

Srila Prabhupada In My Life – The Podcast Recordings



One of the most touching documents spoken by Guru Maharaja, is presented here due to wonderful services (recording, transcription and editing) of Their Graces Vinod-Bihari Dasa (our webmaster), Ranga Radhika Dasi and Ratna Radhika Dasi.

I first met Srila Prabhupada in a dream. I got a Nectar of Devotion and as I started to read it, from the very first page I realized that this was what I was looking for. From my childhood I had a feeling that one day I would leave everything behind and become a sadhu. Those days of course I used to think that that was a kind of fantasy. I used to think that everyone actually feels that way and that those feelings were not unusual. However, eventually the attraction for spiritual life developed when I was in Germany. I used to come across people, even my close friends used to comment, that India was a poor country where people were dying of starvation. And it used to make me feel really bad that people had such a misconception about India. And naturally I used to protest that vehemently and I used to try to uphold the glory of India. However while trying to do that I became painfully aware how little I used to know about India's heritage and culture. That led me to probe deep into Indian classical writing or the Vedic literatures and Vedic philosophy. I do not know how much I really understood the philosophy but I started to speak to my friends about it. Then at some point I realized that what I was so proudly presenting to my friends was rather hypocritical on my part because I was not practicing it. It dawned in me that Indian philosophy proposes that there is another reality beyond this material nature and the goal of life is to aspire for that reality and eventually enter into that reality.

Therefore one day I decided to go back to India in order to pursue that goal. When I arrived in India I didn't even go to my home in Calcutta. I landed in Delhi and from there I went to places of pilgrimage in the Himalayas. I knew that in order to start my spiritual journey I would need a guru and I started to search for one. But unfortunately soon I became totally disappointed. In those days it was not clear in my mind what I was actually searching for. My understanding about spiritual life was very vague and was mostly influenced by impersonalism and I was harboring a misconception that the

ultimate goal of life is to achieve liberation by getting out of this material nature and I did not have any idea about the spiritual destination. I had a deep conviction that I would find a spiritual master and he would let me know what that goal was and how to enter there. However all those so-called saintly people I met, no one could give me any acceptable information about that goal rather they appeared to be like unscrupulous pretenders or ganja-smoking escapist. That I think was the most difficult phase of my life. I was all set to take to spiritual life but I did not know how to enter there nor there was anyone who could help me in my endeavor. Disappointed I went back to Calcutta, to my home, where I actually did not belong anymore.

This search for a guru went on for about a year in vain. Although the ISKCON temple was not too far away from my home and many a times I went past that temple but it never occurred to me that that was the place where I would find my guru and find the ultimate goal of my life. Eventually one day through a friend of mine, Sarvabhavana Prabhu, who already joined ISKCON in Germany I received the Nectar of Devotion. And as I went back home and started to read it, from the very first page it occurred to me that this was what I was looking for. Understanding about God became so clear, actually for the first time I realized that God is a person, He is Krishna. Everything Srila Prabhupada said became so clear and made so much sense. I could not stop reading that book until I fell asleep. Next morning when I woke up I picked up the book and continued to read it. I think I read the book throughout the day and at night I had a beautiful dream. I saw Srila Prabhupada. He was sitting on a throne. Those days I didn't know what a Vyasasana was, therefore it looked more like a throne. And there was a brilliant light around Srila Prabhupada. I didn't ask him anything, I just offered my obeisances. My heart became filled with an indescribable joy that finally I found my guru, I found my spiritual master.

All this while I was hoping that somehow my spiritual master would come and pick me up, now he has come. I do not know whether he would accept me, but I was prepared to offer myself to him unconditionally. I read the book continuously for a few days. I think it took me about three days to complete the Nectar of Devotion. Those days I was not doing anything so I had all the time in this world and I just read Nectar of Devotion. Many times I felt that I was not understanding anything and that everything was practically flying over my head, but still I could not stop reading it. And after I completed the book it became clear in my mind that I was going to surrender myself to Srila Prabhupada. I went to the Calcutta temple and inquired where Srila Prabhupada was. And I was informed that Srila Prabhupada was in America that time. So I decided that I would wait till Srila Prabhupada came back to India and until then I would visit different places where Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu performed His pastimes.

And thinking that, the first place I went too was Mayapur. I arrived there in the evening and the devotees were extremely friendly. Mayapur used to be quite different those days; there was hardly anything around here. I remember when I came across the river Jalangi I found that there were some 2 or 3 teashops and they didn't have any electrical light. They had just some kerosene lamps burning and one or two rikshas there. And I took a riksha and came to Mayapur.

On a summer evening I arrived at Mayapur. Those days Mayapur was very remote and there was no public transport. Therefore I had to take a train to Krishna Nagar from Calcutta. And from Krishna Nagar I took an autoriskha to the other side of Mayapur to the bank of river Jalangi. I took a boat across the river and then a riskha to Mayapur Candrodaya Mandir. When I arrived the evening arati was going on. It was so beautiful to see so many devotees dancing in an ecstatic kirtan.

Everything there appeared to be so divine. After the arotika I attended the Bhagavad Gita class in a room upstairs. Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, those days he was, Raghava Pandit Prabhu, gave the class. He seemed to be so knowledgeable. And while listening to the class, I felt that the entire atmosphere was so serene. And I got a glimpse of what spiritual life actually is.

The devotees became curious about me, everyone I spoke to, requested me to stay and become a devotee. Or at least give it a try and see what it is like. The next morning I attended the morning program starting from the mangal arati. After the arati I sat with the devotees and chanted the Hare Krsna Mahamantra on beads for the first time in my life.

Satadhana Prabhu gave the Srimad Bhagavatam class. He seemed to be so impressive, he was speaking so eloquently on the subject, quoting so many Sanskrit slokas. It was a completely new experience that an American has mastered the subject so wonderfully and quoted so many Sanskrit slokas during the class. And it seemed to me that he practically knew the entire Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam in sanskrit. After the class he came to me and started to speak to me. Like everyone else he also requested for me to just stay and give it a try and see if I would like to be a devotee. I never told anyone that I already made up my mind to become a devotee after reading the Nectar of Devotion.

And in the back of my mind I thought, I already made up my mind and they all are requesting me, so why not just become a devotee. So I went to a shop and bought a pair of dhoti and kurta. I went to a barber and shaved my head and went to the Ganges. I took my bath and threw away my old clothes, put on the dhoti and kurta, and that is how my spiritual life began. There was one devotee called Pandu Prabhu, he was an artist. He was the first one to notice me in that way, shaved up, wearing dhoti and kurta. He met me the night before and we briefly spoke. He was extremely friendly. And when he saw me in devotee clothes, he just exclaimed with joy, 'Hey, you shaved up and you became a devotee!', and then he corrected himself and said, 'No, you always have been a devotee.' Everyone was very, very impressed, seeing this hasty and determined mood, determined move that I took. I had so many wonderful experiences in the early days in Mayapur.

The management, that means the temple commander and other devotees, decided that I should be given some heavy job to try me out. And they asked me to....they sent me to the kitchen. In those days they used to make kicheri for the distribution to the local people. In those days there was no Sunday feast or any such thing in Mayapur. Just every day kicheri used to be distributed to the local people. And I was sent to the kitchen to help in the kitchen in making the kicheri. So I went to the person in charge of kicheri

making, one elderly Bengali devotee. There were quite some Bengali devotees there in Mayapur, they were mostly from Bangladesh. At that time Bangladesh had some difficulties due to Pakistan's genocide there and many Hindus left and came to India and took shelter. And some of them joined Mayapur. So I was told to go and help them making the kicheri in the kitchen. So Adi-guru Prabhu who was in charge of that kicheri-making operation. When I went and told him that I had been sent to help them in the kitchen, he just looked at me and probably was not quite convinced that I was in a position to help. So he just told me that just bring some wood and he pointed out a big, huge pile of logs for cooking. And he asked me to bring them to the kitchen and he left. So I didn't know how much had to be brought so I went and started to bring the wood to the kitchen. I practically filled up half the kitchen. When he came back he was so upset with me, he thought that I was the greatest fool in the world. He made me take all the wood back to the pile outside. So that is how my spiritual life began, service that I rendered caused a great disappointment to the devotees involved because of my stupidity.

But soon they started to consider that I was practically the only educated Indian devotee in Mayapur, so they decided to put me in a service suitable to my background... or whatever. The service that I wanted to do was to teach in the Gurukula. Because I thought that would be the best engagement. So Bhavananda Prabhu and Jayapataka Maharaja were the co-directors of Mayapur at that time. And Bhavananda Prabhu was mainly involved with me because Jayapataka Maharaja was traveling those days, travelling, distributing books with a group of devotees. So Bhavananda Prabhu was in charge of Mayapur, so to say. When I went and told him that I want to be involved in Gurukula teaching there, he did not like the idea. He felt that I was meant for better engagement. He told me not to worry that in due course of time he would find a suitable engagement for me. So in the mean time Svatika Prabhu who was in charge of the Goshala, he became very friendly with me and he requested me to be involved in the Goshala. And I thought, yes, Goshala, taking care of the cows would be the most appropriate service. So I went and told Bhavananda Prabhu that I wanted to be in the Goshala and take care of the cows. He also did not like that idea and he discouraged me. But I got quite upset. I told him, 'Why don't you want to give me a service, I want to teach, I want to take care of the cows, and if you feel that none of this service is good enough for me then what am I meant for?' Then he actually gave me the service to assist Pancaratna Prabhu. Pancaratna Prabhu was taking care of the construction of the building.

The long building was being constructed and they needed someone to purchase the materials from Calcutta and Krishna Nagar. So I was put under Pancaratna Prabhu's care. And those days Pancaratna Prabhu's assistant was Bhumna Prabhu, one Canadian devotee. And I was placed under his care to be trained up to purchase the materials from Calcutta and take care of different other businesses pertaining to the construction of the long building. So that is how my service in Mayapur started.

During those days I used to go to some Gaudiya Math libraries and see the Bengali books. And one day in Devananda Gaudiya Math in Navadvipa, the Math of Srila Keshava Maharaja, Prabhupada's sannyasa guru, I found some books and some magazines called Gaudiya Patrika and in those magazines I found some early writings of

Srila Prabhupada. They actually range from 1948 to '53 / '54. So I decided to compile those articles and print them in a book. Pancaratna Prabhu already engaged me in actually translating a Bengali Back to Godhead. Translating the Back to Godhead into Bengali and print them. So I was assisting him and in the mean time I came across these articles by Srila Prabhupada. And we decided to get them together and print them into a book. And that book was later on published into English as the Science of Renunciation or 'Renunciation through Wisdom'.

I mentioned earlier how I joined Mayapur in 1976 and the early days have a very profound impression in my mind. And I miss those days. I have so many fond memories and although they were not directly related to Srila Prabhupada, but in an indirect way they are very much **there**, leaving a very deep impression in my Krsna Consciousness, in my involvement in the movement.

Right from the time of joining ISKCON in Mayapur I became involved in various activities there. I used to purchase the construction materials for the long building from Calcutta. I used to go to Krishna Nagar to release the goods for construction like stone chips and cements that came by train. And at the same time whenever I had some spare time I used to translate various articles of Srila Prabhupada from Back to Godhead magazine for the Bengali edition of Back to Godhead, called Bhagavad Darshan, that I started with the encouragement of Pancaratna Prabhu. After translating I started to print that magazine which involved proof reading and chasing up the entire printing process. Sometimes when I had some spare time I used to go to Devanand Gaudiya Math in Navadvipa to copy the articles that Srila Prabhupada wrote in Bengali for the magazine called Gaudiya Patrika which was published by Devananda Gaudiya Math. That service was, the time for that service was very rare because I was already so busy doing so many things. But I used to thoroughly enjoy this wonderful opportunity to get completely immersed in Srila Prabhupada Bengali writings from late '40 and early '50. Srila Prabhupada was the editor of that magazine in those days and many editorials seemed to be his writing although his name was not there. But from the writing I could make out that it must have been Srila Prabhupada's writing. In course of rendering this service I got to know many sannyasis and brahmacaris of that Math. And gradually it developed into an intimate friendship.

Mayapur was full of Western devotees and life was very exciting. Bhumna Prabhu, one Canadian devotee, and I often used to travel to Calcutta together to purchase materials for construction. He was a really funny person, full of vitality and life. He was extremely fond of Bengali sweets and knew all the famous sweetshops of Calcutta. He was indeed a connoisseur of Bengali sweets. Going to Calcutta with him would inevitably mean gracing the sweetshops with our magnanimous presence and eating sweets beyond anyone's imagination. One day jokingly I asked him, 'After eating all these sweets how do you control your sex desire?' He replied, 'By wearing my *kaupina* really tight'. He used to have an extremely high opinion about me. One day he told me, 'You know, maybe very soon you will rise up to the highest echelon of ISKCON hierarchy'. I felt a little embarrassed and questioned, 'Doesn't it depend on one's seniority according to time?' He replied, 'Not really, it is the quality and qualification that really matters.' Later

on he often used to remind me about that conversation and pointed it out how his prediction had come true.

The days in Mayapur were indescribably sweet. Those days there were so many devotees. And most of them were Americans and Europeans. We developed the deep bond among ourselves. Jayapataka Maharaja, Bhavananda and Satadhanya were three sannyasis, kind of resident sannyasis of Mayapur. Jayapataka Maharaja and Bhavananda Prabhu were the co-directors of Mayapur those days. In those days sannyasis used to command utmost respect and were treated genuine awe and reverence. Jayapataka Maharaja used to mostly travel with a group devotees in Mercedes-Benz van that came from Germany, distributing Srila Prabhupada's books and preaching in the towns and villages of Bengal. Bhavananda Prabhu was present all the time and used to take care of the management. Satadhanya was his main assistant. Nitaichand Prabhu was also like his righthand man but at that time he had a motorcycle accident and he was totally bedrid. Madhusevita Prabhu, an Italian devotee, was the temple commander and Tapamaya, a Bengali devotee from the village of Sundarvan was the devotee who dealt with the laborers and outside workers. Hiranya Garbha Prabhu, a Canadian devotee, was the Gurukula headmaster and one young American devotee called Nadiya was his assistant. There were very close to each other and they were always together. Satyika Prabhu, an Italian devotee, was in charge of the Goshala and took care of the cows really well. He was a friendly young devotee, who used to play mridanga very nicely and sang sweet kirtans. Pandu Prabhu, an American artist and Anakadundubhi Prabhu from England, were two artists who were painting Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes and Krsna's pastimes on the walls of the road. Besides that, there was Venkata from America, who taught in the Gurukula and his brother Pada Sevana was in charge of the maintenance department. Raghava Pandita from Canada, who later became Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Akrura Prabhu from Germany with his wife and two children. Then there were a few Godsisters, Daivishakti, Maha Maya, Svasti, Kamadhuk, Vrindavan-biharini, Shivani. Shivani had a little son, Govinda, who was so fond of me that when I used to take prasad he would sit next to me and practically eat from my plate. Sometimes he would eat so much that his stomach would become really swollen. And his mother would become very worried and request me not to pamper him in this way. Vrindavan-biharini, Anakadundubhi's wife, was an amazing cook and sweet maker. She used to cook the evening offerings and prepare varieties of sweets. After the offering, the prasad in many plates used to go onto the roof of the Lotus building where the sannyasis stayed. Madhusevita Prabhu, the temple commander, used take the plates to them and after they finished, he used to bring them to conference room on the first floor where we all waited impatiently, after the evening Bhagavad-Gita class, to have the Maha-Maha prasad.

One day when the prasad did not come down for a long time Nadia became impatient and went up to the roof to find out that Madhusevita prabhu had taken the plate quite some time back. On his way down, he and a few other devotees found that Madhusevita was helping himself with the mahaprasad plates in the dark, isolated corner of the balcony. They came down with Madhusevita and told us in great details what actually happened and Madhusevita admitted that he was doing that for quite some time, every day. And we all had a big laugh.

The sannyasis along with the selected devotees used to have mango feasts every afternoon on the roof of the Lotus building. One day Bhavananda asked me to come and I went. The sannyasis and devotees, mainly senior devotees, important devotees sat on the floor, around a huge pile of mangoes. And a few devotees were cutting the mangoes and serving them. I felt that I was one of the privileged few, who received the mercy of the hierarchy and stuffed myself with the most delicious mangoes. Bhavananda asked me to come for the feast every afternoon. However, I did not go the next day. When Bhavananda saw me in the evening he asked me why I did not go. I replied, 'You are inviting me, it's all very nice. However, if some day you don't, then I will feel bad. Therefore I decided it's better not to go.' He appreciated my attitude and started to treat me with a lot of respect.

When I decided to join ISKCON in Mayapura I wrote to my father how much I liked it there. He did not realize that I already joined the movement, bidding goodbye to my family life. He was under the impression that it was one of my visits to an ashrama and after a while I would go back. However, he informed me that there was some pending business that needed my argent input and asked me to come back and take care of them. I also felt that it was necessary and decided to go to Calcutta for a few days. So I went to Shatadhanya and told him that I needed to go home for a few days. He was totally against the idea, thinking that if I went home then I would not come back. I tried to explain to him that it was only for a couple of days, I already made up my mind to become a devotee, I had already become a devotee and there was no way I was going to leave ISKCON and go back home. But he was adamant that I should not go. So it led to some heated exchanges and finally I just walked out, packed my bag and left for Calcutta.

When I reached home it was evening. My father was half lying on a bed, reading some book. When he looked up and saw me, shaved up, wearing dhoti and kurta, which I rarely wore those days except for some special occasions, he became shocked. He knew that I was searching for a spiritual life and lost all interest for any materialistic endeavour. But when he realized I had finally found what I was looking for and committed myself to it, he was heartbroken. He used to have a lot of love for me.

I lost my mother when I was 8 and I was practically brought up by my aunts and uncles and did not have much of his physical association. But still, my father played a very important role in my upbringing. Our communications were mostly through letters, especially in the early stage of my life. I used to love receiving letters from him and I used to impatiently wait for them. He used to always remind me that my life was meant for achieving something outstanding and as a result of that I grew up with a desire to stand up to his expectation and not to fail him. On one hand, due to my mother's death, my materialistic life was completely shattered, but on the other hand it prepared me for my spiritual life, in its own subtle way.

Sometimes when I mention that it was fortunate that my mother left her body when I was young, people cannot understand what I am actually saying, because they can't understand how my mother's death could be a fortunate event. Of course, it was not fortunate from that point of view, but I feel that, because of her death and because of my

growing up without her affection and care, I became quite detached from materialistic way of life. And it became easy for me to take to spiritual life. So that's why I consider that it was fortunate that she left when I was young. Of course, growing up without the care of a mother was not very easy, but that also had a good, rather important effect on me, because on one hand I became detached and on the other hand I became very sensitive. And I think the sensitivity is necessary for spiritual advancement. From my childhood, even when my mother was alive, I used to have a feeling that one day I would leave everything and become a sadhu and that feeling became even stronger after her death.

My father wanted to bring me up in a very special way. He was preparing to send me to one of the best schools in India and provide the best facilities for me to grow up. But the absence of one person from our lives completely changed everything. Later on of course I realized that whatever happened in my life was Krishna's divine arrangement to bring me where I am today.

When I left Mayapura Jayapataka Maharaja was not there. He was away distributing books and preparing for distribution, training the brahmacaris in getting acquainted to the villages of India and preach there. So when he came back somehow he got the impression that I had a serious disagreement with Shatadhanya and left. He had always been a very kind and compassionate devotee.

Although, due to his absence from Mayapura, I did not have much of his association and get to know him so well, but still, I think he developed some appreciation for me and did not want to lose me. So the next day he went to Calcutta to bring me back. He went to my father's place, but unfortunately, I was visiting a friend that day and was away from home, practically the whole day.

When I came back that night my father told me that Jayapataka Maharaja came a few times in search of me and he really wanted to meet me. It was already quite late, therefore I could not contact him immediately, but the next morning I went to Calcutta temple long before mangala arotika. He was very happy to see me and requested me to come back to Mayapura. I assured him that I came to Calcutta just to take care of few pending business matters and that I would go back to Mayapura soon, but he insisted that I went back to Mayapura with him the next day and I agreed.

The thought that I was leaving home for good must have agonized my father. But he did not express it. Already through a few intimate discussions I made him realize the importance of spiritual life. I assured him that if I stayed with him then I could only take care of him as long as he was alive, but if I offered myself to Krishna then I would be able to take care of him even after his death. I could see that he appreciated the wisdom I had acquired in just a few weeks through my involvement with ISKCON. When I left I did not look back. I knew it would break my heart if I saw a drop of tears in his eyes.

So, in 'Sri Prabhupada in My Life' I narrated up to my going to Calcutta from Mayapura to tell my father that I decided to join ISKCON. I wrote to him that I have joined, but he did not really understand at that time or he didn't really realize that I

decided to commit myself freely in ISKCON. So at that time there was some business also that I had to take care of in Calcutta, so I went to Calcutta. When I met him he was shocked to see me in devotee clothes and shaved head. But then when I spoke to him he realized that I was serious about it and I found the right path and in a way I felt that he was very impressed also that within just a few days I learned so much about spiritual life and informations that were available in the Veda's. Anyway, so then after that I went back to Mayapura.

In Mayapura the days were beautiful. Mayapura was such a beautiful place. Mayapura of course is always a beautiful place, because it is the spiritual sky. It is the place of eternal abode of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. So undoubtedly it is non-different from the spiritual sky. It's an extension of the spiritual sky in the material nature. And those days especially the Mayapura-atmosphere was so serene. There were not so many people, there was not so many traffic, there were not so many shops. It was just a few riksha's and that used to take us to Kulor ghat and there we used to take a boat either to go to Surya kunja (?) or to Navadvipa. And we used to take a bus to Krishna Nagara station and then we used to take a train to Calcutta. And there was only one bus service in the morning and in the evening that used to go from Mayapura to Krishna Nagara via [indistinct]. Sometimes in the early morning I used to take that bus to go to Krishna Nagara station to take the train whenever I needed to go to Calcutta.

And in Mayapura those days there were not so many devotees. Most of the devotees were Western devotees, there were Americans or few Europeans. And we had a very strong bond among ourselves, especially among the brahmacaris. There were few householders and they used to have their corner and they had their family and we used to have a very good relationship with them also, but the bond among the brahmacaris was extremely unusual. Like we were there the whole day together and rendering service, attending the programs and whenever we used to have spare times we used to sit together in a circle. And we would read from Krishna book or Srimad Bhagavatam or Bhagavad Gita. The way we used to do it is, one person used to read while others listened, and then he would pass the book on to the next person and then he, after reading for a while, he would pass it on to the next person. In this way, in a group of devotees, we used to read Srila Prabhupada's books. In this way we were very particular not to waste any time. Whatever spare time we used to have we used to make it a point to utilize it perfectly in Krishna Consciousness.

One of the important aspects of devotional service is avyakta kaladhyat, that we see that not a single moment goes to waist. Everything must be used in Krishna's service and time is the most precious thing. Therefore we must be very careful not to waste any time. And that mood was so beautifully established those days. We are always either engaged in rendering service or engaged in hearing and chanting, or honoring prasada. I miss those days. Now my life has become so busy and I do not have any spare time, all the time is much occupied. And I have very little time to spend together with the devotees and hearing and chanting in this way.

So, my days were occupied either in Mayapura or in Calcutta. Often I had to go to Calcutta to take care of the purchasing and printing the books that I was printing for Srila Prabhupada, collecting from Prabhupada's early writings in Bengali. And I also translated some old Back To Godhead articles and I was compiling a Bengali Back To Godhead. That was the first Bengali Back To Godhead that we printed. In this way I was very much involved in various activities in Mayapura and in Calcutta. And I was waiting for Prabhupada to come back to India, I was eagerly waiting, actually I was dying to have his darshana.

Then one day I got the news that Srila Prabhupada came back to India. Srila Prabhupada was in Bombay. So I told Bhavananda prabhu, who was my immediate boss, he was in charge of me, and he was engaging me in the services those days. In a way I was his man. When I told Bhavananda prabhu, he was a sannyasi at that time, Bhavananda Goswami, so I told him that I wanted to go to meet Srila Prabhupada. And he told me that Prabhupada's health was not good, therefore Prabhupada was not meeting anybody. Besides that, in Bombay no one knew me. Therefore the chances of my being able to see Srila Prabhupada were very, very bleak. So he said, "Listen, why don't you wait, soon Srila Prabhupada will come to Mayapura and you meet him here." And I also thought that I already have so much to do, this printing books, publishing Back To Godhead magazine plus I was purchasing material and so much to do. I thought okay, I'll rather wait for Srila Prabhupada to come back.

Then we got the news that Srila Prabhupada was going to Kumbha Mela in Allahabad. At that time Gurukripa Swami also was in Mayapura. He was the GBC of Japan and South East Asia. He had a group of very fired up devotees, they are known as Nama Hatta. They used to mainly distribute books and collect in Japan. He collected a lot of lakshmi for Srila Prabhupada's projects in Vrindavana, Bombay and Mayapura. So he decided to go to Allahabad with his boys and it was arranged that some other devotees also would travel to Allahabad, to Kumbha Mela, to meet Srila Prabhupada. So I also was included in that team. They were travelling by bus. A bus was arranged to drive all the way to Allahabad from Navadvipa. So one fine morning we went across the river, Jalangi, we...not Jalangi, river Ganges and we went to Navadvipa. From there we started our journey to Allahabad. We travelled through the day and at night we stopped in Benares and the next morning we arrived in...noon time actually, late morning, we arrived in Kumbha Mela in Allahabad.

Kumbha Mela in Allahabad takes place on the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna. There is a vast tract of sandy land which is completely, otherwise completely empty and during During Kumbha Mela thousands of tents are erected there for millions of pilgrims to come there. We also had our spot, ISKCON area was there, and we drove to that place. Immediately upon arriving I just went straight to see Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada's area was... Prabhupada's tent, Prabhupada had a large tent there. That area was walled out with corrugated tin sheets and there was an entrance and at the entrance there was a big bearded Western devotee guarding the gate. When I tried to go in, he stopped me and he told me that I couldn't go and he asked me to come back in the evening. Srila Prabhupada would give darshana.

A little disappointed I just left the place and I was loitering around. At that time I saw that Bhavananda prabhu was carrying a basket of vegetables and going towards Srila Prabhupada's tent and he saw me also and he said, "Come, let's go to Srila Prabhupada." And he took me... and I ran behind him. We went past that big bearded guard at the gate and then we came to Srila Prabhupada's tent. And I saw Srila Prabhupada sitting behind a desk inside the tent. And from outside I offered obeisances while Bhavananda prabhu just walked in, inside the tent. And after I offered obeisances than I saw, that Srila Prabhupada was looking at me and I also was looking at him. And I tried to go in, but when I was about to go enter Prabhupada's tent, Rameshwara Maharaja who was Prabhupada's secretary at that time, he stopped me and he told me that I shouldn't go because Prabhupada was taking prasada.

So, again I was disappointed and I was actually feeling very bad and I was thinking why did I offer obeisances from outside, why didn't I just go inside with Bhavananda prabhu, then no one would've stopped me. Anyway, when Rameshwara Maharaja told me that I couldn't go in, I just left the place.

In the evening Srila Prabhupada was giving darshana and I was a little late in coming and I found that the tent was completely packed. There were not only devotees, but there were many, many visitors. Like in Kumbha Mela, there literally millions of people come to participate and that Kumbha Mela was very special. It was a purna purna Kumbha, a full full Kumbha, and that means that the pot of nectar that year was completely full. And this purna purna Kumbha comes once in every 144 years. So that was a very special Kumbha Mela, so naturally lots of people came and Prabhupada was already so famous.

So, all these people came to see Srila Prabhupada and I somehow squeezed in into the tent. It was packed and I practically squeezed myself into the last man and the wall of the tent. Just by the sight of Srila Prabhupada made my heart pound with an uncontrollable feeling. And I did not have any external awareness at that time. All I was aware of was the pounding of my heart which was so heavy and I could hear the sound, it was so heavy. I was completely unaware of everything else. My heart was filled with an inconceivable joy that I never experienced before. And I think for the first time I realized what ecstasy actually meant. It was as if my heart was just trying to...trying to spring out of my body. And it was an indescribable experience that I had the first time in my life. When I came back to my senses than I saw that Srila Prabhupada was surrounded by so many people and he was sitting on his asana, on his simhasana, and he was answering the questions of the people, many people were there asking questions.

Two incidents from that meeting, from the darshana, remain very vividly engraved in my memory. One was...one educated, intelligent looking gentleman was asking Srila Prabhupada in a rather challenging way, "Why are you building new temples when so many old temples need renovation?" At that time Srila Prabhupada...our Vrindavana temple was completed. Vrindavana temple was completed I think in '74 and it was actually the talk of the country. I remember in Calcutta also I heard about the beautiful temple that ISKCON built in Vrindavana. And now the second temple was going up in Bombay, so that temple was going to be even more gorgeous. So, that man therefore

asked Prabhupada, “Why are you building these big, big temples when there are so many old temples needing renovation?”

Srila Prabhupada did not answer the question directly. He quietly listened to his question and then Prabhupada told him, Prabhupada asked him: “Who is that lady sitting next to you?” And that man replied that, “She is my wife.” Then Prabhupada asked him: “Why did you get married?” And this time the man got little flustered, he didn’t know what to say and he was fumbling. Prabhupada said: “You got married because you wanted to have children, putrarthe kriyate bharya, one accepts a wife in order to get children, but why have children when there are so many children loitering in the streets? So many orphans are there in the streets. Why don’t you just get them and bring them up?” And the man didn’t know what to say. Prabhupada said: “Just as you want to have your own children, devotees want to build their temples to offer to Krishna.” And that just...that was so brilliant and I was completely awestruck to see Srila Prabhupada answering this question in such a beautiful way.

And then, another incident that took place there. There was an Indian sadhu. He was quite young and from the dress I could make out that he was from Bharata Srivashrama Sanga, one spiritual group in Bengal. They’re mainly involved in doing social welfare work. Like wherever there is flood or famine or earthquake, they are there helping. They are quite famous for their social welfare work. So this person belonged to that group. So he also in a kind of challenging way asked Srila Prabhupada what Srila Prabhupada was doing to benefit people. What kind of social work Srila Prabhupada was doing. And this man asked the question in Bengali, but Prabhupada became very heavy and he started to tell him in Hindi. Prabhupada was responding to his question and Prabhupada was pointing out that the real welfare work is to give people Krishna Consciousness. This providing food and shelter and helping people in distress was only a superficial thing. It is not going to solve the real problem. The real problem will be solved only by becoming Krishna conscious, therefore Krishna Consciousness is the most important social welfare work. And in this way Prabhupada was very strongly responding to that question and Prabhupada was quite heavy actually. And at one point this person asked Srila Prabhupada, “I asked you the question in Bengali, why are you answering them in Hindi when you are a Bengali yourself?” Then Prabhupada again became very heavy. He said: “Whether Bengali or Hindi that doesn’t matter. What really matters is whether you understand what I am saying.” And I could see that that man was completely shattered and at the back of my mind I was thinking that this person will never come back to ISKCON. But strangely enough after some time, after Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance, one day I saw this man in Mayapura and I could recognize him from that Kumbha Mela incidence and he became a devotee and later on he became initiated by Jayapataka Maharaja. And I was thinking that he is so unfortunate that if he surrendered himself to Srila Prabhupada at that time he could have received Prabhupada’s mercy directly. Anyway, it’s nice that he eventually joined the movement. So in this way, in Kumbha Mela I met my eternal spiritual master for the first time in this life and that was the most memorable incidence in my life.

Being with Srila Prabhupada in Kumbha Mela was a wonderful experience. As it is, Kumbha Mela is the biggest spiritual festival in India. Millions of people come to take their bath in the confluence of Ganges and Yamuna. And the festival goes on for about a month and we were very fortunate to be in that holy place, on that holy occasion with Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada was giving us his association mainly twice a day. In the morning we used to celebrate Prabhupada's gurupuja and then Prabhupada would give Bhagavatam class. And in the evening Prabhupada used to give darshana to everyone.

One day, during the Guru Puja, one devotee was leading an ecstatic kirtana and about three hundred devotees were jumping up and down in ecstasy. Then all of a sudden that devotee started to sing 'Bhaja Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna'. And Srila Prabhupada just shouted and stopped the kirtana. And all of a sudden everything became pin drop silent. And then Srila Prabhupada just roared 'Where did you learn this Bhaja Hare Krishna?!' The devotee was quiet, everyone was quiet. And Prabhupada continued that Hare Krishna Mahamantra must be chanted just as Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. And nothing should be added to it and nothing should be subtracted. So that was a very important lesson we learned that day.

Now it is also sometimes I hear devotees, although they may not sing 'Bhaja Hare Krishna', but sometimes I hear some devotees chant Jaya Hare Krishna and so forth, but Prabhupada never wanted us to add any unauthorized things to the Holy Name. Prabhupada wanted the Hare Krishna Mahamantra should remain intact. We should only chant the mantra without adding or subtracting.

Srila Prabhupada was quite unwell those days, but still Prabhupada used to give darshana in the evening. Sometimes Indians can be quite arrogant and argumentative. I used to feel very bad, that here is Srila Prabhupada, not only the pure devotee of the Lord, but an intimate associate of Krishna. But these Indians were so unfortunate that they could not recognize Srila Prabhupada's exalted position and accept him as their spiritual guide and receive the ultimate spiritual benefit. They, on the other hand, were coming sometimes challenging Prabhupada. Later on one day Srila Prabhupada told me how disappointed he was that the Indians were not coming forward to join this movement. He once told me that everyone is coming, people from all over the world are recognizing the importance of this movement and participating and deriving their spiritual benefit of that. Only Indians are not coming. That was Srila Prabhupada's discontentment and once Srila Prabhupada also mentioned "I am one Indian, I spread Krishna Consciousness all over the world. What will happen to the world if all the Indians will take up this responsibility to spread the message of the Veda's, message of our sanatana dharma, message of Krishna Consciousness all over the world?" That was Srila Prabhupada's concern, that every Indian should become involved in Krishna Consciousness. Prabhupada often used to repeat Mahaprabhu's instruction 'bharata bhumite haila manusya janma yara, janma sarthaka kari kara para-upakara.' [CC Adi 9.41] Those who got human form of life in the holy land of India they must make their life successful by spreading Krishna Consciousness all over the world.

Kumbha Mela, since there are lots of people, so many people, was little crowded and noisy. It was very noisy at times and Srila Prabhupada was inconvenienced. He could not translate at night, because throughout the night they used to be blaring loudspeakers and noise created thereby. So one morning we just heard, we just got to know that Srila Prabhupada decided to leave Kumbha Mela and go to Calcutta. So we got the news and we just accepted it that Srila Prabhupada was going to leave. Then later that morning Bhavananda prabhu just came to me and told me that Prabhupada was going to leave for Calcutta and the arrangements have been made for him to travel by train. Srila Prabhupada would travel with a group of devotees to Calcutta and to my great joy he announced that I have been included in that team that would travel with Srila Prabhupada. I literally jumped with joy and I could realize that it was he who has created that good fortune for me. That way I am extremely indebted to him. He had been very kind to me. He had made a point to take me to Srila Prabhupada. He used to tell me that Prabhupada used to lament that high class Indians were not joining the movement. And he thought that I was very high class and that's why he thought that Prabhupada would be very pleased to meet me.

So the arrangements were made for Srila Prabhupada's travel to Calcutta by train. At night Prabhupada was supposed to travel by train. A first class carriage was arranged for Srila Prabhupada through some influence there in Allahabad and this carriage was hooked on to a Calcutta compound train. The whole carriage was exclusively meant for Srila Prabhupada and his entourage. There were about fourteen devotees travelling with Srila Prabhupada and I was one of the fortunate ones. Many devotees came to see Srila Prabhupada off to the station and about nine o'clock the train started. Devotees were waving and I also stood by the door of the train compartment and waived at them. I did feel somewhat proud of my good fortune, although I was just an uninitiated new devotee, but still I had the good fortune to travel with Srila Prabhupada. It was indeed Krishna's mercy.

When the train started to move we took rest. The next morning, after taking my bath, I was chanting and Bhavananda prabhu just came to me and he told me, "Come, I will take you to Srila Prabhupada." All this while I was dying to meet Srila Prabhupada, but now when the time came to meet Srila Prabhupada face to face in that close proximity and Prabhupada was just one, two compartments away from mine, I felt completely unqualified to even go in front of Srila Prabhupada. So I didn't say anything. I was just...All these thoughts were going at the back of my mind and probably Bhavananda prabhu could understand what was going on in my mind. So he just grabbed me by my hand and dragged me through the corridor and opened Srila Prabhupada's door, the compartment door, and he pushed me in. And I just felt flat on the ground offering obeisances to Srila Prabhupada. When I got up I saw that Srila Prabhupada was looking at me with a smile on his face. And then Srila Prabhupada asked me to sit next to him. The first class compartments in India, Indian trains, have two rows of seats, facing each other. In one seat there were Rameshwara Maharaja, Jayapataka Maharaja and Bhavananda Maharaja and Abhirama prabhu, who was the temple president of Calcutta at that time, he was sitting on the floor and Srila Prabhupada was sitting in one seat. Prabhupada asked me to sit next to him, on that seat. I became very embarrassed. I said,

“Prabhupada, no, I would rather sit on the floor.” Prabhupada insisted “No, you sit here.” So I rolled up the edge of the blanket that was spread over that seat and sat down in the corner of the seat. And Srila Prabhupada started to ask me some preliminary questions, like who I was and so forth. And then Prabhupada just told me “You translate my books into Bengali.” So at my very first meeting with Srila Prabhupada I got this wonderful instruction from His Divine Grace to translate his books into Bengali. I was feeling very unqualified and I told Srila Prabhupada: “Srila Prabhupada, will I be able to do that, I never really translated into Bengali.” And Prabhupada said: “Practice makes a man perfect.” He actually used a Bengali expression at that time. He said “by practicing one becomes a musician and by dancing one becomes a dancer”, which actually meant the same as the English expression goes, practice makes a man perfect. I felt myself extremely fortunate and then Prabhupada started to criticize Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. He started to tell me how they actually have destroyed whole Bengali culture and the spiritual life of Bengal. It is because of their wrong propaganda that Mahaprabhu’s teachings have been covered over and the Bengali’s today are not really so well acquainted with Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his teachings, what to speak of recognizing Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Like all the Bengali’s have become so animate by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda who actually have nothing to say, they have no spiritual message whatsoever. Ramakrishna is just an illiterate pujari and Vivekananda was just a ruffian. That’s how Srila Prabhupada expressed, identifying those two so-called spiritual personalities. I got the message and I got the message that how Prabhupada wanted that their position must be smashed and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s glories must be established.

Srila Prabhupada came to Calcutta. He stayed there for about three days and for those three days I was with Srila Prabhupada constantly. Calcutta was already my stopping ground and now Srila Prabhupada was in Calcutta and I am with him. This first meeting gave me the opportunity to come very close to him, practically stay near him all the time. And I had the good excuse that I had things to ask to Srila Prabhupada or I was translating. That’s what I was doing. I would translate something and go to Srila Prabhupada, read it out to Srila Prabhupada and Prabhupada would guide me and advise me, train me.

Then one evening Srila Prabhupada was giving darshana to many important people from Calcutta. And then after the meeting...actually when the meeting was going on the arati started, the evening arati started. So Srila Prabhupada told everyone to go and attend the arati. Then I also left with others and I was standing in the arati and then I thought that arati I can attend every day, but Srila Prabhupada’s association, to be in Srila Prabhupada’s presence was going to be a very, very rare opportunity. So I just went to Srila Prabhupada and as I opened the door Srila Prabhupada looked up to me and asked me “So, what do you want?”, and I said: “Srila Prabhupada, I just wanted to be near you.” Srila Prabhupada said: “Than sit down.” Srila Prabhupada was counting the money that people give in donation. That kind of gave me a little shock. I couldn’t imagine Srila Prabhupada counting money, because in India you generally don’t see sadhus dealing with money. But then immediately I thought, “Whatever Srila Prabhupada does is

perfect. Srila Prabhupada is a pure devotee. Whatever Srila Prabhupada does is for Krishna. And therefore it is all perfect spiritual activities.”

So Srila Prabhupada counted all the rupees and he opened his drawer very gracefully and stacked the money inside the drawer. Then he looked up to me and asked me: “So, what do you want?” And I asked Srila Prabhupada with a throbbing heart: “Srila Prabhupada, will you kindly give me initiation?” I was afraid because I heard that many devotees who have been waiting for six, seven, eight years and still they didn’t get initiation. And I was wondering if that happens to me then what would happen, what should I do, because if Prabhupada sees me to be completely unqualified for initiation what shall I do? But to my great relief Srila Prabhupada immediately responded, “Yes, I will give you initiation. During the Gaura Purnima festival in Mayapura then there will be initiation, I will give you initiation.” And I just offered my obeisances to Srila Prabhupada with the great joy, enlightening my heart with an inconceivable feeling that finally I got the shelter of my spiritual master. Now my life is situated on the perfect path.

Srila Prabhupada stayed in Calcutta for three days, and it was one of the most wonderful experience for me, because during those three days I had the good fortune of being with him practically all the time. Srila Prabhupada also did not object to my being there. Actually, wherever Srila Prabhupada used to go, so many devotees used to be around him, that his secretaries and servants had to really guard him and protect him from being disturbed by others constantly. But no one really objected my being there, because they knew that Prabhupada displayed some special kindness towards me.

After three days Srila Prabhupada went to Bhuvaneshwara. Goura Govinda Maharaja had procured a large piece of land there. A very influential and wealthy person donated that piece of land for ISKCON to build a temple and Srila Prabhupada went there to lay the foundation stone. Srila Prabhupada went there with a team of devotees. I also could have gone there with Srila Prabhupada to Bhuvaneshwara, but since I was printing a book in Calcutta at that time, that was the compilation from Srila Prabhupada’s writings from 1948 onwards that were printed in a monthly journal called ‘Gaudiya Patrika’, which was the monthly magazine of Devananda Gaudiya Matha. So I collected all those writings of Srila Prabhupada and printed the books. The first book that I printed was called ‘Bhagavanera Katha’ or ‘The Message about the Supreme Personality of Godhead’. I was getting that book printed along with another one called ‘Bhakti Katha’, about devotional service. These are Prabhupada’s writings from the late forties and early fifties, and also I was printing the Bengali Back To Godhead at that time and knowing that Srila Prabhupada was so fond of his books being printed, that I took the initiative to get the printing done for Srila Prabhupada’s pleasure.

So I sacrificed this opportunity to travel with Srila Prabhupada to Bhuvaneshwara and stayed back in Calcutta and print the books and I thought that I would offer them to Srila Prabhupada when he would come back from Bhuvaneshwara. Then after about two weeks Srila Prabhupada came back to Mayapura and it was an amazing sight. Mayapura already had many devotees living there, but that time, being before close to Gaura Purnima Festival, that many, many devotees came from different parts of the world. So

there were large gathering of devotees. Srila Prabhupada came in his red ambassador car and the car stopped in front of the temple gate and Srila Prabhupada came out of the car. The devotees were standing on both sides of the road and as soon as Srila Prabhupada came out of the car the devotees offered obeisances. I could see that the devotees those who were chanting and dancing ecstatically waiting for Srila Prabhupada to arrive, all these devotees, just as they saw Srila Prabhupada tears just came spontaneously out of their eyes. Like as if without even their knowing tears were flowing down their eyes and that gave me a very profound realization, what a deep devotion these devotees used to have for Srila Prabhupada and what a deep attraction Srila Prabhupada had that he inspired them with such a profound feeling. The kirtana was one of the most ecstatic ones that I ever heard and the ladies were throwing flowers from the first floor of the temple building which is now known as the Lotus building in Mayapura.

Srila Prabhupada came to the temple room. The Lotus building, that was the only building in Mayapura at that time and the long building, which is known as the Chakra building, that was being constructed. The long building was being constructed at that time and the temple used to be on the ground floor of the Lotus building. The Deities were the small, 'astha dhatu', eight metal Radha Madhava and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu deities. Srila Prabhupada had the darshana of the Deities and at the other end of the room was Prabhupada's vyasasana.

Srila Prabhupada sat at his vyasanana and gave his arrival speech. It was a short speech and Srila Prabhupada expressed how happy he was to be back in Mayapura, which he considered to be his home. And then Srila Prabhupada went up to his room.

Since the meeting of Srila Prabhupada in the train I somehow had a very easy access to Srila Prabhupada, like I could just be around him. But when he was in Mayapura I did not try to go so close to him, because he was always surrounded by his very, very senior sannyasi's and GBC's. And Mayapura also had some sort of very exclusive atmosphere. Like Srila Prabhupada's quarters were in the upstairs and it was well protected, well guarded all the time. And of course I could have gone and been with Srila Prabhupada, I don't think anyone would have objected, because they all already got to know that Srila Prabhupada bestowed such special mercy upon me during the first meeting and also I was already a recognized devotee in Mayapura.

But since I had lot of things to do, I did not make any effort to be near Prabhupada those days. Only in the evening Prabhupada used to give darshana on the lawn in front of the Lotus building, sitting on a marble seat and the devotees used to sit on the grass. And many devotees used to also...many people used to come from the neighboring areas and some people even used to come from Calcutta to have Prabhupada's darshana. Those evening darshanas, late afternoon darshanas, used to be in Bengali and I used to just be there, listen to Srila Prabhupada and enjoy his divine association.

Then one day I went to Calcutta to pursue the printing of the books that I was printing and it was taking a lot of time. Actually printing in India used to take a lot of time those days, because the printers used to typeset everything by hand, like every single letter used

to be handset. So that was very time consuming, although those people are very proficient and fast. But still, because it was all manually done, it was very time consuming. And then on top of that there was the proofreading, and after proofreading further correction and again proofreading and two, three times they used to correct before we got the final version. So it was taking a lot of time and I also was getting quite disappointed with the printer. So although I wanted to present the books to Srila Prabhupada when he came to Mayapura, the books were not ready, printing was not complete. So I went to Calcutta to pursue the printing. So when I came back that night some devotees told me that that evening during the darshana Prabhupada noticed that I was not there and he asked where I was. And I was naturally very excited that Srila Prabhupada noticed that I was not there and somehow Srila Prabhupada cared for me, Prabhupada asked about me. That was very enlivening and very exciting for me.

So next morning I went to see Srila Prabhupada and I asked him whether he wanted me to do something. So Prabhupada asked where I was the day before and I told him that I went to Calcutta to pursue the book printing. Prabhupada asked why the books are not ready. Prabhupada asked, "Where is the book then?" And I told him how much time it was taking and then Prabhupada also admitted that in India things don't really move. You have to really push hard to get anything done in India.

But then it occurred to me that although I told Prabhupada that I went to Calcutta for book printing, but when I go to Calcutta another attraction for going to Calcutta also was to go to the sweetshops and eat sweets. So I felt that I must admit that to Srila Prabhupada. So I told Prabhupada about my inability to control my tongue and I told him, "Srila Prabhupada, it is said that if one can't control his tongue, he can't get Krishna. And that is my problem, I can't control my tongue. So what will happen to me?"

So Srila Prabhupada told me, "You take Krishna prasada, that is the way to control your tongue. Karibare jihva jay sva prasada anna dilo bhai. In order to conquer our tongue, Krishna has given His prasada. So that is how we should control the tongue." But then I admitted that when I go to Calcutta I sometimes go to the sweetshops and eat sweets. And Srila Prabhupada said, "That is also Krishna prasada." And then Srila Prabhupada elaborated on this point. He said: "Actually everything is given by Krishna. Therefore, whatever we need, whatever we receive, whatever we take, we should take it with the understanding that it is actually Krishna's mercy."

And in this way I had a glimpse of the broadness of Srila Prabhupada's understanding, the broadness of Srila Prabhupada's presentation of Krishna Consciousness. And he made me see how to accept everything as Krishna's mercy and in this way try learn to spiritualize everything and eventually that attitude will help me to control my senses, starting from my tongue.

For a long time I was not able to come to this podcast. I am sorry about that. Actually when I travel it becomes very difficult for me to record as such. Recently I just came back to Ujjain and hopefully I will be able to do the podcast on a daily basis again. Last time I was on, I spoke about how I confessed to Srila Prabhupada about my weakness of

having sweets. And when I used to go to Calcutta, I used to have sweets. And Prabhupada told me that everything is Krishna prasada provided that we take it in the right consciousness. That of course, Prabhupada said I could understand that I was a new devotee and Srila Prabhupada was trying to encourage me. But it should not become the standard. We should not take excuses to gratify our senses. Rather we should try to accept everything with the right spirit that everything belongs to Krishna and everything is for Krishna's pleasure. And Krishna will provide for whatever our needs are. But we, on our part, as we make advancement in spiritual life, should be detached. We should not demand anything from Krishna or we should not take things for our sense gratification with an excuse of Krishna Consciousness.

So Prabhupada came to Mayapur and it was so wonderful. Every day was like a festival. Prabhupada used to give the darshana in the evenings and we used to have his wonderful association. Those days lots of people from the neighboring area used to come also to get the darshana of Srila Prabhupada, most of them were Bengalis. So evening sessions that Prabhupada used to give sitting on the lawn used to be mostly in Bengali. And Prabhupada used to emphasize that how the Indians have to take up this mission of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Caitanya Mahaprabhu emphatically said that those who are born in the land of India or those who are born in the Vedic culture, they must take up the responsibility of benefiting the world by spreading Krishna Consciousness. "bharata-bhumite haila manunya-janma yara, janma sarthaka kari' kara para-upakara" [Cc. Adi 9.41].

And then Prabhupada emphasized how to benefit, how to do the "para-upakara." He explained that those who are materially motivated, they try to gratify their senses and they are simply concerned about their own benefit, their own enjoyment and their own welfare. But those who are situated on the spiritual platform, they do not worry about their own welfare because they know that Krishna is going to provide for them. They have taken shelter of Krishna, they have surrendered themselves to Krishna, so Krishna will positively take care of them in all respects. Therefore the devotees are not concerned about their own welfare. But they are concerned about those who have not taken shelter of Krishna's lotus feet. And therefore, they try to tell them about Krishna and they try to bring them to Krishna's lotus feet and help them develop their relationship with Krishna.

So Prabhupada pointed out that this "para-upakara" is "yare dekha, tare kaha 'krnsna'-upadesa" [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Whoever you see, you speak about Krishna. And Prabhupada pointed out, when you meet a devotee then discuss with him about Krishna and try to receive informations about Krishna, get to know more about Krishna from him and try to advance in spiritual life. That is "mac-citta mad-gata-prana, bodhayantah parasparam." The devotees when they meet, they understand each other because both of them are committed and dedicated to Krishna. And "kathayantas ca mam nityam" Therefore they always speak about Krishna. They discuss among themselves about Krishna. And by doing so, they derive great pleasure "tusyanti ca ramanti ca." But those who are not devotees of Krishna, those who are innocent, those who are in ignorance of Krishna Consciousness, those who are ignorant about Krishna, we have to speak to them about Krishna so that they can understand who Krishna is. And we saw

how Prabhupada always spoke about Krishna. We haven't see much about Prabhupada associating with his other Godbrothers and discussing amongst themselves about Krishna, But Prabhupada was preaching all the time. All the time. Whether it was with his disciples, or visitors, or general mass, Prabhupada was always instructing about Krishna and the importance of becoming Krishna Conscious. So this way we had the good fortune of listening to Srila Prabhupada every evening.

Then one day, Srila Prabhupada called for me and when I went to Srila Prabhupada, Prabhupada gave me a stack of letters in Bengali and he asked me to reply them. The way Prabhupada wanted me to reply them was first I had to read the letters out loud to Srila Prabhupada and Prabhupada would listen and then Prabhupada would give me the points and then I had to formulate the letters. And so in this way, every day I used to reply to some letters and take them to Srila Prabhupada. And then Prabhupada approved, then I had to write it on Prabhupada's letterhead. The final letter was written on Prabhupada's letterhead and then Prabhupada used to sign them.

So this is how I started to answer Srila Prabhupada's Bengali letters. And when that stack was answered, Srila Prabhupada asked me whether I can write in Hindi, I could reply the letters in Hindi as well. And I told Prabhupada, "Prabhupada, I know Hindi and I can write in Hindi also, but my handwriting is not so nice."

So Prabhupada smiled and said, "Actually nobody's Hindi handwriting is nice." And then Prabhupada told me a joke. He said one day, one man received a letter from his friend in Hindi and he wrote back to his friend: "Next time you write to me, please also send me the train fare to go to you." So his friend replied, "Why did you ask for the train fare to come to me when I write to you?" He said, "Because in order to understand what you wrote, I have to come back to you. You only can decipher what you wrote."

Anyway, so Prabhupada gave me the assurance that even though my Hindi handwriting was not so nice, it did not really matter. So I started to reply to Srila Prabhupada's Hindi letters. Around that time, Prabhupada told me that he was going to appoint me as his secretary for Indian Affairs and he called for Tamala Krishna Maharaja, who was his secretary at that time, and he told Tamala Krishna Maharaja that he was appointing me as his secretary for Indian Affairs and that he wanted me to move into his secretary's room, which was next to his room. Actually Prabhupada's secretary room was next to his room, but since secretary had to type the letters and it used to make a lot of noise. Those days there were no computer or electronic typewriters. There were only key-punching typewriters, manual typewriters. And that used to make a lot of noise. Therefore Prabhupada used to feel disturbed. So Prabhupada shifted his secretary room, to the room after, which was actually his servant's room, and his servant moved next to his room. So when Prabhupada told that to Tamala Krishna Maharaja, Tamala Krishna Maharaja was very happy. And in that room there were two beds and Tamala Krishna Maharaja and I started to live in that room. In that way I had a very nice association, very good fortune of Tamala Krishna Maharaja's very exalted association. In this way we started to serve Srila Prabhupada.

From the very beginning, Tamala Krishna Maharaja had a very nice and compassionate and affectionate attitude towards me. He was very kind to me. And in a way he was very happy to have me around him. That was Tamala Krishna Maharaja. When he liked somebody, he would do anything for him. And I was fortunately one of those fortunate souls who won the favor of Tamala Krishna Maharaja. He was always helping me and making sure I was nicely situated and he was like an elder brother. And sometimes he was also very strict and sometimes if he found me taking rest at an odd hour then he would chastise me. So in this way, I had the good fortune of serving Srila Prabhupada with Tamala Krishna Maharaja and be together for almost a year, for 10 months, we were together, living in same room. First in Mayapur, then in Bombay, then to Hrisikesh, then Vrindavan. And Srila Prabhupada was also very happy to have us serve him.

At that time Prabhupada's servant situation was in a transition. Hari Sauri Prabhu, who was Prabhupada's servant, became the GBC of Australia. Prabhupada appointed him as the GBC of Australia. So he was about to leave for Australia so the consideration was who would serve Srila Prabhupada. Sometimes Bhavananda Prabhu used to serve Srila Prabhupada. And sometimes I used to also serve Srila Prabhupada. Serving Srila Prabhupada actually meant being with him the whole time. And that good fortune I actually had very wonderfully. I had the good fortune of being with Srila Prabhupada practically the whole time. Even afterwards when Upendra prabhu came as Prabhupada's personal servant, but I used to be there practically all the time. And Prabhupada was very, very kind towards me. Those days there were thousands of devotees who were just dying to have a moment's association of Srila Prabhupada and I, just a newcomer had such a good fortune of being with Srila Prabhupada all the time.

Hari Sauri Prabhu also liked me very much and he was trying to increase my service. So one day, Hari Sauri came and asked me whether I knew how to cook and in my arrogant way I just said, "Yes, I know how to cook." Then Hari Sauri Prabhu went and reported to Srila Prabhupada that I knew how to cook. So Prabhupada wanted me to cook for him. So Hari Sauri came and told me that Prabhupada wanted me to cook for him. But when Hari Sauri Prabhu told me, then I realized that I did not really know how to cook, especially cook for Srila Prabhupada. Just cooking something, liking boiling some rice and making some dhal, would be alright. But cooking for Srila Prabhupada needed real expertise.

So in this critical situation, I just approached Pishima, Prabhupada's sister, who fortunately was there in Mayapur at that time and I told Pishima that Prabhupada wanted me to cook for him but I did not really know how to cook. So Pishima said, "Do not worry. I will help you." So both of us went to the kitchen, Prabhupada's kitchen. So Pishima, who actually told me that she would help me, she actually took the full charge and started to cook. So after she cooked the prasada, I carried the plate to Srila Prabhupada. And Prabhupada just had a look at that plate and he asked me, who cooked it and I said, "Pishima." So Prabhupada was very annoyed. He said, "I asked you to cook. Why did you get Pishima to cook?" And Prabhupada was very, very upset with me. When Prabhupada used to get angry, he was really like a ball of fire. And I was just a new devotee and also serving Srila Prabhupada with such awe and reverence, I practically started to tremble.

Then Prabhupada at one point, just after chastising me, he told me to take away the plate. And I did not know what to do. So Prabhupada insisted, "Take the plate away from here!" So I just took the plate away, for which I later on repented so much. I wished that at that time, why didn't I beg Srila Prabhupada to take the prasada and admit my mistake and told him that since I did not really know how to cook, that is why I did not dare to cook for him and asked Pishima. But I was so stupid, that it just did not occur to me.

Anyway, I continued to serve Srila Prabhupada and Prabhupada was happy that I was replying his letters and every day I was translating and reading them out and Srila Prabhupada used to correct me, my translations. And I continued to serve Srila Prabhupada in that way and I thought that I would never be able to cook for Srila Prabhupada again. But one thing I thought that now I have to learn how to cook and then probably I can request Srila Prabhupada one day if I can cook for him.

So in this way Srila Prabhupada used to stay in Mayapur and because Prabhupada's health condition was not so good, Abhirama Prabhu who was the temple president of Calcutta at that time, arranged for a very famous Ayurvedic doctor, who was also acquainted to Srila Prabhupada to come to Mayapur and treat Srila Prabhupada. His name was Bimalananda Tarkatirtha. He was also a retired member of legislative assembly of MLA of the West Bengal government. So he came. He was a very old man. At that time, he was 92 years old and he was blind. But he was considered to be one of the best Ayurvedic doctors. Prabhupada later on told me one day that he was a very good Ayurvedic doctor but he ruined his career by entering into politics. Since he entered into politics, his Ayurvedic career, his medical career was neglected. And he did not have any time also naturally to pursue it. So he started to treat Srila Prabhupada. Although that person had his personal servant with him, but Prabhupada wanted me to take care of him. So I used to bring him to Prabhupada's room and I used to take care of him also. So in this way, Prabhupada was having his treatment.

And often Prabhupada would sit with him and talk and those intimate moments with him were very sweet and had a very nice impression in my mind. That also reminds me. Once I expressed my desire to learn Sanskrit to Srila Prabhupada. But Prabhupada discouraged me asking, "Why do you want to learn Sanskrit?" And I gave him various reasons, but Prabhupada said, "No, there is no need to learn Sanskrit." Then finally he said, "You read my books and you will learn Sanskrit." Then he elaborated. He said, "What is the point in learning Sanskrit? There are so many Sanskrit scholars. But what are they doing? They are not doing anything to spread Krishna Consciousness or even spread the glory of Indian culture. They are just learned in Sanskrit and that is about all." Prabhupada pointed out that our main mission actually is to preach, not to become big scholars. And Prabhupada said, "And you can preach with whatever you have already learned. In course of preaching, what you learn that is another thing. But there is no need to separately learn something in order to preach. Whatever you have learned is enough, is sufficient, to preach." So this way Srila Prabhupada discouraged me from learning Sanskrit.

So one day, Prabhupada was discussing with Bimalananda Tarkatirtha and after he treated, Prabhupada was discussing about the age of Kali how degraded it would become.

And Prabhupada wanted me to get the Srimad-Bhagavatam. In those days the 12th Canto was not translated so Prabhupada wanted me to get the Sanskrit Srimad-Bhagavatam and Prabhupada asked me to open a certain chapter and start reading from that chapter. He indicated where from I should start reading. And I started to read and then Prabhupada explained. I read the verses and then Prabhupada translated and explained and elaborated on the purport. Then when Bimalananda Tarkatirtha left the room, Prabhupada looked at me and asked, "Where did you learn Sanskrit?" I was also amazed how without difficulty I was able to read the verses of the 12th Canto of SB. At that time I could understand that by the mercy of the spiritual master, everything is possible. And in this way, Prabhupada used to have some very intimate dealings with Bimalananda Tarkatirtha.

One day, Prabhupada and Bimalananda Tarkatirtha were sitting down together one evening. And Prabhupada started to tell him about his own life and that way I had the good fortune of hearing his life from Prabhupada's own mouth. Prabhupada explained how he met Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura in 1922 when he was just a young man and how he quit his job although he was a householder with a son. At that time his only desire was to fulfill the order of his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura. That is why he wanted to quit his job. But Dr. Bhosh, his father's friend who was the proprietor of the Dr. Bhosh's laboratory, he did not want Prabhupada to resign from his job. Then he got to know that the reason why he was quitting his job was because he wanted to spread Krishna Consciousness fulfilling the instruction of this saintly personality that he met. Prabhupada explained that "I want to give my time to this mission completely, but if I am working for you then my time is sold out to you, my time does not belong to me, it belongs to you."

Therefore Prabhupada decided to start a business. By running a business, he could earn his livelihood and at the same time he would have enough time to preach Krishna Consciousness. So when Dr. Bhosh heard that so he said, "OK, then you take up the agency for my products for North India." And that is how Prabhupada went to Allahabad and started his business there. And although Prabhupada started his business, Prabhupada mentioned that he was not very successful in his business. And he was not successful in his business because his mind was not in business. His mind was in how to fulfill the order of his spiritual master and spread Krishna Consciousness all over the world. And this way, Prabhupada had been struggling for many, many years to get the proper opportunity to spread Krishna Consciousness.

And he even told Bimalananda Tarkatirtha that his plan was that by running his business he would make a lot of money and with the money he would go to the west and spread Krishna Consciousness. But that did not happen. He did not make a lot of money. He was not very successful. Prabhupada said, "Ultimately when Krishna sent me to the west, he sent me as a pauper but everything happened." Krishna Consciousness spread all over the world. And this is how Krishna actually pointed out that "When you serve Me, you do not have to worry about anything, I will make all the arrangements." That is how Prabhupada put it to Bimalananda Tarkatirtha. That although he was without any recourse, without any funds, without any patronage, but his mission was successful beyond anyone's imagination. And it all happened without any financial arrangement. So

it actually happened by Krishna's divine mercy, Krishna's causeless mercy. So this is how Srila Prabhupada explained to him about his success in Krishna Consciousness.

And this is how Prabhupada stayed in Mayapur until Gaura-Purnima and soon after Gaura Purnima Prabhupada decided to leave Mayapura and go to Bombay. The devotees in Bombay arranged a program in Cross Maidan and Prabhupada needed to go there.

When Srila Prabhupada was preparing to go to Bombay, there was a consideration whether I would accompany him or not. It was mainly because the devotees, the management in Mayapura, considered that I was rendering so much service and my involvement was also so extensive there. It would've been better that I continue to stay in Mayapura, mainly because those days there were not so many educated Indian devotees to take care of the local affairs.

I had my hands full. Besides translating Srila Prabhupada's books, before I joined Srila Prabhupada's team as a secretary, I was involved in Mayapura in purchasing the materials for the construction, releasing the materials that were coming to Krishnanagara by train from different places, like stone ships and cement. I was also involved in taking care of the local devotees, educating them, giving classes to the Bengali devotees. I was also involved in printing the Back to Godhead in Bengali. I translated the articles in Bengali myself and I was also printing. I was also printing various books, compilation of Srila Prabhupada's writings from the early days, from late 40's and early 50's. I was also printing the Bengali Bhagavad Gita and also a Bengali newspaper. So I was very much involved.

So there was this consideration whether I should stay back and they were even considering asking Srila Prabhupada to let me stay in Mayapura. Of course, to my great dismay. And Bhavananda prabhu, those days he was a sannyasi, so those days he was Bhavananda Maharaja. He was one of the two co-presidents, co-directors of Mayapura. And I was mainly involved in serving under him. So Bhavananda prabhu was asking me one day that it would be better that I stayed back in Mayapura. And he actually helped me so much and he had done so much for me that I could not go against his desires. So I complied. Although, at the depth of my heart, I was not so happy about it that I have to sacrifice my service to Srila Prabhupada, in order to stay on in Mayapura. But still I thought for the sake of service, I should carry on.

And just a couple of days before Srila Prabhupada was leaving for Bombay, he asked me whether I was coming with him or not. Somehow, of course Prabhupada is non different from the Supersoul in the heart, so he knew everything what was going on in my heart. So Prabhupada asked me whether I was going to go to Bombay with him or not. I just blurted out that I was not going, because Bhavananda prabhu told me that service to the spiritual master in separation is higher than serving him directly. And Prabhupada just responded saying: "But I think when your spiritual master wants you to go with him, you should come with him." So my heart really lit out with joy. So I just ran to Bhavananda prabhu and I told him what Srila Prabhupada said. So Bhavananda prabhu of course had to accept that and then I told him that Prabhupada told me to tell you that you have to pay

for my fare also. So this is how I got the opportunity to continue to serve Srila Prabhupada.

Prabhupada went to Bombay and we also joined him.

Prabhupada's health condition was not very good. At that time Prabhupada had that program to attend, in Cross Maidan for three days. And on top of everything, when Srila Prabhupada arrived in Bombay, Prabhupada... at that time the new temple was being constructed along with those two towers, the guesthouse. And on top of one the towers was Srila Prabhupada's quarters. When Prabhupada arrived in Bombay Prabhupada wanted to stay in his apartment, in his quarters, the new temple.

So they drove the car straight to Prabhupada's old quarters and Prabhupada inquired: "What happened?" He was expecting to stay in the new quarters. Then Prabhupada was told that that quarters was not complete, therefore they brought him to the old quarters. But Prabhupada insisted that he wanted to stay in the new quarters. Now, of course, we can see why Prabhupada insisted, because that was Prabhupada's last visit to Bombay and Prabhupada wanted to stay in his quarters.

When Prabhupada insisted the devotees had to make arrangements for Prabhupada to stay there. The place was not complete. Many of the doors were not fixed, the lift was not really operating. So it was quite inconvenient. Then Tamal Krishna Maharaja got a bright idea. He thought that Prabhupada would be attending his program in Cross Maidan for three days. Cross Maidan is in the heart of Bombay city, the other end of Bombay city. And Juhu, it would take at least one, to one and half hours to just go there. Therefore it would be better that Prabhupada stayed in Bombay city, instead of driving back and forth from Juhu.

One very big man in Bombay was Bhagilal Patel. He was a very wealthy person and he was very fond of Srila Prabhupada. He actually had a palace. They are kind of royal family and Prabhupada sometimes stayed at his place. So the first attempt was made to arrange for Prabhupada's accommodation in Bhagilal Patel's house, but unfortunately at that time Bhagilal Patel was not in Bombay. So they made arrangements for Prabhupada's accommodation in the house of Mr. Kartikeya Mahadevia. Mr. Kartikeya Mahadevia had a very beautiful apartment on the sea beach, a very beautiful, large, luxurious apartment. And arrangement was made for Prabhupada to stay there.

He was so nice. Mr. Kartikeya Mahadevia is such a nice person. He vacated the entire apartment for Srila Prabhupada and his entourage and he, with his family, moved to another apartment in the same building. They had some relatives and they moved out of the apartment and into their apartment. Although during the day they used to be in the house, taking care of Srila Prabhupada, and his wife also used to cook. And they had some very nice cooks also who used to cook for Srila Prabhupada.

It was a very wonderful arrangement that was made for Srila Prabhupada. Three of us moved in the apartment with Srila Prabhupada: Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Bhavananda

prabhu and myself. Upendra prabhu did not come as yet. He was supposed to replace Hari Sauri prabhu when he went to Australia, a new GBC of Australia. Hari Sauri prabhu used to be Prabhupada's servant, personal servant. So Bhavananda prabhu started to act as Prabhupada's personal servant. So three of us moved in there.

Srila Prabhupada stayed in that house for a few days, during the program in Cross Maidan. In the meantime the arrangement was made that Prabhupada's quarters would be completed. So it was a very rush job, [they] practically worked for day and night to complete Prabhupada's apartment.

Next time when Prabhupada came from Bombay city, after the program, Prabhupada moved into his apartment. Not an apartment, it was actually Prabhupada's quarters, with many rooms up there.

In the evenings Srila Prabhupada used to go and attend, give the lecture at the program. Prabhupada used to...as I mentioned Prabhupada was quite sick at that time. I used to accompany Srila Prabhupada. Tamal Krishna Maharaja and Bhavananda prabhu used leave earlier to the program and then, just before Srila Prabhupada's lecture, I used to take Srila Prabhupada in Kartikeya Mahadevia's car.

Prabhupada used to go there, give the lecture. And it was very interesting to note, that Srila Prabhupada, when he used to go there, he was very tired and weak. He used to sit there on his vyasasana on a huge stage. Thousands of people used to attend the program. Prabhupada was quite...from the side one could see how weak and tired Srila Prabhupada was. But when Srila Prabhupada started to speak, Prabhupada used to get rejuvenated. When he used to start, he was kind of hunched and bent, with times, but then as he would start to speak his body would become more and more erect. And Prabhupada finally would be shouting at the peak of his voice and straight and bold, sitting at the edge of his seat. In this way one could see how Prabhupada was totally unaffected by his physical condition and was completely Krishna Conscious. He was indeed the most wonderful pure devotee of the Lord.

I recall a few incidents from that. Like one day, Srila Prabhupada spotted one Arab gentleman in the crowd. It was a huge pandal. About six, seven thousand people used to attend every night. Many people who used to just sit and many others used to stand around the pandal. So this man, quite at the far end, this Arab gentleman, dressed up in typical Arab attires, was standing in the crowd. And Srila Prabhupada spotted him and he sent two of his sannyasi disciples to call him and bring him up on the stage. So this man was brought to the stage and Srila Prabhupada made him sit on the sofa just next to him, sit on a chair just next to him, next to his vyasasana. There were a few chairs on the stage where Prabhupada's sannyasi disciples and dignitaries who came there sat, and in the middle was Prabhupada's vyasasana. So Prabhupada made this gentleman, that Muslim gentleman, typically dressed in Arab attires, sit next to him.

At that time I was fanning Srila Prabhupada, so I could hear the conversation that was going on between Prabhupada and him. And it turned out that that man was actually the

Chief of Police of Kuwait. He came to Bombay for treatment and that was the first evening he went out of the hospital. He was allowed to go out of the hospital. And he came to this park to have a stroll. There he saw this big gathering. So out of curiosity he came there and he was standing in the crowd. Srila Prabhupada just picked him up from there and made him sit next to him.

It was such a beautiful sight. Here was a big spiritual leader from India, surrounded by so many of his disciples from all over the world, and attending a program where thousands of people gathered. And next to him is a Muslim gentleman and that must've carried such a powerful message, that ISKCON is not a sectarian, religious group. ISKCON is open to anyone. Whoever wants to accept the teachings of the Veda's, whoever is interested to know about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and whoever is interested to establish his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, irrespective of from which religious or social or cultural background one may be coming, everyone is invited. So this was such a wonderful gesture of Srila Prabhupada greatness, a wonderful display of Srila Prabhupada's greatness.

At the same time I also remember some unpleasant incidents. During the question answer session, one man was challenging Srila Prabhupada that why he worships only Krishna and not Rama. Prabhupada answered that: "No, we worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Rama and Krishna, the same person." But that person kept on insisting, why we don't worship Rama, why we worship Krishna. Then Prabhupada pointed out that: "Yes, we chant the holy name and the holy name has Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare." But still this man was not compliant to Srila Prabhupada's reasoning, so finally Prabhupada was screaming practically at him. He said that: "Do you have the eyes to see who you are worshipping?" In this way Prabhupada just kept on explaining to him that the devotion of the devotee cannot be understood by this mundane consideration. And the crowd also became so upset with this person, at that point practically they picked him up and threw him out of the pandal. They just...because this man was so obnoxious. So in this way Srila Prabhupada was attending the conference, the programs in Cross Maidan.

That was about the most wonderful programs that I had seen. The crowd was extremely attentive, extremely receptive. And Prabhupada was so brilliant!! After the program Prabhupada used to go home, go back to Kartikeya Mahadevia's house. He used to be quite tired when he went back and I used to massage his lotus feet. So one day, when I was massaging Prabhupada's feet, Prabhupada asked me: "So, how did you like my lecture?" Prabhupada would make some light hearted conversation or ask some light hearted questions in a joking way. So he asked me: "So, how did you like my lecture tonight?" So I said: "Prabhupada, it was wonderful." And then Prabhupada asked: "So, what was so wonderful about it?" So I told him in every detail what I recalled about the lecture. And I could see that Prabhupada was very pleased. Prabhupada was pleased when he saw that we attentively listened to what he was saying. In this way he stayed in Kartikeya Mahadevia's house, throughout that program in Cross Maidan for three days. And then Prabhupada went back to Juhu temple.

By this time Prabhupada's apartment was complete. Prabhupada came, had the darshana of the Deities. Those days the main temple was not inaugurated. Only Radha Rasabihari deities were there in a small, little tin shed. We had this palacious structure of the temple where Radha Rasabihari deities were staying [inaudible], in that shed. We used to have all the programs. All the programs were going on. And the temple site, it was a construction site. Not much could be done there.

And Prabhupada had the darshana and the devotees were very ecstatic that Srila Prabhupada came back to the temple. The lift took Srila Prabhupada to the fifth floor of the building. He was happy to see that his quarters were complete. Tamal Krishna Maharaja and I were staying with him in his quarters with his servants and secretary. By that time Upendra prabhu also came and joined. He just arrived actually the day Prabhupada came to the temple. Three of us were serving Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada did not go down very much. He was in his apartment, in his quarters the whole day, all the time. But Srila Prabhupada used to continue to translate. Most of the time, he was just translating. Especially at night time Srila Prabhupada used to translate. Sometimes he would even wake up at 11 o'clock and start translating. I used to be there, taking care of him, even at night. It was such a wonderful sight, to see Srila Prabhupada translating and dictating. Everywhere it was so quiet and you could hear the dog barking from a distant. Otherwise there was no sound whatsoever, because those days Juhu was very quiet and uninhabited. There was hardly any awake [?], especially at night, practically no one awake [?] was there. And in that quiet of the night Srila Prabhupada used to do translation of the Srimad Bhagavatam.

In Bombay Srila Prabhupada was quite relaxed. His schedule did not involve meeting many people or going out anywhere. He used to just stay in his quarters on the fifth floor of the twin tower in Bombay temple. And in the morning Srila Prabhupada used to take a little rest after translating. It used to depend how long he translated and accordingly he would take a little rest and wake up in the morning. Then he used to sit on his... after the morning when he used to wake up, after brushing his teeth and after his morning rituals, he used to sit on that desk. Prabhupada used to have two desks in Bombay. One is a large desk and he used to sit behind that mainly to meet people and there was another desk, which was next to his bedroom. There Srila Prabhupada used to sit mainly to translate. And there was also another desk that Srila Prabhupada used to use for taking prasada. That was the main area that Prabhupada had in Bombay.

And there was Prabhupada's bedroom. Adjacent to the bedroom one side was the bathroom and the other side was the toilet. Then there were two rooms on the other side. That was for Prabhupada's servant and secretary's room. Then next to that was the kitchen. There was a passage leading to Prabhupada's reception area. This quarters of Srila Prabhupada was quite self-contained and we did not need to even go anywhere. Only sometime I used to go down to buy some bhoga, or... yes, every morning I used to go and buy all the newspapers. And at seven o'clock, I used to go to Srila Prabhupada and I used to read the headlines of the newspapers. And if Srila Prabhupada liked some news, after hearing the headline, then Prabhupada used to ask me to read that news.

At that time India was going through a political change and Indira Gandhi called the time of emergency. There was a lot of turmoil at that time. Prabhupada sometimes used to give comments after hearing. So sometimes I used to read the news of Indira Gandhi and how she was imposing the emergency and what she was doing. This was actually after the emergency, the emergency was already over. The emergency was, I think in '75, yeah '75, '76. And this was still continuing, or the end of the emergency. And Srila Prabhupada didn't have much to say, much nice things to say about Indira Gandhi. Srila Prabhupada used to tell me that how degraded the family was. Prabhupada was quite well acquainted with the family, because that family held from, Indira Gandhi's family, Nehru's family, held from Allahabad, and Srila Prabhupada lived in Allahabad for many years. And Srila Prabhupada had some close contact with the family. And Srila Prabhupada knew the family's inside story also. And he explained to me or narrated to me, quite a few shocking informations about their family and how degraded they were. Srila Prabhupada was not happy that Indira Gandhi was in power and what she was doing with the country and the way she was persecuting, sort of, the devotees in Vrindavana. Later on, I could see that this persecution of the sadhus in Vrindavana was led by Indira Gandhi's elder son, Sanjay Gandhi. Later on Sanjay Gandhi died in a plane crash. Her other son, Rajiv Gandhi, who became the prime minister afterwards, he also was assassinated. Actually the family was...you can see like how one pays for his misdeed. The karmic reaction catches up. I could see how clear was Prabhupada's perception. He knew. At one time even Prabhupada told me that Nehru was born as a dog in Sweden. So this is how the material nature takes care of one's misdeeds.

So I used to read the newspapers every morning to Srila Prabhupada. My duty was to go to Srila Prabhupada at seven o'clock with all the newspapers, mainly English and Hindi. Mainly I used to read out...Prabhupada used to listen to the English newspapers and sometimes I just skimmed through the Hindi newspapers also. So Prabhupada in this way kept himself up to date with the affairs of the country. And after that Srila Prabhupada used to take some very light breakfast, some fruits or some fruit juice.

Then Srila Prabhupada met the devotees. At that time the construction was going on in Bombay. The temple construction was going on, so Prabhupada often used to hear from the devotees about the progress report. In one such a day Srila Prabhupada came across this newspaper article which mentioned about the Juhu temple complex that was coming up.

Srila Prabhupada was quite upset, because there was no mention of him in that entire article. This article was orchestrated by Surabhi prabhu. Surabhi, at that time he was sannyasi, he was in charge of, he was one our godbrothers, he was in charge of the construction in the Bombay project. And the interview took place, the newspaper and him and he apparently provided with all the information. And I could see that Prabhupada was very particular about his identity as the founder-acarya. It was quite a heavy session. Prabhupada called Surabhi and Prabhupada chastised him very, very heavily.

Later on it occurred to me why Srila Prabhupada...at that time actually it did occur to me that why Srila Prabhupada was so particular about his identity as the founder-acarya. And

later on, it occurred to me, or I realised, why Srila Prabhupada was so empathic, because Prabhupada knew in order to hold the institution together, his identity as the founder-acarya is absolutely essential, because if his identity is not properly established and recognized, then ISKCON would fall apart. Therefore Prabhupada was so empathic about his identity and later on Prabhupada even mentioned, that wherever the name ISKCON would be used, his name as the founder-acarya must be there after that. And GBC past a resolution that even in print whenever we use the name ISKCON to identify some project, or some centre or so forth, there must always be Prabhupada's name as the founder-acarya.

So ISKCON in this way is non different from Srila Prabhupada and this identification is very important. Because in order to hold the institution together, we need the head, we need the centre point, we need the focal point, we need the nucleus. And Srila Prabhupada is that. And we can see now, even now, ISKCON is together, because ISKCON has retained its unified identity, because of Srila Prabhupada as the founder-acarya and the GBC as his executor of his will, his assistant, his secretaries who are taking care of the institution on his behalf. And they're the ultimate managing authority of ISKCON.

Srila Prabhupada, during the day, used to meet...In the morning he would used to meet the devotees. And then Prabhupada used to take lunch. Oh in between, before Prabhupada used to take lunch, I used to come with the replied letters and my translation. I used to read them out to Srila Prabhupada and Prabhupada used to correct me. That used to be for about half an hour or forty five minutes. Then Prabhupada used to take an oil massage. And after the oil massage, Upendra prabhu used to give the oil massage, sometimes Bhavananda prabhu used to give the oil massage. So after oil massage Prabhupada used to take his bath and then Prabhupada used to take lunch.

Those days mother Pallika, one of our godsisters, used to cook for Srila Prabhupada. Sometimes I used to watch her cook. One day I found a small cookbook that came along with the pressure cooker that we bought. A new pressure cooker was purchased and along with the pressure cooker came a small, soft bound cookbook. So I started to experiment cooking, with the cookbooks. So one day I remember I prepared something from the cookbook and I served it along with Pallika's preparations. Pallika used to cook and I used to serve Srila Prabhupada. And after serving Srila Prabhupada I used to take down the plates. Then Prabhupada used to sit on his asana for some time and then Upendra prabhu used to come and take Prabhupada to his bed.

Then Prabhupada used to take rest till about three o'clock. He used to take rest until about three o'clock. And then Srila Prabhupada used to dictate letters to Tamal Krishna Maharaja. At three Tamal Krishna Maharaja used to come and Prabhupada used to dictate his letters. Tamal Krishna Maharaja then used to print them out and after that, Srila Prabhupada used to sometimes meet some people, sometimes I used to read Caitanya Caritamrta or Srimad Bhagavatam to Srila Prabhupada.

Then in the evening Srila Prabhupada ...generally Prabhupada didn't take any prasada. At about nine o'clock Srila Prabhupada used to start translating. Sometimes Prabhupada used to take a little rest. He used to take rest from eight to nine or ten o'clock and he used to wake up and he used to start translating. Generally that was Srila Prabhupada's schedule.

He used to prefer to translate at night, because everything was quiet and Prabhupada would be peaceful. I used to watch Prabhupada translating at night. So one day I was sitting quite close to Srila Prabhupada, close, maybe one would say about ten, fifteen feet away from Srila Prabhupada. I was quite visible that I was listening to Srila Prabhupada, watching Srila Prabhupada translating. So Prabhupada then told me: "Don't sit there watching me." From that time onwards I used to go behind the door, just sit there and listen to Srila Prabhupada translating.

So this is how Srila Prabhupada used to spend his days in Bombay. Many often important people used to come to meet Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada used to preach to them very nicely. Sometimes Prabhupada used to tell us what to do and what not to do. Like on one occasion, Prabhupada was not very happy with the way the evening kirtana was being sung. So he sent me down and asked to tell them not to sing like that. So I ran downstairs and I told the devotee who was leading the kirtana that Srila Prabhupada didn't like the way the kirtana was sung. So Prabhupada was so vigilant all the time, always watching us and correcting us whenever necessary.

In Bombay I was serving Srila Prabhupada practically throughout the day and night. Like it was just in Prabhupada's quarters and that was where I was all the time. And whenever Prabhupada needed me, he would just ring the bell and I would be there. So in a way, being concealed in that area all the time, I was feeling a little rusted and I felt the need of some activity. So one day I asked Srila Prabhupada whether I could do some asana. Then Prabhupada discouraged me. He said: "Why do you want to do asana?" And I told him that I was not getting any exercise there all day. Then Prabhupada told me: "Go to the ocean and take a bath, take a swim." So Bombay temple is very close to the ocean.

So in this way Prabhupada actually discouraged me from practising asana. Although some time in the past I did some asana, before I joined ISKCON. But Prabhupada, the way I felt, although Prabhupada may have told some devotees to do asana, but to me Prabhupada directly discouraged. At least asana for physical exercise, as a physical exercise, was not approved by Srila Prabhupada. Of course, if we are sitting in lotus posture and things like that, just as a sitting, for sitting, that is all right, but not doing asana for physical fitness. On many other occasions I heard Prabhupada discouraging that, that this kind of asanas for material purposes is not right. Even meditation Prabhupada discouraged. He used to point out that the meditation should be upon Krishna, that is our meditation. Not just some sort of breathing in a certain way and then trying to keep your mind vacant of thoughts. That's not meditation.

And at one time Prabhupada pointed out that everyone was meditating, all the time. But they are meditating on what? They are meditating on women or money, kamini kanchana

meditation. But actual meditation is to fix the mind on Krishna. In this way fixing the mind, the mind has to be made vacant of undesirable thoughts. But to keep the mind vacant from undesirable thoughts is not the only way of meditation. As a matter of fact, one cannot keep the mind free in that way. It will be artificial. The natural way is meditate on Krishna, think about Krishna, then automatically other thoughts won't come. And the best way to think of Krishna is by mantra meditation, chanting the holy names. Why it is the most effective means? Because Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave this path, chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. We chant on our part we simply chant the holy name of the Lord, and Krishna becomes pleased and Krishna helps us to become free from material entanglement and become engaged in His devotional service. And when you become engaged in devotional service then it is a natural meditation. When we are serving Krishna then we have to think of Krishna. We have to think of how best possible to serve Krishna.

So Krishna Consciousness is the real meditation, the natural meditation. Therefore it is an easy process. If something is natural, then it's easy. We walk on our feet, so it is easy. But if we try to walk on our hands, it will be very difficult. And we eat with our hands, it is easy. If we try to eat with our feet, it will be very difficult. So anything that is natural is easy. But something that is unnatural is difficult. So that is that Prabhupada always pointed out. Accept the natural process. The spirit soul naturally wants to be engaged in serving Krishna. So become engaged in serving Krishna, you'll become free from all these material anartha's and the spirit soul will naturally become satisfied. Yayatma suprasidati. Atma, the soul, becomes satisfied, becomes content being engaged in devotional service.

So I was happy serving Srila Prabhupada. Sometimes I would go to the, after Srila Prabhupada approved, as He suggested that I go to the ocean to take a bath, I used to go take bath. And it was really very enlivening to take bath. It was a very good exercise. It gave a...Prabhupada also said that taking bath in an ocean is a natural massage. These waves of the ocean actually gives you a message. It's an exercise, it's a massage. And Prabhupada also said that if you take bath in the ocean and your appetite will improve. Since then whenever I get an opportunity to take bath in an ocean I try to take advantage of that opportunity.

So I was serving Srila Prabhupada there. In the morning, at seven o'clock, I used to bring all the newspapers and read them out to Srila Prabhupada. And then Prabhupada used to take some very light breakfast. And then Prabhupada used to meet the devotees. And then Prabhupada used to take his massage, oil massage. Then he used to take his bath. And then he used to take his lunch. After lunch Prabhupada used to take a little rest. And then he used to dictate letters to Tamal Krishna Maharaja. And in between I used to get some time. Prabhupada used to tell me to...he used to give me the dictation also for the Bengali letters and Hindi letters. By that time most of the letters were replied, so there were not much. But every day I used to sit with Srila Prabhupada and read out my translation. At that time I was translating Bhagavad Gita.

So one day, Srila Prabhupada gave me one tape recorder and he asked me to translate in the tapes and then transcribe. In this way it would go much faster. But I found it very difficult to start to translate in the tape recorder. Writing is easy, because the thoughts are more composed. And I started to feel that sitting in front of the tape recorder in my hand, sitting in front of the Bhagavad Gita, trying to translate with the tape recorder in my hand, my mind used to go completely blank. And then I noticed, once Prabhupada told me, by practice a man becomes perfect. So as I kept on trying that eventually it became very easy. And naturally I got faster work in this way.

Srila Prabhupada had his meetings with different people. Not many people were allowed to come. Only some very important people were allowed to come to see Srila Prabhupada. So one day, one big scholar came to Srila Prabhupada to present a big Sanskrit book that he wrote. I can remember, it was a huge book. And I forgot what it was all about. Maybe...anyway, I don't remember. So he brought that book to Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada saw that book. And I could see that Prabhupada was not at all impressed. Prabhupada asked: "How many people will read it?" And the man admitted: "Yes, not so many people know Sanskrit nowadays." Then Prabhupada said: "Then what is the use of this book?" And in this way Prabhupada started to preach to that person.

He was a big Sanskrit scholar and I think he was very well reputed and recognised by the Indian government and big, big politicians. But in front of Prabhupada he seemed like a fool. And Prabhupada pointed out, like: "What's the use of this knowledge if it cannot be used for the benefit of mankind, for the upliftment of the living entities?" And Prabhupada compared that endeavor to a lamp which is covered by a basket. The lamp is burning, but because it is covered by a basket, there is no light coming out. So there is no benefit. The lamp is burning, but there is no use of that light.

Prabhupada quoted a verse also. Maybe it was from Srimad Bhagavatam. The part that I remember is jnana khale yatha sahi, which probably meant that the knowledge which is not utilized, like a lamp covered by a basket. And then Prabhupada pointed out that the essence of the Veda's is devotion to Krishna. Essence of the Veda's is to understand Krishna and become a devotee of Krishna. So all the learning should be focused onto that object. Studying Veda's, remembering some verses, or giving some explanation to the verses is not going to benefit anybody. But the simple presentation of devotion to Krishna is going to give the essential understanding and the ultimate benefit of the Vedic wisdom, which Prabhupada himself was doing and the result was there all over the world.

One incident I very vividly remember during those days is, one day, one morning Srila Prabhupada told me that he wanted to have some orange juice. So I looked for some orange. There was no orange in the kitchen. I went to the devotee kitchen, I went to the Deity kitchen. There also, they didn't have any orange. So I had to go to the market. And those days near Bombay temple there was nothing. There was no shop, nothing. So I had to go to quite a distance to get the oranges and I came back. I started to make the orange juice for Srila Prabhupada. And the bell rang. Prabhupada used to call us by ringing the bell. So the bell rang and I ran into Prabhupada's room and Prabhupada asked me: "What happened to the orange juice?" So I told Prabhupada: "Prabhupada, I am just bringing it."

But at that time I just arrived, so I didn't really even start making the orange juice. So I quickly started to make the orange juice. And again the bell rang. And the way the bell rang, it was an electric bell. The switch, it was a switch fixed to Srila Prabhupada's table. Prabhupada used to press the bell and it used to ring electrically. And this time the bell just kept on ringing and ringing and ringing... So just the way the bell was ringing, I could make out how angry Srila Prabhupada must have been. So I was in great anxiety. So I just poured the orange juice in a silver cup for Srila Prabhupada, placed it on a silver tray, and rushed into Prabhupada's room. And when I opened the door, I heard as if there was a thunderbolt continuously cracking. Prabhupada was very angry with me. He was actually telling me that he didn't want it, I could take it away. But I didn't stop this time. I had one experience in the recent past in Mayapura. There Prabhupada had asked me to take the prasada away and I took the plate away. This time I was not going to make the same mistake.

So with the glass of orange juice on a silver plate on my hands, I just kept on moving towards Srila Prabhupada. I just went in front of Srila Prabhupada and held the tray with the glass. For quite some time Prabhupada did not pick it up. He was so annoyed with me. But I just kept on holding it there. So finally Prabhupada picked it up and he started to drink it. So when Prabhupada started to drink it, then I realised that I did not bring the water to wash his mouth. Generally, when I would serve something to Srila Prabhupada, especially some juice, I would also bring some water for Prabhupada to rinse his mouth. So I remembered that this time I didn't bring the water. So I ran to the kitchen, brought some water, in a lota, and then I gave it to Srila Prabhupada to rinse his mouth. And when Prabhupada was rinsing his mouth, I remembered that I forgot to bring the napkin to wipe Srila Prabhupada's mouth. So I didn't go to the kitchen, but I just went to Prabhupada's wardrobe and pulled out a small towel and gave it to Srila Prabhupada to wipe his mouth.

So when I gave it to Srila Prabhupada, Prabhupada just told me: "See, you are trying to serve me so nicely, but I always chastise you." Then he said: "You see, when one becomes old, one becomes short-tempered, so please don't mind." When Prabhupada chastised me I didn't feel bad, but when Prabhupada started to speak like that, I felt as if my heart was cracking. I tried to speak up and tell Prabhupada not to speak like that, but my voice was choked, as if there was a lump in my throat. And I couldn't speak. Then Prabhupada just kept on speaking in that mode, that when one gets old, one becomes short-tempered and how I should not mind his chastising and losing his temper. Then finally I spoke up. I said: "Prabhupada, I make mistakes and if you don't correct me, what will happen to me?" When I spoke like that Srila Prabhupada stopped. And I could see what a soft heart Srila Prabhupada used to have. Even though we are his disciples and we are there, ready to take any amount of chastisement. Even if Prabhupada would have beaten me with a stick, I wouldn't have protested. I made mistakes and Prabhupada chastised and then he was so soft, kind [inaudible]. And he chastised me, he felt bad. He was so compassionate and so humble. There was no need for him, the world acarya to apologize to his disciple for chastising him. Still, Prabhupada was so humble, he did that.

So this is Srila Prabhupada. The kindest person, the most caring person, the most wonderful person, at least I have ever seen. Not only I have ever seen, no one comes

anywhere near Srila Prabhupada. The way I saw him, his completely unique, incomparable... Like if you saw all the great personalities of the world are like stars, Srila Prabhupada is like the sun. And when the sun comes up all the stars become invisible. So similarly, ever since Srila Prabhupada came to my life, all the individuals whom I considered to be great, became practically invisible, practically lost from the horizon of my mind.

In Bombay, in '77, we had a very wonderful time with Srila Prabhupada. Just three of us, Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Upendra prabhu and myself were taking care of Srila Prabhupada. Although there were hundreds of devotees, but up there in the tower, in Prabhupada's personal quarters, it was a different world all together. During the day hardly anyone used to come and Prabhupada used to be there and we three of us were taking care of him. Kind of, it was away from everything else. And for Srila Prabhupada's prasada mother Pallika used to come and cook.

And I had that desire to cook for Srila Prabhupada, but in Mayapura I just made a complete mess of it, this opportunity. So I was not daring to make any effort to, or rather even approach Srila Prabhupada suggesting that I could cook for him, but since I was harboring that desire at the depth of my mind, depth of my heart, often I would try to venture into the kitchen and try to cook something. We had this cookbook from the Hawkins Pressure Cooker Company. We bought a pressure cooker for Srila Prabhupada's kitchen and along with that came this cookbook.

So I was trying to cook different things. One day I cooked the kofta made of jackfruit and I served Srila Prabhupada, but I didn't tell him that I cooked it. But afterwards Pallika tasted it and she was very appreciative of that preparation. And in this way sometimes I would cook from this, taste something and try from the cookbook and serve Srila Prabhupada. It was just mother Pallika and I [who] knew about my venture without... We didn't tell anyone and Pallika was always very appreciative.

Then one day Pallika became sick and she couldn't cook for Srila Prabhupada. Another godsister of ours was asked to cook and Srila Prabhupada told her what to cook and how to cook. But when she cooked and I served the prasada to Srila Prabhupada, I took it to Srila Prabhupada, I could see that Prabhupada couldn't eat. Those days Prabhupada was just eating only a little bit during the lunch and he was hardly taking anything during the day. I was feeling very bad that Prabhupada was not eating. That would mean that until the next day Prabhupada would not eat anything. So I asked Srila Prabhupada: "Prabhupada, was the cooking not all right?" And Prabhupada said: "No, she doesn't know how to cook." So I asked Srila Prabhupada: "Prabhupada, should I try to cook for you tomorrow?" Prabhupada said: "Yes, you can try."

While I was actually cooking already, Prabhupada called me, while he was having the massage. And Prabhupada asked me to get some 'parwal', it's a vegetable which is very common in India, but you don't get in the West. It's a kind of a squash with a hard skin. It looks like a mrdanga, tapered on the two sides, solid in the middle and it has some

stripes also. It's a green vegetable with some white stripes. It's called parwal, in Bengali it's called 'potal.'

Srila Prabhupada asked me to bring some parwal and some potatoes and while he was having a massage he showed me, he told me how to scrape the skin off the potal with the back of the knife. It was not cutting, just scraping the outer part, and peel the potatoes and then cut them in cubes, almost about three fourth of an inch cube. And the potal was diced, in about that size. And then Prabhupada asked me to get the turmeric. And Prabhupada asked me to put the turmeric in it. I put a lot of turmeric in it and then Prabhupada finally said to stop it. And then Prabhupada asked me to get some red chili, dry red chili, and he showed me how to break the chilies, about also, about half inch, three quarter inch long. And also lot of chili was put in there.

Then Prabhupada asked me to bring the mustard oil can, a tin of mustard oil that we brought from Calcutta for Prabhupada's body massage. Prabhupada asked me to bring that can of mustard oil and he asked me to pour. Prabhupada was having the massage and I was pouring. I poured a lot of mustard oil and at one point I felt that most probably Prabhupada didn't notice how much mustard oil I put. So I tilted the can back and stopped pouring. And then Prabhupada told me, he said: "Why did you stop?! Keep pouring." So I kept pouring, a lot of mustard oil was put in there. And then Prabhupada told me to put some salt on it and put it on the fire.

Oh yeah, before that, Prabhupada asked me to put some water, before putting it on the fire. The water would just cover the vegetables, just cover the vegetables and put it on the fire. And the water will evaporate, and the thing, the preparation will start to burn at the bottom. Then it will start making a sound, like 'chut, chut, chut, chut' and some white smoke would start coming from the vegetable. So when it starts making that sound and the white smoke starts to come out, then I should take it out of the fire and cool it. Little bit cool it, just keep it there to cool down a little bit. And then, before serving, I should scrape the bottom of the preparation, scrape the bottom of the vegetable and mix it. Prabhupada told me that preparation is called 'bati charchari.'

So I cooked it. I waited for the water to dry out, for the water to evaporate, then white steam to start come out, and it really started to make a sound like 'chut, chut, chut, chut' from that, and I took it off the fire. When I served Srila Prabhupada he really liked that preparation. He liked everything practically what I cooked. I cooked sukta myself and there was another, I think cabbage subji I prepared, few things that I prepared. And Prabhupada ate quite nicely.

So after serving Prabhupada, I went in and took out the plates and I was washing the plates in the kitchen. After Prabhupada took prasada, he used to sit on there for few minutes, about five, ten minutes. And then Upendra prabhu used to take Prabhupada to the bed and Prabhupada used to lie down for a while. So after putting Srila Prabhupada to bed, Upendra came out and he came to the kitchen. He said: "Hey, what did you cook for Srila Prabhupada?" He was really praising my cooking and he asked me to taste it. So I gave Upendra that preparation, whatever I cooked.

Then, at three o'clock Tamal Krishna Maharaja used to come to take dictations of the letters from Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada also told Tamal Krishna Maharaja and Tamal Krishna Maharaja also came and told me: "You know Prabhupada was really appreciating your cooking." And I was really excited and feeling as if I am on the top of the seventh heaven. Prabhupada liked my cooking and also, I could see myself that Prabhupada was eating quite nicely after a long time.

However, the next day, when I cooked for Srila Prabhupada and I served, the kind of same preparations I cooked for Srila Prabhupada and I served, I made the bati charcharis, but Prabhupada was not at all happy. He just told me, he took a few bites: "You don't have any standard. One day you cook nicely and I praise you, and then you've gone [?]." I was feeling completely devastated. However, the next day I cooked very, very carefully. Literally with a pounding heart I served Srila Prabhupada, because I knew if I blew it that day, then the opportunity to serve Srila Prabhupada, to cook for Srila Prabhupada, will be lost forever.

So, when I served Srila Prabhupada, I could see that Prabhupada was eating and I gathered some courage and I asked Srila Prabhupada whether the cooking was alright. And Prabhupada said: "Yes, today it was alright."

So in this way I got the service to cook for Srila Prabhupada and from then onwards I was cooking everyday for Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada used to call me 'the famous cook,' because all the devotees also were praising my cooking. Devotees means those who were there. Tamal Krishna Maharaja was there and some senior devotees used to come and take Srila Prabhupada's remnants. They also used to tell Srila Prabhupada.

And actually for a long time they were waiting for some male devotee to cook for Srila Prabhupada, because since there was no male devotee to cook for Srila Prabhupada, our godsisters were cooking and Prabhupada was wanting that a male devotee would be cooking for him, who could also travel with him. And it seemed that they found that cook in me. Especially Tamal Krishna Maharaja was very fond of my cooking, very appreciative of my cooking. This is how I got the new service to cook for Srila Prabhupada.

And I also used to translate. I was translating Bhagavad Gita. And every day I used to take my translations and read them all to Srila Prabhupada. Sometimes Prabhupada used to correct me and sometimes he used to appreciate my translation. Somehow Prabhupada liked my translation. He felt that I had a simple and lucid style of writing in Bengali. Sometimes Prabhupada would appreciate, like if some expressions, some translations were, the expressions were very...Somehow Srila Prabhupada liked them and he used to tell me also that: "That was very nice."

Also, one day just Srila Prabhupada...I was just sitting with Srila Prabhupada in the afternoon. We were sitting in the balcony, facing the temple. At that time the temple was, the construction was going on. The Deities were not installed. The temple was not complete.

Prabhupada was sitting there and I was sitting at his feet. Prabhupada just started to tell me that: “These Indians are cheating the Western devotees. Western devotees are not so experienced in India. They do not know how to deal with these people. They just trust them, but these Indian business people, the suppliers and all these people, they’re cheating the devotees. They see them as the Westerners and they think that they are loaded with money.”

So in this way Prabhupada started to describe how difficult it was for him to actually build this temple and do things in India, because at that time most of the devotees in India were Westerners. They were inexperienced and they were being cheated. Therefore Prabhupada himself had to get involved in so many different areas. And he was explaining that: “It would be nice if some Indian devotee could also be involved here in Bombay.”

My heart started to throb in apprehension. It sounded like Prabhupada was suggesting that I stay in Bombay and be involved in the construction and other areas in Bombay, which would mean that I would not be able to travel with Srila Prabhupada anymore. But eventually Prabhupada did not propose that. He was simply expressing his concern and disappointment the way with the Indians, because they have become so... Many of them became so unscrupulous and in that respect Prabhupada mentioned that India, although it’s the most glorious country, but the Indians, because they have rejected the Vedic culture, they lost all their good qualities. And Prabhupada pointed out that because they have given up Krishna Consciousness, they have become poverty stricken. Because they have given up Krishna, Narayana, therefore Lakshmidēvi has left them. Lakshmidēvi has withdrawn her favor and as a result of that the people have become poor. Actually India is not a poor country. It’s the richest country in the world, but the people of India have become poor, because they have rejected Krishna. And when one becomes poor, he loses all good qualities. Poverty causes them to lose all good qualities.

So in this way Prabhupada explained how... actually Prabhupada’s analysis was so scientific and he would always point out that how all the problems of this world, all the difficulties of this world, all the crises of this world, are due to man’s rejection of Krishna Consciousness.

And the more they reject Krishna, the more miserable they’ll become. On the other hand, if they accept Krishna, then everything will become so prosperous and wonderful for them.

So in this way Srila Prabhupada reassured that just accept Krishna Consciousness, surrender unto Krishna, try to serve Him, Krishna will provide for everything. Lakshmidēvi will be providing for us with everything, with four hands. And when she gives with four hands, we won’t be able to receive it with our two hands. We’ll find it difficult to receive the mercy with our two hands.

And then, at one point, Srila Prabhupada told me that: “I am the richest man in the world.” And then he also emphasized that even materially, Prabhupada was the richest

man in the world. You see, because there are so many people who're completely surrendered to him and they're working for him. Who has so many thousands of people working under them? And then Prabhupada pointed out that he has his temples everywhere. He has his house everywhere. How many people have that kind of wealth? Even the richest people in the world may have ten, twelve, twenty, thirty houses, but Prabhupada had more than hundred houses.

And in this way Srila Prabhupada was pointing out that he is literally the richest man in the world, even materially! Spiritually, of course. He was the most exalted personality. He was the wealthiest. He was the richest spiritual personality, there was no doubt about that, but even materially also Srila Prabhupada...In this way Srila Prabhupada pointed out that this was the benefit of becoming Krishna Conscious: you accept Krishna and Krishna will give you everything. Krishna will provide for everything. But if you reject Krishna you'll lose everything.

And India is a perfect example for that. The richest country in the world has become practically the poorest country in the world. And if they take to Krishna Consciousness then again India will become the richest nation, the most glorious nation. And the rest of the world will accept India as the leader and follow India. So in this way India will become recognized as the most glorious country, the wealthiest country in the world. All it needs is that it accepts its original culture, Vedic culture, Krishna Conscious culture. And then the world will accept India's leadership.

So Prabhupada's health was not very good and Prabhupada was eating only very little. One day Prabhupada told, that if he could take four chapatis, then he would consider that he has become healthy. But unfortunately, Prabhupada couldn't take more than one chapati. Sometimes he wouldn't even take that much. And those chapatis were not very thick. The way we used to make those chapatis were very thin. Prabhupada was very particular about how the chapatis were made. He used to like the chapati to be soft and it should swell up completely, like a football.

First you roast the chapati on a pan, they call it 'tava', it's an iron skillet, sort of. And first you roll the chapati and then put it on there and then you roast it, and then you put it on a flame and then the chapati swells up. The good chapati will swell up like a football, but if it didn't swell up, then Prabhupada was not happy about it. So we had to be very, very particular about how we make the chapati's for Srila Prabhupada.

And then, the chapati also had to be not very thick. It had to be thin, a certain consistency. Prabhupada mostly used to take chapatis those days. Very rarely Prabhupada took rice, although I had to cook rice also, thinking that if Srila Prabhupada wanted, but Prabhupada never took rice. At least when I was serving Srila Prabhupada, he never took rice. He was only taking chapatis, but he could hardly eat.

Then one day, one very important person came to Srila Prabhupada. His name was Sriman Narayana. He was a retired governor of Madras, the ex-governor of Madras. His brother in law, Ramakrishna Bajaj, he was the chairman of Bajaj Industries, a very big

industries that make various types of automobiles and motorcycles and scooters and things, a big industrialist. One day the two of them came to see Srila Prabhupada and seeing Srila Prabhupada's health condition, they suggested that Prabhupada went to Hrishikesh, at the foothills of the Himalayas, next to the Ganges. Because they were proposing that maybe the Ganges water and that area will help Srila Prabhupada to recuperate. And Prabhupada was travelling so extensively, so his body was naturally exhausted.

So they suggested that Prabhupada went to Hrishikesh and they actually arranged a house for Srila Prabhupada. They were very wealthy people, very influential people. I don't think that house belonged to them, but it was one of the relative's house or something. At that time that was the most beautiful house in Hrishikesh. Now, of course, many, many big buildings have come up, but those days that was just the picturesque building on the bank of the river Ganges.

So they proposed that Prabhupada went to Hrishikesh and Prabhupada also liked the idea. He said he'd never been to Hrishikesh before. And he also thought that Ganges, being next to Ganges will be good and Ganges water will be good to drink. So then arrangements were made and three of us accompanied Srila Prabhupada. We flew to Delhi and from Delhi we drove to Hrishikesh. Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Upendra prabhu and myself. Already some other devotees were in Hrishikesh to make the arrangements for Srila Prabhupada. Trivikrama Maharaja was there, Pramana Swami and Vira Prakasha [?] Swami. They were already there and few other devotees I don't remember.

So we came to Hrishikesh. It's a beautiful place and when we arrived, Prabhupada wanted to drink some water. Upendra prabhu brought some water, but Prabhupada didn't like the idea. Prabhupada said: "Did I come all the way to Hrishikesh just to drink tap water?" So I immediately got the idea and I heard Prabhupada saying that when you go to Hrishikesh you drink only Ganga water. I immediately took the pot and ran to the Ganges and brought the water and served it to Srila Prabhupada. And Prabhupada drank it and he was very happy with that water of the Ganges.

Prabhupada was optimistic that his health condition would improve. So we were serving Srila Prabhupada. Few other devotees also came and joined. One was Yadubara prabhu. He was filming at that time Srila Prabhupada. So he came to Hrishikesh, or he came to India with the project to film Srila Prabhupada. So he was there and then, besides Trivikrama Maharaja, Vira Prakasha Maharaja and Pramana Swami, there was also Gauridasa Pandita. He was Tamal Krishna Maharaja's servant, he was serving Tamal Krishna Maharaja. Pradyumna prabhu joined us, after a few days. He was Prabhupada's Sanskrit editor.

So we were there serving Srila Prabhupada. It was very nice and Prabhupada was very relaxed for at least for first few days. In the evening Prabhupada used to give darshana. Hrishikesh being a very place, a place of pilgrimage, many pious people come there and Srila Prabhupada used to give darshana in the evening. Many, many people used to come to see Srila Prabhupada. The news spread that Srila Prabhupada came to Hrishikesh and

people became very excited and they wanted to see him, receive some spiritual guidance. So in this way, every evening Srila Prabhupada used to give darshana.

But then we found out that it was exhausting Srila Prabhupada also, because many people were coming, they were asking many questions. And Prabhupada mostly was... whenever there is an opportunity to preach, Prabhupada always took the opportunity and he took full advantage of that. So Prabhupada was speaking to many, many people in the evening and it used to go on till quite late. Prabhupada used to start give darshana at five o'clock, sometimes it used to go on till seven thirty.

So one day Tamal Krishna Maharaja suggested that we have to do something about the darshana time and he decided that the darshana time would be only from five to six. And at six o'clock we used to take everybody out of the room. But after that, we used to take them out of Srila Prabhupada's room, but if there was some interested person, then we would continue to preach to them. Like, sometimes we would go up on the roof, sometimes we'd sit on the balcony and preach to them. There was a lawn also, so sometimes we'd sit on the lawn.

So I was just a new devotee at that time, but when I used to see that the others were preaching, I also felt like preaching. One day, one very nice, quite youngish sadhu came to see Srila Prabhupada. So after they left, after six o'clock, they were asked to leave Prabhupada's room. I sat with this person and started to speak to him. And while speaking to him it turned out that he was an impersonalist, he's a Mayavadi. So I started to smash his Mayavada concept. And I quoted the verse: vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvam yaj jnanam advayam brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti sabdyate. [SB1.2.11]

So I was explaining to him, that this Brahman realization is only the initial aspect, only the initial aspect of spiritual understanding. So Brahman realization is actually the result of jnana. Jnani's, who try to understand the Absolute from the material perspective, from the mundane perspective, they approach through the process of 'neti neti', not this, not this. Is this the Absolute? No, not this.

Through this process of 'not this, not this,' or neti neti, they come to the end of the universe. If they're fortunate they even go beyond the coverings of the universe and they perceive the brahmajyoti. But seeing brahmajyoti, perceiving brahmajyoti is something like a blind man, not a blind man, a person who has been in a dark room for a long, long time. If all of a sudden he is taken out and look at the midday sun, the way he would become blinded, that's what actually happens to the impersonalist, to the jnani's, who try to understand the Absolute Truth through this material endeavor.

But after realizing Brahman they become blinded and if they're fortunate, then they realize that they have come to a dead end. They were looking for the Absolute Truth, but they in course have become blind. So then they could change their course. Instead of going externally, now they try to go internally. And that process of going internal, internally searching for the Absolute, is the process of yoga. And through this process of

yoga, Astanga Yoga, when one achieves the success, the ultimate success of yoga, and perceives the Supersoul, then he sees the Lord in the heart as the Supersoul.

And so through the process of yoga one actually sees the Supersoul. But when one sees the Supersoul, he sees Him as the Supersoul, as the Supreme Lord and sees himself in that light as the minute living entity. So he surrenders himself unto the Lord. And that surrender is actually the beginning of devotion. And by practising this process of devotion, rendering devotional service, when one achieves perfection, then he sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Bhagavan. So that is how the ultimate understanding of the Absolute Truth is Bhagavan and the process is devotional service.

Now while I was explaining that to him, my voice became quite loud. Anyway, I don't know how much that person accepted it, but anyway he left and I also went down. And when I went down, Upendra came and told me that Prabhupada wanted to see me. When he told me that Prabhupada wanted to see me, I became worried. Then I realised that Prabhupada actually...that I was speaking so loudly to that person practically next to Srila Prabhupada's room. And Prabhupada must have heard me and now Prabhupada must be quite angry with me, because the way I displeased a sadhu.

Anyway, with a throbbing heart and an apprehensive mind I approached Srila Prabhupada's room. I went to Prabhupada. Then Prabhupada asked me, as I apprehended, so Prabhupada asked: "So, what are you doing?" I said: "Prabhupada, I was preaching." Then Prabhupada asked: "What are you preaching?" Then I told that there was a Mayavadi sadhu, kind of a sannyasi, and I was trying to explain to him that Brahman realisation is not the ultimate. The ultimate is Bhagavan realization and I explained, I quoted the verse. And I tried to repeat in brief what I spoke to that person. And Prabhupada was very silent for a while. He didn't say anything. It seemed like Prabhupada was thinking quite deeply. Then I asked Prabhupada, when Prabhupada didn't say anything, I asked Srila Prabhupada: "Srila Prabhupada, did I say anything wrong?" Then Prabhupada said: "No, what you spoke was very, very good and very correct." And naturally I felt very excited and joyful.

So this is how we were spending our days in Hrishikesh in very close proximity, in very close association with Srila Prabhupada, and just a few of us. And as if Srila Prabhupada was for us, Prabhupada was ours to serve him.

One day, when we were in Hrishikesh, we forgot the Ekadasi. We did not fast. We took some grain for breakfast and then later on we found out that it was Ekadasi. So Prabhupada was very upset that we did not remember the Ekadasi day. Pradyumna prabhu was with us and he was a scholar. Prabhupada used to call him 'pandita.' So Prabhupada said: "What's the point in having a pandita with us, if he can't even figure out when is the Ekadasi." So we asked Prabhupada what we should do. We failed to observe Ekadasi and Prabhupada said: "Okay, then fast tomorrow."

And although Prabhupada did not take anything on that day, but because we were not fasting, Prabhupada also did not fast. Prabhupada also took grains on that day. And the

next day we all fasted. Later on I of course found out from Hari Bhakti Vilasa that one who is below eight years of age and one who is above eighty, do not need to observe Ekadasi. So Ekadasi should be observed only for individuals from eight to eighty years of age. So Prabhupada was already above eighty. So even if Prabhupada did not observe Ekadasi, it did not really matter. But Prabhupada showed us the kind of solidarity: since we were not observing Ekadasi, Prabhupada did not observe Ekadasi.

This was a wonderful lesson for all of us. That way Prabhupada showed how to always be with the group. Do what the group is doing. And following that example of Srila Prabhupada, later on, when I used to go to Jagannatha Puri with Western devotees, since they could not enter into Jagannatha temple, I also did not go, feeling that if my compatriots cannot go then I also shouldn't go. I should always be with them.

So, the next day, we were meant to observe Ekadasi, but Srila Prabhupada actually showed me how to make a feast of Ekadasi, how to make an Ekadasi feast. Prabhupada told me to get 'kottu atta' and 'singara atta.' Singara atta is a kind of water chestnut, but it's not exactly water chestnut. It's a fruit called 'paniva', the water fruit. The inside of the fruit is white, nuttish kind of a thing, and it was pulverized. And there was another thing called 'kottu atta'. And Prabhupada showed me how to make pakoras and puris and sweet preparation out of those atta's, out of those flours, Ekadasi flours. And then Prabhupada directed me how to prepare them. He could not come to the kitchen. He just directed me how to cook them and I cooked them. And Prabhupada was very pleased when I served him.

Somehow, by Prabhupada's mercy, I developed a knack for cooking and when Prabhupada just told me how to do it, how to prepare certain preparation, I could do it and Prabhupada tasted it and he liked it. But sometimes he was also very upset with my cooking.

Like one day, Prabhupada asked me to prepare bati charchari for him. A real rich preparation with a lot of chili and a lot of ghee. That preparation Prabhupada asked me to cook for him. Actually, that preparation qualified me to become Srila Prabhupada's cook. So I prepared that preparation, but that day I did not put chili in that. I put very little chili and when I served, Srila Prabhupada was very upset with me. He told me that he himself taught me to prepare something and I forgot. How could I forget? So, not only Prabhupada chastised me that time, for next two days, whenever I went near Srila Prabhupada, Prabhupada chastised me with the note that he himself taught me something, and how could I forget.

Then finally, one day Prabhupada did not chastise me, but he asked me rather mildly that he himself taught me something, how I forgot it? And so then I told Prabhupada that: "Prabhupada, it's not that I forgot, but since your stomach was not very good, I decided not to put too much chili in it." Then Prabhupada said: "Then why didn't you tell me all this while?" So I told Prabhupada that...actually I was silent, I didn't say anything. And then Prabhupada told me: "You see, when you put a lot of ghee, you must put a lot of chili, because they counteract each other. Ghee is hot and chili is hot, but when they're

put together, then they counteract each others' richness." That was a big lesson I learned from Srila Prabhupada about cooking. When you put a lot of ghee, you must put a lot of chili, whether you like it or not. If you want to digest the ghee, you have to put a lot of chili.

In this way we were just spending our time in Hrishikesh. We used to serve Srila Prabhupada, just few of us. Mainly Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Upendra prabhu, Trivikrama Maharaja was there also. He was not directly serving Srila Prabhupada, but he was there. In direct service it was Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Upendra prabhu and myself. Few other devotees were there. Trivikrama Maharaja was there, Pramana Swami was there, Viraha Prakasa Swami was there. Then of course Pradyumna prabhu. And then there was Gauridasa. He was Tamala Krishna Maharaja's servant.

And in this way we were serving Srila Prabhupada in a very intimate atmosphere in Hrishikesh. And Prabhupada also seemed to be very relaxed. Like in the morning Prabhupada used to translate and then I used to serve him some light breakfast. And Prabhupada used to take lunch. I used to cook.

One day, Srila Prabhupada decided to teach us how to cook. He actually decided to teach me, because I could not prepare the rice properly. The rice became...Prabhupada hardly used to take rice. He used to mainly take chapatis, but that day I cooked some rice and the rice became a little soggy, a little mushy, overcooked. So, Prabhupada was little upset and then Prabhupada told me that he would show me how to cook rice.

And in Hrishikesh you get very good quality basmati rice. Actually, best quality basmati rice comes from that region. It's called 'Dehradun rice.' So I got the rice and then Prabhupada showed me to get some ghee and just rub the ghee, mix the ghee with the rice. That day, of course, Prabhupada told me just to put the ghee without washing the rice, but if we want to cook it like that, nowadays they put chemicals and other stuffs in the rice. It will be better to wash the rice first and dry it in the sun beforehand. And then put the ghee. And then put exactly double the amount of water. First you boil the water and then put the rice coated with ghee into the water. And then boil it, and when the water is almost dry, just a little water is left, you turn the fire off and cover the pot with the lid.

After I cooked the rice, Prabhupada asked me to bring it, and asked me to get a spoon. So he asked me to pick up the rice with the spoon. And he showed that every single rice is perfectly cooked, yet every single piece of rice is separate from each other. No rice is sticking to each other. Prabhupada was such an expert in everything that he did. Then he went to the kitchen with us and Tamal Krishna Maharaja decided to learn to make chapatis from Prabhupada. So he was learning to make chapatis, I was preparing the subji. So Prabhupada showed us how to make three, four preparations simultaneously. Prepare everything, cut the vegetables, and then, one after another, just put them in different pots on different fires. So that way.

And Prabhupada also showed how to make the chapatis. First you roll the chapati, and then you bake it on a pan and keep it one side for some time, let it cook, and the other side. Then you turn it around. The first side that you put on the pan, that side should be cooked little longer and then when you turn, it shouldn't cook for that long. And then you put it on the fire and it perfectly puffs up, like a football. So, as I mentioned earlier, Prabhupada used to be very particular if the chapati fluffs up properly and it is soft.

Also another thing Prabhupada pointed out, that when you make the chapati dough, you should put sufficient salt, because if the salt is not there, then chapati will taste very bland. So there should be sufficient salt and the proportion for salt also is almost one heaped spoon full of salt in one kilo of flour or vegetable. That is the proportion. For chapati you can even put a little more in flour for bread or flour chapati. When you make the dough, put one to one... maybe one and a half spoon full of salt in that. Prabhupada used to take a lot of salt. He used to like to take a lot of salt. Once, a doctor suggested that Prabhupada should not take salt, because he had some kidney problem. And Prabhupada just totally disregarded that suggestion of the doctor.

So, every day I used to cook for Srila Prabhupada. So the mornings I used to be quite busy. I used to go to the market, buy the vegetables myself and come back and cut the vegetables, prepare Srila Prabhupada's prasada. Then I used to serve Srila Prabhupada. And by that time, everybody used to be in the Ganges, swimming. And Ganges there, the current is very strong. One of our recreation was that from uphill, from the mountains, the logs used to be transported floating through the river. They used to cut trees up in the mountains and then they used to put it in the river and I think at some point they used to collect them. So this is how the logs used to be transported and we used to climb on to the log and float on the river, sitting on the log or lying on the log and paddling with our hands.

In this way, we used to spend our water sports in the Ganges. The current was very, very strong there, but it was fun, because you could float downstream. The river used to flow with very strong current and then after some time you just, after floating for some time, you just climb on to the bank and then walk back. Or sometimes we used to go upstream, we walked upstream and then get into the water and come out of the water near the house. Then all of us used to honor prasada.

So it was a very beautiful time with Srila Prabhupada in Hrishikesh.

One day all of a sudden the weather turned very, very stormy. It was storm and rain, and due to the storm, the electric poles got broken somewhere. The electricity supply got disrupted and the whole city was plunged into darkness. There was no light anywhere. There was no electricity anywhere. And Prabhupada was feeling very annoyed that there was no light, there was no electricity, and that night he could not translate. Because Prabhupada needed the electricity to translate, he needed the light and he needed the power for his Dictaphone. Because his Dictaphone was not battery operated, it was electrically operated.

And then I thought at least Prabhupada could get some light at night. So the next day I went to Haridwar, which was about, I think 8 miles, 7, 8 kilometres from Hrishikesh. But I went across the Ganges and then went to Haridwar, thinking that if I could get some lamp there. And I got a Petromax. Petromax is a kind of a light which you put kerosene or petrol and pump it, and it has a filament, it heats up the filament, and gives a very bright light. So I arranged to hire one Petromax and brought it, but by the time I came back, it was quite late and there was no boat to go across the river. I was wondering what to do. So I decided that I would go to Lakshman Jhula. Lakshman Jhula is a bridge across the Ganges, which was on the other end of the city, other end of Hrishikesh, which was probably one kilometre walk.

So I went and there was nothing. And it was stormy and there was a strong wind and the Ganges was way below the bridge. This bridge is a hanging bridge. So when I was walking with the storm, the bridge was swinging. It was quite scary actually. The bridge was swinging and I had to balance myself walking. And then I went to the other side of the river and then I had to walk through a kind of forest path to where our house was. I was walking, and for some reason, those days I also did not use shoes or 'chappals' so much. So I was walking barefoot.

There was one shop. One shopkeeper saw me. It was a small, little shop. They had some kerosene lamp burning and so that man asked me where I was going. So I told him that I was going to the...the place I think is called...anyway, I told him where I was going, which was about almost one kilometre walk through the forest path. He said that, "Look, that path is full of scorpions and snakes and you are walking barefoot!" So I said, "Well, I have to go." Then I said, "Can I buy a pair of slippers anywhere?" I thought if I was wearing slippers then the scorpions won't be able to sting. He said, "Even if you wear shoes, the scorpions can...they can be quite dangerous." And he suggested that I don't walk through that path. Also there was no light and there was no way I could actually find the path.

Anyway, I didn't have any experience, so to say, walking in that kind of roads. During the day sometimes I used to go for a walk in that path, on the other side of the river. Nowadays, of course, those places have become filled with houses and temples and 'dharmashalas' and hotels, but those days there was nothing. In last 30 years things have changed so much in India. Recently I went to Hrishikesh. I just couldn't recognize the place. The place where Prabhupada was staying, in Ganga Darshana (the name of the house), it was a most beautiful house those days, and now in the cluster of houses so many big, big things, hotels and houses have come up, that you can barely recognize that place anymore. It looks like one of the insignificant houses covered over by towering structures of hotels and 'dharmashalas'.

So then I decided not to...actually, that man persuaded me and other people also came out, there was some other people who came out, and they also said I should not walk through that path. So I again walked back. It was quite late. Quite late means, must have been about nine or nine thirty, but there, by seven o'clock everything practically comes to a standstill. So nine thirty was quite late. So, I started to walk back towards the 'ghat'

opposite to the house, which was a ferry ... there used to be a ferry 'ghat' to take one across the river. And when I came close to that place, I heard the sound of a motorboat. So I just ran and I saw that one motorboat was coming to this side of the river. And it so happened that one government official was there, went there and he had to come, he came to bring him across the river. They brought him in that boat and when I asked them to take me across, they took me across. And that's how I went back.

I went back to the house. I lit the Petromax. It did give some light, but still Prabhupada couldn't translate, because the Dictaphone was not working and Prabhupada used to translate on Dictaphones. Finally, Prabhupada decided not to translate, just go to sleep. When Prabhupada used to sleep at night, one of us used to always be with Srila Prabhupada. And my turn was from twelve to two at night. So I was attending Srila Prabhupada. It must have been around one o'clock or so and I was just sitting there. And when we were attending Srila Prabhupada, we couldn't sleep. We just had to just sit, just in case Prabhupada needed something.

So I was just sitting there and I heard Prabhupada calling me. So I went to Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada was on his bed under the mosquito net. And that time Prabhupada told me, "The time has come for me to leave the planet, leave this world. And I want to leave my body in Vrindavana. Please make arrangements to take me to Vrindavana." So that statement from Srila Prabhupada was so shocking. I didn't know what to do. I immediately ran downstairs, woke up Tamal Krishna Maharaja and told him that this was how Prabhupada was speaking. Tamal Krishna Maharaja in great anxiety and haste just came up to Srila Prabhupada and Prabhupada told him the same thing: "The time has come for me to leave this world. I want to leave my body in Vrindavana. So please make arrangements to take me to Vrindavana."

We didn't know what to do. Prabhupada wanted to go to Vrindavana, so we had to comply. That night only we packed up everything. In the morning Tamal Krishna Maharaja and I went to Haridwar, thinking that if we could arrange a train for Srila Prabhupada, we thought that we could get a first class compartment, whole compartment for Srila Prabhupada to travel, because travelling by train would be more comfortable than driving. But there was no...what to speak of a whole compartment, there was not even one first class seat available. So we, totally disheartened, we came back and then decided to travel by car to Delhi.

I remember, when we were crossing the river by boat, all the time I was just chanting 'Jaya Srila Prabhupada, jaya Srila Prabhupada, jaya Prabhupada.' Just in my mood I was just chanting. Prabhupada sort of liked it. He was looking at me and smiling. Then Prabhupada came to Delhi and he stayed there for that night. That night Prabhupada slept on the roof. Prabhupada used to like to...it was hot, during the summer time Prabhupada used to like to sleep on the roof. So Prabhupada was lying on his bed and I was just attending him, sitting nearby, chanting. So at one point Prabhupada called me, said that, "You have to lie down. Go to sleep." So I just laid on that roof, next to Srila Prabhupada's bed on the floor, on the roof. And I slept. I don't know when I woke up

Prabhupada was already up. Or maybe Prabhupada called me and woke me up, and he wanted to go down to wash and take bath.

And then we left for Vrindavana in the morning. In the meantime, Tamal Krishna Maharaja called Adikesava Swami, who was the GBC of New York at that time, and told him about Prabhupada's plan, that he wanted to go to Vrindavana to leave his body. And he asked Adikesava to inform all the temples. In this way this shocking news spread all over the world like a lightning. So the next day, Prabhupada left for Vrindavana.

We left Delhi for Vrindavana early in the morning, soon after mangala arotika. We left Delhi for Vrindavana soon after the mangala arotika. Srila Prabhupada seemed to have rested quite well at night and in the morning he looked fresh. And probably the prospect of going back to Vrindavana enlivened Srila Prabhupada. That was the first time I was going to Vrindavana and I considered myself to be extremely fortunate to have this wonderful opportunity to visit the most important spiritual place on this planet along with the Lord's pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada.

The road to Vrindavana from Delhi those days was not very nice. It was full of potholes and broken patches. And I could see that Prabhupada was feeling quite uncomfortable during the ride. Finally, we arrived near Vrindavana. When we came to the crossing of Agra Road and Chattikara Road that leads to Vrindavana, we saw a devotee just jump on his motorbike and start the engine and whiz past. Tamal Krishna Maharaja told Prabhupada that that was Gunarnava prabhu, the temple president of Vrindavana that time. He probably came earlier, waiting in that crossing to see when Srila Prabhupada would arrive and then he drove back to Vrindavana to remind everyone that Prabhupada was coming.

Those days we didn't have mobile phones or such advanced communication systems. Arrangements had to be made in that way. The drive to Vrindavana through Chattikara Road was so beautiful! All the time I was thinking that here, every speck of dust is actually desire fulfilling chintamani, the trees are desire trees, and the innumerable cows that were grazing all around were all Surabhi cows. I was imagining in my mind that if I am fortunate, then I could even see Krishna's pastimes, because His pastimes are going on continuously, nifty lila, eternally.

When we arrived in Krishna Balarama temple, I saw hundreds of devotees standing on the road, chanting the Hare Krishna Mahamantra, waiting for Srila Prabhupada. And when Srila Prabhupada arrived they became ecstatic. They got into some sort of a frenzy. Srila Prabhupada got out of the car and the devotees were chanting, filling the entire atmosphere with the most vibrant rhythm and melody.

Srila Prabhupada went to the temple room. The devotees followed. After having darshana of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Krishna Balarama and Radha Syamasundara, Srila Prabhupada walked to his room, walked to his house, his quarters just next to the temple room. And devotees also followed. Gurukula boys were chanting the kirtana. Yashodanandana Maharaja was the principal of the gurukula at that time. There were quite a few children

in the gurukula those days. And Yashodananandana Maharaja was leading them. And we all came to the temple room. Devotees were simply ecstatic that Srila Prabhupada came down all of a sudden when just one day's notice.

Then Prabhupada sat on his asana and devotees sat facing him. And Prabhupada started to explain to them, or rather Prabhupada declared why he came to Vrindavana. He announced that he came to Vrindavana to leave his body. And I could see in a flash of a moment, the ecstasy of the devotee was transformed into agony. Many devotees started to cry and a very intense heaviness prevailed the atmosphere.

Srila Prabhupada could sense that and Srila Prabhupada then started to explain, quoting the verse, dehino'smin yatha dehe [BG 2.13], that the material life is temporary. Our life in this material nature is temporary. That's the instruction Krishna has given so empathically in Bhagavad Gita. That kaumaram yauvanam jara, the body transforms from childhood to youth to old age, but these changes are the changes of the body. The soul always remains unchanging. Since the change of the body doesn't affect the soul, since in spite of the change of the body the soul remains unaffected, that is the proof that when one leaves the body, the soul will continue to exist. And dhiras tatra na muhyati: a person situated in Absolute knowledge and who has become completely composed internally, he, that pure devotee, does not become bewildered by this business of birth and death.

And Srila Prabhupada pointed out that he has come to teach us that lesson. He has come to remind us that we are eternal spirit souls and the changing of the body is never going to affect the soul. And the main business of the spirit soul is to become connected to Krishna and thus go back to the spiritual sky. In this way, in the most wonderful way, Srila Prabhupada explained that our business is not to become affected by death, but our business is to conquer death. Therefore, we should not become bewildered, or we should not become grief stricken at the prospect of death or at the prospect of somebody's death, no matter how dear that person maybe to us.

I think devotees felt a little consoled after Srila Prabhupada spoke in that way. Then, when they left, I was trying to organize. Tamal Krishna Maharaja told me to find out which room we were going to stay. The arrangement for our accommodation was made in the guesthouse, but I decided to stay in the room next to Srila Prabhupada's room. There was a small, little room behind Srila Prabhupada's darshana room and I opted for staying there. And Tamal Krishna Maharaja thought that we should have a room in the guesthouse also, and he decided to stay in the guesthouse.

So, when we were just arranging in that way, our accommodation, one devotee came and told me that Prabhupada was looking for me. So I just ran in to Srila Prabhupada's room and Srila Prabhupada was still sitting on his asana in the darshana room. Then Srila Prabhupada just told me that I should not cook for him and I should not force him to eat anything. And he said, "What is the use of eating when there is no appetite?" When Prabhupada was speaking like that, the thought flashed my mind about Parikshit Maharaja when he got to know that he had to leave his body in seven days time. I felt

that, just as Parikshit Maharaja sat on priopabation [?], he just sat down on the bank of the Ganges without eating and drinking, Srila Prabhupada also was going to do something like that. He is going to stop eating and in this way Srila Prabhupada is just going to leave his body.

And Srila Prabhupada just gave me a very strict and clear instruction that I should not force him to eat or I should not cook anything for him, kind of made me feel very, very helpless. I didn't know what to do, so I ran to Tamal Krishna Maharaja and I told him this was what Srila Prabhupada was saying. Then Tamal Krishna Maharaja also accepted that fact that when Prabhupada said not to eat I cannot possibly...when Prabhupada said that I could not cook for him, I cannot go to the kitchen and start cooking. It defies my spiritual master's instruction. And when Prabhupada said that I should not force him to eat, I cannot force him to eat. It was a feeling of total helplessness when Srila Prabhupada spoke like that and I didn't know what to do.

For two days, maybe even for three days, Prabhupada did not eat anything. Then in the meantime, the devotees started to come in from different parts of the world. They received the news. I remember Tamal Krishna Maharaja phoned Adikesava prabhu in New York, who was a GBC of New York at that time, and told him about Prabhupada's decision and asked him to instruct all the devotees worldwide that Prabhupada has gone to Vrindavana to leave his body. And within two days many, many devotees, leading devotees, came from different parts of the world. They had a meeting and in that meeting they decided that we cannot let Srila Prabhupada leave us now. Srila Prabhupada is a pure devotee of Krishna and if Srila Prabhupada wanted, then Prabhupada could stay on. If Srila Prabhupada wanted to stay on, then Krishna would fulfil his desire, Krishna would grant his wish. So they decided to request Srila Prabhupada to stay on.

So, all the devotees just came to Srila Prabhupada's room after that meeting. Kirtanananda Swami was made to be the spokesman since he was the senior most devotee. He came and he started to speak just sitting, kneeling next to Srila Prabhupada's bed. And he started to speak to Srila Prabhupada, who was lying on his bed, that we are so young in Krishna Consciousness. We are like little children, just few years old. And if Srila Prabhupada left us at that time, then we will become orphans, and what would happen to us, without the shelter and protection of our spiritual father? So while speaking like that, Kirtananda Swami broke down, started to cry. Then Srila Prabhupada just placed his arm, placed his hand at his back and started to pat him. And he told him, "Okay, if that is what you want, then I will stay on." And all the devotees in ecstasy just jumped up, saying "Jaya! Jaya Srila Prabhupada!"

It was one of the most memorable moments when Srila Prabhupada, who actually broke everyone's heart with the news that he came to Vrindavana to leave his body, now he decided to stay on. And Srila Prabhupada also told us to pray to Krishna, "Krishna, if You so desire, then let Srila Prabhupada stay with us." Then Srila Prabhupada drank some fruit juice. I used to have this fruit juice ready for Srila Prabhupada. Although Prabhupada was not eating anything, but I thought at least he may want to drink some fruit juice from time to time.

Prabhupada was not taking any fruit juice. From time to time I would change the glasses, the fruit juice I would just transfer and make some fresh juice and keep it ready next to Srila Prabhupada, on Srila Prabhupada's table. I used to keep the glass not just next to Srila Prabhupada, it was near Srila Prabhupada, because I was afraid that if Prabhupada could see that glass of fruit juice he may get annoyed with me. So I used to keep it a little away from him, just expecting or hoping that some day Prabhupada may want to drink something. So at that time Prabhupada just told, "Give me something to drink." And I immediately ran for the glass of juice. It was a glass of pomegranate juice that I made. So I just gave it to Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada seemed to be little surprised that I had that juice ready at hand and when I gave it to him, he looked at me and smiled.

I ran to the kitchen and I started to cook and Srila Prabhupada started to eat again. I don't remember whether I asked Srila Prabhupada, mostly I asked before going to the kitchen to cook that whether I could cook for him and Srila Prabhupada gave an affirmative answer. And I was very, very happy that once again I can start cooking for Srila Prabhupada and Srila Prabhupada would start to eat.

Prabhupada was not eating very much. He would just take a little bite, because, as he said himself, he didn't have any appetite. So, I just would cook and offer it to Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada would sit down and take. One day, after Srila Prabhupada took his lunch, he asked me whether I knew where Gopinatha Bazaar was. So I told Prabhupada that that was my first visit to Vrindavana, so I didn't know any place at all. But I asked Prabhupada, "Tell me what you wanted there. I can always go there and get it for you." And Prabhupada said, "No, just get somebody, local devotee, who knows this place and just call him."

But I didn't want to let this wonderful opportunity of rendering some service to Srila Prabhupada go away like that. So I insisted that, "Vrindavana is a small place and I can take a riksha and find out where Gopinatha Bazaar is." Then Srila Prabhupada said, "Okay, go to Gopinatha Bazaar and there, there is an Ayurvedic doctor called Banamali Kaviraja. So you go to him and tell him about me. He knows me and tell him that I needed him. I wanted him to treat me."

So, in the afternoon, I just took a riksha. It was not difficult to find Gopinatha Bazaar. The rikshawalla knew, he took me there. And it was also not difficult to find Banamali Kaviraja. I just asked one shopkeeper where was the clinic or office set up of Banamali Kaviraja. And he pointed out, there was a small, little shop like ASP, a small shop actually. There was a table and there was an old man sitting there. His name was Banamali Kaviraja. So, I approached him and I told him that Srila Prabhupada sent me to him to ask him to, that he wanted him to treat him. So, Banamali Kaviraja, later on I found out that he was 92 years old. He was a very old man, thin, small man, with a very bright face and bright eyes, as if his body may have aged, but his spirit was still young.

So I asked him to treat Srila Prabhupada. That's what he wanted. Then he said that he is too old to go anywhere. He just comes to his dispensary from his home and he spends a few hours there and treats some patients and then he goes back home. So I insisted that,

“Look, Prabhupada wanted you to treat him. So please come.” And I told him that, “I’ll take you in a riksha.” But he told me that the riksha, the jerk of the riksha will be too much for him. I was insisting, I was begging and I fell at his feet and I told him to come. Then finally, after a lot of persuasion, he agreed to come and I took him to Krishna Balarama temple.

He treated Srila Prabhupada. Then he told me that the medicine that he would give, that had to be freshly made. What to do about that? So I told him that, “Why don’t you stay here? We’ll arrange for you a room in the guesthouse.” But he declined. He said no, he couldn’t stay in the guesthouse. He left to go home, go back home. Then I told him “Okay, then you can teach me how to make the medicine.” So he liked that idea.

So he took me to the field and he showed me two plants. One is called ‘Punarnava’ and the other is called ‘Patharkuchi.’ He collected the leaves of those two plants and then he pulled out some salt. One was white, like regular salt. Later on, I got to know that it was actually sodium nitrate. And there was a reddish kind of a salt. I forgot...he told me the name, but I forgot the name. And it was like a rust colored salt. So he showed me how to make the juice of those leaves, Punarnava and Patharkuchi, and mix the salt and he gave the quantity. A small dose of those salts are mixed in there. And then give it to Srila Prabhupada.

I started to give that medicine and every day I used to go with Srila Prabhupada’s car to Gopinatha Bazaar and pick him up and bring him to see Srila Prabhupada. And it seemed that his treatment had a positive effect and Prabhupada’s health condition started to improve. But when Prabhupada’s health condition started to improve, then Prabhupada became restless. He started to say that he wanted to go to the West and preach. And he would even say that a general, that a soldier doesn’t lie on bed. He said it’s a risk for a soldier to lie on bed.

And Tamal Krishna Maharaja also was encouraging Prabhupada to go to the West. Of course, he was encouraging Srila Prabhupada, because he thought that this would revive Srila Prabhupada’s spirit and his health. But when I told Banamali Kaviraja that Prabhupada was actually planning to go to the West, then Banamali Kaviraja told me, “Please don’t let him go now. The medicine is working and when his body becomes a little strong, I will give him Makaradhvaja and Makaradhvaja will build him up.” But he told me that he wanted to give the Makaradhvaja in winter, because by that time Prabhupada’s health will improve and the cold of the winter also would help him retain the Makaradhvaja.

I told that to Tamal Krishna Maharaja. Tamal Krishna Maharaja said, “See, he himself wants to go. How can we stop him?” And I also left it at that. And besides that, you know, those days we had a feeling, that Srila Prabhupada is a pure devotee and Prabhupada can do anything. And this is just Prabhupada’s pastimes. So, Prabhupada is not really affected by his body and Prabhupada is not dependent upon medicine and so forth. So I also kind of gave in to that idea that Srila Prabhupada wanted to leave for the West and go preach there. And he also wanted to continue to translate the tenth Canto.

Prabhupada's plan was to go to London first, and then to New York, to Gita-Nagari, then to Los Angeles and from Los Angeles to Hawaii.

The day came when Srila Prabhupada was to leave for London and the flight was in the morning. So Prabhupada had to leave at night and drive to Delhi airport. Prabhupada was all dressed up and ready to leave, waiting for the other devotees to tell him when to leave. And I was sitting at his feet. Then Srila Prabhupada asked me, "Aren't you coming?" So I told him that no, I was not going. Prabhupada asked, "Why aren't you coming?" And I told him that I didn't have my passport with me and the other reason, of course, was: nobody actually asked me to accompany Srila Prabhupada. I just accepted that, because I thought that when Prabhupada was in India, I was serving him, it was alright, but when he goes to the West, there is no need for me to go with him.

But when Prabhupada heard that I was not coming with him, he was very concerned and that's why I just told him that I didn't have – which is also a fact – that I didn't have my passport with me at that time. So I also had to have a visa to go to America. Then Prabhupada told me that, "Okay, so you come and join me in Hawaii." Prabhupada's plan was that he would ultimately go to Hawaii and just stay there. So, he just told me that I should go and meet him in Hawaii. So I was very, very ecstatic that once again I'll be able to be with Srila Prabhupada.

Then Prabhupada drove through the night to Delhi and he was sitting, waiting for the flight, surrounded by the devotees. And when the announcement was made that the boarding, calling the passengers for boarding the aircraft, I just approached Srila Prabhupada and placed my head at his lotus feet, praying that Krishna will allow me to be with him again soon. Srila Prabhupada was also very compassionate. When I looked up I saw he was smiling. The eyes full of compassion was looking at me and then the devotees, who were going with him, just helped him to walk through the customs and immigrations and go to the aircraft.

After Srila Prabhupada left for London, I went back to Vrindavana with Bhavananda prabhu. It was so nice to see him. He came back from Mayapura before Srila Prabhupada left. Actually, he got the news that Srila Prabhupada was leaving for London. So, he came to Delhi from Mayapura just to see Srila Prabhupada, or rather see Srila Prabhupada off. And then in the morning, him and I drove to Vrindavana. That day was the day of Balarama Jayanti, Balarama's appearance day. So we spent the whole day in Vrindavana and he asked me what I was going to do. I told him that Srila Prabhupada wanted me to go to Hawaii and meet him there. So he suggested that I went back to Mayapura. And I did. After two days in Vrindavana we flew back to Calcutta and then to Mayapura. That was the first time I went back to Mayapura after my sannyasa.

Srila Prabhupada, in the meantime, gave me sannyasa. That was also another ordeal. Like, there was some objection to my taking sannyasa, but Srila Prabhupada waved all those objections and gave me sannyasa. So, devotees in Mayapura were very happy that Srila Prabhupada gave me sannyasa so quickly. So when I went back to Mayapura it was like a real homecoming. Mayapura was my home. I joined there. My spiritual life started

there. And I was initiated there by Srila Prabhupada. And I had so many relationships [there]. So naturally, I belonged to Mayapura.

When I went back, I found quite a few new devotees [who] joined. They were nice, very nice young boys from Calcutta and the nearby areas. They started to look up to me as their leader, because I spoke Bengali, I was a Bengali. And I started to train them up, I used to give them classes. And I used to spend a lot of time with them. I used to tell them about Srila Prabhupada and how wonderful it was to be with Srila Prabhupada. How wonderful it was to serve Srila Prabhupada.

In this way I stayed there for some time in Mayapura. Those days communication was not so easy. Like, especially from Mayapura to make a phone call abroad could mean really winning a battle. To get the connection was more difficult than winning the battle of Kurukshetra. Even to get through to Calcutta was very, very difficult. Like, we used to book a call in the morning...or no, we used to book a call the night before. And in the morning we used to call it the fixed time call. That was the best way to get the line through. Like the night before we'd book a call, fixed time call, at six o'clock, and at six o'clock they would ring back and connect us to the line. If we just tried to make a call to Calcutta, it was practically impossible to get through. And no one knew when the call would come through.

And calling abroad was rather unthinkable, to get through to the country of connection. So those days telephone connections were not possible. There was no internet, no computers and what to speak of phone calls and getting access calling abroad anytime. It was rather inconceivable. I mean I can think back like in just last thirty years, so much progress has been made in communication. The only mode of communication was through letters. And then also, to receive a letter in Mayapura was not a very usual thing.

So, at that time I felt that Srila Prabhupada left and I didn't know when Prabhupada would come back. And in a way I also started to wonder whether I would be able to go to Hawaii, to be with Srila Prabhupada. I applied for my passport, which expired ahead