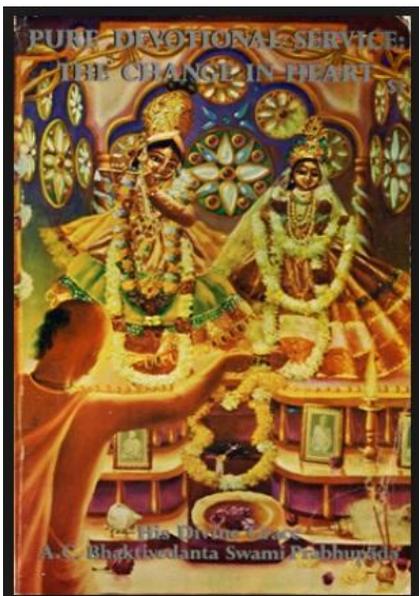


and the devotees, myself included, had to unquestionably take his instructions to heart instantly. He became very aggressive one morning, and became quite physical with me in demonstrating how to dance in time while swinging the legs far aside in an exaggerated swaying motion. He manhandled me like a puppet, even though I was not resisting him. I became emotionally distressed and did not know how to react. I privately went to Rupanuga and reported on the extreme stress Nara Narayana had imposed on our party of devotees, and within a day or two it was time for Nara Narayana to visit his next temple. We bid him a hearty farewell and

promised to maintain everything just as he had taught us. We were all relieved he was gone, and although I myself was somewhat of a stickler for details, I learned there were limits to which devotees could be pressured; it was good to allow a little leeway to let them be their natural selves sometimes.

Due to the miraculous component of *sankirtana*, the temple was thriving again, and more devotees joined the temple. Rupanuga cultivated and then approved who could “move-in” and who could shave their heads (“get shaved up.”) Space was short in our small building, as there was but one small room upstairs, and we had *brahmacharis* bedding down everywhere at night, primarily in the temple room- the Lord Jagannath deities were thus inconvenienced by all the commotion and snoring. At that time we had no women devotees; only Rupanuga’s wife Kalindi would sometimes come by, usually to enhance or decorate the altar with new photos, vases, or candles. It was clear we needed a larger temple and Rupanuga would take myself and another devotee or two to

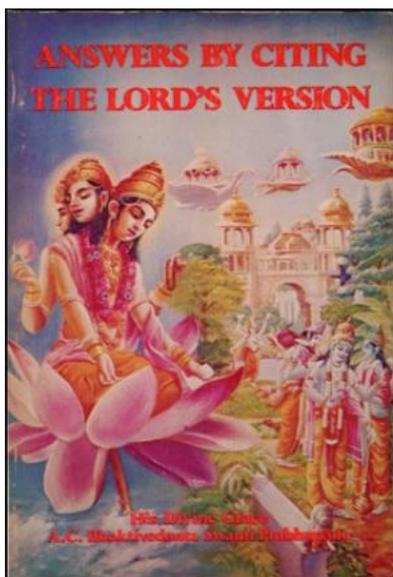
examine some new rental properties. We settled on a full size two story house only a half block away from the college campus at 40 Englewood Drive. I believe we made our move there at the beginning of December 1969. In the basement we made some bunks for 6 or 8 *brahmacharis* next to a huge oil burning furnace, which at a few feet distance, provided just the right amount of heat. It was a little scary watching the flames through a small mica window roaring ferociously so nearby, but we got used to it and were warm all night (except when the oil ran out).



Now being several blocks closer to the SUNYAB campus, and almost across the street, we began to get more visitors, and Buffalo began to feel as dynamic and exciting as Detroit had been. I became quite content, busy just about every minute of the day. The temple bank account was no longer empty, and I was surprised, almost shocked, when one evening Rupanuga informed me I would be sent to New York City the next day by airplane to do some special shopping for many essential items that were unavailable in Buffalo.

December 10, 1969. Nervously, I departed for two days with a list, a thousand dollars cash, and detailed instructions. The New York temple was then located at 96 2nd Avenue, on the second floor, formerly being a store for men's suits and clothing. The temple room had been a showroom, with mirrored doors down both sides and change rooms behind; the mirrors gave the illusion of a much grander space. Arranging with Brahmananda Prabhu to store things at the temple as I bought them, I set out racing around Manhattan. I bought a full roll of saffron taffeta *dhoti* cloth (we did not get cotton *dhotis* or *saris* from India in those times) and a supply of Indian spices, tapioca beads (sego), other food ingredients, and Fuller's earth for *tilaka*. A Jewish rhinestone dealer on a side street with a front door buzzer and intercom provided beads and stones, trims and fittings for embellishing the deity clothes. It was my first service directly for the Buffalo Jagannatha deities, one that I found very gratifying. At the temple, I became friends with some devotees, including Brahmananda, Jayadwaita, and Rishi Kumar. Somehow I navigated subways, trains, and taxis

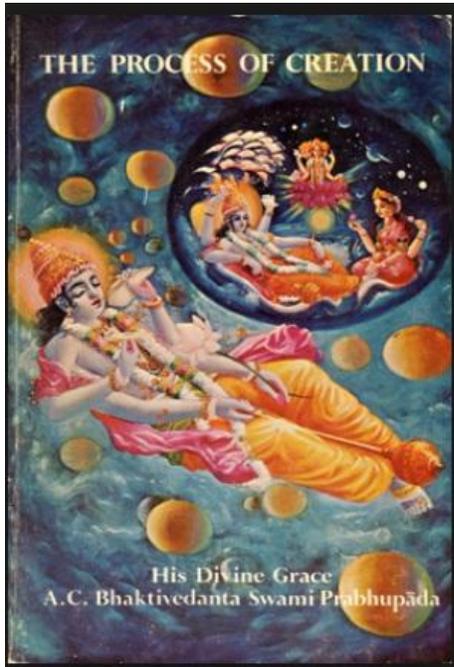
and managed to shepherd all the purchased goods on buses and trains to the LaGuardia Airport. Back in Buffalo with the precious goods, everyone at the temple was satisfied with the fresh supply of unique necessities for Krishna's devotional service.



Rupanuga was in regular telephone contact with Brahmananda in New York, and one evening informed us of news that Shrila Prabhupada was coming to the Boston temple after several months in Europe where he had been residing with the London devotees on John Lennon and Yoko Ono's estate. An idea to go to Boston to meet Prabhupada rapidly evolved into a decision- about ten Buffalo devotees would travel by van to associate with Shrila Prabhupada for a week. Kalindi and another devotee stayed back as a skeleton crew to take care of Lord Jagannath and the *arotikas*. He was arriving on December 21.

Hard winter had set in, and the days before departure brought a heavy snow and ice storm all over the Northeast USA. We discussed whether we would have to cancel our trip, but I argued strongly for still going, as I was now very keen to see Shrila Prabhupada. When Prabhupada had come to SUNYAB (State University of New York at Buffalo) in April, I was unable to appreciate Him at all, but since then I had turned to him as my *guru*. Following the regimen he taught by chanting, reading, taking only *prasadam*, serving, going on *sankirtana* I was now eager to see Prabhupada. I remembered the end of Prabhupada's letter to me: "*Most likely this December I shall be staying at our Boston temple for some days, and if it is possible, you may then come there to meet me.*"

December 20, 1969. Due to my persistence at going ahead with the trip to Boston, and with my confidence that the roads would be open, Rupanuga agreed that we could at least try to reach Boston in spite of the snowstorm. For weeks we had been constantly on the road with the *sankirtana* van, so we were comfortable about braving the elements and trusting in Krishna. I was the roads navigator, and had several Chevron state road maps. From Buffalo to Albany



the turnpike was plowed clear and easily traveled, but then we had to decide whether to follow the large interstate highways in a huge detour south to the Connecticut coast and then back northeast to Boston, or to take the smaller local state roads that wove eastward through hilly country into Massachusetts. We took the more direct route and found several times that minor shortcut routes were closed due to ice and snow. Often the Ford van crawled along, slipping and sliding, tires spinning on icy pavements that had just been roughly plowed. We were unsure whether the roads were open ahead of us, but we continued slowly with patience and determination through the snowy

and still-frozen countryside. We arrived in a freezing rain by nightfall at the Boston temple in the outlying suburb of Allston after ten hours of harrowing and dangerous travel.

The temple was a large, two story rented house, crammed full of devotees from all over the eastern seaboard, including New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Montreal, and New Vrindaban. Thus as devotees moved about, there were constant obeisances and recitations of Prabhupada's *pranama* prayers as was the practice whenever one devotee met another, whether previously acquainted or not. We were at first unable to do much but fall to the floor and rise again, over and over. Many devotees I recognized from the previous month's Washington war protest event or from my recent shopping trip to New York. Madhusudana introduced himself and was reassuringly friendly while I was self-conscious amidst the whole swirling scene. As it was in Washington, the mayhem and chaos was overwhelming for me, although there was much more space, and moving about was somewhat easier.

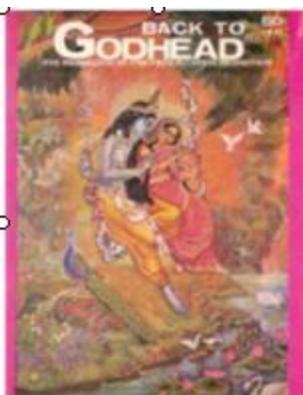
It was a massive family gathering, with constant *japa* chanting, a gathering in heightened anticipation to meet again with the Lord's transcendental ambassador. There was the seemingly mundane also. I was dismayed that generally the devotees were unconcerned about bodily considerations and social

conventions, as passing gas, using the toilet, dressing, and drying one's washed underwear was done as necessary and without much ado or decorum. In such close quarters, it was almost impossible to obtain any degree of privacy. The 3 to 5 am early morning bathroom rituals were particularly public and distasteful to me, so I stayed in my sleeping bag and used the bathroom later when it was nearly vacant.

Shrila Prabhupada had first visited Boston in May 1968, and again in late April 1969, when the devotees had only a small downtown storefront. In mid-1969 they moved to Beacon Street in Allston, and the New York temple's printing works were relocated here due to the greater space. In the basement the *Back to Godhead* magazine was collated and packed 200 per carton, serving the demands of a growing number of temples. Now Shrila Prabhupada was coming to see His new Boston facility and inspect the printing works, which also was printing the *Bhagavatam* chapter by chapter in soft cover books. The press was very dear to Prabhupada, saying it was the heart of the movement and the "big *mridanga*." The overall operation was impressive but obviously amateurish and inefficient, run by devotees who really had little to no clue or experience how to run a press operation. Adwaita had worked at a print shop and thus was the chief pressman.

Shrila Prabhupada's afternoon flight arrival in Boston was on December 21. Almost everyone went to Boston's Logan Airport to welcome Shrila Prabhupada, but I wanted to stay behind. Emotionally, the prospect of being crammed together with so many others in a rush to and from the airport was intimidating and nerve-wracking to me, and I longed for some quiet time alone. My damaged mental condition was still healing from an extended ordeal at the hands of the material modes, having taken refuge of the chanting process only some months earlier. Even my mentor Rupanuga's coaxing and encouragement to go was of no avail. I missed the ecstatic greeting and arrival of Shrila Prabhupada, who was just returning from months in London and very successful preaching, including with the world famous musicians, the Beatles. We were supercharged with amazement and excitement in the leaps forward that the movement was making with Prabhupada as our commander. Of course, later I would greatly regret this decision. What a loss it was to forego Prabhupada's airport arrival!

The Boston weather was cold, alternating rain and snow, and was ice-frozen and dangerously slippery. Still, the devotees who had just greeted Prabhupada at the airport rushed back to the temple so to meet him all over again. Shrila Prabhupada's car arrived as I watched from the temple's double front doorway and purple painted hallway. New and unfamiliar emotions filled my mind. My spiritual teacher was here, my guide and savior, the cynosure of all my new hopes in a life as a devotee of Krishna. It was to him that I was to surrender; I was his eternal servant. I resolved to make the most of the company of the pure devotee.



He slowly climbed a few icy steps up from the street sidewalk, came down the yard walkway and up the wooden temple steps, entering his new Boston temple for the first time. Devotees crowded in from all sides and a great pandemonium commenced. First there were cheers, exclamations of “Jaya Prabhupada!” and “Hari bol!” but then some chaotic behavior ensued. The tumult halted Prabhupada's further progress right at the base of the staircase, only ten feet inside the front door. Several devotees were blocking his path, just a few feet in front of me as I squeezed closer to see what was happening. Mingled within a strong *kirtan* with drums and *kartalas*, I heard shrieks and screams by a few devotees, particularly two or three women. Loud and hysterical, they became obnoxious by grabbing onto His feet, blocking His way, practically screaming in His face. This commotion prevented Shrila Prabhupada from ascending the stairs, but He stood there patiently and docilely, although obviously inconvenienced. Wailing pleas to “save me” or for “mercy” were interjected with cries of Shrila Prabhupada's name. Several devotees fell at or on His feet and stayed there, holding on while bellowing. They obviously thought they were doing the right thing with their enthusiasm. This lasted for about five minutes.

Finally Shrila Prabhupada was able to move forward and he reached his red velvet Vyasasana in the temple room, and things proceeded more smoothly. There was a very enthusiastic *kirtan*, followed by everyone falling prostrate while Prabhupada chanted praises of previous *acharyas*, various *tirthas*, and

deities. Prabhupada spoke about London and the deity worship there, encouraging cleanliness. Then he joked with Saradiya dasi not to fight with her husband. Over a hundred devotees watched and listened to Prabhupada carefully to catch every drop of transcendental nectar they could. Soon Prabhupada was finished and he arose.

At His own request, Shrila Prabhupada then was given a tour of the temple building by Satsvarupa, followed by a group of curious devotees who pressed in tightly to witness everything. I tagged along, as close as I could get, but not too close either, lacking confidence. Most devotees dutifully returned to their various chores and responsibilities, but I was convinced that my responsibility was to attend Prabhupada's temple tour.

Near the temple room upstairs was the art department, in a large room with several easels, each holding a stretched canvas and a spiritual painting in progress. Shrila Prabhupada conversed with head artist Jadurani dasi about the details of the paintings, answering questions, and noting what was shown to Him with interest and pleasure. It reminded me of an old battle-experienced general reviewing the training activities and war preparations of his troops. He peeked into the rear upstairs *grihasta ashram* which had been cordoned off with sheets or Indian madras' hung on lines to create several householder cubicles, and loose clothes and mess were strewn all around—not a very pretty sight. Shrila Prabhupada reserved his reaction until later.

Shrila Prabhupada then inspected the printing press operation downstairs, which was in a large open room on the left side of the first floor, directly under the temple room. Two large black steel printing presses, perhaps 6 feet tall and square, and some smaller auxiliary machines were set around. I remember vaguely a long paper cutter and stocks of paper. The sharp smell of ink and oil filled the air. Slightly disheveled Advaita dasa, in regular shirt and pants and wild red *shikha*, and ink stained fingers, explained everything and answered Prabhupada's questions. Now I pressed forward a little more boldly to see Shrila Prabhupada closer, His subtle facial expressions, and every word or



Jadurani devi dasi painted this Gaura-Nitai Nabadwipa sankirtana photo sometime in 1970 at ISKCON Press Boston. She confided that the member of the sankirtana party in the rear right with closed eyes was taken from a picture of your Editor.

every movement. This was a rare chance to associate with Shrila Prabhupada outside the temple room in more intimate conditions. I was absolutely captivated by him. Although rather short in height, Prabhupada was the center of the universe.

Back to Godhead magazine was being printed in Boston now, but the press workers were having a difficult time lining up the four basic colors on the front covers of issue number 31, and also the edges were not trimmed properly. The result was poor quality BTG's with blurry front cover and poorly cut edges. It

was definitely an amateur printing operation, operating on a shoestring, learning as they went, behind schedule with breakdowns, but all in pursuit of Shrila Prabhupada's desire to print his books with ISKCON's own press operation. Prabhupada discussed solutions to these problems with Adwaita, giving practical advice and encouragement.



Prabhupada named the printing operation "ISKCON Press," and commented that this press operation was his heart, and the heart of ISKCON. Near the kitchen in the rear were steep wooden stairs to a very chilled basement. Here was the collation, folding, stapling, and boxing of the magazines. Many tables had the various pages in stacks and someone assorted by hand a complete magazine and then stacked it by the folder-stapler machine. Prabhupada stated he wanted one full book published every two months, and emphasized the great importance of producing these transcendental literatures. Then, completing His temple tour and having greatly enlivened the devotees, Shrila Prabhupada departed for his hotel downtown via the limousine. He was accompanied to the street curb by another, but more subdued, kirtan with devotees already pained at waiting until tomorrow to see Him once more. As consolation, they retreated inside and resorted to recalling and sharing their memories and realizations of all their transcendental experiences in a day of association with the pure devotee.

The next morning, December 22, the same few devotees again behaved very inappropriately upon Shrila Prabhupada's arrival, blocking Him, holding His feet, wailing loudly, delaying his progress to the temple room. Class was from *Bhagavatam* 2:1:1-5, and he began on a personal note with his gathered disciples:

Prabhupāda: So I am so pleased that you are doing things just to my satisfaction. And stick to this principle and Krishna will bless you, sure. Our line of action is not difficult: chanting sixteen rounds regularly, following the four regulative principles, take *prasādam*, read books, we have got so many books, speak, discuss about the subject matter amongst yourself, and this is the

process.

Further in his lecture, Prabhupada tied in something from his temple tour the day before, subtly requesting better orderliness in the temple *ashram*: “Just like I was seeing just now the rooms of our *grihastha*, householder, boys and girls. Things are scattered. (laughter) But if you go to another person’s, *grihamedhi*, you will find their apartment nicely decorated, chairs, cushions, and sitting place, but they have no vision about self. And here, although we see that household affairs, their resting place, is not so nicely decorated, but their aim is Krishna. So that is the difference between *grihamedhi* and *grihastha*.”

During the class Prabhupada pointed out a Sanskrit word to Pradyumna, joked with ten year old Dwarkadisha dasa by calling him “DDD,” and several times made the devotees laugh. Midway through, Prabhupada again spoke directly to his students: “We have got this after many, many births, *mānuṣyam*, this human form of life. Therefore the *śāstra* says, *tūrṇam yateta*. I am very glad. You all young boys and girls, you are fortunate. I am not bluffing you. Actually you are fortunate. You have come to the right place, where you can learn Krishna consciousness. This is the greatest boon of life.”

In conclusion, Prabhupada summed up his message: “So this Krishna consciousness movement is training before you ultimately meet death, fight with. So this is the advice given by Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and we shall read later on. Thank you very much.”

The third morning, right after *mangala aratika*, before Shrila Prabhupada arrived for class, the temple president Satsvarupa made a stern announcement. He strongly rebuked the errant phenomenon of wailing and howling before Prabhupada, saying Prabhupada was very disturbed at the *sahajiya* or pretentious behavior. It was warned emphatically that Shrila Prabhupada was not to be touched or blocked, inconvenienced or subjected to a spectacle event. Thankfully, the disturbing celebrity craziness did not reoccur again during the rest of Shrila Prabhupada’s weeklong stay in Boston. ISKCON was but three years old and devotees were still learning the very basics of Krishna consciousness, such as appropriate conduct with their spiritual master.

The thought then dawned in my foggy head that I should more aggressively maneuver myself in the crowd of devotees, to be physically nearer to His Divine Grace. I was like a moth drawn to the great attractive light source. This third morning, ahead of Prabhupada's arrival, I self-consciously positioned myself midway on the staircase, and I stood out like a pimple on the end of the nose. Hugging the wall while devotees rushed up and down, swerving past me, several times I was told this was not a good place to be, but I held fast, determined that Shrila Prabhupada would come by this way and He would pass right before my eyes. Otherwise it would be difficult to get close to him without climbing over devotees, or pushing them aside, something I was not able to do. Shortly, He did arrive, and my plan proved successful, and I riveted my eyes on Him as He came by with His cane, negotiating each step carefully, surrounded by His leading assistants: Kirtanananda Swami, Brahmananda, Hayagriva, Rupanuga, Satsvarupa, and Prabhupada's servant Purushottama. Studying him as closely as my sketchy and scattered condition would permit; I derived much satisfaction from the experience, yet became simultaneously more anxious for further close association of the pure devotee. He came within a foot of me on the staircase. I strained my dull consciousness trying to see Prabhupada more fully, sensing that there was much more that I could not see. And it was obvious that all the devotees were doing the same. I cannot remember the class, nor was it recorded.

The building was frigid, due to deliberate economizing on the heating fuel. Devotees were side by side in sleeping bags everywhere, still retiring by 11 or 12 at night while others rose around 2 or 3 in the morning. When most everyone was asleep for those few middle hours, there was loud snoring from all sides. I found it very hard to get any decent rest.

A remote corner behind machinery and shelving in the press room suited me as my spot for a few belongings and sleep. In the mornings I slept in till about 6 indulging my nasty head cold, until the early bathroom rush had passed, and I thus missed parts of the morning programs. But I was sure to be ready and there when Prabhupada arrived at 7 am.

During the week in Boston, Shrila Prabhupada had some college engagements in the evenings. On December 24, he spoke at Harvard University and had a

long question and answer session with the students. I could have gone to witness these extraordinary events in an otherwise very ordinary world, but foolishly I avoided them out of self-consciousness. On this date Prabhupada also had two meetings at the temple. One was a New Vrindaban *gurukula* discussion with Kirtanananda and Hayagriva. The other was an ISKCON Press meeting to discuss *Back to Godhead* magazine, book publications, and the art department. I hovered outside the meeting room but unfortunately missed everything.

Thus far I my timidity kept me more in the background whenever Shrila Prabhupada came to the temple. When the hallway shrieking spectacle had occurred, I had little idea of what was transpiring, and I asked about it. These women somehow had become very emotional about seeing Prabhupada, and I noted that my own attraction to Shrila Prabhupada had come to the point that I was anxious for the company of His Divine Grace. Reflecting, I wondered about how this had happened. Why? I had never spoken with Prabhupada, and so far had only seen Him a few times. This anxiety could not just be explained as crowd psychology or a rubbing off of others' enthusiasm. It came from within, and I now noticed it.

I had been chanting since I went to the Rocky Mountains in July and had been strictly following temple life for a few months. There were results of following the spiritual process called *bhakti yoga sadhana*, namely a cooling and calming of the mind, the soothing of my troubled heart, a subtle feeling of swimming in blissful purity, and the increasing conviction that I had found what I was searching for. I could feel intuitively that these results were coming from Prabhupada. He was the cause of my renewal of hope, so naturally I was becoming fixed on his divine association. He was invisibly yet profoundly changing my consciousness.

The desire to see and hear Shrila Prabhupada had become my top objective; it was a virgin craving that grew as time passed while being in his obedient service. By some supra-mystical process that I could not yet understand, I was cultivating a relationship with my spiritual teacher, very deeply private and heart-felt. I would have physically followed him anywhere around the world if it were not for my conviction that this could abort my progress and his

continued blessings. He was pleased with me if I remained at my destined post and met my responsibilities in Buffalo temple. Still, I understood there were two authorized ways to associate personally with Prabhupada—by writing him letters with questions or news of my service, anxiously awaiting his reply, and occasionally in person whenever he came to our part of the world.

December 26, 1969: One morning was the initiations ceremony. Shrila Prabhupada came down from His elevated seat and sat cross-legged on the floor in front of the sacrificial fire pit. He was going to perform the sacrifice himself, whereas in later years he would typically delegate this responsibility to senior devotees. Sunlight flooded the room from large windows along the whole of one side of the tightly packed room. I squeezed and snuggled into a sitting space just behind the six new initiation candidates, who sat directly across from Shrila Prabhupada. I was trying to get as close, physically, mentally, and spiritually as I could.

Shrila Prabhupada began by sprinkling with His dexterous long fingers the variously colored rice flours from separate containers, making lines and diagonals over the sand floor of the pit. He stacked some pieces of tinder wood kindling in the center. He rearranged for proper access various ingredients in bowls to His left and right. Occasionally His vision swept around the room in surveillance of the devotees, and simply instructed, “Chant!” Immediately the hum of everyone chanting on their beads increased several notches, and all attention was on our ultimate leader. All were eagerly anticipating participation in the transcendental rite of initiation performed by the pure devotee for His new disciples. I asked Rupanuga if I could be initiated that day, but the time was too soon. I had to wait for a few more months. It could be done later through the mail.

I longed for Prabhupada’s recognition of my presence as an aspiring initiate, for some minor exchange, or at least some show of acknowledgement by a nod or smile- anything. I thought that this would surely be good for me, and boost my weak spirits and mangled, battered psyche, fresh as I was out of the material energy’s whirlpool of dangerous illusions. So, I began to stare intently at Shrila Prabhupada, concentrating my mind with the thought, “Please look at me!” Although this certainly was meditation on the *guru*, it was not exactly in the

line of mature, favorable service.

For the better part of an hour while the fire sacrifice ceremony was underway, I strained my eyes and mind, trying to reach out on the subtle plane and compel Shrila Prabhupada to look directly at me, to recognize me. The book *Autobiography of a Yogi* had influenced me with vague ideas of *yoga* powers, and I mistakenly understood mind machinations as being spiritual. I was frustrated as I saw him look directly at several others near me, but ignoring me. I kept up my silly mind projection, pathetically focused on attracting his attention to me.

Suddenly his penetrating eyes locked strongly and deeply *into* my eyes, and I was shocked by the experience, one so grave and disarming, that I have never lost the memory of it. As I looked into his infinitely dark deep eyes, he looked straight into mine and into my *very self*, a self that I myself did not know nor could even see. For a couple of seconds, I was embarrassingly exposed and stripped stark naked, without the external defenses of body, mind, and false ego. He had but glanced at me, effortlessly peering *through* my outward shell, and noting my morbid condition of spiritual health. While I was spiritually blind, he was not, and he looked at my soul within my body. In an instant he had assessed all my karmic baggage, impurities, sins, desires, and nonsense. Of course, at the time, my understanding of what had happened escaped me.

Disarmed, I had to awkwardly look aside, but not before He turned away from me first, almost casually. Amazing how a brief glance from Prabhupada could be so profound! It jolted me, shaking my obviously faulty perception of reality. However I was also tantalized by this experience of higher reality. My faith in Shrila Prabhupada as an exalted seer and advanced spiritualist was greatly enhanced, and I then knew that he was not an ordinary person of this mundane realm. This was my first experience of Shrila Prabhupada's exalted stature and never again in my life did I experience this "soul nakedness" in the sight of anyone else.

I understood that I could not hide anything from Shrila Prabhupada any more than I could from Krishna. There was no use in pretense. After recovering from the shock, and seeing that Prabhupada was humbly carrying on with the

sacrifice, chanting mantras and placing offerings of grains and ghee into the fire, I then dared to yearn for another of Shrila Prabhupada's transcendental glances, and although I continued to watch Him very closely in case he would look into me again, he did not. The lecture was superb, although my listening capabilities were very limited. ↪



Above: Beacon Street temple room shortly after Prabhupada's Dec. 1969 visit

Below: Jayadwaita, Chandanacharya and Murlidhara in class

Initiation Lecture

His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

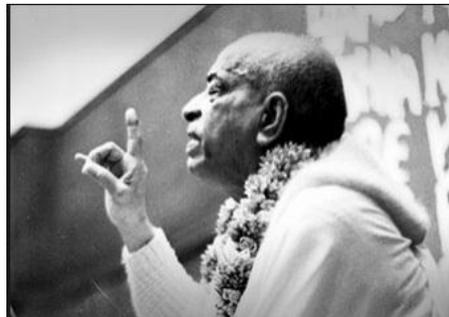
Boston: December 26, 1969

During this initiation ceremony and the one that soon followed it, these souls became disciples: Suhotra, Soma, Haladhara, Gauri dasi, Sukhada dasi, etc.

Prabhupāda: So this chanting Hare Krishna *mantra* is purifying your existence. *Yasmādsuddhyed sattvam.*

Sattvam means existence. You are existing, I am existing, God is existing

eternally. The temporary existence that we see at the present moment, this is not our existence. This is our diseased condition, crazy condition. *Piśācī pāile yena mati-cchana haya. Piśācī* means ghost or witches. When one is haunted by ghost he becomes upset of his own consciousness and talks all kinds of nonsense. Similarly, when our existence is covered by the material ghost we talk so many nonsense: “I am this body, and anything in relationship with this body is mine. I am dying. I belong to this family. I belong to this community, nation, this, that, planet.” These are all just like a man haunted by ghost speaks nonsense, these are all nonsense. And the Krishna consciousness movement is to cure this disease. *Śuddhyed sattvam*, existence. That is called *svarūpa*, real identification.



Mukti. *Mukti* means... This word is very popular, *mukti*, liberation. What is that liberation? Liberation means to come to this platform of Krishna consciousness. That is liberation. *Svarūpeṇavyavasthitiḥ* [SB 2.10.6]. *Mukti* is defined in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *muktir hitvānyathā rūpam. Muktir hitvā anyathā rūpam. Anyathā rūpam. Rūpam* means form. We are in a form which is not liberated form. Material form. This form which we have got just now, this form, when it will be finished, you'll never get this form. Another form. Another. Just like bubbles. Bubbles in the ocean, they come out. You cannot have the exact same bubbles, same measurement. No. That is going on. Similarly, this *rūpam* is *anyathā*. This is not our *rūpam*, our form. Therefore sometimes in Vedic literature it is stated, “formless.” Formless does not mean has no form. Not this form. That is formless. But people with less intelligence, they think formless means there's no form. Formless means not this form. This is *anyathā rūpam*. This is different from our real form. So *mukti* means to give up this unreal form and accept your real form. Just like freedom from disease. Get free from the diseased condition and come to real healthy life.



Shrila Prabhupada directs Satswarupa in performing the yagna. He looked at me and (indicating the Krishna Book) said gravely, “You read.”

So this Krishna consciousness movement is for bringing men to the real life. Always remember this. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. It takes... Just like to cure a disease it takes little time. But if you take to the process of cure, then that is very good. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [Bg. 9.30], Bhagavān, the Personality of Godhead says,

*api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāḥ
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*

Kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati. Those who have taken to Krishna consciousness seriously, even there are some faults, still, they are saintly persons. That is the recommendation of Krishna. Because that fault may be due to his past habits, but that is being stopped. Just like you make the switch off, no more electric current will act, but the fan still gives some rounds due to the past force. Similarly, a Krishna consciousness person, even if he’s found in fault, Krishna says, “No.” *Sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ*. “He’s saintly person, *sādhur*.” Why? Now, the process he has taken up, that will cure him in due course of time. *Śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati*. So these who have fortunately come to this platform of Krishna consciousness by association, by practice, this

is the way. So stick to it. Don't go away. Even if you find some fault, don't go away from the association. Struggle, and Krishna will help you.

So this initiation process means beginning of this life of Krishna consciousness. And we shall try to be situated in our original consciousness. That is Krishna consciousness.

Jīvera svarūpa haya nitya krishna dāsa [Cc. Madhya 20.108]. Real consciousness, as it is recommended by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, that He identifies Himself as eternal servant of Krishna. This is Krishna consciousness, and this is liberation, and this is *mukti*. If you simply stick to this principle, *gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayoḥ dāsa-dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ* [Cc. Madhya 13.80], that “I am nothing except the eternal servant of Krishna,” then you are in the liberated platform. Krishna consciousness is so nice. You keep yourself. And for keeping yourself in that consciousness, the simple method is this chanting, Hare Krishna. You keep yourself chanting as many hours, twenty-four hours. Why as many hours? Twenty-four hours. *Kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ* [Cc. Adi 17.31]. Lord Caitanya says, “This is to be practiced twenty-four hours.” And that you can do. It requires simply practice. Even in sleeping you can chant Hare Krishna. Even in sleeping. And there is no bar. In sleeping, in eating, in going to the toilet room, there is no restriction. You can go on, “Hare Krishna.” You see. That will keep you in your *svārūpa*, in your real identification, and you'll never be attacked by *māyā*. Just like if you keep yourself vaccinated and if the period... What is called? Active. Then there is no fear of being infected. That is practical. If you get yourself vaccinated of certain type of infection and you keep yourself active... Just like doctors, they go, treat patients suffering from infectious disease, but they keep themselves always unaffected. They know the remedial measures, antiseptic, prophylactic processes. So this prophylactic antiseptic process is *Krishna-kīrtanam*. *Param vijayate śrī-Krishna-kīrtanam*. That is Lord Caitanya's blessing. *Param vijayate*. All glories to the *saṅkīrtana*, *śrī-Krishna-saṅkīrtana*. *Kīrtana* means *Krishna-kīrtana*. Not any other *kīrtana*. The Māyāvādī philosophers, they introduce so many other *kīrtanas*. No. *Kīrtana* means *Krishna-kīrtana*: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma ...

Or any name glorifying the name of the Lord. That is *kīrtana*. But this Hare Krishna *mantra* is especially recommended in this age, and Lord Caitanya personally chanted, so we should follow. Although every name of Krishna is as potent as the name Krishna... Vishnu name, or there are thousands and thousands of names...*Nāmnām akāri bahudhā*. *Bahudhā* means there is no counting. Innumerable names. And each name has the same potency like Krishna. But this is recommended, especially, those who take advantage. This is one thing.

And other thing, to take precaution so that *māyā* may not attack you. You should be cautious also. And therefore we have to follow the four regulative principles: no illicit sex life and no meat-eating or non-vegetarian diet... We have no quarrel with vegetarian and non-vegetarian. We are after Krishna-prasādam. If Krishna accepts something beyond these vegetarian dishes, then we can accept also. But Krishna says, “No. Give Me *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam* [Bg. 9.26].” Krishna can eat everything. He is God. But He says that “Give Me this.” *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*. “Offer Me this flower, fruit, water. Like that.” So we are after Krishna-*prasādam*. That is our motto. We don’t fight with vegetarian and non... We are not making propaganda... Just like there is vegetarian society. No. We have no business. Even if a man becomes vegetarian, what does he gain? In this material world, either vegetarian or non-vegetarian, they are on the same platform, birds of the same feather. You see? So that is not our propaganda. We are introducing Krishna-*prasāda*; therefore we invite people to take nice *prasāda*. So these four principles we should follow. We shall not accept anything which is not offered to Krishna. That is our position. And no illicit sex life, no gambling, no intoxication. We are already intoxicated, being haunted by the ghost of *māyā*. And further intoxication...? Do you think intoxication can be cured by intoxication? No. That is not possible. So these four rules you have to follow. And you keep to Krishna consciousness. Then your life is sublime. Very simple thing. Very simple thing. But it is simple for the simple, but it is very hard for the crooked. Yes. So those who are going to be initiated, they should always remember these restrictive four rules and chant Hare Krishna at least sixteen rounds, and eat Bhagavat-*prasādam*, Krishna-*prasādam*, and be happy, dance. That’s all. Is there any difficulty?

Devotees: No.

Prabhupāda: (laughter) No difficulty. And people will write, “the bright-faced.” Yes. They have to admit it. Because it is purifying. There is no impurity. Without being pure, how can you expect to reach God? This is all rascaldom. To keep oneself dirty, impure in mind, in body, in feeling, in character, and you want to go to God? Rascal. (laughter) Forget! There is no entrance for you to God.

*yam brahmā varuṇendra-rudra-marutaḥ stuvanti divyaiḥ stavair
vedaiḥ sāṅga-pada-kramopaniṣadair gāyanti yam sāma-gāḥ
dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yam yogino
yasyāntam na viduḥ surāsura-gaṇā devāya tasmai namaḥ*

God’s position is that, that the *yogis*, they are trying to capture God by meditation. And demigods like Brahmā, Lord Śiva and others, they are offering Vedic prayers. And the *Sāma Veda* is always singing the glories of the Lord. The Lord is so exalted, so pure. So if you have to reach Krishna, you must be pure, cent percent pure. And that is not very difficult. This *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam* [Cc.Antya 20,12]. Chant Hare Krishna and you become purified, purified, more, more, more, more. And day will come when you find that you are completely pure from all material contamination and you become eligible to enter into the kingdom of God, and that makes a solution of all problems.

So it is so nice. Always remember this, that “We have taken the best in the whole creation of the Lord, Krishna consciousness.” Do not try to adulterate it. Keep it pure, and your life will be successful. This is an opportunity, this human form of life, this particular type of tongue which you can use. In other type of tongues you can chew, you can taste the blood and the flesh, and so many things. But you cannot chant Hare Krishna. But here is a tongue given by God. You can utilize it for chanting Hare Krishna. Don’t miss this opportunity. That chewing facility, tasting facility, you’ll get even in cat’s life, dog’s life. But this chanting facility you’ll not get. This is in this life, human form of life. So don’t misuse it. Chant Hare Krishna regularly and be happy. Thank you very much.
[break]

*namaḥ apavitraḥ pavitraḥ vā sarvāvasthām gataḥ api vā
yah smaret puṇḍarikākṣam sa abhyābhyantaraḥ śuciḥ
śrī vishnu śrī vishnu śrī vishnu*

(Devotees repeat:) So *mantra* means... *Namaḥ*. *Namah* means surrender, to become submissive. *Namanta eva*. *Namanta eva*. That is the qualification. *Namaḥ*. When we utter this word *namaḥ*, means “I surrender.” Anyone, I *saynamaskāra*, *namaskāra* means the surrendering process: “I accept the surrendering process.” So when we surrender to Krishna or His representative, then *apavitraḥ*. *Apavitraḥ* means contaminated and *pavitraḥ* means purified. So one may be in contaminated stage or purified stage. It doesn't matter. One who... *Yaḥ smaret puṇḍarīkākṣam*, one who remembers Krishna, the lotus-eyed... *Puṇḍarīkākṣam* means lotus-eyed Krishna. So *bahya*. *Bahya* means externally, and *abhyantara*, internally. *Bahyābhyantara-śuciḥ*. *Śuciḥ* means purified. And another meaning of *śuciḥ* is *brāhmaṇa*. A *brāhmaṇa* means purified. So those who are going to be sacred-threaded today, they should remember that they are being accepted as *śuciḥ*, as *brāhmaṇa*. After chanting process for the six months or one year, it is supposed that he has already become purified. Now he should be recognized that he is purified. So this sacred thread means recognition. Sacred thread means one should understand... Just like one understands a man (is) learned by the degrees M.A., B.A., or Ph.D., similarly, when there is sacred thread, it is understood that he has undergone the purificatory process under superior management, or guidance of spiritual master. This is called *upanayana*. *Upanayana*, in Sanskrit. *Upanayana*: bringing him more near. The initiation is the beginning of purification, and offering the sacred thread means bringing him nearer. Therefore the principle is those who are ordinarily initiated, they should not touch the Deity. Only those who are in sacred thread, they should touch. This is the system.

But Krishna-*kīrtana* is so nice that even without sacred thread, because he is regularly chanting, he is to be supposed to be purified. That is the recommendation given by Jīva Gosvāmī. Anyone who is chanting regularly Hare Krishna *mantra*... *Śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate*. *Śvādaḥ*. *Śvā* means dog, and *adaḥ*, *adaḥ* means eating. Dog-eaters. The dog-eaters are considered to be the lowest of the mankind. But in the *Bhāgavata* says that *śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate*. Even if he is dog-eater, but by this process he immediately becomes qualified to offer sacrifice. *Savanāya*. This fire sacrifice is called *savanāya*. And Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī gives notes on this line that a person born in the family of a *brāhmaṇa* awaits the sacred thread ceremony. But one who has become surely (?) purified by chanting Hare Krishna *mantra*, he immediately

becomes a highly qualified *brāhmaṇa*. So don't misuse the opportunity obtained by you. Use it properly, and the life will be successful. So *apavitrah pavitro vā*. In any condition of life, anyone who remembers Krishna, Puṇḍarīkākṣam, so both wise-externally and internally—he becomes purified, śuci. Śuci means pure. And there is a verse written by one Vaiṣṇava in Bengali. Not ordinary. He's Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura. Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura is one of the *ācāryas*. He has written *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*. As there is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, he has written *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*. Perhaps you have heard the name. So his opinion is, *mucihaya śuci haya yadi krishna bhaje*. *Muci* and *śuci*, just opposite. *Muci* means the most nasty cobbler. He eats everything and does all nonsense. He is called *muci*. *Muci* means cobbler. In India, when a cow or bull dies, these *muci* class are called to take away the carcass. So they take it away and they take out the skin and tan it for... This is the original system of shoe-making. And make some shoes and sell in the market. But not by killing cows. When it dies. So this business is done by the *muci* class. And they take the flesh also. After taking out the skin, the flesh they take. Therefore they are considered very low class, *muci*. And *śuci* means *brāhmaṇa*. So Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura says, *muci haya śuci haya*. A cobbler, *muci*, can become a *śuci*, *yadi krishna bhaje*, if he's Krishna conscious. That's all. If he's Krishna conscious, never mind he is a cobbler, he becomes immediately *brāhmaṇa*. *Muci haya śuci haya yadi krishna bhaje*. *Śuci haya mucihaya yadi Krishna tyaje*. And even if he's born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, if he gives up Krishna consciousness, he's immediately cobbler. So don't lose this opportunity. Always remember Krishna, Krishna, Krishna. (laughter) Don't become cobbler.

End of lecture.

Nityananda dasa's article continues ...

Shrila Prabhupada chanted patiently one full round on each initiate's beads, giving their beads and spiritual names one by one. As the fire grew in size, and the flowers, seeds, *ghee*, bananas, and leftover rice flour was offered, finally the room became very intensely choked with smoke, and, coughing, I had to escape outside while kirtan continued within at full strength. Most devotees accepted the transcendental smoke as more cause for bliss, but my head cold protested. A grand feast followed, but I could not get enough *halavah*. I took advantage by helping with the post-feast cleanup, scrounging through leftover plates for extra

halavah, sweets and other favored prasadam preparations, if they looked relatively untouched. I had shamelessly become a spiritual *prasadam* scavenger, and I noticed a few competitors in the same vicinity.

A van of devotees had come from Detroit, including my old friend Loren Fogel, always a jolly fellow. I watched him in the kitchen as he cooked day and night, having become a very good temple cook. This was the first I had seen of Loren since I left Detroit almost two months earlier, and I missed him greatly as he was always such a support in the battle with *maya*. He sported a bushy full *shikha*, and as usual, was always smiling, talkative, charismatic, and blissful, while I was quiet, shy, and anxious. He encouraged me to just come back to Detroit with him, as I described the less vibrant Buffalo temple atmosphere, but Rupanuga did not sanction this idea. I tried hard to get to go back to Detroit, and was tempted to just do it, but finally submitted to Rupanuga's gentle insistence that I was needed in Buffalo, and that I should abide by my authorities as Prabhupada wanted.

Our destinies were separated from then on, as Loren became Narottamananda dasa and went on to Paris, France with Bhagavan dasa, and then to India. We did not meet again until 1986 in New Vrindaban, and by then our previous close friendship had been thinned by the passage of time, and we just shared notes and remembered pastimes from college days. Krishna had blessed me, that throughout life I would have few long-lasting friends, forcing me to seek out my eternal best friend in the heart.

Most of the day Shрила Prabhupada was at the hotel or on preaching engagements, and I wandered about the temple trying to catch up on my rounds, laundry, or studying the *Gita*. Unfortunately I was not inclined to go much on *sankirtana* or to the university engagements with Prabhupada, due to social awkwardness. It was a very private and withdrawn time for me, nursing my head cold, getting enough rest and having some seclusion. I looked forward to getting back to Buffalo and our familiar routines. The Boston chaos and temple pandemonium was unsettling.

The furniture-less double-length *prasadam* room downstairs was messy, everything spread on the floor, bedrolls and blankets, boots and coats, devotees

coming and going, most of them struggling to make some order out of their day. Prabhupada had found some leftover cans of paints thrown outside the rear of the building, and criticized this as being an example of wasting Krishna's energy. One night I went with the chanting party in the steely-cold, downtown streets of Boston, near the Commons, and I was shocked to see customers at a restaurant cheerfully choose live, swimming lobsters from a fish tank in the front plate glass window, to be cooked alive and immediately for their evening dinner.



Getting ready for mangala aratika. L. to r., Swarupa dasa, Bhargava dasa and Karunamoya dasa force Chandanacharya and one other late sleeper out of their sleeping bags at 3:30 am.

Brahmananda, some of the senior devotees, and press devotees were not rising early in the morning, sleeping in until 7 or 8 am as though they were exceptions to the temple rules due to their important and special services. Their service was separate from the regular temple programs of *sankirtana* and outside preaching. Shrila Prabhupada came to know of this and was not pleased, clarifying that the leaders must set the proper standards for all the devotees by their ideal example. Hearing this, although I always rose early and attended the full morning program back home in our Buffalo temple, I tried harder to cope with the morning congestion chaos and make it to the 4:30 am Boston *aratika*. It was confusing and disconcerting to see the leaders chastised and corrected by Prabhupada, and this was the first of a trend that I came to hear of where ISKCON leaders fell short of the standards, sometimes fatally so. ISKCON was not a personality cult, but was based on the Vedic literature as revealed by Shrila Prabhupada, and required following the regulations of spiritual practice, known as *vaidhi-bhakti*. Leaders would come and go, rise and fall, appear

divine and then suddenly very ordinary. I would need to keep only Shrila Prabhupada as my ship, rudder, and keel. It was not advisable to overly depend on fallible “senior” devotees. Prabhupada’s longtime servant Purushottama left the movement during this week in Boston.

Every other day Shrila Prabhupada also came for the evening temple program, for *aratika* and giving class. After one evening lecture, Shrila Prabhupada went downstairs to the temple office and spoke with senior devotees and temple leaders in private. I stood outside, wishing I could go inside, trying to hear more than just the muffled voices that were all that I heard. Rupanuga also was inside, and later, smiling happily, he disclosed to me how Shrila Prabhupada had caressed and rubbed his six year old son Ekendra’s head for a long time. I was surprised that Prabhupada was so affectionate with the devotees. I wished it could have been me.

December 27 was Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Maharaja’s disappearance day. In the evening, Shrila Prabhupada took his *guru maharaja’s* photo from the altar and placed it with great emotion and seriousness on his own Vyasa Asana. Then He personally offered *aratika* to Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta, and gave a short talk, none of which I remember, and which was unfortunately not tape recorded either. I was in the rear of the crowd, but other devotees said that Prabhupada had shed tears and with a cracking voice had emotionally praised his spiritual master. Gradually my phony notions of emotionless and stoic spirituality gave way to the understanding that full consciousness of the Absolute Truth Shri Krishna entailed not only divine emotions of the soul but also ever-increasing ecstasy, perfect love, and purified desires.

Rupanuga consulted me about how many cases of *Back to Godhead* magazines we should purchase while in Boston, and we loaded twelve cases of 200 each into our van, a several month supply at present rates of distribution. But with Prabhupada encouraging more literature production and distribution, I projected we could also increase our results. Now, after almost a week in Boston, I became very restless. Although it was supremely wonderful to have the association of Shrila Prabhupada in person, I sorely missed the daily routine back home in Buffalo of distributing books and prasadam at university campuses and the familiarity of our own temple activities. For much of the days

in Boston I was doing very little, and so I pressed Rupanuga that we should



Clockwise from upper l to r, Adwaita works the 4-color Chief 29 offset printer; Kasturi, Saradiya and Lilasukha collate in the bookbindery in the basement; Jadurani paints for the Gita and Bhagavatam; Upstairs, devotees at the temple services and feast.

return to Buffalo, and although he entertained the idea, we stayed a few more days until Prabhupada's departure on December 28. I missed Shrila Prabhupada's airport departure to Los Angeles, being impaired by reclusive tendencies. Krishna had kindly placed me under Rupanuga Prabhu's guidance, and he displayed much patience and gentleness in dealing with me. But I wish he had forced me on at least these few occasions. Whether simply due to my own neophyte foolishness, or that higher authorities found me unqualified to attend these special pastimes of the pure devotee of the Lord, these missed

Prabhupada associations have been much regretted ever since.

The old saying goes, “opportunity knocks but once.” I am reminded of missing half of Prabhupada pastimes in Boston, December 21 through 28, 1969. Now, nearing fifty years later, I try to console myself by remembering the other half of them. R

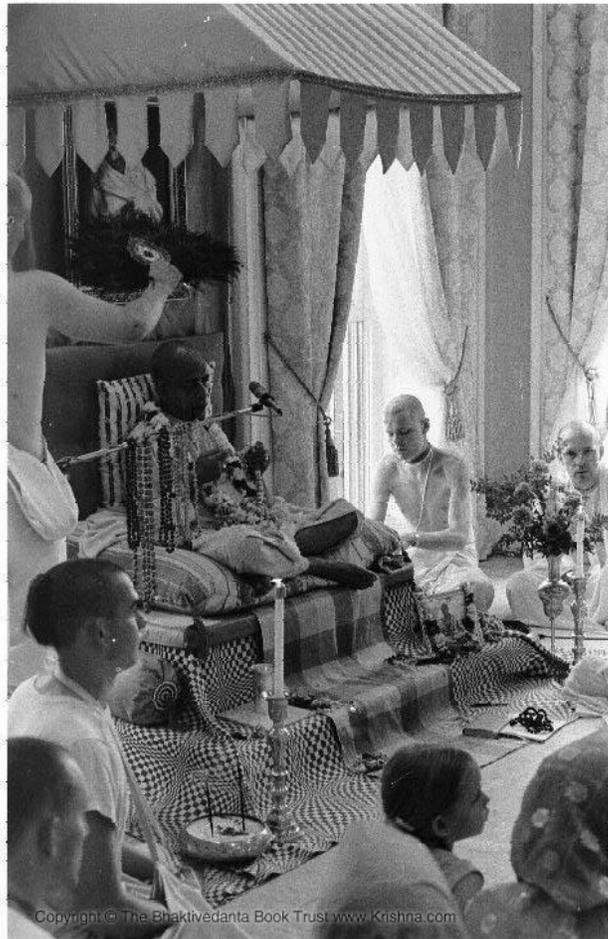


ISKCON Boston and ISKCON Press devotees in the sankirtana van: Summer 1970.

**?, Hridayananda, Rukmini, Balai dasi. Jayadwaita, Giriraja, ?, ? , Romapada, Murlidhara,
Madhavananda.**



During his visit to ISKCON Press in December 1969 Shrila Prabhupada kindly greeted me with, “Patita Pavana Prabhu.” From then on I figured I had two names. I gave my Guru Maharaja a Cross gold plated pen, to which he said, “I have.” He offered it back to me, though I could not accept it.



After the bookbindery shut down in Boston, I returned to NYC, where the temple had now shifted from 2nd Ave in Manhattan across the river to Brooklyn. By day I sold big books off a table at Grand Central Station. Here initiations are being held during Prabhupada's famous visit in April of '71. I am at the window.

“Most probably we shall start our own press very soon. And as soon as the press is started we shall immediately begin printing of Bhagavatam and other books.” (Shrila Prabhupada, letter, 22 November, 1968)

History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

Swarupa dasa

Introduction



For more information about ISKCON, contact ISKCON Press, 38 N. Beacon St. Boston, Massachusetts 02134. Attention: Svarūpa dās Brahmācārī, secretary.

At the San Francisco Rathayatra a few months ago in August, 2012 I ran into my godbrother Jayadvaita Swami. He was at the Question & Answer booth discussing philosophy with guests and devotees. I got a message from someone that he wanted to speak to me so I walked over to the booth and since it had been many, many years since we had spoken to each other our meeting was much like a reunion between old friends. After some reminiscing and filling one another in on what's been happening in our lives he said he was currently working on a project to record an oral history of ISKCON Press. His idea was to travel about and interview anyone and everyone who had anything to do with

printing Shrila Prabhupada's books. Akruranatha dasa was with him at the Q&A booth. That day he was assisting Jayadvaita Swami in locating people and doing the recorded interviews. and he told me that if I were willing, they could do an interview with me right then and there. I declined the offer. I explained that I didn't feel comfortable doing interviews and would much prefer contributing my memories in written form. Jayadvaita was happy to accommodate my request and gave me his card with his email address.

A few days later I began writing. Over the course of two months I wrote the following in segments which I emailed to Jayadvaita Swami. I have no idea what he intends to do with any of what I wrote as well as the taped interviews done with other former ISKCON Press / BBT devotees. After sending the last installment I decided to go back and turn all the emails into a document. I had to then do a bunch of weaving and condensing where there were overlapping time lines and edit it enough so that it would be easier to read.

As soon as I began this endeavor I realized that I could not present a historical perspective of ISKCON Press and the Mail Order Department without also telling (interweaving) my personal story. In addition ... my initial focus was on my recollections of ISKCON Press and in that undertaking I also included information about the Mail Order Department. However, when I informed Jayadvaita Swami that I was submitting my final installment he wrote me back saying I wasn't "getting off the hook so easily" and he urged me to get into more detail concerning the Order Department — as a separate entity. For this reason you may find some duplicate storytelling and overlapping of events. ↗

"My point is, I don't wish to keep money in the bank. Invest in printing." (Shrila Prabhupada, 6 October 1977, Vrindavana)

History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

1. The Big Mridanga



My first close encounter with ISKCON Press was when I visited the Boston ISKCON temple in December of 1969. At the time I was living as a *brahmachari* at the 61 2nd Avenue temple in New York City's lower east side. Shrila Prabhupada was in London at the time but his travel plan was to return to the U.S. on December 21st with his first stop being the Boston center. The day before his arrival all of us New York ISKCON devotees headed up to Boston. Some rode in our little red VW beetle rented from Mar-U-Drive on The Bowery, a few took the bus and

some even hitchhiked. I got a ride up there but ended up hitchhiking back home from Boston to New York on a snowy night in late December after volunteering my seat in the VW to a godbrother. Devotees from other centers such as Buffalo, Columbus, New Vrindaban, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. were also arriving. On the day Prabhupada was due to arrive a school bus was rented to transport everyone to Boston's Logan Airport. The wonderful reception scene there was documented in a series of photographs in which can be seen a banner saying "ISKCON New York Welcomes Prabhupada." I'm holding one end and Rohini Kumar the other. Notice in the photo that "Prabhupada" was spelled wrong. It wasn't that long before that when we stopped calling him Swamiji and we were still getting used to addressing him as Prabhupada.

The highlight of Prabhupada's visit to Boston was when he was given a tour of the Press facilities. As he watched Advaita demonstrate how the printing press worked Prabhupada commented, "This is the heart of our movement." Brahmananda spoke up and said, "You are the heart of our movement, Shrila Prabhupada." After all the shouts of "Jaya Shrila Prabhupada" and "Hari bol" died down Prabhupada then motioned toward the press and said, "Ah ... but this is my heart." He also explained to us how his guru maharaja called the printing press "the big *mridanga*." For spreading the Sankirtana Movement the *mridanga* drum could be heard for some distance, but the printing press could be heard around the world.

Shrila Prabhupada left Boston for Los Angeles a few days after we got back to New York. While we were in Boston we got to be with Prabhupada for Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura's disappearance day on December 26th. On that day he personally made *urad dal* which was the favorite of his *guru maharaja* and several people received first and second initiations on that auspicious day as well. We New York devotees returned home just in time to go out on *sankirtana* at Times Square on New Year's Eve as 1969 turned to 1970. We took the subway uptown around 9 PM and in the midst of all the turmoil of drunken revelry we managed to perform *sankirtana* right up until midnight when the ball came down on top of the Allied Chemical Building as is the tradition every New Years Eve there.

A few days after returning to New York from Boston Brahmananda called a special Ishtagosti and announced that Shrila Prabhupada wanted him to move to Boston permanently and take charge of managing ISKCON Press. None of us could believe what we were hearing. Brahmananda had been a part of the New York scene since the very early days and in the course of time he was, for all intents and purposes, managing not just the New York center ... but all of ISKCON ... from New York. As the shock of his announcement began to subside Brahmananda then looked over at me, smiled that big B ear to ear grin, and added, “Oh yeah ... and Swarupa is coming with me.” Since the very next day after I joined the temple in the summer of ‘69 I had been serving as Brahmananda’s secretary (working at the “office” which was a rented basement apartment on East 10th Street). I was also handling whatever BTG subscriptions were coming in as well as orders for the few books we had back then. We had the abridged *Gita, Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* and the three volumes of First Canto *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* that Prabhupada brought over from India. ♪

“I would always prefer to distribute our books ourselves and publish them ourselves in our own press. That is my ambition, so you try to fulfill this desire of mine.” (Shrila Prabhupada, 6 May 1969, Allston, Mass.)

History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

2. The Washington Peace Rally

About a week after New Year’s Day a *brahmachari* named Karunamoya drove the dark blue ISKCON Press van (Chevy 108 model) to New York to pick up Brahmananda and me and take us to our new home at ISKCON Boston, 38 North Beacon Street. I was very happy and excited about moving up to Boston. First



of all, my sister had joined the movement a few months after me but because we had no facility in New York for *brahmacharinis* we sent her and another girl as well who wanted to join up to our Boston center. I knew that my sister

Michelle was having a little difficulty adjusting to life in the *ashram* so I thought it would be a good thing for me to be living in the same temple as her. She was greatly relieved and happy as well when she found out I would be coming there to live and work with the Press.

As soon as we arrived Brahmananda set up his (our) office in the front room. We brought our desks from East 10th Street with us in the van. The Big B (as many of us affectionately called Brahmananda at the time) put his big desk by the bay window looking out onto the front yard and street and I had my smaller desk by the door (that Brahmananda insisted be kept locked most of the time). The Big B rarely left that office. He'd even wait until the last minute to go to the bathroom at which time he'd walk quickly through the hall with his blue janitor pants and large set of keys dangling and jangling while every devotee he passed would bow down offering obeisances—making him very uncomfortable since he couldn't stop to return the gesture.

Here are the names of devotees I recall living in that big house on North Beacon Street. Some were there when Brahmananda and I arrived and some came during the months that followed. These are just the folks who were connected with ISKCON Press back then. There were, of course, other devotees in Boston who did not work with the books but were engaged in the typical types of service done at any and all other ISKCON temples:

Advaita and Balai
Uddhava and Lilasuka
Sacisuta and Indumati
Devahuti
Vaikunthanatha and Saradia
Pradyumna and Arundhati
Bharadvaja and Rukmini
Jayadvaita
Muralidhara
Pariksit
Satsvarupa and Jadurani
Patita Uddharana
Peter (Kusakrata)

Karunamoya
Chandan Acarya and Kasturika
Aravinda
Nara Narayana and Dina Dayadri
Madhusudana and Kanchanbala
Palika

Among the others who didn't work on the Press but were "regular" Boston temple devotees were Giriraja, Soma dasa, Manmohini, Shridama, Hridayananda (he stayed there when we moved to B'klyn) and some uninitiated new members ... et al... Dinesha (was into putting together the "Bande'ham LP at that time) and his wife Krishna Devi

I believe the first printing done by our own Chief 29 offset printing press was of pamphlets called *Krishna, the Reservoir of Pleasure* and *Two Essays* ("The Peace Formula" and "Who is Crazy"). In November of '69 there was a huge peace rally in Washington D.C. at the Washington Monument. Devotees from all the centers on the East Coast flocked to our D.C. center which, at the time, was being managed by Damodara and Madhusudana. The newly printed pamphlets were brought there for distribution and also in New York we prepared lots and lots of little cellophane wrapped packages of *halava* and simply wonderfols (with *mantra* cards stapled onto them). I do believe it was the first (or one of the first) mass distributions of literature and *prasadam* and throughout the day devotees were bringing bags of money (mostly change) back to where we set up shop in the grass along with the throngs of protesters. Allen Ginsberg was there and with his harmonium he performed his weird style chanting on the makeshift stage which sort of legitimized our presence there and thus helped our cause. We had a large trunk that held all the pamphlets and throughout the day the pamphlets continued to disappear and be replaced with money.

By the end of the day the trunk was so heavy it took three of us to pick it up and carry it to the van parked a few blocks away. As we were getting ready to leave, the crowd started to become unruly and the cops began tossing tear gas to break it up. It was quite a scene with Brahmananda, Rishi Kumar and myself trying to make our way through the cloud of tear gas to the van with our trunk filled with

money. Hayagriva, who was walking along with us trying to get away from the tear gas, started freaking out yelling that his eyes were burning and he couldn't breathe. Anyway—the collections amounted to a few thousand dollars (I think it was a little under four grand if I remember correctly). What was more important ... thousands of pieces of literature were passed out and to this day I still hear about people having become devotees after first reading “Krishna, the Reservoir of Pleasure” which is still in print. In fact, I keep in the trunk of my car a stack of “On Chanting Hare Krishna” and “Krishna, the Reservoir of Pleasure” pamphlets to give out when the opportunity arises.

We never got to hand out all the packs of *halvah* and simply wonderfols so we brought the leftovers back to New York. For weeks after the peace rally—each morning when I would leave the *ashram* and walk to the office on East 10th Street I'd grab some halvah packages, put them in the pocket of my winter coat and snack throughout the day. I'd often stop on my way at the Krishna Store on St. Marks Place that Allen and Carol Kallman used as a retail store and wholesale showroom for their clothing line called Krishna Fashions. All day long they would play the Happening LP that they helped to produce (after which Allen tried to copyright the *mantra* to no avail). I'd hang around shooting the breeze with the Kallmans and listen to the magical mystical chanting on the album with Shрила Prabhupada and a group of his early disciples from 26 2nd Avenue days. ♪

“Similarly, the sales of Back to Godhead should be divided more evenly amongst our centers. Not that one or two temples do all of the selling and all of the others should simply sleep.” (Shрила Prabhupada 28 January 1969)

History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

3. Saving the World from Godlessness

As Brahmananda's secretary I would mostly type all his correspondence which was more often than not to and from Shрила Prabhupada. In those days the topic in those correspondences mostly centered upon the ongoing establishment of ISKCON Press up in Boston. Emulating Prabhupada, Brahmananda used a

Dictaphone and gave me the tape when he was done which I transcribed using a machine with a foot pedal and earphones. Whenever he, or any other devotee in the temple, would receive a letter/aerogram from Prabhupada we would all gather around the recipient as he read it aloud.



By the time I got to Boston in early January of '70 ISKCON Press was geared up and ready to print and publish ... with the departments and manpower in place to perform every function and task. That included transcribing, editing, typesetting, proofreading, layout, plate burning, plate opaquing, offset printing, signature folding, stapling, cutting, binding ... and when it was decided that our Chief 29 wasn't up to the job ... camera ready copy was sent off to Dai Nippon in Japan.

With Prabhupada's approval and encouragement Advaita, who had some little printing experience before joining the movement, had taken some additional vocational training at the New York School of Printing on West 49th Street (Hell's Kitchen) and so when the time came he was as skilled and energetic as any printer press operator could be. The editing and proofreading (English and Sanskrit) was handled by Satsvarupa, Jayadvaita and Pradyumna; Uddhava and Madhusudana handled the camera work. Chandana and Aravinda were up in layout. Jadurani, Parikshita, Muralidhara and even Devahuti were the artists. Others who worked on binding, folding, typesetting, etc. were Vaikunthanatha and Saradiya, Sachisuta, Patita Uddharana, Palika, Arundhati, Peter (Kushakratha) and myself. Brahmananda was the on-site manager. A call went out to all ISKCON temples everywhere for anyone and everyone who had any experience with any aspect of printing or painting. Kulashekhara was sent from London and over the course of time ... while in Boston and later in Brooklyn ... others came as well. After Sai (later known as Siddhasvarupa) joined with his followers from Hawaii, some of the people also ended up coming to Boston to work with the Press. Two whom I recall were Kathy (now Nara Devi) and Bo Schnepf.

As soon as Brahmananda and I arrived he told me that there had been a problem with the typesetting and that department was slowing down production. The very next day Palika showed me how the machine worked and it was off to the races. I found myself working double shifts and very often right through the night. That winter of '70 was the coldest Boston winter since the early 1920's. The composing room was no bigger than a closet and a small space heater was put in there to help. I recall sitting there at night typesetting the Krishna Book while everyone in the house was sleeping and I'd think to myself, "Here I am ... 17 years old ... should be in my senior year of High School ... but instead I'm engaged in the most important work in the universe. Shrila Prabhupada was very eager to present to the world a summary study of the Tenth Canto of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* in such a way that the reader would have no doubt that God is a Person and everything about Him and His interaction with liberated souls in the spiritual world were completely transcendental and free from any mundane material impurities. George Harrison donated \$19,000 for the first printing and wrote some Words (From Apple) in the front part of the book and Shrila Prabhupada dedicated it to his father, Gour Mohan De.

The Boston temple at 38 North Beacon Street in Allston was, for a period of time, well suited for ISKCON Press. The previous tenant made caskets and installed a small lift that went from the basement up to the ground floor in the back of the house where there was a loading dock big enough for a truck to pull up whenever I would ship out consignments to the various temples. In December of '69 when Shrila Prabhupada toured the Press facilities in Boston he told us not to wear *dhotis* when working anywhere around the machinery and so we eventually made up a simple ISKCON Press uniform consisting of green pants and a green button down shirt.

As it turned out I did the majority of typesetting on *Krishna Book* and *Nectar of Devotion* and I also worked on the unabridged *Gita*, *Shri Ishopanisad*, the ten paperbacks for each of the chapters in the Second Canto of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* as well as the rest of the *Bhagavatam* volumes as the tapes arrived, along with other paperbacks such as *Topmost Yoga*, *Shri Ishopanisad*, etc. To say the least I was kept very busy as were all of us. After all, Shrila Prabhupada was determined to save the world from Godlessness and as such there was

much to do using whatever resources we had. ↗

“Try to become rich by selling BTG. There is possibility of making profit of at least \$1,000 per month.” (Shrila Prabhupada, 6 August, 1969)

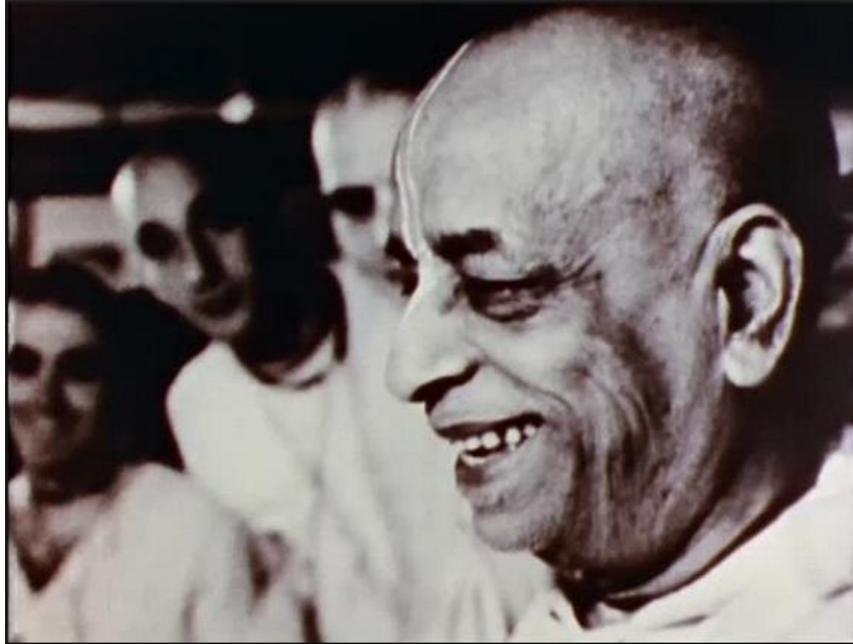
4. History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

The Cast of Characters

Devotees are not like “regular” people and those who were living at 38 North Beacon Street and working on ISKCON Press from late ‘69 to the Spring of ‘71 were not like “regular” devotees. Artists are eccentric and the ISKCON Press devotees were all artists in one way or another. Of course those who painted pictures were artists but so were those who were plying their trades, skills and talents to print books in the service of Shrila Prabhupada’s mission.

Some anecdotes about the weird, whacky and wonderful characters that comprised the staff of ISKCON Press:

There was Jadurani trying to be a good Vedic wife to Satsvarupa by heating up his lunch for when he got back from work (he had a job with the Social Services Dept. at the time) Her idea was to just throw everything that was served at lunch in the temple (rice, *chapatti*, *dal*, *subji*, salad ... i.e. the usual mid-day *prasadam*) into a pot and light the stove. When she thought the contents, which were all merged together at that point, were warm enough she’d dump it all back onto the paper plate and put it in front of him. She’d say, “Jaya Prabhu .. here’s your lunch .. I have to get back to my service” and off she’d go back to her easel. Sometimes I’d steal a glimpse of the poor fellow sitting alone in the *prasadam* room, still wearing his dark blue knit hat, and doing his best to honor his mixed together hodge podge heated meal that his wife served him. I marveled at his humility and tolerance.



Bharadwaja and Vaikunthanatha share a smile with their Guru Maharaja.

“Our life and soul is *kirtana* and presenting literature to the public at large, and I can understand that Krishna is dictating to you from within how to carry this out successfully.” -Letter 28 Jan. 1969

Sacisuta (who flipped out the first time he saw the spelling of his name go from “Sachisuta” to the more correct Sanskrit-to-English transliterated “Sacisuta”) and Vaikunthanatha seemed at times determined to annihilate each other. Tensions usually rose in the *prasadam* room. Sacisuta liked to serve the *prasadam* which meant sitting behind the pots that came from the kitchen (since we had a cafeteria style situation happening). I’m not sure which he relished more serving his fellow devotees or getting the chance to refuse Vaikunthanatha seconds. It never failed. Vaikunthanatha had a big appetite and he’d always want a second helping but Sacisuta would tell him he had to wait until it was certain that everyone had come and taken *prasadam*. Of course there was really no way of knowing whether everyone had eaten since people came and went all day long and unless they specifically asked someone to save them a plate they missed that meal. I recall two times when a physical fight broke out between those two. They were wrestling on the floor, rolling over plates, knocking over pots and dueling with ladles and serving spoons.

Pradyumna! Very brilliant and devoted in addition to also being capable of some very odd behavior. He was always asking me if a trip to New York was

coming up soon or if I had any plans to go out traveling with a van filled with incense to make some money. One time Satsvarupa called an Ishtagosti and informed everyone that we were short a thousand dollars that month and had less than a week to come up with the monthly payment for the house. He asked if anyone had any ideas and I mentioned that there were some old dusty boxes of Spiritual Sky incense in the corner of the basement as well as a few display stands and that maybe I could sort through it all and see if I could salvage anything for selling. Sure enough – After wiping off all the dust and inventorying what we had I was able to put together enough product to hit the road. Well, let's just say that Pradyumna loved getting out and taking rides. It didn't matter where or when. He just liked being in a vehicle going somewhere. And so he rode shotgun with me on that sales road trip. Turned out that he was a great help since he was born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts and knew well the central part of the State from whence the Sherbow family hailed. During that trip I learned from Pradyumna that Springfield was the home town of Timothy Leary and Dr. Seuss and the only place in the U.S. where Rolls Royces were made.

The trip was a success and I brought back almost \$1400 in cash as well as another \$500 of receivables on consignment. During that sales trip and other trips taken over the next few months Pradyumna was right there riding shotgun and giving me an earful of Dylan music Pradyumna style. At times he'd sit there with his arms raised up high, his huge blue eyes wide open and singing, "Oh Krishna I want you I want you ... I want you ... so bad yes, I want you ..." or "One should not be where one does not belong" and "When you see your neighbor, help him with his load; and don't go mistaking paradise for that house down the road." One time when Pradyumna was giving class in the temple he was talking about the temporary nature of the material energy. He quoted Donovan: "First there is a mountain, then there is no mountain, then there is."

Then there was Peter Viggiani who became the wise and wonderful Kushakratha when his head cleared of the effects of LSD. He'd sit for hours and hours and hours ... having not bathed since the last time Satsvarupa pleaded with him to take a shower with the same white shirt and black pants ... at the stapling machine guiding pamphlets through and chanting as he worked. His

chanting was very different from the norm. It would take him close to five minutes to get through one *mantra* drawing out each syllable as long as he could hold his breath. So we'd hear "Haaaaaaaaaaaa...raaaaaaaaaaaay Kriiiiiiiiiiiiiish...naaaaaaaaaaaaaa ..." over and over all day every day.

Oh I could go on and on but that's for another time and place. Suffice it to say that we were brought together by the will of the Lord to assist His pure devotee fulfill the order of his *guru maharaja*. That was our destiny and privilege. I am forever grateful to have been there. ♪

"I am very much anxious for sale of my books. It has to be organized; please think over this matter. If the books are not properly sold how I can print so many books." (Shrila Prabhupada, April 1967)

5. ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

Why the Press Moved from Boston Back to New York

My very first experience with electronic word processing came in 1982 in San Francisco. There was an ad in the S.F. Chronicle offering free training and experience in exchange for volunteer work. It was the Hunger Project. At the time they had Wang Word Processors and having a typing speed of over 100wpm they were happy to have me aboard. As I learned how to electronically delete, insert, format, page number, etc. I continued to have flashbacks of the IBM composing machine that we used to typeset in ISKCON Press some 12-13 years back.

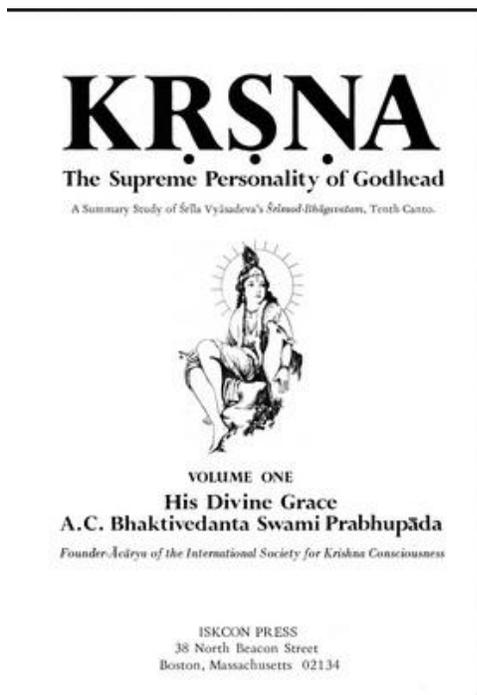
The composing machine wasn't that different from an IBM Self-Correcting typewriter except it didn't self correct. We used typing fonts just like the typewriter and in our case we had to have a special one made to insert diacritic marks. We had a font for bold and italic type as well. In order to flush/justify the right margins one had to first type a rough draft of the page. There were two wheels that dialed in colors and numbers so when typing the rough draft after each and every line the wheels would show a setting (e.g. Orange 4 or Red 2, etc.) and we'd tab over a few spaces to the right at the end of the line and type

the reading that was shown. So at the end of the page ... if there were 40 lines there would be 40 settings in a column down the right edge. Then it was time for the final draft which meant before typing each and every line ... manually setting the wheels to the color/number for that line and by doing so the machine would space the words out perfectly thus making the stopping point at right margin uniform throughout. (I never would have made it writing tech manuals).

Typesetting back then, compared to modern day desk top publishing computer technologically was, for all intents and purposes, stone age primitive laborious and tedious work. However ... if the typesetter is working on transcendental literature such as *KRISHNA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nectar of Devotion, Shri Ishopanisad, the unabridged Bhagavad-gita As It Is, etc.* the fact that one had to type everything twice was in devotee parlance ... “extra mercy / more nectar.”

We typeset on special paper. One side was glossy where the type went and the other side was a matte surface that got sprayed with a pasty type substance in the layout department when it came to mounting the pages onto galleys using a light table. The galleys were carefully proofread and if there were mistakes they would go back down to typesetting where sometimes just a few words or lines

and sometimes entire sections had to be retyped and sent back to layout to paste up the corrections.



The rush was on to finish up the Krishna Book and get the camera ready copy off to Dai Nippon in Japan. As early as February/March of '70 Shri Prabhupada was inquiring what was holding it up. Finally in June of '70 Brahmananda took it personally to Tokyo. It was to be printed in two hardbound volumes. We anxiously awaited its arrival. We anxiously awaited Brahmananda's return. The Krishna Book volumes finally did arrive. Brahmananda didn't. He never came back to

Boston. A funny thing happened to him, his brother Gargamuni, as well as

Vishnujana and Subala, when Brahmananda stopped in Los Angeles to see Shrila Prabhupada on his way back from Japan. They were all four awarded *sannyasa* by Shrila Prabhupada.

Fast forward to Spring of '71 when ISKCON Press moved to Brooklyn. Yes, the main reason was that the Press was expanding so quickly with manpower and machinery that we needed our own larger space to work and grow and it became apparent that for ISKCON Press to share the same facility as an ISKCON temple created many problems.

But there was also another reason why we felt an urgent need to move out of Boston and relocate to Brooklyn ... as near as possible to the Henry Street center. Whether it was due to a shortage of money or kitchen workers the *prasadam* situation in Boston had turned very austere. Even the Sunday feasts left much to be desired. Especially the ISKCON Press householders were upset and dissatisfied. Advaita and Uddhava refused to eat the temple lunches and began having their wives prepare their meals separately. At the same time ... in Brooklyn ... Bhavananda made sure that the *prasadam* was excellent and plentiful. Those of us who were periodically traveling back and forth were spreading the word around and the discontent continued to increase as the days and weeks went by. It became official ISKCON Press was to move from Boston to space found in an industrial building on Tiffany Place which was very close to Henry Street where the temple was located. ♪

“We must publish our books as much as possible because that will create our position. Back to Godhead should be the life and soul for the Society.” (Shrila Prabhupada, 16 March 1967)

6. History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept.

“North, East, South and West”

In August of '70 ISKCON was traumatized. A big festival was being planned at New Vrindaban to celebrate Janmastami and Vyasa Puja. The four godbrothers who were recently awarded *sannyasa* were invited. Shrila Prabhupada gave

them *sannyasa* and held the fire sacrifice in Los Angeles a few months prior to the festival in West Virginia. It would be the first opportunity for all of us on the East Coast to see and hear them. Especially those of us who had been close to Brahmananda were eager and excited.

I planned to catch a ride with Shridama and Manmohini. They purchased a van after they were married in Boston back in May of 1970 and first tried to open a center in Provincetown and then Providence, Rhode Island. Their small preaching center in Providence was right near Brown University and was doing well at the time but they decided to take a few days off and drive down to New Vrindaban for Janmashtami. Shridama agreed to first swing by the Boston center to pick up a bunch of us who wanted to go and needed a ride. Unfortunately I began to feel ill the night before and by the time they arrived I was running a fever and had all the symptoms of a bad flu.

Janmashtami and Vyasa Puja came and went and the *sannyasis* all gave lectures; however, what they were saying in those lectures were causing major concern among the Society's philosophical stalwarts such as Rupanuga, Satsvarupa, Jayadvaita, Bhagavan, et al. So stressed out they were that they felt the need to contact Shrila Prabhupada in India to tell him what the “fab four” were preaching to the assembled devotees.

As the dust finally cleared after frantic phone calls and telegrams went scrambling and rambling around the globe ... it was decided by Shrila Prabhupada that the four new *sannyasis* could no longer preach in ISKCON and unless they agreed to immediately stop what they were doing and saying they were no longer welcome in any ISKCON center. They did not even bother responding nor replying to Shrila Prabhupada and their fate was sealed. They were in Detroit at the time when their conviction came down and their sentence was carried out by the newly established GBC. The four were taken out onto the porch of the Jefferson Street temple, given maps of the United States, told which way was North, South, East and West and bid farewell.

In a letter to Hansadutta a few days later Shrila Prabhupada referred to the “poison” that had entered into our Society and said that just like Prahlada Maharaja wasn't harmed by the poison his demon father administered, similarly

if there were Prahlada like devotees in ISKCON then no harm could come. He relied on the GBC to make sure the disturbance was over and everything would get back on track by dint of following strictly the principles that Shrila Prabhupada gave us both orally and in his books and that they travel from center to center making sure everyone understood and followed the philosophy and principles of Krishna consciousness.

Apparently they felt it a priority to make their first stop Boston since it was pretty much assumed that Brahmananda was the leader of the exiled four and if there was a place that needed decontamination it was 38 North Beacon Street, Allston, Mass. starting with those who were most intimately associated with Brahmananda.



ISKCON Boston: 38 North Beacon Street, home of ISKCON Press 1970-71. That's the legendary Vishnujana Maharaja on the left with the other *sannyasis* entering the temple.

Despite the fact Brahmananda never returned to manage ISKCON Press in Boston ... nothing really changed as far as our day-to-day functioning. Satsvarupa became the main link between the Press and Shrila Prabhupada, Advaita handled all the details of purchasing supplies and overseeing production and I was handling all the orders coming in from the temples and with the shipping records accounts were kept concerning the centers paying for the books and magazines they received on credit. Sometimes Shrila Prabhupada

would have to intervene if a particular center became remiss in their BBT payments. Certain temple presidents had to eventually be warned “No more money ... no more books.”

Not long after the Janmashtami festival in the summer of '70 when Brahmananda and the other three new *sannyasis* went astray ... a contingency of the newly established GBC came to Boston. Their mission was to cleanse away any and all contamination left over from the Brahmananda days there. Imagine my surprise when they came into the office that Brahmananda was using and I still worked in ... and began hauling the desks out to the backyard. When I asked what was going on I was told that Shrila Prabhupada didn't use desks like that—he sat on the floor with a small table in front of him and that should be good enough for us. I protested that such an arrangement doesn't go well when it comes to typing but my words fell on deaf ears as did my pleas for keeping the filing cabinets alone. Nothing doing! They were determined to get rid of any and all traces and reminders of “The Big B.” Once the decor was redone they told me that many changes were about to take place as far as our daily schedules were concerned. Working would be scaled down to a minimum and Press personnel would now be spending more time out on *sankirtana*, going to both morning and evening classes as well as *kirtanas* and *aratikas*. They had special plans for me though. I was told that Shrila Prabhupada very much wanted his books placed in public libraries and also the libraries of colleges and universities and I was going to give it a try there in the Boston area. That's just what I did beginning that very day. I found an old attaché case ... lined it with velvet got some brand new shiny samples of Shrila Prabhupada's books (the few available at that time) ... procured a bunch of Order Forms and began calling around to make appointments.

Advaita, on the other hand, didn't take the changes as lightly and refused to go along with all these new rules being brought to us by our godbrothers who were now deputized GBC men. He respected the authority vested in them by Shrila Prabhupada but he wasn't going to cooperate without first making sure they were, in this situation, representing Prabhupada's wishes. When he asked them how he was supposed to keep schedules and print books when only working a few hours a day and that there was no way he could run ISKCON Press under those conditions they told him “ISKCON Press is in Japan.” Well, that's all he

needed to hear. That night he came to me saying he was ready to pack up and leave. I never saw my friend Advaita that angry. He was always so jolly and happy. I convinced him to first draft a letter to Shrila Prabhupada telling him what was happening and wait for the answer. That's just what he did and as always, Shrila Prabhupada saved the day.

To make a short story longer Shrila Prabhupada chastised the GBC men for meddling in the affairs of ISKCON Press and told them that their business was to see that all his disciples living in ISKCON centers followed the regulative principles, chanted their rounds and washed their hands after they ate. Prabhupada reassured Advaita that his work was very important and valuable and that he never intended such changes and cutbacks. As far as ISKCON Press being in Japan ... although Dai Nippon continued to print our hardbound large volumes ... there was plenty to keep the Chief 29 humming day after day ... after day. And so our work went on ... through the end of '70 and into '71. ♪

History of ISKCON Press / BBT Order Dept

7. 32 Tiffany Place, Brooklyn

Imagine a town in the middle of nowhere that suddenly grows and develops not because the railroad stops there and not because it's situated on some waterway or seaport ... but because the government decided to place a military installation there. Most of the townsfolk are employed at the base, the businesses in town all depend on the presence of the military personnel and their families and they even get their own little airport courtesy of the U.S. government. Then one day it's decided that the base is to be shut down ... relocated. Overnight the once prosperous bustling town turns into a ghost town and its survival depends on the willpower of the few who remain. Well, that's pretty much what happened to the Boston ISKCON temple when ISKCON Press moved all its manpower and machinery ... resources and assets ... from Boston to Brooklyn. But we didn't just vanish quietly one day. It took almost six weeks to transfer everyone and everything connected to the Press from Boston to 32 Tiffany Place in Brooklyn. Trips were made back and forth every other day carrying people and equipment. We even had to knock down a few

walls to get some of the heavier machinery out of the building and onto the truck.

In March of '71 Satsvarupa wrote to Prabhupada requesting that he be replaced as the President of the Boston center. Hridayananda took over in the aftermath of the move and he did a great job of keeping the center going. His enthusiasm for *sankirtana* and his great talent for giving inspiring classes kept everyone there enlivened.

On a personal note ... just before moving out of Boston a girl joined and became a *brahmacharini* there. Her name was Barbara Murphy and she seemed to be a very sincere and humble devotee and hard worker. I had been considering the possibility of getting married at the time and since Hridayananda (who had recently gotten married himself) had just become the temple president I thought it appropriate to first consult with him since Barbara was under his care. Hridayananda told me that there was no way he was going to let Barbara leave Boston and so his offer was that if I stayed behind as well and helped him manage the center then yes, I could marry her. Well, there was no way I was going to leave ISKCON Press so that was the end of that idea.

Our new location—32 Tiffany Place—was in the Cobble Hill section of Brooklyn (between Red Hook and Brooklyn Heights). Tiffany Place was one block over and ran parallel to Columbia Street which ran along the Brooklyn Harbor docks. I was familiar with the area because I sometimes drove down from Boston to load consignments onto cargo vessels there for overseas temples. In fact that's how we originally came upon the Tiffany Place location. On one of the trips Advaita came with me and we drove around looking at industrial lofts near the Henry Street temple. We noticed a “For Lease” sign in front of a building on Tiffany Place which led to contacting the owner — a man named Aaron Kahane.

My first impression of the facility was thinking that the place needed the Army Corps of Engineers to get it ready for us to move in. I mean there wasn't even a floor ... no walls ... a few broken overhead fluorescent lights ... no garage door in front ... no loading dock dilapidated staircase leading to a second floor where we planned to put the artist studios ... and I noticed a few rats running

around the dirt floor on my first walk through of the place. The good news was that there was sufficient space for our printing press (and a smaller multilith printer we had just gotten), the camera and binding equipment, folding and cutting machines ... typesetting and layout departments as well as offices for editing and my growing mail order biz.

Nara Narayana became the self-appointed foreman and to his credit ... with a lot of help from other devotees who assisted with carpentry, electrical and plumbing work, etc. ... Tiffany Place was gotten ready in record time. When it came to pouring cement for the floor ... we recruited every able bodied devotee we could find and turned it into a festive occasion with prasadam being catered by the Henry Street temple devotees. (i.e. Bhavananda's girls: Connie, Susie, Bhavarati, Lalita, et al) One time ... after a long hard day up in Boston with myself, Chandan and Nara Narayana moving some of the heavier machinery and then driving down to Brooklyn ... we arrived around 8 p.m. When we finished unloading Chandan and I were ready to drive the few blocks over to the temple, hopefully find some leftover prasadam and then go to sleep. Nara Narayana, on the other hand, decided that he wanted to install the garage door that night and somehow convinced us to stay up with him and help.

And so it went ... until ISKCON Press was finally settled in. After *KRSNA* was published we began concentrating heavily on *Nectar of Devotion*, the unabridged *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* and *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*. It was decided that each of the ten chapters of the Second Canto would be separately printed in paperback and so we produced ten books with the titles:

The First Step in God Realization

The Lord in the Heart

Pure Devotional Service, the Change of Heart

The Process of Creation

The Cause of All Causes

Purusa-sukta Confirmed

Scheduled Incarnations with Special Functions

Questions by King Pariksit

Answers by Citing the Lord's Version

Bhagavatam is the Answer to All Questions

We were printing other paperbacks as well such as *The Perfection of Yoga* and of course, our monthly *Back to Godhead* magazine required continuous effort to make sure every thirty days a new issue was ready to go to press.

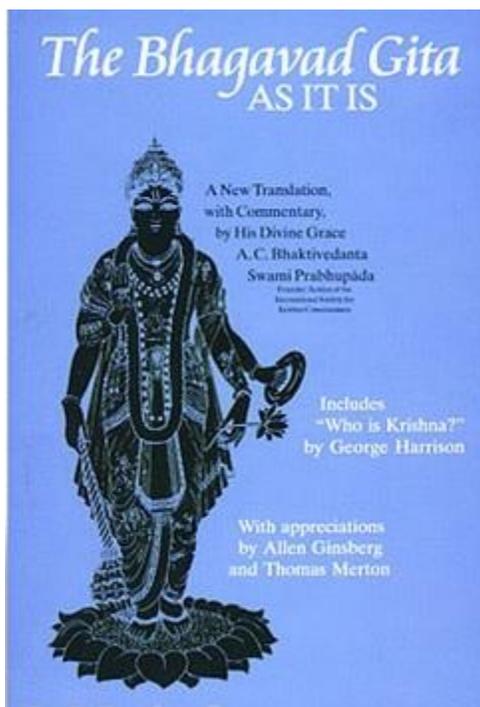
At some point in time it was also decided that all money matters concerning ISKCON Press would be handled in Los Angeles by Karanadhara. At first Advaita didn't like the idea but when Karanadhara came from L.A. for a visit and we all met him for the first time we could understand why Prabhupada was impressed with his managerial skills. Besides ... who needed the all the aggravation that comes with money management? With this set up all we had to do was keep track of purchases, submit bids and cost projections and save receipts. Although at first Prabhupada rejected the idea, eventually he agreed to allow Advaita to do some outside jobs for extra income for the Press. We ended up printing a few pamphlets and booklets for the Integral Yoga Society on West 13th Street in N.Y.C. They were very nice folks and their *guru*, Swami Satchidananda was very respectful toward Shrila Prabhupada.

Side Note: When mailing out BTG subscriptions I had to, of course, sort out the packages by zip code and bundle them according to the rules of non-profit 3rd class bulk rate mail. When they were ready to go I took them to the main Post Office in downtown Brooklyn which was the same post office used by Jehovah's Witnesses for mailing out their two publications: *Awake* and *Watchtower*. When I would see the tens of thousands of parcels they brought in by the truckloads I would become very envious and hoped that someday our BTG subscriptions would match or even exceed their volume. Hey – the race ain't over yet. ☞ (published at <http://iskconbookdistribution.com/history-of-iskcon-press-and-bbt-mail-order/>)

Shrila Prabhupada's first book published in America was the condensed Bhagavad-gita As It Is from Collier, a subsidiary of MacMillan. Later MacMillan published the unabridged edition. Let's go back to 26 2nd Ave. for the story of ...

The Macmillan Miracle

Satyaraja Dasa



The *Bhagavad-gita* was important to Shrila Prabhupada. He saw it as the perfect book to convey Krishna consciousness, as it consists of the Lord's own words and His interactions with His loving devotee. In 1939, just seven years after Prabhupada was initiated by his spiritual master, he wrote a lengthy introduction to the book in English, presaging his full translation and commentary, which appeared soon after he began his mission in the West.

When Prabhupada arrived in New York in 1965, he gave priority to his work on the Gita. In India he had already completed a translation, spanning well over a thousand pages, but it was stolen. In March 1966, Prabhupada was adjusting to life in the Western world when he met with another loss: his typewriter, cassette recorder, and several books were taken from him. But he was resilient and determined to complete his work. In 1967 he finished the new manuscript, again over a thousand pages, and resolved to get a major publisher so that his message would be heard throughout the world.

At the time, Allen Ginsberg, famous poet of the Beat Generation, was visiting the New York temple, and he was enjoying a friendly relationship with Shrila Prabhupada. Since Ginsberg was an experienced published author, Prabhupada asked him to show the manuscript to his benefactors, which Ginsberg did. But they were unimpressed, claiming the book had little commercial value.

Prabhupada then gave the manuscript to Rayarama Dasa, an early disciple with some experience in the publishing world. Rayarama, too, was unsuccessful in his attempts, his contacts explaining their hesitation in much the same way that Ginsberg's did.

The Miracle Begins

Enter Brahmananda Dasa (Bruce Scharf), one of Prabhupada's earliest disciples. He vividly relates the story as if it were yesterday, though it was more than forty years ago.

"I didn't know anything about publishing," he admits. "But Prabhupada put the manuscript in my hands, saying, 'You must get this published.' So I knew what I had to do."

What he didn't know was how to do it. If Ginsberg and Rayarama couldn't get the book published, how would he?

"I bought a couple of books on publishing, and I was about to take a publishing course at New York University—I just didn't know what to do. Still, Prabhupada wanted me to get the book published, and that was that."

Around this time, the devotees had released the "Happening" album, an assortment of devotional songs sung by Prabhupada with musical accompaniment. They had placed an ad for the record in the *Village Voice* and were receiving orders from various parts of the East Coast.

One such order came from uptown Manhattan, relatively close to the little storefront serving as a temple for Prabhupada and his early disciples. Brahmananda brought the letter to his master.

"Look, Swamiji [as Prabhupada was then called]. It's an order from Macmillan. They're one of the biggest publishers in the world."

Prabhupada gazed knowingly into his disciple's eyes and gave the following directives: "Do not mail out this order as we do with others. Instead, bring the record to Macmillan's offices and hand deliver it to the person who sent us the

letter.”

Brahmananda nodded, aware that Krishna was using him as an instrument.

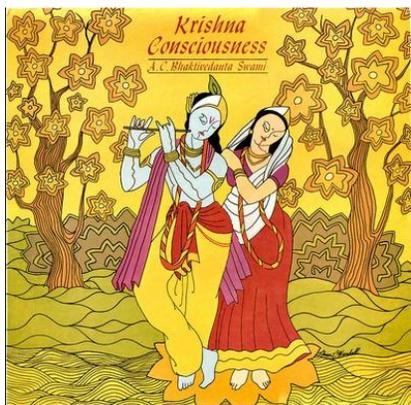
“When you deliver the album,” Prabhupada continued, “tell them that you are a disciple of a guru from India and that he has translated the Bhagavad-gita. They will publish it. Do not worry.”

Brahmananda was stunned. Prabhupada seemed so confident. There was no doubt the book would get published-and by Macmillan! One couldn't do much better than that.

Wading in the Ocean of Nectar

The next day, dressed in suit and tie, Brahmananda made his way up to the Macmillan skyscraper at 866 Third Avenue, just off 52nd Street. His expectations as large as the building itself, he was disappointed when he learned that the order for the album had come from a clerk in the mailroom.

“This really had nothing to do with the publishing company-it was just a simple worker who had some interest in mantras and meditation.”



So Brahmananda dutifully delivered the album and had pretty much given up hope that his teacher's Gita would get published. Just then, in the midst of polite small talk with the clerk, a young executive happened to appear, hoping to collect his mail. The clerk introduced him to Brahmananda.

“This is James O'Shea Wade, our senior editor.”

Brahmananda seized the moment.

“I am a disciple of a guru from India,” he said, trying to repeat Prabhupada's words verbatim. “He has translated the Bhagavad-gita.”

“What?” Wade responded, incredulously. “We've just published a full line of spiritual books, and we were looking for a Bhagavad-gita to fill out the set.”



Brahmananda's mouth dropped open. Though at a loss for words himself, he contemplated the potency of Prabhupada's: "They will publish it. Do not worry."

Wade then broke the awkward silence.

"You bring in the manuscript tomorrow," he offered, "and we'll publish it, sight unseen."

Brahmananda raced back down to the storefront and told Prabhupada the news. In his own inimitable way, Prabhupada was nonchalant, as though he knew what would transpire before it happened.

Firsthand Corroboration

Now, are these the memories of an over-zealous disciple, an exaggerated footnote in ISKCON's forty-year history? I decided to find out.

I found James Wade, and he confirmed the events in question. He remembered the incident with tremendous clarity, supporting Brahmananda's story. And he offered an addendum.

"I vividly remember the stir caused in our rather sedate and boring office the day the Swami came to visit, accompanied by followers in orange robes."

Apparently, Prabhupada himself brought the manuscript the day after Brahmananda's brief visit to Macmillan.

Wade shared his thoughts about Prabhupada's spirituality.

"I remember the Swami as being a very imposing and striking figure, with a powerful spiritual aura. His like had never before been seen in the Macmillan offices. Around that time we also published Alan Watts and John Bleibtreu,

who was involved in the spiritual and communal movement called Arica. Macmillan had a tradition of publishing books about spirituality and religion at that time. I think that ended not long after I left to become the editor-in-chief of the now defunct World Publishing Company. But the Swami was special. That was clear.”

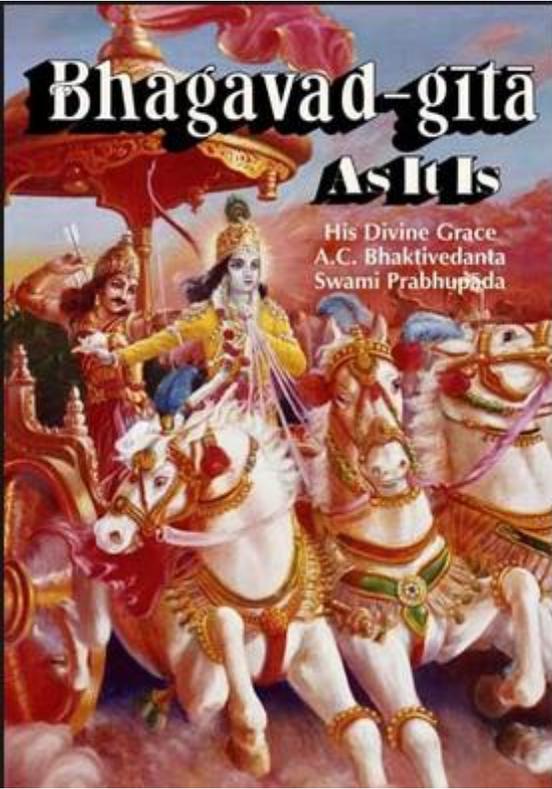
I asked Wade to elaborate on that fateful meeting.

“Our office was a rather austere, coolly modern place as far as decor. I remember having some apprehension about how comfortable the Swami would feel in this rather alien setting, but it turned out that he was a man who was at peace and at home in any environment. I remember him as a rather tall man, physically imposing. But of course, he wasn’t, being rather small in stature and not at all daunting. Quiet, modest, and surrounded by a kind of stillness, a peacefulness that was, well, welcoming. I can’t think of a more precise word. He was in the world and, at the same time, not of it. He knew that we live in a world of illusion-something science has also taught us, as we go from sub-atomic particles and quantum mechanics to string theory. I remember that he wanted the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* to get the widest possible exposure in the US. As I recall, things like the Hare Krishna movement were in the very early stages. Alternative spirituality-ranging from Zen to Tibetan Buddhism, for example-had not then touched the minds and spirits of people the way such alternatives do today for so many.”

James Wade was senior editor at Macmillan from 1965 to 1969. But in his few years at their offices, he made history by publishing a pure devotee’s edition of the *Bhagavad-gita*. The abridged version came out first, in 1968, and because of seeds James Wade planted, Macmillan published Prabhupada’s unabridged *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* in 1972.

A Translation with Spiritual Power

Shrila Prabhupada’s translation and commentary are not merely his own; they bring to bear the insights of his predecessors in disciplic succession. And so he titled his edition “As It Is.” The name boldly announces to his readers that this is not yet another interpretation but rather the original message of the book’s initial speaker: Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Accordingly, Prabhupada’s Gita was the first English edition to bring people to Krishna



consciousness, to make them devotees of Krishna, which is the book's intended purpose (see Bg. 18.65).

Prabhupada's *Gita* went on to become the most important edition in the modern world, often outselling both popular and scholarly translations. Claiming millions of readers in some fifty-five languages, from Polish to Japanese, German to Azerbaijani, Danish to Croatian, English to numerous Indian languages, Shрила Prabhupada's *Gita* is a phenomenon. It can be found in homes, bookstores, research libraries, and academic institutions around the world.

The history of Prabhupada's meeting with Macmillan shows that James Wade, then a senior editor, served as an instrument in the hands of Krishna, who had already signed the contract. ♪

Printed in Back to Godhead May/June 2008

Shрила Prabhupada Uvacha: Please accept my blessings and offer the same to all your Godbrothers for your doing the respective duties nicely. I am in due receipt of the copy of Back to Godhead dated 15th February 1967 and I am glad that it is nicely done. The only defect is that picture which is wrongly put there without asking me. There was no need of interpretations and why you have interpreted the picture as one has to be naked before the Lord to become perfect? We have no interpretation in any of the verses in the Gita or Shrimad Bhagavatam. They were not fictitious and therefore there is no need of interpretation. Krishna actually took away the dresses of the Gopis and actually He saw the girls naked. There is no interpretation there. The girls of Vrindaban of the same age like Krishna wanted Krishna as their husband. In India the girls are married earlier by ten years at least and thus the girls who were of the same age were married although they wished Krishna as their husband. Krishna fulfilled their wishes by this pastime. (Letter to BTG Editor Rayarama dasa, (28 February 1967)

From the Memories series, the legendary Shyamasundara dasa explains ...

How George Harrison Paid for the Krishna Book

Shyamasundara dasa



I had met George Harrison and became his friend, and then subsequently the other devotees—there were six of us—went over to his home and had *kirtan* one Sunday. And he got into it, it was such an incredible ecstatic *kirtan*. It went on for hours. There used to be a recording of that. I suppose that it is long lost now. George and everybody took turns playing the

instruments. George had a white harmonium that had foot pedals. That was just after his Maharishi days, and he was all dressed in Indian clothes. So, anyway, we had this long *kirtan*, and at the end of it George said, “You know, we ought to make a record.” Okay. So we got together one night soon thereafter and just cut a track and it became a very big smash.

Prabhupada used to love to get our record sales reports. And he’d call up or telegram congratulations. He would always—even from far away—and this is his management skill, keep us going over there. He would inculcate a kind of transcendental competition among devotees: “So-and-so is doing this, so what are you doing?” It was never bitter or anything like that. So we always tried to please Shрила Prabhupada the most by outdoing our Godbrothers and –sisters. So the record was cut and this was kind of the way that it worked out. Prabhupada really wanted to come to London so badly after that. The record was out and we were becoming number one all over Europe. But we kept saying, “You can’t come yet Shрила Prabhupada, there’s no pace to stay!” But finally he just announced, “I am coming.” So we raced around, and I asked John Lennon if we could stay out there. And he said, “Sure, why not?” He said,

You can all stay out there and help me work on my house.”

Prabhupada treated George like an old friend. I spent some time with George this summer. I’m talking 1999 now. And George has reached a very high level of spiritual development, I am happy to say. He chants Hare Krishna every day. And he is totally serene, as he has accepted life as it is. He has actually achieved a much higher level of self-realization than I can ever hope to achieve. He is peaceful and serene to a degree that is rare in a person, and at such a young age—same age as I am. Prabhupada benefited him so much. Prabhupada knew the buttons to push and the ones not to push because of their natural hesitancy to have anything public to do with Prabhupada, because they would see us then as just going after their money or their fame and not giving them the real thing. So I tried, and Prabhupada by his example, showed me the way to treat them is like this: “Always keep giving them stuff, and never ask them for anything.”



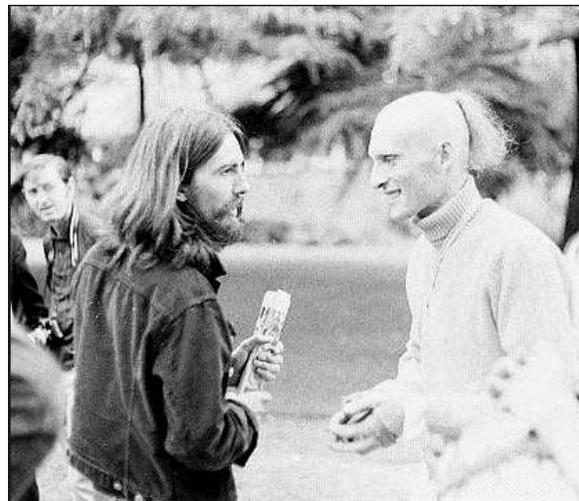
l. to r.: George Harrison, Shyamasundar and HH Mukunda Goswami at the Samadhi of Shrila Jiva Goswami, Shri Shri Radha-Damodara, Vrindavana.

Although one time Prabhupada did call me into his room and said, “You know we only have one book. We have *Bhagavad-gita*. That’s it. And maybe there

was *Nectar of Devotion*. *Krishna* book has been finished for some time, and I got news today that it is ready for publication. How can we publish? We need this book.” He said, “I want you to go and ask George for the money for this book.” So then I said, “Oh no, Prabhupada. You know the reason that we have gotten this far with George, and he has helped us too much to date, is that I’ve never asked him for anything. I always wait until he offers. And Prabhupada said, “Yes, but we really need this.” And I asked, “Well. How much is it?” He said, “\$19,000.” In those days that was like saying \$100,000. Whew. So I said, “I don’t really think it is a good idea, Prabhupada.” And he said, “Yes, yes it is. You’ll see. *Krishna* will help you. Watch this.”

So the next day we had made arrangements to go look at marble. George had said that he would donate a new slab of marble for the altar. To help us select this marble, he had called on his friend David Wynn who is the sculptor laureate of England, a very famous sculptor who had designed the coinage and who had done the famous busts of Queen Elizabeth and the Beatles, too. And so we went with David Wynn to the marble yards, and afterwards we went to David Wynn’s house for dinner. And all this time I was trying to screw up my courage. Because I had one mission that day, “How am I going to ask George for the money?” Here he has given us a three- or four-thousand pound slab of marble. How can I ask him for something more on top of that today?”

So we had dinner, and we were all finished eating and it was getting late at night. It was dark. And it was a long way from where I had to go in London. And George had to go all the way out to some place in the suburbs. So finally I just did it. I said, “George ... Shрила Prabhupada asked me to ask you if you would donate the money for the *Krishna* book. And I explained what the *Krishna* book was and his face was growing grimmer and grimmer. And I could see this whole thing just passing through his face thinking, Oh, man, they are just another one of those groups. Here it comes.” Then the room went quiet for a moment while he



thought about it and fixed me with this really belligerent stare. And suddenly all the lights went out in the house and *BWAM!* This bolt of lightning hit the house. True story. The whole house shook. The sound and the light were simultaneous. And we sat in silence for some minutes after that, stunned.

The lights came back on and I looked over at George, and he had this huge grin on his face. And he said, “Well, what can I do after that?” And he came the next day and he talked with Prabhupada about it. 🌀

Soon afterwards George hand wrote the following Preface for the book Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead by His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Words from Apple

Everybody is looking for Krishna.

Some don't realize that they are, but they are.

KṚṢṂA is GOD, the source of all that exists, the Cause of all that is, was, or ever will be.

As GOD is unlimited, HE has many Names.

Allah-Buddha-Jehova-Rama: ALL are KṚṢṂA, all are ONE.

God is not abstract; He has both the impersonal and the personal aspects to His personality, which is SUPREME, ETERNAL, BLISSFUL, and full of KNOWLEDGE. As a single drop of water has the same qualities as an ocean of water, so has our consciousness the qualities of GOD’S consciousness ... but through our identification and attachment with material energy (physical body, sense pleasures, material possessions, ego, etc.) our true TRANSCENDENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS has been polluted, and like a dirty mirror it is unable to reflect a pure image.

With many lives our association with the TEMPORARY has grown. This

impermanent body, a bag of bones and flesh, is mistaken for our true self, and we have accepted this temporary condition to be final.

Through all ages, great SAINTS have remained as living proof that this non-temporary, permanent state of GOD CONSCIOUSNESS can be revived in all living Souls. Each soul is potentially divine.

Krishna says in *Bhagavad Gita*: “Steady in the Self, being freed from all material contamination, the yogi achieves the highest perfectional stage of happiness in touch with the Supreme Consciousness.” (VI, 28)

YOGA (a scientific method for GOD (SELF) realization) is the process by which we purify our consciousness, stop further pollution, and arrive at the state of Perfection, full KNOWLEDGE, full BLISS.

If there's a God, I want to see Him. It's pointless to believe in something without proof, and Krishna Consciousness and meditation are methods where you can actually obtain GOD perception. You can actually see God, and hear Him, play with Him. It might sound crazy, but He is actually there, actually with you.

There are many yogic Paths—Raja, Jnana, Hatha, Kriya, Karma, Bhakti—which are all acclaimed by the MASTERS of each method.

SWAMI BHAKTIVEDANTA is as his title says, a BHAKTI Yogi following the path of DEVOTION. By serving GOD through each thought, word and DEED, and by chanting HIS Holy Names, the devotee quickly develops God-consciousness. By chanting

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama
Rama Rama, Hare Hare

One inevitably arrives at KRISHNA Consciousness. (The proof of the pudding is in the eating!)

I request that you take advantage of this book KṚṢṆA, and enter into its understanding. I also request that you make an appointment to meet your God now, through the self liberating process of YOGA (UNION) and GIVE PEACE A CHANCE.) R

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE (KRISHNA) HARI BOL.
George Harrison 31/3/70

**Apple Corps Ltd.
3, Savile Row London W1**

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ISKCON Press
38 North Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02134 R

Shrila Prabhupada's Letter to George Harrison

**Los Angeles
16 February, 1970
70-02-16**

**Shriman George Harrison
c/o Apple Record Co.
London, England**

My Dear George,

Please accept my blessings. I am so much obliged to you for your valued cooperation in spreading my movement of Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world. I beg to acknowledge receipt herewith of your contribution of \$19,000 (nineteen thousand dollars) for publication of my book, Krishna, now going to the press within the week.

Please note that every farthing of this money will be employed in the service of the Lord, and the Lord is so kind and grateful that He will bestow upon you benediction at

least ten times more than that you have done for Him. It does not, however, mean that Lord Krishna is like a business man, and He bestows benediction when He is profited by our service. The Lord is full in Himself; He does not require our service, but if we render service unto Him in love and devotion, such action enriches our very existence.

The example in this connection is given that when a man decorates his face, he does not feel much enjoyment because he cannot see his own face. But he enjoys his beautiful face when it is reflected on the mirror. In other words, when a living entity, by rendering service to the Lord, feels happy, the Lord enjoys the situation.*

Under the pressure of illusory energy, especially in the age of "Kali," all the people of the world are unhappy; but I am sure if they take to this simple chanting of the Holy Name of the Lord

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

under the guidance of Lord Chaitanya, certainly they will be happy.

I know that both you and John are very good souls. Both of you are pledged to do something for the peace of the world. By the grace of Krishna, you have already realized to some extent about the necessity and importance of Hare Krishna movement in the world. Similarly, if John also does so, it will be a great event.

John and his wife were very kind upon me when I was staying at Tittenhurst Park as their guests. I always prayed for them to Krishna for understanding this great movement. Please inform him this message on my behalf. I have dreamt something very nice about John which I shall disclose in proper time. In the meantime, please ask him to cooperate with this movement as you are doing, and he will be very happy.

Please try to understand the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness in a nutshell: Every living entity has a dormant propensity to love somebody other who is very excellent in his opinion. Everyone of us therefore wants to love somebody else, attracted by his different varieties of opulences. Somebody loves some other either on account of riches, power, popularity, beauty, knowledge, or renunciation. But this loving propensity for somebody else is fundamentally meant for the supremely rich, powerful, popular, beautiful, wise, and unattached Lord.

Everyone is hankering after loving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but none of them has the right information. By Consciousness movement we want to broadcast this information that if anyone reposes his loving propensity upon, he will immediately feel full satisfaction, as much as he feels full satisfaction by supplying food in the stomach. Otherwise, everyone will be frustrated.

Please try to understand this simple philosophy by critical analysis, and I hope by the grace of Krishna you will be a great servant of His in fulfilling His desire that He may be known by His Holy Name in every village and every city all over the world, and thus the people will become happy.

Hope this will meet you in good health and shall be very much pleased to hear from you.

Your ever well-wisher,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
ACBS:db R

**Shrila Prabhupada's beautiful example of the mirror is from the prayers of Prahlada Maharaja for pacifying Lord Nrisimhadeva, SB 7.9.11: "The Supreme Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is always fully satisfied in Himself. Therefore when something is offered to Him, the offering, by the Lord's mercy, is for the benefit of the devotee, for the Lord does not need service from anyone. To give an example, if one's face is decorated, the reflection of one's face in a mirror is also seen to be decorated."*

Pradyumna Prabhu was pretty much everyone's favorite elder devotee, including mine. He was Prabhupada's first Sanskrit editor, and he traveled with His Divine Grace around the world many times. He was the only disciple whom Shrila Prabhupada honored with the title "Panditji" because "no one can be a pandit if he doesn't know Sanskrit." Thanks to the stunning Memories series of interviews conducted by Shriman Siddhanta dasa Prabhu, we have the benefit of ...

Reminiscences of a Pandit

Spoken Memories of Pradyumna dasa

"It's Paul from Montreal"

I arrived in New York around midnight and walked through the lower Eastside to 26 2nd Avenue. After I repeatedly knocked on the door, someone finally let me in. The place was packed with *brahmacharis* sleeping on the floor and I couldn't get to sleep very well. At around two or three o'clock I figured, "Swamiji must be up. I'll get up and go see him since I can't sleep anyway. I tiptoed over, opened the door, went through the garden up the stairs to Prabhupada's apartment, and knocked. A voice said, "Who is there?" I said, "It's Paul from Montreal." He said, "Oh." I had already written two or three letters to Swamiji. Swamiji opened the door and said, "Come in." And I went into his room.

Prabhupada lived very simply. He had a metal trunk from India with a cloth over it and a couple of books on it. He sat on a blanket behind the trunk. He said, "How are things in Montreal?" In this way he talked with me and at that time I did my first personal service, which was weighing Prabhupada's correspondence. He had a small scale that you held up to see how much it would cost to send the letter. Hold it up. How many cents will this letter go for?

After a while I said, "When I came I thought that you'd be up at three o'clock." He said, "I got up at one this morning. I am up since one working." At that first meeting with Prabhupada I asked if I could be initiated, and he said, "Oh yes,

we can initiate you tomorrow or the next day.” ॠ

Learning Sanskrit

I began to learn Sanskrit on my own. In the Montreal temple, three Indian gentlemen used to pay a little money and then take prasadam with us, and every time they came I would ask them about the Devanagari letters. One of them brought a little grammar book for me and I began to learn Devanagari.

When Prabhupada got sick in the summer of '67, he was to go back to India and everyone went to see him in New York. At that time Achyutananda and I were poking around in a bookstore in New York and we found a book called *Shri Brahma-samhita*. It had a picture of Shрила Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati in the front and it was published by Bhakti Vilas Tirtha of the Chaitanya Math. I thought, “This looks like the same teachings.” We purchased it and went back to 26 2nd Avenue. Prabhupada was weak and he was sitting in his room most of the time. Devotees were letting him rest, but we went in, paid our obeisances, and gave him this book. I said, “We found this in the bookstore, is it bona fide?” Prabhupada opened it and said, “Ah my Guru Maharaja.” We said, “Can we read it?” He said, “Oh yes, it’s a very good book to read.” That particular edition of *Brahma-samhita* had Sanskrit in Devanagari characters, then the translation and then the purport in English. But it had no transliteration. Later during that summer, devotees were singing the Govindam prayers, but it was sometimes hard to hear the words. When the Govindam tapes were released, I thought, “I have this *Brahma-samhita*, maybe I can learn the characters, maybe I can transliterate this.” So I began to transliterate and I sent about half of the *Brahma-samhita* transliterations to Prabhupada. Prabhupada wrote back an extraordinary letter saying, “This is wonderful. I’ll make copies of his for all our devotees to use. Please complete doing this. You can do a great service for the Society if you do more work like this.” That was the beginning:

Los Angeles

13 January, 1968

68-01-13

My Dear Pradyumna,

Please accept my blessings. I thank you for your nice letter of Jan. 13, 1968. Your eagerness to render service to

the Lord is very much appreciated by me. Please get the copy of Shri Shri Brahma Samhita and begin the transliteration. I think you know the diacritical marks for transliteration; please use them.

Your ever well-wisher

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami



That's Pradyumna-da on the left smiling blissfully. Rupanuga's son Ekendra is next to Prabhupada. I was sitting behind my spiritual master and rapt in prayer. By his countenance it was as though His Divine Grace was listening. (At NY's LaGuardia Airport, 1971)

Vaishnava Etiquette

I was with Prabhupada many times when he met some of his Godbrothers. He treated them very respectfully. The etiquette is that you are supposed to treat the Godbrother of the *guru* in the same way that you treat the *guru*, and you are supposed to treat your senior Godbrothers—those who were initiated before you—in a particular way as well. That's Vaishnava etiquette. In the Gaudiya Math there's generally an emphasis on senior Godbrothers, and Prabhupada

also observed this.

One time in Montreal, an Indian scholar came to see Prabhupada. Janardana and I were there, and I was eager to hear from Prabhupada. I edged forward to get close because I wanted to catch every word—and I was a little ahead of Janardana. Janardana was not only older in age to me, but he had been initiated before me. He was initiated at the first initiation that Prabhupada did in New York. Prabhupada immediately said, “Ah, he is your elder Godbrother. You should not sit in front of him.” I was ahead of him, a little closer to Prabhupada. Prabhupada said, “You should move back, he is senior to you—a senior Godbrother, that is etiquette. Just like my Godbrother Tirtha Maharaja, he used to be called Kunjada. Actually his name was Kunjabehari dasa, but everyone called him Kunjada. The ‘*da*’ means ‘like the older brother or like the uncle.’ Everyone called him Kunjada because he was one of the most senior Godbrothers. Similarly, Janardana is your *da*. He is your elder brother, so you should give him respect. You should not sit before him.” That was in ’67 or early ’68 in Montreal. ✍

The Word Processor



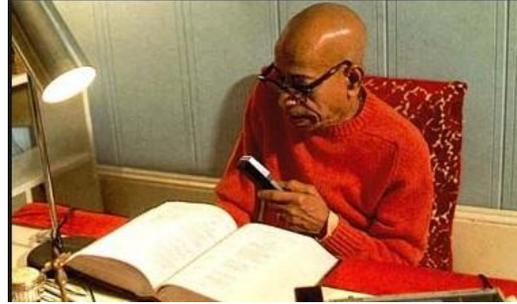
As soon as I was married, my wife and I went to see Prabhupada. When someone was married, Prabhupada generally said, “Well now that you are married, what’s your service going to be?” Immediately he gave us a very heavy service. He said, “We’re having ISKCON Press in New York, and we need a word processor for my books. You find out about an IBM word processor that can do the Sanskrit diacritic marks. Please ask how much it will cost, and since you are working, pay for it. I made inquiries, and we purchased a top-of-the line word processor. When it was delivered, Prabhupada said, “So your wife will type. We will send tapes, she will word process, you will edit and New York will print.”

The first book was *The Nectar of Devotion*. We had this word processor in our bedroom. I went out to work in the day and she would be typing away at *The Nectar of Devotion*. I’d edit it and we’d send it to New York. We had this mail traffic between New York and Columbus (Ohio). Then we started

Ishopanishad, and we were doing *Ishopanishad* back and forth. Then it got to be too much because the press moved to Boston in the fall of 1969. We were told, “You have to come to where the press is.” I was President of the Columbus Temple at that time but I gave that up on December 11, 1969, when we took a plane to Boston with the word processor on our laps. We became part of ISKCON Press in Boston. I did some English editing at first, but later I just did the Sanskrit. Sanskrit editing means that I would just put the correct diacritic marks on the Sanskrit words, and I would spell them correctly according to the international system. I would also adjust Prabhupada’s grammar in the word-for-word translations. Also, if something was missing I would send a lot of queries. “What about this, what about that, is this okay?” I had a lot of letters from Prabhupada. “Yes you can do this, you can do this, that is okay.” I also transliterated Sanskrit prayers, and when Prabhupada said, “Now we should do a calendar every year, for ten years or so I did the calendar for ISKCON, the almanac. Prabhupada would send me his almanac and I would translate it and then send it to LA where it was printed.” ♪

The Big Four

Prabhupada always considered that four books—*Bhagavad-gita*, *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, *Nectar of Devotion* and *Chaitanya-charitamrita*—were the necessary books. Outside of that, everything was extra. Once we were in Prabhupada’s room in New York when



Radhaballabha asked Prabhupada,” So after you finish the *Bhagavatam*, what books would you like to translate?” Prabhupada said, “Oh maybe Jiva Goswami’s *Sat Sandharbha*, or *Vedanta Sutra* or *Bhagavad-gita*. They’re so many.” Someone spoke up, “But Prabhupada, you already did the *Bhagavad-gita*.” Prabhupada said, “There are so many commentaries. We did a small part. Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, everyone has given a *Gita* commentary. We could do many *Gitas*, not just one.” So he had a conception like that. ♪

Hari Nama Chintamani

Once Gaurasundar Prabhu and I were sitting in Prabhupada’s room in Hawaii and Prabhupada said, “Now you boys both know Bengali. So why don’t you

translate some of the important works of Bhaktivinoda Thakura like *Chaitanya Shikshamrita* or *Jaiva Dharma*?” He considered these important books. Some other books he did not consider so important.

I used to carry *Hari Nama Chintamani* around with me because I liked reading about the offenses. I usually had to lecture about the offenses because I’d do the initiations, and at every initiation Prabhupada would say, “Now, explain the ten offenses.” So I’d recite the ten offenses. One time Prabhupada was doing a *bhajana* recording in his room, and I took out a book I had with me. Prabhupada said, “What is that book?” I said *Hari Nama Chintamani*.” He said, “Why are you still reading that? That’s not a very important book.” About the offenses he said, “You’re still learning the offenses? Finish.” ☞

The Ashtatika-Bhagavatam

Prabhupada had a few books in his room. He had two editions of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* complete with eight commentaries. Originally there was one edition of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* with eight commentaries that was published in the last (19th) century. It’s called the *Ashtatika-Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada liked that edition. Those *tikas* (commentaries) by Shridhara Swami, Viraraghavacharya, Jiva Goswami, Vishvantha Chakravarti Thakura—and so forth—are considered authoritative. That was the *Bhagavatam* that Prabhupada used for his translation work. Prabhupada also had one other edition of the *Bhagavatam* with three commentaries, as well as the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu*, and the original *Gita* published by Gaudiya Math with Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura’s commentary. Prabhupada liked Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura’s commentary on the *Gita*, and several of them were important in Prabhupada’s own devotional process. One commentary was about obeying the order of the spiritual master, and Prabhupada said that when he read that he realized something about his spiritual master. He said, “This portion of this commentary was very important for me.” But for *Bhagavad-gita* he primarily used the commentary of Baladeva Vidyabhushana which is very complete. ☞

The Goswami Ideal

Prabhupada said, “The Goswamis never thought about being published. That’s their attitude.” That was a shock to me, but if you look at all the Goswami

books, in the beginning there is a line: “For my friend Sanatana Goswami or Rupa Goswami.” The Goswamis would write for friends, and afterwards their works were sent to Bengal to be copied. That was the way books were published in those days. But in the beginning they were written down for the pleasure of a few friends. Prabhupada said, “That’s the Goswami ideal. They weren’t thinking, “I’m an author. I’ve been published.” ☞

“I Read My Own Books”

He read his books. Whenever he traveled on the plane his secretary would bring him a *Bhagavatam*. Prabhupada would say, “Where is the book?” He would read the book and think, read, chant and think. He would read *Gita*, or *Bhagavatam* or *Nectar of Devotion*. He’d say, “See, I read my own books. Who reads their own books? People don’t read their own books. Therefore, they were not written by me. They were written by Krishna.” ☞

The Final Days

Prabhupada called me when he was getting a massage. He asked me, “So in my absence you can complete *Shrimad Bhagavatam*?” I said, “Yes, Prabhupada, I’ll try to do that.” “Yes,” he said. “OK, good.” I said, “If I have any questions, I could ask Shridhara Maharaja?” He said, “Yes, you can ask him questions, yes, that’s good.” I was right there in the Krishna-Balarama Temple in Vrindavana, but I wasn’t around Prabhupada too much in the final weeks—because for the final part of the *Bhagavatam*, Prabhupada asked me to do verse translations, and that took all my time. I would read all the commentaries, translate the verse, do the synonyms, and then read it to



Prabhupada. Then we would hold the microphone to his lips, and he would dictate the purport. That’s how the last volume was produced, and that kept me occupied because I had to have everything ready to read. It would take a lot to make sure it was right.

After I read it I would go back to my room to work on the next verses. Anytime Prabhupada was ready to do more, I had to be ready. I couldn’t say, “I’m not ready,” because that would mean a *Bhagavatam* verse and purport that the people wouldn’t have. So for the last weeks, that’s basically what I was doing. I was always in the compound but I was always translating as fast

as I could. ✍

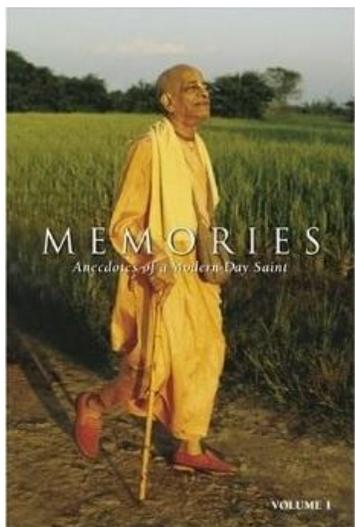
These remembrances by Pradyumna Panditji were recorded on Tape 16 of the Memories DVD set, and are published in Siddhanta Das's Memories—Anecdotes of a Modern Day Saint, volume two.

Pradyumna

Pradyumna, Pradyumna
Pradyumna Prabhu walking in the park.
Pradyumna walking in the park.
Yellow and blue, shaved head Prabhu,
Walking in the park through the families.
Walking through the families.
The grass is green, bright green,
Where Pradyumna walks blue and yellow,
Chanting on his beads, walking,
Walking through the families,
In Montreal, walking to the temple,
Prabhu walking so nicely, walking
To the temple among the children,
Who do not notice that he is chanting,
Chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
On his beads as he walks, Krishna
Krishna, to the temple Hare Hare,
Straight to the temple Hare Rama
Hare Rama Rama Rama Krsihna kirtana,
Hare Hare walking to Krishna's temple,
Yellow and blue on a green field
A Brahmachary flag for Lord Krishna.
But still the people do not sing
Do not follow him, the children do not
Laugh and dance with the flowers at his feet
How can they ignore the call, Krishna's call,
The urge to sing his name, the urge
To follow Pradyumna Prabhu, a devotee
Of the Lord, Pradyumna Prabhu,
Walking in the park, Pradyumna! ✍

By Damodara dasa (Dan Clark) Printed in Back to Godhead, c. 1967

Shrila Prabhupada invested an extraordinary amount of energy into his artists because His Divine Grace envisioned the power of fine art to impart Krishna consciousness. Guru Maharaja called them, “windows to the Spiritual Kingdom.” Many became devotees just by seeing the temple masterpieces of talented devotees ... including your Editor in 1967-8.



(L) Siddhanta dasa’s *Memories*, vol 1. (R) Baradwaja dasa, devotional artist and musician extraordinaire is on the left. In the middle is Siddhanta Prabhu, who conducted the *Memories* interviews. All eyes are on Shrila Prabhupada who blesses the world with the fragrant flowers of devotion.

Thus Spake Krishna’s Artists

“In Christian religion they have got pictures like the Crucifixion and a few similar others. In the Buddhist religion they have got the picture of the Lord Buddha. In Mohammedan religion they have got picture of Mecca Medina, and I do not know what is the picture in the Jewish religion. But so far as our Krishna Consciousness is concerned, we can supply millions of pictures of Krishna, Vishnu, and Their multi-incarnations, as well as Their transcendental Pastimes. So we have to create a unique position for this paper, at least in the western world.” (Letter to Brahmananda. 5 February, 1969)

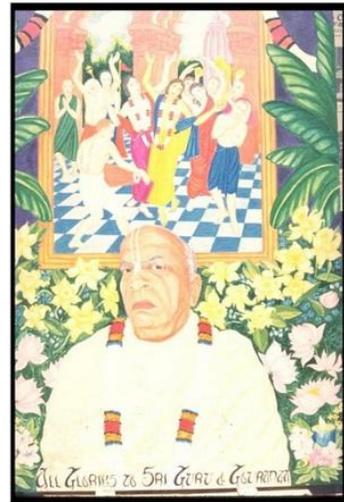
Thus Spake Govinda dasi:

“That Is Required”

Gary and I were well situated in Texas when we were mystically, incredibly drawn to the Haight-Ashbury area 1,500 miles away just a couple of months before Prabhupada arrived there. In San Francisco we saw some flyers that said, “The Swami is coming to town. Chant and be high forever,” this sort of thing. Gary looked at one of these flyers and said, “When the Swami comes to town we’ll go see him and we’ll do whatever he says to do.” We went to Frederick Street and learned about the classes—and Mukunda dasa who later became Mukunda Goswami—arranged for us to go see Prabhupada. In our first private meeting Prabhupada was sitting in a lounge chair in the sunlight looking effulgent and peaceful near some bay windows in his apartment. I sat in another chair opposite him and Gary sat on the floor. Prabhupada began to ask us questions about our lives, who we were, where we had come from, what we were doing. He was personally interested in us, as he was in each of his disciples. We told him that we were artists and had studied art. He asked about our parents, our families. In the course of the conversation I told him that I had traveled all over Europe and had studied art in various places, and he was quite surprised. He raised his eyes and said, “Oh you have traveled so much?” I looked like I was sixteen although I was actually nineteen or twenty. I said, “Yes, Swami, but none of that has made me happy.” He smiled and said, “Ah, that is required—to be disgusted with material life!” ♪

The Taste For Devotional Service

Shrila Prabhupada knew that we were art students and he immediately engaged us as artists. His very first project was to have me paint a four-foot-by-three-foot painting of him sitting on the Vyasa Asana with a painting of Lord Chaitanya dancing in a *sankirtana* party hanging behind him—and specifically with Lord Chaitanya’s foot touching his head. What I found so significant in this is that Shrila Prabhupada engaged people in the work for which they had a natural propensity. Since the people already had an inclination to work in this particular way, doing the same work for Krishna gave them a taste for devotional service. ♪



From “Swamiji” to Shrila Prabhupada”

A significant thing that happened in Boston was that Swamiji became Shrila Prabhupada. Gaurisundara was studying various forms of address in Sanskrit and he learned that “*ji*” is an affectionate form of address, which was news to us. I was sitting in Shrila Prabhupada’s room taking dictation as I often did, and Gaurisundara at the doorway said, “Swamiji, is it okay if I call Govinda dasi ‘Govindaji’?” Swamiji said, “No, ‘ji’ is a third-class form of address. You should not.” I said, “Why are we calling your Swamiji if it’s a third-class form of address?” He said, “It is not very important.” I said, “No, it is very important. What is the best thing we can call you?” Swamiji said, “You could call me Gurudeva or Guru Maharaja of Shrila Prabhupada.” I said, “Which of the three is best?” and Swamiji said, “Shrila Prabhupada is nice.” I said, “Okay,” and told all the devotees. From that day he was no longer Swamiji but Shrila Prabhupada. ✍

Drawing Prahlada

In New York before he fell ill, he had us drawing the story of Prahlada and Hiranyakashipu. He was keen on having the story as a slide show for children, which we eventually did. Prabhupada told us about the poses and demonstrated them. He posed for Hiranyakashipu standing on one leg. He loved to pose for Lord Nrisimhadeva. At least once a day, he would come into the room, do a roar, and describe how Lord Nrisimhadeva came out of the column. “Rrrrrrrhhhhh!” His eyes would get big and you could see the whites up above. “Rrrrrrrhhhhh!” This was his delight and he enjoyed it very much.

Once Jadurani had him pose like Krishna. He wrapped up in a white *dhoti* so that we could see how the pleats fell from a three-fold bending posture. He was right there watching us, seeing what and how we were doing. ✍

Demons

There was a picture of Prahlada sitting in boiling oil and I had to come up with some demons for the picture. I didn’t know what demons looked like, but somehow I drew demons. I asked Prabhupada if they were okay. He said, “Yes this is very good. There are such demons. They are like this. Yes. Even on this planet there are such demons.” I said, “Oh, really?” I didn’t know that.” He looked at me and said, “There are a lot of things you do not know.” ✍



“This Is Very Serious”

We were in Boston in May of 1968 when a new *Back to Godhead* magazine was published with a black-and-white picture of Prabhupada on the back cover and the caption, “This man has changed the world.” It looked very slick for those days. Prabhupada called me in his room, handed it to me and said, “Look at this.” I looked and thought, “What’s wrong with it?” He said, “This is very serious. The spiritual master should never be referred to as a man. This consciousness, viewing the spiritual master as an ordinary man, even calling him a man, is the beginning of fall down.” This seriously affected Shрила Prabhupada because one should never refer to or consider the spiritual master on the level of a man. ✍

“Why They Have Removed These Drawings?”

When Shрила Prabhupada was in Los Angeles in 1968, we illustrated the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*. There were five drawings for *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*, and they took quite a while. One was a picture of the Nawab coming to visit Rupa and Sanatana Goswamis, another was a picture of Lord Jagannatha in the Jagannatha Temple with Lord Chaitanya. At that time I had no idea what the inside of the Jagannatha Temple looked like. Shрила Prabhupada described how the interior was dark, how the *pujari* sat on the altar and handed down garlands. I did the drawings according to Shрила Prabhupada’s descriptions. Later when those five drawings were removed from the book,



Shrila Prabhupada was disgusted. He said, “Why they have removed those drawings from this book? Why they have removed them?” Shrila Prabhupada had supervised every aspect of them and had personally overseen them.

And when he saw that the illustrations to Krishna Book had been removed he said, “Why they have removed these paintings? Those early paintings were full of *bhakti*.” Even though the technical quality of the paintings might not have been perfect, their mood was very special. ✍

He Was in Complete Ecstasy

Each morning at the end of class in the Frederick Street temple, Shrila Prabhupada would ask for relevant questions. One morning I wanted to hear the story of Lord Chaitanya falling in the water, but I was shy about asking since it wasn’t relevant to the class. I raised my hand anyway and said, “Could your please tell us the story of Lord Chaitanya falling in the water?” Prabhupada became totally quiet for about five minutes. I thought, “What have I done now?” I didn’t know what was going on and I was worried. Then he said, “Yes.” And he told the story of Lord Chaitanya falling into the water. Afterwards the devotees said, “Didn’t you see? There were tears running down his face. He was in complete ecstasy.” I marveled at that. I began to see that when his Western children—we were just like children to him—asked about Lord Chaitanya it gave him great pleasure, great joy. ✍



Chaitanya-charitamrita

When we were living in Los Angeles, I would usually read *Chiatanya-charitamrita* when Shrila Prabhupada took his nap. It was a seven volume edition that Gaurasundara had obtained, translated by some scholar. Krishnadasa

was also reading it. Prabhupada would come in and say, “Oh! What are you reading?” We would say, “This is *Chaitanya-charitamrita*.” Prabhupada saw that we were interested and he decided to make a good translation of it. He engaged Gaursundara in the transliteration work, and I started transcribing the tapes for *Chaitanya-charitamrita*. He wanted to give us that because he could see that we were very eager for it. ♪

“We Should Not Give Out Such Things Freely”

Once in Los Angeles the Jehovah’s Witnesses came to visit and Prabhupada said, “Let them in.” I let them in and they preached their philosophy. Apparently they believed that within this body you become liberated and that this body is eternal. Prabhupada kept asking them, “With this body?” He was incredulous that they could believe that this body was eternal. But he was polite and nice with them. He didn’t preach to them, he just wanted to know what they were teaching. They gave him some literature, and as they left he had me give them a little brochure about chanting Hare Krishna. It had a picture of the Universal Form that I



had made and a picture of Lord Vishnu with all His arms. The next morning when he went on his walk, he saw that this brochure had been thrown on the street and run over by a car. He was disturbed by this that the Lord’s picture had been run over. He said, “We should not give out such things so freely.” ♪



Thus Spake Jadurani ...

“Prabhupada’s Grid System”

After a couple of paintings in which the proportions were wrong, Shrila Prabhupada taught me a grid system to make the paintings more accurate. The pictures that he gave me to paint from were in a frame with glass, so with some kind of marker or paintbrush he had me divide the pictures in half, then half again and so forth to make sixteen lines across and sixteen lines down. Instead of trying to do the whole picture at one I would paint one box at a time, and it would be more accurate. The first painting I did with that system was of his Guru Maharaja with long hair and a beard (during *chaturmasya-vrata*).

“These Paintings are our ISKCON Trademarks”

In New York in 1974 the press was reprinting the Krishna Book. We felt that the original Krishna Book paintings were crude and we wanted to put in new paintings that told similar stories. We spent hours picking out better versions of the old paintings and sent them to Rameshwara in Los Angeles. Rameshwara showed the new paintings to Prabhupada who rejected 99% of them. He said, “These old Krishna paintings are our ISKCON trademarks, and unless you have my sanction you can’t replace any of them. He said this (old) one is such a beautiful picture and this (new) one simply shows Putana’s black face. How can you say that this is better? ♪



As soon as possible I will require some artist who will paint pictures from the Bhagavatam as I give hints on what to paint. But the artist must be very quick. Two or three pictures must be done every week. These pictures will be used for my new book, "KRISHNA", which I will begin as soon as I get the assistance of a quick painter. I am sure that you could do this but you are already engaged with so much work. (Letter to: Jadurani, 13 December, 1968 : Los Angeles)

Thus Spake Baradwaja ...

“Paintings are Direct Preaching”

After finding out that I spoke another language, Prabhupada said, “You can do this artistic creative service no matter what language you speak. The image of Krishna speaks to anyone anywhere in the world. It brings Krishna directly into their minds. This is not unimportant. This is great service. You should be convinced of this.” The artists were always anxious that they were not good enough. There was pressure upon them to stop painting and go distribute books. “These people can only sit and paint—second rate citizens.” But Prabhupada said, “No, this is very important. Sometimes I think of it as even a more

important service because it is not restricted. We have to translate our books into so many languages. It may or may not be a good translation. But the paintings are direct preaching.” ✍

“Printing and painting are our life back bone.” (Shrila Prabhupada, 23 November, 1967)

Thus Spake Pushkara dasa...

“The Painters are the Best Book Distributors”

I was sitting next to Shrila Prabhupada when we first got the hardback *Shrimad-Bhagavatams* from Dai Nippon Press. Prabhupada opened the book, looked through it, looked at the pictures and said, “I think the painters are the best book distributors.”

Thus Spake Bhargava dasa, ISKCON Press photographer ...

“No More Chhh Chhh”



When I first started photographing I was using single lens reflex Canon cameras. On these cameras the mirror goes up and makes a loud noise when the picture is taken. So Prabhupada asked me not to take any more pictures while he was speaking. He said, “no more *cut cut* while I am speaking.” Later on we became a little more prosperous and I got Leica cameras that didn’t have the flapping mirror. The next time Prabhupada chastised me he said, “No more *chhhh chhhh* while I am speaking.” He had a fine sense of hearing. ✍

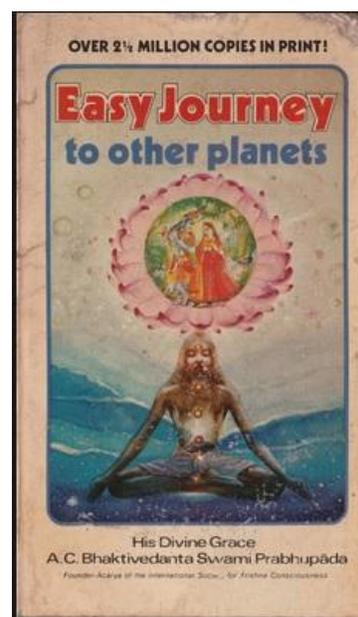
Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: *Gita Press is full of Mayavada Philosophy which says Krishna has no form but He assumes a form for facility of devotional service. This is nonsense. I am just trying to wipe out this Mayavada philosophy and you may not therefore order for any more copy of the English Bhagavatam published by the Gita Press. The one which you have got may be kept only for reference on having an understanding of the Mayavada Philosophy which is very dangerous for ordinary person. The Mayavada Philosophy has played havoc in spiritual understanding leading to Atheistic tendency. The interpretation that one has to be naked before the Lord is also Mayavada philosophy. (Letter to BTG Editor Rayrama, 7 March 1967)*

Mahamaya dasi is the daughter of the well known publisher of Guinness Book of Records and learned typing and proofing from her earliest years. Apparently all this was Krishna's arrangement ...

From Proofreader to Devotee

Mahamaya devi dasi

ISKCON Press, the publishing arm of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), was based in the Boston temple. When I said I could proofread, the devotees gave me a small book, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, by Shrila Prabhupada, to proofread before it was reprinted. They said, “We know there’s at least one typographical error in this book, but we don’t know where it is. Can you find it?” Once I found the mistake, I kept reading this scholarly and scientific presentation of Krishna consciousness. It was great medicine for my deep-rooted cynicism and atheism. “Is there anything else to read?” I asked.



“Yes, you must read the *Bhagavad-gita*,” a devotee told me. “But we’re out of copies at the moment. We’re not going to print anymore, because the edition we had was abridged, and the unabridged edition will soon be printed.” Seeing my desire to read the *Bhagavad-gita*, Svarupa dasa, one *brahmachari*, gave me his treasured copy. He had bound the paperback book and pasted Deity photos inside the covers. I was deeply touched by his generosity.

I delved into the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. Its message was so wonderful and apropos for me at that time in my life. It answered questions that I had always wondered about, and even questions that hadn’t quite formed in my mind. I read the *Bhagavad-gita* five times before I asked if there was another book to read. Each time I reread the book, it seemed entirely new. I began to understand the description of transcendental literature as ever fresh.

Most of the sixty or so devotees in Boston personally knew Shrila Prabhupada, but I was so cynical I doubted that he really existed. “The *Bhagavad-gita* As It Is is so transcendental,” I thought, “how could the author even be on this planet?” Refusing to be convinced until I saw him myself, I began to desire to meet Shrila Prabhupada. He was in India, but he wrote the devotees letters, which were shared with everyone, saying he was coming to America soon.

I learned about the four regulative principles: no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling. “Wow! I can’t possibly follow these!” I thought. I still had a roach clip for smoking marijuana joints, and I was just waiting for the opportunity to use it. But within a short time I thought, “I’ve been following these principles, and if I continue associating with the devotees, I can follow them.”

Many devotees encouraged me to stay at the Boston temple, but I still had plans to meet Stan in California. “Relationships are temporary,” I was told. “Either he’ll leave you, or you’ll leave him; he’ll die, or you’ll die. One way or another, the relationship will end. But your relationship with Krishna is eternal. You can give your heart and soul to Krishna, and you’ll never get hurt. Krishna can be your eternal husband. Depend on Krishna, and you’ll be happy.”

“This is reasonable, but am I ready to surrender?” I asked myself. I understood that if I stayed in the temple, I might never see Stan again. But the possibility of a relationship with Krishna as my eternal husband was deeply comforting.

Passing me on the temple stairs one morning, Hridayananda dasa Brahmachari, the temple commander, casually inquired, “How are you doing?” I poured out my heart: “I like chanting Hare Krishna, and I’d like to stay, but I’m just waiting for my ride to California. I’ll probably go to a temple there.”

“You really should stay here and become fixed in devotional service,” he advised. “Then you can travel anywhere and bring your Krishna consciousness with you. We’ve already wandered throughout this universe, lifetime after lifetime, in material bodies. Now we have a chance to go back home, Back to Godhead. Experiment! Try Krishna consciousness for just this one lifetime and

see for yourself if the process works. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain."

He convinced me. I was already getting feedback that the process worked. Shrila Prabhupada taught, "Chant and be happy," and I was happy chanting sixteen rounds. I decided: "I'll make a week-by-week experiment. If I get positive feedback each week, I'll stay another week." Tracking me down through Bob, Peter called to say, "I'm ready to go back to Ohio and on to California."

I said, "I'm not going. I'm staying here at the temple." I told him I would pick up the things I'd left at his friends' dormitory, but I never did. Everything I needed was provided at the temple -- sleeping bag, clothes, winter coat, boots and so on.

Soon I was allowed to dress in saffron *saris* like the other *brahmacharinis* I was told it pleased Shrila Prabhupada to see the ISKCON girls dressed Shrila Prabhupada said in spiritual clothing, so I liked doing that. The girls had a policy of sharing clothes, but I didn't like that, because, being very short, I had a problem: the *saris* were so wide that I had too much cloth to tuck in. So I claimed two *saris* for myself and cut off several inches, thus making sure that no one else would wear them.

Bob visited me whenever he was in the neighborhood. I thanked him for tricking me into going to the temple. Someone always chaperoned me when he visited, so I got the impression the devotees expected Bob to kidnap me. After Satsvarupa Prabhu returned from Dallas, Jadurani asked me several times, "How old are you?" I had the feeling they thought I was only thirteen or something, and didn't believe me that I was twenty-four.

I became happier daily, eventually fully emerging from my withdrawn state. Reading Shrila Prabhupada's books continually, I developed trust that he was not cheating me by giving me some man-made philosophy. He was an authorized guru, coming in a long line of disciplic succession. I developed the desire to dedicate my life to his mission. To please Shrila Prabhupada and to avoid wasting precious time, I began literally running from one service to

another.

I was surprised to learn that the worst month of my life—September, 1965—was the very month Shрила Prabhupada arrived in Boston. He came out of his compassion to save us, and he definitely saved me. If it weren't for Shрила Prabhupada, I would have either committed suicide or ended up in a mental hospital.

When the devotees found out I could type, I began typing letters for Satsvarupa Prabhu and re-typing the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* manuscripts. After one week at the temple I had phoned my mother and said, "I've joined the Hare Krishna movement!"

"You'll be doing something different next week," she predicted. But she was wrong. I never left the movement after the day I joined.

Learning to Typeset Shрила Prabhupada's Books

Palika dasi, the wife of Bhavananda dasa, the president of the Brooklyn temple, was in Boston typesetting Shрила Prabhupada's books. Do you want to learn composing and move to New York with ISKCON Press? she asked me. Yes, I said, because I wanted to be more involved. Publishing was in my blood. Besides, I'd heard about the delicious halava, a buttery cereal made from farina, that Bhavananda Prabhu made every morning in New York.

Palika oriented me to the IBM composing machine: Before you start your service, offer your obeisances to Shri Composer, she said, using a Sanskrit honorific. Paraphernalia used in Krishna's service becomes spiritualized and should be respected.

The composer justifies lines, Palika taught. This means it straightens the right margin. You start by typing a rough draft on plain paper to measure the length of the lines. The gauge gives you a colour/number code, which you type at the end of a line, for example 'b5' for blue 5 or 'y3' for yellow 3. When the page is complete, put glossy paper in the composer and retype the final page. Set the little dial to the line's code. If you typed accurately both times, the lines will be justified.

She also explained that for the different type faces -- regular and italic -- we had to switch the fonts manually, by alternating the small metal spheres peculiar to IBM electric machines.

The most difficult part was putting in diacritic marks -- the dots, dashes and other marks above and below certain letters. The diacritics were also on two separate fonts, because Sanskrit words were in italics, but Sanskrit names were in regular. It was especially tricky doing the synonyms, which alternated between Sanskrit words and their English equivalents.

Proofread your work and type corrected lines at the bottom of the page for the layout men to strip in, Palika said. But if you have more than nine mistakes per page, layout will reject it; so retype the entire page.

To avoid retyping whole pages, I and another composer named Kathy (who became Nara-devi dasi) often scratched out our smaller mistakes on the glossy paper with a razor blade and retyped over them. One blade was accidentally dropped inside a machine, and a serviceman had to come to retrieve it. We were warned never to do that again, so we avoided using razor blades for some time, but eventually we used them again, and the cycle was repeated.

I loved this challenging service. Not only was I helping to produce books for distribution but also I got to read Shrila Prabhupada's books before practically everyone else. We were composing the unabridged edition of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, which the MacMillan company had agreed to publish, and the monthly editions of *Back to Godhead*, which we composed six months in advance because they were printed in Japan.

My first contact with Shrila Prabhupada was in connection to my composing. Either Palika or Radhaballabha dasa, the production manager, wrote to him: Emily Prabhu is now composing. According to Palika, Shrila Prabhupada wrote back, Shrila Prabhupada said: Tell the composers to slow down. Too many typing mistakes were slipping by the proof-readers and getting printed. Shrila Prabhupada was particular about the appearance of his books. He wanted them to be first-class, so that scholars and readers would accept them as highly authoritative.

Typesetting in New York

In April, 1971, the composing department moved to New York, ahead of the other ISKCON Press departments in Boston. Two attached brownstones in a residential area of Brooklyn served as the temple, which was larger and more populated than the Boston temple.

I was brought to the large *brahmacharini* ashram and given a room to share with others. In this temple, to my relief, the devotees didn't share clothing. I put my few possessions on my shelf. Then I heard guitar music downstairs. "Wow! In Boston the devotees said guitars are *maya*," I thought. "This temple is less conservative." I became doubly convinced when I learned that the music came from Bhavananda Prabhu's office. New York was a happening place!

As in Boston, the devotees stood anywhere they liked in the temple room during *aratis* and *japa*—front or back. Being short, I liked to stand in the front, near the Deities. On the left side of the altar was a medium-size oil painting of Pancha-tattva—Lord Chaitanya and His four principal associates. A large Lord Jagannatha and His brother and sister stood on the right side, and in the middle of the altar were small brass Deities of Shri Shri Radha-Krishna, with large lotus like eyes and curvy hips, beautifully dressed by Rukmini dasi.

New York *kirtans* always sounded lively, especially when Baradwaja dasa led, although a few ladies were also good at leading. Once, even I led a kirtan, as we walked through the streets of Brooklyn, returning from *sankirtana*.

Sundays were my favorite days. We'd start with a maha-cleanup early in the morning. During *japa*, several men disassembled Shrila Prabhupada's Vyasa Asana, a series of graduated platforms, setting them in the hallway, and Bhavananda Prabhu mopped the floor. The *pujaris* similarly stripped down the altar, behind a closed curtain, after placing the Deities on tables in the adjoining *pujari* room, and they thoroughly cleaned the altar room.

After breakfast on Sundays, a large group of devotees took the subway into Manhattan, to their favorite spot in Central Park, for *sankirtana*. After they drew a large crowd, a spokesman briefly introduced the people to Krishna consciousness and invited everyone to the temple for the feast. People followed us back, swelling the regular number of guests at the *arati* and

lecture. Sitting with guests to eat the feast was always fun, especially when they welcomed hearing about Krishna consciousness.

After the feasts, we swung into another, not-quite-as-thorough maha-cleanup of the temple, and engaged any guests willing to help. When the guests had gone home, Bhavananda began our weekly *ishtagosthis* (meetings) by singing a wild rendition of the prayers to Lord Nrisimhadeva—which was immortalized on tape.

Awaiting the completion of the renovation of the new press offices, Palika set up the IBM composers in a small dungeon beyond the steamy laundry room in the sub-basement. Yuck! Another devotee, Debby, joined the department -- she became Mamata dasi -- and we ate a lot of *halavah* (stashed at breakfast) to keep up our spirits in that dank, dark room.

Once the new ISKCON Press quarters were ready, we moved the composers to Tiffany Place, four blocks away, and the other departments from Boston arrived soon after. The name Tiffany Place was deceptive; the street was strewn with broken glass, not diamonds.

It's a good thing I understood that my relationship with Krishna Shrila Prabhupada said surpassed the importance of material relationships because Stan visited me one day in April with a girlfriend. They stayed overnight but left quickly the next morning, and I never saw them again.

I donated to the temple my shares of stock that my paternal grandfather gave me as an investment. "I don't need them," I reasoned, "because the temple meets all my needs." I was satisfied to receive a set of hardbound Krishna books in return. A broker informed my grandfather of the stock transaction. He became upset, and so did my father. After that, our relationships were strained, but my brother Lincoln and his wife and my young nephew occasionally visited me.

I loved composing, and I was committed to it, but I broke Palika's rule not to accept any other service. It was tantamount to betrayal when she caught me in the composing room embroidering a handkerchief for the Deities. Not

accepting my excuse—I had promised to have it done by a deadline—she traded me with a girl from Philadelphia.

“Since you are attracted to Deity worship,” Palika reasoned, “you can be the head *pujari* in Philadelphia.” There was no court of appeal. 🙏

(from *Shrila Prabhupada is Coming* “How I Came to Krishna Consciousness-Boston January, 1971,”

“Learning to Typeset Shrila Prabhupada’s Books” and “Typesetting in New York”)

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: “But one thing can be very nicely utilized, if the *Brahmacharinis* learn typographic machine. That will be a great help because printing is one of our most important line of activities. And if the *Brahmacharinis* help us in the making of letter printing sheets for photo offset printing, that will be a great help.” (Letter to *Satsvarupa*, 12 July 1968, Montreal)

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: *Kirtanananda* wanted that the editing should be done by *Hayagriva*. But I understand from your version that in some places of *Gita Upanisad* he has followed *Swami Nikilananda* who is quite unaware of *Krishna Consciousness*. By their present behavior it appears that *Hayagriva* belongs to the same feather and *Krishna* has saved His *Gita Upanisad* by transferring the whole thing into your hands. Now please do your best and hand it over to *MacMillan Co.* for necessary action. We have tried our best in the *Gita Upanisad* that *Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead* is the *Supreme Person* and His energies acting impersonally. The devotees are primarily concerned with the *Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna* and His impersonal expansion of energy is of secondary importance to the devotees. (Letter to *BTG Edior Rayarama* 11 November 1967)

Shrila Prabhupada taught that Lord Krishna brings each devotee to Krishna consciousness by the hand. Therefore, in order to add literary credentials to a movement of pure devotion, he encouraged his beginner disciples to get started by simply writing about how they came to Krishna consciousness. The following article appeared in a stapled and mimeographed BTG, 1 January 1968. Its unpretentious simplicity has created a lasting impression ...

How I Met A.C. Swami Bhaktivedanta

Madhusudana dasa Brahmachary (Michael Blumert)

I had a “normal” childhood, had fights with the kids on the block, envied my older brother for his associations with pretty girls, and tried to be a number one lover myself, all through my school days. I started taking marijuana in my senior year in high school. After my first semester of college, at the age of seventeen, I went traveling through Europe and North Africa trying to squeeze some enjoyment out of all I came across.

After running out of money I came back to the (East) Village, where I somehow came upon the joy-spreading chanters of HARE KRISHNA in Tompkins Square Park. My feeling about it was that it was nice; however, at this time I did not think that there was anything serious in these names of God I thought that these were merely words. I also thought it strange to have a rug in the middle of a park. I did not inquire further.

I began drowning myself in psychedelic drugs such as LSD and DMT, thinking myself a very advanced creature. At the same time I became serious about my relationship to everything around me, and asked questions as to who I was and where I was going. I then went to the Haight-Ashbury area in San Francisco, to live with some people I had met in the Village.

I got too serious about bodily relationships with people and the world, thinking that I was this body and relating to everything in this manner. In trying to be a “virtuous creature,” I was seeking the perfection of life in these relationships, through drugs which I truly felt to be the answer to the problems of Mankind. I deemed myself one of the discoverers of the newly-found panacea. Such is an

example of illusion. In my quest for knowledge that is, in finding the answers to my questions, the question “Who is God?” arose. This was the supreme quest. Then during one “trip” I was sure I had realized God, and afterward desperately tried to put what I thought to be my new knowledge to practical use. I soon entered a mental hospital.

I was then delivered back to New York and started sessions with a therapist. One day, by the grace of God, I came upon the temple storefront. The first thing that struck me was that the people were so warm and friendly and had no arrogance of attitude. They answered my numerous questions completely for, as I have learned, this is a complete philosophy and the practical method is guaranteed.

After coming to service once, I returned for each one after that. Dancing and chanting the praises of Lord Krishna is so nice. Our kind Lord reveals Himself to His devotees in proportion to their devotion. Much of the revelation comes automatically during chanting, for the chanting of the Lord’s Name is our meditation and a most important part of the process of God consciousness.

At the time I came Swami Bhaktivedanta was at the San Francisco temple, but his message is so fine that I was attracted to Krishna and to the Swami by the teachings he had given to his disciples.

Some time later, as Swamiji was arriving at the airport, some of my God-brothers-to-be and I were preparing the feast. We were very anxious to meet our *guru*. Finally, we were told that he was downstairs in the temple, and we hurriedly fumbled there to greet our Spiritual Master. He was clad in saffron robes and grandly sitting on his throne-like altar. He was a magnificent sight, as I beheld him every morning at *kirtan*. Never have I met anyone who exhibited such godly qualities. It is my pleasure to try to be the loving servant of my Spiritual Master, and through him to learn to serve Krishna. ♪

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: “Less intelligent asuras are attracted by the impersonal manifestation because they have no chance to meet Krishna face to face.” (Letter, 15 Novembr 1967)

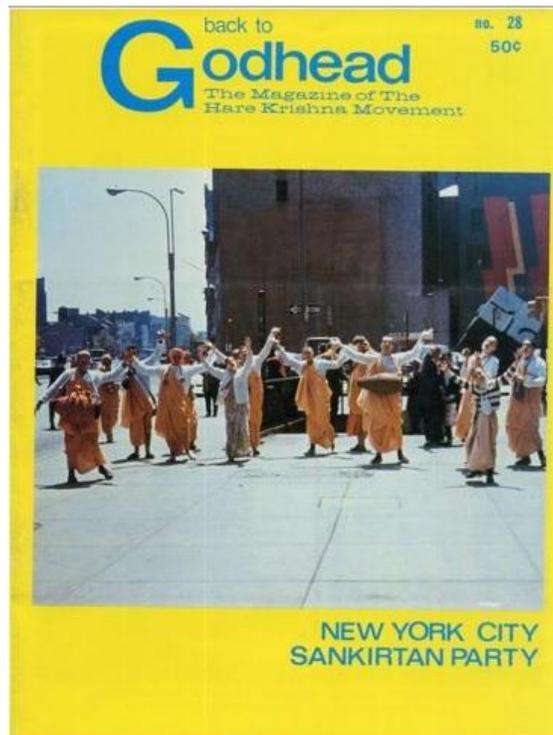
I once presented Shrila Prabhupada with a notebook of poems I had written about Krishna consciousness and naturally about him, too. His Divine Grace emanated a golden aura as he embraced the crude, handwritten notebook to his heart. He kept turning it this way and that, exclaiming repeatedly, “Poet! Poet! This is one of the qualifications of a devotee, to be a poet!” So here we present ...

Two Poems

from the

Days of ISKCON Press

Patita Uddharana dasa Brahmachari



Damodara, ?, ?, Lilasukha, ?, Madana Mohana, ?, Bali Mardan, Birabhadra, Patita Uddharana, Rishi Kumara. This issue contained the poem “Prabhupada” by Patita Uddharana dasa Brahmachari

Prabhupada

Paramhansa of the nectar lake
Did You Your own True Love forsake,
Leaving His sweet and fragrant breast
To come to this world of birth and death?

Or is this a helping hand You lend
While this world of matter You transcend?
I am perplexed. Please, let it be known:
Have You come to take me home?

My feeble memory cannot recall
Did I once in anger slip and fall?
If there is Truth, then tell me, where?
From this I'll turn: go with You there!

Tell me please of life's true goal
So I may cleanse the dust from my soul,
And from this humbly let me start
To nourish the spark of life within my heart.

Your blessings I crave as now I see
Your love can teach infinity
And of the mercy that therein lies
For this my twice-born soul does cry.

So tell me please of Vrindaban
and the Blue Boy, yes, the Gentle One
Known as Krishna, Devaki's Son.
To His Abode I long to run!

KRISHNA! Yes that is the Name
And the reason why to Your Feet I came.

I pray I'll hear KRISHNA wherever I go
With sounds of cymbals and HARI BOL!

Now tell me of His jewelled throne
And how He dances with His Gopis alone,
Oh, and how His flute notes fill the air.
Tell me this in loving prayer.

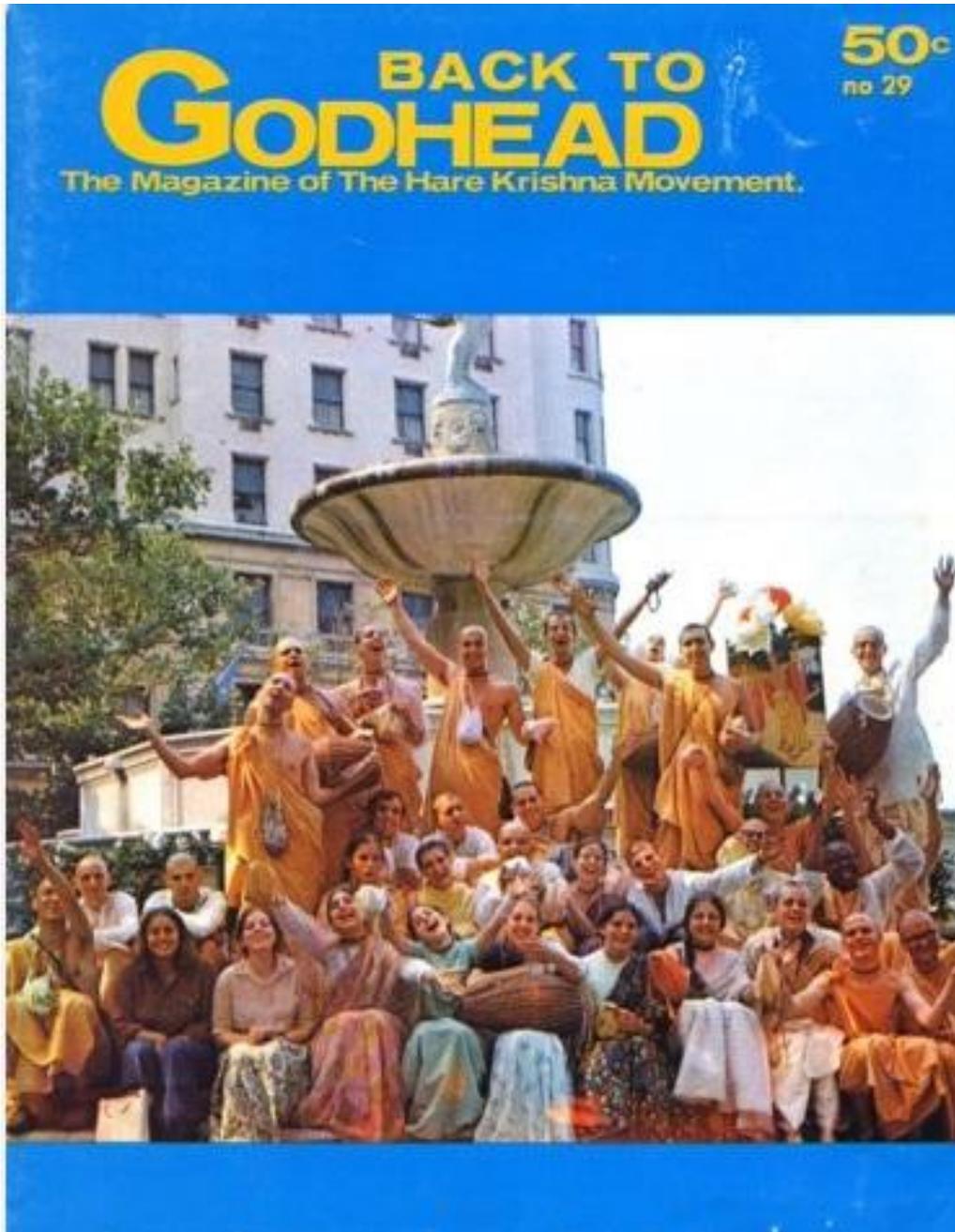
I see in nectar that You swim
While herding Surabhi cows with Him
Tell the beauty of His lotus flowers
And His Strength and Fame and Mystic powers!

And of devotees whom He holds so dear
In Vaikuntha His abode where there is no fear.
Do tell! Are His features like the moon?
Tell it sweetly, lest I swoon.

Now unto Your Lotus Feet I'll cling
Lest I be whipped by Maya's sting.
Even the dust at Your Grace's Feet,
As I bow down, tastes nectar-sweet.

O Paramhansa of our land,
I see in glory You do stand.
Ten thousand times a day I beg
Let me thank You for Your helping hand! ✍

-From BTG vol 1, no. 28



L. to r. Brahmananda, ?, Chandanacharya, Ranadhira. Rohini Kumara (?), Rishi Kumara, Jagadisha.

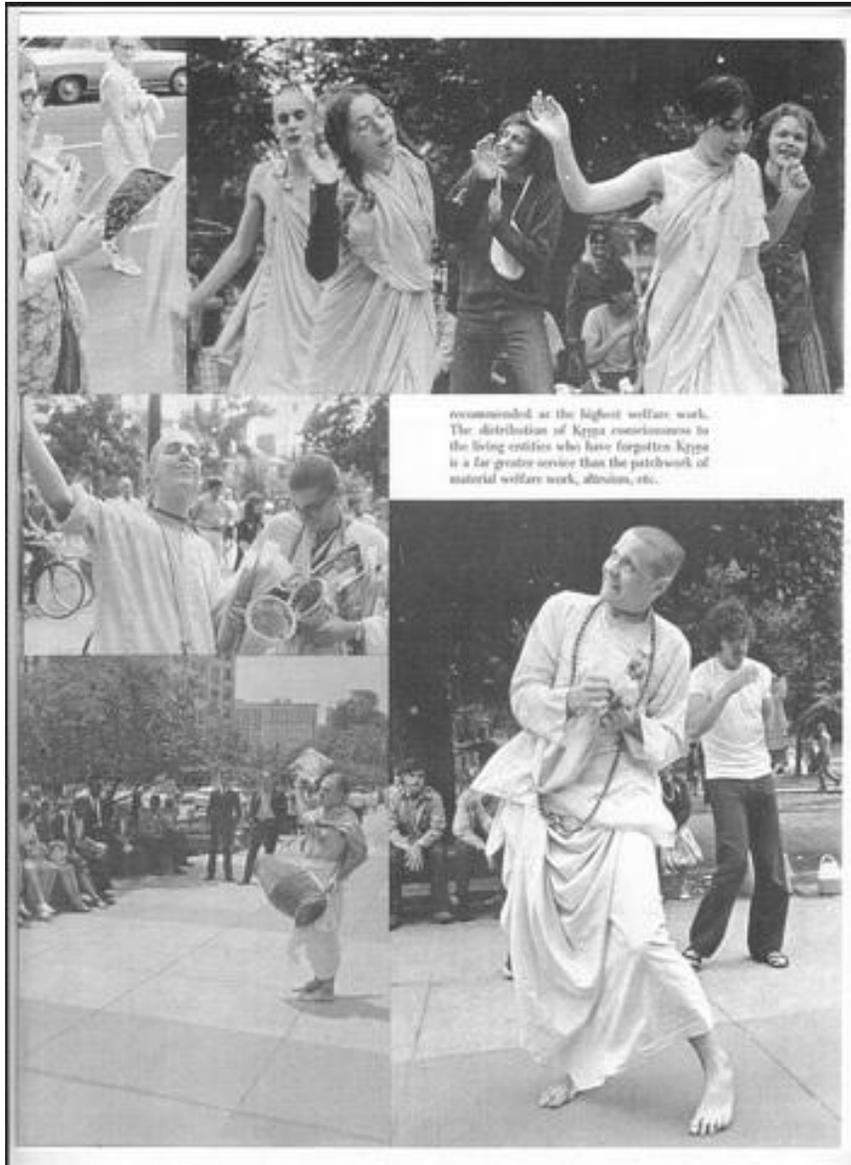
Bali Mardan, ?, seated: Madana Mohana, Lalita Kumara, ??

Indumati, ?,?, Krishna Bhamini, Bhagavan dasa, Bhima (black),

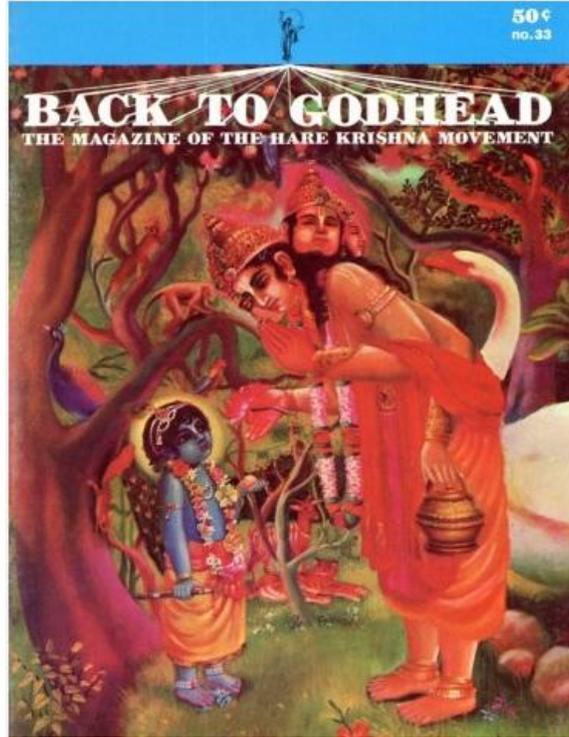
Subala, Kushakratha,

Gadadhara (one arm rasied), ?,? Kanchanbala, Lilasukha, Saradiya (with mridanga), ?, Lakshmi Moni,

Karuna Moya, Nayana Bhiram (arms raised with bead bag), Anirudha.



Upper left to right, clockwise. Jadurani was a great book distributor and could out-preach anyone. Anangamanjari and Vaikunthanatha's sister perform the only yagna for pushing back the insidious tide of Kali Yuga. That's me, Patita Uddharana, clanging the caratalas. Baradwaja challenges the crowd to read a BTG, A big "Jaya" from Madhavananda while Giriraja gets his stash of books ready for distribution.



Jagat Nrsimha Guru

O eternal ray of Krishna, O thou messenger of Govinda's flute,
Thy blessed countenance I did recall when once I walked a wayward route.

Effulgent was thy personage, thou did beg I seek my Lord
So the asuras within my heart could breathe their last by the mercy of His sword.

Prabhupada has told us thou art an evangelic angel Krishna sent
He told us as a surrendered soul he is thine serving instrument.

As electric current, Krishna's blessing flows through the heart of devotee pure,
And in the following of your most blessed footprints all glories are found for sure.

Durga's jailhouse tower of void is now lying crumbled in the dust,
Now open wide Vaikuntha's gate, and dovetailed is our lust.

Your touchstone fingers have picked us up to protect us with your might,
And in the presence of your brilliance vanished now despair of night.

Secure thou were in knowledge that the great chain must stay unbroken:
Thus you ordered this sublime tradition spread to where the English tongue is spoken.

In the woods of New Vrindavana Prabhupada said Krishna sent him here,
Though thanklessly I yearn to bathe thy feet with my ungrateful tears.

Just as a fish spends its time eating waste up from the ocean floor,
Any remnant of prasadam your devotee leaves behind is mine in glory to devour.

This aquatic bathes in nectar now, while poison was my food before;
 Each grain of dust your foot has touched is nectarine and I your omnivore.
 As the grandfather showers his mercy upon the gurgling babe
 With more mercy than the parent I beg you bless me in that way.
 But my lord and master Prabhupada desires sons who see tapasya in each test;
 Therefore within his holy lotus heart your dream of world sankirtana may rest.
 The hypocrisy of Kali yuga the American Vaisnavas do deplore;
 Sankirtana its mighty cure more fierce than Lord Nrsimha's roar!
 Eyes that pierce can see your grand swan's bliss is as sweet as lotus flowers,
 And your miracle of Krishna consciousness surpasses Brahma's powers.
 O master of my master, O modern Sukadeva,
 Thy sweet will alone our shelter be from Yamaraj's fiery grave.
 Just as all the rivers of the world do serve the ocean blue,
 So all pious men of Kali yuga shall do service unto you.
 Never must I think I am surrendered servant of the feet of your Divine Grace;
 Prabhupada alone serves thy feet for the deliverance of the human race.
 He is the surrendered soul of Krishna's swan, he the pure devotee
 Because Prabhupada loves Shri Jagat Guru, and thus spoke he: "Gurudeva loves me."
 Heaven's damsels I may be offered or the liberation of soma-rasa,
 But I would fall from these senseless ventures believing all I thought mine lost;
 I would suffer flaws and then reactions but I'd never suffer worse
 If somehow from you I were removed, O uplifter of the universe!
Sac-cid-ananda-vigraha is written clearly upon thy face,
 And millions offer homage unto the lotus feet of your most holy grace.
 Grandfather thou art of a generation of righteous saints and kings
 Who likewise will teach others of the power your greatest disciple brings. ✍

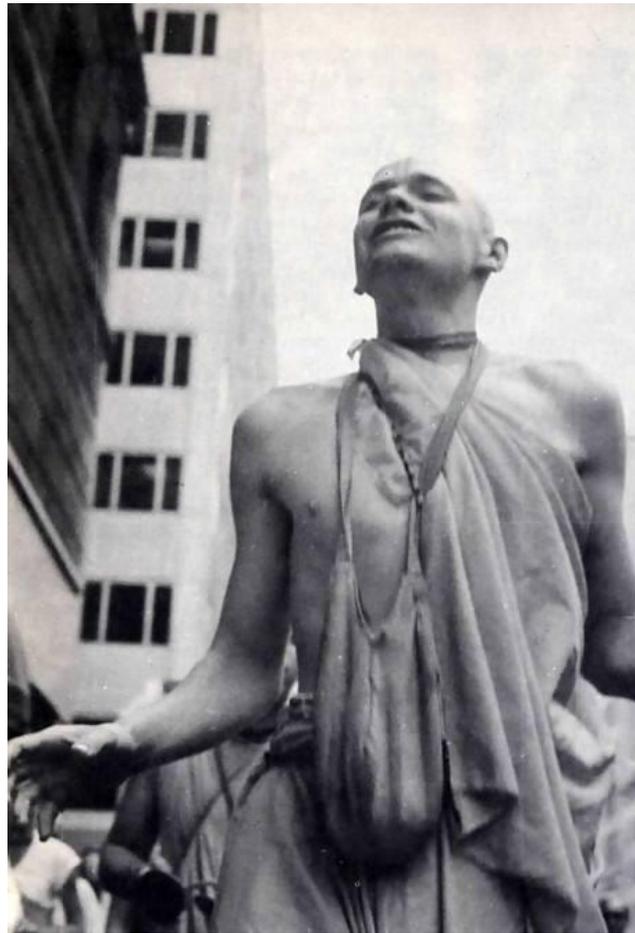
-From BTG 33, 1970

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: "You should take BTG as your life and soul. Your work for BTG is first and foremost above all. If you do not find any time for other things, there is no objection, but I want to see that you make BTG a successful magazine like Life magazine or Illustrated Weekly of India." (Letter to BTG editor Rayarama 23 March 1968)

Vaikunthanatha and I saved a year's worth of two-dollars-an-hour minimum wage salaries from working in the bookbinderies to pay for the machinery. And on weekends we collected with pamphlets to support the temple. The following are some random memories of a day preaching in Central Park ...

“I Just Want the Truth”

By Patita Uddharana dasa Adhikary



Summer of '69: When I wasn't working as a bookbinder in the factories of Hell's Kitchen or Brooklyn, I could be found on sankirtana with the other Prabhus or swinging a brahmachari's conch shell in Central Park.

Manhattan, a Saturday in early spring 1969: It had been nearly three years since the world *acharya* had landed in America. By now under the spiritual master's

guidance a few rag-tag *sankirtana* devotees armed only with their new-found faith in Shri Guru and the *mahamantra* had ignited the spark of the forthcoming worldwide Hare Krishna Explosion. These were remarkable times; Krishna consciousness was bursting aflame and Hare Krishna was becoming a household word. Numbering about twenty or so *brahmacharis* headed up by temple president Brahmananda, we had just moved out of the first ISKCON center at 26 2nd Ave. to the new location up the street at #61.

Not even one of us was looking back to consider that the old place would someday be celebrated as the ISKCON world famous landmark. Not only had the old temple at 26 2nd Ave. been the first center of worship for the Hare Krishna Movement but, as history would unfold, it was in fact the first Hindu temple in the Western hemisphere. In our excitement, all that we could consider was that our new place on the other side of the street was perfect for expanding the glorification of Hari *nama*. We were still on the Lower East Side, but at last Their Lordships Shri Shri Radha-Krishna and Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balarama had a wonderful new place for Their worship. And ISKCON NY was now one full block farther away from the Bowery slums!

Devotees had been hard at work day and night preparing for Krishna's "swan messenger." Shrila Prabhupada would be arriving in just a few days after a victorious world tour. His Divine Grace was returning to the city and neighborhood of his first public American *sankirtana* to check up on the New York disciples, whom he loved dearly and who loved him. We had been waiting a long time for his *darshan*, and soon there would be feasts, celebrations and fire yagnas to initiate the new batch of newcomers coming down from Buffalo and Montreal. When I had asked Brahmananda Prabhu if he would recommend me for second initiation, the "Big B" had thought it over for a moment, and then responded, "OK you can handle it." So my big moment was at hand, too.

Back in LA the year before, Shrila Prabhupada had ordered me to learn bookbinding, so I had hit the road and thumbed the 3000 miles, arriving on a snowy December day at 26 2nd Ave. For the pleasure of my spiritual master I had been learning everything about creating a bindery at the proposed ISKCON Press we would soon set up in Boston. Weekdays would find me working in midtown factories around Hell's Kitchen or over at the Henry Street Bindery in

Brooklyn hand binding medical journals for Jewish doctors. There I was learning the craft from an ascetic-looking rabbi who looked and acted more like an austere Himalayan sage than anyone I had ever seen.

Evenings found me dancing in front of the *sankirtana* party to the beat of *mridanga* and *caratals* as we wended our way uptown through Times Square. On Sundays I would take it a bit easy and hang around the new ashram so that I could preach the message of *sanatan dharma* to our guests. It was understood by any regular visitor that he could expect a full dose of *parampara* logic along with his lavish meal of all-you-can-eat Krishna *prasadam*. Each guest to the Hare Krishna Temple knew that he was expected to listen politely to the ageless wisdom of the newly-released *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* as sort of a payment for his free meal of mercy. So for a preacher like me, Love Feasts were like open season on anyone chewing on a raisin simply wonderful or slurping down spiced tomato chutney.

But today was neither a day at the job nor was it a day of receiving our Lower East Side regulars with appetites for transcendental philosophy and spiritual remnants. It was a Saturday; my day to take out my huge conch shell and a shoulder bag filled with Prabhupada's "Who Is Crazy?" pamphlets. It was me-the-preacher against the world of Maya; I had come uptown to Central Park to preach to anyone who'd listen to whatever little I had learned of Krishna consciousness. I was a good collector, too, by the standards of the day. Usually I'd return to the temple with about \$35 in quarters, or "Garudas" as we called them, named for the eagle on the back of the coin.

So this sunny Saturday found me on the green rolling lawn by the lake in earshot of a band of Jamaican drummers who were filling the sky with a hypnotic tribal rhythm. I remember that it was just about then that a wild-eyed and bearded beatnik marched over to me as deliberately as a soldier on a mission and tossed a Garuda in my conch. "I just want the truth," he demanded. "Give it to me." I reflected that maybe the wild look in his eyes was due to some psychedelic like mescaline or LSD he had ingested the night before, but whatever it was, it was plain that this hipster knew that it had left him more confused and disoriented than before taking it. The drugs hadn't given him the truth he wanted, so for just this moment, he was looking to Krishna.



April 1969 at 61 2nd Ave, NY ISKCON. My second location and wedding of Indira dasi and Vamandadeva. Behind me are Adwaita and Balai dasi

The unlimited philosophy of Krishna consciousness is like a great and bottomless ocean that submerges the devotee ever deeper into eternity, knowledge and bliss. Krishna Himself personifies the Supreme Absolute Truth and as such He the only Source of liberation and the Fountainhead of freedom. The oft-quoted Biblical proverb “the truth shall set you free” actually applies to Shri Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead and none other. And that freedom born of truth is described in the *Gita* by Krishna to Arjuna with the words: “Just become My devotee.” *Mad mana bhava mad-bhakto.*

So how was I to summarize something so profound, deep and vast as “the truth” to this desperate fellow in one short chance meeting? In a way, I was no different from him. We probably would have shared the same concerns about

where the world was heading, the war in Viet Nam, the rampant materialism taught like gospel in our schools, the arrogance of the politicians, the fragility of an oil-based society. But by now I had been through all those social and political issues and had found the solution to those problems and more. I had graduated into Krishna consciousness and no longer cared for stop-gap theoretical fixes because Shrila Prabhupada had assured us that Krishna consciousness is the answer to every dilemma. I had come to Central Park to preach what I had learned from the eternal spiritual master, an understanding far above well-intended but temporary solutions.

This wild-eyed New York hipster had put a Garuda into my conch, and was challenging me to give him his money's worth. He wanted the "truth," and a thousand starting points circled my head as I considered where to begin. Though I was finished with hip-sounding social compromises, I didn't want to sound like a fanatic, either. The answer depended upon finding the delicate balance between loyalty to the order of the spiritual master and an explanation that would not turn the desperate hipster off. What would Prabhupada say? Truth alone remains after the destruction of the world, but this was the here and now. I could tell him...

—The truth, my friend, is that the world desperately needs this Krishna consciousness or there will no future at all for mankind. Without the *mahamantra* and *sankirtana yagna* as introduced by Shrila Prabhupada, the world is doomed to become a horrible place from which all pious persons must escape by taking shelter of remote mountain caves.

—The truth is that the four sharp and sinful teeth of Kali Yuga—meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication and gambling—are ripping asunder practically every man, woman and child of every country of the world and devouring them in the *yuga's* horrible belly of immorality. As man turns against Nature, so Nature will turn on him, and mankind will always be the loser as the grip of war, famine, poverty and disaster caused by collective impiety tightens.

—The bitter truth is that everyone we have ever known—our family elders, teachers and religious guides—have all misguided or downright lied to us because that is what happened to each of them in a never-ending chain of

misconceptions and falsehood. As devotees, our job is to break that downward spiral and take these lost, misguided souls back to home, Back to Godhead. We have been sent out with *hari nama* in *dhotis*, *tilaka* and *shikhas* to ring the alarm bell for a world “that’s sleeping on the lap of the witch Maya” yet does not know how to wake up.

—The truth is that everyone now living on the planet will be dead and gone in a few short years, and hardly one in a million of them have even considered where he is going to wind up next in the terrible whirligig of *samsara*. To a man and to a woman each one is wasting God’s greatest gift, the human form of life. Due to the animalistic pull of sense indulgence each and every person we’ve ever seen is likely to return to some horrible sub-human species from which extrication will be impossible for millions of years. And only Krishna consciousness can save them here and now.

—The truth is that across America practically every other yogi and swami claiming to teach the eternal message of India to the people of the West is simply making a business-for-profit out of innocent hopes for liberation. The uptown yogis are playing a losing gambling match with the souls of those whom they pretend to teach.

—The plain and simple truth is that our governments are all demonic. Worldwide the politicians are in the same bed as Earth-exploiting big businesses like the meat, oil, liquor, weapons and chemical industries. In order to woo the votes of a public that they purposely keep in ignorance, politicians lie habitually to the voters while seeing that the pockets of their wealthy donors are lined with your tax dollars. But the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* has a recipe for fixing government, too.

—The truth is that today religion has been molded into little more than a family custom or social tradition. No rabbi, priest or Bible-thumping wrangler can be unearthed who knows the absolute truth, and neither are they interested in finding it. Whatever message of Godliness that was originally explained in any of their holy scriptures has long since been watered down and washed away due to the absence of any disciplic succession. Yet, the essence of all religious truth is compressed into the *mahamantra*:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.



—The truth is that the scientists claiming they have discovered the mysteries of the universe through the lens of a telescope are bald-faced liars. No astronaut will ever get to the Moon because the Moon is farther away than the Sun. You can forget all about the propaganda of colonizing other planets because the Supreme Creator in His wisdom made the bodies of the denizens of this Earth suitable for living only on Earth. But, if we were to somehow travel to the other planets, then we would only take our problems there. Why not take to Krishna consciousness and solve the real problem of life culminating in birth and death here and now?

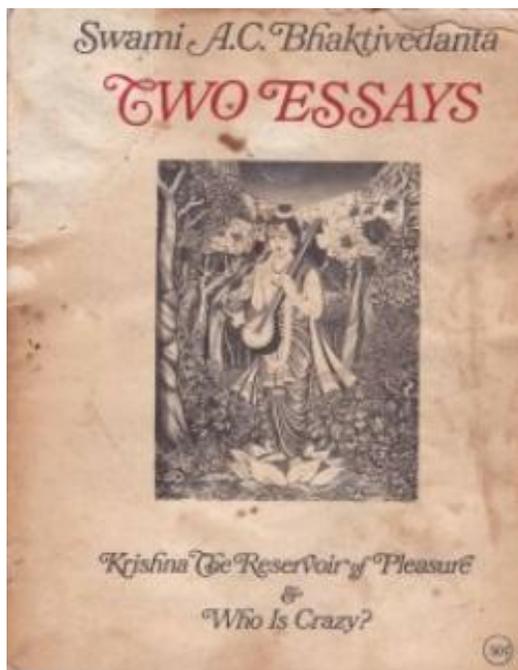
—The truth is that here on Earth, the scientists' plans for population control through horrible means like poisonous pills and abortion will never be successful. The destructive and murderous methods to manage mankind recommended by fiendish scientists have enmeshed the entire world in bad karma. Doctors who practice abortion are destined to themselves return as aborted fetuses, and their huge salaries will not save them when their future mothers pay to dispose of them.

—The truth is that the underground, radical or revolutionary movements—whether dubbed “hip” or “beat” by the press—are doomed to failure because they embrace the same body conscious values of base sense gratification that characterize the society they claim to be rejecting. Only when a human being rises above the four-fold animalistic propensities of mindlessly mating, eating, sleeping and defending is he eligible to consider the truth.

—The truth is that the outspoken voices of the counterculture—whether the free speech poets, singer-songwriters or minstrel prophets—are not leaders, but

misleaders. The only folk song that will open your eyes to the truth is the Hare Krishna *mantra*.

—The truth is that there is hardly a shred of truth to be found in all the colleges and universities of the world. The education they offer only creates degree-decorated karma-bound slaves who toil mindlessly till the last breath for nothing of permanent value. If truth can set you free, then how is it the universities produce slaves chained up like dogs? The lessons offered by the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* are more valuable than a post-graduate degree from every university in the world because the Song of God will situate you in the truth above all illusions.



—The truth is you really are not your body. As Krishna tells Arjuna, reincarnation is a fact, and all living entities are eternal pure spirit souls, parts and parcels of the Supreme Absolute Truth. Our job is simple: to go back to home, Back to Godhead to Lord Shri Krishna the One seed-giving Father of each individual soul.

—The truth is that Darwin’s theory of mankind’s evolutionary origins from matter is a concoction fabricated by a sick mind enmeshed in ignorance. By teaching Darwin’s wild speculations as scientific fact, the institutions of learning are sending mankind to hell through keeping the world on the level of grossly ignorant bodily consciousness. Educated graduates are usually little more than polished dogs, while simple devotees who know the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* have opened the doorway to eternity, knowledge and bliss.

—And on that Saturday in 1969, the unfortunate truth was that the wild-eyed beatnik who had thrown a Garuda into my conch was not prepared to listen to the truth. I would have to look for some other soul who was ready for the truth. Like pouring milk upon sand, preaching to those who are not prepared to hear is futile and offers no practical relief. So I told him: “You want the truth, man?”

Well, it's all there in our spiritual master's *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. You can pick up your copy at the temple on the Lower East Side, and our Guru Maharaja will be there in a few days, too. So why not come to our Love Feast tomorrow?"

P.S. That was then, this is now: Those were the days before big book distribution, days of *Who Is Crazy?* pamphlets and silver Garudas. Every street-preaching *sankirtana* devotee felt empowered with Prabhupada's hammer to go out and smash illusion in whomever they found it. And they were learning how and when to use that hammer effectively. There was neither debate about our duty to Shri Guru, nor about Shrila Prabhupada's divine origin as a *shaktyavesha avatara* who had arrived to save the world with the Supreme Absolute Truth, one soul at a time. We had been authorized to preach.



In 1969, the first abridged version of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* sans the Sanskrit was hot off the press, and it had not as yet found its way into the devotee's book bags. I would not distribute my first big volumes until Spring of '71— from a folding table in NY's Port Authority Bus Terminal, after ISKCON Press Boston would shut its doors and printing was shifted to Dai Nippon in Japan. Today, even as I am reminiscing from a California motel, the cleaning lady is delivering a copy of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* to my room. Nowadays forty years after the wild-eyed beatnik gave Krishna a quarter and went on his way— through the remarkable efforts of Prabhus like Vaisheshika and Akruranath, and tens of thousands of enlightened devotee distributor— even maids have been recruited into the service of distributing Shrila Prabhupada's books! ♪

(published on www.dandavats.com, 2010)



After the marriage and initiation yagna in April of 1969, Uddhava Prabhu snapped this classic shot outside of 61 2nd Ave. I'm on the far left next to Mr. Malkani, one of the first Indians to join Prabhupada in the West. l. to r. Lilavati, Brahmananda, Karunamoya, Yamunacharya, His Divine Grace Shrila Prabhupada, Nanda Kishore, Kirtanananda Swami, Subala, Vamanadeva and Indira just married, Purushottama, Jayadwaita and Rasananda Prabhus.

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: So far discussions of political affairs in BTG, it is not a very good suggestion. But if you can present political affairs in spiritual light, as I wrote some articles in the original BTG in the matter of political divisions of India, and catastrophes thereof. That requires a very thorough understanding of the whole situation, and if you can do this, it will be a great service. I wanted therefore a combined editorial board. Unfortunately, you have to do everything yourself. For this work I think you will have to invite cooperation from others who may help you. Anyway, BTG must be improved to the fullest extent, because it is the backbone of our society. (Letter to BTG editor Rayarama 23 March 1968)

My 2014 Vyasa Puja offering to Guru Maharaja ...

Letter from a Bookbinder

Patita Uddharana dasa Adhikary

Dear Shrila Prabhupada,

I beg to offer my humble *dandavats* in the dust at your lotus feet. I bow before you, my beloved spiritual master who was specifically sent to this world by Lord Shri Krishna. You were sent by the Supreme Personality of Godhead and ordained by Him to ignite the spark which set off the chain reaction for the enlightenment the world.

You alone have appeared as the torchlight *acharya* to deliver mankind from the evil snares of *nirveshesha* and *mayavada*. You have appeared to reveal to the sightless citizens of the world that the divine hand of Shri Krishna moves every breath of the wind, colors each golden ray of the Sun and paints each pastel change of Nature's revolving tapestry. And you have blessed each one with a vision of the eternal world that waits beyond this one. You have come to reveal that personal philosophy which is the highest of the high, the eternal religion which is the most confidential of all secrets and the Absolute knowledge that is the essence of all truths. For you have freely given that personal understanding for which even great *tapasvis* seek for thousands of years without success.

All fortunate souls who have come under your divine presence have witnessed that you are absorbed in thinking, thinking, thinking of new approaches to serve Shri Guru and Gauranga in every way possible. That is your open secret, your unalloyed dedication to your own Guru Maharaja.

There was always so much activity going on around you—so many fresh ideas and revelations that were new to us—as you constantly brainstormed new methods to inaugurate the Golden Age of Kali Yuga on the direct order of your own Shrila Prabhupada and the Supreme Lord Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. And that is why any soul with the requisite piety who obtained

your *darshan* was immediately humbled into submission by your very presence. For—as you say—dry leaves once fallen from the tree can never rise up again. Those who came before you found themselves within the transcendental and spiritual domain of the World Prophet, the *shaktyavesha avatara*, the very savior of mankind. The energies moving in waves about you spoke silently that you would not, could not, rest until you had fulfilled the prophecy of the Supreme Lord Himself in the role of His own devotee, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Your darshan truly meant falling under the divine presence of the pure devotee whom the powerful demigods in heaven revere in awe and admiration.

Back in 1968 in LA with a grand gesture of your index finger and an ever so slight toss of your head, Your Divine Grace gravely ordered this fortunate soul back to New York to engage in your vision of the coming ISKCON Press. With my thumb out to traffic I hit the roads through both desert and snow drifts and a week later I was reunited with Brahmananda, Madhusudana, Kanchanbala and the other devotees at 26 2ⁿ Ave. I was there to learn bookbinding for—as your secretary back in California had noted—the fortunate soul who would be blessed to bind your books would become “the most celebrated bookbinder in the Universe.” Well, after a year of working in the factories of Brooklyn and Hell’s Kitchen to learn the craft, we finally set up the bindery in Boston as part of ISKCON Press. Along with Vaikunthanatha I began hand binding your precious literatures as well as stapling and hand trimming *Back to Godheads*. In one run alone, I hand cut 80,000 magazines by your blessings.

Some time later, I would hand you a copy of the 1935 edition of Shri Brahma Samhita and ask if Your Divine Grace would like me to bind that one for you, too. By way of reply you opened the book, and lo and behold, there was the eternal portrait of your own spiritual master His Divine Grace Shрила Shri 108 Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura. Suddenly that swirling and rushing transcendental vibration moving at the speed of the mind that always accompanied you seemed to cease. Though the phenomenon was invisible, the change in mood was obvious. Now your concentration focused entirely upon your Guru Maharaja. As the landscape around suddenly shifted, everything became as still as an early morning on a late autumn day. For a moment frozen in time I watched you and wondered. Very slowly and deliberately, you lifted

that book of the revelations of Lord Brahma, the leader of the sampradaya, to your forehead in an offering of obeisances as your ocean-like devotion funneled all at once into the portrait of your spiritual master.

For me that was the ultimate lesson of lessons. What words could be necessary? I realized that whatever you had accomplished and would accomplish in the all-too-brief dozen years of your manifest presence with us—the re-establishing of the world’s rightful heritage of Krishna consciousness—all that appeared to be placed on hold for the moment. As Your Divine Grace demonstrated the meaning of pure and simple devotional service, you also showed me the way to perfection in that instant’s gesture.

This unbreakable system of disciplic succession is open and available only to that disciple—or disciple of the disciple—who understands that real success lies not in becoming lord and master, but in voluntarily submitting himself or herself as the obedient servant of the bona fide representative of the parampara. Only when we are surrendered, by the divine grace of Shri Guru, can we your insignificant followers hope to please Lord Shri Krishna unto Who all great sages pray with melodious hymns. For as Your Divine Grace sets the example of serving your spiritual master at every moment, so you have made this once-in-a-billion years’ opportunity available to the most fallen fools like this *patita* who sits helplessly and uselessly before you. But if I have learned anything from your Bhaktivedanta Purports, it is that perfection for the servant is attained only through the pleasure of the spiritual master. The benefits of serving your lotus feet—you who are the divine representative of the Supreme Absolute Truth Personified—are countless. You are the world’s link to the transcendental realm of eternal bliss in direct association of Shri Shri Radha-Krishna. For by giving up our thoughts, words and deeds unto your divine service, and becoming your humble instruments, even unfortunate *mlecchas* as our worthless selves, might have a prayer of becoming linked to the great Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya. By your grace alone we can hope to go back to home Back to Godhead at the end of this short life. The grains of sand are running rapidly through the hourglass of time and soon for each one of us—your remaining disciples—we must come face to face with the good, the bad and the ugly of what we will leave behind us. Only that which we have performed for your pleasure will follow us and save us.

Your Divine Grace never did answer the question as to whether or not I should bind that *Shri Brahma Samhita* for you, as I had so many other volumes of yours. In your usual detached manner, you simply handed the sacred text back to me, very carefully and without speaking. But the silent reply that I received answered any question I should ever have whether in the past, the present or the future. For as you have taught us by your example and your books (*Shri Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya 19.51*):

*brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva
guru-krishna-prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija*

“According to their *karma*, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.”

I beg to become,
Humble servant of your servants’ servants,
Patit Pavana das Adhikary (Patita Uddharana das)
12 October 2013, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Letter from the Spiritual Master:

My Dear Patita Uddharana,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to thank you for the six volumes of our BTG magazines which you have bound up and sent to me. You have done it very nicely, and I am keeping them installed in my bookshelf for convenient reference.

I do not think it is necessary to make any slip-cases as you have kindly offered. But in future, the magazines may

be bound up by the full year and you may enclose in the binding also an index for the year's articles. Soon our BTG will also be printed in other languages, and it will be nice if you can also bind these in similar sets as the English BTGs.

I am very glad to know that your pen is inspired to create, because we are in need of many intelligent writers who can express our Krishna consciousness philosophy nicely just following exactly the transcendental words and purports of our vast Vedic scriptures according to the previous Acaryas of our Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya. And if you continue to work in this writing and publishing of our literatures with steady enthusiasm and sincerity, your success in Krishna Consciousness is certain. Therefore to keep your spiritual strength, always observe the regulative principles strictly and chant at least sixteen rounds of beads daily without fail. This is essential for understanding our philosophy practically to advance in Krishna Consciousness. And we should always avoid mental speculations.

Hope this will meet you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

ACBS:db

19 March 1970, Los Angeles R

(published www.dandavats.com, 2014)

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: Back To Godhead ... is too much important that it must be distributed regularly, as it is the backbone of our mission. So, even it is not printed very expensively and highly, still, it must be distributed even in mimeograph copy. (Letter to BTG Editor Rayarama, 8 June 1968)

Boston Wedding Ceremony and Lecture

His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Boston, May 6, 1969



During a visit in April / May of 1969, Shrila Prabhupada performed the weddings of (l. to r.) Vaikunthanatha dasa with Saradiya devi, Baradwaja dasa with Rukmini devi, and Nanda Kishore dasa and Jahnava devi. I came up from New York at Vaikunthanatha's invitation.

Prabhupāda: Hare Kṛṣṇa. So this is very simple method: chant, dance, eat nicely, and realize God. First of all give to the audience, then... (devotees chanting *japa*) Why don't you collect something, door? Right side bride, left side bridegroom.

Jāhnavā: Right side bride. (wedding fire sacrifice begins)

Prabhupāda: Yes. That's all right.

Devotee: Your right side. (devotees chanting *japa*)

Prabhupāda: And who is going to be this grain ceremony?

Himāvātī: Dayal Nitāi?

Prabhupāda: Little, little. You have not learned your hand? Left-handed. Three times. Just see. You are old. You should learn it. One, two, three, four. That's all. One, two. You don't see? What I'll do? Come on. I'll show you again. One,

two, three, four. Do it again. Is it open? (devotees chanting japa)

Satsvarūpa(?): Yes.

Prabhupāda: Anyone's father, mother has come?

Rukmiṇī: My father and mother.

Prabhupāda: Your father, mother? Any other? No. (chants with devotees responding:)

*om apavitraḥ pavitro vā
sarvāvasthām gato 'pi vā
yaḥ smaret puṇḍarīkākṣam
sa bahyābhyantara-śuciḥ
śrī viṣṇu śrī viṣṇu śrī viṣṇu*

Chant it three times. Three times (devotees responding:)

*vande 'ham śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāmś ca
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānviṭaṁ taṁ sa-jīvam
sādvaitaṁ sāvadhūtaṁ parijana-sahitaṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devaṁ
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gana-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānviṭaṁś ca*

[I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and of all the other preceptors on the path of devotional service. I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇavas and unto the six Gosvāmīs, including Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī and their associates. I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrī Advaita Ācārya Prabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and all His devotees, headed by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. I then offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and all the *gopīs*, headed by Lalitā and Viśākhā.]

(chants standard prayers for fire sacrifice)

This evening we are going to hold a marriage ceremony for three couples of our students. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to understand to always bear in mind or always be in consciousness that we are eternally related with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So the process is to utilize this human form of life for elevating oneself to the highest perfectional stage. There is evolution

of life from lowest animal in the water and up to the highest platform or highest planetary life, where the duration of life is many, many millions of years. The highest planetary system is called Brahmāloka, or where the first created being, Brahmā, lives. The duration of Brahmā's life is explained in the Bhagavad-gītā that forty-three hundred thousands of years multiplied by one thousand makes one twelve hours of that Brahmāloka. Just like there is distinction of the duration of life between the microbes and the human being, similarly, there are different grades of different duration of life in different stage of planetary system. So the life is evolving. Now after evolutionary process from the lower animals, from the aquatics to plant life, vegetable life, then microbes, reptiles, birds, beasts, then we come to the human form of life, this civilized form of life. Now here it is just like crossing. Where we should go next life? Whether I shall promote myself to the higher planetary system or into the spiritual sky, Vaikuṅṭhaloka, or I shall go down again in the evolutionary process of lower animals? That is to be decided. So if we want to go to the higher planetary system, we can go there. If we want to stay here, we can do that. If we want to go down, that we can do. And if we want to go Back to Godhead, that also we can do. So this facility is given in this human form of life. Now it is our choice, where shall I go? Shall I go down to hell, or shall I go up to heaven, or I shall go Back to Godhead, back to home? Everything we can do. So our this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is directly approaching the spiritual sky, back to home, Back to Godhead. No more evolutionary process. That is the advantage of this Kṛṣṇa conscious... If you make your consciousness completely absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, if you understand what is Kṛṣṇa, what is your relationship, how you have to act in that relationship, simply if you learn this science in this life, then it is assured by the Lord Himself, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *tyaktvā dehaṃ punar janma naiti mām eti kaunteya*: [Bg. 4.9] "After leaving this body, one does not come again back to this material world to accept one of the 8,400,000's of species of body, but he goes directly unto Me." *Yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṃ mama* [Bg. 15.6]. "And if one can go back there, then he does not come back again in this material world to accept this material body." And material body means three kinds of miseries, threefold miseries always. And at least threefold miseries are exhibited in four kinds of distresses, namely birth, death, old age, and disease.

So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not a new movement. It is there

always in the Vedic scriptures, but people have forgotten. So we are trying to revive that movement, although in India the movement is there always, especially since the last five hundred years, introduced by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In your country it is introduced since 1966. But people are appreciating. We have got many books and literature, magazines, to convince people about the importance of this movement. And those who are coming to be a serious student of this movement, initiated, they require to follow four principles of regulation. That one, first regulation, is that the student is not allowed to have illicit sex life. In this country, the guardians, the teachers, the government allows the boys and girls to meet together and have illicit sex life without marriage. That is not allowed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. If any boy or girl wants sex life, then he should regularly be married. That is civilized way. Because in the civilized society there is marriage ceremony. According to Vedic system, the father and mother's responsibility is for the child unless they are married. It is the duty of the parents to see that the girl and the boy is married by the supervision of the parents. That is the Vedic way of civilization. In India the ... Especially for the girls. If the girl is above the age of 13 years old, and if she is not married by the father, or in the absence of father, the elder brother ... Mother has not so much responsibility. But the father or the elder brother ... Then it is said that that man, father or elder brother, will go to hell. So it is a great responsibility to take care of the girls. According to Manu-saṁhitā, Vedic principle, woman has no independence. She must be taken care of by somebody. In the early age the father is to take care, in the younger age the husband, a good husband has to take care, and when she is old, the elderly son, he has to take care. But a woman is never allowed to remain independent. That is Vedic principle of life. Actually, the woman is the weaker sex. They require protection by good father, good husband, and good child also. In my case also... There are many cases. I've left my home. I have got my wife, my elderly children, my grandchildren. So they are taking care of my wife. She has no concern. So that is the way of social system. And especially in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we want to give the students complete peace of mind, because without peace of mind nobody can cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [SB 1.2.20].

*evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogataḥ
bhagavat-tattva-vijñānaṁ mukta-saṅgasya jāyate*

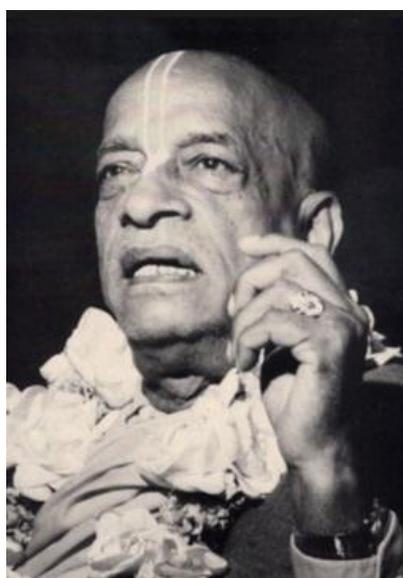
There is a process. This science of understanding God, the science of God, is a great science. People have no knowledge about it, but it is a great science. And the ways and means of understanding God is different from ordinary material science. So the ways and means and the process of understanding the science of Godhead is to hear [SB 1.2.17].

*śṛṅvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

God is situated in everyone's heart. Simply you do not know. He is situated. He is everywhere. Within the atom also, He is present. *Andantarastham paramanu cayantarastham*. God is present within this world, within everything, everywhere, even within the atom. Now, at the present moment, the atomic theory is very prominent, but in the Vedic literature it is said that God is existing even within the atom. *Aṅdāntara-stha-paramāṇu. Paramāṇu* means atom. Therefore *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati* [Bg. 18.61]. *īśvara*, the Supreme Lord, is sitting within your heart. I am also sitting. This is dress. This body is dress, but my place is within the heart. The medical science also says all the energy is coming from the heart. The heart stops to work, that means man is dead. So the soul and the Supersoul both are sitting in the heart. We get this information from Vedic literature. So as soon as we begin hearing about the Supersoul or the Supreme Lord, then the contamination which are accumulated on the covering of our heart for so many years of our past work, by simply hearing, by electrifying or by lighting, it becomes clear. *Śṛṅvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ* [SB 1.2.17]. To hear about God is itself a pious activity. Even if we do not understand, simply if we hear this chanting, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma..., one becomes gradually a pious man. Apart from any other realization, he becomes a pious man. In this way, as soon as we hear about God, we become cleansed of all material contamination. Then our three modes of material nature, namely we are... This world is moving under three modes: the modes of goodness, the modes of passion and the modes of ignorance. So generally, people are influenced by the modes of passion and modes of ignorance. Very few people are on the modes of goodness. But this process of hearing about God will gradually place one on the platform of the

modes of goodness. *Sthitam sattve prasīdati*. And the symptoms, as soon as he's placed on the modes of goodness, the symptom will be that he'll feel satisfied. He'll feel satisfied. *Prasīdati*. In this way, when he is satisfied, when he is on the platform of goodness or the platform of satisfaction... That is wanted. *Prasanna-manaso. Evaṁ prasanna-manaso* [SB 1.2.20]. How it is attained? Simply by hearing, the process. Process is simply hearing, submissively hearing. Then he comes to the platform of goodness, and at that time, the passion and ignorance is completely moved out. And then he can understand what is the science of God, what is God, what is relationship.

So we want to give chance to all to raise oneself on that platform of goodness. And on the platform of goodness, there is no chance of indulging in passion and ignorance. Therefore although it is not my duty... Because I am a *sannyāsī*, I have nothing to do with social activity. Still, because in this country, mostly I see the boys and girls are not married, I have introduced this marriage system in our society, and the result is very good. You'll be very pleased to know that in London I have sent six boys and girls who were married by me in my presence. Formerly, they were not married. You



know as the other boys and girls lived, they were also living in that way. But the result has been very excellent. They are preaching there Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are not very big philosopher, nor Vedantist, neither, I mean to say, born in the Vedic civilized way—just like ordinary way—but they have been trained only under my direction for only two years. But they are working in London very wonderfully, so much so that people have come to know that there is a movement, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and London Times, in big heading, they wrote, “Kṛṣṇa Chanting Startles London.” So formerly many *sannyāsīs* went there to introduce this movement, but they failed. But these sincere boys and girls... They are not very aged also—not more than twenty-six years, any one of them. But they are doing very nice. So the platform of purity is so nice that they can play tremendous...

So we want such pairs in our society. We are not dry. Everything is there. The hedonists, they want eat, drink, be merry and enjoy. These four things for the hedonists, they are going to hell. But our, the same things are there. We are dancing, we are chanting, we are eating, and we have love also between husband and wife, between boys and girls. We allow everything. But everything is targeted to achieve to the highest goal of life, Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa. That is the significance of this life. We don't stop anything, but we regulate everything to achieve the highest perfection of life. That is our aim. *Adānta-gobhir viśatām tamisram* [SB 7.5.30]. One who does not know this technique... Everyone, every living entity, is by nature hankering after joy, joyful life. That is his nature. Because... Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, you see. They are also transcendental unity. Kṛṣṇa is representing as a young boy, sixteen years. Similarly, Rādhārāṇī is also a young girl. They are chanting and They are playing on flute and They're enjoying life. They have got Their associates. So it is not dry, but it is highest perfectional stage, in purity. Not in the material modes of passion and ignorance. So everyone is hankering after that pure, joyful life, but he does not know where to get it. That is the defect. That information we are giving. Here is the life. You just try to approach Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and you'll have full life of enjoyment. *Ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt (Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.12)*. In the *Vedānta-sūtra* it is stated that the Supreme Person, the Supreme Lord, is full of enjoyment. He's not morose. He's not old. He is not without a joyful life. He is full of joyful life. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to transfer everyone to that platform of full joyful life. So in order to give them facility for acquiring this highest goal of life, we have introduced the marriage... The marriage system is there also according to our *Vaiṣṇava Smṛti*. *Smṛti* means regulative, the law book, the statute book. Married life is there. We are preaching the cult of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He also married. All the five associates of Lord Caitanya, they also married. Kṛṣṇa also married. So marriage is not bad. Marriage is... It is not that unless one becomes a *sannyāsī* or a strict *brahmacārī*, he cannot attain the highest perfection of life. No. Even in married life. But one has to adjust it. Married life means not sex enjoyment. It is not a license for sex enjoyment. Although it is some sort of license, but it can be utilized. It can be utilized for producing children of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And at least, one should be satisfied. The husband will help the wife, the wife will help the husband advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the benefit of their country, for the benefit of the total human society.

Thank you very much.

Devotees: Hare Kṛṣṇa. (obeisances)

Prabhupāda: You're... nobody is guardian? First of all, you come here. Both of you, come sit down. Satsvarūpa? Where is Satsvarūpa?

Satsvarūpa: Yes.

Prabhupāda: Come here. So you can say that “Śāradīyā, my Godsister, was so long under my care. Now I give Śāradīyā to you, Vaikuṅṭhanātha, in your charge.”

Satsvarūpa: Śāradīyā, my Godsister, has so long been in my charge. Now I give you unto my Godbrother Vaikuṅṭhanātha.

Prabhupāda: Now you say that “I accept her as my wife.”

Vaikuṅṭhanātha: I accept her as my wife.

Prabhupāda: “And take charge of her...”

Vaikuṅṭhanātha: And take charge of her...

Prabhupāda: “...throughout her life...”

Vaikuṅṭhanātha: ...throughout her life...

Prabhupāda: “...and shall see to her comfort, provide with all necessities of life, without thinking of any personal gratification.” (Vaikuṅṭhanātha repeats) You say that “I accept you as my husband. (Śāradīyā repeating) I shall serve you throughout my life as your most obedient servant.” (chuckling) Yes. “And we shall live together peacefully for prosecuting Kṛṣṇa consciousness, forgetting everything else, and live happily.” Now change your garlands.

Devotees: Haribol!

Prabhupāda: Now you sit down and cover the head. Yes. Cover the head. Yes. Just like... There is no, that red? Vermillion?

Himāvatī: Where is that red crayon?

Prabhupāda: Now you can sit down there, next her. No, you sit left. Now change. You sit here. Yes. Now she'll always remain on your left. You come forward. Now you say...

Satsvarūpa: Jāhnavā has so long, my Godsister, has so long been in my care. I now give her over to Nanda Kiśora prabhu.

Prabhupāda: You say you shall “take charge of Jāhnavā, my wife, (Nanda Kiśora repeating) and I shall look after her comforts throughout her life, and I shall supply her all necessities of life.” And you say that “I accept you as my husband. (Jāhnavā repeating) I shall see to your comfort throughout my life.

Without any separation we shall live peacefully, in happiness and distress, without any separation, for executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Change your garland and place. Jaya. Now you cover her head like that. Yes. Not in that way. From this part. All right. Change your seat. Yes.

Devotee: Should he apply it?

Prabhupāda: Yes. You apply it. That’s all right. Now you come, You, sit down here. Sit down here. First of all, sit down. Your father is present?

Rukmiṇī: Yes.

Prabhupāda: You may come sit here. You can say that “My daughter was in charge of me so long, now I give in charge to this boy.”

Rukmiṇī’s father: My daughter was in charge of me so long. I now give her to...

Prabhupāda: His name is Baradrāja.

Rukmiṇī’s father: Baradrāja.



Prabhupāda: So you say, “I accept (Baradrāja repeating) Rukmiṇī as my wife. I shall maintain her throughout my life, supply all necessities of life, and we shall work together for prosecuting Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” You say that “I accept you (Rukmiṇī repeating) as my husband, and I shall serve you as your most obedient wife, to keep you in all comforts, in all distress and happiness, and we shall continue our life for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Now change. Change the garland. Mind that this promise has been made before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. You cannot change all these promises. Change your seat. Cover the head. Cover the head and give her this red. Cover it

nicely. You see, here. You should keep your wife always covered. (laughter) Don’t allow this miniskirt or minishirt. (laughter) According to Vedic civilization, respectable woman cannot be seen even by the sun. *Asūryam paśyat*. How can you avoid sun? But it is said like that. The sun will find difficulty to see one man’s woman. Yes. *Asūryam paśyat*. *Asūryam*. Sūrya means the sun. Sun cannot. Sun will also hanker after her: “How can I see that

woman?” (chuckles) So woman should be always in privacy. They should be respectfully protected by the husband and the father. That is the way. All right. Then it is finished. Now let us perform yajña. (devotees offer obeisances) Now chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. After performance of yajña. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Mix it. Mix it.

Satsvarūpa: ...can use that?

Prabhupāda: No, no. Hand. Now you can sit comfortably. (devotees chant *japa*) Now take, you know, little, little, everyone. When I say “*svāhā*” three times, very little, little take. We’ll have to continue. (responsively with devotees:) *Namaḥ apavitraḥ pavitro vā sarvāvasthām ...* No, why you are not chanting? (devotees were responding softly, now more loudly) ...*gato ‘pi vā yaḥ smaret puṇḍarīkākṣam sa bahyābhyanantara-śuciḥ. Śrī viṣṇu śrī viṣṇu śrī viṣṇu.* (continues prayers for fire sacrifice). Why not take a group photo of these newly married couples? It will be nice.

Guest: That’d be great. It’d be beautiful. Sure.

Himāvatī: Should they go behind or should they turn around?

Prabhupāda: As you like.

Guest: Could the wife be seated and the husband in back of her?

Prabhupāda: Just like they are sitting, left and right.

Guest: ...if we had a better place to...

Prabhupāda: (continues chanting) *Svāhā svāhā svāhā.* So you want to take just now or after finishing this?

Satsvarūpa: Prabhupāda, he wants a couple there, a couple there, and a couple behind you.

Prabhupāda: That’s all right.

Guest: Or maybe two couples here and a third couple over there or something.

Prabhupāda: You come here. Sit down there. Yes, sit down. Yes, like that. Why you are standing? Sit. (continues prayers)

*namo gaura-kiśorāya sākṣād-vairāgya-mūrtaye
vipralambha-rasāmbodhe pādāmbhujāya te namaḥ
svāhā svāhā svāhā
namo bhaktivinodāya sac-cid-ānanda-nāmine
gaura-śakti-svarūpāya rūpānuga-varāya te
svāhā svāhā svāhā*

(continues prayers for fire sacrifice) Now you take one banana, this part of banana, and stand up. Take each one of you. Supply. Stand up.

*namo brahmaṇya-devāya go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca
jagad-dhitāya kṛṣṇāya govindāya namo namaḥ*

(repeats twice) Now take this, silently. Yes. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. (repeats)
Now bow down.

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta svāmin iti nāmine*

(Prabhupāda repeats twice) All right. Now chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Devotees: Hare Kṛṣṇa!

Prabhupāda: And be happy.

Devotees: Haribol! All glories to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga! Haribol! All glories to Prabhupāda!

Prabhupāda: Now chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Dance, chant now. Enjoy life. (*kīrtana*-Prabhupāda talking in background) (*kīrtana, prema-dhvanī*) (obeisances) Prasāda? You are sitting uncomfortably?

Guest: No. (devotees chant japa)

Prabhupāda: Now distribute *prasāda*. (*bhajana: Govinda jaya jaya*)

Haṁsadūta: There's no draft? The window's not open? (*kīrtana* in background)

Prabhupāda: No, no. That's all right. I have informed your brother in Germany, Kṛṣṇa dāsa, "Your sister is going to be married..." Stop. You can now eat. Stop. (*kīrtana* stops)

Devotee: Take *prasādam*.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Take *prasādam*. You can play the records. That's all. (laughter) Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa... You also eat. Everyone eat. Yes. I think it is nicely prepared. You can take one plate. (laughter) Yes. ("Hare Kṛṣṇa Happening" record comes on as everyone takes *prasāda*) Let me see (?).

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda-
svādv-anna-trptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān*

*kṛtvaiva tṛptim bhajataḥ sadaiva
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam ***

The spiritual master is satisfied when nice foodstuff, *prasādam*, is distributed, and it is eaten by the devotees. Our is not dry speculation. Everything substantial.

Himāvatī: We need another plate.

Prabhupāda: These Press representatives, they are taking?

Haṁsadūta: Yes, they're all from the Press.

Prabhupāda: So you have not offered them *prasādam*?

Himāvatī: Everyone has.

Prabhupāda: They should have been given. Anyway, something should have been given. You are going? She is going with her father?

Himāvatī: He was once in Montreal. Remember? Rukmiṇī's father once came to Montreal?

Prabhupāda: Yes. She is her mother?

Himāvatī: Yes.

Prabhupāda: She is not elderly. Mother is eating?

Himāvatī: Yes.

Prabhupāda: Forty, thirty-five years.

Himāvatī: Yes. Rukmiṇī is only seventeen. Rukmiṇī is seventeen. She's not very old.

Prabhupāda: She is only... She is the first child?

Himāvatī: I don't know. I think so, first child. She has one sister.

Satsvarūpa: Just one announcement. Tomorrow night is Swami Bhaktivedanta's last appearance, last lecture, last *kīrtana* in Boston, and that's at the International Student's Association. They have a place at 33 Garden (?) Street. He'll be speaking there. But we'll be carrying on this sublime teaching, especially in the form of *saṅkīrtana*. We'll be chanting in the streets. We'll be pushing this more than anything. Then the feast, of course, Hare Kṛṣṇa Love Feast. But especially if you see us in the parks and the streets, join us and feel this real transcendental bliss by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, all summer, as long as the weather is nice. (indistinct) a basket around. If you can give something it will help for the cost of this feast and wedding. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa.
(end) ♪

Suhotra Maharaja takes us from the bare beginnings of ISKCON on New York's Lower East Side to Boston and beyond...

Entries from the In2MeC Diaries

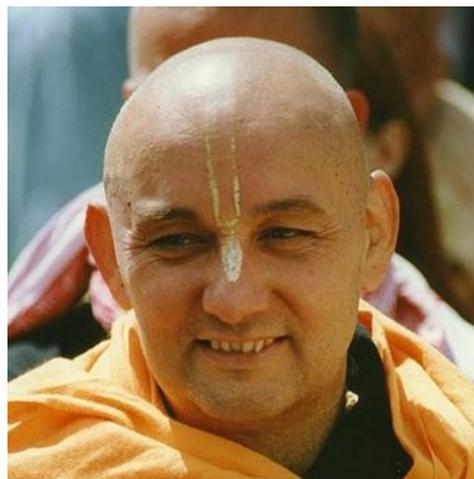
of

His Holiness Suhotra Maharaja

1. How I Almost Missed My Initiation

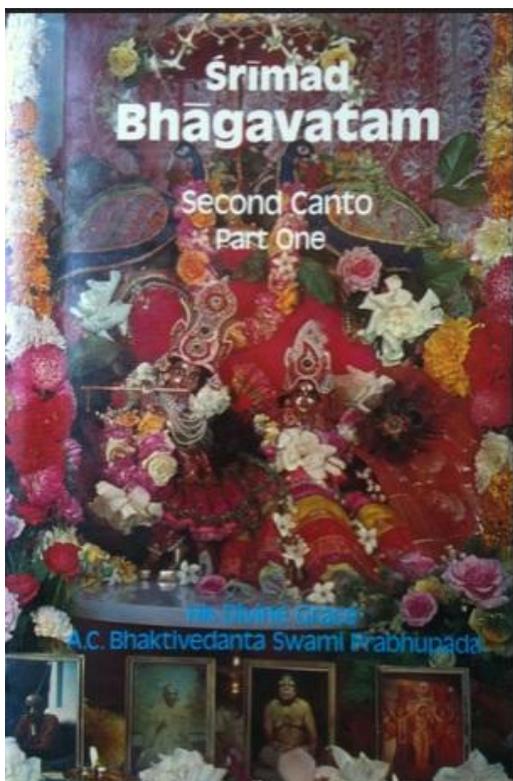
Kolhapur, Maharastra, 20 January 2003

In2MeC: The first time I met Shрила Prabhupada, he let me see that he knows me, and that he wants me to serve him. The second time I met him, he let me see that I ought not to be whimsical, and that he is served when I serve his servants. But on my third meeting with Shрила Prabhupada, I almost threw it all away.



I mentioned previously my “lunar personality.” Say what you will about numerology, but I find that it works for me. Some devotees—I could name a couple Godbrothers, but I won’t—are into the Enneagram, a New Age system of personality typology. Like numerology, the Enneagram system analyzes the human personality into nine basic types. I checked out the Enneagram a few years ago but after a period of fascination I finally rejected it as being too subjective. Numerology is more objective because it is tied to objective numbers like the birth date. Indian numerology fits hand in glove with the nine planetary values of astrology, and with the three *prakrtis* of Ayurveda. It is not free of speculation, however, so buyers beware. Anyway, I am a 2, the number of Soma, the moon. Actually I am an 11, but in numerology, no number has a value greater than 9. So 11 is 1+1, or 2. Likewise, 12 is 1+2 or 3 (3 is the value of Guru or Jupiter). Even a big number can be

reduced in this way--for example, 3471 is $3+4+7+1$ or 15, which in turn is $1+5$ or 6, the numerical value of Venus.



But multiple-digit numbers (10 and higher) retain a scent of their multiple values even after they are reduced to a single digit (between 1 to 9). So being an 11 means I am a special type of 2. Regular 2's are thoroughly feminine entities; they do not shine on their own but must reflect the light of a masculine power, i. e. number 1, which is the value of the sun. However, an 11 is a 2 formed of two 1's. Therefore, while still being emotional and intuitive like other 2's, an 11 is obstinate, revolutionary, and authoritative. Furthermore, since 11 is a mystic number, people whose psychic number is 11 are very mystical. Yet overall, 11's are still 2's, meaning that their minds are very much influenced by the moon.

This is both good and bad, since the moon is both light (as on Purnima day) and dark (as on *amavasya* day). Regarding the dark side, to quote from a book--"they [number 2's] fall victim to their delusions and doubtful nature. They become mistrustful and anxious and are caught in their own internal dialogues."

The day after Shрила Prabhupada installed Shri Shri Radha-Gopiballabha, I and the other "*bhaktas*" and "*bhaktins*" (remember, we didn't use those terms then) of the Boston temple were to be initiated in a morning ceremony at about 10:00 AM. Unfortunately, earlier that morning I fell into a darkened state of mind exactly as described in the quotation above.

My name was posted on the list of those to be initiated. I saw the list. But I didn't see my name. I suppose my own nagging, self-deprecating internal dialogue--"I'm not worthy to be Shрила Prabhupada's disciple"—forced my mind to censor out what my eyes were trying to show me. My doubtful nature willed that I would not be initiated. I was too useless, therefore I had to be

passed over. Shrila Prabhupada would not take me after all.

And that is why, during the initiation, I sat somewhere among the many guests who were coming each day to see Shrila Prabhupada. Funny, I thought as I watched the proceedings, there is an empty place among the initiates seated around the *yajna-kunda*: an extra paper plate with a three-strand set of neck beads on it. Who could that be for?

Names were called, and one by one the initiates came forward to receive their *japa* beads and names from His Divine Grace. Suddenly my name was called.

Like 48 hours earlier, at that moment Shrila Prabhupada finished his arrival lecture, I once again froze. What was I so afraid of that I could neither move nor speak when Shrila Prabhupada called me to his lotus feet? “It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live,” said a Roman thinker of old. In other words, I should have been more afraid of not answering Prabhupada’s call and thus not beginning my spiritual life. I was in the grip of *maya* in the form of a stultifying terror that I had inherited from many births in a world of savagery and deceit.

The temple instantly went pin-drop silent. Tension charged the air like static electricity. I don’t believe anybody actually looked at me—all eyes were on Shrila Prabhupada—but I felt everyone’s thoughts sweep across my gloomy mindscape like searchlights: “What are you doing there? What’s the matter with you? Snap out of it!” “That’s all right,” Shrila Prabhupada said calmly. It was as if a Vaikuntha breeze swept through the temple room. The mental strain that my stupidity had put everyone under—not the least myself—went poof!, right out the window.

After the fire sacrifice, a disconcerted Satsvarupa Prabhu came up to me. “Roger Prabhu, why weren’t you there for your initiation?” he asked, his eyes large with concern. You may recall from reading the *Lilamrta* that he stayed home and typed up Prabhupada’s dictation during the initiation ceremony at which he was supposed to become Shrila Prabhupada’s disciple. Afterward, when he handed Prabhupada the typed pages, His Divine Grace told him, “If you love me, I’ll love you. “

“My name wasn’t on the list!” I moaned. “I didn’t know I was supposed to be there. “

He led me through the temple’s side entrance into the hall where the list was posted. He looked at it, not saying a word. He just kept looking at it until I looked at it. There it was. . . my name, in the midst of the other names, right where it had been all along.

“Oh,” was all I could manage to say in a small voice.

He faced me and nodded reassuringly. “There will be another initiation this evening for the devotees who’ve come from other temples. Please don’t miss it.”

At the evening initiation I got my name, Suhotra dasa (Shrila Prabhupada said, “Means ‘very nice priest’”) but due to a mix-up, I got no initiation *japa* beads. Or rather, Shridama Prabhu, the Miami temple president, seeing that because I was a last-minute add-on therefore there was no *japa-mala* for Prabhupada to chant upon and hand me, gave Prabhupada his personal *japa-mala*! I didn’t notice this happening. All I knew was, I received from my spiritual master’s lotus hand these beautiful red beads that I immediately became attached to. After the fire sacrifice, Shridama Prabhu came up to me and said, “Sorry, those are my beads,” and took them back. Mercy for him: Shrila Prabhupada chanted on his initiation beads twice.

My sweet Lord.

But the stalwart Harer Nama Prabhu came to the rescue. The next day he had me buy some wooden beads at Tandy’s (a hobby chain that must have sold thousands of beads to ISKCON devotees in the early days). I did a lousy job of stringing them (I’d never done that before). Since by the time I was done stringing them Shrila Prabhupada had flown to New York, Harer Nama Prabhu personally took the beads to the Henry Street Temple and had Shrila Prabhupada chant on them there. When he returned, I had my initiation *japa-mala*.

Some years later I lost those beads while on book distribution in the city of Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island, Canada. The beads that I use now were chanted on by Shrila Prabhupada in Vrindavana.

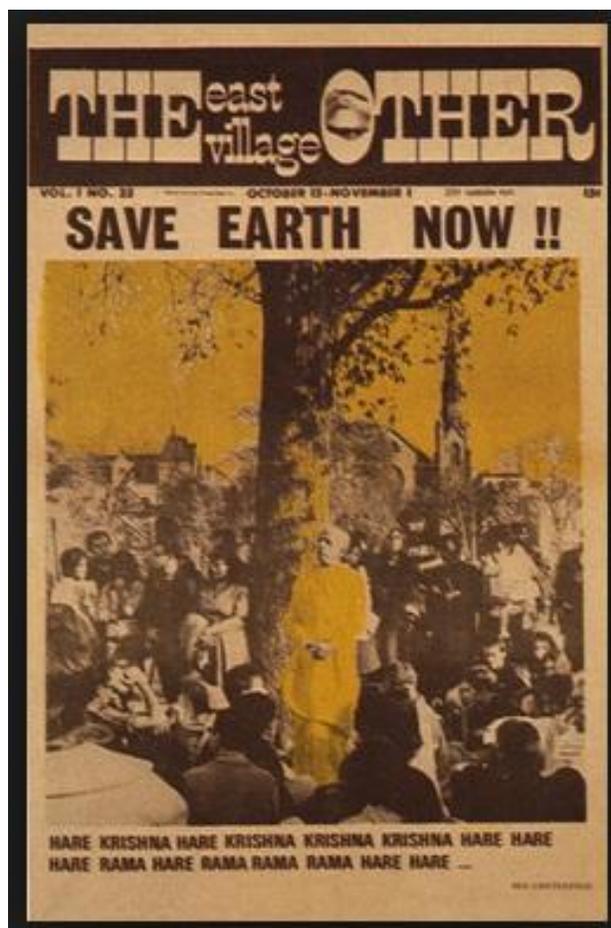
From my fiasco of a first initiation I learned that while I am prone to make mistakes in my spiritual life, fortunately Shrila Prabhupada is prone to forgive them.

All glories to Shrila Prabhupada! ☞

2. Meeting David Allen

HH Suhotra Maharaja

*In2MeC, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, 18 January 2003: Shrila Prabhupada Lilamrta, Ch 17, takes us to the Bowery in New York City, where in 1966 Shrila Prabhupada shared a loft with a young man named David Allen. Prabhupada hoped David would become his first initiated disciple. Unfortunately he continued to take drugs even while being trained by His Divine Grace. At last he went mad. David's madness prompted Shrila Prabhupada to vacate the loft. From there, with the help of Carl Yeargens (Karlapati dasa) and Michael Grant (Mukunda dasa), Prabhupada moved to 2nd Avenue, where his *kirtanas* and classes in the Matchless Gifts storefront began.*



I got to know David Allen when he

visited the Boston temple sometime in the winter of either late '70 or early '71. Why do I remember this? Yesterday's journal entry alluded to the falldowns of senior disciples of Shrila Prabhupada. In a way, David's case is the first such story in the history of ISKCON.

I recall the great respect the devotees of Boston temple showed him. He wasn't initiated, but he was the first candidate for initiation. For a time he was the only person in whom Shrila Prabhupada found a potential for serious spiritual life. He was special.

Nowadays my older Godbrothers and -sisters who spent a lot of personal time with Shrila Prabhupada, who did great service to His Divine Grace, and who may have been sannyasis or even gurus, but who suffered setbacks in their spiritual life, are treated (or should be treated) with the same kind of respect that I saw the Boston devotees show to David.

David was a simple fellow, no pretensions. But because he'd been touched so early on by Shrila Prabhupada, there was something different about him, something I found appealing. I just had to talk to him. He didn't have a great deal to say, really. No amazing revelations, like I'd hoped. But Shrila Prabhupada had clearly made a deep impression on his life. He was in awe of His Divine Grace. I could see that David would never forget him. And that's what made David so special.

There was another person whose birth name I've forgotten. He finally joined ISKCON after Shrila Prabhupada's *nitya-lila pravishtha*, and was initiated as Prabhupada dasa. I think he serves at present in South America. Anyway, this young man ran a second-hand shop not far from the Boston temple. But during the Matchless Gifts days he lived in New York and used to visit with Shrila Prabhupada.

I found his association very appealing also. In those early Boston days of my memory he kept long hair and beard (David was more clean-cut), but he told funny stories of his times with Prabhupada. He said he had a lot of trouble with his wife and used to go to Prabhupada to lament. Prabhupada would listen for a while, then reach for one of his folded saffron sannyasi lungis that were stacked

on a shelf. This he would hold out to the young man as an invitation that he ought to renounce his marriage and take the *sannyasa* order. The young man said, “Oh no, Swamiji! Not that!” Shrila Prabhupada returned the *lungi* to the shelf and remarked something like, “So then you must continue suffering. “

As a new devotee I felt it was my great fortune to associate with David and the future Prabhupada dasa. Now in ISKCON, by default, I am a “senior disciple” of Shrila Prabhupada. But I still feel very fortunate whenever I can associate with anyone who carries with him or her the oceanic mercy of extended personal association of Krishna’s pure devotee during the beginning days of his mission. Such fortunate persons may appear before our imperfect eyes as “fallen” in some way, as “not up to standard. “ But if they carry Shrila Prabhupada in the core of their heart then in my opinion they are not of this world. They are of the spiritual world, Prabhupada’s world. As soon as they start talking about Shrila Prabhupada, their eternal identities as his servants birth after birth become apparent.

Here in Kolhapur I was asked, “Why did they fall down?” Well, how do we know they fell down? I see that internally, in their hearts, they continue to mediate upon their service to Shrila Prabhupada. And I see that if Shrila Prabhupada returned, they would instantly resume all the external formalities of service to him. They are Prabhupada conscious. They are *rasa-graha*: they cannot forget the nectar of his association. No matter the external situation or activities, if one is *rasa-graha*, or retaining consciousness of the nectar of the lotus feet of the Lord (which means the nectar of the pure devotee who is always situated at those lotus feet), one’s spiritual identity is established.

*na vai jano jatu kathancanavrajen
mukunda-sevy anyavad anga samsrtim
smaran mukundanghry-upaguhanam punar
vihatum icchen na rasa-graho janah*

My dear Vyasa, even though a devotee of Lord Krishna sometimes falls down somehow or other, he certainly does not undergo material existence like others [fruitive workers, etc.] because a person who has once relished the taste of the lotus feet of the Lord can do nothing but remember that ecstasy again and again.

(SB 1. 5. 19)

Someone may ask, “Well, why don’t such fortunate persons just come back to ISKCON and serve in the institution like the rest of us?”

Often the sad answer is that they are very sensitive about the minimization of His Divine Grace that they find in ISKCON after Prabhupada’s departure from this world. If you think that Shrila Prabhupada is always glorified and never minimized in today’s ISKCON, you are overlooking certain unhappy developments.

For example, the BBT recently published a book for distribution to the public in the USA. It is a very pretty book written in an up to date style. But it associates Shrila Prabhupada in a favorable way with Vivekananda, a Mayavadi whom Shrila Prabhupada severely condemned. It associates His Divine Grace favorably with a host of other mundane persons, one of whom is still alive and taking active part in criticizing Shrila Prabhupada on the Internet.

I’ve noticed that many of our present-day ISKCON devotees are able to shrug this off: “Anyway, the book sells, and who among the karmis is gonna take notice of those details?” Well, for one thing, Prabhu, this is the Internet age. Anybody can get on the Net and type this list of mundane names into their favorite search engine. Voila! Mayavada missionizing and Prabhupada minimizing right there on your home computer screen. But apart from that, the main thing is the book is an offense to Shrila Prabhupada. If the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust would have ever printed a favorable mention of the name Vivekananda during the years of Prabhupada’s physical presence on this planet, a bomb blast would have gone off that we would still be talking about now. Just because Prabhupada is not physically visible to us now does not mean he does not know about this book and is not unhappy with it.

My Godbrothers and Godsisters who gave their youthful lives to Shrila Prabhupada and who still love him in the core of their hearts are deeply pained by this new BBT book. I know, I talk to them. So why should they take part in a movement that produces and distributes offenses to their spiritual master?

All glories to Shrila Prabhupada! ☺

3. Why Don't You Write?"

HH Suhotra Maharaja

In2MeC, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, 7 January 2003: In 1978 I had an extremely vivid dream of Shrila Prabhupada. It opened with me finding myself in a forest at night. Up ahead I saw an encampment—a group of persons seated in a ring around a fire under a very large tree. I came nearer and discerned these men to be *sadhus*. All at once I was astounded to see that on a simple wooden platform placed in the center of the group sat Shrila Prabhupada! He was wrapped from head to foot in a brown *chadar*. I ran forward and fell prostrate in the dust, His Divine Grace on my left, the campfire on my right. Not only did I fall into dust, but into shock as well. My sweet Lord, Shrila Prabhupada is here again!

I raised my head to see him smiling reassuringly at me, his face glowing yet ancient-looking in the dancing firelight, his eyes sparkling yet dark like glistening pools of oil. I couldn't find a word to say to him. But the only thought on my mind was, "How can I serve you, Shrila Prabhupada?" In 1978 that was a profound and at the same time poignant question, now that His Divine Grace had physically departed this world. He nodded his head from side to side in his characteristic manner and, still smiling, said only this to me: "Why don't you write?"

I awoke. Stunned, I could not take what I had just experienced as anything less than a direct *darshan* of my spiritual master. I had just gotten from him, in all my worthlessness, a direct order.

Since that time I labored to fulfill that order by writing three books that were published in the 1990's. This E-journal, appearing here under the title In2-MeC, is in further pursuance of that order. (If you find the title puzzling, well, think about it!) I call it a journal but I will not be limited to merely recording the things I am doing "in real time." Here, I'll be writing. For Prabhupada.

When I was in high school and college I used to think I was blessed with a

talent to write. But in fact it is only a blessing if you can write for Prabhupada and Krishna. It is a curse to write for one's own self. My very senior Godbrother, His Grace Brahmananda Prabhu, related to me that the only time he saw Shrila Prabhupada actually curse someone was when a gifted disciple turned down writing for Prabhupada to write for himself. Shrila Prabhupada offered that, "If you desire to make a name for yourself as an author, we can give you all the credit for writing *Nectar of Devotion*, which is ready for publication." This person refused, got to his feet and turned to walk away from the spiritual master of the universe. In transcendental anger, Shrila Prabhupada called after him, "Those who are envious and mischievous, who are the lowest among men, I perpetually cast into the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life. Attaining repeated birth amongst the species of demoniac life, O son of Kunti, such persons can never approach Me. Gradually they sink down into the most abominable type of existence." His Divine Grace actually cited only the Sanskrit of these verses (Bg 16. 19-20), but there you have the meaning. And indeed this person sank into abomination and many years later died most painfully of AIDS.

Save me, Shrila Prabhupada! Please accept this attempt to serve your lotus feet.

4. "My name is Prabhupada dasa"

HH Suhotra Swami Maharaja

In2MeC, First Day at IBSA ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Sadhana Asrama, Govardhana, Shri Vrindavana Dhama, 21 April 2003 In2MeC: Now, the second extraordinary thing that happened today is that after 32 years I again met P R A B H U P A D A D A S A !!!!!!!

Readers of In2-MeC will find reference to him in a January entry, the same one in which I told you about my meeting David Allen in Boston in late '70 or early '71. Prabhupada dasa was the one to whom in 1966 Shrila Prabhupada offered a *sannyasi lungi* when he came complaining to His Divine Grace about his

material sufferings.

After talking with him today I can fill out the whole story. Prabhupada dasa was then Lon Solomon. In 1966 he lived in the East Village, in an apartment on East 9th Street between Avenues B and C. He was together with a black woman who was very attached to him.

At one point he had a drug experience that cost him his hold on reality. He ran away from the girl and started living on the street. Sometimes he slept in the Paradox and the Forum, two bohemian hangouts. Sometimes he slept in a city park. And sometimes, by the kindness of the devotees, he slept at 26 2nd Avenue (Matchless Gifts), the first ISKCON center.

In that drug-crazed condition he thought of himself as a preacher. He had attended some of Prabhupada's lectures and knew the basic teachings of Krishna Consciousness. And he tried to spread those teaching among his own associates. His hippie friends used to complain, "Lon, don't preach." But they'd hand him a guitar and say, "Just chant." He could play guitar nicely, so he'd lead them in a *kirtana*. At least they were enthusiastic about that.

Shrila Prabhupada knew Lon. Once, while under the influence of lysergic acid diethylemide (LSD), he came Matchless Gifts to hear His Divine Grace lecture. Shrila Prabhupada looked right at him and said, "Lon, did you take LSD?"

In those days it was very easy to meet and talk with Prabhupada in his apartment behind Matchless Gifts. So once Lon came up to explain the state of his mind to His Divine Grace. Actually, Prabhupada dasa admits, he was in a psychotic condition, so he was not able to speak in any sensible manner. But Shrila Prabhupada listened patiently as he babbled, "I'm just like you, Swamiji. I am a mendicant preacher. But I can't maintain! I have no place to stay! I have a message but no way to give it to the world!"

Shrila Prabhupada responded, "Tsk, tsk, tsk." He reached behind him and picked up a *lungi*, holding it out to Lon. "Simply join us, we will solve all your problems." Prabhupada dasa told me at that instant his mind began churning out one insane thought after another. In exaggerated panic he wondered, "Now

what am I supposed to do? Just take my pants off and put this thing on?” He got to his feet and backed away from Shrila Prabhupada in the direction of the door behind him. Prabhupada stood up too and followed him, still holding out the *lungi*. At the door, as Lon was leaving, a crystal tear glided down from the corner of one of Shrila Prabhupada’s eyes. “Please come back,” he said.

Prabhupada dasa remembers a class from October 1966 in which Shrila Prabhupada said to his listeners, who were mostly still in *karmi* dress and hardly able to follow the four regulative principles, “Some of you will go to England. Some of you will go to Europe. You will spread Krishna consciousness all over the world.” At that time Lon was very much into Beatles music, particularly their album Revolver (I believe the mystical song Tomorrow Never Knows is on this LP). When Lon heard Prabhupada talk about his followers going to London, he thought, “Wow! If I hang around the Swami, I’ll meet the Beatles.” He foresaw himself preaching to the Fab Four about Krishna.

I commented, “You know, Prabhu, that could have actually happened, had you really hung around Shrila Prabhupada. Syamasundara Prabhu and his wife Malati, Gurudasa and the others who went to London were themselves hardly more than hippies at the time. But by hanging around Prabhupada they got the mission to go to England and preach to the Beatles.” He nodded and smiled. “Oh yes. I know that very well. But I was too crazy in those days. “

Through the years, Lon Solomon gradually overcame his craziness. By the time I met him in Boston, he was the manager of what he calls a “junk shop. “ He considers that he was still half out of his mind even at that time, but at least he was doing something productive. Later, after I left Boston to travel with Vishnujana Maharaja, he got a bigger shop that became quite successful, and he began donating regularly to the temple. He met Shrila Prabhupada again during the early ‘70’s and tried to explain to His Divine Grace that his mind was finally getting in order. But perhaps it wasn’t in order enough. He once wrote a letter to Prabhupada complaining about something the Boston temple president had done that Lon thought was unfair, but got no reply.

Finally he joined the Boston temple. On Rama-navami, April 1975, he was initiated by Shrila Prabhupada, through the mail, as Prabhupada dasa. This

name was especially arranged for him by the Boston temple president in light of all the early association Lon had with Prabhupada. The initiation ceremony was performed by HH Tamal Krishna Maharaja.

At his initiation ceremony Lon had an experience that reminded me of my own when I was initiated, when I thought my name was not on the list. Generally when a *bhakta* or *bhaktin* got a spiritual name from Shrila Prabhupada, it would start with the same letter as the first karmi name. Hence, for example, Bruce Scharf was initiated as Brahmananda, Greg Scharf as Gargamuni, Steve Guarino as Satsvarupa, Howard Wheeler as Hayagriva, and so on. So in Lon's initiation ceremony the names were being announced in alphabetical order, and as usual every spiritual name started with the same letter as the devotee's karmi name. The names progressed past the letter "I" and still Lon was not called up to take his beads. So he started thinking that because he had done so poorly on *sankirtana* the day before, he had been passed over. He would not get initiated!

Actually, he had even said the day before to a devotee named Shrinatha (a very saintly Godbrother who years ago passed away from this world) that "I collected so little today, I should not take initiation tomorrow." Shrinatha replied sweetly, "You just take the mercy." Now that the "I" names were finished up, Lon's heart sank into deep depression. Suddenly the Boston president said, "Now it is time for a very special devotee to receive his name and beads. Since he had so much merciful association with Shrila Prabhupada in the very beginning of ISKCON's history in New York, Bhakta Lon is now Prabhupada dasa!" You can imagine the loud shouts of "Jaya!" and the heavy beating of the *mridangas*.

Ten days before Shrila Prabhupada left this planet, Prabhupada dasa received his second initiation. It wasn't until the 1980's, long after I had left the States to preach in Europe, that I received word from others that "that guy in Boston who owned the junk shop, you know, who knew Shrila Prabhupada in 1966, is initiated as Prabhupada dasa." I was under the impression that he was initiated by a disciple of Shrila Prabhupada. But no, he is my Godbrother. How wonderful.

My meeting him again after all these years was a beautiful experience for both

of us. He is just now reading my book, *Substance and Shadow* and likes it very much. He wants to talk again with me about it after he's had a day to put some questions down on paper. He is a real old-style intellectual who majored in philosophy at Brooklyn College. Just wonderful to talk to!

This is how we met here at IBSA. During *prasadam* time, he was sitting some distance from me. I was talking with Keshava Bharati Maharaja, but I noticed this older devotee in *brahmacari* dress glancing at me again and again and smiling. After we finished *prasadam* he shyly came over to introduce himself. He said, "Suhotra Maharaja, you probably don't remember me. . . ," then he started recounting some things from the old days in Boston. I couldn't tell who he was because the last time I saw him he had long hair and a full beard. Then finally he said, "My name is Prabhupada dasa."

I got all excited and almost shouted, "Don't remember you? Prabhu, I have never forgotten you! It's just that I never saw your face without hair and beard. You were a major influence on me when I was a new devotee!" Very humbly he said, "But I was crazy then." I said, "But you got Prabhupada's mercy in 1966. I always considered you a very special person." Then we offered each other obeisances.

Prabhupada dasa is full of stories of the old days. He told me for example that he started an underground newspaper in New York called *Nova Vanguard*. It only lasted four issues. But he dedicated a full page of one issue to an article on Shрила Prabhupada written by a devotee.

He used to visit Allen Ginsberg, sit down in his kitchen and chant Hare Krishna while strumming his guitar. Ginsberg would come and join him playing finger cymbals. Lon's sister was married to N. S. (name abbreviated for legal reasons), who was a close friend of Richard Alpert (Baba Rama Das, who wrote the hippie classic *Be Here Now*. Alpert was Timothy Leary's partner in launching LSD as a fad among American youth.) N. S. and Lon's sister used to manufacture huge quantities of LSD and another powerful hallucinogen called DMT in the basement of N. S.'s mother's house. N. S. often walked around the house with no clothes on, just being "natural," I suppose. N. S.'s mother loved it. She thought it was great that her son and all his bearded weirdo friends were

buzzing around her place day and night. Lon used to wash the test tubes in which the drugs were cooked up.

I brought up the question of beatniks versus hippies that I had discussed with Brahmananda. Prabhupada dasa said, “Brahmananda was old enough to be a beatnik, but I was younger. I became aware of the Beat scene at age 13 or 14, and I wanted to become a poet. The Beats were creative. They were into poetry, art, jazz, and they could intellectualize. They were also totally into drugs and illicit sex, but they studied too; Allen Ginsberg took the trouble to learn some Tibetan, for example. But by the time I was old enough to myself take up the bohemian life, the hippies had taken over. And yes, like Brahmananda told you, it was because Allen Ginsberg, one of the top Beats, himself turned into a hippie. So I guess I was a hippie who started out wanting to be a Beat. When I got into LSD, all my intellectual pretensions just went to hell. My poetry consisted of line after line of dirty words. Even Allen Ginsberg didn’t like it.

“I know what Brahmananda meant about them (beatniks and hippies) being two different tribes,” Prabhupada dasa continued. “I remember a talk in a coffee shop by David Lacombe, who was a name among the Beat Generation. He was speaking to a whole roomful of people, just condemning the hippies. ‘These hippies don’t create,’ he was complaining. ‘They don’t even think. Hippies are just passive drug zombies. They’ve ruined the whole underground scene. I’m leaving New York to live in the forest.’”

Shriman Prabhupada dasa Brahmachari is truly my long-lost brother. I didn’t know until he told me today, but he met HH Bhaktividya Purna Maharaja in Mayapur for the first time this year. As you may know, Maharaja is my best friend. Prabhupada dasa was so happy to meet Maharaja! He said, “Like you, he’s a philosopher. He can talk about any subject and bring it into the light of Vedic knowledge. And this is what I want to learn to do. I’ve been in South America doing business to keep ISKCON going down there, but now that’s finished. I can’t hustle for money any more. I’m wearing saffron now and I just want to study Shрила Prabhupada’s books, preach, and help devotees come to a deeper understanding of the philosophy.” I hugged him. “We talk the same language,” I said.

Prabhupada dasa and I exchanged emails. We'll be talking again tomorrow, so readers, stay tuned, because more of his lore which is not a bore will be its way to your computer display in just one day. That's only here at www.in2-mec.com. Remember, friends and neighbors out there in Internet land, at In2-MeC you read by far the most unconventional, free-associative and outright bizarre presentations of Krishna Consciousness to be found on the World-Wide Web. We're proud that In2-MeC is a private site, totally unconnected and unaccountable to iskcon.net, pamho.net or any other "bona fide" ISKCON communications system.

The reason I write, as I declared in the very first entry of this journal, is that in 1978 Shрила Prabhupada asked me in a dream, "Why don't you write?" So I write. And the oldtimers know that Shрила Prabhupada did appreciate off-beat creative writing. In an early BTG article Hayagriva dasa analyzed a long-winded poem written in 1930 by Hart Crane called "The Bridge." Somehow or other he connected that poem to Krishna consciousness. Shрила Prabhupada was very pleased, even proud, of his "Professor Wheeler's" pioneer literary efforts. We try to keep that pioneer spirit alive here at In2-MeC. So don't flip, even if you think centipedes are hip, In2-MeC's gonna catch you in its grip. Your responses have been hugely supportive. Keep those cards and letters coming, folks.

So completely wonderful, this meeting with Shriman Prabhupada dasa Prabhu! So completely meaningful. I pray, pray, pray to Shri Shri Jagannatha-Sudarshana that what I am experiencing here in my talks with Godbrothers like Shridhara Maharaja, Keshava Bharati Maharaja, Bhaktividya Purna Maharaja, and Prabhupada Prabhu, is the start of a spiritual revolution. I feel incredible spiritual nourishment whenever I get the mercy of their association.

In2MeC: Second Day at IBSA, ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Sadhana Asrama, Govardhana, Shri Vrndavana Dhama, 22 April 2003: Prabhupada dasa—I'll be calling him Lon a lot, by his pre-initiation name--first heard the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* in 1965 from Allen Ginsberg, who sang *kirtana* in two live performances accompanied by an East Village rock group called the Fugs (see this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJSoDuaBJ8k>, Ed.). At this time I lived in Mount Clemens, Michigan (the greater Detroit area). In 1966 or '67 I

bought a Fugs album that featured Hare Krishna sung by Ginsberg; this was my own first aural introduction to kirtana. (Not a pure source for receiving the real name, I am afraid; but I did start to chant in imitation as a result.)

The first time Lon ever saw Shrila Prabhupada and heard him speak was when he appeared as a guest on The Alan Burke Show, a New York television program. Now, this TV show has been described by others—Satsvarupa Maharaja in the *Lilamrta* and Nanda Kishore Prabhu on the SPM video series—but for the first time I learned from Prabhupada dasa that by the end of the show Burke had become so moved by Prabhupada’s saintly demeanor that in an emotion-choked voice he told His Divine Grace, “Swamiji, you are a very charming gentleman.”

“That was not Alan Burke,” remembers Prabhupada dasa. “Burke’s program was aired from inside his opulent skyscraper penthouse. He used to bring ‘weird’ guests on, like a guy from the Flat Earth Society, and poke sarcastic fun at them; he was fond of lighting up big cigars during his interviews and blowing smoke into his guests’ faces. But with Prabhupada, Burke could not act like Burke. Prabhupada was too aristocratic, too calm, too gentle, too scholarly, too much in control to be mocked by a man like Alan Burke. “

Lon used to walk past Matchless Gifts, on 26 2nd Avenue, when it was still a gift shop. “No wonder it went out of business. The only thing on sale was a collection of wooden match boxes. Artsy-craftsy sorts of things, these boxes. They were highly glossed with a thick coat of varnish painted over color pictures of movie stars and other popular faces. But the boxes had no matches in them! And that was it. That’s all that was on sale. Therefore the shop was called ‘match-less.’ Not a profitable line of business.”

Tomkin’s Square Park was right in the middle of Lon’s neighborhood. After Shrila Prabhupada moved to Matchless Gifts from the Bowery, Lon would see the *harer-nama sankirtana* performed by Swamiji and his earliest disciples. “They sat, sang, played their instruments and danced on a big rug. This had been donated by a fellow named Robert Nelson. He once asked Shrila Prabhupada for the recipe for *chapattis*. Prabhupada replied, ‘Oh, this will cost you \$100.’ Somehow Robert got the money for Prabhupada and learned from

him how to make *chapattis*.”

Lon was the type of guy who put his nose into everything. “I knew all the ‘spiritual scenes’ in the East Village. I knew Buddhists, I knew meditators, I knew mystics. Like for example, there was this local mystic poet named Benjamin Schwarzberg. He used to write for an underground newspaper called the East Village Other. Ben would only speak in poetry. Somehow, without effort, he could make everything he said rhyme. He’d throw in words like Shiva and Bodhisattva, connect them in funny ways, toss together a spontaneous mystical word-salad. Just having a conversation with him meant your mind went for a ride on a roller-coaster of metaphysical ideas. And on top of it Benjamin was completely celibate, which was very unusual for those times. So in the midst of this explosion of wacky spiritualism that was going on at that time in the East Village, I also used to visit the 26 2nd Avenue temple. That’s how I became known to Shрила Prabhupada. He even called me by my first name, Lon. But I never intended to get serious about Krishna Consciousness. The temple was just one of many scenes for me.

“I knew this psychedelic artist called Ron Lawson who used to help me with my underground newspaper, Nova Vanguard. He lived downstairs from Alan Ginsberg. One night at his place Ron gave a friend and I a dose of very potent LSD. I couldn’t believe what was happening. The hallucinations were so extreme that this Ron just turned into a grinning skeleton before my eyes. There he was, a skeleton sitting at his kitchen table, chanting ‘Om’ again and again. Then he got up and stood over my friend and I. He just stared at us with a skull face and popped-out eyes. Then he intoned ‘*Tat tvam asi*, ‘I am He,’ ‘I am God,’ with this ferocious intensity.

“This was the acid trip that pushed me over the edge. I stayed at Ron’s place for ten hours, until dawn. Normally after ten hours on LSD you come down off the high. When I left Ron’s place and walked out in the new light of the day, I realized, ‘My God, this trip is just starting!’ The sunshine, the color, the waking up of the city, it all built up into a madhouse circus in my head. I didn’t come down for two weeks, and by that time I had gone clinically insane. I even jumped from the roof of a subway entrance station, thinking I could fly. Fortunately the station was not very high, so I didn’t hurt myself. Eventually I

ended up in the Bellvue Psychiatric Hospital where I was diagnosed as an ambulatory schizophrenic.

“In the meantime my personal life went to pieces. That’s when I left my apartment and my girlfriend. I couldn’t handle normal life anymore. On top of that, this Ron Lawson had put this crazy idea into my head that he was God, I was God, everything was God.

“So anyway, at some point I came to the temple and attended one of Swamiji’s *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* classes. That’s when Prabhupada asked me, ‘Lon, did you take LSD?’ I answered, ‘No, Swamji.’ Which in a way was true because this was at least several days after I had taken Ron’s acid. So normally I would not be high. But in fact I was out of my head and Prabhupada knew it immediately. After the lecture everyone bowed down except me. I stood up before Shрила Prabhupada and held my hands up over my head. In my mind I was showing him my universal form. I was wearing this long muskrat fur coat that I had bought cheap from a second-hand shop. The thing was so thick and fuzzy it weighed five kilos. I had a day-glo third eye pasted on my forehead. Swamiji took a look at me in this crazed state and then he did something totally unpredictable. He offered his *pranams*. Seated in the Vyasa Asana, he pressed his palms together before his face and bowed his head. What I think he was doing he was offering his respects to Maya-devi who had me firmly in her grip. ‘All glories to the powerful illusory energy.’

“But of course I couldn’t fathom that. Prabhupada’s *pranamas*, oh, that convinced me. ‘Swamiji knows who I really am,’ I thought. ‘He knows I’m different from all these others here who bow down, who are merely servants. He knows I am an incarnation!’

“Shрила Prabhupada left the Vyasa Asana and went out the back door of the temple into his apartment building. Now, the way things were in the temple of that time, the devotees were hardly more than hippies themselves. There was no discrimination as to who is fit or unfit, who is sane, who is crazy. So they were urging me, in my totally insane frame of mind, ‘You gotta talk to Swamiji. Go on up, talk to him.’ So I went up. In those days Prabhupada’s door was open to everyone. There was even a sign on it that said something like ‘Door open,

come in.’ But when I turned the doorknob to enter, the door was locked. I should have understood what that meant. But I was insane, completely insane. ‘OK, Swamiji’s door is locked. Never mind. He has already given me my leave to become a *guru*. There’s nothing more to talk about anyway. I’ll just do it. ‘

“So I went to Tomkins Square Park. There is a big round fountain in the middle, and because it was autumn season and chilly, the park authorities had shut the water off. So this fountain became my *mandala*. I sat in the middle of it, upon the metal nozzles that in the summer shot the water into the air. And in my fur coat and third eye I preached. I preached in a screaming voice hour after hour, sometimes in English, sometimes in Spanish, sometimes in Hebrew, throwing in a few Sanskrit words I knew. The whole rest of the morning went by like that. It’s New York, so mostly the people walking by didn’t look at me twice. But finally a crowd gathered, I guess because I just wasn’t going away. And at last a really beautiful looking couple, this young boy and girl, very *sattvik* in their features, they stepped up and laid a vegetarian meal before me.

“I thought, ‘Yeah! Here they are! My disciples!’ I ate the meal and after that I don’t know what I did; the day had ended so I slept somewhere, maybe in the park. Who knows? I mean, in that state I used to sometimes just walk into people’s homes, strangers. I’d just walk in, they might be painting their living room so that’s why the door was open. I’d just walk in, start helping them to paint.

“So the next day I returned to the fountain to continue my mission. This time a policeman came up and ordered me out of the fountain. One thing led to another and I was arrested. The cops understood I was nuts. So I was sent to Bellvue. My parents came to see me; they were almost crying, ‘Our poor son, locked in the madhouse.’ ‘No, it’s great here,’ I told them with a big smile. ‘I’d like to stay here for the rest of my life.’ Then they really started to cry. After a week or two in the nuthouse I managed to talk my way out.

“I went back to the temple. While I was in Bellvue they cut off all my hair and beard. So when Shрила Prabhupada saw me, he said, ‘Ah, Lon. Now you look very nice.’ Now, during the time I was locked up, the devotees had newly printed this booklet Prabhupada wrote. It was called *Who is Crazy?* I saw these

booklets all over the place; it was one of the very first pieces of distribution literature. And I felt sort of proud. ‘Ah, this is all in my honor. I’ve just come from the madhouse, and here I am greeted by all these newly published booklets called *Who is Crazy?*’”

Soon after that a documentary movie crew came to the temple to film *Happiness on Second Avenue*, a very interesting piece of ISKCON history that has been transferred to video by the ITV (ISKCON Television Network, see link, Ed.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSrABGtI-58&noredirect=1>). The film is seven minutes long and appeared on New York TV as part of a longer program called Eye on New York. Lon Solomon can be seen in *Happiness in Second Avenue* wearing glasses, his hair neatly cut. In two sequences he bows down before Shрила Prabhupada with the rest of the devotees and guests.

“I’m really glad that my paying obeisances to Shрила Prabhupada was captured on film. Because that was definitely not my style in those days. I was the guy who would stand up to show his universal form while everyone else was down on the floor. But on that day, because of the film crew, I behaved properly.”

Shрила Prabhupada was always kind to Lon. But several times he was dismissed from Prabhupada’s presence, in a firm but gentle way, because of his crazy behavior. Once he came into Prabhupada’s apartment while some early disciples were present. Again, these devotees were hardly above the hippie stage themselves. Lon was in a restless state; he paced back and forth in Shрила Prabhupada’s room and then started re-arranging Prabhupada’s things, moving the writing materials on his desk from one place to another and so on. Not one of the disciples thought to do anything about Lon’s strange behavior. In fact they were saying to one another, “Hey, dig this cat, man. He’s flipped out. Look what he’s doing. Man, that’s weird, really weird. Is he high or what? Wow!”

Finally Shрила Prabhupada stood up and smiled. He started shaking Lon’s hand, clapping him on the shoulder, moving him very gently but quickly to the door. In this way he got him out of the room. Prabhupada dasa commented, “You see, that’s how a host will deal with a drunk at a party. You’ve got guests, it’s your own home, so don’t want an ugly scene to break out. So you just smile, keep

shaking the guy's hand like he's a good friend, and edge him through the door and out of your place. Shrila Prabhupada, as pure and saintly and innocent as he was, even knew how to do this, a tactic used by the kind of people who hold parties where alcohol is served. “

In 1967 Shrila Prabhupada left New York to start his ISKCON in San Francisco. Not really intending to follow Swamiji, more to check out what's happening on the West Coast, Lon also took off for Frisco. This was the height of the Haight-Ashbury scene. “I remember seeing the posters for the famous Mantra Rock Dance at the Avalon Ballroom. That event is elaborately described in the *Lilamrta*. I was in San Francisco at the time. I could have gone to see Prabhupada at the Avalon and at the temple on Frederick Street. I mean, I was really glad for the Swami to see his Krishna Consciousness catching on in Frisco like wildfire. But unfortunately I took LSD again. This was the last time I ever touched that drug. Once more I went totally bonkers and had to return to New York. “

After that, Lon managed to pull himself together a bit. He kept chanting Hare Krishna but he got more involved in his own affairs. He got married, moved up north to Vermont for a while, then moved a bit south to the city of Boston, which is still north of New York City.

It was 1969 and by now Lon was out of touch with ISKCON. He needed a job. His wife found an advertisement in a hippie newspaper called *The Phoenix*. It offered an “antique and junk shop” for sale. So Lon and his wife went to the place, located at 95 Glenville Avenue. He found a group of hippies sitting around on the old furniture that was stocked in the shop. He saw amidst the junk a big sign that said Hare Krishna Temple. There was a good number of ISKCON books scattered around too.

“What's this?” he asked the hippies, pointing at the sign and the books.

“Hey, man,” one replied languidly, “this joint used to be the Boston Hare Krishna temple. They moved over to North Beacon Street.” Lon had saved some money so he bought 95 Glenville Avenue for a cheap price and went into the second-hand business. The hippies had a big wooly monkey in a cage in the

cellar. He was named Zeke. When he bought the shop, he got Zeke as part of the deal, so Lon named the place Zeke's Old-Time Furniture Store. Eventually Lon had to sell Zeke the Monkey because as a pet he was too expensive to maintain.

It was during 1970-72 when, as a new devotee at 38 North Beacon Street, I got to know Lon. Glenville Avenue is not far from North Beacon Street. So I'd sometimes run into him, either when he visited the temple, or just on the street in the neighborhood.

He told me something very interesting from this period. You'll recall my description of the first time I met Shrila Prabhupada in July of 1971. Everyone went to the airport except me, who had to stay and clean the kitchen. I heard some *kirtana* music coming from somewhere in the ether, so at one point I searched the building top to bottom to see if someone else was there. I found no one. But Prabhupada dasa told me that on that same day, he was alone in the temple room after everyone went the airport. He thought he was the only person in the whole building. Meanwhile, I too was in the building thinking the same thing about myself: "I'm all alone here." Somehow during the search I missed finding him. By the way, he was not playing a tape of *kirtana*. So that mystery remains unexplained.

His business improved, so he moved to a better location at 1357 Commonwealth Avenue. He kept the name Zeke's and continued to sell second-hand furniture, appliances, antiques, junk. There was a rock band that used to often shop at Zeke's on Commonwealth Avenue. These guys had long wild-looking hair and regularly needed handheld electric hair dryers. This band, at that time struggling in Boston to make a name for themselves, was named Aerosmith. In the late '70's and '80's they became one of the most successful American rock bands. The lead singer is Steve Tyler; Liz, his daughter, is a famous Hollywood actress. She plays an elven princess in the Lord of the Rings series.

Later Zeke's moved to its next location on Harvard Square, a busy commercial center in the city of Boston. This shop was a large space that Lon managed to buy at a sweet price. But Lon and his two co-workers had no separate living

facilities, so they used to just bunk in the store at night. One night they couldn't get to sleep because of the loud rock music of a jukebox in a nearby pizza restaurant. So they all got up and went into the pizza place. They learned that the manager of the pizza joint had left the night business to some freaky character with hair down to his waist. He was playing the jukebox super loud and just giving pizzas out for free. So Lon got a guitar from somewhere and started chanting Hare Krishna.

The long-haired Pizza Freak broke into a big smile and said, "Hey, man! I really dig that! You guys gotta live with me! I got this big place over on Chester Street. C'mon, let's go!" So he closed down the pizza place and they went to his house. Pizza Freak had a room free for each of the three Zeke's workers. He put Lon in a room that had the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* painted all over the walls and the ceiling. There were BBT posters of Shri Krishna on the wall too.

It turned out that just previous to Lon's moving into that room, it had been occupied by a young woman who joined the Boston Hare Krishna temple. (All this transpired after I had joined Visnujana Maharaja, so I do not know this Mataji.) This lady went on to be one of the big book distributors in America during the 1970s. An interesting fact is that her boyfriend, who did not go with her to join ISKCON, was named Harry Kershner.

Another interesting fact is that when the Boston temple was located at 95 Glenville Avenue, before Lon had even come to Boston, there was no place at that address to house Shrila Prabhupada when he visited. According to Satsvarupa Maharaja's diaries, the Boston devotees found Shrila Prabhupada an apartment in a building on Hester Street. But there is no Hester Street in Boston; there is only a Hester Street in Chinatown in New York. In Boston there is a Chester Street. After she became a devotee, this mataji did research and learned that Shrila Prabhupada had been put up by the devotees in an apartment in the very same building on Chester Street that she, and then Lon, later lived in.

In2MeC, Third Day at IBSA: ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Sadhana Asrama, Govardhana, Shri Vrindavana Dhama: 23 April 2003: Today I had planned to do Govardhana-*parikrama*. But yesterday I developed a cold that worsened as

the day when on. I began drinking fruit juice (orange and pineapple) and taking medicines. Last night my conditioned reached its worst point: I couldn't sleep until some mad hour like 4:00 AM, and when I woke up at about 8:00 AM I felt dazed and feverish. So I arranged for Martanda dasa to do a simple *puja* for Shri Shri Jagannatha-Sudarshana. I chanted my rounds, rested and continued to take only juice. Gradually I find I'm feeling better. It's strange because this hot and dry season is not the weather for catching cold. I am vowing to do Govardhana-parikrama tomorrow, starting at 4:00 AM, no matter what. I'll have to get up very early to the *puja* first. But that's OK; today I will have gotten lots of rest.

This morning Prabhupada dasa went with Martanda to visit Shri Radhakunda. Before leaving they asked my advice about bathing there. I told them that my practice was to sit on the step nearest the water surface and to use a *lota* to pour Radha Kunda water over my head. Later Prabhupada dasa came by just before 14:00 to take *darsana* of Jagannatha-Sudarshana, Laksmi-Sesasayi, Ananta Nrsimha and Giriraja. I told him a bit about my usual *puja* program. We had a short discussion about the importance of taking extra effort to remember Krishna and to develop a relationship with Him.

I also had him point out exactly where he appears in the *Happiness on Second Avenue* video, which I have stored on an external hard drive. Unfortunately the image in the film is not very clear. He sat more to the back of the crowd so the camera did not focus on him.

Later in the afternoon Prabhupada dasa and I had another long talk, lasting for four hours. Much of it was about *Substance and Shadow*. He knows philosophy himself, so it went quite deep. Then we turned to more personal, God-brotherly matters. It is said that one who has many friends has none. There are a few persons with whom I can speak freely with, to get advice as well as to give advice. Prabhupada dasa is one of these persons. As I grow older, such association as his becomes more and more important. Friendship is the shadow of the evening, which increases with the setting sun of life.

All glories to Shrila Prabhupada! ☺

Editor's note: HH Suhotra Maharaja joined the Hare Krishna Movement at ISKCON Press,

Boston after purchasing a Back to Godhead from a sankirtana devotee on the streets of Detroit. He was a born seeker and found what he was searching for in the philosophy of Krishna consciousness. He decided that instead of joining the Hare Krishna Temple in Detroit, he would hitchhike the 500 miles to Boston to join at the ISKCON Press where the BTG he bought was published. His felt that the devotees who printed this literature must have understood Krishna consciousness best. When he arrived at the Press, he immediately asked to assist Vaikunthanatha and me in the bookbindery. He was the only daring soul who offered to work in the cold and austere conditions of that dank basement.

His Holiness Suhotra Maharaja left this world in Mayapura where his Samadhi stands today. Although in good health, he predicted his spiritual ascension some days earlier, as seen in this, his last recorded talk on the Bhagavatam in two parts: [http://www.suhotraswami.net/download/Suhotra Prabhu Last lecture 1.mp3](http://www.suhotraswami.net/download/Suhotra_Prabhu_Last_lecture_1.mp3) and [http://www.suhotraswami.net/download/Suhotra Prabhu Last lecture 2.mp3](http://www.suhotraswami.net/download/Suhotra_Prabhu_Last_lecture_2.mp3) . There are many wonderful lectures of His Holiness on Youtube. His disciples maintain an active website: <http://www.suhotraswami.net/>

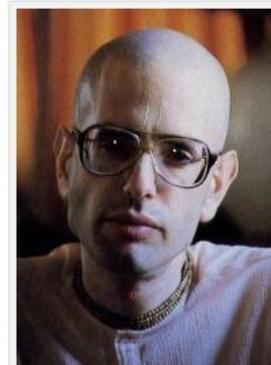
Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: *“I have entrusted Back To Godhead in your hand. Because this paper is the beginning of my spiritual life. During the time of my Guru Maharaja's passing away, His last instruction was to me that "You try to preach whatever you have learned from me in English, and that will do good to you and the people who will hear you." This instruction was given to me in 1936, and I started this paper in 1944. So during my householder life I was printing this paper and almost distributing free, and some of them were paying me subscription, and some of them not. But I was trying my best at my cost.” - Letter to BTG Editor Rayarama, (12 June 1968)*

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: *“I am awaiting for the day when this paper will take the shape of Life magazine or similar other magazines, in the matter of its popularity. From India this paper has been brought to America, with this hope that American young boys like you will take interest in spreading this sublime gospel of Krishna Consciousness. Letter to BTG Editor Rayarama, (12 June 1968)*

As for the next chapter in the ongoing saga of His Grace Prabhupada dasa, he received sannyasa initiation from His Holiness Niranjana Swami on March 17, 2013 in Mayapura. His sannyasa name is Bhakti Prabhupada-vrata Damodara Swami. We will hear from him next via an article from BTG ...

A Letter From a Friend Prabhupada Dasa

“Let us see this life in the context of eternity.”



Dear Friends,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Prabhupada dasa, a name that means I am a servant of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and spiritual guide of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. This Society is a unique worldwide federation of temples, farms, schools, and *asramas* dedicated to the constant remembrance of Lord Shri Krishna, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.’ I myself have been a full-time member of the Hare Krishna movement for more than six years, and I am increasingly satisfied with my decision to become a devotee of Krishna. Every day I follow the schedule of devotional activities that all members of the movement follow, and I have no separate, “private” life outside my service to the Lord.

You might be surprised to learn, then, that I am feeling a deep sense of sadness, a sadness that pertains to all of you. Kindly allow me to explain.

I am sad because I see that many millions of you are continuing to spend your most precious human lives without trying to come in touch with the Soul of souls, Lord Krishna. I understand something of your mentality, for I used to think as you do and relish the same sensations you now place at the center of your life. But I am worried about how you will cope with death, the time when everyone has to leave the bodily vehicle. Will you be satisfied that you have loved enough? Will your loved ones follow you to your next destination, dark and unknown?

Now, perhaps you're just not interested in all this sort of talk. After all, you're probably working hard just to maintain your family in this era of inflation and recession. You see devotees like me with our robes and strangely shaven heads, our arms upraised as we dance in the streets or in front of the lavishly decorated Deity forms in the temple, always chanting the same prayer Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare and you can't even imagine becoming like us. It's all so strange!

But did it ever occur to you that we devotees are motivated in much the same way that you are? We are also hankering for blissful loving exchanges. But we are loving Krishna, the eternal, all-attractive Personality of Godhead, and we are urging you to learn the art of loving Him as well. Unlike us pathetically limited human beings. He possesses infinite beauty, strength, wealth, fame, knowledge, and renunciation. But please, before you discount this description as some fantastic exaggeration, remember that we are talking about God. Krishna is simply a most lovely name for God, a name that means "the all-attractive one." So Krishna consciousness means God consciousness, the revival of our dormant love for God. What more valuable asset do we have than our ability to love? So don't be fooled; don't squander your love on someone or something that will be destroyed by the inexorable force of time.

Mundane romance, based on the sex impulse, is going on even among the squirrels and pigeons in the park. The science of the soul, explained in books like *Bhagavad-gita* and *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, teaches that such creatures have gotten where they are by remaining overly absorbed in sex during their previous human incarnation. Now that we have achieved the human form, we should apply our reason. We should not merely rationalize our inappropriate absorption in sense pleasure. Because our intelligence is greater than the animals', we have the responsibility to use it properly. In human life we know, for instance, that our term in the body is limited; we know death is coming. Therefore, societies guided by spiritual values have always had some program for gradually renouncing mundane attachments as death approaches. The total lack of such a program in our present society indicates a profound ignorance about spiritual matters. But individually we do not have to allow ourselves to become victims of such wasteful ignorance. If we do, our fate will merely be increased

ignorance. Natural law, the law of *karma*, will compel us to become embodied as drastically limited creatures, akin to those that are now buzzing around our patios, crawling along the wall, flitting across the sky, or licking our fingers.

Krishna, God, who is in our very heart, is simply waiting and watching, seeing what decision we will make in this highly responsible human form. While the beasts may absorb themselves wholly in looking for food or a mate, in fighting, fleeing, or sleeping, we are meant for much more important tasks. We must inquire, “What am I, beyond this temporary, changing body? What is the ultimate reality, in which I am an eternal participant?” Our God-given, natural gift of advanced intelligence includes the unique privilege to ask and understand on this level. An ancient Vedic text called the *Brhad-aranyaka Upanisada* declares, “That man is a miser who quits his body like the cats and dogs, without understanding the science of self-realization and solving the problems of life [birth, old age, disease, and death].”

If we simply peer into the clear night sky, we can understand that much of reality must lie totally beyond our range of perception. We know that the animals’ range of perception is minute, but then again, so is ours. Yet we are granted a broader perspective. We see the grand, natural order and can fathom, “There must be a supremely intelligent being who has created all of this.” It is only the insidious preoccupation with superficial bodily sensations that makes us feel as if we are permanently at home in our bodies. It is this bodily fixation that dulls our sense of wonder, even to the point where we just brush aside as “chance occurrences” the miracles of nature, which irrefutably point to the existence of God. Then again the dumb complacency sets in, robbing our hours and years. Billion-dollar questions get pushed aside in favor of piddling concerns.

Let us snap out of all such complacent slumbers and meet the awesome challenge of knowing how tenuous, and at the same time how crucial, is the human span of life. Let us see this life in the context of eternity and resolve that we must not die without sufficiently understanding our eternal nature, our spiritual status in the eternal kingdom of God. No one can help us in this regard but Krishna or His representative, the pure devotee. Krishna advises that we become *yogis*, controllers and transcendents of our senses. But we can do this

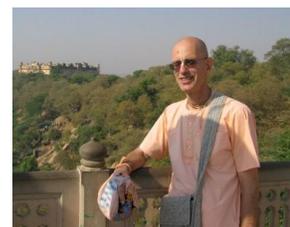
only by His mercy. He is our guide toward Himself, and He is indeed the ultimate goal of our myriad lifetimes. Now that we have human life we can finally give Him our love; this is all He wants. As soon as we cease loving the phantom shapes formed by temporary configurations of dead matter, as soon as we earnestly begin directing our love toward Krishna, He will be most pleased to swiftly deliver us from the ocean of birth and death.

I am therefore urging all of you to take up the responsibility and opportunity granted you by the vastly significant yet fragile human life. Please do not carelessly cultivate inappropriate “loves” of the kind that occupy our finny, feathered, or four-footed friends. I also request that you take up the simple process of chanting the holy names of the Lord. Why not try it? Krishna has arranged this most sublime process of self-realization specifically for the suffering souls in the present, difficult age. When we vibrate the Hare Krishna mantra, we are calling out to Krishna, “O my Lord, before I lose this valuable human life, please engage me in Your service and let me remain with You eternally. I don’t want to forget You and have to enter another body to suffer in this material world.” Such an earnest supplication at once invokes the full mercy of the Lord.

So, my dear fellow human beings, kindly relieve my sadness. When I see you continuing to direct your lives toward fleeting sensory contacts, despite countless frustrations, I deeply regret that you are remaining caught up in such illusory, wasteful pursuits. Therefore I vow that I will keep trying to induce you to serve Krishna and obtain His mercy. You may engross yourselves in serving so many people, so many things, but I will still beg you to give even one percent of your time for serving Krishna, for remembering Him as the Supreme Lord of everyone and everything, the Supreme Enjoyer, the Supreme Friend. I will keep begging you to take part in the chanting of the holy names of God, the only effective religious practice for this age, for I know it is the only way you can be eternally happy.

Your servant,

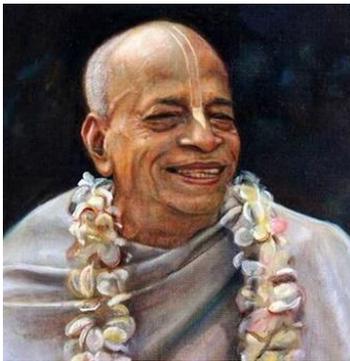
Prabhupada dasa ॐ



In his History of ISKCON Press above, Swarupa mentions Shriman Kushakratha dasa. What follows is the touching yet humorous story of a rare mahatma and avadhuta of our times, the late lamented Kushakratha das Brahmachary. At the time of his initiation, after Shrila Prabhupada asked Kushkratha to recite the four regulative principles, he asked wryly, "And which one is your favorite?" The photographer, Bhargava das, caught the levity of the moment just on cue. Some considered him a mad man—indeed he was known as "Crazy Peter." But he went on to learn Sanskrit and Bengali on his own and proceeded to translate an astounding 125 Gaudiya Vaishnava literatures all of which he self-published. What follows is also a knowledgeable and loving tribute from one talented Godbrother to another ...

The Story of Kushakratha Das

Pushkar Das Adhikary



In 1956, we moved to the Bensonhurst area of Brooklyn, where I entered fifth grade. Peter Viggiani (the future Kusakratha) was in my class for the next two years. He also attended the same junior high as I, and we shared some of the same classes. For approximately 5 years we were good friends. He was always quite eccentric and didn't appear to have many other friends. Devotees who knew "Kusa" found him to be a bit of an *avadhuta*, and he was no less so in his early days. There was one other odd fellow who was an artist. We would sometimes associate, and together we once built a sculpture in his yard composed completely of old wire coat hangers.

Predictably, other kids would pick on Peter. They would walk by and punch him in the shoulder or hurl some insult his way, but he tolerated it. Although I had various associates, he was a loner as his aspirations were distinctly loftier than the neighborhood's average Jewish or Italian resident. Out of thousands and thousands of kids growing up in Brooklyn at the time it would not be possible to find someone similar to him.

He had a younger sister, Rosemary. Although her features resembled his in many ways, they were distant. He seemed to be a bit distant from all of his family members—perhaps because his parents were a bit older than others. His mother once threw an open box of crayons at me, and loudly blamed me for being a bad influence on her son, because he was constantly doodling in his smaller-than-



Initiation of Shriman Kushakratha das Brahmachary, ISKCON Brooklyn 1971. “Which one is your favorite?”

average loose leaf book.

As someone who had taken special art classes in early childhood and visited museums regularly, I can say that these “doodles” were not ordinary. They were amazing and unforgettable. His wonderful and original conceptions remain with me still. How I wish those sketches had been preserved! No doubt the world of art has been deprived of a great genius. The figurative drawings swirled, lifelike, drawing the consciousness into the page more and more. The notes were barely detectable amidst the free unprecedented expressions decorating the pages. A few times I asked him to draw people congregating nearby in Central Park. With astonishing ease, capturing the gesture in perfect proportion, figures would manifest on the paper.

When the opportunity for an illustrated school project sometimes arose, he would stun the entire school, teachers and students alike, by utilizing his skill at

watercolor and pencil drawings. In the sixth grade, who among us was able to paint the billowing sails of Columbus's ships plying the waves in perfect perspective?

His talents were not restricted to the art world. His compositions were not to be rivaled in our tiny circle. Of course, the spelling and grammar were never faulty, but his wit was prodigious and while reading his compositions the teacher would sometimes laugh out loud. After all, by seventh grade he was already writing 60,000 word poems. Yin-Yang is one that I remember.

Kusa had zero desire to engage in sports like all the rest of us. As we rolled by quickly on our bikes, or skates, he was often seated on a bench in front of his house pouring over philosophy and poetry books. He would make his way to the main Library near Prospect Park, which was quite some distance by public transport. There he would take out as many books as they allowed, and then scrutinize them. They would range from the writings of the Ancient Greeks such as Homer, Socrates, and Virgil to modern existentialists such as Sarte and Camus. Kirkegaard, Kafka, and Pound are also some of the names that come to mind.

All of this extra study never prevented him from effortlessly getting the top marks in school. It was always "O" for outstanding, except for maybe P.E., and cleanliness. Whenever there was an oral quiz, Peter was the first one with his hand up, enthusiastically waving his hand, unable to contain himself. He was called on when no one else could answer. It was a syndrome; he would blurt out the answer, neglecting to stand, the teacher would admonish him for not standing, and then he would lean on the desk. When the teacher chastised him for leaning on the desk he would stand, and his pants would begin to fall. He was then instructed to pull up his pants midst the chuckles of the other students. Kusa was the kind of guy that needed a shave even in the fifth grade, which added to his slovenly appearance. His dirty handkerchief hanging out of his pocket, waiting for his next amplified nose blow was another colorful feature.

At that time, I was often penalized for misbehavior and was sometimes locked in the principal's office. On one occasion I had a chance to peak through the file cabinets. I checked up on everyone's I.Q. score. Kusa's was definitely the highest at about 158. At around 12 we were making trips to Manhattan to attend Ginsberg and other "beat" poetry readings and meeting off-beat artists in Greenwich Village. At that time he decided he would not touch money, so I carried the subway tokens and change.

On one memorable occasion around 1962 when I realized I would never be able to read all the books that he had, I pointedly asked him which books he considered to be the most important. He immediately replied, ” Just read Bhagavad Gita. You don’t need any other books. ”



By tenth grade we moved to another neighborhood, and I rarely saw him. He attended a local Brooklyn high school, Lafayette. During the U.S. attempted invasion of Cuba, the students at his school were required to salute the flag, but he and another boy defiantly spit on it whereupon they were attacked by other students. This incident actually made the newspapers and appeared on the front page border of the New York World Telegram-long defunct. After this period he attended college for some time, although he never graduated. I remember seeing him once at an anti-Vietnam war rally in front of the U.N. He was continually jumping up and down holding hands with an odd woman. I was trying to communicate with him when the police started unceremoniously dispersing the crowd by beating us with their lead-filled clubs.

Some years ago I asked him about some symphonies he had composed and he said that he had never actually heard them played. From the earliest time that I remember he was practicing *hatha yoga asanas*, although I don’t really know how he learned them. Sometimes when I dropped in he would be sitting in a lotus position which seemed pretty odd at the time, even to me. He would be listening to a stereo that he had assembled.

I came to the L.A. temple via “Sai” in Hawaii sometime in October 1970. Besides chanting and other service, I was engaged by Karandhar in painting sets of the *parampara* for temples on the west coast. One day Karandhar told me he thought I might like to join the other artists who had recently moved from Boston to New York. Anxious to see me, my parents arranged a ticket and I was on my way back to New York. Somewhere in the darkness a chilling premonition came over me. Someone I knew would be at the temple in Brooklyn. Then it came to me-it must be Peter. I reasoned, where else could such a person be? After my arrival, at about 10:00 p.m., and an almost sleepless night, I was abruptly awakened by a loudspeaker blaring Prabhupada singing and sat up groggily in an almost amnesiac daze. Somebody directed me to the tiny laundry room where there was a tangled merge of clean clothes in a few baskets. Standing there was Bhakta Peter attempting to disentangle some extremely knotted wrinkled clothes. He appeared only mildly surprised to see me and I was half expecting to see him

anyway. He asked me how I came to join, and I told him about joining in Hawaii with Sai. He asked in his kind of high pitched voice, “How is Sai?” We both seemed to adjust rather quickly to this “surprise” encounter.

During the time leading up to and after the week long initiation of July 21st at the Brooklyn Temple, Bhakta Peter along with almost everyone else would go out on Harinam Sankirtan during the day. It was a decidedly colorful group and a big group it was -seventy to eighty+ *brahmacaris* and increasing daily! Once, a congregational member named Zubin, who was in in the tie-dye business had donated a bunch of tie-dye *kurtas*. Who could forget *brahmacaris* adorned in tie-dye *kurtas*? Almost everyone had tired of the novelty, but it seemed that Kusa had worn his longer than most of us. This combined with his unique and haphazard *dhoti* style along with two different socks was an unforgettable sight. Of course, if you weren’t careful to lift your *dhoti* while ascending or descending the filthy subway steps you were to sure to pick up an ever-widening decorative grayish-black border.

Before the big initiation Kusa was thinking that the four regulative principles should be embraced by the devotees more enthusiastically. Just after Shrila Prabhupada gave Kusakratha his name, Prabhupada asked him to state the regulative principles which he did. Then immediately he asked him which one he like the best and Kusakratha kind of lost it—half gasping and half laughing he replied, “Shrila Prabhupada, you are reading my mind.” Shrila Prabhupada was also laughing, and this pastime was caught in a classic photo appearing in an early Vyasa Puja book around 1972.

I was told that when Kusakratha first saw Shrila Prabhupada in Buffalo, he was rolling on the ground back and forth in front of His Divine Grace. Although it appeared very weird to the devotees at the time, in retrospect this is actually a natural way to approach a pure devotee. Balavanta related that when they began the Atlanta temple, Kusakratha was one of the original founders and although very eccentric performed nice service.

Giriraja Swami remembers when there were hardly any devotees in Boston, Bhakta Peter used to sit in the hallway at the entrance to the building with his back to the wall and legs outstretched, absorbed in reading Prabhupada’s books. When sleep overcame him he would simply lie down in the same spot and take rest. The first thing a guest would see was Peter, slouched in the hallway reading or sleeping. Satsarupa Maharaja wrote to Prabhupada asking what to do. Prabhupada wrote back, “What’s the matter? Can’t you tolerate?” Twenty years

later when Giriraja visited New Dwarka and saw Peter he asked curiously, “Who’s that?” A devotee told him, “Oh, that’s Kusakratha.” Kusa was now famous for translating so many scriptures. Although Maharaj saw so little potential, Prabhupada saw much more.

At the Brooklyn temple I would sometimes plead with Kusa to sketch or do something in art. He would just say that he had no inclination, although because of my persistence he did show me a sketch he had drawn that seemed to me half-heartedly done. It seemed to be his way of discouraging me from bugging him anymore.

Kusa never liked cold weather so he left Brooklyn for warmer climates. I saw him briefly at the famous 1972 festival in New Vrindavan, and he told me again how he couldn’t tolerate cold weather. I don’t remember seeing him again until 1975 when I returned from India and he was residing in San Diego. Jayatirtha was GBC in those days and he became a great admirer of Kusa for his expertise in *shastra*. J.T. organized several retreats with Kusa and the zonal leaders to enthruse others to scrutinize Shrila Prabhupada’s books. After that J.T. wanted Kusa to give special evening seminars to all the devotees in New Dwarka. On the first night the temple was filled with expectant devotees. Several boards exhibited Kusa’s summary descriptions of *Bhagavad Gita* chapters. Devotees perused these summaries awaiting Kusa’s appearance.

I began to sense that something could be going wrong, so I ran outside to find Kusa. There he was, near the alley, in the rain. I said, “Everyone is waiting for you.” He just blurted out, “Tell them to move.” Then I saw some women congregating at the entrance so I asked them to move. Kusa didn’t appreciate microphones or any loud noises so he spoke without any amplification. He gave some homework tests for everyone to bring the next evening. The next evening Jadurani handed me all the ladies’ papers. I said, “Here are the women’s papers.” He said, “I don’t want them,” so I returned the papers to Jadurani. Rameswara was denouncing the classes as overemphasizing *jnana* or knowledge, but it had the good effect of encouraging people to put their heads to the books.



The 1976 Gaura Purnima Festival was drawing near, and J.T. decided to sponsor Kusa’s plane ticket. I asked Kusa later if he had ever bathed in the Ganga and he

said that he had put his toe in. In those days he used to wear several hooded sweatshirts even on the hottest day in Mayapur.

Sometime after the 1976 festival I was in front of the L.A. temple and I saw Kusa walking toward me from Venice Boulevard. First thing he said was that he was worried that he may have been banned from the L.A. temple, in fact from all of the temples. He recounted that while in India Tamal Krishna Goswami had asked him to visit the Radha-Damodar buses upon his return to the U.S. just to enthuse the *brahmacaris* in studying. He seemed to be doing okay until he was pressured on one bus to clean and perform other chores while the men were out distributing.

One over-zealous *swami* decided to kick him off the bus and even made sure he was unwelcome at the local Chicago temple as well. Kusa had hitchhiked from there back to L.A. and here he was. I assured him that there was no chance of anyone heeding that *swami's* orders here in New Dwarka. Allaying his anxieties, I took his arm and proceeded across the street to the BBT Sanskrit department, and left him there with Gopipranadhana and others. Day by day, he advanced his grasp of Sanskrit and was soon translating simple texts. He was so enthusiastic in the beginning that he would come up to my studio and attempted to teach me Sanskrit grammar while I was painting. He was incredulous that I was unable to develop the same taste for Sanskrit that he now had. I did learn a bit, but in the end I remained a *sudra*, simply memorizing a few verses.

While in Europe in '78 I started to see some of his manuscripts, but it wasn't until 1984 that I had any real association again with him. At that time there were a few small books that he began to publish, but he had big plans. I was surprised that he had recently purchased a ticket to India at an exorbitant rate in order to procure as many original Sanskrit and Bengali works as possible for translation. He was now translating at a feverish pace and had run out of books. Several of us strongly insisted that he return his ticket and get one that was reasonably priced, but he refused again and again-not wanting to deal with the situation. After some days, in touch with Dasaratha-suta, he was able to borrow quite a few books to continue with his translation work, so he now decided not to go to India.

I accompanied him to the travel office, a few blocks away, to get a refund for the ticket. When we walked in the door he blurted out immediately, "I want my money back!" When they asked him why, he wouldn't speak to them so I explained that he would be going later in the year with me. Although he lost seventy or eighty dollars the ticket was refunded. Some days later I noticed that Kusa wasn't at *mangla arati*. He used to stand at the far right side his ears

plugged with toilet paper that would stream down the side of his face. Later that day I saw him and asked suspiciously, “Where were you today?” Sure enough, he had flown all the way to San Francisco on a separate ticket to get his visa which he was unable to get in LA. I reminded him that there was no need for a visa since he wasn’t going to India. He shrugged his shoulders and said, “Oh yeah, that’s right. I forgot.” When Kusa translated he would try to work under as strong a light as possible-practically always natural light. Often he would go to the roof of the temple and sit in the strong sunlight.

Although his father was a simple upholsterer he had received an investment tip and made some money. He had left Kusa a certain amount. I recall he was supposed to receive \$20,000 at intervals. When he received the first twenty thousand he was able to launch his Krishna Institute publications and also pay his rent for some time. After his father’s demise his family members had somehow arranged to prevent him from getting the rest, so he was totally dependent on the sales of his books which he printed in lots of one hundred, increasing the cost considerably. Whenever I saw him he would give me the latest books and sometimes send them to me. He said that I should have an archive. I used to stay with him at his place when I was in L.A. for Rathayatra although it was famously funky. The windows were tightly shut and although *kirtan* from across the street was barely audible, he claimed it was “deafening.” Whenever I tried to open a window he admonished me saying he couldn’t handle the “Arctic breezes,” In 1985 I had completed a painting of Lord Chaitanya instructing Rupa Goswami which I gave him to hang on his wall. He told me that for the next fifteen years or so he took inspiration from that painting. I picked it up when he left for India. It was quite dusty.

Kusa was really bummed out when one devotee pirated his work. It was difficult for him to maintain his service and simple lifestyle. For a few years I had helped arrange a regular stipend from an ex-member of the Sanskrit department who had become quite wealthy and was happy to see the new books being produced. Kusa was pretty stubborn as far as discounts go. Once for more than an hour in his room Mahamantra das Brahmachari (now HH Vishrambha Maharaja) was begging for a discount on buying a bunch of books, but Kusa was humorously unmovable.

At various times Kusa taught *gurukula* students in L.A. and later in Vrindaban, sometimes making funny cartoons on the chalkboard as part of his lesson. Sometimes he wrote spoofs of the perceived foibles of the devotees. He particularly poked fun at T.V. watching, sporting events such as ping-pong, and

social events. He used to laugh heartily at these things. He invented original funny expressions spontaneously such as “dizzydasis”. He found it amusing that people were attending college to learn Sanskrit and in the end were translating *Mahabharata*, when there were so much Goswami literatures that needed translating.

I saw Kusa in 2000 in Vrindavan when he told me that still, after several years, he continued to translate Jiva Goswami’s monumental *Gopal Champu* which he said was the most difficult task he had ever undertaken. At the same time he was composing his own poems in Sanskrit and English. These works are as yet unpublished. He was handwriting everything over the last few years as his computer had failed and he was unable to get it going again. I saw him in April and he was serenely detached coming out to chant for a while every day, take *darshan*, and get *prasadam*. 🌀



The author, artist Pushkar dasa shows a painting to Shrila Prabhupada who once said, “The artists are the best book distributors.” And the first words your Editor ever heard Shrila Prabhupada say were, “Any artist I like.” (That was in Santa Fe, 1968)

Pushkar’s essay was originally published at <http://vedicilluminations.com/kusakratha/Stories.htm>

From a talk by His Holiness Giriraja Swami on Shrila Prabhupada's Disappearance Day (Houston, Texas, November 15, 2004)...

“Crazy Peter”

Shrila Prabhupada's faith in a person or mercy toward a person brought great results. There was a young man who came to the Boston temple when I was there in 1970. His name was Peter, and Peter was eccentric—to say the least. In the old Boston temple there was the front door, and then there was a hallway and a stairway up to the temple room. Basically, when a new person came all they would see was the hallway, unless someone greeted them and directed them to the stairs up to the temple room. So, Peter made his home in the front hallway. He would keep all his books and personal paraphernalia scattered on the floor of the hallway. He would rest his back against the wall and stretch his legs out, completely blocking the hallway. And sometimes he would lie down and sleep in the hallway. He did not respond to normal instructions and thus earned for himself the name “Crazy Peter.” We used to call him Crazy Peter.

Still, we all knew Shrila Prabhupada's mood. Shrila Prabhupada was very merciful, and especially in the early days of the movement in America, we considered that any soul that came to the temple was sent by Krishna and was not ordinary, and we would really do everything we could to encourage the person. But with Peter things came to the stage where we thought that he was causing such a disruption that new people who came would be discouraged from Krishna consciousness. We thought that maybe for the larger interest, for the greater good, we should just ask him to go. Satsvarupa Maharaja, as the temple president, wrote to Shrila Prabhupada and asked if we could ask Peter to leave. And Shrila Prabhupada replied, “What's the matter, can't you tolerate?”

Thereafter, Shrila Prabhupada returned to India, and he asked each temple to send one devotee. I was chosen from Boston, and so I went to India. For years I never heard about Crazy Peter, nor did I think much about him. Then, after being in India for many years, I came back to visit the United States. And there, at the Los Angeles temple, during *guru-puja*, I saw Crazy Peter. I could

not believe it. So many years had passed—Shrila Prabhupada had left the planet—and there was Crazy Peter right in the temple room in Los Angeles.

I asked a nearby devotee, “Who is that?” He answered, “Oh that is Kushakratha Prabhu.” I thought, “Kushakratha Prabhu—the Sanskrit genius who is producing translation after translation of Vedic scriptures and the works of the Gosvamis and other *acharyas*?” We were reading them and reciting prayers from them. His translations were an essential part of our spiritual lives. I thought, “O my God, that is Kushakratha Prabhu! Crazy Peter has become Kushakratha Prabhu, the Sanskrit translator!” [laughter] And then I thought of Shrila Prabhupada’s mercy. Shrila Prabhupada had protected him. Somehow Shrila Prabhupada wanted to give him a chance to do service, to become Krishna conscious, and he did. ॠ

Kushakratha Prabhu passed away in Vrindavana in 2005. He remains the most prolific author / translator among Prabhupada’s disciples. For a list of translations by Shriman Kushakratha dasa Prabhu, or to read his books online, see this site:

<http://vedicilluminations.com/kusakratha/Translationlist.htm> ॠ

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: “Your idea of issuing a special issue concerning the [Varnasrama dharma](#), and Gandhi's movement; it is very good idea. And actually India's position is now degraded; it is not advancing. They have lost their original culture, and now they are begging from outside. So actually they have not gained by sacrificing their original culture. Of course, this superficial loss of original culture is visible only to the so-called educated person at the present moment, and they have become befooled as it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*: [Mayaya](#) Prihatajnana, their knowledge has been taken away. So if you try to criticize that will be of some value because you are outside purview of the Indian government, but do it very carefully, so that you may not offend anyone.” (Letter to BTG Editor Rayarama dasa, 15 October 1968)

Boston, 5 May 1968:

Lecture at M.I.T.

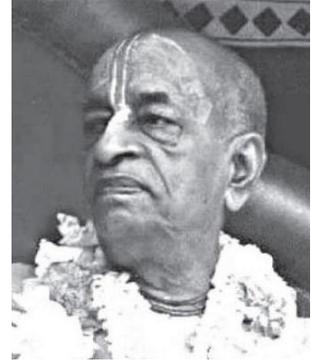
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmīlitam yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who with the torchlight of knowledge has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance.”

This prayer is offering respectful obeisances to the spiritual master. Why? Because the spiritual master is the person who opens our eyes, complicated in ignorance, with the torch of transcendental knowledge. Timirāndhasya. Every one of us born ignorant, and we require specific education and training for seeing things as they are. Today I am very glad to meet you. You are all students of technology. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is also another technology. Unfortunately, in the modern state of civilization there are different department of knowledge. There is department of teaching medical science, there is department of teaching engineering, there is department of educating—so many other departments of knowledge. Unfortunately, there is no department for distributing knowledge in the science of the soul. But that is the important, most important thing, because the soul is the mainstay, is the background of all our movements.



In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [Bg. 3.42] there is a nice verse:

*indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ*

The idea is that in the present consciousness I am thinking that I am this body, although actually I am not this body. This is ignorance. And body means the senses. I am acting means... Just like I am talking. That means I am using my tongue for vibration. So these bodily activities means sensual activities. But if you go deep into the matter, the senses can only act when the mind is sound. If the mind is not sound, a crazy man or a madman cannot use his senses properly. Therefore higher science. First of all technology of the senses, and then, next higher technology is of the mind, which is known as psychology. Thinking, feeling, willing. They are trying to understand how they are working. And above this mind, mental science, there is the science of intelligence. And above the science of intelligence, the background is the soul. Unfortunately, we have got technology for the bodily senses, we have got technology for psychology, but we have neither any technology for intelligence nor for any technology in the science of the soul. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the technology of the science of soul.

There is a nice story. You'll appreciate it. In India, especially in Bengal, there are many rivers. The land is full of rivers. Because it is on the bank of the Bay of Bengal, all rivers are falling. Therefore Bengal, the land of, especially the east Bengal, is full of rivers. One student of technology was going home, and he was on the boat. So the student was asking the boatman, "Do you know what are the stars?" The boatman said, "Sir, we are ordinary boatman. What do we know about these stars?" "Oh. Then your fifty percent of life is wasted, useless." Then he was asking, "Do you know what are these trees? Do you know any science of botany?" He said, "Sir, we are ordinary laborer. What do we know about botany?" "Oh. Then seventy-five percent of your life is useless." In this way the student of technology was asking the boatman, "Do you know this? Do you know that?" And he said that "I am ordinary man. What do I know all these things?" Then all of a sudden there was a black cloud, and there was storm, and the river began to be inflated, and the boatman said, "My dear sir, do you know swimming?" "Oh," he said, "no." Then he said, "Then your cent percent knowledge is spoiled. Now you have to go down to the river. Your life is finished." In this way they dropped in the river, and the technological student, because he did not know how to swim, so the storm and the waves grabbed him.

The idea is that we are making progress, certainly, in technology, in economics, in so many other departments of human necessities. But *Bhagavad-gītā* says that real problem of this world, or real problem of our life is, *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam* [Bg. 13.9]. If you are intelligent enough, then you should see the real problem is birth, death, old age and disease. *Janma* means birth, and *mṛtyu* means death. *Janma-mṛtyu-jarā*. *Jarā* means old age, and *vyādhī* means disease. So actual material problem is this, *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī*. We have forgotten that “In the abdomen of my mother, how precarious condition I was living in.” Of course, we can know from the description of medical science or any other science how the child is packed up there and how much suffering is there. The worms bite the child and he cannot express; he suffers the suffering. Similarly, the mother eats something and the pungent taste also gives him suffering. So these descriptions are there in the śāstras, in the scriptures and authentic Vedic literature, how the child suffers within the abdomen of mother. So these are the sufferings of birth. At least, one child has to remain in that air-packed condition at least for ten months. Now just imagine if you are put into that air-packed condition for three minutes now, you will immediately die. But actually, we had that experience to remain in the mother's womb in that air-packed condition for ten months. So suffering was there, but because the child was incapable of expressing, therefore ... Or his consciousness was not so elevated. He could not cry, but the suffering was there. Similarly, at the time of death there is suffering. Similarly, old man. Just like us, we have got so many complaints, bodily complaints. Because now everything, the anatomical or physiological condition, is deteriorating. The stomach is not digesting foodstuff so nicely as when I was young I could digest. So the sufferings are there. Similarly, disease. Who wants disease? So modern technology, they have advanced undoubtedly, but there is no remedy for, I mean to say, to stop birth, death, old age and disease. This is real problem. But because these problems cannot be solved by the modern scientific advancement of knowledge, they have practically set aside or neglected because they cannot solve it.

But there is a solution. There is a solution. That solution of this problem is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [Bg. 8.15, that,

*mām upetya kaunteya duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramām gatāḥ*

“My dear Arjuna, if somebody comes to Me ...” “Me” means here the Supreme Personality of Godhead is saying, Kṛṣṇa. “If somebody comes to Me, then he hasn't got to take birth again in this miserable material condition.”

Duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam [Bg. 8.15]. *Duḥkhālayam* means the place of miseries. We are thinking that we have made a paradise, but actually the place is miserable, because the threefold miseries, they are there. Either in America or in India or in any other country, China, or any other planet, the material miseries which are three kinds, *ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidaiivika* ... *Ādhyātmika* means miseries pertaining to the body and the mind. Sometimes we are feeling headaches, sometimes we are feeling some other pains. Any things which are pertaining to the body and mind, there is some pain. These are called *ādhyātmika*. Similarly, there are other pains, inflicted by other living entities. They are called *ādhibhautika*. Similarly, other pains also, which is offered by the nature, by the laws of nature. All of a sudden there is earthquake, all of a sudden there is famine, or similar other which we have no control over. So these three kinds of miseries are always there. But under the spell of illusion we are thinking that we are happy. And the illusion means that the material energy is so illusory that however a living entity may be in abominable condition, he thinks that he is happy. You take any animal, just like take the hog—that life is most filthy life. Of course, you have no experience to see in your city, hogs. In India there are many hogs in the city, and they are living in filthy place—they are eating stool, and most abominable life. But even you ask a hog that, “You are living in such abominable condition. Let me do you something good,” he'll refuse to accept. If you give him something, nice preparation, as we have got in India, *halavā*, he'll not accept it. He will accept stool, because his body is meant for that purpose and he will not like any palatable foodstuff. He will like that stool. This is the spell of *māyā*.

So Kṛṣṇa consciousness means that if we want, if we are actually educated, then we must try to question that “Why I am suffering?” This is called *brahma-jijñāsā*. In the *Vedānta-sūtra* the first aphorism is *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. One should inquire about his existence as soul, not as body or as mind. Because he is

neither body nor mind. So this *Vedānta-sūtra* says that *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. *Atha* ataḥ means this is the time, this human form of life, developed consciousness, with greater intelligence than the animals, one should inquire about his spiritual existence. That is real technology. And *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* says that *parābhavas tāvad abodha-jāto yāvan na jijñāsata ātma-tattvam*. So long one does not inquire about his spiritual existence... Every one of us is born ignorant because we do not know what is our real identity. Generally, we accept that “I am this body,” but actually I am not this body. These things can be understood very easily. Suppose you are seeing all along a friend. All of a sudden he dies and you say, “My friend is gone.” Well, your friend is lying there with all the body, hands, legs, everything. He's lying there. Why do you say that your friend is gone? Then you have never seen your friend. You have seen only his bodily structure. That's all. Similarly, at the present moment the humanitarian work is going on, but we do not know what is the basic principle of humanitarian work. The *Bhāgavata* answers this: *yasyātma-buddhiḥ kuṇape tri-dhātuke* [SB 10.84.13]. A person who is in the knowledge that “I am this body and...,” *sva-dhīḥ kalatrādiṣu bhauma-ijya-dhīḥ*, and if one thinks that “In relations with this body, my kinsmen, they will protect me,” and if he thinks that “The land where the body is grown, that is the worshipable land,” then he is, I mean to say, accepted like animal. *Sa eva go-kharaḥ* [SB 10.84.13].

So these instructions are there. Unfortunately, we have no time, neither we have desire to understand actually what I am, why I am suffering, what is this world, what is my relationship with this world, what is God, what is my relationship with God. These questions are very important questions, and there is technology to understand these questions. And the *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, all these literatures are there. If you kindly, of course, see to these literatures, you'll find the solution of the problems of life. But we are not interested. That is the difficulty. We are thinking that we are happy, we have no problem, although there are so many problems and we are not happy. This is called *māyā*. *Māyā* means what is not. *Mā* means not. *Yā* means this. This is called *māyā*. We are thinking that we are happy, but actually we are not happy. And even if we are happy, how long we are happy? Suppose, taking for example you Americans, you are the richest nation of the world. Your material comforts and everything is greater than other countries, standard of living. But just try to think how long you can remain as American. Say, for

fifty years or hundred years, at most. Then... But we do not know what is going to happen in my next life because we do not believe in the next life. But actually there is next life. So if you don't take care of my next life and if we irresponsibly waste our valuable human form of life like ordinary animals... The ordinary animals, they demand something for eating, they want to sleep, they want to defend, and they want to mate. So similarly, if human being is also busy with the four principles of bodily demands, namely eating, sleeping, mating and defending, then, according to Vedic literature, it is said that he is not human being. *Dharmeṇa hīna paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*. If the human being does not understand his real spiritual identity and simply busy with the four demands of bodily necessities, then *paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*—he's as equal as with lower animals, cats and dogs.

So *Bhagavad-gītā* gives you clue. It is not very difficult to understand this science. The *Bhagavad-gītā* gives you the information of the spirit soul very simply. The *Bhagavad-gītā* [Bg. 2.13] says,

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati*

Just like within this body, when you were a child you were within this body—not exactly this body, but another body, which was so small. Now where is that body? That body is gone. You have got another body. So *Bhagavad-gītā* says, as we are changing body moment to moment, *dehino 'smin yathā dehe...* [Bg. 2.13]. *Dehinaḥ* means the soul, the spirit soul, who is embodied within this body, as he is changing body from moment to moment. This is a fact, a medical fact, that you are changing body every moment. Similarly, the last change is called death. But we have to take..., we have to accept another body. But we do not know what sort of body we are going to accept. That technology is wanting in the modern civilization. But there are 8,400,000's of different bodies, and after leaving this body you may enter any of such bodies. You may become, after leaving this body, you can become American or you can become Indian or you can become Chinaman or you can become god in the moon planet or some other planet, or you can become dog, you can become hog, you can become serpent—anything. That requires... That is under the control of the material nature. That is not under your control. But if you take to this Kṛṣṇa

consciousness, it will be under your control. How it is possible? The *Bhagavad-gītā* [Bg. 9.25] answers this:

*yānti deva-vratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ
bhūtejyā yānti bhūtāni mad-yājino 'pi yānti mām*

If you want to enter into another planet, say moon planet or sun planet or Venus planet... There are innumerable planets. The ultimate, highest planet is called Brahmaloaka. And the advantage of going to Brahmaloaka is also stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, that you can get a life, *sahasra-yuga-paryantam ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ* [Bg. 8.17]. You can get there life for millions and millions of years. But still, there is death and there is birth and there is that old age and there is that disease. But *mad-dhāma gatvā punar janma na vidyate*. But if somebody is transferred to that planet which is called Kṛṣṇaloka, Goloka Vṛndāvana, or Vaikuṅṭha, then one hasn't got to come back to this material, I mean to say, temporary existence. So these informations are there, and they are very scientific. They are not dogmatic. If you accept them with reason and argument and with human consciousness, the solutions are there.

So Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the movement. It is not a new movement. This movement is at least, current, since five hundred years before. Lord Caitanya, He started this movement in the fifteenth century. So this movement is current everywhere in India, but in your country, of course, it is new. But our request is that you kindly take this movement little seriously. We do not ask you to stop your technological advance. You do it. There is a nice proverb in Bengal that a woman who is busy in household work is also..., she also takes care for dressing herself nicely. It is the nature of women. When they go out they dress very nicely. So similarly, you may be busy with all kinds of technology. That ... that is not forbidden. But at the same time, you try to understand this technology, the science of soul. That is there. It is not a bogus propaganda. It is factual. It is science. As science is not bogus propaganda, similarly this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is also not bogus propaganda. As science means two plus two equal to four, similarly Kṛṣṇa consciousness



means mitigating the all problems of life. So... And the process is very easy. We are... Not we are. It is recommended by Lord Caitanya that in this age, for self-realization it is this process [*Cc. Ādi 17.21*]:

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāma iva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

Lord Caitanya says that in this age, when our life is very short, we are not very much enlightened in spiritual matters and we are very lazy at the same time, and at the same time we are unfortunate, so under these conditions the people are recommended simply to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāma iva kevalam. Now this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, you may say that “This 'Kṛṣṇa' is Indian name or Hindu name. Why shall we chant 'Kṛṣṇa'?” But if you have got any name of God, you can chant that also. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that God has millions and billions of names. So any name is as good as “Kṛṣṇa.” It doesn't matter. Then why we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa? Because we are following the footprints of Lord Caitanya, and He chanted this holy name, we are chanting. So we shall request you most humbly that it is..., there is no loss on your part, but the gain is immense. If you take to this chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, then gradually your misconception of this life will be cleared off. You will understand your real identity and you will act in that way. And the technology is so nice that you may remain in your business, that doesn't matter. Simply you have to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Suppose you are walking on the street. If you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, nobody is taxing you, nobody is bothering you. But if by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, if you derive some benefit, why do you neglect it? That is our submission. So this movement is for making solution of the problems of life, and it can be easily done. And anyone can accept it. It doesn't matter whether he is Indian or American or Hindu or Muslim or Christian. It doesn't matter. Simply this vibration: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

So I shall thank you if you join us with this kīrtana and at least for few minutes you chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Thank you very much. Any question you can put. Yes?

Student (1): If I understood you, I think you said that this approach, that you feel that it's appropriate to you because people are lax in their approach to

spiritual problems.

Prabhupāda: It is not Hindu approach. It is... We are recommending that you chant the holy name of God. Why do you say it is Hindu approach?

Student (1): I didn't. But as I understood you, I thought you said that this was appropriate here because people aren't terribly interested, therefore are lax in spiritual matters, which I feel is true. But if this is true, is there something that would follow? In other words, could you progress to some other form of this more...?

Prabhupāda: There are many other forms, of course, but this form is the easiest, and just suitable for the people of this age. Just like you gather together and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Anyone can. Actually we are doing that. In your country, wherever I go I chant this, and the American boys and girls, they take part in it in parks, in our class. So there is no difficulty. And this is the easiest. Simply we do not ask that you must be very highly educated, you must be philosopher, you must be expert in breathing exercise or this way or that way. No. We don't require any qualification. Simply come and sit with us and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and see the result.

Student (1): Do you imagine in this life an attainment of a follower...?

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. There are many followers. You can ask how they have changed. We have got many letters. And here there are my students. You can ask directly how they have changed. This is practical. Yes.

Student (2): I want to make sure I understood—that chanting this over a long time will also help affect where our body will go after we die, what form we'll come back in?

Prabhupāda: First thing is by chanting your misconception of life will be cleared. At the present moment I am thinking that “I am this body,” and therefore, because my body is born in this land, therefore I am thinking, “I am American.” And because I happened to take my birth in a certain family, so I am thinking, “I am Christian” or “Hindu.” But all these things are designations. When we clear the misconception of my life, then I can understand that I am pure soul, ahaṁ brahmāsmi. The Vedic language says that “I am spirit soul.” And as soon as you understand, then *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati* [Bg. 18.54]. As soon as you realize yourself as soul, then you become immediately free from all anxieties, *prasannātmā*. *Prasannātmā* means jolly. Spiritual life means natural joyful. *Ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt (Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.12)*. The *Vedānta-sūtra* says that spirit is by nature joyful. So because we

are spirit, we are always hankering after joyous life. But because our expression is through this material mind and body, it is not being fulfilled. So as soon as you stand on the spiritual platform, you actually stand on the platform of joyous life. That is the immediate gain. *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam* [Cc. Antya 20.12]. Immediately. Yes?

Student (3): What is the meaning of the sign at your back?

Prabhupāda: What is the meaning of your sign in the neck? What is the meaning of your sign in the neck? Oh, this? I do not know. (laughter) That is not my sign. That is technological sign. (laughter)

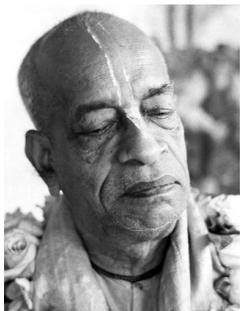
Student (4): Your Holiness?

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Student (4): Could you estimate how many people in India have found true spirituality through Indian religion?

Prabhupāda: What do you mean by Indian religion?

Student (4): By any of the true religions which are offered in India. Not only yours, but...



Prabhupāda: You do not know what is Indian religion. The Indian religion is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Have you read *Bhagavad-gītā*? Then you do not know what is Indian religion. Indian religion is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says, there is no greater higher authority than Kṛṣṇa. You can accept it. At least, the Indians, they accept. So in the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said in the beginning that *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati*: [Bg. 4.7] “Whenever there is discrepancy in the matter of discharging religious principles, I appear.” Now, if you accept this religion means the Hindu religion or Muslim religion or Christian religion or Buddhist religion, Kṛṣṇa does not propose such religion. He, at the end of *Bhagavad-gītā*, He says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: [Bg. 18.66] “You give up all other religious principles. You simply surrender unto Me.” So religion, either you take it Hindu religion or Muslim religion or Christian religion, religion means to surrender unto God. And the *Bhāgavata* explains, *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje* [SB 1.2.6]. That is the perfect type of religion which teaches surrendering unto the Supreme Lord. That is religion. Either you take it Hindu religion or Christian religion or Muslim religion or any religion, real religion means surrendering unto God. If there is no surrender unto God, that is no

religion.

Student (4): Well, in India how many followers do you feel...

Prabhupāda: Why do you ask for India? I am talking of religious principle. How many of you Christian, you surrender unto God? First answer this. Then you go to India. Anyone, Christian or Muslim or Hindu, it doesn't matter. The conception of God is there. If you do not surrender unto God, you have no religion. Yes?

Student (5): In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, when Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to go forth in the battle and not to, to slay his relatives and not to be caught in the material world and see that the slayer and the slain are one, should the young American faced with the war in Vietnam go forth to Vietnam realizing that the slayer and the slain are one and that all this slaughter, just slaughter karma, and follow the way of the sage.

Prabhupāda: In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna, he was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, a friend of Kṛṣṇa. Perhaps you know it. So in the beginning he did not like to fight. He denied. So any devotee of God or Kṛṣṇa is not fond of war or fighting with any others. But if there is necessity, if Kṛṣṇa wants that fight, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa will accept such fight. If you think that your Vietnam fighting is ordered by Kṛṣṇa, then it is all right. If it is not, then it is not. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If Kṛṣṇa says, if God says, “This is right,” we accept it right. If God says it is wrong, we accept it wrong. Because we think, we have poor fund of knowledge. We do not know what is right and wrong. Therefore if God says or Kṛṣṇa says this is right, we accept it right. If God says or Kṛṣṇa says it is wrong, we accept it wrong. Yes?

Student (6): In order for one body to perceive another body, you need your eye. You have to look and see the other person and another person... In order for a body to perceive itself, it needs a mirror. But how does one body perceive its soul?

Prabhupāda: Yes. When you see your body you think that “This is my finger, this is my hand, this is my head, this is my chest, this is my leg.” You see simply you will find, “This is my, this is my, this is my.” But if you try to find out “Then what is I?” then you will find out. That is called self-realization. We are simply now engrossed with things “my,” but we do not know what is “I.” The identification of myself—or I with this body—is wrong. The identification of I with the mind is also wrong. The identification of I with intelligence is also wrong. When you actually come to the platform of spiritual understanding, then

you understand that “I am neither this body, neither the senses, neither this mind, nor intelligence, but I am spirit soul.” That is called *brahma-jñāna*, or Brahman realization. And the symptom will be, as soon as you are actually in self-realization, you will feel happy. You will have no anxiety. That is the test. Just like when you're free from disease, then there is no pain. Similarly, when you actually realize that you are spirit soul, ahaṁ *brahmāsmi*, then the symptom will be that there will be no anxiety and no lamentation and no bereavement or no so-called, I mean to say, happiness.

Student (7): How can you be sure?

Prabhupāda: Here is the surety. As soon as you see that you're free from all anxiety, then it is sure that you have realized yourself.

Student (7): Well how can you be sure you're free from all anxiety if you're incapable of perceiving happiness? And to perceive happiness, you...

Prabhupāda: Well, you have to follow the process. Then you will feel. Just like if you are diseased, if you have to be under the treatment of the physician and you have to take medicine, and when you're actually free, you will yourself feel, “Yes, I am free.” But without going under treatment of an expert physician, or taking the medicine, how you can be free from disease? Yes?

Student (8): I don't understand exactly how Kṛṣṇa consciousness is different than the other religions. Like in Christianity, Judaism and Moslem they have the idea that a person can pray and sometimes chant, communicate with God, understand His way. And all religions seem to have this. So I don't see how it's different.

Prabhupāda: There is no difference. I have already explained that we are recommending that you chant the holy name of God. If you have got any holy name of God in your religion, you can chant that. We don't say that you chant Kṛṣṇa. Just like you are thirsty, you want water. Somebody may call “water,” somebody may call “pani,” somebody may call “jala.” That doesn't matter. But you want water. Similarly, if you have got any name for calling the Supreme Lord, you call in that name. It doesn't matter. That is our recommendation. When we say, *harer nāma*. *Harer nāma* means the holy name of the Supreme Lord. Yes?

Student (9): There are different techniques for reaching Christ consciousness or God consciousness or self-realization. What test do you recommend for finding out which technique is the best?

Prabhupāda: Yes. That I have already explained. That technique is best by

which you develop your love of God. That is the test. If by following Christian religion or Muhammadan religion or Hindu religion you actually develop your transcendental love for God, that is the best technique. If you have no love for God, simply you follow the technique, then it is simply laboring. That's all.

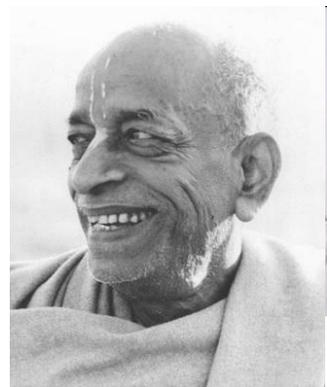
Student (9): I mean especially the variations of Indian technique.

Prabhupāda: I don't say any variation. I say that is the best technique by which you develop love of God. Now you find out what is that best technique. If you find that in your technique you are developing love of God, it is best. We don't say that you accept this technique or that technique. Any technique by which... Just like a man is diseased. Any medicine by which he is cured, that is best medicine for him. Similarly, the criterion is whether you have developed love for God or you are still in love for the matter. That is the test. *Sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje* [SB 1.2.6]. This is the definition of technique in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. That technique is the best form of technique of religious activity by which you can develop your service attitude towards the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The service attitude is there. You are serving. Either you are serving your family or you are serving your body or you are serving your society or serving your country, or if you have no engagement to service, you are serving some dog, you are serving some cat, you are serving some animal. So serving spirit is there, but we do not know where to place our service and become actually benefited by that service. Therefore you have to develop that spirit of service attitude toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When you develop that consciousness, that is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness or God consciousness or whatever technical name you may give. Yes?

Student (10): According to the belief, how many... Is there a fixed number of souls or fixed number of spirits in the universe?

Prabhupāda: No. The souls are innumerable. *Asaṅkhyaya*. It is stated in the Vedic literature, *asaṅkhyaya*. You cannot count. *Asaṅkhyaya*. And in the *Upaniṣad* it is said, *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām eko bahūnām vidadhāti kāmān* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13). God is also a living entity. As we are living entity, He is also living entity. But He is the chief living entity. *Nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām*. He's the leader of all living entities. *Eko bahūnām vidadhāti kāmān*. That one Supreme is supplying all the necessities of these many. So living entities... Just like sparks of the fire. The fire is..., big fire is one, but the sparks, there are millions. Similarly, we are all qualitatively one

with God. Just like fire and fire sparks. Qualitatively all of them are fire, but the big fire and small fire is different. Similarly, we are also of the same quality as God, but we are very minute and God is great.



Student (4): When some new animal or person is born, is the soul always a reincarnation of some previous soul, or can it be that a new soul has...

Prabhupāda: No. The same soul is changing, just like you are changing your dress. Now you are in some colored dress. You may have some white dress or some red dress. Similarly, *vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya* [Bg. 2.22]. As soon as your dress is old enough, you cannot use it any more, you have to change the dress. Similarly, the present body, as soon as it is no more workable, you have to accept another body. Now, taking it accepted as dress, that the next body means next dress, so that dress will be offered according to the payment, or according to your work. If you have worked just like a god, then you get the dress of a god, and if you have worked like a dog, then you'll get the dress of a dog.

Student (4): Then how can the dog then become a higher soul, a higher form after the dog?

Prabhupāda: Yes, there is gradual evolution. From dog life, from animal life, again by evolutionary process... That is accepted by anthropo... What is called? Anthropology. That they come to the human being, again there is a chance to get out of this bodily embodiment, and you can get yourself free life in the spiritual world. So if you lose this chance, then you again go to the cycle of birth and death in so many forms of bodies. Therefore we should utilize this enlightened body, the human form of body, the civilized form of life, for our next eternal life. *Yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama* [Bg. 15.6]. We should prepare ourself to go to that form of life which has no more birth, death, or disease or old age. Eternal life. Yes.

Student (11): Does it do atheists any good to chant your verses if they only want to be happy through chanting them?

Prabhupāda: Certainly. You may be atheist or theist. The chanting is so powerful, the atheist will be theist. If you are atheist, you can try it. Yes?

Student (12): Is this continual reincarnation only occurring on this earth, or does it occur on other planets?

Prabhupāda: Oh, other planets. All throughout the whole material world.

Student (12): Is there interchange between the planets?

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. You can go in another planet also. Because it is said in the Bhagavad-gītā, sarva-gā. Sarva-gā means the soul can be transferred to any place. It may be in America, it may be India, in moon planet, sun planet, or any..., anywhere.

Student (13): Has the universe existed forever, or does soul have a beginning?

Prabhupāda: No. This material universe is created and dissolved. Bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate [Bg. 8.19]. Just like this body: it is born for some time, it will stay for some time, it will go for some time, then it will become old, and it will vanish. Similarly, the whole universe is like that. It has its creation, it stays for some time, a long duration of time, and it creates so many other things, by-products, and there will be time when everything will be vanquished.

Student (13): And where were the souls before the universe began?

Prabhupāda: That is called spiritual kingdom. In the spirit.

Student (13): And is that where they will all end up again when the universe comes to an end?

Prabhupāda: Yes. If you are not liberated, then you have to come to this material world and change one body after another. That will be your business. But if you get yourself transferred to the spiritual world, then there is no more coming back to this material world, and you get your eternal, blissful life of knowledge.

Student (13): What happens if the universe ends and there are some souls that have not yet transferred themselves to the other universe?

Prabhupāda: The same thing. What happens when your body will be vanquished? Nothing happens. The same thing will go on. There are many bodies, there are many universes. It is coming and going and vanquished. It is the law of nature.

Student (13): Do you mean the universe is likely to go on forever?

Prabhupāda: No. It is created. As your body is created, similarly anything material, it has got a life. It has got a period of creation, it stays for some time, then it is finished.

Devotee: Uh, I think questions...

Prabhupāda: Yes. Very nice. Thank you. Yes. So you can all chant. Come on. (kīrtana) ॐ

Well-known Vaishnava author and journalist Satyaraja dasa tells the story of a humble brahmachari who made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of the spreading the message of

his Guru Maharaja ...

Shrila Prabhupada's Indexer: The Life and Death of an Unsung Hero

Satyaraja Dasa

Devotees of Krishna are special, and even among such special souls, some stand out among the rest. While there are those who become swamis or gurus or leaders in various ways, others live ordinary lives of devotion. They perform their service effectively and enthusiastically, if also quietly, exhibiting exemplary character, a contagious service attitude, and a mood of dedication. The unfortunate thing is this: Few are privy to the glory of their humble endeavors. Akshobhya Dasa (1950–1979) is one such soul.



Akshobhya was especially dedicated to the books of his guru, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, establishing a system and method of indexing that made his spiritual master's work accessible not only to the devotee community but to a much larger readership as well, including seekers and scholars.

These were no simple indexes: Academics and literati outside the movement praised them for their clarity and breadth. And his contribution continues to this day, as indexers for the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust draw on his outstanding methods and procedures when indexing BBT books.

Akshobhya's oeuvre included several volumes of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (starting with the first one), *The Nectar of Devotion*, and the mammoth *Krishna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*—important texts for Prabhupada's mission.

Akshobhya's indexing days were cut short by a fatal knife wound to the heart.

When a vicious assailant pursued a young devotee, with intent to kill, Akshobhya leaped in front of the cold blade, exhibiting a heroic side that defined his character. Even his work as an indexer indicated this same heroic tendency, if in a less demonstrative way. Indexing is the job of the unsung hero, since writers and editors usually receive recognition for their work while the indexer stays in the background, rarely getting his due. Accordingly, Akshobhya was an unsung hero in regard to Shrila Prabhupada's literary work, and he was a hero in saving a devotee's life.

Early Days

Akshobhya was born Eric Mausert on July 31, 1950. He was the eldest child of John and Loretta, who made their home in Albany, New York. Two brothers would soon follow, Mark and Kurt. According to Mark, the family was lower middle-class and not wanting for material necessities. However, it was plagued by arguments and the threat of divorce.



Says Mark: There were magical, warm family moments, without doubt, but there was also a lot of rage. There was friction and little sense of security. All of this culminated when, as young boys, our dog was put to sleep in front of us. Bootsie had gotten into a neighbor's chicken pen, and our family had to make financial restitution. So Dad decided to bring her to the vet. We went with him and watched. I don't know why he brought us along. I responded by going within, becoming withdrawn, to a certain extent. But Akshobhya, then Eric, exhibited intense resentment. He couldn't tolerate this kind of injustice or cruelty. After this incident it became clear to him that the material world was a nasty place.

The boys were sent to Catholic school in Watertown, New York, where the family came of age. Soon they relocated to Schenectady, where high school years were spent at Bishop Gibbons. Here the teachings of Christianity were reinforced along with a superior academic curriculum.

The Polish Catholic nuns, as Mark remembers it, conveyed a Christianity that

was suffused with threats of hell—they preached fire and brimstone. At the same time, they talked about a life of brotherly love while collecting their congregation's hard-earned donations. It seemed contradictory. We were told about a loving God, Mark summarizes, who, with just a little prompting, could send you to hell forever. This inconsistency, among others, made the Mausert boys turn away from religion.

Eventually, the family moved to Binghamton, where in 1968 their father had landed a good job as a purchasing agent for the State University of New York (SUNY). Prior to this, Eric had stayed on in Schenectady, living with his grandmother. But time would reunite him with his dad. Always garnering excellent grades, Eric soon began courses at SUNY Binghamton. But his reunion with his father was short-lived: The same year that Eric arrived, the elder of the Mausert clan had died. Again, the harsh realities of material existence hit Eric with the power of a thunderbolt.

It was in college that he met Dhanurdhara Swami, then Dennis Winiker, who became his roommate. The two would often discuss philosophy and took an English literature class together.

The Swami remembers Eric fondly: He was a tall guy, maybe 6' 2—an imposing figure—and extremely bright. He used to do the New York Times crossword puzzles in college—it was easy for him. I remember that he had a fondness for the story of Odysseus. In fact, that was his nickname. He seemed to love the idea of the tragic hero. His girlfriend at that time, Jean, was called Aphrodite. So you could say that this was a big part of his self-identity.

Odysseus is considered one of the most important Greek heroes of all time. His story involves the Trojan War, a mythological battle waged by the Greeks against the city of Troy. Odysseus's contribution to the war was largely his brilliant Trojan Horse, a wooden structure with Greece's best soldiers hidden inside. This allowed the Greek army to sneak into Troy and end the war once and for all, emerging victorious.

Eric felt that the world needed more heroes, people with integrity and character. He read many stories about heroic personalities of the past, great

souls who dedicated their lives to helping others, and who would rescue people who came on hard times. He wanted to be like that. For this reason, perhaps, the Odysseus story stayed with him, molding his personality as he also adopted hippie culture and the other more common moods and attributes of his generation. Perhaps he wanted to be a hero; or maybe, subliminally, he was looking for someone to rescue him.

Joining ISKCON

On his summer break in 1970, Akshobhya traveled to southern California, unsure if he would ever return to school. He quickly found a place to stay, and when he heard that several friends—Dennis, Jan Potemkin, and others—were coming west, he offered them shelter.

Jan recounts: It was 1970. I was a student at Stony Brook, and that summer I was traveling around California with Dhanurdhara Swami [DDS], who at the time was Dennis, and two other friends. We split up into two groups, and I traveled with DDS to Los Angeles to meet Eric and his roommate Tom, who had left school at Binghamton, NY. We lived a hippie existence, eating brown rice and vegetables every evening. Eric was an intense, intelligent guy who was still looking for a direction. We would have animated discussions, and he wrote tight little poems full of wordplay and double meanings.

He was tall and had a striking face. Tom was a musician, and they liked to perform a version of the Rolling Stones' Sympathy for the Devil. I played the harmonica with them, and we did it every time we happened onto a piano and a gathering. We all did the whoo-whoos while Eric pranced around like Jagger, singing with an invisible microphone in his hand and wearing dark sunglasses.

It was during this same summer that Eric met the devotees of Krishna and became interested in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). He received a mantra card from a shaven-headed monk on the street, inviting him to the temple. Jan remembers what ensued:

We were tired of our nightly dinners, and so we agreed when Eric suggested we try the Hare Krishna Sunday feast in Venice [Blvd., off Watseka Avenue in Los Angeles]. I am not sure if that was his first time, but it was for me and

DDS. We were hooked right away, and I carried a Gita in my jacket pocket the rest of the summer. Within a couple of years, DDS and Eric were devotees.

Toward the end of the summer, the young men drove up the Pacific Coast Highway to San Francisco and met the devotees there as well. One of those devotees was Jayananda Dasa, an ISKCON luminary who inspired people with his sincerity and devotion. This meeting underscored the young men's attachment to the fledgling spiritual movement that now captured their hearts. After the summer, school beckoned, and they all returned to the East Coast—except Eric. He stayed on, assisting ISKCON, adopting the life of a monk, and foregoing his college education. In due course, Shрила Prabhupada initiated him as Akshobhya Dasa. This was in San Diego, in 1971. But soon after, he returned to New York, to serve as a devotee at the burgeoning Henry Street temple in Brooklyn. Kurt, his younger brother, recollects:

He was there in 1971, before [the sacred images of] Radha-Govinda were installed. He told me that he helped carry Them into the temple when They arrived. Shri Shri Radha Govinda, the Radha-Krishna Deities in Brooklyn, were installed on March 3, 1972. So he was there during that period, but not long after that, he went to the gurukula [ISKCON's elementary school] in Dallas as an alternative service for the government. Apparently, he had pled guilty to evading the draft. His federal probation officer, Frank Waterson (now deceased), asked my mother what would happen if they put her son in prison. She thought for a minute and then told him that Akshobhya would have the whole cell block converted to Hare Krishna within a week. Mr. Waterson thought that was very funny, and he threw his head back with laughter. Perhaps to keep Akshobhya's influence out of the prison, they offered him alternative service. Akshobhya suggested teaching in the Dallas Gurukula. And they went for it.

Texas and the Krishna Bowl

Rupa Vilasa Dasa was there in Texas when Akshobhya arrived. His memories are clear and detailed, since he was a teacher in the ISKCON elementary school with Akshobhya: When gurukula was in Dallas in the early to mid-1970s, Akshobhya showed up, [and I immediately noticed his] tremendous intensity and energy. I remember that he was very philosophical and would

discuss points in the philosophy by quoting from different parts of Shrila Prabhupada's books. But the service he relished most, it seemed, was cleaning the ashram and temple. Dallas had extensive areas that needed mopping in the ashram and the prasadam room areas, as well as the halls. Akshobhya would clean them all daily with tremendous energy and enthusiasm, chanting constantly as he did so, and in record time. It seemed to me that he could effortlessly do the work of several men.

He prodigiously read Shrila Prabhupada's books and was able to quote entire passages of Krishna book from memory. In this regard, he created his own service: reading to the students from Krishna book and Chaitanya-charitamrita at breakfast and lunch. He would insist on absolute quiet and would read with tremendous excitement and drama. Breaking off from the reading from time to time, he would make exclamations of appreciation and amazement.

In the afternoons, the children would have recess in the temple's park-like area just outside the temple. Akshobhya had become incredibly inspired by reading the chapters from Krishna book concerning Shalva's airplane. After stringing wires from tree to tree in the park and building a model of Shalva's airship, Akshobhya made bows and arrows for the children, met them in the park, and while dramatically narrating the story would simultaneously direct the children in a pastime play which culminated in the firing of arrows at the plane as it hurtled across the wires by Akshobhya's arrangement, bringing the plane to earth. The children went wild and loved this. He would also take them to various playgrounds for outings and would interact with them and play with them with great energy, encouraging them to chant as they played. At other times, he would assist them in enacting other pastimes from Krishna book in plays. In the evenings he would read to the boys as they fell asleep in the ashram.

Most of the boys responded with enthusiasm to Akshobhya's renditions of Krishna book stories. We divided up into teams and began to have contests similar to an old TV program called College Bowl where a host/MC would ask questions. In this instance, of course, we related it all to esoteric details found in Krishna book. There were girls' teams and boys' teams. The whole temple used to attend, and the adults also took it up. Akshobhya always functioned as

the host and researched and composed all of the questions, all of which he knew the answers to and could quote the passages from memory.

Rupa Vilasa highlights Akshobhya's creativity and the success of his program: Before the start of each contest, he would chant the prayer:

*krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna he
krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna he
krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna raksha mam
krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna krishna pahi mam
rama raghava rama raghava rama raghava raksha mam
krishna keshava krishna keshava krishna keshava pahi mam*

That is, O Lord Krishna, please protect me and maintain me. O Lord Rama, descendant of King Raghu, please protect Me. O Krishna, O Keshava, killer of the Keshi demon, please maintain Me. [*Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya 7.96–97*]

Lord Chaitanya chanted this prayer as a traveling sannyasi, especially while in the Jharikanda Forest. But Akshobhya would lead the chanting of this mantra in a newly conceived dramatic fashion, with a tune adapted from Beethoven's Eroica. Naturally, everyone was amused and fascinated. The contests would then begin with him firing questions. Akshobhya had created an elaborate system of buzzers and lights that indicated who had rung in first, and as a result, the devotees began to more seriously read the Krishna book, and many of them began to memorize passages.

Amongst the students, we had a boys' team that few adults could compete with. I remember their names: Lila-smarana, Vrindavan, Markandeya, and Keshava, among others. Lila-smarana, the son of Akrura Dasa and Khandabasi, had the most prodigious memory, but the other boys were very sharp as well.

This Krishna Bowl, as it came to be called, had caught on in other temples, and a Los Angeles team headed by Jayatirtha and Rameshwara organized a multi-temple showdown during the San Francisco Rathayatra Festival in 1973. The boys' team was undefeated until they ran into the LA team, but then LA had to

contend with our *gurukula* adult team, and Dhrishtaketu led us to victory and the Krishna Bowl cup.

After some time, Prabhupada expressed reservations about the contests, and so they were eventually discontinued. It seems Akshobhya had written to him about it in 1974, and he quickly responded with a concern that the elaborate contests might overtax the children or create an immature competitive spirit with negative consequences.

Akshobhya was temporarily discouraged, but his enthusiasm for Krishna's pastimes and Prabhupada's books continued to grow. Apropos of this, in 1976 he went to Los Angeles to work with the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. He had an idea for developing indexes for Prabhupada's books, an idea that would soon bear fruit.

The Index Acharya

Arriving in LA, Akshobhya walked right into the offices at the BBT and proceeded to spearhead what was to become the standard indexing system for Shрила Prabhupada's literary works. Before Akshobhya's arrival, the books would occasionally include indexes, but not always. And even then, they were often crude and incomplete, making it difficult for readers to locate points of interest. Akshobhya helped make the books more accessible by developing superior indexes.

At the time (the mid-1970s), the BBT was brimming with activity. Shrikanta Dasa, who was then copyediting and proofreading Shрила Prabhupada's books, was aware of the need for proper indexes, but he was at a loss when it came to actually doing them. Good indexes do not come easily: Indexing is an art and a science that requires a certain skill. In walks Akshobhya, still enthused from his service in Dallas. He had ideas about how to compose indexes, and between the two of them a system was developed.

Shrikanta recounts his initial meeting with Akshobhya and the service to follow:

He'd tell me how they would bring Krishna's pastimes to life with the children, making it almost playtime. I loved to hear his stories, and I was moved by his love for those children. I was sure he'd have loved to still be there for them, but

evidently Krishna had other plans. Now he was needed to bring the books' pastimes to them, and to everyone else, through the best indexes to the best books in the world . . . Akshobhya was always the one with the Kshatriya-like drive—single-minded, cranking out entry after entry, stopping only to debate a point, clarify a meaning, challenge our assumptions. He was completely dedicated to getting it right for his spiritual master. His absorption in this service was beautiful to watch, a level of surrender that still inspires me.

Intellectual devotee Suresvara Dasa travelled to LA to work with the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. His memories of Akshobhya are telling: It was January 1976. Having organized the BBT indexing during the recent book rush (Prabhupada wanted 17 books produced in two months), Akshobhya welcomed my [desire to help], took me to his BBT office, and showed me his system. From Analogies to Zoomorphism, he spoke like a man possessed—Godly-haunted, as Prabhupada would say.

I was astonished by his powers of association, all within the realm of Prabhupada's books. Having organized the ill-fated Krishna Bowl a couple of years earlier at the Dallas *gurukula*, he was able to recite whole pages of the Krishna book and then reference those pages from myriad angles, letting them shine variously like the Lord's *vaidurya* gem.

For a few days, Akshobhya acquainted me with the system he had created to index Prabhupada's work, as well as with a 1975 letter excerpt from His Divine Grace about the importance of the index: Every volume of *Shrimad-Bhagavatam*, *Chaitanya-charitamrita* and any other big volumes must have a full index. It is not a very prestigious presentation without the index. All volumes in the future must have the index. (Letter to Radhaballabha, 19 Jan 1975)

Akshobhya drilled me in the main headings that come up again and again in Prabhupada's books, as well as how to make key-word entries under those headings. The indexer's job, he says, is to anticipate how readers may look up references in different ways. His system is logical, but it really rests on his encyclopedic and kaleidoscopic awareness of Prabhupada's writings.

The importance of quality indexes should not be underestimated. When executed properly, indexes help the reader locate information quickly and easily. A comprehensive and effective index is not simply a list of words and phrases, but a cogent map of a given book's contents, affording a serious student content locations, cross-references, and a useful assemblage of related concepts.

Often, indexes go unnoticed. But serious students will miss them when they're not there or, worse, when they are inadequate. Moreover, even casual readers will feel the effects of a missing or poorly constructed index. In such cases, indexes are mainly noticed when they don't function properly, which leads to frustration and the inability to find what one is looking for. When readers can access information seamlessly and with little effort, i.e., when an index works as one expects it to, it serves the readers without applause. Still, the best of indexes are incalculably useful. This is what Akshobhya was shooting for, and he clearly hit his mark.

He would inadvertently assure the future of reliable indexes, too, by nurturing his younger brother Kurt (who would eventually be initiated as Kirtan-rasa Dasa) and helping him along in Krishna consciousness. Akshobhya left an indelible impression on Kirtan-rasa, and so the younger brother followed his example, not only in becoming a devotee, but in developing a deep appreciation for the science of indexing. He eventually used Akshobhya's techniques to index later Krishna-conscious books. Here are Kirtan-rasa's comments:

An index should be an accurate, brief, concise, and neutral summary of and guide to the contents of a book. Its ability to anticipate the needs and perspectives of various kinds of readers (students, scholars, devotees, the mildly curious) both by the style of the entries and the appropriate cross-references (the glue that holds indexes together) is its art. The encapsulation of vast quantities of information in the aforementioned accurate, brief, concise, and neutral manner is its science.

In the twenty-five years that I have been practicing law, and in my years as a student and reader before that, I never encountered a system of indexing as

logical, practical, and useful as that which Akshobhya designed for Shrila Prabhupada's books. Shrikanta was Akshobhya's colleague in that adventure, and he helped teach me what the two of them invented. Nothing I have ever done as a lawyer required so much intense mental energy and intellectual dedication as writing indexes for Prabhupada's books.

I can't understand how a good index can be written unless the indexer has love for the book's author and subject matter. The demand to create and to narrowly focus the mind—taking apart and processing every phrase, sentence, and paragraph word by word while keeping in mind all the other topics of the book and how best to craft the index to guide all sorts of readers—is not a task to be taken up lightly. It is consuming in its demand for commitment. I saw Akshobhya sit for sixteen hours a day, creating mountains of index cards while writing the masterpiece index for *Krishna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*. It was like watching Hercules perform his twelve labors.

Akshobhya felt a sense of responsibility and love for Kirtan-rasa, and the feeling was mutual. The two had a deep relationship that virtually transformed Kirtan's consciousness. As he puts it: Akshobhya nurtured my spiritual life from the time I was thirteen, when he gave me a copy of Krishna book. I had already rejected God in the form of an overbearing father figure who would send me to hell forever if I messed up. Now, here was God in the form of a lovable child, a heroic teen, and an adventurous prince. And, He was being handed to me by someone who reflected many of those qualities. Akshobhya loved me like no one else in my family did or could. Even as a young teen, I knew there was something different about how he treated me. In later years, I came to understand that his love for me was unique because it had a basis outside of our family connection. He didn't show me kindness and spend hours reading about Krishna with me just because I was his brother. He saw me as a spirit soul, just as Prabhupada had taught him.

I came to believe in God again because of him. Akshobhya had such potency and intelligence that he could convince almost anyone that God existed and that His original form was Shri Krishna. But what really stayed with me, and is with me today, forty-two years after he introduced me to Krishna, is his sense of conviction and love. I wanted to be as kind as him, as heroic and powerful

as him (although I knew I could never reach that level and became content to just admire it in him). If he loved Krishna, that was good enough for me. If someone like Akshobhya vouched for Krishna, He must be real.

Kirtan-rasa remembers a brief period where Akshobhya had left LA to set up shop at the Mausert home, still dedicated to Prabhupada's indexes: In LA he had some medical issue, and a woman showed up trying to distract him with marriage, a marriage he wasn't interested in. So he came home to Schenectady and established an indexing area in our TV room. I remember him working on the Krishna book index there. Most temples didn't want to maintain someone who sat in one place and wrote indexes all day; so he stayed at our home for a few months.

Finally, Radhavallabha [who was in charge of the BBT] called him and asked him to come back to LA. Akshobhya was very excited, explaining to me that Radhavallabha never called anyone to come back to the BBT if they left. But Akshobhya had unique talents. Anyway, after he received that call, I helped him shave his head, and Mark and I took him to Albany airport. That was the last time I saw him.

It might be said that Akshobhya's Trojan Horse was his indexing system. Hidden in the back of Prabhupada's books, inconspicuously, they serve a vital function that is easy to overlook. The Trojan Horse of Greek fame was overlooked, too, but it was invaluable in accomplishing Odysseus's righteous ends. Of course, metaphorically, a Trojan Horse now indicates a ruse that often has negative consequences. No such negativity here: Just a brilliant plan to help people access Shрила Prabhupada's books.

Along similar lines, Akshobhya had ideas for Krishna conscious children's books. He wanted to take the information he had gathered from his spiritual master's texts and use them to help educate the movement's young. Thus, when he discovered that Govinda Dasi, an accomplished artist and a senior Prabhupada disciple, was interested in illustrating such books, he immediately made plans to relocate to Honolulu, her home base. After all, he reasoned, he could continue his indexing from Hawaii and work on this new project as well. It was time to visit the Big Pineapple.

Mahalo: Service in Hawaii

In Hawaii, mahalo is a word that expresses gratitude, a traditional way of saying thank you. But it goes much deeper than that: it includes a sacred or spiritual component. The roots of the word are ma, which means in; ha, which refers to the breath of life; and alo , which indicates being in one's presence. Ultimately, mahalo means in the presence of the Divine, even if, in common parlance, it is merely a way of saying thanks. Akshobhya heard this word quite a bit.

There was much for which to thank him. He was always doing service—whether it was his own indexing work for Prabhupada's books or reading to the devotees during meals; whether playing with the children (helping them remember Krishna with stories and dramas) or protecting the devotees when they went out on Harinama Sankirtan, chanting in the streets. Shridhara Dasa, a devotee living in Honolulu at the time, remembers:

He lived and indexed out on the deck under a roof-overhang above the driveway at the Honolulu temple that you had to access by climbing through the window of the Brahmachari ashram . . . On his tiny make-shift desk (a board on two plastic milk crates) he had many hundreds of 3 x 5 index cards for doing the amazing *Nectar of Devotion* index. . . . He really was fearless and in many ways unconcerned about his physical body—so much so that on occasion he stood up to aggressive types, big local mokes who would harass the Harinama chanting parties . . .

That was Akshobhya—determined to safeguard devotees from big local mokes. He was courageous and soft-hearted, willing to protect and help his co-spiritualists in any way he could. It was the Odysseus motif once again, emerging in his service to Krishna. Early on, he had studied the Mahabharata, an epic that conveys the importance of chivalrous attitudes and nobility, of boldness, character, and integrity—particularly in regard to protecting the weak. Along these lines, he fancied himself something of a Brahmin-Kshatriya: A Brahmin is a scholar-intellectual-priest, and Akshobhya's well-known knowledge of Prabhupada's books and his indexing placed him squarely in that category. But his Odysseus temperament and his desire to protect was

part of who he was, too, and this was a Kshatriya tendency. The Kshatriyas of old, as depicted in the *Mahabharata*, fully embodied such kingly qualities, and this appealed to Akshobhya.

As Rupa Vilasa tells us: While still in Texas, Akshobhya discovered the Mahabharata. I would find him in an empty room in the old church building in the Dallas temple, striding back and forth reading it aloud and acting out certain passages. He told me with almost feverish excitement how the world of Kshatriyas and Mahabharata was inspiring him. He felt that he had been a Kshatriya in a past life, and he scarcely knew what to do with the energy these readings was stimulating in him. He wanted to fight and protect according to the high Kshatriya ideals he embraced, but he couldn't really find an outlet. He would stride about reading and enacting the Mahabharata pastimes in a deep voice and in Shakespearean style. Some devotees thought he was a bit eccentric, but no one could deny his attraction for Krishna's pastimes. He wanted to bring these stories to children, especially, and he felt that they conveyed the teachings of Krishna consciousness quite clearly.

To this day, Govinda Dasi speaks fondly of their original plan to work together on the big island. She says that he was a brilliant writer and indexer and that she was interested in doing children's books at the time, as was he. They communicated quite a bit by phone and mail and gradually became good friends. While he lived at the temple in Hawaii, he thought of her as a mother figure, and after he passed away, she fulfilled this role by caring for his younger brother Kirtan-rasa, whom she cultivated in Krishna consciousness.

Says Kirtan-rasa: Govinda Dasi's association was an emotional balm for me. She was a connection to Akshobhya, but she became like my big sister, too. At a time when I was deep in grief and pain, she befriended me. I saw her as yet another blessing that Akshobhya brought to my life.

Although the book with Govinda Dasi never materialized, while in Honolulu he continued helping devotee children in various ways, just as he had done in both Dallas and LA. Guru Krishna Dasa, who spent time with him there in the late 70s, relates the story like this: Akshobhya Prabhu would engage the kids in numerous ways. He often pretended to be a demon, and the kids loved it! He

would raise his arms upward, make his hands into claws, and declare himself a dangerous child-eating demon. He would say, I am a demon and I am hungry. Come here at once! I am going to eat you! Then he would roar and show his teeth, widely opening both his mouth and his eyes to playfully scare them. The kids would laugh and scream and run away. Akshobhya would then tell them: There is nothing you can do because I am coming to eat you! The only thing you can do to save yourself is to chant! But you won't, and I know it . . . hahaha! Therefore, I will come and eat you!" Then he would take another step toward them and they would start screaming again. Inevitably, one of the kids would start chanting. At that point, he would act like the chanting was hurting him, as it would an ordinary demon. With a big frown he would cry: "No! No! No! Not that chanting! Not Hare Krishna! I hate that! Please stop chanting!" And he would dramatically cover his ears to avoid hearing the chanting. Of course, this would make them chant all the more. He was expert. The kids loved him for it.

I remember him as a staunch disciple of Shrila Prabhupada. As a Brahmachari, he was able to devote long hours to indexing, with his celibacy, no doubt, aiding his powerful memory. I remember one amazing quality in particular: He would often delight us all with a little contest. Someone would read a word or two [from Krishna book], and he would be able to cite the story that the word came from—they would read part of a sentence, and Akshobhya would finish it and could even tell them what page it was on. Totally incredible! All the devotees looked forward to it, and they saw it as a special mystic potency he had. It showed how deeply dedicated he was to his service regarding Shrila Prabhupada's books.

Odysseus in Modern Times

It was February 22, 1979. On this day, Akshobhya would perform the ultimate sacrifice, giving his very life for the devotees he so loved. Like Odysseus, he was willing to surrender all that he had to achieve noble ends—the Greek hero would do so to return to his wife, from whom he had been separated for ten years, but in Akshobhya's case, it was to return to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The day started like any other. Yet Akshobhya soon found himself with a

valuable if temporary service: He would be assisting two new devotees, Steve and his wife, Janet, who had recently been married and joined the Honolulu temple. The couple's parents frowned upon their marriage and even more their affiliation with ISKCON. Janet's father had been a diplomat with the Philippine Consulate and was determined, perhaps through political machinations, to sway his daughter from living as a devotee. Because of this, the temple authorities determined that Steve and Janet would do well to start their life together at another center, and the newlyweds agreed.

Thus, on the 22nd, they were to leave for Berkeley, but Janet's mother convinced them to visit home before proceeding to the airport. That evening, Akshobhya and Chaitanya Ballabha Dasa, another senior devotee in Hawaii, accompanied the young couple, not only because the couple needed transportation but because, as promised, they intended to visit the parents, who harbored ill-will toward the devotees.

Sure enough, after a few pleasantries at the parents' house, their intentions became clear—they wanted Janet to change her mind and stay with them. But it went from bad to worse: According to the subsequent police report, a brief ruckus ensued, and the couple ran from the home. They were pursued by Janet's less-than-rational brother, in his mid-twenties at the time, and her father.

Chaitanya Ballabha, as an eye-witness, later recounted the rest of the story: The father picked up a stick and the brother a knife, shouting and following after them. Janet and Steve frantically called out for the two devotees waiting for them in the car. Akshobhya heard the screams and quickly made his way toward the commotion. As Steve came running by, Akshobhya stepped in front of him, blocking Janet's maniacal brother. Akshobhya raised his arms high above his head and roared like Lord Nrisimhadeva (the half-man/half-lion form of Krishna), hoping to frighten the brother away and thus avoid a further skirmish.

But the fates had conspired to take Akshobhya that evening—it was dark, and he never saw the five-inch knife being thrust towards his chest. He thought it was a mere punch, as he flailed his arms downward with force, inadvertently

knocking the knife to the ground. Although in a compromised position, he swung at his attacker, felling him with one blow. He next turned to the father, who was running toward Akshobhya with a stick, but by now he realized he had been stabbed, as blood streamed from his body. The father backed off as Akshobhya fell. It was like a scene from the Mahabharata, a great hero meeting his end.

“He stabbed me, C.B. [Chaitanya Ballabha],” whispered Akshobhya. “He stabbed me with something.”

Chaitanya Ballabha managed to get him into the car, but he was losing a lot of blood. Steve reached the car, too, and they drove away. Pulling into a nearby gas station, they called an ambulance, but it was too late. Chaitanya Ballabha looked at Akshobhya and spoke his mind: “That’s it for you, man. Think about Krishna, Akshobhya, think about Krishna!” In response, Akshobhya nodded his head, indicating that his mind was focused and that Chaitanya Ballabha could rest easy. Nonetheless, seeing the gravity of the situation, C.B chanted into his ear, softly but constantly, until the ambulance arrived. They took Akshobhya to the hospital, but the significant loss of blood had ended his life. Later, Chaitanya Ballabha called the police and identified the murderer.

After two days, the brother was released from prison. His diplomat father was able to pull strings, it seems, allowing the young man to flee to his home country, the Philippines, thus avoiding the original indictment charging him with manslaughter, issued on June 5, 1979. As of the writing of this article, in 2012, he remains free, mainly because there was no extradition treaty at the time. Although such a treaty now exists, having been established in 1996, the authorities in Hawaii will not extradite him, citing the passage of time and witnesses’ “poor recollection” as their reasons.

Justice is hard to understand. The law of karma dictates that there is an order to the universe, that for every action there is an equal and commensurate reaction. Criminals will get their due, if not in this life, then in the next. And so will the likes of Akshobhya. By dedicating one's life to God, and hearing His names at the time of death, one is assured a higher destination, if not the kingdom of God.

In the *Mahabharata*, too, we hear of unfortunate deaths and of heroes who die untimely. “Surely,” Subhadra says, upon hearing of the death of her son, “the course of destiny is difficult to comprehend, even for those who are wise. This is proven by the fact that you, whose protector is Krishna Himself, were killed in battle as if no one were protecting you.” (Mahabharata 7.55.19) In the end, we have to admit that we don't see the whole picture and that God metes out reward and punishment according to a higher law. Sometimes, His sweet flute-music calls a devotee to another service in the material world, or back home, Back to Godhead.

The story of Odysseus's death cannot be found in either the Iliad or the Odyssey. But there are predictions about what was yet to come, and in a subsequent epic known as the Telegony, dated at roughly the sixth century BCE, we find the story of Odysseus's final moments, when he is bested during a fight he wanted no part of: He was pierced through the chest by a spear tipped with poison. The parallel is uncanny.

As I conclude this article, a South Indian proverb about heroes and yogis comes to mind, and perhaps it reveals something about Akshobhya's sojourn: *dvau imau purushau loke suryamandalabhedinau/ parivrad yogabhuktas charane chabhimukho hatah* (“As the yogi can penetrate the sun's orb through mystic yoga, so, too, do heroic ones accomplish a similar end. Indeed, battle is in many ways a yogic exercise.”) If yoga allows one to link with the Supreme, Akshobhya's supreme heroic sacrifice undoubtedly brought him to Krishna.

Akshobhya's Untimely Passing: The Aftermath

After Akshobhya's passing, the devotees were nonplussed. One of their best had been taken by a knife-wielding assailant, and they nonetheless had to continue on. Their solace was in knowing that, due to his sincerity and the fact that he had died in Krishna's service, protecting a devotee, he would likely be born into a Vaishnava family, if not return to Krishna's divine abode.

Some devotees were involved in the immediate aftermath. Shridhara Dasa, one of Akshobhya's friends in Honolulu, for example, had to call his family and give them the news.

Guru Krishna Dasa, for his part, was the driver to the crematorium. He tells the story as follows: I was a van driver to the cremation site. When I got to the room, there was a tumultuous kirtan going on full blast. Premarnava Prabhu was leading, and there were drums and gongs and metal kartals. People were chanting and dancing and crying. Such a mixture of emotions! Some were happy that Akshobhya Prabhu was now beyond this material world with all of its sufferings. Some were still so sad and devastated to lose their teacher, brother, or friend. I saw the body enter the kiln, all decorated with prasadam flowers and other auspicious items. I had never been to anything like this in my twenty-two years of life. The employees there dressed in their customary black suits and stoic faces—they seemed unprepared for such a send off. But they got one last dose of Akshobhya’s preaching spirit in that kirtan. All glories to that great soul! Akshobhya Prabhu ki jai!

For Akshobhya's brother Kirtan-rasa, the cremation was more poignant than words can describe: I hadn't seen Akshobhya since I took him to the Albany airport two years prior. His friend Jita Vrata and I dressed his body for the funeral. I called the LA temple and received advice from a devotee priest about dressing his body in new cloth, putting Tulasi wood on the body, flower garlands from the Deities, and so on. It was a service I had to do, but it was the hardest thing I have ever done in this life. I kept it together through force of will. After the body was dressed and as it entered the fire, the kirtan was going full force. I remember tears streaming down my face and just losing it. A strong arm went around my shoulder and kept me from falling. It was Dvijati-pujaka Dasa, a close friend, holding me up. He was very kind.

In the end, it is Akshobhya’s memory and work that will live on. Suresvara Dasa eloquently offers specifics: Later that summer [1979], Kirtana-rasa, Akshobhya’s brother, shipped two big boxes from ISKCON Honolulu to the LA BBT. The boxes contained Akshobhya’s masterpieces, happily completed before he died: his indexes for the *Krishna* book and *The Nectar of Devotion*. It took me all summer to sort through the 10,000 cards for *The Nectar of Devotion* alone. Even editing the cards down, the new *Nectar of Devotion* was published with a 103-page index in small type. The finest index I’ve ever seen in Prabhupada’s books. Only outdone later by the index he made for the *Krishna* book, his magnum opus.

Shrikanta Dasa, coworker in the indexing of Prabhupada's books, remembers when he heard of Akshobhya's passing: In 1979 I was living at the Denver temple when I heard of Akshobhya's passing. I was alone in an upstairs office in the rear of the temple room working on an editing project. I don't remember who told me of Akshobhya's murder. But upon learning of it, I felt like a knife had entered my own heart. It's hard to say much more . . . I was devastated. And angry. And so sad for the loss to his family and to his friends and of his contributions to Prabhupada's mission. . . . Of course, the Krishna conscious philosophy helps us cope, as does my knowledge that Akshobhya's contributions live on.

Yes, without doubt, his contributions will surely live on. ♪

A Poem by Akshobhya Dasa

This heavy house around my soul,
with walls of flesh must some day fall;
And I who am spirit soul,
untouched will leave this human hall.
Shri Krishna knows our every turn—
My deep-sea swim is known to Him:
where surface clue none may observe,
Shri Krishna sees the depths I'm in. ♪

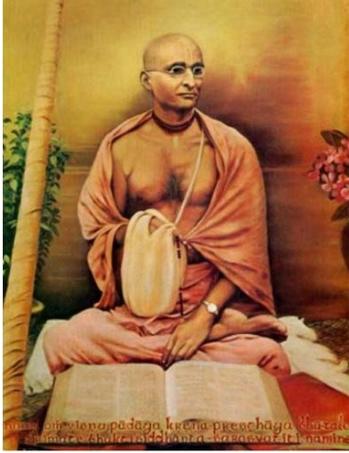
Satyaraja's article and Akshobhya's poem originally appeared together in Back to Godhead.

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: "Regarding Press: I have already written to Brahmananda how the press should be started. The following principles should be followed strictly in our press: All the works of the press, including binding, and everything should be done by our men. We shall not accept any outside job for maintaining of this press. We will print simply our books and magazines, etc. And the boys and their families should be maintained by the sales proceeds of books and magazines." -Letter to BTG editor Rayarama (19 November 1968)

Sometimes something that someone pinned up stays with you for your whole lifetime ...

ISKCON Press Bulletin Board

Patita Uddharana dasa Adhikary



Today there are enough books on Krishna Consciousness to fill an entire library, but during the days of ISKCON Press there was hardly enough to fill a shelf. Shrila Prabhupada was hard at work planting the seeds, and the orchard of the transcendental gardener continues to grow.

However, there was a bulletin board upstairs where we could read the exciting news of ISKCON's growth, or read Xerox copies of Shrila Prabhupada's instructive letters. One day one of the devotees pinned up an essay called "Krishna Is." In fact it was a collection of verses describing Lord Krishna from the tenth canto of the *Bhagavata* that had been assembled some thirty-four years early by our Grand Guru Maharaja. As I recall, Gaurasundara had chanced upon it and sent it to the temples.

I would later learn that "Krishna Is" was from an Introduction to a book by a scholarly disciple of Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, and was one earliest English volumes on the life of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The condensed message of that collection of verses stayed with me. Years later after some research I put together the following essay: words that had been inspired by a Xerox post that a thoughtful devotee pinned up on the bulletin board forty years earlier at ISKCON Press.

Krishna Is

The year was 1933. In Orissa, Professor N.K. Sanyal had just published the first volume of his milestone work on the life of Shri Mahaprabhu under the divine order of his spiritual master, Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. To that date, it would be the most voluminous and scholarly presentation ever scribed

in English regarding the life and times of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. And with another volume to go, the good professor was only half-way through the project. The title page proudly announced:

All Glory to Guru and Gauranga

Shree Krishna Chaitanya

Vol. 1

**Nisikanta Sanyal, M.A., Bhaktishastrī
Senior Professor of History Ravenshaw College, Cuttack**

With A Foreword By

**PARAMHAMSA PARIBRAJAKACHARYA (108) SREE
BHAKTI SIDDHANTA SARASWATI GOSWAMI
President-Vishwa Vaishnava Raja-Sabha**

Unfortunately, within a few years of its publication our Grand Spiritual Master left this world for the Divine Realm of Shri Krishna. His life work, the all-India Gaudiya Math, soon disintegrated beneath a tidal wave of party politics. Neither did Prof. Sanyal ever finish his scholarly presentation; vol. 2 would not see the light of day. He quickly became a “party man”, as Shrila Prabhupada once commented. Then, suddenly, Prof. Sanyal was summoned from this world by the Lord’s will. Although Prof. Sanyal had pleased his spiritual master with the first volume of his literary achievement, he had turned from the order of the spiritual master after the *nitya-lila pravista* of his Gutu Maharaja. Rather than unifying the Gaudiya Math under a strong Governing Body, the ugly visage of party spirit had bifurcated the network of sixty-four ashrams into several warring factions.

Shrila Prabhupada mentioned the example of Prof. Sanyal so that we might learn a lesson about the destructive nature of separatist strategies. If factions can divide learned scholars, then why should we consider ourselves exempt?



Shrila Prabhupada called managing a religious society as “the world’s most difficult task.” Yet, today ISKCON’s continued growth speaks volumes about the practical benefit of a strong Governing Body, as foreseen and ordered by the Founder Acharya. Now as in the future, the legacy of the Hare Krishna Movement will continue only if the disciples and grand-disciples of the Founder-Acharya co-operate in the unalloyed spirit of following those instructions.

Shrila Saraswati Thakura’s order that the life of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu be broadcast extensively in English

would eventually be carried out by the leading disciple of Gaudiya Math, Shrila Prabhupada. When *Shri Chaitanya Charitamrita* was published in sixteen volumes by the BBT, it became the first ever comprehensive study of the life of the Golden Avatar presented for the benefit of the Western world.

With that brief glimpse into the history lesson underlying Prof. Sanyal’s book, we now return to the subject of this article. There in the Foreword to his disciple’s book, the Param Gurudeva and Grandfather of the Hare Krishna Movement collected a series of observations from the Tenth Canto of *Shrimad Bhagavatam* that he labeled “Krishna Is”. Here then is that collection by His Divine Grace Shrila Shri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura:

Krishna is possessed of an unlimited intellect (84.22)

Krishna is inaccessible to sensuous knowledge (16.46).

Krishna is the Lord of the infinity of worlds (69.17).

Krishna wields the power of creating the unlimited (87.28).

Krishna carries the impress of limitless power (87.14).

Krishna is possessed of inconceivable potency (10.29).

Krishna is unborn (59.28, 74.21).

Krishna solves all heterogeneous views (74.24).
 Krishna is vanquished by exclusive devotion (14.3).
 Krishna is the Inner Guide (1.17).
 Krishna is the Withholder of the energy of the wicked (60.19).
 Krishna is the Giver of salvation to *jivas* that are free from vanity (86.48).
 Krishna ordains the worldly course of conceited *jivas* (86.48).
 Krishna is Primal God (Deva) (40.1).
 Krishna is Primal Person (Purusha) (63.38).
 Krishna is an overwhelming flood of bliss (83.4).
 Krishna possesses fulfilled desire (47.46).
 Krishna is self-delighted (60.20).
 Krishna is the opponent of the sensuous (60.35).
 Krishna is sung by the best of hymns (86.23).
 Krishna is the dispeller of the night of pseudo-religion. (14.40).
 Krishna is devoid of increase and decrease (48.26).
 Krishna is efficient and material cause (10.29).
 Krishna is the only Truth (14.23).
 Krishna is the Awarder of the fruit of work (49.29).
 Krishna is not subject to the consequences of work (84.17).
 Krishna is the Seer of cause and effect (38.12).
 Krishna is the Person who is time (1.7).
 Krishna is Time's Own Self (70.26).
 Krishna is even the Time of time (56.27).
 Krishna is Present in the heart of every animate entity, like fire inside wood (46.36).
 Krishna is Grateful (48.26).
 Krishna is the Augmentor (like the Full Moon) of the ocean of earth, gods, twice-born and animals (14.40).
 Krishna is the Tormentor of cannibalistic persons (14.40).
 Krishna is the Destroyer of the pride of the arrogant (60.19).
 Krishna is the Root-Cause of the origin, etc., of the world (14.23).
 Krishna is the Cause of the world (40.1).
 Krishna is the Creator of the world (70.38).
 Krishna appears as if possessed of a body like that of mundane entities for the good of the world (14.55).
 Krishna is the Guru (centre of gravity) of the world (80.44).

Krishna is the Refuge (Ashraya) of *jivas* (individual souls) who are afraid of birth and death (49.12).

Krishna is devoid of birth (46.38).

Krishna is equally the Internal Guide, Cause and Director of *jivas* (87.30).



Krishna is the Destroyer of the miseries of persons who enjoy themselves in meditating upon Him (58.10).

Krishna is of the fourth dimension and self-manifest (66.38).

Krishna is Worthy of being gifted (741.24).

Krishna is the Punisher of the wicked (69.17).

Krishna is the God of gods (80.44).

Krishna is rarely cognizable by the gods (48.27).

Krishna is unconcerned about body, house, etc. (60.20).

Krishna is the Supreme Ruler of the greatest gods (738).

Krishna is the Exponent of Religion (69.40).

Krishna is the Eternal Son of Nanda (14.1).

Krishna is Visible to man with great difficulty (71.23).

Krishna's Presence mocks the world of man (70.40).

Krishna is the Object of palatable drink of the human eye (71.33).

Krishna is Internal Guide of all (31.4).

Krishna is Worthy of the worship of all the worlds (69.15).
 Krishna accommodates all the worlds (59.30).
 Krishna is the Manifestor of all light (63.34).
 Krishna is unstinted in giving Himself away to one who recollects Him. (80.11)
 Krishna is the efficient Cause (87.50).
 Krishna, although devoid of all mundane quality, assumes mundane qualities by His Inconceivable Power for the purposes creation, etc. (46.40).
 Krishna is not subject to change (64.29).
 Krishna is not capable of discrimination, by reason of void of any extraneous covering (87.29).
 Krishna is the Giver of Himself to those who covet nothing (86.33).
 Krishna loves those who covet nothing (60.14).
 Krishna does no work (60.20).
 Krishna is the Human, Hidden, Primal Person (Purusha) (44.13).
 Krishna is Present in the hearts of *jivas* like the five elements (82.45).
 Krishna is the Supreme Sorcerer (70.37).
 Krishna is Supreme Godhead and the Internal Guide of all (56.27).
 Krishna is the Crest-jewel of those whose praises are sung by the sacred lore (71.30).
 Krishna is the Primal Person and Ever-existing (14.23).
 Krishna is the Highest among the Objects of worship (74.19).
 Krishna is the Healer of the miseries of the submissive (73.16).
 Krishna is the Destroyer of the sins of the submissive (31.7).
 Krishna is the Destroyer of the distress of the submissive (73.8).
 Krishna is the Residue after the Cataclysm (87.15).
 Krishna is devoid of touch with mundane senses (87.28).
 Krishna is the Soul and Friend of all animate entities (29.32).
 Krishna is devoid of distinction appertaining to an alien (63.38,44).
 Krishna is Inconceivable by His Nature (70.38).
 Krishna is the Master of the Universe (70.37).
 Krishna is the Nourisher of the Universe (85.5).
 Krishna is the Sun that cheers the lotus of the kindred of the Vrishnis (14.40)
 Krishna is God worshipped by the Brahmanas (69.15).
 Krishna is Foremost of the Brahmanas (84.20).
 Krishna is the Originator of Brahma (40.1).

Krishna is the Worshipped of Brahma (31.13).
 Krishna loves His devotees (48.26).
 Krishna wears Forms in accordance with the wishes of His devotees (59.25).
 Krishna is eternally Present in Mathura (1.28).
 Krishna is devoid of the sense of kinship and regards all in the same way (46.37).
 Krishna is beyond all Measuring Potency (Maya) (63.26).
 Krishna is subdued by the love of Judhithira (72.10).
 Krishna is concealed by the screen of Maya from the sight of the people (84.23).
 Krishna does not follow the ways of the world (60.36).
 Krishna is the Destroyer of the fear of the mundane sojourn of the submissive. (85.19).
 Krishna is the Womb of the Scriptures. (16.44, 80.45, 84.20).
 Krishna is Sree Guru's Own Self (80.33).
 Krishna is devoid of hankering for wife, offspring, etc. (60.20).
 Krishna is of the Ordainer of the worldly sojourn and of the summon bonum (1.7).
 Krishna is the friend of the good (69.17).
 Krishna is devoid of discrimination as of kinship (63.38, 44).
 Krishna is Existence (56.27).
 Krishna possesses true desires (80.44).
 Krishna is the True Entity (87.17).
 Krishna is True of speech (48.26).
 Krishna is True of resolve (37.12).
 Krishna sees with an equal Eye (16.33).
 Krishna is the Cause of all causes (14.56-57, 63.38, 87.16).
 Krishna is the Originator of all (59.28).
 Krishna is the Soul's own self of all jivas (individual souls) (14.55).
 Krishna is Omniscient (16.48).
 Krishna is All-seeing (38.18).
 Krishna is the Embodiment of all gods (74.19, 86.54).
 Krishna is the Seer of all (16.48).
 Krishna is the Lord of all (37.23).
 Krishna is the Stay (Ashraya) of all entities (82.46).
 Krishna is All-pervasive and Eternal (9.13).

Krishna is the Soul of all elements (86.31).
Krishna is the Knower of the minds of all elements (81.1).
Krishna is the soul's self of all elements (74.24).
Krishna is the Inner Soul of all elements (37.11).
Krishna is the Internal Guide of all elements (47.29)
Krishna is the Cause of the origin of all elements (64.29).
Krishna is the Limit of all good (84.21).
Krishna is Omnipotent (37.12).
Krishna is the Lord of Lakshmi, the Presiding Deity of all riches (47.46).
Krishna is the Internal Guide of all (63138, 7216).
Krishna is the Stay (Ashraya) of all (40.15).
Krishna is Witness and Seer of Self (86.31).
Krishna is the Refuge of the good (80.9).
Krishna is most difficult to serve (88.11).
Krishna is the Friend of one's heart (48.26).
Krishna is the Withholder of Creation (82.45).
Krishna is Withholder, Creator and Preserver (63.44).
Master of the functions of creation, etc. (16.49, 37.12).
Krishna is devoid of distinction as of kinship (74.21).
Krishna is devoid of distinction as between kin and alien (72.6).
Krishna indwells the Universe created by Himself (48.19).
Krishna is satisfied by the taste of His Self-Delight (72.6).
Krishna is the Destroyer of the worldly sojourn of His devotees (60.43).
Krishna is the Wearer of body according to His Wish (1.7).

-SIDDHANTA SARASWATI.

24th Nov., 1932.

Sree Krishna-Chaitanya Math

Brindaban, Muttra

Camp; Office of the Circumambulation of the Circle of
Braja, Muttra, U.P. ☞

This article was originally published at www.dandavats.com on 22 December 2009 ☞

At ISKCON Press everything was meant for Krishna's pleasure, which meant pleasing His pure devotee. There was never any question of any press devotee receiving any sort of remuneration for service, until one translator wanted to change the rules...

The Letter that Saddened Shrila Prabhupada

Govinda dasi

One day while in Kaawa, Hawaii, I walked into Shrila Prabhupada's room, and he looked quite troubled. His mail had arrived, and he was holding a letter in his hand, shaking his head. Feeling concerned, I asked, "Shrila Prabhupada, what's the matter? Is there some distressing news? What has upset you?"

Shrila Prabhupada shook his head slowly, and very sadly said, "This letter is from our Janardana. He has been working to translate my *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* into French. Now he is asking me, so how much money for me, how much money for my wife ... for doing this translation work." Shrila Prabhupada almost tearfully said, "His wife has now spoiled him. This is not devotional service, this has become a business. To take money from the Guru is not good."



He shook his head sadly and placed the letter on his desk. I was wide-eyed with disbelief by now, as Janardana was our dear friend, and I also knew he loved Shrila Prabhupada very much. We had just spent three months in Montreal, and Janardana came almost daily to meet with Shrila Prabhupada. He too was a scholar, and so he spent much time with my husband Goursundara, also a scholar, who was by then translating *Chaitanya Charitamrita*.

Janardana dasa was working daily to translate Shrila Prabhupada's *Gita* into French, since he was a French resident of Montreal. While we were in Montreal, he would visit almost daily to discuss various philosophical points with Shrila Prabhupada, in order to fully understand the purports.

Unfortunately, however, Janardana was married to a pretty lady who had no

interest whatsoever in Krishna consciousness. She once told me pointedly, “All I want from Krishna is plenty of money eternally!” and she sat down on my small altar that was nothing more than a bench with a picture of Krishna on it. I found her very difficult to understand, but tried to always be friendly with her. When the couple would sometimes visit together, she would refuse to sit on the floor in front of Shrila Prabhupada, and would instead sit above him on a nearby couch. This always bothered me, but since my job was to be polite to Shrila Prabhupada’s guests, I never said anything.

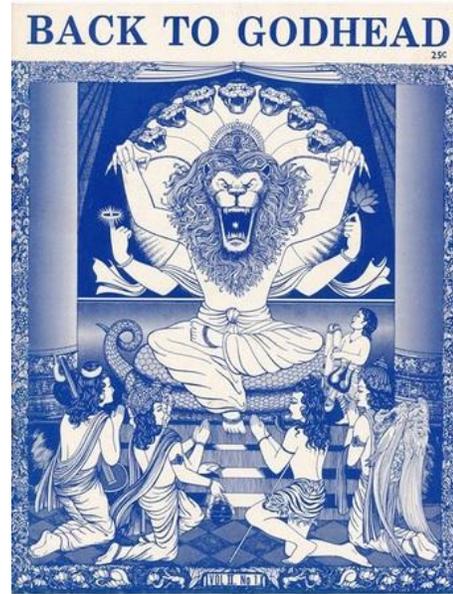


But now, Shrila Prabhupada was aggrieved at what seemed to be the loss of his dear disciple Janardana. Shrila Prabhupada loved each and every one of his disciples in a way that is not even known or understood in this material realm. Our loves tend to be selfish, and self-interested. Shrila Prabhupada’s love for us was full of concern for our welfare, and for our ultimate deliverance from this world of *samsara*. There was no tinge of selfishness. And we understood this, we felt this, each and every one of us, even if we happened to meet him only once, or even if we never had the chance to meet him personally. He was there for us, always. And he continues to be there for us, in his books, and his videos; his presence is a spiritual presence that continues to pervade our existence in this material world. He guides us every step of the way.

Shrila Prabhupada sighed and softly muttered, “Hare Krishna.” It was his surrendered way of saying, “Whatever Krishna arranges.” He then explained to me that if one takes money for devotional service, that is all he will get--the money. But not Krishna *bhakti*. He said it is better to do some business and make money separately than to serve Krishna and Guru and expect to be paid. That will not give the desired result of Krishna bhakti; one will get only the money. And, moreover, to take money from the Guru is considered to be a very bad thing. One should give to one’s *guru*, not take. There is a saying in India, “The Guru’s money is bad money.” This saying says a lot. In India, there is an age-old understanding that to take from one’s *guru* ultimately brings great misfortune. Instead, out of gratitude for the loving instructions and grace

coming from the Sat-guru, this great and illumined personality Shrila Prabhupada, one should offer one's mind and heart, as well as one's wealth and time.

This meeting with Shrila Prabhupada left a very deep mark on my consciousness. Over the years, I have always been amazed at how often this tendency is repeated. Perhaps it is one of the last traps of the conditioned soul. That day Shrila Prabhupada explained to me that whatever we accomplish is by the grace of Guru and Krishna. He communicated to me the understanding that devotional service is indeed a greatly fortunate opportunity, not one to be taken lightly. To think that "I am the doer," "I have done all this, it is to my credit," "I should be paid money for my devotional accomplishments," "I did all this, I deserve to be paid," are all poisonous misconceptions of devotional service. Such poisonous perspectives lead to eventual fall down and the loss of the opportunity to perform devotional service in this lifetime. These attitudes lead to a hardened and selfish mentality where the pure bhakti of Krishna consciousness cannot reside.



Shrila Prabhupada never considered himself to be the "doer" of anything. Rather, he always said "I have simply tried to follow the orders of my Spiritual Master, and if there is some little success, that is due to his mercy only." He never laid claim to name and fame, though it was certainly his. He always remained humble, and expressed gratitude for his Guru's guidance and the blessings of Lord Krishna. ♪

Govinda dasi's article appears on her site: <http://harekrishnahawaii.com/>

Shrila Prabhupada Uvacha: *Please continue to try for the printing of Back to Godhead French edition. We work so that men of all languages and cultures may join us in chanting Hare Krishna, and for this we need so many literatures in so many different languages. So please try for this. (Letter to Hamsaduta, 24 November 1968, Los Angeles)*



I had collected this “newspaper” on sankirtana from a vendor of novelty headlines who gladly donated his services. It reads “Krishna Consciousness Takes Over the World.” I gave it to Shрила Prabhupada at the airport when His Divine Grace was leaving the Brooklyn temple, in 1972. He was so thrilled with this small effort, he kept asking me, “Who has printed?” I felt too shy and stupid to reply. The devotees including Bhavananda, Romapada, Sachisuta, Pushkar are enjoying the humor.

Shрила Prabhupada Uvacha: “I have noted with pleasure that Jaya Govinda has sent you a nice Govardhana Hill article for printing in Back To Godhead. I have already instructed Jaya Govinda to arrange for going to Hamburg and let us see what will happen with this boy. I have been requested by Janardana in Montreal temple to immediately send him the original manuscript of Bhagavad-gita As It Is, and I think that you are keeping this manuscript in New York so kindly send it to Montreal as soon as possible. Janardana will require this manuscript to translate into the French language for publication, so it is important business, and please do the needful in this connection.” –Letter to BTG editor Rayarama (16 January 1969)

On Ramesvara's first meeting with Shrila Prabhupada as the newly-appointed BBT Trustee, he suggested that there could be some improvements in the illustrations of some of the books. From an interview for the Memories series ...

The First of Many Lessons

Rameshwara dasa



Dance of the Rasa Lila by Shrimati Devahuti dasi was a favorite of Shrila Prabhupada's. It hangs in his LA quarters

Karanadhara met me in 1970 at the Portland temple and decided that he wanted me to become his assistant in working for the book publishing. So in 1971 he brought me to New Dwaraka and he personally trained me throughout 1971, '72 and '73. And then the unimaginable happened. Karanadhara left at the end of '73 which was a shock. Jayatirtha and I immediately flew to Hawaii to visit with Shrila Prabhupada. At that time Prabhupada was asking us how will things go on, and the conclusion was that Karanadhara's job would be split. Jayatirtha would handle the zonal responsibility, and I would handle the BBT responsibilities. So in early 1974 I made an official BBT visit to our Brooklyn

temple where ISKCON Press was located.

I had been to the temple a number of times as a book distributor and as a preacher about book distribution, but not in this capacity as the BBT manager. So I met with Bali Mardana, the press devotees and the artists to discuss production in 1974. What are we going to be producing? I have to know—now I'm handling the publishing. We were getting ready to print two books, *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya* and the *Krishna* book. One of the artists had been working on the better part of a year on line drawing sketches that would appear in every chapter in *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*. The other devotees who had been painting for the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* were now up to the third canto. They had this idea that in the re-print of the *Krishna* book some of the paintings in the original were done in '68-'69 and in the early 1970's.

The artists' techniques had gotten much better. They thought that the paintings today—in 1974—looked more realistic. So they had proposed to me that they were going to take out some of those paintings and insert some of the newer paintings that they had been doing for the *Bhagavatam* that depict *Krishna-lila*. Prabhupada was getting ready for his 1974 visit to LA. Okay—so my first task was to fly back to LA and present this idea to Shрила Prabhupada as my first official meeting as a BBT manager.

Prabhupada was in his room and I came up and I began showing him the drawings for *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*. And one by one, by one, Prabhupada was commenting—and rejecting them—for various reasons. As simple as they were Prabhupada liked the original drawings by Govinda dasi and Gaurasundara. According to Shрила Prabhupada the new drawings while, I think they were technically superior, were lacking in so many ways. In one drawing the Goswamis Sanatana and Rupa were absent, and in another drawing one of the Goswamis was sitting on the same level as Lord Chaitanya. On and on Prabhupada would tear apart these drawings, and as he kept going through them he was getting angry.

I don't know if any devotee had seen Shрила Prabhupada angry before—I certainly had not—it was a shock and it was scary. I was very frightened. And ... the conclusion was that we weren't going to use any of the drawings. So

then I had to now bring out the *Krishna* book and start to show Prabhupada the paintings that the artists wanted to take out and the new ones that they wanted to insert. So I introduced the topic. And Prabhupada said, “They want to add paintings?” I said, “No Shрила Prabhupada, they want to replace paintings, not add. In some scenes they think they painted it better. And in other cases they want to take out paintings that were painted too long ago and not painted in a serious way. They want to insert other paintings, not of the same *lila*, but just because they are technically better.”

Prabhupada said, “What? You have no authority to do that. You have no authority here. Once a painting has been approved, you can’t remove it. If you want to repaint that pastime, and if the new painting is better and shows more detail, more *lila*, more characters—that might be considered. But just to take one painting out and put another in, no. You can’t do that. Once I have approved something in my books, it is *eternal*. Once a painting is approved, it is *eternal*. You have no authority.” I said, “Oh, okay.” So I said, “Do you want me to show you what they are proposing?” And very unhappily he said, okay.

So one by one I started to show Shрила Prabhupada the paintings that they wanted to insert. One of them was a painting of Krishna killing Putana. Now, we had a painting of Krishna killing Putana, but this I think would have fit the category of taking one out and putting in a better one. Prabhupada looked at it and he made a face—this one was printed in the second canto but I don’t know if they still use it. Prabhupada said, “That is an ugly black mask. That is not superior. Rejected!”

Okay ... and on and on I showed Prabhupada a painting of Krishna sitting on the rocks which I thought was beautiful. Prabhupada thought his hair was too long and wild. Rejected! “Besides you don’t want to add, you want to take out a painting that I have already approved for that. No. Rejected!”

As I kept showing Shрила Prabhupada these paintings, the anger that had started with the line drawings for *TLC* had grown to almost like roaring proportions. At one point he was pounding his fist on the desk saying, “This is what I’m afraid of—that you will make changes in my books that will ruin them. No, you have to get permission. You cannot do this.”

So finally I had one last painting to show Shrila Prabhupada. I said Prabhupada, they want to take out the painting of the *rasa lila* and insert this new painting of the *rasa lila* that appeared in the third canto. Prabhupada didn't say a word for a moment, from his sitting room he can look into his bed room where he sees this beautiful painting of the original *rasa lila* that Devahuti did hanging on his wall. So he is looking at that painting and then looks back at the print of the painting that we wanted to put in his book. He said, "You think this is better? This is a hippy dance, their heads aren't covered. Krishna's hair is wild; the *gopis'* hair is wild. Hippy scene. Hippy dance! Rascals! They're all rascals!"

Prabhupada was so angry he was banging his fist and yelling at me. At that time the servant Sudama came running in because he heard the yelling and he couldn't imagine what it was. He opened the door and saw Prabhupada like Nrisimhadeva. He couldn't even get down to offer his obeisances, he was so terrified. He stood in the doorway and on one foot he lifted himself up and covered his eyes as he couldn't bear to see the scene. And then Prabhupada said to me, "Get out!" And he threw us both out.

It was the first of many lessons that Prabhupada gave me about making changes in his books. ↪

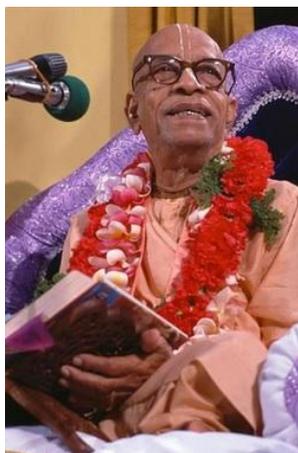
Ramesvara's talk appears on DVD 50 and volume 4 of Siddhanta dasa's Memories series.

"Don't change from this to that. That is your American disease. This is very serious that you always want to change everything." (Shrila Prabhupada, letter to Bhakta dasa, 24 November 1974)

A devotee who changes the cover of the Bengali Gita-gana receives a stern lesson ...

“You Will Take Stones to Eat?”

From *A Transcendental Diary by Shriman Hari Sauri dasa Prabhu, Volume Two, entry 28 May 1976 (Honolulu):*



Three letters came from north India. From New Delhi, Bhargava dasa, who has taken on the service of managing the press operations there under Gopala Krishna, sent two copies of a new printing of *Gita-gana*, Shрила Prabhupada’s versified form of *Bhagavad-gita* in Bengali. To get a lower price, he explained, they had to switch to a two-color cover rather than four. There was a rush to print because existing stock was exhausted. Being unable to contact Los Angeles in time to get a new two-color separation of the standard picture of Krishna and Arjuna on the chariot, he went ahead with a cover picture of depicting Krishna with His arm around a cow.

Shрила Prabhupada was displeased. “No. You have done a great mistake by changing the front picture and it will hamper the sale. In future you don’t do any changes without asking me first.

“Simply because there is no stock of books, we can do anything whimsically??? Is this logic? *Gita* is not spoken in Vrindaban, it is spoken on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, but this is Vrindaban picture. That chariot drive by four horses, that is the real Kurukshetra picture. It is not that because there is no stock we can do whimsically as we like and lose the idea, that is *rasabhasa*. Because there is no bread, you take stone to eat? There is no stock of bread so you will take stone??? The front picture is most important thing and you have changed it. It must remain standard, and not change.”

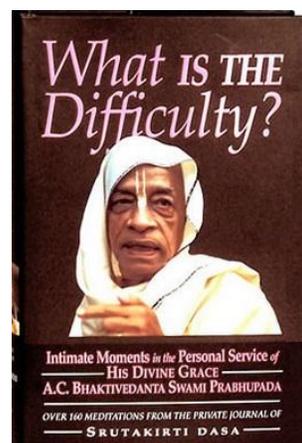
He advised that if any changes are required in the future, then Bhargava should contact him first for approval. ☞

Shrila Prabhupada often emphasized that the purports of his translations are more important than the verses. For example, by 1968 when the first abridged Bhagavad-gita As It Is appeared, there were already many hundreds of versions of Krishna's battlefield instructions to Arjuna in English. But not one of them had made a devotee of Shri Krishna. And since the publication of Bhagavad-gita As It Is, due to the insightful commentary on Krishna's divine message, there are hundreds of thousands of devotees serving Lord Shri Krishna all over the world. Shrila Prabhupada's wrote his divinely inspired purports in such a way that they are practical and appropriate to the reader—as his personal servant "Shruto" explains:

The Purport behind the Purport

Srutakirti dasa Adhikary

February 5th 1975, ISKCON Honolulu: I feel as if I am always surrounded by what is called a "bubble of illusion." The bubble is present to the degree I am not Krishna conscious. As Shrila Prabhupada's personal servant, however, I was surrounded by a "bubble of protection." It was a wonderful benefit that automatically came when in the proximity of the pure devotee. Being Shrila Prabhupada's servant, I was well provided for. I didn't have to worry about meals, or where to take rest. My passport, visas and airline tickets seemed to manifest themselves. I traveled around the world five times, but never worried about an airplane accident. After all, I sat beside the Lord of the Universe's purest devotee.



It was an enviable position and unfortunately one I gave up voluntarily. I was now in Hawaii and one of the *grihasthas* living outside the temple and struggling to be a "fired-up" devotee. Shrila Prabhupada was sympathetic. I knew this because once in Vrindavana, Shrila Prabhupada spoke about the *grihasta ashram* saying, "It is a great dilemma. We cannot pay them to live in the temple, but neither can they work outside."



One day while grocery shopping with devotee friends, the loss of my “bubble of protection” cost me dearly. We were in a car accident. Hamsavatara and two godsisters, one with a small child, were driving home from the store. I was sitting in the front passenger seat when a car went through a red light and slammed into our driver's door. It turned into a four-car collision with everyone in the other three cars going through their windshields. My door flew open and out went both Hamsavatara and me. I landed on my tail bone. The two *matajis* and the child remained in the car as it spun around and almost ran me over. I was taken to the emergency room of a nearby hospital. My back was the source of great pain for months to follow.

Because I had been in the hospital that night, I did not give Shrila Prabhupada his evening massage. The next day Paramahansa Maharaja located me and said, “Shrila Prabhupada wanted to know where you were last night.” I told him my tale of woe. He went back to Shrila Prabhupada and explained my situation. My compassionate spiritual master said, “Oh! Call him here.”

In a great deal of pain, I made my way to Shrila Prabhupada's room and slowly offered my obeisances. With a strained look on my face I sat up before my effulgent master.

“What has happened?” he asked in a gentle voice. “I heard you were in a car accident.”

I told him the details of the accident as he attentively listened.

“Accha!” Shrila Prabhupada said. “If it wasn't for Krishna's mercy, you would be dead.”

“Yes, it was very frightening,” I said, with a forced smile.

Over the next few days I had the good fortune of being in Shrila Prabhupada's room on different occasions. Each time I was there with other devotees Shrila Prabhupada brought the conversation around to me. Very dramatically Shrila Prabhupada said, “Srutakirti, he was in a very serious accident. If not for the mercy of Krishna he would have died.”

After hearing this for the third time it finally sank into my thick skull. If not for the mercy of Shrila Prabhupada and Krishna I would have died. I was young and careless and death was the least of my concerns. If it was, I would have never left the lotus feet of my Gurudeva. He kept driving it home. Finally, I understood and realized that Shrila Prabhupada was speaking the absolute truth. It was the most wonderful experience to have my compassionate Guru reaffirming how Krishna saved me. I pray to increase my understanding and faith in every word His Divine Grace has said and every action he has performed.

During this visit to Hawaii, Shrila Prabhupada was translating the fifth canto of the *Shrimad-Bhagavatam* (5:14:1). He related the story of my accident in the following way:

Bhaktivedanta Purport: When the living entity is lost in the forest of the material world, in the struggle for existence, his first business is to find a bona fide *guru* who is always engaged at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu. After all, if he is at all eager to be relieved of the struggle for existence, he must find a bona fide *guru* and take instructions at his lotus feet. In this way he can get out of the struggle.

Since the material world is compared herein to a forest, it may be argued that in Kali-yuga modern civilization is mainly situated in the cities. A great city, however, is like a great forest. Actually, city life is more dangerous than life in the forest. If one enters an unknown city without friend or shelter, living in that city is more difficult than living in a forest. There are many big cities all over the surface of the globe, and wherever one looks he sees the struggle for existence going on twenty-four hours a day. People rush about in cars going seventy and eighty miles an hour, constantly coming and going, and this sets the scene of the great struggle for existence. One has to rise early in the morning and travel in that car at breakneck speed. There is always the danger of an accident, and one has to take great care. In his automobile, the living entity is full of anxieties, and his struggle is not at all auspicious. (© BBT1975)

My dear Shrila Prabhupada, the years have quickly passed. Many precarious situations have come across my path. Still, I plunder along not totally realizing

that, “If not for Krishna’s mercy I would have died.” Please give me the intelligence to comprehend the urgency of my surrendering to you. When death arrives, I want my mind's eye fixed on your lotus feet. I do not want to be tossed about by the material energy. It is much too painful. ♪ (from *What Is The Difficulty?* by Srutakirti dasa)



O the pure devotee! Wherever your lotus foot touches the ground, that place becomes a *tīrtha bhūmi* as good as Vṛindavana. And through the Big Mṛidanga your message spreads round the world!

*yan-nāmadheyam abhidhāya niśamya cāddhā
loko 'ñjasā tarati dustaram aṅga mṛtyum*

“The holy name of the Lord is as powerful as the Lord Himself. Therefore, simply by chanting and hearing the holy name of the Lord, many men can be fully protected from fierce death without difficulty. Thus a devotee is saved.” (SB 4.10.30)

From the Bhaktivedānta Purport: “By the grace of the Lord, if a devotee, at the time of death, can simply chant His holy name—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—

simply by chanting this *mahā-mantra*, he immediately surpasses the great ocean of the material sky and enters the spiritual sky. He never has to come back for repetition of birth and death. Simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord, one can surpass the ocean of death.”

REVIEWS of THIS IS MY HEART

“A great read and a wonderful collection of stories around the press and also great research on all the photos. Classic. You have done a great job compiling the stories about the printing history of Prabhupada's books which brings things into great historical perspective.”

-Siddhanta dasa Adhikary, compiler of the 4-volume *Memories* series on His Divine Grace our Guru Maharaja.

Dear Prabhuji,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All Glories to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada! Param Vijayate Sri Krishna Samkirtan! I have just taken a few minutes to glance through your new book.

Really, you have done an amazing job of assembling historical nectar and putting it together in a way that all devotees will relish for the many years to come. From the day I joined in 1969 I was taught that these books were the Brhat Mrdunga. We did not know or of the confidence to sell the "big books" until later in 1971 when Kesava Prabhu's first travelling Sankirtan Party showed us that it was possible. That started the fire.

I hope your book will inspire generations of devotees to study and share Srila Prabhupada's work with the entire world.

Thank you very very much.

Your servant,

Bhakta dasa

-Bhakta dasa was the President of San Francisco ISKCON at the time of the biggest Rathayatra in the West, attracting 30,000 celebrants.