

My experiences and associations with Prabhupada.



**HH Bhakti Caru Swami Maharaj – Sunday Morning, 10 Jan 2010
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Hare Krsna,

So we were discussing about Srila Prabhupada, my experiences and associations with Prabhupada.

So from Mayapur Srila Prabhupada went to Bombay. The main reason for Prabhupada's going to Bombay was a big Pandal program in Cross Maidan. In the main city of Bombay there is a large park called Cross Maidan. A program was arranged for Srila Prabhupada for three nights in Cross Maidan. When Prabhupada arrived in Bombay the devotees drove Srila Prabhupada to his quarters. In Bombay Prabhupada used to previously live, he had his quarters in one of the old buildings. Actually Bombay property had many apartment buildings and there were many tenants also. So Prabhupada used to live in one of the apartments, when he used to be in Bombay. So devotees drove Srila Prabhupada to his old apartment.

And Prabhupada asked what happened to his new apartment. And the devotees told that it was not ready at that time. Prabhupada said, ready or not he was going to stay there. And Prabhupada insisted. Now probably you have seen Prabhupada's apartment in Bombay temple, the top floor of one of the towers is Srila Prabhupada's apartment. Prabhupada just insisted on staying there now. The apartments were not ready. The lifts were not ready, and it was on the fifth floor. And the doors were not fixed and, it was, But Prabhupada just insisted he wanted to stay there.

And then Tamal Krishna Maharaj actually made, Prabhupada went up there and the work was still going on. The floors were not (inaudible). Prabhupada just insisted that he wanted to stay there. And then Tamal Krishna Maharaj suggested that since the program is in the city, Cross Maidan, maybe it is better for Prabhupada to stay in the city in somebody's house.

He already phoned someone, one very important man in Bombay who had a big palatial building, I mean, not palatial building, he actually had a palace. He was like a king. His name was Bhogilal Patel. So first Tamal Krishna Maharaj contacted Bhogilal Patel but Bhogilal Patel was not in Bombay at that time. Finally it was arranged that Prabhupada will stay in Kartikeya Mahadevya's house, another life member, who was very close to Srila Prabhupada and a very important person. He had a very beautiful apartment on the beachfront, sea-facing. It was very luxurious apartment buildings. And so arrangement was made that Prabhupada would stay there in Kartikeya Mahadevya's house. So Prabhupada moved in there with a few of us. Three of us were there with Prabhupada, Tamal Krishna Maharaj, myself. At first NavaYogendra Maharaj, no NavaYogendra didn't come yet. Bhavananda Maharaj joined after a few days. And so three of us moved in with Srila Prabhupada and myself, three of us, moved in that apartment. Kartikeya Mahadevya with his family moved out, he vacated the apartment for Srila Prabhupada and us. And he moved in, in the same complex in some other apartment. I think they had some relatives and the whole family moved in there.

So Prabhupada stayed in Kartikeya Mahadevya's house for a few days and every evening Srila Prabhupada used to go to the program.

And this was a very successful program. There were thousands of people, used to participate, must have been about close to 10 000 people used to attend the program every night. And from that program I remember a few things, a few incidents that were very memorable.

One day, one evening Srila Prabhupada noticed that an Arab gentleman dressed up in Arabic attire, like the way the Arabs dress, long kurta, Al khanna they call it and then the head is covered with a ring on top, all white. So the man was standing there in the crowd. And Prabhupada sent one of his sannyasis to bring that man on the stage. He was a Muslim. Prabhupada brought him onto the stage. And Prabhupada started to have some exchange with him. And it turned out that that person was the Police Chief of Kuwait. He was the Chief of Police of Kuwait. He came to Bombay for some treatment and that evening was the first time he was allowed to go out of the hospital. He just came for a walk in that park, and he saw this gathering. And out of curiosity he just came there and Prabhupada just invites him onto the stage.

Prabhupada had some very sweet exchange with that person. Prabhupada noticed that that person had a set of beads in his hand. So Prabhupada asked him, 'What is that? What do you do with that?' So he said something like, he just fiddles around with that. And Prabhupada showed him his beads. He said, 'I also have one.' And then Prabhupada pointed out that these beads are meant for chanting the Holy Name of the Lord and keep count. And Prabhupada pointed out that, 'Your beads also is meant for that. It is meant for chanting the name of Allah and keep count of that.' And Prabhupada said that he didn't have any bead bag or that sort of thing, it was some sort of stone kind of beads, a

crystal. And then Prabhupada said that, 'That is a very sacred thing and it must be kept in a sanctified way and that's why we put it in a bead bag, so it does not become exposed to any unclean thing.' And so in this way Prabhupada had very sweet exchange with this man.

And it was quite an impressive sight also that here is Srila Prabhupada, a big spiritual leader with his followers from all over the world spreading Krishna consciousness all over the world. And next to him there is this Arab gentleman, obviously a Muslim, sitting, Prabhupada invited him to come onto the stage. I think Prabhupada even asked him to speak but that man did not want to speak. He had some reservations because he was from Kuwait and from a Muslim country and he was the Chief of Police there so he didn't want too much publicity also.

So that shows how broadminded Srila Prabhupada is. Just as I think, yesterday or the day, before in the offerings one of the devotees mentioned about the reporters in San Francisco, when asked about conflict, possible conflict between different religions. Prabhupada's reply was, 'No, all the religions are speaking about God. They are propagating the teachings of God, glory of God, so why should there be any conflict?' But the conflict is due to misunderstanding or no understanding about God and all kinds of claims that my way is the only way. Then only the trouble starts. At some point you may have to say the our way is the way, because if the others are not in the name of God consciousness, if they speak all kinds of nonsense then somebody has to go and correct them. So that way there may be some conflict. But if all the religions are speaking about the Supreme Personality of Godhead then there is no possibility of conflict. This has been very clearly indicated time and time again by Srila Prabhupada through his actions.

I also remember once Prabhupada was having some discussion with some reporters. And they actually challenged Srila Prabhupada. No, I'm sorry they were actually, they were not reporters, they were Christian priests, Catholic priests. They asked Srila Prabhupada, 'Why are you converting the Christians into Hindus?' Prabhupada's response was, 'No, I am not converting Christians into Hindus or Muslims into Jews. I am simply making better Christians out of Christians, better Jews out of Jews and better Muslims out of Muslims, better Hindus out of Hindus. Prabhupada is situating them in their perfect identity. Jesus came and spoke. Who is a Christian? A true follower of Jesus Christ is a Christian. And what did Jesus preach? Jesus simply spoke about God, the Father. Who is God the Father? Are there many Fathers? Are there many God, the Fathers? There is only one God, the Father. So that God, the Father is Krsna. Who is Allah? Is there any difference between God, Allah, Krishna, Jehovah? So we have to understand that essential truth. If that essential truth is properly understood, then there cannot be any conflict between different religions.

Anyway this broadness has been very clearly indicated but at the same time Prabhupada also maintained a very strict understanding of Krishna. Like, at the beginning, when Prabhupada was establishing ISKCON, and he declared that the name of the institution will be The International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Then many actually suggested that better would be to call it The International Society for God Consciousness.

But Prabhupada was adamant, 'No, International Society for Krishna Consciousness.' And there is reason that Srila Prabhupada did that. People may not understand Krishna, that Krishna is God. Prabhupada said, 'I have come here to to make everybody understand that Krishna is God.' That was Prabhupada's mission, to make everybody understand that Krishna is God.

And many times Srila Prabhupada dealt with this issue. Sometimes especially when he was dealing with the Christians, Prabhupada used to ask that, 'You speak about God? Who is God? What does He look like? Where does He stay? What does He do? So if you do not have any information about Him but if I have some information, if I provide the information then why shouldn't you take it? You do not have any information. I have the information. So you have to accept that I know better than you. You are speaking about God but you do not have any understanding about God. You are speaking about God but you do not have any information about God. So why don't you accept? Why don't you take an honest stand? And accept that, "Okay, I don't know about God and here is the information about God. Let me honestly accept it." But instead you just keep on saying that, "My God is the only God." But you don't have any understanding of God. Who is your God? You just have the three letters, God. What does He look like? What does He do? Where does He live? No information. So if somebody comes and provides you some information, why don't you accept it?'

So in that respect, Srila Prabhupada was very strong. That, 'If you want to know about God, come to me. If you want to know about God, come to me. I can tell you what He looks like, what His name is, where He lives, what He does and I can even give you His phone number.' So this is how Srila Prabhupada was very clearly and emphatically establishing Krishna Consciousness.

Anyway so another incidence in that program I remember that somebody in a rather challenging way he was asking, 'Why don't you worship Rama? Why you always worship only Krishna?.' Prabhupada said, 'No, we worship Rama also. Our understanding is Rama and Krishna is the same Supreme Personality of Godhead. When we are chanting Mahamantra, we are saying Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama.' And so the man was quite argumentative and Prabhupada became more and more upset the way the man was. And Prabhupada's voice became louder and louder. And finally Prabhupada was screaming at him, although physically Prabhupada was quite weak at that time.

Prabhupada's health condition was quite weak. When he used to come, actually when Prabhupada was in Mayapur, his health condition deteriorated considerably. Previously Prabhupada used to walk on his own. But in Mayapur, we had to kind of, hold Srila Prabhupada when he was walking. There was one way we used to hold Srila Prabhupada when he was walking. Prabhupada used to have his stick. He used to hold the stick with his right hand and we used to hold Prabhupada. With the right hand we used to hold him around his waist and with the left hand we used to hold him on his shoulder. And this is how we used to give him the support, when he used to go to bathroom, or any place. When he used to go down to give class or went to attend some programs in the temple,

then Prabhupada was carried in a palanquin. There was a thing made, It was a chair made with handles and a few devotees used to carry Srila Prabhupada down the stairs and up the stairs.

So in Bombay other sannyasis, actually Tamal Krishna Maharaj and Bhavananda used to go beforehand to the program and then at some point Prabhupada and I used to go to the program. I used to assist Srila Prabhupada. So Prabhupada's health condition was quite weak and Prabhupada was giving the class. And he used to sit there. He used to sit there quite hunched and weak with his physical frailty. But then as Prabhupada would start to speak, his body would become straight. And then finally Prabhupada was practically sitting at the edge of his seat, straight and erect as a bolt, and screaming with a pitch, at the top of his voice, chastising. And I remember, the people also became so upset with that man, they practically carried him and threw him out of the crowd.

So, sometimes Prabhupada in India especially, sometimes Prabhupada used to have this kind of confrontation with the people. It's unfortunate that such a glorious country with such an inconceivable spiritual asset, that some people are just so adamant and unwilling to recognise the greatness of a saintly person like Srila Prabhupada. At times I lament that when Prabhupada was on this planet so few Indians recognised Srila Prabhupada's greatness. Nowadays we hear so many people come and say, 'Oh, I met Swamiji.' If you met Swamiji, then why didn't you come and help him? Why didn't you surrender to him? You met Swamiji but what was the use of that meeting? Some bed bugs also met Srila Prabhupada. (Laughter) So anyway this is the misfortune that they couldn't recognise Srila Prabhupada's glory, Srila Prabhupada's greatness and take advantage of that. Srila Prabhupada often used to have this.

Anyway I was just thinking Prabhupada used to go out in the morning walks. So in Bombay I heard Prabhupada used to go for morning walks. And those morning walks were very interesting. But I didn't have the good fortune to go out with Srila Prabhupada on the morning walk because those days when Srila Prabhupada was in Bombay, he didn't go out on a morning walk. That is because his health condition was so bad. But sometimes when Srila Prabhupada would go back after the program I would go with Srila Prabhupada and then he would lie down on his bed and I used to massage his feet.

One day Prabhupada was asking, 'So how did you like my lecture?' So I said, 'Prabhupada it was very nice.' And then Prabhupada said, 'What was so nice about it?' Then I related whatever I recalled. And Prabhupada was very pleased.

Then after the program was over, Prabhupada came back to Bombay temple, Juhu temple, and Prabhupada's apartment was complete by now. Complete in the sense, yeah, more or less complete. Only the lift was not in full operation. The lift was used only when Srila Prabhupada had to use it, at the beginning. When we went down, and up, we went on foot, climbed the stairs on foot. And those days, so, just Tamal Krishna Maharaj and myself.

When Prabhupada was in Kartikeya Mahadevya's house Prabhupada one day suggested that Upendra should be called. Prior to that Hari Sauri Prabhu was Prabhupada's personal servant and Prabhupada appointed Hari Sauri Prabhu as the GBC of Australia. That's what Prabhupada used to do, either the GBC used to be Prabhupada's servants and secretaries or the servants used to be promoted, when at some point Prabhupada used to make them into, give them some service, important service, like make them GBC. So Hari Sauri Prabhu was serving Prabhupada and when Prabhupada was in Bombay, he made Hari Sauri Dasa GBC for Australia and so there was a need for someone to serve Srila Prabhupada and Upendra Prabhu was called in. He was probably in Fiji or some place of that kind. I don't know where he was. I never met him before.

So one day, one fine morning he just arrived. He was very efficient, very competent servant of Srila Prabhupada. He left his body unfortunately. And he came. And so three of us were there, Tamal Krishna Maharaj, Upendra Prabhu and myself were serving Srila Prabhupada. I was kind of stand by. Although Prabhupada made me Secretary of Indian Affairs but I used to do whatever.

My day was something like: At 7 o' clock I used to get all the newspapers, daily newspapers. Prabhupada wanted me to get the daily newspapers. And 7 o' clock I would go to Srila Prabhupada with the newspapers. And I used to read the headlines. And if Prabhupada liked some interesting news, Prabhupada wanted me to read them. And I used to read them. And sometimes Prabhupada used to make comments.

Like, one day Prabhupada was telling me how degraded the Nehru family was. At that time Indira Gandhi, I think Indira Gandhi called a State of Emergency in India. So Prabhupada was telling how degraded that family was. Prabhupada knew the family from Allahabad. The Nehru family's originally from Allahabad. Prabhupada also used to live in Allahabad. It seemed that he knew that family quite well. And that way Prabhupada pointed out that India's situation was so bad that a person like Nehru as the leader of the nation, and then his daughter now is the leader of the nation. And at that time Sanjay Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's son was making a lot of disturbance all over. And finally he died in a plane crash. Sometimes Prabhupada would make some interesting comments.

Then one day some very important people came to meet Srila Prabhupada. They were Sriman Narayan and Ram Krishna Bajraj. Sriman Narayan was the Governor of Madras and Ram Krishna Bajraj was the chairman of Bajraj Industry, a very big industry. They were brothers-in-law. And Bajraj's sister was married to Sriman Narayan. So they were very fond of Srila Prabhupada. So one day they came to see Srila Prabhupada. When they saw that Srila Prabhupada's health condition was not so good, they suggested that Prabhupada went to Rishikesh, on the bank of the Ganges. And they felt that this change of climate and going to the bank of the Ganges would be good for Prabhupada. Prabhupada also appreciated that proposal. He liked it. He told that he'd never been to Rishikesh before. And he liked the idea of being on the bank of the Ganges. So Ram Krishna Bajraj and Sriman Narayan made arrangements for Srila Prabhupada. They were very well connected. It was not their house but one of their acquaintance's house. A

house called Ganga Darshan, a very beautiful two-storey building right at the bank of the Ganges. It was arranged for Srila Prabhupada.

In the meantime when we were serving Srila Prabhupada, Prabhupada's cook was Palika, one of our godsisters, American godsisters. She used to cook for Srila Prabhupada. And I used to serve Srila Prabhupada. She used to cook and then exactly at twelve o'clock, I would take the prasadam plate to Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada didn't have much of an appetite. So he was hardly eating.

One day I saw that Prabhupada was not eating. He couldn't eat. He was trying to eat. Actually what happened is, that day Palika was sick. So another godsister of ours was asked to cook for Srila Prabhupada. And when Prabhupada was eating, Prabhupada couldn't eat. So I asked Srila Prabhupada, 'Prabhupada, it was not? She didn't cook properly? Prabhupada said, 'No, she doesn't know how to cook.' And then I just spoke up. I said, 'Srila Prabhupada, should I cook for you tomorrow?' Prabhupada said, 'Yes, you can try.'

And the next day Srila Prabhupada taught me how to cook some preparations. He just told me how to cook. He was having his massage. Upendra Prabhhu was giving him the massage and Prabhupada just asked me to get the vegetable and mustard oil, red chilli, turmeric. And then Prabhupada told me how to cut the vegetables, how to spice them. And I cooked, then I served. And Prabhupada ate quite well. After serving Srila Prabhupada I was in the kitchen, cleaning the kitchen, cleaning the pots. So Upendra just came running to me. He said, 'Hey, Prabhupada told me to taste the food. He liked it. He asked me to taste it.' So I gave it to Upendra.

So that afternoon Tamal Krishna Maharaj when he went to Srila Prabhupada to read out the letters and take dictations from Srila Prabhupada, Prabhupada told Tamal Krishna Maharaj also how he liked my cooking. How well I cooked. So Tamal Krishna Maharaj also came and told me 'Prabhupada really liked your cooking.'

Then the next morning I cooked. The next day I cooked. Prabhupada took a bite and he was very upset. He said, 'You don't have any standard. One day you cook nicely, I praise you and next day you are gone.' So I was feeling very bad that I displeased Prabhupada. Then the next day I cooked, this time I was cooking very, very carefully not to make any mistake because I knew that if I made a mistake that day then I would lose my service of cooking for Srila Prabhupada. I mean, I used to actually really intensely desire that maybe I could cook for Srila Prabhupada some day. When Palika used to cook I used to try out some preparation. One day I cooked some kofta and served Srila Prabhupada. I didn't tell him that I cooked. But Palika tasted that and she told me it was very nice. So in this way I was kind of, trying some different preparations.

Anyway when I cooked for Srila Prabhupada the next day and I cooked very very carefully, not to make any mistake. And then I served Srila Prabhupada. And when I saw that he was eating I got a little courage. So I asked Srila Prabhupada, 'Prabhupada, is the

cooking alright today?’ Prabhupada said, ‘Yes, today it is alright.’ That’s how I got the service to serve Srila Prabhupada. I cooked for Prabhupada.

And then Srila Prabhupada left for Rishikesh one day. We all flew from Bombay to Delhi, Tamal Krishna Maharaj, myself, Upendra Prabhu and Prabhupada. We stopped in Delhi for one night. And the next morning we drove to Rishikesh. Prabhupada stayed in Rishikesh for a few days and we used to have a lot of fun. Some other devotees were already there to make the arrangements. Like, Trivikrama Maharaj was there and Pramana Swami, Viraha Prakash. And Pradyumna Prabhu came. Pradyumna Prabhu was Prabhupada’s Sanskrit editor. So Prabhupada used to affectionately call him Panditji. Panditji means scholar, pandit.

So one day, it was an Ekadasi and we were not informed about it and some devotees broke the Ekadasi. So Prabhupada was very upset. And he said, What is the point of having Pandit with us if you can’t even tell us when is Ekadasi?’ So then Prabhupada said, ‘Okay, we broke the Ekadasi, so fast tomorrow.’ So Prabhupada told us to fast the next day.

Another person that was there, was Jadhubara Prabhu. He was shooting, filming Prabhupada’s activities. So in this way we were there. I don’t even remember for how many days we were there in Rishikesh. Time just, Our time was revolving just around Srila Prabhupada. Then from morning till night I was busy. Especially from morning till noon after Srila Prabhupada took prasad. I used to serve him also prasad.

Then one day Srila Prabhupada was upset with me because I couldn’t make the chapati properly. Then Prabhupada said he would come and show us how to make the chapati’s. He came to the kitchen and he rolled the chapati’s. Prabhupada was very particular about chapati’s, that the chapati must swell up fully. If the chapati didn’t swell up, didn’t puff up, then Prabhupada didn’t like it. And the chapati had to be hot. What I used to do is, Prabhupada hardly used to take any rice. So I would serve the prasad with one chapati. Serve the plate, bring the plate to Srila Prabhupada. Then after serving Srila Prabhupada I used to just go run back to the kitchen, and roll another chapati and then bring that. So this is how I used to just make fresh chapati. And if one chapati didn’t come out alright then I was in trouble, because the time it used to take for Srila Prabhupada to eat one chapati, the same time it used to take for me to make one chapati. (laughter)

So one day the weather turned very, very severe, there was a very heavy storm and there was torrents of rain. And as a result of that storm, the electricity got disrupted, electric supply got disrupted. Some poles got uprooted. Those days in India, in that area, the electric cables were actually supported by some wooden poles, not even metallic poles. There was no electricity and the whole day it was raining, there was ghastly wind. I remember there was such sound, such a heavy sound of the wind blowing. And Prabhupada was feeling very uneasy. So that night I was attending Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada just called me and told me that the time has come for him to leave his body and he wanted to leave his body in Vrindavana. So we must take him to Vrindavana immediately. So I ran downstairs and woke up Tamal Krishna Maharaj and told him what

Prabhupada said. And Tamal Krishna Maharaj also ran upstairs and Prabhupada told him the same thing. 'The time has come for me to leave my body. I want to leave my body in Vrindavana. So please take me to Vrindavana immediately.'

So that night only we packed everything. Initially we thought that we would take Srila Prabhupada by train, because the train ride was relatively more comfortable than car ride. And in the train Prabhupada could also lie down. So Tamal Krishna Maharaj and I went to the railway station thinking that we will arrange, we will reserve some seats in the first class compartment and take Prabhupada in that way. But what to speak of one full compartment, there was not a single seat available in first class.

So we gave up our plan and we came back. And we arranged to take Srila Prabhupada by car. So that night Srila Prabhupada stayed in Delhi, stopped in Delhi and next morning Prabhupada left for Vrindavana. And in Vrindavana the devotees didn't know that Prabhupada was coming back. And all of a sudden they got the news that Prabhupada was coming, so they became very, very excited. There were many devotees in Vrindavana at that time. So Prabhupada just arrived and they were so ecstatic that Prabhupada came.

So Prabhupada's coming was always a very exciting affair. Devotees often used to speak also, 'Prabhupada is coming. Prabhupada is coming.' Prabhupada's coming was always a very very exciting and interesting affair. So I could see that. Devotees were waiting for Srila Prabhupada. When Prabhupada came they were so ecstatic. They were taken to the temple room, followed Srila Prabhupada to the temple room and had an ecstatic kirtana. Prabhupada greeted the Deities. And then after that Srila Prabhupada went to his quarters. All the devotees followed him. And when Srila Prabhupada went to his quarters and devotees, Prabhupada sat on his vyasasana, all the devotees sat there.

And Prabhupada broke the news why he came to Vrindavana. And their ecstasy of the devotees immediately turned into agony. The devotees were so bright with excitement but then as soon as they received the news that Prabhupada came to leave his body, tears just came streaming down their eyes. Seeing that Prabhupada started to console them. He started to tell them that how, he quoted that verse, dehino 'smin yatha dehe. And he elaborated that this is our situation in this material nature, dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara. The body is changing. And tatha dehantara praptir, there will be a time when we have to change the body, dehantara, transmigrate the body. And dhira tatra na muhyati, a person who is situated in proper knowledge, he doesn't become affected by that, he doesn't become bewildered by that.

And then Srila Prabhupada, when everybody left, Prabhupada told me, 'From now on you don't cook for me and you don't force me to eat.' And then he said, 'What's the use? What's the point in eating when there is no appetite.' So it came to me just like a final ultimatum. Prabhupada is saying, 'Don't cook for me.' And I felt that now Prabhupada is going to prepare himself to leave his body just by fasting. I thought of Pariksit Maharaj, the way he just sat down and stopped eating. So I immediately went and told Tamal

Krishna Maharaj. He also felt so frustrated and said, 'What to do now?' He doesn't know. 'He is just going to stop eating.' There was nothing that we could actually do.

In the meantime the news spread about Srila Prabhupada's condition and devotees started to come in from different parts of the world. They had a meeting and then they decided that we cannot now, we cannot let Srila Prabhupada go. We just like a bunch of children and if Srila Prabhupada leaves then we will become orphans. And Srila Prabhupada is a pure devotee of Krishna, so if Prabhupada wanted, then Krishna will fulfill Prabhupada's desire.

So with that, the devotees approached Srila Prabhupada, went, After the meeting they all walked into Srila Prabhupada's room. And Kirtananda Swami, as the spokesperson of all the devotees, he presented. I was not there for the meeting, I was (unclear) with Srila Prabhupada. Kirtananda Swami and all the devotees came. So Kirtananda Swami started to tell Srila Prabhupada how we are like a bunch of children and if Srila Prabhupada left, then what would happen to our spiritual life? And we will become orphans (unclear) will we know how to face that situation in Srila Prabhupada's absence? Then Prabhupada changed his mind and Prabhupada said, 'If you all so desire then I'll stay.' Then everybody became so ecstatic. Prabhupada decided to stay. So I will stop now.

Because Srila Prabhupada is always with us. Prabhupada never left. Srila Prabhupada is with us. He gave us the assurance that he would always stay.

Yes, Syamalal Prabhu?

HG Syamalal Prabhu: Maharaj, you didn't give that, Rishikesh in Vrindavan, when Prabhupada said that he wants to give you sannyasa.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Oh.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: That part is important for your disciples and (inaudible).

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: It was in Vrindavana, Prabhupada, when he came to Vrindavana from Rishikesh, one day Prabhupada decided to give sannyasa to two persons, Bhakti Caitanya and Bhakti Prema. Bhakti Prema was already a sannyasi. He was translating Prabhupada's books in Hindi. He was a Mayavadi but by coming in contact with Srila Prabhupada, he became somewhat of a devotee. His name was Prema Yogi and Bhakti Caitanya was Caitanya Guru He was a GBC member. So Prabhupada was to give them sannyasa and at that time Prabhupada decided to give me also sannyasa.

So all of a sudden I got to know that Prabhupada decided to give me sannyasa. When the news got around there was some objection. Some leading devotees felt that I was too young to be get sannyasa, I was too new in the movement. Because it was just a few months I was in the movement. I got first and second initiation during Gaura Purnima only about two and a half months ago. So they were opposed to the idea. They first told me that I shouldn't take sannyasa. I said, 'Fine.' But at the same time I was feeling a little

bad also. But I just didn't say anything. Some of them even told me about the procedure, which is you have to wait for ten years to get sannyasa.

But then I was cooking for Srila Prabhupada in the kitchen. Then Tamal Krishna Maharaj and Bhavananda Maharaj came to me. And Tamal Krishna Maharaj broke the news that Prabhupada decided to give me sannyasa. And he told that they went to tell Prabhupada not to give me sannyasa, but Prabhupada over-ruled their objection.

And I was cooking for Srila Prabhupada and I was going to get sannyasa the next day. So I cooked. I served. And after serving Srila Prabhupada I went to Loi bazaar to buy the bamboo sticks and cloth and everything. Pramana Swami actually helped me wrap the danda. And the next morning I got sannyasa. And right after sannyasa I went to the kitchen to cook for Srila Prabhupada (laughter). And, Ya. It was very sudden. All of a sudden, Srila Prabhupada decided that he would give me sannyasa.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: It is our great fortune to have you in (inaudible) the South African devotees. Srila Prabhupada had so much of love for Bhakti Caru Maharaj. And my first time I was watching him. I used to be travelling with some of the macho devotees in ISKCON. ? Gargamuni and like that.

But I have seen Bhakta Kishor to become Kesava Gopinath within a very short time. He was working very very wonderfully in serving the mission of Srila Prabhupada. Whatever the service was given, taken very seriously. And sometimes I used to watch. Maharaj used to come to Calcutta from Mayapur. Whatever service, whether it was printing or buying raw materials for the construction, but every midday, I used to see him, he used to come, have his bath. He's very brahminical from the day one. He had that quality of the brahminical. So Srila Prabhupada as a trikalagya, who could see past, present and future of his followers, recognised that person, how important to have him. And he is our spiritual leader. And everybody in the world of ISKCON respects him on that. Not only philosophically, his presence, physical presence and that way he presents, talks to the devotees. The devotees love that art. I'm one of them. Please bless me, Maharaj.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Hare Krishna.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: You have so much mercy to distribute.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Syamalal Prabhu has always been a very big devotee. As he said when I was just Bhakta Kishor, Syamalal Prabhu was a big preacher of ISKCON. Syamalal Prabhu also served with such dedication and often I consider the greatness of Syamalal Prabhu. He just kept on serving. He never really aspired for position or things. Often I wonder it's fortunate that Prabhupada gave me sannyasa. By giving me sannyasa Prabhupada actually closed the door behind me. I had nowhere to go. I had to stay in ISKCON. But Syamalal Prabhu in a simple but humble way is just continuing to serve. He had always been the biggest preacher of ISKCON. (Applause) He opened so many new fields. When I say biggest preacher, he is also one of the biggest collectors. (Applause) That way I can recall, another person, who was a very big preacher in

ISKCON all along and big collector, is Giriraj Maharaj. (Applause) When I was thinking of Bombay situation, Giriraj Maharaj was the leader of Bombay. And Prabhupada had so much confidence in him. I remember when Prabhupada was forming different trusts. In all the trusts, Prabhupada mentioned Giriraj Maharaj. And from that I could understand that how much trust Srila Prabhupada had for Giriraj Maharaj. In every trust he's put Giriraj Maharaj and Tamal Krishna Maharaj. These two personalities are there in all the trusts by Srila Prabhupada.

And about my coming to South Africa, actually Syamalal Prabhu is the person who brought me to South Africa. (Applause) I never thought of coming to South Africa. Because my passport, As soon as I open my passport it had a very clear writing. It said, 'Valid for all countries except for South Africa.' So just seeing that I always used to think that that is one country I'll never be able to go. And then in '89, there was some problems in South Africa. And that year I was the Chairman of the GBC. So I was in Belgium at that time. I received a phonecall from Syamalal Prabhu. For years I didn't hear from him. Last I saw Syamalal Prabhu was in mid-eighties when Syamalal Prabhu was in London. I remember Syamalal Prabhu had a Volvo car, fancy-looking car. And he used to go from morning till evening preaching.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: Actually that was late 70's.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Late 70's? Which year did you come to South Africa?

HG Syamalal Prabhu: I came in 1982, in January.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Okay. so it must be '80, '81.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: '79.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: You left in '79?

HG Syamalal Prabhu: I left in '80.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Okay. Anyway, something like that.

So Syamalal Prabhu was a big life-member maker. And he was not only a life member maker, Syamalal Prabhu used to take care of all of life members, preaching to them. He is the one devotee who made life members and then took care of them. This culture is practically lost in ISKCON today. Like we make life members but we don't cultivate them, don't take care of them.

Anyway, so Syamalal Prabhu, that was for about 8, 9 years I didn't hear from him, because he got lost in South Africa actually. So I got a phone call from Syamalal Prabhu. And he wanted me to come to South Africa. I said that I can't come to South Africa because my passport won't allow me. He said, 'Don't worry. I will make all the arrangements.' And in the meantime that year during the Gaura Purnima festival, Sri Hari

and Tribhanga, I got to meet three, four of you. That was in '89, March, Gaura Purnima. And they invited me to also come, but I never took it that seriously. They kind of came and met me, and spoke about South Africa. But Syamalal Prabhu, he just made the arrangements for me to come. And I came. And I used to know the Consul, Indian Consul of Switzerland at that time, one Mr Kumar. And I spoke to him and asked him whether I could go to South Africa. He said, 'Please don't do that. Please don't go.' He warned me that if the government finds out that I went to South Africa, they may revoke my passport. So I was even more worried. But Syamalal Prabhu just kept on insisting. He said, 'No, there won't be any stamp on your passport. The visa will be separate. You have to collect the visa when you come to South Africa. In the airport your visa will be there. They will stamp on the paper. He gave me the whole procedure. So, and I came. And I feel very fortunate that I came. And Syamalal Prabhu created that good fortune. It's undoubtedly, it's one of the most beautiful countries with most beautiful devotees. Not many places in the world has such wonderful congregation, collection of devotees.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: I remember that you all of sudden you decided the date you wanted to come. That's the slot you had only, otherwise you can't make it. It was so short that I called up Pretoria. South African Home Affairs. And I spoke to Mrs van der Merwe and I said, 'Mrs So-and-So, two months ago I applied for Mr. So-and-So's visa and I didn't hear from you. And he's ready to fly tomorrow and what are you going to do about it?' 'Oh! Okay, we'll give you the visa.' I said, 'No. Make sure the visa is ready waiting for him at Counter number 6.' I still remember that I that I told you, 'You go and collect at Counter number 6. Your visa will be ready.'

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Thank you. Hare Krishna.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: And we are so fortunate. It's not that I have done. It is Srila Prabhupada wanted you to be here. (Applause). The situation was (inaudible) And so also until today Maharaj comes here and we are also together in Spain.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: He took me to Spain also ! (Laughter)

HG Syamalal Prabhu: Thank you, Maharaj. Your blessings we always look forward to.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Hare Krishna.

HG Syamalal Prabhu: Hare Krishna.

Prabhu: Hare Krishna, Guru Maharaj. Some time ago HG Hari Sauri Prabhu on his visit to South Africa and he was speaking about his diaries. And then I had a chance to speak to him. And he told me there is a gap between the notes of the diaries he took and the time of departing of Prabhupada. Then Tamal Krishna Maharaj started the diaries. And it seems as though after listening today, there is quite a big gap. You are one of the few persons around who can give us all that information in telling the stories. So this is a humble request to give it to us sometimes.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: I'm giving it to you. (laughter)

Prabhu: (inaudible) ... You will speak it and somebody will write it. Thank you, Guru Maharaj.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Hare Krishna. Yes?

Mataji: Maharaj, You served Prabhupada so much by cooking for him. What was his favourite sabji?

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Prabhupada liked everything that was cooked nicely.

Mataji: But I am sure he liked something.

HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: One preparation that Prabhupada taught me, he was taking. Two things Prabhupada took rather quite continuously for some time. One thing is called Paati Charchari. The first preparation that Prabhupada taught me. It is made with potatoes and parval. Do you know Parval? Do you get parval here? Parval is something like tindora (= ghilora). You get tindora's here. Like yesterday Bhagavati made some preparation with tindora for me. But do you get parval here? Parval is something like tindora's elder brother. (laughter).

Anyway so Prabhupada showed me how to make that. Like, you cut the, not take the skin off but take the outer coating of the skin by rubbing it with the back of the knife, not the sharp side but the blunt side. You rub it so the outer [thing?] [layer?] comes out And then you cut it in dices, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch round and then the potatoes are also cut in the same size, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cubed. And then Prabhupada asked me to put a lot of turmeric. And then he asked me to break the red chillies in the size of about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and put a lot of chillies, a lot of turmeric, a lot of red chillie. Then Prabhupada asked me to bring the can of mustard oil. That mustard oil was not meant for cooking. That mustard oil we were carrying for Prabhupada from Calcutta for his massage, (laughter) and he asked me to bring that container. And he asked me to put a lot of mustard oil. I poured. And I thought I'd poured a lot and still Prabhupada didn't say anything. So I thought maybe Prabhupada was not watching. So I tilted the tin back and stopped pouring. Then Prabhupada shouted at me, 'Why did you stop pouring?! Keep pouring!' (laughter) So I kept pouring and then finally Prabhupada said, 'Okay.' And then he told me to put water, just to cover the vegetables. So that it's just submerged, the vegetables. And then, put salt and then he asked me to put it on the fire. Then he said that the water will evaporate. The bottom of the thing will start to burn, making a sound like 'chat, chat, chat, chat'. And the white steam will start coming out from the pot. So at that time you take it off the fire and cool it for some time. And then scrape it from the bottom. Actually what happens, a lot of turmeric settles at the bottom, making a layer. And the water is dried out and so now it is only oil that is there. It burns but it doesn't burn. It actually starts to fry it. It burns a little but it creates a crust. So when you scrape it from the bottom, the crust actually breaks and so Prabhupada taught me to cook that. And Prabhupada liked it. Prabhupada liked it so much that for days together I was cooking that same, Prabhupada asked me to cook that.

Every morning I used to go to Srila Prabhupada and ask Srila Prabhupada what I should cook. And practically every day Prabhupada told me to cook Paati Charchari.

So Tamal Krishna Maharaj became quite worried that Prabhupada was eating mustard oil so much. So he tried to persuade Prabhupada not to take it. But then Prabhupada was quite insistent. So then Tamal Krishna Maharaj requested Prabhupada that at least cook it with ghee, not with mustard oil. And then Prabhupada agreed. And from that time on we started to make it with ghee. Lot of ghee, lot of chilli, lot of turmeric. So that is one preparation that Prabhupada (inaudible) quite a lot.

And once in Rishikesh, Prabhupada asked me to cook that preparation. And Prabhupada's stomach was not very good at that time. So I thought it won't be proper to put so much chilli. So I didn't put the chilli. I put one or two pieces. And when I served Prabhupada, Prabhupada was very upset with me. He just kept on telling me that, 'I personally taught you something, and you forgot? I personally taught you and you forgot? How can you forget when I personally taught you?' And this way for two days, each time whenever I went to Srila Prabhupada, he blasted me. (laughter) And then on the third day, when the blasting was not that heavy, so then I told Srila Prabhupada that I didn't actually forget. I deliberately didn't put the chilli thinking that his stomach was not very good. Then Prabhupada said, 'Then why didn't you tell me all this?' (laughter) Then Prabhupada told me that when you put a lot of ghee, you should put a lot of chilli because the chilli and the ghee counteract each other. Both are hot but when you put a lot of chilli into a lot of ghee, they counteract each other in effect. So you going to cook it? (laughter) Okay.

Another preparation that Prabhupada taught me was, you take pumpkin, radish, eggplant and bitter melon. You cut them in about 1/2inch pieces and put a little chaunce and cut ginger and chaunce then you put the vegetables. You just stir it up a little bit, fry it a little bit. And then you put spinach and you cook it. The water comes out from the spinach and with that water the vegetables get cooked. And then before you take it out of the fire, you just put paste of ginger and paste of cumin, you add it with water and pour that water in that. That preparation also Prabhupada liked it very much. When he taught me this preparation, then for many days Prabhupada used to take this preparation every day.

Okay. Thank you very much. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Mataji: Maharaj, is (inaudible) radish long one (inaudible) ?
HH Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Long white radish.

1.29.40mins