

Srila Prabhupada Reflections – Part Two

Saturday Morning, 10 Jan 2010, South African Retreat, Drakensberg.



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Bhajan and kirtan:

1. suddha-bhakata carana-renu
bhajana-anukula
bhakata-seva parama-siddhi
prema-latikara mula

2. madhava-tithi bhakti-janani
jatane palana kori
krishna-basati basati boli
parama adare bori

3. gaura amara je-saba sthane
koralo brahmana range
se-saba stana heribo ami
pranayi-bhakata-sange

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

Nitai Gaura Haribol Haribol Haribol

Jaya Jaya Prabhupada Prabhupada Prabhupada

1. The dust of the lotus feet of the pure devotees is conducive to devotional service while service to the Vaisnavas is the supreme perfection and the root of the tender creeper of Divine love.

2. I observe with great care the holy days like Ekadasi and Janmastami, for they are the mother of devotion. As my dwelling place I choose with greatest of reverence and love the transcendental abode of Sri Krishna. All those places.. [unclear] Okay let's read from [unclear]

3. The holy days like Ekadasi and Janmastami are the mother of devotion for those devotees who respect them. Let the holy places of Krishna's pastimes be my places of worship, and bless me.

4. May I always visit all the holy places associated with the lila of Lord Caitanya and His devotees. No. Where did you get this? [Unclear]

Gaura amar. Let's go word for word or sentence by sentence.

1. suddha-bhakata carana-renu suddha bhakata means the dust of the lotus feet of the pure devotee; bhajana-anukula is conducive to devotional service; bhakata-seva parama-siddhi prema-latikara mula The service to the bhaktas, the devotees, Vaisnavas, is the supreme perfection and the root of the tender creeper of Divine Love, prema-latikara mula.

2. madhava tithi bhakti-janani jatane palana kori jatane palana kori means I carefully observe. I observe with great care the holy days like Ekadasi and Janmastami. Madhava-tithi are the days. Tithi are the days that are dear to Madhava, Krishna. madhava-tithi bhakti-janani and madhava-tithi is the Mother of devotion bhakti-janani. Janani means mother and bhakti means devotion. Mother of devotion. krishna-basati basati boli parama adare bori I accept the places where Krishna resides, as my own. As my dwelling place I choose with greatest reverence and love the transcendental abode of Sri Krishna.

3. gaura amara je-saba sthane koralo brahmana range-All the places where my Lord Gaurasundara travelled for pastimes ; se-saba stana heribo ami pranayi-bhakata-sange I will visit those places or I will go to see those places in the association of pranayi-bhakata-sange in the association of devotees who have developed their love for Krishna.

Thank you.
Hare Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada ki Jaya!

Hare Krishna.

Since yesterday we started our devotee Bhagavata classes. And who is the greatest devotee, Maha-Bhagavata for us? Srila Prabhupada.

And yesterday we discussed about understanding Srila Prabhupada in our life. Understanding the contribution of Srila Prabhupada and how we are going to derive our

most important and the supreme spiritual benefit by developing our relationship with Srila Prabhupada.

So yesterday there had been some request that I speak about my personal experiences with Srila Prabhupada. So I came across, first Srila Prabhupada's books. Actually I met the devotees in 1970 for the first time in Hamburg, Germany. Those days I visited the temple a few times but it didn't occur to me to join the temple. Rather in a way I found some devotees to be very arrogant. And aggressive, insensitive. And as a result of that I stopped going to the temple. And the temple also was not at all as impressive. It was actually an old warehouse. And in that warehouse they had on the second floor, they had the temple. In a city like Germany where everything is so posh and prim, it was not very impressive. Anyway I didn't mind that, like how the temple looked. Of course at that time, it was not much of a temple also. But there were many devotees and most of them were, many of them were, Americans. And one day I had a little disagreement with one American devotee and I stopped going to the temple. Not only I stopped going to the temple. Those days if I saw the devotees on this side of the road, I stood the other side. And they used to stand on a very strategic point. The underground station to the university was a place called Stefans Platz. And you come out of the underground station and you have to cross the road over a bridge. They used to stand on the bridge, so anybody who is actually going from the station to the university had to meet them. They used to stand there and chant. Most of the mornings they used to do that. But I used to make it a point, I used to avoid them.

And then gradually my attitude changed. I became quite disillusioned with the materialistic way of life. You see, in India generally you grew up with the idea that west is the best. The Indian education system very expertly gears up to that understanding. And so, and that's why like, this illusion was there that the West is the best, that to materially make it big is the ultimate goal of life and so on and so forth. But then going there and seeing what the whole, entire western culture was like and the degraded condition of this culture. And also, another consideration actually was that after going to the west I started to appreciate India. Because I had many friends. I developed many friends there. Most of them were from America because they used to speak English, I used to speak English. And in the early stage I didn't really have so many German friends, only those who spoke English but their number were not that many. But mostly it was Americans. And they had some very condescending attitudes towards India. I mean not that they would deliberately do that. But it would come out from time to time. Oh, India is so poverty-stricken, in India people are starving to death. And I used to very strongly defend. Naturally. Because I had never seen, at least from my point of view India was not poor. India was a very rich country. I mean the rich Indians are really rich. Their wealth surpassed those of the west in many cases. And the lifestyle also in India is much better than the west. All the western glamour, the external glamour is there but underneath it is all... is there very [unclear].

They were very close friends of mine, actually, but I used to have big arguments with them. And I used to tell them. You have never been to India, it's all bad propaganda. You think that west is the best but west is terrible. And, anyway but in course of that I began

to realise how little I knew about Indian culture. So I started to read books on India. And that led me to start to appreciate Indian culture, Indian philosophy, Indian heritage. And I could see that what a vast horizon just started to open up.

And then came a time when I felt that I had to take to spiritual life. And to take to spiritual life I had to go back to India. Because spiritual life meant finding a guru and he would guide me to my spiritual path. So thinking that, I went back to India. But I did not find, after a long search, quite an extensive search, I could not find a single guru. Or I couldn't find a single person to whom I could surrender myself. Because my first impression I'll tell you like, was something like...

I landed in Delhi and I went straight to Haridwar and then to Rishikesh. I didn't even go home. I didn't even tell them that I was coming to India. So I went straight to Rishikesh, Haridwar first and then to Rishikesh. And then I started to spend time there. And I thought that these people, these sadhus will be steeped with spiritual understanding and completely profoundly absorbed in philosophical and spiritual culture.

But I found that they smoked from morning till night, and even through the night. They were just smoking ganja. They just sit by the Ganges and smoke. And food is free because there are many dharmshalas, many chattras, many ashramas where they distribute food, free food. And, at least this is not what I expected. Because I had many friends in the west who are also smoking ganja from morning till night. I felt that my friends in the west, those hippie friends in the west were much better than these... at least they are not pretending to be spiritual. Thinking that I then left Rishikesh and I went back to Delhi. And then from Delhi I went back to Calcutta. That was a very difficult time in my life. I rejected materialistic way of life but I couldn't enter into spiritual life. I did not know how to enter into spiritual life. One thing I knew that I needed a guide. I needed somebody to lead me to spiritual life, guide me to the spiritual path.

And this was a very, very difficult phase and at some point when I almost gave up my search. In the meantime I used to go wander around, stay in different ashrams, associate with some of those spiritual personalities, but there was nothing that impressed me, that generated the confidence that they could guide me in my spiritual path and I could completely surrender myself to them.

And then when I practically gave up my search, thinking that if I have a guru then let him come and pick me up. All this while I have been searching for him. So if I really have a guru then let him pick me up because I can't find him in my search.

And it was around that time that through a friend of mine I started to visit Calcutta temple. That friend of mine also was in Germany with me. He was from Calcutta and he became a devotee. His name is Sarvabhavana Prabhu. A very close friend of mine. Sarvabhavana was, I mean when I saw him. He came to Calcutta one evening. He just knocked at my door. I heard that he became a devotee. He joined ISCKON. But I thought it was just, because I was not thinking at that time that ISKCON was the answer. I was thinking that the answer was somewhere else because the impression of ISKCON that I

got was not really that impressive or (unclear). And so one day Sarvabhavana, I saw him as a devotee, shaved hair. He had long hair. He had long hair (laughter) I had never seen him wearing dhoti (laughter). He was always, he used to wear blue jeans and jackets. So here he was. And he looked very bright and peaceful and effulgent. And naturally I was very happy to see him. And then I asked him, 'Are you serious about what you are doing?' And he said, yes he was serious. But he didn't preach to me or try to.. He didn't try to make me into a devotee as such. He used to come to me and we used just to spend some time together. Then he used to invite me to come to the temple, Calcutta temple. And Calcutta temple was not that far from my house. And many times I went by Calcutta temple but it never occurred to me to go to the temple to look for spiritual life, as such, there.

And then one evening I went to the temple with him and he was suggesting that I read some books. And he used to speak very highly of Srila Prabhupada. So I said, 'Okay, let me take a book.' And so he suggested that I should start with Bhagavad-Gita. But unfortunately there was no Bhagavad-Gita available, for some reason. So I asked him to give me any book. So they gave me the Nectar of Devotion. And, maybe they gave me Nectar of Devotion because size-wise it was close to Bhagavad-Gita (laughter). So I took The Nectar of Devotion, went home. And when I started to read, from the very first page it just occurred to me that this is what I was looking for. From the very first page it became clear. Like things that actually impressed me at that time, what actually completely blew me out, was... You see, in spiritual life generally what you search for is liberation, liberation.

And the very first page it became clear that there are, Prabhupada mentions about five kinds of liberation. [laughter]. It blew my mind! Like, I was, I didn't know what liberation was and Prabhupada was speaking about five kinds of liberation. [laughter]. Then he is talking about one liberation is negative and four others are positive. I mean, never ever I came across any description as clear as that. And then just what struck me that God is a Person, that Krishna is God. With such clarity Prabhupada explained that and I felt, 'This is it. This is what I am searching for'. And I became so engrossed with The Nectar of Devotion that I just couldn't stop reading it. While reading, I fell asleep. And in the morning when I woke up, the first thing I did, is pick up The Nectar of Devotion and start reading again. And I finished The Nectar of Devotion from cover to cover in three days. [laughter]. Because I was not doing anything. [laughter]. All I was doing was just reading. And after practically the First Wave everything started to fly above my head. Because first part, that First Wave was very clear, very easy to conceive but then this rasas and exchange of combination of rasas, and symptoms of rasas, expression of rasas. It was completely beyond me. But still I couldn't stop reading. Just like, as if completely bound to that book. I kept on reading. And while reading, at some point there is a description of practice of devotional service. And I started to imagine myself doing that. I started to imagine that I am at Vrindavan and I am doing all those things, visiting the temples, going to take bath in Yamuna. And then that friend of mine, he actually came back to India. And he was the Vice-President of Delhi. So he told me to come to Delhi with him, when I started to express my appreciation of Prabhupada's books. But he invited me to come to Delhi. I said,

‘Look, now I just want to be on my own. I do not want any other influence. Let me just be on my own’. And I asked him, ‘Where is Prabhupada?’ And he told me that Prabhupada was in America, at that time. And at the back of my mind I thought that when Prabhupada came back to India I would surrender myself to Srila Prabhupada. Because internally I already made up my mind, I’ll surrender. I’ll become a devotee, so I’ll follow this path.

And then when I heard that Prabhupada was in America, I thought I’ll wait till Prabhupada came back. And in the meantime I’ll visit all the places where Caitanya Mahaprabhu performed His pastimes, and Krishna performed His pastimes. Thinking that, the first place I went to, was Mayapur. And I arrived in the evening in Mayapur. I arrived in the evening, because on the way I stopped at a friend’s house. I was talking to him and he was trying to persuade me not to join, not to go this way. Anyway, just some last snares of Maya [laughter]. And then many other friends, actually they all got together. They were trying to convince me to lead a normal life [laughter]. But I just, I made up my mind.

So finally I arrived in Mayapur in the evening. And it was at the time of, Sandhya arati was going on when I came there. And the whole atmosphere was so beautiful. And one devotee asked me to come to the Bhagavad-Gita class. Those days Bhagavad-Gita class was not in the temple room. Those days Mayapur was very different. Mayapur had only one building, the Lotus Building. And the temple actually was on the ground floor of the Lotus Building. And upstairs there were guest rooms, there was the guesthouse and on the second floor was Srila Prabhupada’s quarters. And Jayapataka Maharaja and Bhavananda Maharaja were the Co-Directors, two sannyasis. They used to live on the roof, one side of the roof was Jayapataka Maharaja on the other side, Bhavananda Maharaja.

So the Bhagavad-Gita class used to take place on the GBC Conference room and Bhakti Raghava Maharaja gave the class. Those days he was not a sannyasi, he was Raghava Pandita Prabhu. And I was so impressed to see that a Westerner had so much knowledge. And he was quoting Sanskrit verses from Bhagavad-Gita . And to me it seemed like he knew the entire Bhagavad-Gita by heart [laughter]. Later on when I told him about that, he revealed the secret to me. He said he knew only about five or six verses [laughter] and in the Bhagavad-Gita classes he always recited those [laughter]. Actually that’s how Prabhupada taught us.

Prabhupada used to tell us that we should speak on the basis of the sastra, on the authority of the sastra. So whatever we are saying , we must substantiate it with scripture, quoting scriptures. That’s why Prabhupada wanted us to memorise the verses. Not that we had to know, to understand or memorise all the verses but some selected verses. And by quoting the verses we should elaborate the verses, and that is how we should explain. And I could see how powerful that presentation was. That’s one thing I remember Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, he was a brahmacari at that time. And so he gave the class. It was very impressive, I could see that his knowledge was so profound and I could also see that. And he was giving the class in such a way... He later on told me that he made me the target of

the class that day and I also felt that he was telling me everything. Telling me about the futility of materialistic way of life. What is there? There is nothing. Real life is here [laughter]. And simple living, high thinking, being in the Dhama in such a serene atmosphere, we can cultivate our spiritual life.

And I was very, very impressed with that class. And then whoever I spoke to, they all just kept on asking me, why don't you stay here with us. Because those days Mayapur was very remote and ISKCON was not that prominent. Rather ISKCON had many negative images, created by some dubious people. And very few people used to visit the temple those days. And some life members were made and some life members used to come once in a while. I'll tell you about that also. I was relating that incidence.

Anyway so the next morning also I attended the mangala arati, I attended the whole morning program and I attended the Srimad Bhagavatam class. And then I was speaking to, everybody I was speaking to, was asking me, requesting me, inviting me to stay there, at least try it out. So, at the back of my mind I also thought, I made up my mind to take to this path. I made up my mind to surrender to Srila Prabhupada. And all these devotees are inviting me, so why don't I just stay.

So, in the morning I went to a barber. I shaved up. And I went to the Ganga, threw away my old clothes and put on a dhoti and kurta. And the devotees were shocked. They didn't expect [laughter] me to act so fast. Actually one of our Godbrothers, Pandu Prabhu, he whom I kind of developed a very friendly relationship with, he told me that he had always been here.

Yeah, the one incidence, one life member family. No, I don't know whether they were life members actually. One family was visiting Mayapur. It was after three days of my being there. They were just newcomers. They didn't know anything. They just out of curiosity, they just came to visit Mayapur. And I was preaching to them. And the man then told me that he wanted to take initiation from me [laughter]. So I was relating that story the other day because in India initiation is not such a big thing. In ISKCON we have made it so big. And as a result of that, our growth has become stifled. If we consider, it's just a name just an expression, means the beginning. Initiation means the beginning of spiritual life and for this movement to grow properly as Caitanya Mahaprabhu wanted, to every town and village, we need many, many gurus. But unfortunately we have developed the concept that a guru has to be a superman. Therefore nobody fits the bill, or very few. Personally I feel that our movement needs many, many gurus because many people need the guidance, need the spiritual support. It is not going to be possible for just a handful of spiritual masters to execute the mission in the proper way.

Anyway, so I became involved. I joined ISKCON in this way and when it came to service, like, many devotees, I mean I developed friendship with all the devotees. And they all were, those days in Mayapur there were very few Indian devotees. Most of the devotees were actually westerners, the very few devotees were there, Shyamal Prabhu was one of them. And he was a big devotee. [Applause] There were some Indian devotees but they were from, actually they were weavers from Bangladesh. They took

shelter of ISKCON at that time. They got the shelter. But as I said not many educated people were joining the movement because those days ISKCON had, nobody really thought about ISKCON that seriously. And many people used to... There used to be a big misconception that ISKCON was a CIA set up and the devotees of ISKCON are CIA agents. [laughter]. Many times, I mean, those days we used to travel by busses and trams and trains and so many times we would be confronted by this kind of challenges that we were CIA agents. And so the service that I..

Yeah, give him a chair. Actually you should give a Vyasasana.

Syamalal Prabhu: No, no

So one devotee, one of my God-brothers was taking care of the goshala. So he encouraged me to join the goshala. So Bhavananda Maharaja was the co-GBC and he was mostly involved in Mayapura affairs. Jayapataka Maharaja in those days used to travel most of the time, travel and preach and also lead a team of book distributors. And Bhavananda Maharaja was the main person in Mayapura. So I went and told Bhavananda Maharaja, that I wanted to join the Goshala. He said, no you are not fit for Goshala. [laughter] So we just accepted that. Then there was a Gurukula in Mayapur. Mostly with local boys, nice little Bengali boys, very sweet. So Hiryangarbha was the in-charge of the, the principal of the Gurukula. His assistant was another devotee called Nadiya. And Syamalal Prabhu, you remember? I think Hiryangarbha went back to Canada? (Syamalal Prabhu)Yes.

Anyway, Hiryangarbha convinced, kind of tried to get me into the Gurukula, tried to get me to join him in Gurukula to teach the boys. But then, so I got very fired up. Those days I was thinking that serving the cows and taking care of the cows is the highest service. But then, when I was not fit for that service, then I thought that teaching in the Gurukula will be a good service. So I went and told Bhavananda. So Bhavananda said 'Oh, Gurukula is not....' [laughter] So I got really upset, I told him 'Am I good for nothing?' [laughter] 'I can't serve in the Goshala? I can't serve in the Gurukula, then what can I do? Am I not good for anything?' So then he told that, 'It's not whether you are suitable for that or not. The consideration is that I do not want you to get some sort of service where you lose your heart, get frustrated and then run away'. He was actually very nice. In the beginning Bhavananda helped me in many, many ways. And I feel very much indebted to him.

Then finally I got my service. My service was to assist Pancaratna Prabhu who was building the Long building. How many of you have gone to Mayapur? Oh? So most of you have gone to Mayapur. So you have seen the Long Building? It was in '76 and we were building the Long Building. And I became, I got the responsibility to buy all the materials, like steel, cement, stone chips. Like, stone chips used to come from Bihar by train. And trainloads of the, what's it called?, the container-loads of stone chips used to come.

[Laughter] I was just about to speak about the [unclear] [Laughter]. Okay, that's alright.

And then another service that I took up at that time. I used to love to read. So whatever spare time I had, I used to have, I used to go to Navadvipa, the other side of the Ganges. And there are many Gaudiya Maths. And there is one Gaudiya Math called Devananda Gaudiya Math. And I developed some friendship with the devotees there. And I used to go there and study in the library, read the books in the library. And in course of my reading I came across some of the old writings of Srila Prabhupada. Devananda Gaudiya Math used to bring out a magazine called Gaudiya Patrika. And for some years, like '47, '48, for some years Prabhupada was the editor of that magazine. And so I started to get those magazines and collect the writings of Srila Prabhupada from those magazines. And in this way I compiled, I collected Prabhupada's writings and started to print them as a book 'Bhagavaner Katha' in Bengali. And we also, I also started to bring out the Bengali Back to Godhead. I used to translate the articles from Back to Godhead and we got them printed. So this is how I got involved with various services.

Then we got the news that Srila Prabhupada came back to India. Prabhupada arrived in Bombay. So I went and told Bhavananda Maharaja that I wanted to go to Bombay to meet Srila Prabhupada. So he told me that, 'Look, Prabhupada's health is not good. Prabhupada is not seeing the devotees now. And besides that, in Bombay nobody knows you, so it will be very difficult for you to get to Srila Prabhupada, get the darshan of Srila Prabhupada. So you rather wait till Prabhupada comes to Mayapur and then you will have the darshan of Prabhupada. 'So I just accepted that.

And then I got the news that Prabhupada went to Kumbha-mela in Allahabad and a group of devotees were going to Kumbha-mela from Mayapur. So at that time another sannyasi, GBC was Gurukripa and he had a group of devotees called Namahatta. They used to collect in Japan. And Gurukripa with his group came back, came over to Mayapur at that time. And it was decided that Gurukripa and some devotees from Mayapur in a bus would travel to Allahabad, to Kumbha-mela. And I was also asked to join the group. So by bus, we travelled from Mayapur to Allahabad. We arrived in Allahabad at noontime.

And just as we arrived, I immediately ran to Prabhupada's quarters, which was a large area. It was walled out with corrugated tin sheets and inside that, there was a tent. Srila Prabhupada's tent. And so I asked where Prabhupada was, and I was told that Prabhupada was there. And so I ran to meet Srila Prabhupada.

On the gate of Prabhupada's entrance to the boundary area, walled out area there was a big western devotee guarding the gate. So he stopped me and he told me that Prabhupada would give darshan in the evening, so I could come in the evening. So those days I didn't realise how difficult it is to get close to Srila Prabhupada because Prabhupada had so many disciples, so many followers and everybody wanted to meet Srila Prabhupada, everybody wanted to get close to Srila Prabhupada, which I was not aware of. Therefore Prabhupada was very well guarded. Prabhupada's secretaries used to make it very difficult for getting close to Srila Prabhupada.

And so I just felt a little disappointed. So I just left. And while I was just walking, coming back this way, Bhavananda, I saw, was just coming with a basket of vegetables

that he brought from Mayapur. And he saw me. He said, 'Come. I'm going to Srila Prabhupada. So you come with me.' So I ran. He was running. I also ran after him. And, so, the guard just made way for us. I could go in. But I made a mistake. Instead of going straight into Prabhupada's tent, like Bhavananda did, when I saw Srila Prabhupada, I saw from outside the tent, Srila Prabhupada. And I just offered obeisances. And then when I tried to go in, Prabhupada's secretary was sitting at the doorway, at the entrance of the tent. And he stopped me and told me that Prabhupada was taking prasadam, so don't go in. So anyway I left.

In the evening Prabhupada gave darshan. By that time I learnt one thing, don't try to get close to Srila Prabhupada. Because Prabhupada's darshan, Prabhupada's association is very, very rare. But then I used to have the darshan. I used to go to the darshan in the evening and just listen. Didn't even ask any question to Srila Prabhupada. Hundreds of people used to come. The tent used to be completely packed. And Prabhupada used to give darshan. Many people used to come. Kumbha-mela, you get millions of people, people would come there in Kumbha-mela. And that was a very special Kumbha. This was a Purna Kumbha, Purna, purna Kumbha. Purna Kumbha takes place in every twelve years and this Kumbha was in 144 years. This Kumbha comes once in 144 years. A very special Kumbha. Many people used to come. And mostly, those who used to come, were Indians, pious Indians, well-to-do Indians. And devotees did not ask that many questions at that time. It was mostly those people who were asking questions. And Prabhupada would give the answers in such a brilliant way. Only Prabhupada could give answers like that..

And anyway, and then Prabhupada also allowed us to have Guru-puja in the morning. Sometimes Prabhupada would give classes, but most of the time Prabhupada just allowed to have the Guru-puja. His health was not very good so he used to retire. And then one morning we heard that Prabhupada was leaving Kumbha-mela and Prabhupada would go to Calcutta. So I just took it, 'Well Prabhupada is leaving Kumbha-mela.'

And then Bhavananda told me that Prabhupada was leaving that day. And he would be travelling by train at night and a group of devotees will travel with him. And one entire carriage was reserved for Srila Prabhupada and a group of devotees would travel with Srila Prabhupada. And he told me that I also had been included in the team of devotees. So I became so excited. And I could understand that it was he who must have made that arrangement for me. So the train started in the evening, at night, around nine o' clock. And soon after that everybody took rest.

In the morning I woke up, took my bath and was chanting. So Bhavananda came to me, told me and said, 'Come I'll take you to Srila Prabhupada.'. Now all these days I didn't try and go close to Srila Prabhupada and here now the time has come, the opportunity has come to meet Srila Prabhupada. Now Bhavananda is telling me that he will take me to Srila Prabhupada who was just one or two compartments away from where I was. And I had a feeling as if I was not qualified to go to Srila Prabhupada, I was not fit to go to Srila Prabhupada. So Bhavananda probably could, I mean I just sat there, although Bhavananda said that I'll take you to Srila Prabhupada. But I just sat there, without

moving and all kinds of thoughts were going on in my mind. And then, probably Bhavananda could understand. So he grabbed me by my hand, and he dragged me through the corridor. And he opened Srila Prabhupada's compartment door and pushed me in. [laughter]

And so I just fell flat, offering obeisances to Srila Prabhupada. When I got up, I saw Srila Prabhupada was looking at me and Prabhupada motioned, Prabhupada asked me to sit next to him. The first class compartment in Indian trains have two rows of seats facing each other. On the other seat Jayapataka Maharaja, Bhavananda Maharaja and Rameshwar Maharaja were sitting. Abhirama Prabhu who was the temple president of Calcutta at that time, he was sitting on the floor, and the other seat Prabhupada was sitting.

And Prabhupada asked me to sit next to him. So first I said, 'No Prabhupada, I'll rather sit on the floor.' Then Prabhupada insisted. I said, 'No.' He said 'No, you sit here'. So there was a blanket spread over the seat. So I rolled up the blanket and sat on the corner of the seat. And after some initial exchange, Prabhupada just told me to translate his books into Bengali. And that actually gave me the opportunity to be close to Srila Prabhupada. Or that gave me the opportunity to have access to Srila Prabhupada. Like everybody knew that Prabhupada gave me the responsibility of translating his books into Bengali. And those days this was a very important service. Everybody knew that translating Prabhupada's books and printing Srila Prabhupada's books was a very, very important service. And Prabhupada gave me that service himself. And so when we came to Calcutta... As it is Calcutta was my stomping ground. And Prabhupada was in Calcutta so I was with Prabhupada practically all the time. And this was our own field and Prabhupada was within our field and so we had access to Srila Prabhupada.

One evening, Prabhupada only stayed in Calcutta only three or four days, I don't exactly remember, maybe three days. One evening, Prabhupada gave darshan. Every evening Prabhupada used to give darshan to people. A lot of people used to come to meet Srila Prabhupada. And, so then the aratika started. So Prabhupada told everybody to go to the aratika. So everybody left. I also left. And I was in the arati. But I was thinking that arati I can attend every evening but to get to see Srila Prabhupada, to be with Srila Prabhupada is a rare occasion. So I thought let me just go back to Srila Prabhupada. So I went back to Srila Prabhupada. I opened the door. I saw that Prabhupada was counting the money [laughs] people that gave dakshina after having darshan of Srila Prabhupada. They gave dakshina. And Prabhupada was counting that money that he received. So Prabhupada looked up and said, 'What happened?' So I said, 'Prabhupada I thought that I would just come to be with you.' Prabhupada said, 'Sit down.' And when I saw Prabhupada counting the money, it was kind of a shock to me, [laughter] because I never imagined. It was something not fitting to my, the image that I had of Prabhupada in my mind, [laughter], Prabhupada counting, [laughter]. But then I immediately brushed that thought aside quickly. That whatever Prabhupada does, is perfect. And Prabhupada couldn't care less, he just kept on counting [laughter]. And then Prabhupada put them in a stack, opened his drawer, kept it in his drawer.

And then Prabhupada asked me, 'So? Do you want to say something?' Then I just blurted out, 'Srila Prabhupada, will you please give me initiation.' Because I had at the back of my mind, I had some fear. I had some anxiety, because I heard that there were many devotees who had been waiting for years together and Prabhupada didn't give them initiation. And I thought that if that happened to me, if Prabhupada said that I was not fit enough. But Prabhupada... And so that's why I was with a heavy heart, with a lot of anxiety. I asked Srila Prabhupada whether he would give me initiation. And Prabhupada immediately said, 'Yes, sure. I'll give you initiation. He said during the Gaura Purnima festival at Mayapur, I'll give you initiation.'

Then from Calcutta Srila Prabhupada went to Buvaneshwar. Gour Govinda Maharaja got a piece of land there. And he invited Srila Prabhupada to come lay the foundation stone of the temple. I could have gone to Buvaneshwar because I was already considered, kind of, because again, because of Bhavananda Maharaja's mercy, like I was almost in the team, in Prabhupada's team already. But I was printing a book, called (Bhagavaner Katha) books that the articles that I had collected from back from Gaudiya Patrika. I was printing a book. So I thought that I would rather print the book and offer it to Srila Prabhupada when he came back. And thinking that, I stayed back. Then after about two weeks Srila Prabhupada came back to Mayapur. And then I met again.

Then one day Srila Prabhupada sent for me. And he gave me a stack of Bengali letters. And he asked me to reply them. Reply them in the sense, Prabhupada wanted me to read those letters out loud and then Prabhupada would give me the points and then I would make a draft of the reply. And then I would read the draft to Srila Prabhupada. And then when after some corrections I would write the final on Prabhupada's letterhead and then Prabhupada used to sign those letters. So, many letters came in Bengali, so Prabhupada wanted me to answer them. So when I finished the Bengali stack, Srila Prabhupada gave me a Hindi stack, a stack of Hindi letters. And he wanted me to reply them. So, at that time Srila Prabhupada told me, one day that he was appointing me as a Secretary for Indian affairs. And he asked, he called Tamal Krishna Maharaja, who was Prabhupada's secretary at that time. So he told Tamal Krishna Maharaj about my appointment. And he asked Tamal Krishna Maharaja that I would move into his room, Prabhupada's secretary's room.

So that gave me another wonderful opportunity to be with Tamal Krishna Maharaja in the same room. And for about ten months, wherever we went, we always stayed in the same room. And Tamal Krishna Maharaja was also so fond of me, being with me, that whenever he came to Mayapur, he used to stay in my room. And, so this is how my service to Srila Prabhupada started.

In the mean time the initiation took place during the Gaura Purnima festival. And Prabhupada, and now Prabhupada told me that he would give me first and second initiation together. So I got initiation. But soon after, and I was with Prabhupada, I was taking care of the correspondence in Indian languages, Bengali and Hindi.

And everyday, practically I used to go and read out to Prabhupada about the translations, my translations. And Prabhupada used to correct me. Sometimes Prabhupada used to appreciate my translations. And this way I was, I was staying practically next to Srila Prabhupada's room. Actually Prabhupada's secretary's room was next to Prabhupada's room. But, those days there was no computer. The typing used to be done with a khat khat typewriter [laughter]. And Prabhupada used to feel very disturbed with the sound of typing. So therefore Prabhupada shifted his secretary's room to the one after that. And next to Prabhupada was Prabhupada's servant's room. And Hari Sauri Prabhu was Prabhupada's servant at that time. And next to that was Tamal Krishna Maharaja and I were staying. And those were such wonderful days.

Then one day we got to know that Prabhupada was going to leave for Bombay. So it was, I was naturally thinking that I also would travel. But Bhavananda Maharaja told me that I have so much service in Mayapur. And if I left, that service would be affected. Because, there was not so many Indian devotees in Mayapur those days. And the service that I was doing, it would be difficult for others to take over. So he told me and I also felt that, 'Yes, if he is requesting me. After all he had done so much for me. It's because of him that I could come so close to Srila Prabhupada.' So when he said, I accepted it. But I was feeling heavy in my heart, that I would lose the opportunity of being with Srila Prabhupada. But at the same time I couldn't say no to him. So the day before or two days before Srila Prabhupada was leaving, Prabhupada asked me whether I was coming. And in a way, I also was waiting for such an opportunity [laughter]. So, in a rather innocent way I told Prabhupada, 'Prabhupada, Bhavananda Maharaja asked me to stay back in Mayapur. And he told me that service in separation is better than service in association. Then Prabhupada said, 'Yes that's true, but I think when your spiritual master wants you to come with him, then you should come. [laughter] So I was just waiting [laughter] for such a statement from Srila Prabhupada [laughter]. I ran to Bhavananda [laughter] and I told him that Prabhupada wanted me to go to Bombay. He said, 'Well, if Prabhupada wants, then you have to go.' And then I told him that Prabhupada also told me that he should also pay for my fair.' [laughter]. So that is how I got this opportunity to be with Srila Prabhupada. Although I came late to the movement, but I was very fortunate to be with Srila Prabhupada practically twenty-four hours a day. Then we went to Bombay.

Today I'll stop now. So tomorrow I'll continue.

Thank you very much.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada !

Applause from devotees.

I'm not taking any questions today. It's already nine o' clock. We have another session but tomorrow, let us see. Tomorrow I will try to speak again. How many of you have some questions or may have some questions. Okay, Lokabandhu Prabhu, then. Yeah, I'll take your question. These two questions I'll take now.

Lokabandhu Prabhu?

Lokabandhu Prabhu: Maharaja, it seems your knowledge of Bengali, and your early education in Bengali has equipped you admirably for translation of Srila Prabhupada's works. The question is about, we have this wonderful facility in ISKCON today. Such an excellent facility for progress in spiritual life. The question is actually for the young ones, like Jivani and Devaki and others, to equip the young so that they can make full use of this facility.

His Holiness Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Yes, yes, very true.

Lokabandhu Prabhu: Can't we motivate and encourage them? Especially we have the materialistic challenges and the schools system. And yet the real culture, the greatness of the Vaisnava culture is so important that we should give top priority to it.

His Holiness Bhakti Caru Maharaj: Well, generally I don't let my secrets out, [laughter] I'll speak to you, I'll...

Since you brought it up, I'll reveal one secret, that I'm working on. You see, yesterday and day before yesterday, I briefly mentioned about the importance of youth involvement and what a loss it is we are losing our youth. They, we are losing our youth to the corporate world. And so with that in mind I am realising we have to have our business as such, where our youth can be gainfully employed. The point is that if somebody is employing somebody by paying X amount of money. He's obviously making X + Y out of him. Now if we can employ them in a similar way, paying X amount of money, even if he can't make Y amount of profit, but at least if we can make half-Y, still it is a gain for our movement, that ISKCON also needs a financial base. And the reality I have seen, is that when we employ our devotees, then we don't pay them X, they are happy with half-X and they make twice Y profit. So anyway. So I think that is the way we have to go. ISKCON must engage them in a way which is befitting their aspirations and expectations. Like, most of our youth. Like as you have mentioned. After they have completed their studies and all, they are not just going to become a full time devotee. And even if they become a full time devotee what will they do in the temple? Wash pots and clean the floors? Like, the world has changed. You know, like, and going out, And another thing is, that, you know, our preaching, the preaching scenario of this world has changed. I mean, yes, we need Harinam, we need book distribution, we need door to door preaching. We need all of that but at the same time we have to open up another horizon. And that is the corporate world. And there, a whole lot of people are there. And we CAN motivate them, we can influence them. And specially our children when they finish their education. Like that's the problem we had with our Gurukuli's. They completed their education but they didn't have any appointment, any opportunities to be engaged. Our society was not ready. And we didn't really provide them any opportunities to become engaged within the movement, nor did we equip them to become, to find a place in the outside world. That's why today most of our youth has turned against ISKCON. So we have to be proactive. We have to see how we can properly engage them when they reach that age when they need some sort of positive and gainful employment.

Whether within ISKCON or whether outside ISKCON, we have to create that opportunity. That's one side of it. The other side of it, is that a spiritual organisation cannot thrive just depending on donations in today's world. We have to have our own financial base. You see, when you get donations, Just a simple point. When somebody runs his own business, he makes profits in the region of millions. But when he gives a donation, it will be a few thousand. But if you are running the business, then you can make that profit that goes into running the business. And that whole amount will come to ISKCON. Anyway these are just some thoughts. Since you asked, I wanted to share them with you.

Yes, last question? Bharata?

Bharata Prabhu: Guru Maharaj, when you joined the temple, how did your family take it and how did [unclear]

His Holiness Bhakti Caru Maharaja: My father had a heart attack [laughter]. But I told him. I actually told him. I told him that, 'Look, materially, you can't really expect much out of me [laughter]. My other brother was taking care of him. Like he didn't need much. My other brother was in America I mean he is well situated. I mean he was well situated. Now he is retired. it was a long time ago. And I told him that, 'Look, you have one son who is taking care of you, who can take care of you. And you are quite [unclear], you don't really need me. And what I am doing, I may not be able to help you now but in the next life, [laughter] what I'm doing, he is going to get benefit of it. And er, he was actually serious. I was serious when I told him. And he also took it seriously and then he understood. He didn't stop me. He actually let me go.

Krishna Caran was reminding me of one incident that my first darshan of Srila Prabhupada. Actually it was, I got The Nectar of Devotion. The first night I read the book. The second night, the next night, I had a dream of Srila Prabhupada. Still now, I don't know whether it was dream or real. I saw Srila Prabhupada sitting on a throne. Those days I did not know what a vyasasana was. Because sadhus in India generally don't sit on an elaborate seat. They sit on a simple seat. But it seemed like Prabhupada was sitting on a throne. There was a brilliant light around Srila Prabhupada. And just by the sight of Srila Prabhupada made me realise that here is my spiritual master for whom I had been waiting for. I didn't ask any question. I didn't say anything. I just offered obeisances to Srila Prabhupada. And my heart was filled with a feeling that I cannot describe in words.

Hare Krishna.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada!