# ŚRI VYASA-PŪJA

#### Śrī Vyāsa-Pūjā August 23, 2011

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# ŚRĪ VYĀSA-PŪJĀ

#### THE MOST BLESSED EVENT

The appearance day of our beloved Spiritual Master

His Divine Grace Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahamsa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad **A.C.** Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



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## Introduction

It's remarkable, really, the number and diversity of people whose hearts Śrīla Prabhupāda has transformed. It started with his "American boys and girls" well over forty years ago, and his influence has relentlessly spread to more and more people in every corner of the globe. Anyone who reads one of his books (now available in a large portion of the world's languages), hears him or one of his genuine representatives speak (directly or on electronic media), and chants Hare Kṛṣṇa will have the seed of the *bhakti* creeper planted in his or her heart and begin watering it. How quickly and robustly that creeper grows depends on each individual's sincerity. The voices that speak through this Vyāsa-pūjā book belong to a few of the many sincere and fortunate souls for whom that creeper has grown into a flourishing plant comprising attraction to Śrī Krsna and faith in the scriptures Śrīla Prabhupāda so painstakingly translated, faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, faith in his genuine representatives, and faith in the process of *bhakti*.

Here are some highlights from this year's book.

Bhakti Chāru Swami remembers three instructions Śrīla Prabhupāda gave to him—and to all his followers—by which we can stay close to Prabhupāda through serving his institution, ISKCON:

1. "No matter what happens, don't leave ISKCON."

2. "Your love for me will be shown by how you cooperate with each other [to further the mission of ISKCON]."

3. "Always consider the GBC the ultimate managing authority of ISKCON [and follow that authority.]"

Girirāj Swami gives us a riveting account of some of the services rendered by Mr. P.L. Sethi, a staunch devotee and friend of Śrīla Prabhupāda's who passed away last February. Here's an excerpt describing how in 1973 Mr. Sethi provided essential help in rebuilding the provisional temple of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsabihārī on the land in Juhu, Bombay, after it had been demolished at the instigation of the former owner's wife. The devotees only had one weekend to rebuild the temple; otherwise they would be faced with an injunction forbidding them to rebuild:

In those days it was difficult to get cement, and a little hard to get bricks. The supply was less than the demand. And the government had imposed "cement control": to purchase cement legally, one had to procure a government-approved quota. But Mr. Sethi brought cement and bricks from his own construction sites so we could rebuild the temple over the weekend. While the work was going on, Mr. Mhatre, the local municipal counselor, who was in cahoots with Mrs. Nair [wife of the former owner], came to the site and demanded, "Stop the construction immediately."

Mr. Sethi replied, "No. Why should we stop?"

Mr. Mhatre threatened, "Well, you can build it up, but I will come in the night with fifty *gundas* [hooligans] and break it down."

Mr. Sethi turned to his son, who was by his side, and said, "Brij Mohan, bring my revolver and my rifle." Then Mr. Sethi said to Mhatre, "Don't bring fifty *gundas*. Bring a hundred. Bring two hundred. I have two hundred and fifty cartridges." He was that staunch. Then he and his son— Mr. Sethi with rifle in hand, his son with revolver—stayed up all night, in the pouring rain, to complete and protect the project. And no one came to disturb the work.

More poetry than ever this year. From the Gainesville offering, written by Kalakantha Prabhu, a few lines of a poem describing things Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us:

To decorate the Deity infuses one with bliss. A daily round of *sādhana* distills one's consciousness. To cook for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure makes a drudgery a joy, for serving Kṛṣṇa far surpasses merging in a void.

A simple flower, sweetly offered, makes Lord Kṛṣṇa pleased. Do not delay to douse a fire, debt, or some disease. And should the Lord provide a pure devotee as your guide, the truths you'll know, and debt you'll owe, cannot be quantified.

From Rāmāi Swami's offering:

Listen, all, and my tongue shall tell In what great person great virtues dwell. It is Prabhupāda, with such rare grace, Liberator of the human race.

From the offering of the North American offices of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, written by Dravida Dāsa:

As years go by and books go out, We see what life is all about: To serve your mission, and our Lord's, By spreading wide your sacred words.

As well, you want us all to strive To let those words direct our lives. This safest path will lead us Home, No more in Māyā's realm to roam.

Finally, we quote from Chayā Devī Dāsī's offering, written on behalf of the International Society for Cow Protection. Chayā and her husband Balabhadra Dāsa have been protecting cows and teaching others the importance and methods of doing so for decades. In her offering she reflects on the pain and the lessons learned when beloved cows sicken and die. Her prayer to Śrīla Prabhupāda:

Please bless the cowherds worldwide, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Protect them from fatigue and weariness in the face of disease and death. Give them deep love and understanding in such times. Give them joy in times of birthing and youthful calf frolicking. Give them a deep sense of accomplishment and a plentiful harvest from plowing with their oxen. Gift them with rising in the early morning to see their cows basking in the morning sun as the mist leaves the hillsides. Bless them with the peace of the simple life of the humble cowherd unaffected by any desire for adoration, name, or fame. In such a life there is great peace and closeness to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and your most dear cowherd boy, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Dravida Dāsa

Vyāsa-pūjā Book Editor

## The Meaning of Vyāsa-pūjā

To serve and not to be served is the constitutional position of the *jīva*, the living entity. Forgetting his real eternal nature, the conditioned soul becomes the false master of the material world. He plays the role of God and tries to enjoy his senses in every way imaginable and unimaginable. Though he tries very hard to be the supreme enjoyer, in reality the conditioned soul becomes a completely bound slave of Māyā. Ironically, the more one strives for lordship, freedom, and pleasure, the more he increases his bondage of servitude.

For a fortunate soul, the spiritual master, Śrī Guru, appears in his life to remove the darkness of misconception and establish him in the light of eternal truth. Śrī Guru proclaims, "O lost soul! Verily, my dear friend, you are actually the eternal servant of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa (*jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa*)." A new life begins. Joy awakens, and the highest divine prospect descends to lighten the burden of a million previous births.

But who is the spiritual master? What is his relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the compiler of all Vedic thought? And lastly, why and how is Śrī Guru worshiped in a ceremony commonly known as Vyāsa-pūjā? With my head at the feet of my beloved Gurudeva, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I beg for his divine grace as I attempt to explain the meaning of Vyāsa-pūjā.

#### Who Needs a Guru?

Since the *Vedas* contain all the knowledge and mantras one needs to achieve both material happiness and spiritual perfection, why can't one just study the *Vedas* by himself, without a spiritual master, and attain all material and spiritual perfection? Besides, it is said that the Supreme Lord is within everyone; so why does one need a spiritual guide to realize God?

The sacred books alone are not the revelation. The *ācāryas*, spiritual teachers, are a necessary part of revelation. The Vedic texts preserve the spoken words of the Supreme Lord and various liberated saints known as *rşis*. But alone, the books cannot speak personally to us. God is sound, and He must be heard. Therefore, the Vedic literature is called *śruti*, which means "that which is heard or communicated orally from the beginning; sacred knowledge orally transmitted by the spiritual teachers from generation to generation." The word *śruti* also means the "ear organ" or "the power of hearing."

The transcendental sound spoken by a God-realized soul, the spiritual master, to the surrendered disciple disposed to rendering unconditional service to Śrī Guru, is not the same as the transcendental sound written in or read in the sacred scriptures, the *Vedas*. The personal factor, Śrī Guru, provides the essential link connecting the covered consciousness of the disciple with the Absolute Truth. The Supreme Lord engages select persons to act as His delegated, empowered representatives, the spiritual masters, who act in this world to dispel the ignorance eclipsing the original, pure, and brilliant consciousness of the conditioned souls.

By His own will the Absolute Truth appears on the lips of a surrendered devotee. But the Absolute Truth, which is fully experienced as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental autocrat, forever reserves the right of not revealing Himself to the mundane senses of the conditioned soul attached to material sense enjoyment. Personal submission to the living pure devotee is the key to spiritual perfection. The spiritual preceptor is the empowered representative of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, who is none other than Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself.

Mundane scientists research the phenomenal world to make discoveries to improve the quality of human life. Similarly, one may argue that "Since God is within everyone, why can't a spiritual seeker independently research within himself, and thereby gain transcendental knowledge and realization of God? Why does one need a spiritual master?" Such statements reveal one's ignorance about the essential nature of the Absolute Truth and transcendental knowledge of Him.

In summary, the Absolute Truth is the fully conscious Supreme Absolute Person. In other words,



God is the supremely conscious individual. Connection with the Absolute Truth depends solely on His sweet will, which God expresses by sending his agent, the spiritual master, when one is qualified with transcendental faith and surrender.

#### The Identity and Function of Srī Guru

In the form of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has revealed the hidden meaning of the *Vedas* to the ignorant conditioned souls of Kali-yuga by compiling *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the sunlike spotless *Purāṇa*. While in a state of *samādhi*, Vyāsadeva realized the esoteric teachings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* by the mercy of his spiritual master, Śrī Nārada Muni, who learned the spiritual science from Lord Brahmā. Vyāsadeva is the greatest *ācārya* because he was directly empowered by the Supreme Lord to make the Vedic wisdom available in the present age. Without Vyāsadeva we would be nowhere, wallowing in the mud of ignorance, trapped in the darkness and illusion of material sense gratification.

Śrīla Vyāsadeva is the divine propagator, a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, in whom the divine power of transcendental knowledge has been infused. Vyāsadeva has been directly empowered by the Absolute Truth to preach the word of God. Śrī Guru, the spiritual master, is the living spokesman, the contemporary representative, of Vyāsadeva. The enlightened spiritual discourses given by the bona fide guru are based on his constant and uninterrupted realizations of the activities of the Supreme Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as described by Śrīla Vyāsadeva in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The true guru is the enlightened guide, the merciful master, the messiah of harmony. He not only teaches the science of God, but he demonstrates practically by his pure actions that he is the dearest servitor of the Supreme Lord. Śrī Guru thinks, speaks, and acts only in terms of his eternal relationship with the Absolute Truth. The *sad-guru* has perfect knowledge of the personal Godhead, and he constantly associates with the Lord in a most direct and intimate bond of divine love.

The divine guide is fully competent to dispel the darkness of ignorance and remove all doubts from his disciple. He is capable of delivering his disciple to the beautiful lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual sky. Śrī Guru has the power, granted by God, to establish the bewildered conditioned soul in his eternal position as a loving servitor of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Guru manifests in two forms: the quiet director, or Paramātmā within the heart, and the external preceptor, who teaches us by realized knowledge and spotless behavior. Both *gurus* help bewildered souls reach spiritual perfection. However, in the conditioned state one cannot hear the wise counsel of the inner guide. Therefore, the Paramātmā's external manifestation, Śrī Guru, is our only hope.

*Ācāryas* say the spiritual master is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *kṛpā-śakti-mūrti*, the very form of Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy and love, freely accessible to the suffering souls. Śrī Guru is the spiritual counterpart of the famous ATM machines, which leading banks scatter around major cities to offer "Any Time Money" to eager customers thirsty for wealth. Similarly, to anyone, at any time and any place, the spiritual master can give the true wealth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal loving service. Therefore, Śrī Guru is a Kṛṣṇa conscious, walking ATM machine offering "Any Time Mercy." The mercy of Śrī Guru is freely available to all who are willing to accept it. Being completely surrendered to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Guru is always engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service, and he helps others to do the same.

#### The First Vyāsa-pūjā Celebration

Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura describes how Caitanya Mahāprabhu instituted the first Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony in 1509 A.D. through Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, in Śrīvāsa Aṅgana, Māyāpur:

Śrīvāsa Paņdita, the head priest for the function, gave Lord Nityānanda a flower garland to offer to a painting of Vyāsadeva. Holding the garland in His beautiful lotus hand, Nityānanda Prabhu hesitated and began glancing here and there as if He was looking for someone. Then to everyone's surprise, Nityānanda offered the garland to Śrī Caitanyadeva instead. At that moment, Lord Caitanya immediately manifested His six-armed form (*sad-bhuja*). [*Caitanya Bhāgavata, Madhya-khanda*, Chapter 5] Thus Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu completed the Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony by offering a garland to that personality from whom everything emanates and whose empowered incarnation is Śrī Vyāsadeva. By this act, Nityānanda Prabhu established the real meaning of Vyāsa-pūjā by worshiping the Supreme Lord Himself in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Gaurānga is the guru of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. This is the basis of the worship performed by Lord Nityānanda. Therefore, the worship of Vyāsadeva is actually the worship of Lord Gaurānga in the form of the present *ācārya*.

Although Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva are identical with Śrī Caitanyadeva and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Their activities are different. Nitāi and Gaura are the supreme masters, the Supreme Lords, yet They play the role of devotees. The dual Lords act as devotees to teach Their servants the art of devotional service. Thus, in this pastime from *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, one Lord, Nityānanda, is teaching us that the ultimate recipient of the worship of Vyāsadeva, or the spiritual master, is the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyadeva.

Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Lord Balarāma, is the ultimate source of the spiritual function of the *ācārya*. In the scriptures, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava that the *ācārya* is the manifestation of Himself:

#### ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvanmanyeta karhicit na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruķ

"One should know the  $\bar{a}c\bar{a}rya$  as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.17.27)

If Srī Guru is not regarded as identical with the Supreme Lord, the worship of the *ācārya* is not properly performed, and the said worshiper will not realize the true purport of the *Vedas*.

### yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ

"Only unto that great soul who has implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master is the real import of Vedic knowledge revealed." (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23)

Lord Balarāma is nondifferent from Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. However, Lord Nityānanda plays a unique role in that He is the connecting link between all conditioned souls and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is nondifferent from Rādhā-Govinda. The conditioned souls have no access to Lord Balarāma in the spiritual world, but here in the material world everyone can access the mercy of Lord Nityānanda. Śrī Guru is empowered by Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu to save the fallen souls from the clutches of Māyā. As Nityānanda Prabhu's delegated authority, the spiritual master liberates the conditioned souls from the material world by engaging them in the direct service of Lord Nityānanda. The story of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's approaching Śrī Caitanya shows the necessity of first receiving the mercy of Śrī Guru and Lord Nityānanda before one can attain the service of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyadeva.

#### Vyāsa-pūjā Begins with Obeisances

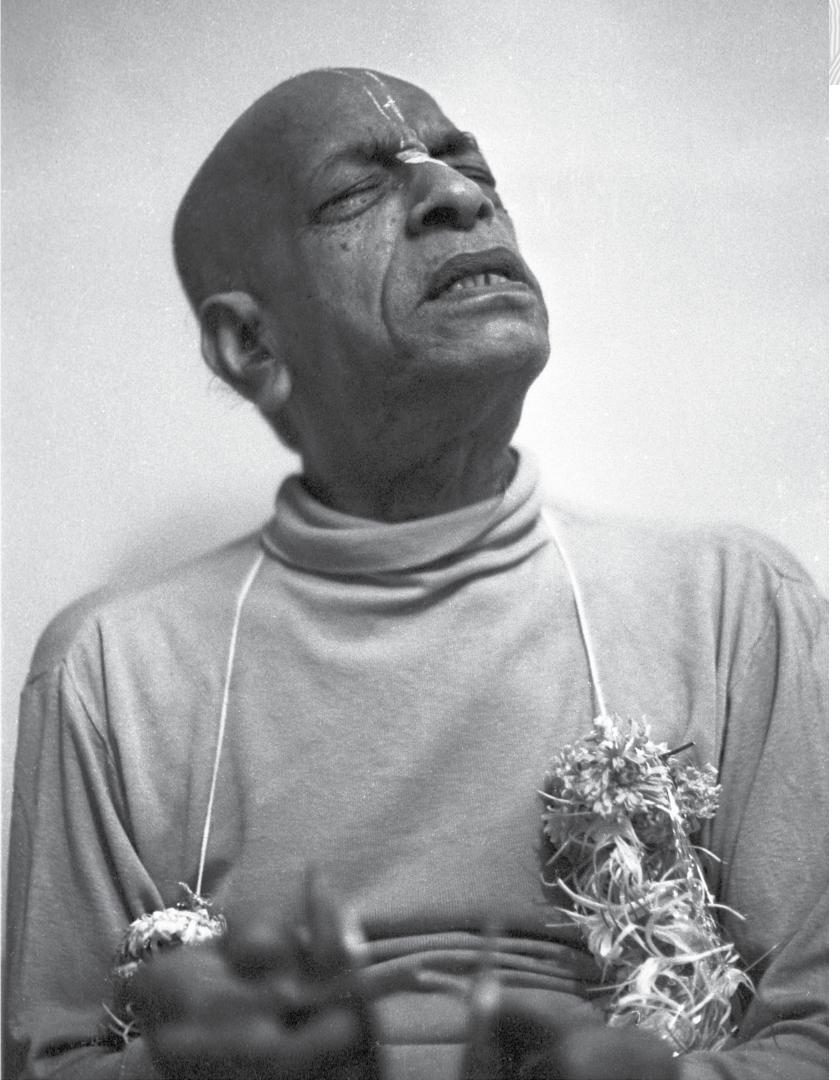
In *Bhajana Rahasya*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mentions a *pāñcarātrika-mantra*, *aim gurudevāya namaḥ*, as the seed mantra for worshiping the spiritual master. The word *namaḥ* is also uttered by all disciples whenever they offer respects unto the lotus feet of their respective spiritual masters. But exactly what does the word *namaḥ* mean?

In general, *namah* means "I am offering obeisances unto the lotus feet of my beloved Gurudeva." On a deeper level, *namah* means to submit one's self with the meditation "I am giving up my worldly vanity and false ego. I renounce the false sense of being the supreme controller and enjoyer." The word *namah* means saying no to false ego, killing the false identity, and fully surrendering to the mastership and control of God standing before you as Śrī Guru.

Renunciation of one's pride is actually the first object to be offered in one's worship of Srī Guru. Therefore, the act of offering obeisances to the spiritual master means to give up the pride of thinking oneself the doer, possessor, and enjoyer of anything in this world. The real Vyāsa-pūjā begins here. The moment the disciple realizes this and acts solely for the pleasure of Śrī Guru, he engages in the true worship and eternal service of his spiritual master.

I pray that someday I can fall at Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet, and with the full backing of my dedicated heart, utter this phrase: "Dearest Gurudeva, please accept my most respectful and humble obeisances."

Mahānidhi Swami



## Prayer unto the Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa

On September 13, 1965, four days before he arrived in Boston, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda wrote this poem on board the ship *Jaladuta*.

(refrain) kṛṣṇa taba puṇya habe bhāi e-puṇya koribe jabe rādhārāṇī khusī habe dhruva ati boli tomā tāi

I emphatically say to you, O brothers, you will obtain your good fortune from the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa only when Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī becomes pleased with you.

(1) śrī-siddhānta saraswatī śacī-suta priya ati kṛṣṇa-sebāya jāra tula nāi sei se mohānta-guru jagater madhe uru kṛṣṇa-bhakti dey ṭhāi ṭhāi

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who is very dear to Lord Gaurāṅga, the son of mother Śacī, is unparalleled in his service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is that great saintly spiritual master who bestows intense devotion to Kṛṣṇa at different places throughout the world.

(2) tāra icchā balavān pāścātyete ṭhān ṭhān hoy jāte gaurāṅger nām pṛthivīte nagarādi āsamudra nada nadī sakalei loy kṛṣṇa nā

By his strong desire, the holy name of Lord Gaurāṅga will spread throughout all the countries of the Western world. In all the cities, towns, and villages on the earth, from all the oceans, seas, rivers, and streams, everyone will chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.

(3)

tāhale ānanda hoy tabe hoy digvijay caitanyer kṛpā atiśay māyā duṣṭa jata duḥkhī jagate sabāi sukhī vaiṣṇaver icchā pūrṇa hoy

As the vast mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu conquers all directions, a flood of transcendental ecstasy will certainly cover the land. When all the sinful, miserable living entities become happy, the Vaiṣṇavas' desire is then fulfilled.

(4)

se kārja je koribāre ājñā jadi dilo more jogya nahi an dīna hīna tāi se tomāra kŗpā māgitechi anurūpā āji numi sabār pravīņa

Although my Guru Mahārāja ordered me to accomplish this mission, I am not worthy or fit to do

it. I am very fallen and insignificant. Therefore, O Lord, now I am begging for Your mercy so that I may become worthy, for You are the wisest and most experienced of all.

(5) tomāra se śakti pele guru-sebāya bastu mile jībana sārthak jadi hoy sei se sevā pāile tāhale sukhī hale taba saṅga bhāgyate miloy

If You bestow Your power, by serving the spiritual master one attains the Absolute Truth-one's life becomes successful. If that service is obtained, then one becomes happy and gets Your association due to good fortune.

(6)

evam janam nipatitam prabhavāhikūpe kāmābhikāmam anu yaḥ prapatan prasangāt kṛtvātmasāt surarṣiṇā bhagavan grhītaḥ so 'ham katham nu visrje tava bhṛtya-sevām

My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service? (Prahlāda Mahārāja to Lord Nṛsimhadeva, Bhāg. 7.9.28)

> (7) tumi mor cira sāthī bhuliyā māyār lāthi khāiyāchi janma-janmāntare āji punaḥ e sujoga jadi hoy jogāyoga tabe pāri tuhe milibāre

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are my eternal companion. Forgetting You, I have suffered the kicks of māyā birth after birth. If today the chance to meet You occurs again, then I will surely be able to rejoin You.

(8) tomāra milane bhāi ābār se sukha pāi gocārane ghuri din bhor kata bane chuṭāchuṭi bane khāi luṭāpuṭi sei din kabe habe mor

O dear friend, in Your company I will experience great joy once again. In the early morning I will wander about the cowherd pastures and fields. Running and frolicking in the many forests of Vraja, I will roll on the ground in spiritual ecstasy. Oh when will that day be mine?

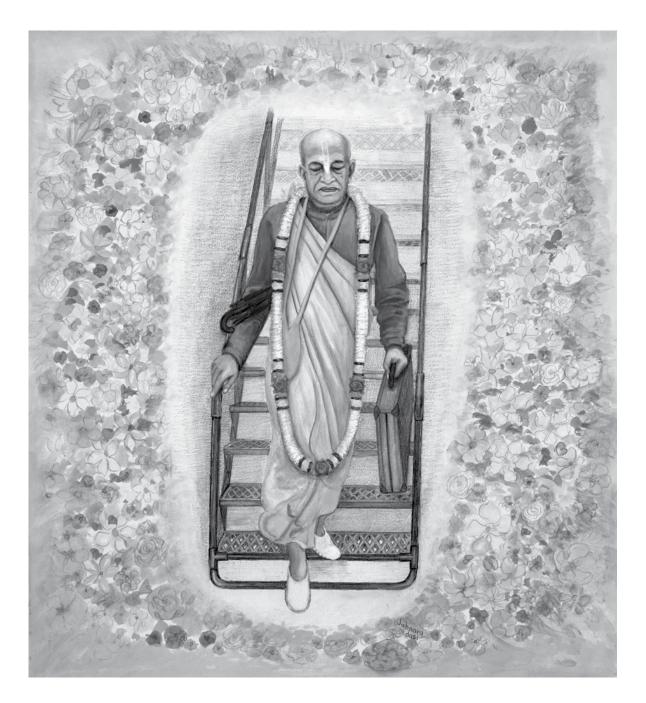
(9) āji se subidhāne tomāra smaraņa bhela baro āśā ḍākilām tāi āmi tomāra nitya-dāsa tāi kori eta āśa tumi binā anya gati nāi

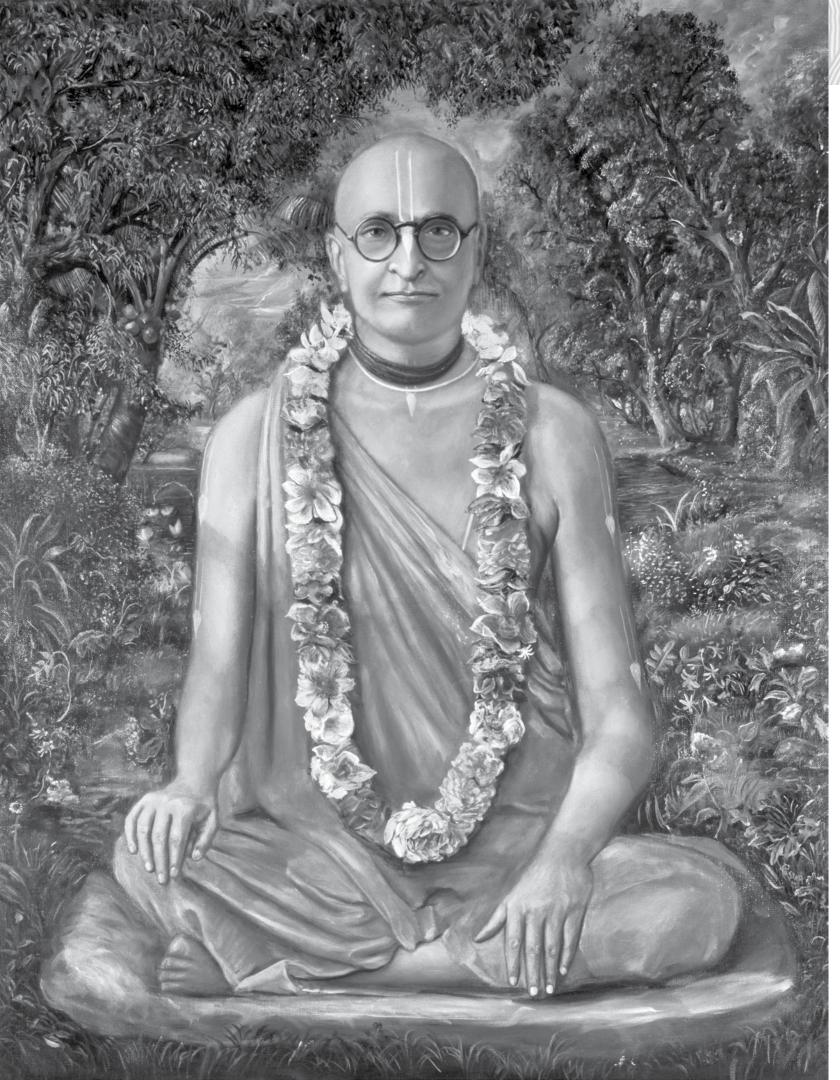
Today that remembrance of You came to me in a very nice way. Because I have a great longing I

called to You. I am Your eternal servant and therefore I desire Your association so much. O Lord Kṛṣṇa, except for You there is no other means of success.

(refrain) kṛṣṇa taba puṇya habe bhāi e-puṇya koribe jabe rādhārāṇī khusī habe dhruva ati boli tomā tāi

I emphatically say to you, O brothers, you will obtain your good fortune from the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa only when Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī becomes pleased with you.





## "Adore, Adore Ye All The Happy Day"

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote the following poem in February 1935, on the occasion of the Vyāsa-pūjā celebration of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. It delighted Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, especially the sixth stanza, which he felt captured the essence of his preaching against the Māyāvādīs. After reading this poem, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was especially keen that Śrīla Prabhupāda preach and write in English.

Adore, adore ye all The happy day, Blessed than Heaven, Sweeter than May, When He appeared at Puri, The holy place, My Lord and Master, His Divine Grace.

Oh! my Master, The evangelic angel, Give us thy light, Light up thy candle. Struggle for existence A Human race, The only hope His Divine Grace.

Misled we are, All going astray. Save us Lord, Our fervent pray. Wonder thy ways To turn our face. Adore thy feet, Your Divine Grace.

Forgotten Krishna, We fallen soul Paying most heavy The illusion's toll. Darkness around, All untrace. The only hope His Divine Grace. Message of service Thou has brought, A healthful life As Chaitanya wrought. Unknown to all, It's full of brace. That's your gift, Your Divine Grace.

Absolute is sentient Thou hast proved. Impersonal calamity Thou hast removed. This gives us a life Anew and fresh. Worship thy feet, Your Divine Grace.

Had you not come, Who had told The message of Krishna, Forceful and bold? That's your right, You have the mace. Save me a fallen, Your Divine Grace.

The line of service As drawn by you Is pleasing and healthy Like morning dew. The oldest of all, But in new dress. Miracle done, Your Divine Grace.