



Homages from Non-GBC Sannyāsīs

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Bhakti Br̥hat Bhāgavata Swami

Mauritius: The First Kṛṣṇa Conscious Country

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances in the most merciful dust of your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace.

About two years ago I asked one of your dearest sons, His Holiness Girirāja Swami, how best I could give the rest of my life in the service of Your Divine Grace and your ISKCON. In the course of our discussions I mentioned that I have been visiting Mauritius for the past twenty-two years. We concluded that, as per your merciful instructions and prediction, I could serve you and your mission best by helping to lay the foundation for making Mauritius the first Kṛṣṇa conscious country. And His Holiness Giriraja Swami finally said to me, “You have to have the plan and the man.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, here is your plan, the one you carefully outlined during your visit to Mauritius:

On October 1, 1975, you came to Mauritius to preach and convince the leaders there of the importance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Upon your arrival in the airport lounge, you expressed one of your principal reasons for coming to Mauritius: “I want to see the leading men. If they understand the importance of this movement, then my mission will be successful.”

You came to Mauritius to solve the social, political, economic, and religious problems. In your arrival address you said,

If the leaders of the society lead the people in the proper channel on the basic principle of spiritual life, then everything will be solved. Everyone will be happy. . . . Then all the questions—social problem, political problem, economical problem, religious problem—everything will be nicely solved. . . . [Y]ou take any question and the answer is there in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, very nicely given. Just like, say, our first problem is economic problem. So *Bhagavad-gītā* says, “Yes. Economic problem will be solved very easily if you produce food grains.”

You came to educate us to be self-sufficient. In your lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.30, given on October 2, you said:

The solution is given in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, that “Produce food grain.” *Annād bhavanti bhūtāni*. So I see in your this Mauritius land you have got enough land to produce food grains. You produce food grain. I understand that instead of growing food grains you are growing sugar cane for exporting. Why? And you are dependent on [imported] food grains, on rice, wheat, dahl. Why? . . . You first of all grow your own eatables. And if there is time and if your population has got sufficient food grains, then you can try to grow other fruits and vegetables for exporting. The first necessity is that you should be self-sufficient.

You came to change our destiny and karma. In a room conversation on October 4 you said:

You can do the best to train your child to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is in your power. That you can do. That is the best service, not anything else. . . . If you become yourself Kṛṣṇa conscious, and if you try to make your son Kṛṣṇa conscious, that you can do. And that is the duty, real duty. Other things, you cannot do anything. That is destiny. And if you make him Kṛṣṇa conscious, then destiny can also be changed. This is the concession of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Destiny also can be changed. *Karmāṇi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhāṣām*. One who comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his karma is also changed.

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You appreciated the nice climate. On your morning walk on October 5 you said, “The climate is nice. There is good potential for producing food, keeping cows. Everything nice.”

You gave the detailed plan for acquiring land and establishing an ideal community. In your room conversation on October 5 you said:

Village, just like you acquire some land. . . . Keep cows, as many cows as possible, and produce, till the ground, field, and make water supply arrangement. If the investment is required, we shall do that. You have no worry about investment. We shall bring money from anywhere. . . . Then you get sufficient milk, sufficient food grains and produce your own cloth. The girls and ladies, they can spine [spin] thread, and from the thread you make cloth, handlooms. So your first necessities of life, eating, and make little cottage, sleeping. . . . That you have to provide. That is not difficult. And then you become peaceful, no anxiety for your maintenance.

And then cultivate this spiritual knowledge the same way. Have a temple there. Go on chanting, offering *prasādam*. You have got your food grains. Don’t be dependent on anyone else. Become self-independent. And don’t be after money. Simply produce your bare necessities of life. Keep yourself fit, strong. And chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, read book. . . . You must be attractive to bring them. And that is spiritual attraction. You must behave yourself nicely. Then people will come. Purity is required. That will attract. . . . One must be pure. . . . So if they see practically that “These people are very happy; they have no anxiety,” then they will be attracted. . . . To become pure is not at all difficult. Rather, to become impure, it is difficult. . . .

So far we are concerned, we shall live very simple life, simply in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is *brāhmaṇa*. *Brāhmaṇa* does not go to construct big, big house. He simply constructs his character, and the other *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*, they offer him, “Please come here and sit down.” . . . One who is unable to become a *brāhmaṇa*, let him become *kṣatriya*. If he cannot become *kṣatriya*, let him become a *vaiśya*. Otherwise let him remain a *śūdra*. But there should be ideal class. So we are trying to create an ideal society of *brāhmaṇas*. Then people will be benefited. They do not know how to live. The *brāhmaṇas* will give idea: “Live like this. You will be happy.” . . . You take land and be an ideal community.

You said that you were prepared to personally take up this program and remain in Mauritius. In a letter to Bhagavān Dāsa dated October 5, 1975, written from Mauritius, you wrote:

Yesterday we had one meeting and all big government officers, ministers, ambassadors came to hear me speak. And they appreciated. Most important the local boys, Indians, are coming, and now they want to do something. They are convinced that this is a good movement. They are organizing a program of getting boys from the villages for me to instruct them. So I am prepared to personally take up this program and remain here. The boys here are educated and intelligent and speak English and especially French.

And you publicly spoke about the prospect for a Kṛṣṇa conscious government. In your press conference of October 2 you said:

When we are many in number, then we shall take politics also. Yes. First of all let there be perfect men. . . . No perfect men, the government will be imperfect. If there is perfect men, the government will be perfect. . . . Kṛṣṇa was in politics. So He instructed Arjuna to fight. This is politics—for a good cause. . . . *Kṣatriya* means one who gives protection from being hurt, *kṣat*. *Kṣat* means hurting. So suppose if I unnecessarily hurt you. Then it is the duty of the government to give you protection. . . . Therefore in the society there must be *kṣatriya*. The *brāhmaṇas* should be learned; they should give instruction, advice. The *kṣatriyas* should give protection; the *vaiśyas* should produce, economic development; and the rest, they should assist—that’s all.

We are so happy to report to you our first baby step in Mauritius. We have acquired forty-eight acres

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of land. As you said, “You take land and be an ideal community.” Please guide and bless us to further acquire more than 108 acres of land to eventually complete the first pilot project, a Kṛṣṇa conscious village in Mauritius. We pray that by your causeless mercy we may realize the establishment of Śrī Caitanya Village, as we have named it, within my limited lifetime.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you mercifully chalked out the plan. Please bless me to serve your many, many dedicated servants in Mauritius who are all working hard to fulfill your desire that Mauritius be the first Kṛṣṇa conscious country. And I know that, since you promised that you would “personally take up this program and remain here,” you are ever present in our humble efforts.

Oh when, oh when will that day come when we will all offer you your first Kṛṣṇa conscious country—Mauritius—as per Your Divine Grace’s instructions and desires, for your transcendental pleasure?

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Your unqualified servant among your qualified servants,

Bhakti Bṛhat Bhāgavata Swami

Bhakti Rāghava Swami

*orṁ ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmilitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace on this, the 116th anniversary of your appearance day.

This morning, at the Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple here at Sahyadri, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Kṣetra, in South India, we started to read the introduction to your biography. Although we just read a few pages, all the devotees attending the class immediately began to appreciate your transcendental qualities and the great fortune we all have of receiving the shelter and mercy of such an exalted spiritual master as Your Divine Grace.

*mūkaṁ karoti vācālaṁ paṇḍurṁ laṅghayate girim
yat-kṛpā tam ahaṁ vande śrī-gururṁ dīna-tāraṇam*

“By the mercy of the guru, even a dumb man can become the greatest orator and even a lame man can cross mountains.”

By your mercy, and only by your mercy, let me try to glorify you by offering these few words.

Your glories will continue to be sung as more and more conditioned souls come in contact with the *saṅkīrtana* movement of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—in particular with the fourth wave of this movement, namely, the establishment of self-sufficient communities that will gradually lead toward the development of the culture of *varṇāśrama*. To highlight this important desire of yours, I have taken a formal vow to remain for two years in this small community of some twenty devotees and thirty-two

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cows, in keeping with your intense desire that we develop these farm communities. I pray that this meets with your kind approval.

Many years ago, in the year 1977 to be precise, you ventured on what was to be your last journey overseas. You were greatly inspired to visit Gītā-nāgarī in Pennsylvania, where you planned to sit and show the devotees by example how to develop a self-sufficient *varṇāśrama* community. Although your physical condition was very frail and weak, your vision was clear and your determination strong to firmly establish this aspect of Lord Caitanya's overall mission. You made it to England, stopping at the London temple, where devotees from different parts of Europe came to get your *darśana*. You remained a few days in London, but then your health suddenly deteriorated to such an extent that you decided to return to India and remain in Vṛndāvana, your home, till your last days. During that period you continued to instruct and remind devotees about the *varṇāśrama* mission. In the last few weeks before your physical departure, you spoke the following words:

Live very simple life. Produce your own food, and produce your own cloth. Don't be allured by the machine civilization. *Varṇāśrama* will help you to divide society. Do it. [Room Conversation, Vṛndāvana, 8 October 1977]

A few days later, on October 18th, you made the following statement:

Unless in the human society the system of *varṇāśrama* is introduced, no scheme or social order, health order or any other order, political order, will be successful. [Room Conversation, Vṛndāvana, 18 October 1977]

Although you stressed book distribution over all other aspects of preaching, you would again and again point out the need to also be very practical, thus underlining the aspect of "utility is the principle." In a conversation with Trappist Monks in Atlanta, you had stated:

Our first problem is, because we have got this material body, eating. Everyone must eat. So Kṛṣṇa says, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni*. "If there is sufficient food grains, then both man and animal, they become happy." Therefore our first religion is to produce food grains sufficiently to feed everyone. [Room Conversation, Atlanta, March 1975]

With your transcendental vision you developed the idea of a special institution that you named "Varṇāśrama College." While speaking with devotees in Los Angeles in 1975, you expressed your desire to establish such a *varṇāśrama* college and a big temple at the historic place where Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kurukṣetra. Taking your divine instructions to heart, devotees traveled to India intent on finding a suitable piece of land at Kurukṣetra to help fulfill your desire. For reasons unknown to the devotees at the time, the land acquisition could not be completed and the project was abandoned. It was only recently that a professor attached to the University of Kurukṣetra who had met with devotees at that time met one of those same devotees and candidly asked him if he ever knew why that land could not be acquired. The devotee said no, and the professor explained that the university authorities, upon hearing of your plans to establish a *varṇāśrama* college, were convinced that the establishment of such an institution would likely close down their university, and so they decided to approach influential people to block the sale of that property.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, when will we have sufficient faith in your instructions about *varṇāśrama*? When will we develop the strong conviction that *varṇāśrama* colleges are the key to opening the doors to a *varṇāśrama*-based society? When will we have the strength and determination to put into practice these most important directives you repeated on so many occasions?

Śrīla Prabhupāda, kindly forgive me for my inability to serve you as you should be served. Kindly give me the courage to somehow or other accomplish this almost impossible task of establishing *varṇāśrama*. Kindly help me to remain a faithful servant and to become humble.

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Your servant,

R.P. Bhakti Rāghava Swami

P.S. I have added “R.P.” for “Rāghava Paṇḍita,” the name you gave me at initiation, to remind me always of your causeless mercy.

Bhakti Sundar Goswami

*nama ori viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Dear Guru Mahārāja,

You once said, “My only desire is that all people become happy and prosperous in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

What a glorious mission you have brought to this Western world! By your mercy the message of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the message of divine love, which was never broadcast before in the West, is now appreciated and accepted everywhere.

While trying to serve your desire to fulfill Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s prophecy, I started to understand that the less I think about myself and the more I think about others’ well-being, the happier and more satisfied I feel. I’m trying to learn from your wonderful example how to surrender my life to your service without any ulterior motive. As you said:

I am just trying to organize a worldwide movement not for any personal ambition but to execute superior orders, and by the grace of Kṛṣṇa we are getting good encouragement. So I request my students to cooperate fully. [Letter, 26 July 1970]

We should try to satisfy you by fulfilling this request of yours. But you warned us: “The poison is personal ambition.” Unfortunately, we are more than ready to swallow this horrible poison instead of drinking the nectar of selfless and humble service. I pray at your lotus feet to save me from this tendency of looking for name and fame, with the excuse that everything is done only for preaching. In our heart of hearts we should cry out to achieve purity of purpose and to develop our love for Guru and Gaurāṅga and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Falling at the dust of your lotus feet, I beg to remain

Your foolish servant life after life,

Bhakti Sundar Goswami



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Bhakti Vighna Vināśa Narasimha Mahārāja

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Your Divine Grace. All glories to your service to the *saṅkīrtana* movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Somehow I have had the good fortune to be connected to your lotus feet. Out of your causeless mercy you accepted me as your disciple and brought me to your spiritual family, formally known as ISKCON but more commonly as the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. When I joined the society I could never have thought that forty years down the road I would still be wearing a *dhotī* and sporting a *śikhā*, what to speak of being a traveling preacher. |

Your society has been through many changes over the years, but a lot of things remain as they were when you introduced them to us. We are glad to say that there is still the Sunday Feast and the occasional *harināma saṅkīrtana* party. Devotees somehow or other still manage to go out and distribute books, your Deities are still being worshiped, and *kṛṣṇa-prasādam* continues to make our life worthwhile.

For several years now I have been spending the first two months of the year in Māyāpur, giving classes as part of Bhakti-śāstrī and Bhakti-vaibhava courses. I very much appreciate this opportunity to make a detailed study of your books, and I find the Māyāpur atmosphere very conducive to this service. Students from around the world attend the classes and diligently apply themselves to the rigorous study schedule, generating a pure and powerful atmosphere.

This year Māyāpur hosted an innovative one-week leadership conference, and more than three hundred senior devotees from around the globe attended, voicing their hopes and doubts regarding the future of ISKCON. The theme for the conference was very apt: “More Devotees, Happier Devotees.” We all hope we can see this theme realized in the coming years. In three seminars we heard from learned Vaiṣṇavas of the importance of keeping Your Divine Grace as the central and highest of all our spiritual authorities. Provided we can keep this as the main theme of our movement, we will be strong and united, but if we neglect this principle, our movement will be easily divided.

I would like to also mention to Your Divine Grace something regarding the Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, which continues to attract large numbers of devotees to the annual Gaura Pūrṇimā festival. This year we had 6,000 devotees on *parikramā*, in four groups. There was a Bengali party of 2,500, a Russian party of 1,000, a Hindi-speaking party of 1,000, and an international party of 1,500. Next year will be the 25th anniversary of this program, and we hope to have 10,000 devotees take part. This would equal the number of devotees who took part in the *parikramās* performed by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda in the early 1900s.

You often said that it was the desire of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura that a great temple for the worship of Lord Gaurāṅga be established in Māyāpur. Now we are seeing the rapid manifestation of this great temple, which will be known as the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium. The construction is well under way, and if all goes as planned the Deities will move into the temple at the 2016 Gaura Pūrṇimā festival, the same year that marks the fiftieth anniversary of the incorporation of ISKCON. The temple is already attracting more and more pilgrims to Māyāpur, and we can hardly imagine how wonderful the completed temple will be. However, the magnificent temple also reminds us that we owe so much to Your Divine Grace. Whatever we offer to you can never begin to repay you for all you have given us. Please allow me to never forget that.

Please keep me always under the shade of your lotus feet.

Your insignificant servant,

Bhakti Vighna Vināśa Narasimha Mahārāja

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Bhakti Vikāsa Swami

“That My Bubble May Not Burst”

Most dear, revered, incomprehensible, merciful Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my obeisance in the dust of your divine lotus feet.

In the book *Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda!* (first published in 1994) I wrote about my “nonentity-ness”: “Crowds do not run to greet me when I visit an ISKCON temple, nor do I have bundles of fan mail to neglect. . . . Whatever I do, good or bad, does not make much difference to anyone.” Times have changed. Now I am an established ISKCON guru—albeit well behind the biggies, but enough of a celebrity to no longer have to travel by public bus, and to be greeted with *kīrtana* in many places (nice!), and yes, to have plenty of emails (from disciples and others) that I try to keep up with.

Within ISKCON, the role of guru is the most challenging and challenged institution. Now that I have come to this razor’s edge, I pray that you maintain me in your service and protect me so that pride and complacency not spoil all that I am doing. Among the many servants of yours who are considerably more qualified than I, several have buckled under the strain of accepting disciples. My only hope for remaining fixed in this service is to constantly remember that despite being considered a dispenser of mercy, I am in every respect dependent on your mercy, and no less so than when I first came to the shelter of your lotus feet. Please grant me the sanity to play my part in pushing forward your mission, with full energy and with full confidence in your protection, and with the understanding that I am not and can never be anything but fully dependent on your mercy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda! I am still trying to come to grips with the paradox of being a guru, a spiritual master. How can a devotee, who is supposed to be the servant of everyone, be the master of anyone? Because you are a topmost devotee, you made it seem most natural to be simultaneously a servant and the spiritual master of the whole universe. You repeatedly stated that to be a guru is easy, yet you set a most difficult standard to emulate. To be a guru like you is not easy. Many facets of your divine personality—for instance, your natural charm and humility, and your defiance of physical laws, such as those governing jet lag—seem far beyond my ability to emulate or even imitate. It is more realistic for me to try within my capacity to follow your example of selfless dedication to the *saṅkīrtana* mission.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, my disciples annually celebrate a function to honor me, which they call Vyāsa-pūjā. I trust that you are satisfied with that, for you have stated, “My glory will be when my disciples are worshiped all over the world.”¹ Yet there is a clear distinction between Vyāsa-pūjā in my honor and Vyāsa-pūjā in honor of Your Divine Grace. You are praised for being the great *mahā-bhāgavata* who, by representing the previous *ācāryas* and by your own extraordinary transcendental qualities, performed incomparable acts in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world. On the other hand, the only praise that might be appropriate for me is that of being your faithful follower. To be a true follower of Your Divine Grace is no small thing, yet there will always be a gulf between you, the singular *mahā-bhāgavata* who widely distributed authentic love of Kṛṣṇa, and your many followers who, according to their realization, based on what they have heard from you (*yathā-matī-śrutam*²), attempt to follow your example.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, because you are the mighty *mahā-bhāgavata* who founded ISKCON, to be your directly initiated disciple is a position of status in ISKCON today. Any “Prabhupāda disciple,” even if deviated from his initiation vows and diverged from your teachings, is honored by juniors as a senior citizen of ISKCON—which is appropriate, for any cultured society respects its elders. Whatever else those disciples of yours may or may not have done throughout subsequent years, the struggles that they undertook for establishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the modern world should not be forgotten.

Nonetheless, to be a disciple of Your Divine Grace means more than being a relic or a mascot, more than merely socializing and reminiscing. Respect is accorded due to one’s connection with you, but a living connection means to strive to live and act as you did. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you wanted your disciples to be gurus, spiritual leaders of mankind, and, in pursuance of your own unprecedented activities, to

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further vigorously promote the *saṅkīrtana* movement. You refused to fade away in old age, instead taking the freedom it afforded to go out into the world. You were not content to accept the honor accorded to elderly *sādhus* but ventured among heathens and hippies. By personifying *amāninā mānadena*, you turned such dishonorable people into *sādhus* who now are worthy of the highest regard. You gave us everything—the real thing—and simply asked that we likewise give it to others.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, please take me beyond formality and grant me the privilege to follow in your footsteps. Let me not merely splutter and snuff out—another candle that could have given more light but simply faded away with the rest. Nor let my goal be merely to be remembered, or to create mythology meant to be perpetuated, or to playact as an icon who might seem genuine to those who have not actually heard your message. Śrīla Prabhupāda, please protect me from my wicked mind, which is ever prone to indulge in cheating. I want to be true to you and to others and not fail either you or the devotees of ISKCON, who are so dear to you.

One quality of a pure devotee is to be *apramatta*³ (not crazy). Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are the only person whom I completely trust to be sane in all respects. Fully sane means fully free from even the subtlest of material desires. I am still insane—deeply insane. My only hope for sanity is to follow your instructions.

*ācāryera mata yei, sei mata sāra
tānra ājñā laṅghi' cale, sei ta' asāra*

“The order of the spiritual master is the active principle in spiritual life. Anyone who disobeys the order of the spiritual master immediately becomes useless.”⁴

Śrīla Prabhupāda, during my very first days in your ISKCON I imbibed this principle, and it has sustained me in your service throughout all these years—to simply do what you have told us to do, with full trust that you are the intimate representative of Kṛṣṇa who is fully empowered by Him to deliver the entire world to His lotus feet. You are the master and we the servants, and we have no other duty than to obey your command. As we practically experience, all spiritual strength, all success, follow from this principle. The essence of your instructions is to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously and propagate it vigorously. Please bless me that, despite the madness of my mind, I always adhere to this simple formula.

Śrīla Prabhupāda! Māyā, in her typically inverse manner, is worshiping you by increasingly revealing your identity as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. By demonstrating the perils of not adhering to your instructions, Māyā helps convince us that all your plans are perfect and that to be an *ācārya* in your service means to serve your order; attempts to do otherwise simply result in disaster. We await the day when, as a movement, we will awaken from the collective amnesia of forgetting that all success is guaranteed if we simply stick to the simple principle of simply following your instructions.

In the meantime, the global insanity level is ever increasing, and only thanks to you can we still ascertain what is sane and what is not. Amid the insanity, we ever-more-deeply take shelter of your books, which truly are the only solace from the madness of this Kali-yuga. While associating with devotees who continue to follow your instructions (fortunately, within ISKCON there are still many such devotees), we marvel at how some of those who are meant to convey the teachings in your books seem to have never read them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda! Please grant me and all your aspiring followers the intelligence to understand that, although subsequent to your departure our knowledge and awareness of the extensive Vaiṣṇava culture and literature have inevitably increased, there will never be any question of “going beyond” what you have given us. It is you who are saving us all, and you live forever in your books. Please awaken in us the realization that in your books you have presented everything we need to know for becoming fully Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, your dear Lord Kṛṣṇa has kindly awarded me both a body and a personality that are not very attractive to women, and throughout all these years you have saved me from my lower bestial nature and protected me from gross capitulation to the charms of Cupid. Now that by default I am a little big shot in ISKCON, Māyā is offering me enhanced opportunities for self-infatuation, in the form of certain disciples and others seeming to regard me as something that I am not. To consider myself

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anything other than simply an aspiring servant in your service would certainly be a great disservice to one and all, and a major obstacle in my attempted service to you. Therefore I pray that you again save me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I never liked pettiness. I have always seen everyone around me as absorbed in petty concerns, and even their pressing issues as being mere trivia. I did not want that, and yearned for something better. I nearly despaired, but then I found you (or rather, you most mercifully found me). I will forsake crores of gross materialists and even scores of *sādhus* who do not, as did you, clearly and emphatically emphasize surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. At least for me, you are the standard by which *sādhus* are to be judged; they are genuine to the extent that they reflect your character, qualities, and commitment to preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness “as it is.” They hold no appeal for me if they are significantly different from you. I want to associate with you, serve you, and be like you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, to be your disciple means to ever aspire for the intense, unalloyed dedication to Kṛṣṇa that you personified and preached. I pray to live by and for the compelling spiritual truths that you incessantly delineated, and to not substitute them with a mere semblance of the vital Kṛṣṇa consciousness that you have given. May I ever cling to what I hear from you, and not be compromised by social niceties or supposed institutional necessities. Please award me the courage to truly represent you as I should, even if the whole world (including many who consider themselves yours) berate me for doing so. May I be ever unpopular if that is the price for clearly repeating the message that I so clearly hear from you. I deem this to be the true standard of a disciple, yet it is not easy to attain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, although profoundly respecting all previous *ācāryas*, I know that my connection with Kṛṣṇa is primarily through you. Reading various writings of and about our previous *ācāryas* has enhanced not only my knowledge of and appreciation for our *sampradāya* and its gifts, but also my awareness that you are the most illustrious representative of the *sampradāya*, having been sent by Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas* to expertly present their message in a manner just suitable for the unique circumstances in which you preached Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Moreover, it was particularly Your Divine Grace who saved me.

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja⁵*

Kṛṣṇa oversees each *jīva*’s wanderings throughout the material universes, and for the most fortunate He ordains that at a certain point they meet a bona fide guru. And Kṛṣṇa arranged that I meet you, not any other of the exalted devotees who have come to this world to uplift fallen *jīvas*. It is Kṛṣṇa’s desire, and my eternal good fortune, that I be linked especially with you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I gauge my spiritual standing according to my relationship with you, according to how much I remember that your mercy, which is attainable by following your orders, is the active principle in my life. Knowing that I am dependent on you, I pray for your mercy, feel grateful, and want to act as your humble servant. Everything else—my advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness (or lack thereof) and my various preaching endeavors—follows from that principle. Without remembering that your mercy is all that I am made of, then whatever I do, however much others might laud it, is just a sham.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I need to keep your shoes upon my head. My only proper and safe position is at your feet. But I cannot fully avail myself of the shelter of your shoes if I retain interest in sense gratification in any form or have any inclination toward Māyāvāda. Please purify me by immersing me in your service. Just as you saved me so many years ago from intense distress by accepting me, please now save me from comfort and delusion and again make me your disciple.

In the dust of your lotus feet and aspiring to be the servant of your servants,

The very fallen Bhakti Vikāsa Swami

¹ Told by Bhakta Dāsa Prabhu; *Śrīla Prabhupāda Tributes* 2011, p. 153.

² *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.6.36.

³ *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 22.80.

⁴ *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi* 12.10. ⁵ *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 19.151.

Homages from Non-GBC Sannyāsīs

Bhakti Viśrambha Mādhava Swami

*vande śrī-gurudevam taṁ karuṇā-varuṇālayam
yat-kṛpā-lava-leśena pāmaro 'py amarāyate*

“I bow unto the bona fide spiritual master, that veritable ocean of compassion, a tiny fraction of whose mercy can immortalize even a vile outcaste.”

Although it's been thirty-five years since your departure, still we are awed by the level of preaching prowess you showed. As middle and old age creep up on your disciples, we can see the truth of many of your practical instructions, such as “a young person can't eat too much and an old person can't eat too little.” How true that is!

On this anniversary of your appearance, may we pray for increased attachment to the holy names of Kṛṣṇa and the service of Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī and Her lords.

Your fallen servant,

Bhakti Viśrambha Mādhava Swami

Candramauli Swami

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

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earth, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your divine lotus feet. All glories to your appearance in this world.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura predicted, “A personality will soon appear in order to preach the teachings of Śrī Caitanya and move unrestrictedly over the whole world with His message.” (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, 1885)

We are eternally blessed and supremely grateful that you have come into our lives to offer us the greatest and rarest gift, the opportunity to render pure devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, under your expert guidance. Your appearance in this realm of existence is your munificence and great kindness upon us fallen and unworthy *jīvas*. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are an eternally liberated soul whose only purpose for appearing on this planet is to fulfill the mission of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in bringing everyone to His lotus feet in ecstatic loving service.

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Recently I came across this historical account by my senior godbrother Patita Pāvana Prabhu, revealing your spiritual position.

Tirupati 1977: A dollar fifty a day is all Gargamuni, then the head of the BBT Library Party out of Bombay, would allow me for food, travel, and shelter. So on a budget of \$50 a month I was traveling third class and alone throughout India to collect reviews of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I would introduce scholars to the "Library Encyclopedia of Vedic Knowledge" (as we members of the BBT Library Party called the collection), and they would all oblige with letterheads of glowing praise. Today, looking back, none of those intellectual leaders sticks in my mind as does the renowned scholar Dr. D. Arkasomayaji.

He was a strict *brāhmaṇa*, an author, a past college principal, and a winner of a government award for his Sanskrit scholarship. He was also the head of the Tirupati-Tirumala-Devasthanam, which oversees the world's most opulent temple of the Lord of Lakṣmī at Tirupati. Since he was also a *paṇḍita*, I showed Dr. Arkasomayaji Śrīla Prabhupāda's horoscope. Immediately he noted that His Divine Grace had been liberated from birth. He declared, "This is the chart of a *nitya-mukta jīvan*."

Dr. Arkasomayaji (who hailed from a long line of astrologers and whose name means "one who performs *yajñas* to the deities of the sun and moon") quickly spotted some of the rare horoscopic combinations of the liberated pure devotee. He observed, "There are separate *yogas* for Lord Viṣṇu (Hari Yoga), His wife (Lakṣmī Yoga), the creator (Brahmā Yoga), and the creator's wife (Sarasvatī Yoga). That means that there are two sets of Husband / Wife *yogas*, an unheard-of rarity in any horoscope."

After scanning the stars of His Divine Grace, Dr. Arkasomayaji took out his pen and wrote the most spectacular review of Prabhupāda's books out of the hundreds I collected. He considered Śrīla Prabhupāda to be "the world's greatest spiritual force in the twentieth century." Naturally all the state's college libraries purchased complete sets of the BBT publications. I sent Dr. Arkasomayaji's horoscope reading and review to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who much appreciated the good devotee-scholar's understanding of his position as the world *ācārya*. Dr. Arkasomayaji wasn't long for the world after that, but when he left here he was surely blessed by the pure devotee.

Perhaps Dr. Arkasomayaji stayed in this world just long enough to make this information available to all and to receive your merciful blessings.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.43.17 describes the various ways different persons in King Kāṁsa's wrestling arena viewed Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His powerful brother Balarāma as They entered:

[TRANSLATION] The various groups of people in the arena regarded Kṛṣṇa in different ways when He entered it with His elder brother. The wrestlers saw Kṛṣṇa as a lightning bolt, the men of Mathurā as the best of males, the women as Cupid in person, the cowherd men as their relative, the impious rulers as a chastiser, His parents as their child, the King of the Bhojas as death, the unintelligent as the Supreme Lord's universal form, the yogīs as the Absolute Truth, and the Vṛṣṇis as their supreme worshipable Deity.

[PURPORT] Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī quotes the following verse, which explains the ten attitudes toward Kṛṣṇa described here:

*raudro 'dbhutaś ca śṛṅgāro hāsyam vīro dayā tathā
bhayānakaś ca bībhatsaḥ śāntaḥ sa-prema-bhaktikaḥ*

"[There are ten different moods:] fury [felt by the wrestlers], wonder [by the men], conjugal attraction [the women], laughter [the cowherds], chivalry [the kings], mercy [His parents], terror [Kāṁsa], ghastliness [the foolish], peaceful neutrality [the yogīs], and loving devotion [the Vṛṣṇis]."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī points out that people like the wrestlers, Kāṁsa, and the impious rulers perceive Kṛṣṇa as dangerous, angry, or threatening because they fail to understand the actual position of the Personality of Godhead. Actually, Lord Kṛṣṇa is everyone's friend and



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well-wisher, but because we rebel against Him, He chastises us, and thus we may perceive Him as threatening. Kṛṣṇa, or God, is actually merciful, and when He punishes us, that is also His mercy.

All these different persons' mentalities reflected the nature of their relationship with Kṛṣṇa. All had different experiences while viewing the same person.

A great spiritual personality is also understood and perceived in different ways by different types of persons, along with being misunderstood in different ways by different persons. The pure spiritual master is imbued with many of the transcendental qualities of the Lord, and these qualities and attributes are often viewed differently.

Some persons saw you just as a very nice *sādhū*, others as:

An emissary from the spiritual world;
A great proponent of Vedic knowledge whose books are read and studied worldwide by scholars and religionists;
A prolific author of ancient philosophical and spiritual teachings for the modern world;
One who came to expose and destroy Māyāvāda (impersonal) philosophy;
One whose books are translated into more than seventy languages.
One who adapted the strict standards of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to establish ISKCON as a worldwide movement with diverse members;
An expert at preaching according to *kāla*, *deśa*, *pātra*;
One who traveled the globe more than fourteen times to preach *bhakti-yoga* and establish Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples, farm communities, restaurants, and preaching centers;
The perfectly pure representative of Lord Caitanya and His teachings;
One who built a grand temple near Lord Caitanya's birthplace and is fulfilling the previous *ācāryas'* desire for a magnificent Vedic planetarium and temple;
One who fulfilled the prediction of Lord Caitanya's that "In every town in village My name will be heard";
The disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī who successfully carried out his instruction to preach Lord Caitanya's teachings to the whole world;
One who gave the world *Bhagavad-gītā* "as it is," thereby giving the Western world the first clear and correct understanding of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's instructions;
One who discussed Kṛṣṇa consciousness with persons worldwide in fields of architecture, literature, religion, politics, sociology, psychology, entertainment, business, and sports, and with the young, the old, and the in between.
One who empowered his disciples and granddisciples to perform many outstanding activities;
One who began a worldwide spiritual movement at the age of seventy.

And from a more materialistic angle, some saw you as

The best of the male chauvinists (*Esquire Magazine*, 1977);
A great proponent of religious teachings "who [shook] things up" (from a recent publication on modern religious leaders);
One who became successful in life after fifty years of age (CNN: 2010).

Śrīla Prabhupāda I listed only a few of the outstanding achievements of Your Divine Grace, just to illustrate how you are appreciated and understood by others. As for my lowly self, you are my only shelter in everything I need to serve and surrender. Thank you for always allowing me the shelter of your lotus feet, although I am undeserving.

My prayer is that I may please you by somehow assisting you in bringing others to your lotus feet.

With love and gratitude,

Candramauli Swami

Homages from Non-GBC Sannyāsīs

Candraśekhara Swami

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāminn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

The spiritual master is present in many forms, even when he is no longer physically present on the earth. The disciple can serve the spiritual master's *vapu* when the spiritual master is on the earth, and then the disciple can serve his *vāṇī* when he leaves to enter the divine pastimes of the ever-joyful Lord. The *vapu* is the spiritual master's personal presence, and the *vāṇī* is his mission.

How does the spiritual master come to us when he is no longer on the planet? During his last days on earth, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said that the spiritual master is always with the disciple in a variety of forms. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta acknowledged the support from these various forms of Śrī Gurudeva; he had lost his spiritual master and his father, two of his most prominent spiritual guides, within one year of each other, in 1914 and 1915. Although devastated after their departure, he had an extraordinary experience. He felt, "How shall I preach to the world the pure message of Śrī Caitanya and establish the heart's desire of my gurus? I have no support of people, no support of wealth, and I do not have any learning or intelligence that can attract the common people." This feeling of void was answered by a visionary dream in which Bhaktisiddhānta saw the Pañca-tattva and their *saṅkīrtana* associates, along with Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Gaura Kīśora Dāsa Bābājī, Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, and others in the disciplic succession—all having come before him to give assurance. They said, "Don't you worry at all. With supreme enthusiasm preach the conclusion of pure devotion, in intense earnestness chant the glories of the name, abode, form, attributes, associates, and pastimes of the Godhead at various places. All of us will help you. There is no need to worry. The support of unlimited people, countless wealth, and boundless learning await the blessing of being engaged in the service of your preaching. They will be received when they are necessary. No type of worldly hindrance or danger will be able to make any obstruction for this great work of yours. We are always with you."

Meditating on those varieties of post-departure manifestation of Śrī Guru, I relate the following.

You are present with me via the transcendental literature you so exhaustively compiled. What would I do without the messages of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? Several times a week I try to understand them more clearly to present them to others. So wonderful is what I call the factor of merciful, divine redundancy! You repeated everything you had to say to us many times in your purports, personal letters, morning walks, arrival addresses, and other verbal, written, and audiovisual presentations. This redundancy is especially merciful because it reduces the tendency to misunderstand your message. There would have been a distinct possibility of misunderstanding important elements of Kṛṣṇa consciousness if you had presented them only once, with only one example, and without further corroboration. But that is not the way you did things. For that matter, the Vedic literatures themselves are mercifully redundant. We have been given a divine parity check via this method of multiple versions of the same topic. The more someone studies your literary legacy, the more he discovers that it is consistent and exhaustive. The nectar is there, and the world becomes clear. What to do becomes understandable.

You are present in the holy name. On one's own, who would have thought to chant "Hare Kṛṣṇa" as a spiritual process? Although in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition the holy name is central, none of us were ever or would have ever been exposed to this tradition. When I chant the Lord's holy name I remember that it is you who made me aware of it; moreover, you made me aware of its *importance*. Your link is that same link to which all the *ācāryas* have clung, the link or lifeline that can effect deliverance of any human. This is the special mercy of Lord Caitanya, relayed to us by you. *Harer nāma eva kevalam*.

You are present as your senior disciples, guiding me. You spent much time with certain disciples,

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training them to lead, training them to understand the deeper levels of the task of bringing neophytes up to full Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is easy to falsely imagine that we understand Kṛṣṇa or devotional service, and it is easy to think that we know how to lead others, but often in these activities there are booby traps and pitfalls. Without the guidance of advanced devotees, where would we be? Devotees learned to serve Kṛṣṇa by serving you, and now newer devotees are learning to serve Kṛṣṇa by following those you trained. Following in the footsteps.

You are present in the Deities you installed. In the Western world we would have never understood that God, Kṛṣṇa, has form. The major religions are not clear on the matter; even some directly reject the concept of a divine form. As you emphasize in your translation to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.31 (as cited at *Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi* 1.51), “transcendental knowledge about [Kṛṣṇa] is not only scientific but also full of mysteries.” This strange-sounding verse was originally spoken by Viṣṇu to Brahmā at the beginning of the universe. As you indicate in your purports, the meaning is that these mysteries are the name, form, qualities, and pastimes associated with the real Supreme Person. Without these details, our relationship with God is incipient only. Truly neophyte. Deep commitment and love can happen only when a full image of the Supreme is understood. Therefore, the understanding of and devotion to a Deity form is the steppingstone for understanding the worship of the Lord that broadens into divine relationship. This mystery would have been beyond us had it not been for you.

You are present in devotee *saṅga*. My godbrothers and godsisters are living proof that Kṛṣṇa consciousness has worked for them and continues to work for them. What if we had been forced to practice devotional service solo? There would be no support and no visible evidence that the devotional lifestyle can factually work. After all, almost everything in the material world seems to go against the practice of self-surrender to the Supreme by service. It might then seem that the glorious and noble path is only a wonderful ideal, too high for the real mortal world and impractical in this world of hard knocks and ubiquitous selfishness. Seeing firsthand the genuine realization and commitment of my godbrothers and godsisters in our *saṅga* is actually your hand lifting us, through each other.

You are present as a worldwide network of centers. It is amazing that anywhere one goes on planet earth there is a temple nearby. Who could have imagined that in a few short years such a matrix could be developed? What does the future have in store? These centers are all individual oases in the dry material desert.

You are present in a special way that I felt for the first time this year. You are present as the ISKCON movement collectively struggling to bring itself into full sail. Devotees meet to discuss the issues of the day, but over the years, devotees, as I have recently been made aware, have been working in committees to plan and create the social infrastructure that will make ISKCON fully functional and give it an internal structure commensurate with its size. Small organizations do not need much internal development, and young organizations have not yet developed any internal facilities. But ISKCON is no longer either a small or a young organization. Needed internal refinements and social organs are not an option; they are a necessity. These devotees have been inspired by you to take on this task, and their work is very inspiring. Here again is your hand.

You are present in your recorded lectures, as well as the recollections of the devotees. Because of modern technology our planet is threatened, but there are also useful aspects to this technology when properly deployed. It is amazing that, even today, thirty-five years after your departure, I can still see you chanting in Tompkins Square Park or hear you speaking in Nairobi, Kenya. The tone of your voice, the details of the philosophy, the setting—all have not faded like an old flower but remain ever fresh, ever able to uplift.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura said:

It is my Gurudeva who is graciously present in all these different forms. If he is not graciously present in all these different forms, who would then preserve me? Those whom my Gurudeva has made his own are my saviors. The order of the gurus which have in their nature the protecting power of the Divinity are always present in different forms and figures to bestow their mercy on me. All of them are specific manifestations of the Śrī Guru who confers spiritual knowledge. . .
[*Ray of Vishnu*, “Final Days”]

Homages from Non-GBC Sannyāsīs

The guru lives on for the disciple in his *vāṇī*. This *vāṇī* can be perceived by those who make the simple effort to serve this *vāṇī*.

Your servant,

Candraśekhara Swami

Dānavīr Goswami

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

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earth, having taken shelter at His lotus feet. Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

Śrī Garga-saṁhitā 1.1.6 states:

*śrī-śaunaka uvāca
satām paryāṭanam dhanyam grhinām śāntaye smṛtam
nṛṇām antas tamo-hārī sādhu eva na bhāskaraha*

“Śrī Śaunaka said: The auspicious travels of saintly devotees bring peace to those who stay at home. It is a saintly devotee, and not the sun, that removes the darkness in people’s hearts.”

Householders (*grhinām*) are generally enshrouded by thoughts of body, home, family, community, and national affairs. In this forgetfulness of life’s ultimate goal, they are sentenced to rebirth in the cycle of *saṁsāra* through 8,400,000 species of material bodies. It is indeed fortunate for them when a saintly person (*satām*) pays an unexpected visit, because this association may deliver the family members from this material world.

As Lord Rṣabhadeva explains, *mahat-sevām dvāram āhur vimuktes*. One can attain the path of liberation from material bondage only by rendering service to highly advanced spiritual personalities (*mahātmās*—great souls).

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu confirms this:

*‘sādhu-saṅga’, ‘sādhu-saṅga’—sarva-śāstre kaya
lava-mātra sādhu-saṅge sarva-siddhi haya*

“The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment’s association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.54*)

Sādhus (pure devotees) are very rare in this world, yet all the more valuable for that rarity. Anyone blessed by the inconceivable causeless mercy of the Lord and His pure devotees gains the highest perfection of life, namely, the chance to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and then return to the transcendental abode called Goloka-dhāma. This opportunity descended upon the world recently when His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a true *mahātmā*, sailed to the shores of the United States in 1965.

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Though uninvited and externally foreign, he brought a spiritual message that resonated with America's youth. This joyful mission continues today as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which is expanding the spiritual ocean of *bhakti-yoga* to every town and village of the world.

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira said to Vidura:

*bhavad-vidhā bhāgavatās tīrtha-bhūtāḥ svayaṁ vibho
tīrthī-kurvanti tīrthāni svāntaḥ-sthena gadābhṛtā*

“My Lord, devotees like your good self are verily holy places personified. Because you carry the Personality of Godhead within your heart, you turn all places into places of pilgrimage.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.13.10)

Since Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival, dozens of holy places of pilgrimage have emerged because saints make every place they walk a *tīrtha*, or holy place. Not only that, but saints bring Kṛṣṇa in different forms, such as the Deity form (*arcā-vigraha*), the holy name (*nāma-rūpa*), and the scriptures (*Vedas*). Thus there are now holy temples of Kṛṣṇa and places where His pastimes have been enacted, such as those of Lord Jagannātha riding on His Ratha-yātrā carts in cities like San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
ahaṁ bhakta-parādhīno hy asvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyaḥ*

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead said to the *brāhmaṇa*: I am completely under the control of My devotees. Indeed, I am not at all independent. Because My devotees are completely devoid of material desires, I sit only within the cores of their hearts. What to speak of My devotee, even those who are devotees of My devotee are very dear to Me.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.4.63)

This assurance given by Lord Nārāyaṇa—“What to speak of My devotee, even those who are devotees of My devotee are very dear to Me”—should be especially pleasing to the followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda because of his impeccable character and devotion.

By studying His Divine Grace's commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we get the light (*purāṇa-arkaḥ*) by which we can comprehend other Vedic scriptures. It is only by his causeless mercy, which includes the combined kindness of Brahmā himself as well as the *ācāryas* in his line, that we are proceeding with this work of presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world by a cooperative venture among many devotees.

This grateful servant humbly takes the lotus feet of his beloved spiritual master upon his head.

Dānavīr Goswami

Gaṇapati Dāsa Swami

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviṣeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

“The special qualification of the pure devotee is that he is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa without deviation and without considering the time or place. There should be no impediments. He should be able to carry

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out his service anywhere and at any time. Some say that the devotee should remain in holy places like Vṛndāvana or some holy town where the Lord lived, but a pure devotee can live anywhere and create the atmosphere of Vṛndāvana by his devotional service.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 8.14, purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you certainly exhibited the pure devotee’s “special qualification.” We are awed and encouraged by your example. What an *ācārya* you are! Nothing could impede your service—neither age nor physical debilities, the apathy of your countrymen, philosophical or legal opposition, the good-willed reticence of Sumati Morarji, the objections and bureaucracy of government agencies, or the frailties, failings, and even mutinies of your fledgling disciples. Your mind fixated on your Gurudeva’s order, you set your sights on the devotional potential of all *jīvas* of the world, setting into motion a “revolution in the impious life of a misdirected civilization.” Your unwavering determination and resolution swept us up in their powerful wake and remain to this day the force behind the spread of the modern Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Vyavasāya-ātmikā buddhiḥ eka: fixed on one goal. To be so thoroughly one-pointed requires an “unflinching trust in something sublime.” Thus, *śraddhā* is at the root of resolute purpose, which is itself founded on knowledge and realization: *vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ*. The first installment of this realization is the attainment of *brahma-bhūtaḥ*, which is the result of *avyabhicāriṇi-bhakti*. So where do we start? It is by the dispensation of divine grace. As you once said, “We are their good fortune!”

The theory of chance can best be explained in the Vedic literature by the words *ajñāta-sukṛti*, which refer to pious activities performed without the actor’s knowledge. But these are also planned. For example, Kṛṣṇa comes like an ordinary human being, He comes as a devotee like Lord Caitanya, or He sends His representative, the spiritual master, or pure devotee. This is also the planned activity of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They come to canvass and educate, and thus a person in the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord gets a chance to mix with them, talk with them, and take lessons from them, and somehow or other if a conditioned soul surrenders to such personalities and by intimate association with them chances to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, he is saved from the material conditions of life. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.21.27, purport]

Lord Kṛṣṇa’s supreme will is channeled through the disciplic succession—in our case, the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya line. It has descended through millennia, protected by an unbreakable chain of *ācāryas*, reconfirmed and reinvigorated by the Original Speaker in the *bhāva* of his most Beloved, culminating in its worldwide propagation by the pioneers of the modern age—Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and his illustrious disciple/son, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. It was Śrīla Bhaktivinoda’s vision which was activated by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and expanded beyond all boundaries and expectations by Your Divine Grace.

You humbly said that you had no qualification, no learning or wealth—simply an aging, humble, *vānaprastha*-turned-*sannyāsī* trying to directly execute your Gurudeva’s order after repeated, aborted attempts to secure financing in the pharmaceutical industry. But since you were buoyed by a tenacious conviction (captured in your famous *sannyāsa*-initiation photo), all obstacles became like floating steppingstones to support your magical march. In one sense, anyone could have done what you did (provided they were empowered by *kṛṣṇa-śakti*). But you didn’t just fantasize—you actually did it! Only you had the unshakeable faith that to attempt to execute the order of the Spiritual Master—successful or not—was the disciple’s sole purpose, and was virtually tantamount to God realization:

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāṇī-sevā*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary on the verse *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* (Bg. 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.51, purport]



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So, with this consideration I continue my efforts to assist your mission by connecting as many souls as possible to your matchless mercy. I certainly have no qualification—no taste for *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and practically no ability to chant the Holy Names. Worse still, I am of feeble faith. But somehow I am inspired to act as your instrument, and this is sustaining my hope that the Lord may one of these lifetimes be inclined to attend to my plight and offer me some insignificant service in His eternal *līlā*.

Praying that you keep dragging me along, I remain your crippled servant,

Gaṇapati dāsa Swami

Guṇagrāhi dās Goswami

Dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my obeisances in the dust of your lotus feet, along with this humble attempt to praise you on this most auspicious day of your divine appearance.

Every morning, for some time now, I have been relishing reading and discussing at length your *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with another devotee. It is indeed our favorite part of the day, for nothing else can compare to the transcendental artistry with which you reveal the beauty of Kṛṣṇa, the workings of *māyā*, and the glories of devotional service. Your vision, your humor, your wit, your intellect, your compassion, your conviction, your joy, your determination, your love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa—all spring forth and dance for us on every page.

Not only is hearing from you the sweetest nectar, but churning that nectar with others makes it even sweeter. It is said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.25.25): “In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart.” You are that pure devotee in whose association we are blessed to be, whose words guide our *kathā* and inspire our realizations. As you have said, “Read and speak from the books, and so many new lights will come out.” (Letter, 16 June 1972) And elsewhere, “To hear and explain them is more important than reading them. One can assimilate the knowledge of the revealed scriptures only by hearing and explaining.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.6, purport). From the newest devotee to the most advanced, and even for those inquiring for the first time, anyone who sincerely hears your words, deliberates on them, and speaks his understanding feels the light of Kṛṣṇa consciousness brightening his life.

You have said that your purports are your devotional ecstasies and that Kṛṣṇa, not you, wrote your books. Day after day, week after week, year after year you dictated as your Lord spoke, your heart and His linked in a love that would manifest in your writings and liberate all those who sought refuge in them.

I was one such seeker of that refuge—a desperate one at that—having for lifetimes been bound, dragged, and beaten by the ropes of illusion. You found me drowning in misery, reached out your hand, hoisted me up, and gave me sanctuary in your lifeboat of transcendental knowledge. How exhausted I had been after such a long journey of sin, suffering, and bewilderment! And how much relief I felt when you began filling my heart with your words, my life with devotee association, and my belly with *prasādam*.

As I witness the plight of all the sad and frightened souls presently in Kali’s grasp, I am often reminded of that same despair I was feeling before being blessed with your mercy. And I reflect: What could be more foolish than to allow oneself to again become overwhelmed by the glare of *māyā*, to let go of your hand and fall headlong back into the miserable ocean of illusion? As senseless as that might sound, because I am still a child in spiritual life I must be vigilant to never underestimate the extent of *māyā*’s craftiness and any propensity for foolhardiness that could still be lingering in my heart. My reverent prayer, therefore, is that you protect this otherwise helpless soul by blessing me to continue

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drinking, relishing, and sharing the elixir of your enlightened words, for they are my only hope and the only salvation for this parched and forlorn world.

Your insignificant servant,

Guṇagrāhi dās Goswami

Hanumatpreśaka Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept our humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

In all the circumstances where we travel or can imagine traveling, we find no shelter but to always have the recollection of your lotus feet. They are warm, substantial, and always stimulated by your travel on the spiritual field. This is our maybe mistaken but humble perception of your mercy and association. Then you kindly give us a little service to accomplish there, always chanting the *mahā-mantra*.

What more do we need?

This is the seed of unlimited universes of devotional activity. On this, the worlds of Goloka and Gaurā-līlā can expand and expand. We hope that these efforts in glorifying your books are successful. We are struggling, struggling, struggling so hard to let people—professors—experience, see, the content of these books. They are very nice. It is a great task to try to relish even a little of them in proper proportion. We hope to be always engaged in this *saṅkīrtana* with your proper disciples.

Your very minor servant,

Hanumatpreśaka Swami

Hridayānanda dās Goswami

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

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

It is said that “soft water wears away the stone.” Your unceasing mercy, which springs spontaneously from your all-compassionate nature, gradually wears away the stonelike covering of our heart. With your pure, peerless Kṛṣṇa consciousness you reveal the supreme reality of Kṛṣṇa to all. With your unalloyed, unflagging determination to serve Lord Caitanya’s mission, you ever remind us of, and inspire us to perform, our real duty in life.

Maturing and growing wiser in Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to appreciate more and more your

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inestimable glories. You are the perfect teacher and friend, and on your Vyāsa-pūjā day we beg to be useful in your mission.

Your servant,

Hridayānanda dās Goswami

Janānanda Gosvāmī

*nama ori viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāminn iti nāmine*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earth, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I sit pondering what to write this year. An account of the year's efforts? A glorification of your movement and the devotees serving you? Glorification of your unlimited achievements? A philosophical presentation? Some musings on your mood, or on your mission and how it should be developed? My memories of you? No, it seems that this year I need to shed something from my heart. Who can I turn to other than you, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Whatever the contents of my offering, for me the most significant aspect of Vyāsa-pūjā is that it is a time to remember you. It is a time to look deep into my heart. How much am I putting you in the center of my life, connecting everything to you, and genuinely recognizing that I exist merely by your mercy?

To be honest, for most of the year I barely remember you. I plow on with so-called service with little consciousness of, gratitude toward, or dedication to you, what to speak of living for your pleasure.

Even during your personal presence I generally avoided getting too close to you, justifying my behavior with the excuse that it enabled me "to better to serve the mission." Sometimes I regret missing out on the opportunity to spend more time in your presence on your many visits to the UK.

I look back nearly forty years to your sitting on the lawn at Bhaktivedanta Manor. I would like to write that I was with you during your many months of grace throughout the summer of the dreamlike year 1973. But that is not the case, nor is it my thought, Śrīla Prabhupāda, since I was not there during those magical moments.

What I remember is a time when tears were coming from my eyes, not out of the ecstasy of being with you but out of a feeling of hopelessness. I could see little light on the horizon. I felt I had let you down. My aspirations as a fledgling devotee seemed to be reaching a standstill. I pondered my future. "Is there any hope for me?" At that time I felt you showed me, as you are always more than ready to do, your causeless mercy. Somehow I picked up the Vaiṣṇava songbook and opened to the song "Gurudeva." (It puzzles me why this song has become almost a theme song for anyone but you, and why when we sing it one gets the vibe that is not to be sung for you.)

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My mind became fixed on the meaning. Suddenly I was transferred to another world—no longer wallowing in my failure and sorrows. I felt your overwhelming presence, like a loving parent caressing his child and allaying his fears. I repeated the words over and over, meditating on you.

Today, as I write these few words, I reflect on the same subject. I bludgeon on in my nearly unconscious way, existing on what I consider my own strengths. This last year has forced open a door in my blocked tunnel—painful as it is. It is far from open yet. Am I again going to resort to my closed-shop approach and intellectualize the situation to my own suiting? When will that day come when I embrace the humble path of surrender to the truth of dependence and not the illusion of relative independence? It's a challenge of faith—there is need of adjustment.

Gurudeva, give to this servant just one drop of mercy. I am lower than a blade of grass. Give me all help. Give me strength. Let me be as you are, without desires or aspirations.

Oh Śrīla Prabhupāda, if I were truly humble I could take that mercy you are showering on us. To be always conscious of your presence in every step, freed of selfish motivations and desires to enjoy in gross and subtle ways.

I offer you all respects, for thus I may have the energy to know you correctly. Then, by chanting the holy name in great ecstasy, all my offenses will cease.

When will that day come when I will offer you respects with my entire being and not just some ritualistic lip service. Even my so-called taking shelter of the holy name is more of an egotistical exhibition aimed at impressing others, with no genuine devotion to you or the name.

O Lord and Master! When will such mercy fall to this one who is weak and devoid of intelligence? Allow me to be with you.

Answer: Whenever you sincerely want it— it is there, just take it.

But I am devoid of intelligence and am surely weak. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are not stopping anyone from being with you. It is only my own self-centred foolishness that is the block. I still want to be seen in the center.

If you examine me, you will find no good qualities. Your mercy is all that I am made of. If you are not merciful unto me, I can only weep, and I will not be able to maintain my life.

Please do not examine me, my mind says. Take it on face value. But I am full of bad qualities. In truth I am nothing without your mercy. You are more than willing to be merciful even to a hoglike person like me, but I continue to grunt and search for the stool of name, fame, adoration, and distinction. Who is to blame? I continue to think I know what is best for your institution, instead of seeing that your institution is best for me. I continue to find faults in others, while tactfully avoiding surrendering myself. I lazily expect others to do it for me, blame them if they don't, and minimize them if they do. My devious intelligence constantly tries to convince me that it alone is right. Śrīla Prabhupāda, I see envy lurking at every step, since I do not give what you have given me. I am a miser and thus miserable.

I do not pray to you. I do not glorify you. I fail to read your books sufficiently and have become too lax in following the *sādhana* program. I rarely instruct others in the way you did. I have little faith or devotion. I want followers but not to follow. I want others to serve me but do not want to serve them.

What a hopeless self-indulgent case! I could go on and on. The list would never end. Anyway, I have wasted enough of your time and others'. Now is the time to use this life to bring pleasure to you instead of consternation. Now more than ever is the time to take shelter of your mercy and get on with it. How will I utilize whatever is left of this meager life?

There is so much mercy to get and give. I hope that one day I will be humble and immerse myself in the dust of your lotus feet. When will I take the glorious opportunity of assisting you in expanding your movement instead of "mine"? I hope that one day I will be an instrument for you to play. I hope

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that one day I will surrender. I hope that one day I will hear the Gāyatrī mantra and the holy name. I hope that one day I will show respect to others and not desire respect for myself. I hope that one day I will genuinely serve the devotees and give up my false ego. I hope that one day I will love you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Only then is there any hope for this hopeless charade of a devotee. “Hope against hope.” At least this one day there is hope.

Almost forty years later I again sit, I am sorry to say, without tears in my eyes, reflecting on the meaning of “Gurudeva.” How much I have offended you and your mission and your devotees over the years, despite my own paltry contribution!

What type of offering is this? Śrīla Prabhupāda, please forgive me. The offering I hope to make is my life. May I truly become grateful and at every moment recognize the true greatness of your mercy. This is your miracle and your glory: that you have allowed someone like me a place at your lotus feet.

It is an amazing testimony to your unlimited mercy that a deceitful person like me is still allowed to associate with your mission. Please do not kick me away. Thank you for the opportunity to remember you on your Vyāsa-pūjā day.

Your servant,

Janānanda Gosvāmī

Kadamba Kānana Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances. All glories to Your Divine Grace!

It is amazing to observe the growth of Lord Caitanya’s wish-fulfilling desire tree.

Recently I was in Tompkins Square Park, New York. The city council has put a sign on the tree where you stood and held public *kīrtana*. The sign reads “Hare Krishna Tree,” and off to the side there is another sign, reading “A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, began his public chanting under this tree.” As I stood under the tree, a young man of about twenty came up to me and asked, “What would I have to do to become a monk.” I could see how you have invested that place with your mercy. And the fact that I could be there and appreciate all of that, instead of being lost in the material wilderness, means that I have been a recipient of your mercy.

Your movement has grown to enormous proportions all over the world, and in India especially Kṛṣṇa consciousness is booming. Through you the branches of the Caitanya tree have spread everywhere. Those branches that very carefully follow your teachings will flourish and produce wonderful fruits, and those branches that are not serious in following you will dry up or break due to foolish independence.

Through you I have come to explore the amazing world of *bhakti*, and as I learn more about our tradition, practices, and philosophy, more about the spiritual world, about Kṛṣṇa’s *rāsa-līlā* and so many other exalted topics, I realize that I am a dwarf. No matter how learned, how experienced, how powerful I have become or will become, I know that success or failure in spiritual life simply depends on very carefully serving your lotus feet. There is nothing else.

Hoping to remain dedicated to you and to increase my service in quantity and purity,

Your servant,

Kadamba Kānana Swami

Keśava Bhāratī Dāsa Gosvāmī

My dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances in the dust of your lotus feet, dust that goes on purifying the world by making Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy accessible to all in the form of your recorded material and transcendental purports.

*vāyur anilam amṛtam athedam bhasmāntam śarīram
om krato smara kṛtaṁ smara krato smara kṛtaṁ smara*

“Let this temporary body be burnt to ashes, and let the air of life be merged with the totality of air. Now, O my Lord, please remember all my sacrifices, and because You are the ultimate beneficiary, please remember all that I have done for You.”

*agne naya supathā rāye asmān
viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān
yuyodhy asmaj juhurāṇam eno
bhūyiṣṭhām te nama-uktiṁ vidhema*

“O my Lord, as powerful as fire, O omnipotent one, now I offer You all obeisances, falling on the ground at Your feet. O my Lord, please lead me on the right path to reach You, and since You know all that I have done in the past, please free me from the reactions to my past sins so that there will be no hindrance to my progress.”

As a result of my past sins, my body is now diseased and full of suffering, like all aging material bodies. O Śrīla Prabhupāda, when will I stop wallowing in the mire of chronic pain and take full shelter of you and of the Lord's holy names!

I feel tangible relief, however, from continually traveling with you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I ride the exhilarating waves of your morning-walk discussions, powerful lectures, room conversations, interviews, public programs, and piercing question-and-answer sessions. I listen again and again as you travel everywhere, enlightening everyone you meet. From whatever position a person has attained on the continuum of spiritual evolution, you take him or her—devotee or not, favorable or not—at least a step closer to reality, toward Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. What an intensely delightful experience this is: to hear daily, in chronological order, all of your published recorded material. And each time I go through it, you reveal something new of your extraordinary personality.

Wielding Occam's-razor-like logic, you find the simplest explanations for effects that seem complex, as you staunchly stick to the Vedic conclusion, which makes no speculative assumptions.

In this way, your dazzling spiritual intelligence consistently and repeatedly deals with even age-old controversial issues in a way that satisfies any honest person who inquires from you.

An airline pilot asks how to understand evil if God is good and the source of everything. You explain in clear, unequivocal logic the relationship between darkness and light. Kṛṣṇa is all-good. For Him there is no evil, just as for the sun there is no darkness. We create evil by turning our backs on God, just as we create darkness by turning our backs on the sun. The pilot goes away enlightened and a step closer to his real destination.

A disciple asks what evidence we can give to the scientists, who need observation and experiment to confirm something as true. You hold fast to the simple logic of the *Gītā*: “First of all you observe that this man is moving, or this animal is moving, that there is some moving force. And the experiment is that now [after death] you can understand that the moving force is gone. This is experiment. . . . It is simple. But because of their bad education, they cannot understand the simple thing.”

A psychologist comes to visit you. You tell him that he doesn't know anything. And still he comes back for more! He's sincere and honest, you note. You then go on to point out that Kṛṣṇa speaks like a

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gentleman in the *Gītā*. From the beginning, Kṛṣṇa highlights how the body is changing from boyhood to old age in this life but the person remains the same. What is the difficulty in understanding the eternity of the soul? But, generally, educated persons need to make things complicated. If it's not complicated they won't consider seriously the point being made, much less accept it as true.

During a lecture one leader calls out: "All the children should go out." You respond, "No, that's all right. Children are not punishable." Cheers and laughter. "Neither the women." More laughter with clapping. "But don't take advantage." More laughter. "And here we have only *brāhmaṇas*, saintly persons, women, and children. Who is to be punished?" The laughter and clapping crescendo.

But at other times (perhaps when they were taking advantage?), you say from the *vyāsāsana* that the children should be taken out. You know exactly what to say and when to say it in order to train everyone in every circumstance. What an artful teacher you are, Śrīla Prabhupāda!

You repeatedly tell us not to waste time with those who are dishonest and unwilling to hear, who simply argue for the sake of argument, no matter how logical the presentation. Look for the innocents, you say. We're not here to please the public, the common man, but to please Kṛṣṇa and our previous *ācāryas*. The others will eventually follow if we don't compromise our core values and principles; then they too will be pleased.

Your dealings are filled with grace, dignity, and humor, even as you are expressing your disapproval of ignorance or correcting the faults of your disciples. Your love and compassion, your genuine concern for whomever you talk to, is self-evident at every moment, even as you call the whole world "rascal."

Authorities learned in subjects you admittedly know little about go away with genuine respect for you, even when you point out the defects in their theories and label them rascals and cheaters to their faces.

A woman reporter tries to embarrass you because of your stance on women's liberation. But even she is forced to chuckle when you propose that it's better to have a cool head and hot legs than cool legs and a hot head. And you win the hearts and heads of bystanders fortunate enough to hear from you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, in this conflict-ridden world, hearing from you soothes the mind and senses like a *mogra*-scented breeze.

May all of us who claim to be your followers learn from you the fine art of living in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness by listening to the transcendental gems that pour forth from your lotus mouth as you travel the earth delivering the fallen conditioned souls.

Aspiring to assist you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I remain forever yours,

Keśava Bhāratī Dāsa Gosvāmī

Krishna Dās Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at the dust of your lotus feet. All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, on this most auspicious day.

In 1965 you took the transcendently brave step of moving from Vṛndāvana, Bharat, to New York City. To follow the instructions of your spiritual master you swapped the transcendental association of saints for the likes of drug addicts. You took the bold step of allowing *mātājīs* to reside in temples, as well as *prabhus*. You took the bold step of awarding *sannyāsa* to young aspiring devotees to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, even though Śrīla Vyāsadeva prohibited the taking of *sannyāsa* in this age of Kali.

You made these adjustments according to time, place, and circumstance, to enable the establishment and development of the movement. Without these bold steps it would not have been possible to spread the movement as quickly as you did.

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Your taking *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in 1959 at Śrī Keśavaḥ Gaudīya Maṭha, in Mathurā, is a great example. At the age of 64 you were inspired in several dreams, in which Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Swami Prabhupāda appeared, urging you to take to the renounced order of life. In fact you already were at that stage of life, as you wonderfully displayed the qualities of a pure Vaiṣṇava, which are nicely described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.25.21):

*titikṣavaḥ kārūṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām
ajāta-śatravaḥ śāntāḥ sādhaḥ sādhu-bhūṣaṇāḥ*

“The symptoms of a *sādhu* are that he is tolerant, merciful, and friendly to all living entities. He has no enemies, he is peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime.”

Even though you are such an exalted Vaiṣṇava, a pure devotee of the Lord, constantly in the direct association with the Lord, still you were somewhat hesitant to enter the renounced order of life to show the example that it is a serious commitment which can be difficult to maintain in this age of Kali. You did not take the responsibility of entering the renounced order lightly.

Since you left the planet, although many of your faithful disciples have carried on your mission, unfortunately we have seen many of the *sannyāsīs* fall away, causing difficulties for their disciples and embarrassment for the movement. Although *sannyāsa* is given to afford the opportunity for the devotee to advance and excel in his service to the Lord, in many cases we have seen that personal weaknesses, such as lust and greed, have resulted in undermining the sincere effort of your movement.

In a letter to His Holiness Trivikrama Mahārāja on 7 March 1970, you state:

Married life does not mean that one should continue to live with the wife throughout the whole life; at a certain age, say between 20-25 years, one may accept a wife, live with her to the maximum age of 50 years, and then there should be no more sex relationship—stringently. And at the mature old age, say 65 -70 years, everyone must accept the renounced order of *sannyāsa*, if not in dress, then in action positively.

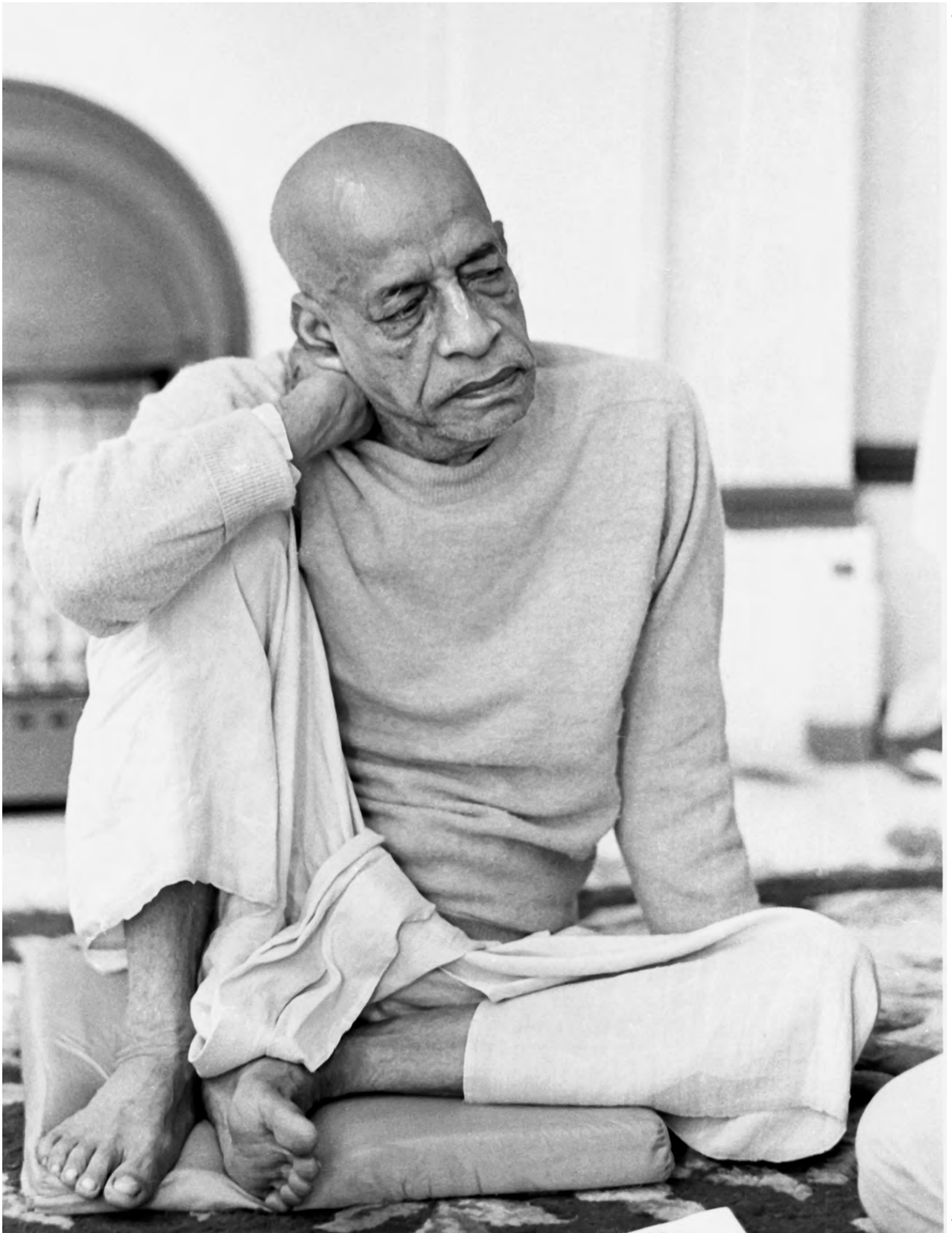
From your guidance we can see that it is important that *sannyāsa* is given when the recipient is at the appropriate mature stage as regards age and spiritual realization, so that the *sannyāsī* can handle the responsibilities, since these falldowns not only undermine the spiritual potency of the movement but have a very negative effect on the disciples of the *sannyāsīs* and gurus who fall down. It causes me great pain when I see the condition of these disciples, knowing how terrible they feel.

I look forward to a time when there will be no more falldowns in ISKCON so as to secure the bright future that awaits the movement you founded. I urge the present leaders of the movement to give proper consideration to this serious problem, determine its causes, and find the appropriate solution.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I thank you for accepting me as your *sannyāsa* disciple and for the great privilege of serving in your ISKCON. I also seek your mercy and blessings to become a responsible follower of your mission, with the internal strength to overcome the trials and challenges that Māyā may place in my path.

Your servant,

Krishna Dās Swami



Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Lokanāth Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at the dust of your divine lotus feet on this most auspicious occasion of the 116th anniversary of your glorious appearance.

The moment we are no longer an observing, reflecting being, we have ceased to be aware of ourselves and only exist in that quiet. On the occasion of your Vyāsa-pūjā, I humbly reflect with much sobriety on the formative years when I first joined your organization. Recently, in March-April 2012, I was in Juhu, Mumbai, and that triggered my memory about the early days and prompted me to reflect on how I joined this glorious Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in March 1972. This year marks the 40th anniversary of my joining your transcendental movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I joined you right after our second meeting.

Around this time I was a simple and inexperienced college student wrestling with my conscience and my spiritual identity. From the moment I met the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees at the Bombay pandal the previous year, I was constantly thinking about them and wanted to join them, but family obligations stopped me from fulfilling this spontaneous, heartfelt desire. College life had become increasingly unbearable, and I simply tolerated the tedium of the long hours of study and the examinations.

On one occasion, as I carried my heavy chemistry and physics books, I felt completely weighed down physically and emotionally and yearned to be far away from everyone and everything I knew. During the long walk, which lasted several hours, I contemplated my undesirable situation and realized that all I wished to do was chant and dance with the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. It became apparent to me that I did not want to sit for these tiresome examinations. I was doing it simply to satisfy my family. The further I walked, the clearer it became to me that I could no longer continue with this charade! Although I was the top student in primary and secondary school, when I entered college my inner being had become transformed. I was putting on a good show, but I had no passion or sincerity in pursuing a college degree. Whenever I was alone in my room I would bolt the door and leap up and down with raised arms, imitating the devotees I had seen chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* at the Bombay pandal.

I was overwhelmed with disgust as I carried a variety of books, notebooks, pens, and papers. As I continued to walk, a strong wave of emotion impelled me to start hurling each item, one by one, with all my strength as far as I could. I threw away everything—my chemistry book, my assignment papers, and my notebooks, and then I feverishly dug deep into my pockets for pens and other bits of paper, which I flung away with renewed vigor. I was finally left bare-handed and with empty pockets. I was overcome with a great sense of relief and victory. “Why haven’t I done this earlier?” I thought. I had been anticipating this poignant moment for years! All that I desired was to be free from all shackles—free like a bird to soar to new heights. I had finally found the willpower to release myself from this stranglehold. It was a long but satisfying walk, and I headed home, warmly embracing my new-found freedom.

My only goal now was to find the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. I had not seen them since April of the year before. I wondered whether I would ever see them again. How could I possibly find them in such an overcrowded place? To my surprise and relief, and as Kṛṣṇa would have it, two weeks later I saw an advertisement in a newspaper about a Hare Kṛṣṇa festival at ISKCON’s new property in Juhu. It was scheduled for March 17. This is exactly what I had been waiting for, and I practically raced to Juhu to attend the festival. It was at that festival, the second pandal program in Bombay, that I saw you again, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Attendance at the festival was not as great as it would have been in downtown Bombay. At least the festival was on our own property, and this was only the beginning. I was gripped by what you had to share with the congregation:

So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is for *para-upakāra*, for doing good to others—the best welfare activities in the world. And it is India’s duty, it is India’s prerogative to take this knowledge

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and broadcast all over the world for *para-upakāra*. And actually it is happening. All these European and American boys and girls, they are trying to understand this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement very seriously. So it is very scientific, authorized, and practical also. So we hope that all of you who are present here will try to cooperate with this movement.

During the festival you held a groundbreaking and cornerstone-laying ceremony—you wanted a temple constructed as soon as possible. You mentioned that the Deities, Rādhā-Rāsavihārī, should not remain standing in a bare tent but should be protected by a silver-and-teakwood *śiṁhāsana* on a marble altar.

The following words are etched in my memory because it was an impassioned plea to the congregation, an invitation that I could not resist:

Unfortunately, when we study the *Bhāgavata* we immediately jump over to *kṛṣṇa-līlā* with the *gopīs*. That is not the process. The process is first of all you try to understand Kṛṣṇa. Without understanding Kṛṣṇa, which is very difficult subject matter. . . Kṛṣṇa says that *yatatām api siddhānām kaścid mām vetti tattvataḥ*. So the preliminary study of Kṛṣṇa is *Bhagavad-gītā*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains Himself. In the Seventh Chapter, we shall begin from tomorrow morning, the study of this *Bhagavad-gītā* in the morning. Please try to come. So we have opened this center in Bombay to give you facilities. Please try to take it. Please come and encourage us, and we shall continue this movement, here in this center, as long as possible.

With these words you invoked the many people who had attended the festival, but it was as if you had spoken to me directly. I was enthused and stirred by the inspiring message.

Each day of the festival I arrived long before the evening program began. I took a local train from Kirti College in Dadar, downtown Bombay, to Santa Cruz, and then a bus to Juhu. This was about an hour's journey. On arriving, I would borrow Kṛṣṇa book and read, or just associate with the devotees. At times they invited me to take *prasādam* with them. I was curious about how they walked and how they talked, and I observed their lifestyle closely. I also remember dancing in the *kīrtanas* enthusiastically.

I was later informed by the devotees how happy you were that ISKCON would now occupy the new Juhu property, and you frequently spoke of your plans of erecting a spectacular ISKCON temple there. You repeatedly spoke of constructing a temple of an international stature, like a Holiday Inn hotel. You ordered the devotees to immediately arrange a ten-day public festival on the newly acquired land. You wanted everything organized before your return in two weeks.

Slowly and hesitantly, devotees began to move onto the Juhu land and prepare for the festival. Mr. Sethi, a neighbor and life member, hired a work crew to cut down the weeds and other vegetation, and other life members came forward to assist. The arrival of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī at Juhu also meant increased difficulties for the devotees, who now had to struggle to maintain the morning *pūjā* and cook six daily offerings in an inadequate kitchen. The tent in which Rādhā-Rāsavihārī was housed at times swayed dangerously in the wind. But They tolerated these inconveniences simply because you prayed to Them, “My dear Sir, please remain here, and I shall build a beautiful temple for You.”

Like many other Indians, I was impressed and inspired by how the Westerners had taken to India's culture. Their commitment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, *sanātana-dharma*, seemed very deep. Their dedication was obvious. I did not doubt their authenticity.

The “smart Indian intellectuals,” however, had doubts. Historically, the British had initially come to India with the promise of doing trade under the name of The East India Trading Company. Gradually they had not only succeeded in business but had also taken over the whole country. Now the Westerners were back in the country, this time with *dhotīs*, *kurtās*, beads, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and some Indians thought the Westerners who once came as businessmen had now returned as *sādhus*, knowing the Indians' weakness for their own culture. “We can't be fooled,” they declared. “On the surface you may appear like *sādhus*, but you are here to deceive us. You are spies, CIA agents in disguise.” Because of this misperception, there was a lot of unfavorable media coverage of the movement. The image presented was that the devotees were not following any principles but were living like hippies. A movie with this theme

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was released and became famous throughout India. It was called *Hare Rama, Hare Krishna*. The movie showed Western youngsters in India, wearing *dhōṭīs* and saris and chanting “Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma,” but also taking intoxicants and mixing freely between the sexes. For several years after that, whenever we went out preaching we would hear people singing the soundtrack from that movie.

The bad publicity did not affect me in the least. You explained the situation with much clarity. You said, “All Indians are devotees. They have just been misled by politicians.” Your policy was to fan the small spark of inherent devotion into a blazing fire.

I stopped going to college after this pandal program. For me it was a foregone conclusion that I was going to accept you as my spiritual master, my dear Śrīla Prabhupāda. There was no need for anyone to preach to me, nor do I remember at any point thinking “Yes, now I am convinced.” I was *immediately* convinced. In 1971 I developed an attachment for ISKCON devotees, and I naturally felt that ISKCON was my home and you were my spiritual master. Perhaps the connection was already there from a previous birth and I was again looking for you and hankering for your shelter and mercy. ISKCON was the first institution I ever joined, and you were the first and will be the last spiritual master I will accept. Since the day I joined ISKCON, the thought of leaving has never occurred to me.

A few days after the festival at Juhu ended, I composed an application letter to join ISKCON. I addressed it to “The President,” wrote it out by hand, and then took it to a typing institute to have it professionally typed. Because this was an “International Society,” I wanted to present myself appropriately. I signed the typed letter and took a bus out to Juhu to deliver it personally. In the letter I explained that I had attended the ISKCON festivals put on by the devotees in both 1971 and 1972 and had studied their literature. I expressed my appreciation for their lifestyle, dedication, devotion, and great sacrifice. Borrowing some of the terms I had seen on the pandal advertisements, I complimented their dazzling *āratis*, ecstatic *kīrtanas*, and sumptuous *prasādam*. I stated my willingness to follow the four regulative principles and apologized for having taken the reader’s time away from Kṛṣṇa by making him read my application. At the end of my letter I begged the temple president to consider the application favorably and to accept me as a devotee.

When I arrived at Hare Kṛṣṇa land I asked to see the president. I expected to find him sitting behind an official desk in a sprawling, opulent office. Girirāja Dāsa, the temple president at that time, a simple *brahmacārī*, was not at all hard to find—he happened to be walking passed me. Wherever the temple president stood became a working office space! I thought my letter would sit for some time in pending files, and probably my history had to be checked and my application weighed against others. But Girirāja stood and read the letter on the spot, right in front of me. As soon as he realized what my intention was, he excitedly waved the letter above his head, getting the attention of everyone around, and yelled, “Hey, we’ve got a new *bhakta*!” I was officially accepted.

It was not long thereafter that a barber arrived on the scene. Before I knew it, Mahānṣa Swami taught me how to put on a *dhōṭī*. It was not even an overnight change— within a few hours I was transformed into a *brahmacārī*. The very same afternoon, I went with Gargamuni Swami, who was in charge of school preaching, to a school program. There was *kīrtana* and a talk, and I was given the job of translating from English to Hindi. Further, I was transformed into a preacher on my very first day in your Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Some months later I was formally given shelter by Your Divine Grace in the form of initiation.

That was my very first service in your transcendental mission, my dear Śrīla Prabhupāda. You have been so very merciful upon me that I have remained engaged in such soul-satisfying services for all these years. And yet the desire to serve and to please Your Divine Grace has only increased over time. I most humbly beg at your lotus feet to keep me engaged with energy and enthusiasm and in this manner serve your divine purpose eternally.

Your humble servant,

Lokanāth Swami

Homages from Non-GBC Sannyāsīs

Mahā-Viṣṇu Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Because you are so dear to Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa has been so patient with me and kind to me, your otherwise unqualified servant. Only because of you can I now see that Kṛṣṇa has been carefully making some intricate arrangement to purify my grimey heart these last few years. Therefore this year I am again able to offer you a Vyāsa-pūjā homage on your your divine appearance day. I am ashamed that I lapsed writing one for two years.

Without your words and personality—especially hearing your lectures every day—I would have been lost. Your words are always so fresh and revealing, beckoning me to try for perfection, going back to Godhead. Your conviction and faith are so comforting to me. Your boldness is so exhilarating and dynamic. Your softness and humility are so endearing and exemplary. Your personality is so fatherly. Your wit is so penetrating and revealing. Your knowledge, which is always completely true to Kṛṣṇa’s words, always corrects me or confirms my realizations and thoughts. Without your words, there would be no hope for me. I met you in your words four decades ago, and you are still with me. In fact, you seem to be coming closer and closer to me.

For example, since I am often trying to preach in Africa these days, these words of yours during question time after your class on *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.2, spoken in Nairobi on October 28, 1975, are very striking and pertinent to me:

Indian man: But Kṛṣṇa has not given you power as guru?

Prabhupāda: Yes, yes.

Indian man: So you can show?

Prabhupāda: So I am not so powerful that I can show the *viśva-rūpa*. He has given me this power, that “You go and speak to the foolish rascals that I am Bhagavān.” [laughter] That much power. Yes. That is my power. I can say to you that “Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān.” That’s all. I never become equal to Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, thank you so much for saving me. Please continue to have mercy on me through your words and example so that till I leave this world I can continue trying to follow in your footsteps as an ISKCON *sannyāsī* preaching Kṛṣṇa’s glories.

Your unworthy servant,

Mahā-Viṣṇu Swami

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Pārtha Sārathi Dās Goswami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories unto you.

Recently, while residing in the shade of Govardhana Hill, I was honored to listen to your morning walks, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes, and conversations recorded thirty-seven years ago when you visited South Africa. Listening to your transcendental voice is very relishable and intimate way of associating with Your Divine Grace.

I have also been trying to increase my appreciation of your sincere followers. I want to develop genuine love for all your associates, whether big (*guru*) or small (*laghu*). During the history of the South African *yātrā* and ISKCON in general, so many Vaiṣṇavas have come and apparently gone. All of them contributed something to your mission, and therefore you will not fail to notice their sacrifice.

Like the multifarious immediate associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, you have many followers, and all should be appreciated. Daily I offer my respects to Your Divine Grace and your numerous followers, in the mood of this passage from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 10.4–7):

*caitanya-gosāñhira yata pāriṣada-caya
guru-laghu-bhāva tāñra nā haya niścaya*

The associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu were many, but none of them should be considered lower or higher. This cannot be ascertained.

*yata yata mahānta kailā tāñ-sabāra gaṇana
keha karibāre nāre jyeṣṭha-laghu-krama*

All the great personalities in the line of Lord Caitanya enumerated these devotees, but they could not distinguish between the greater and the lesser.

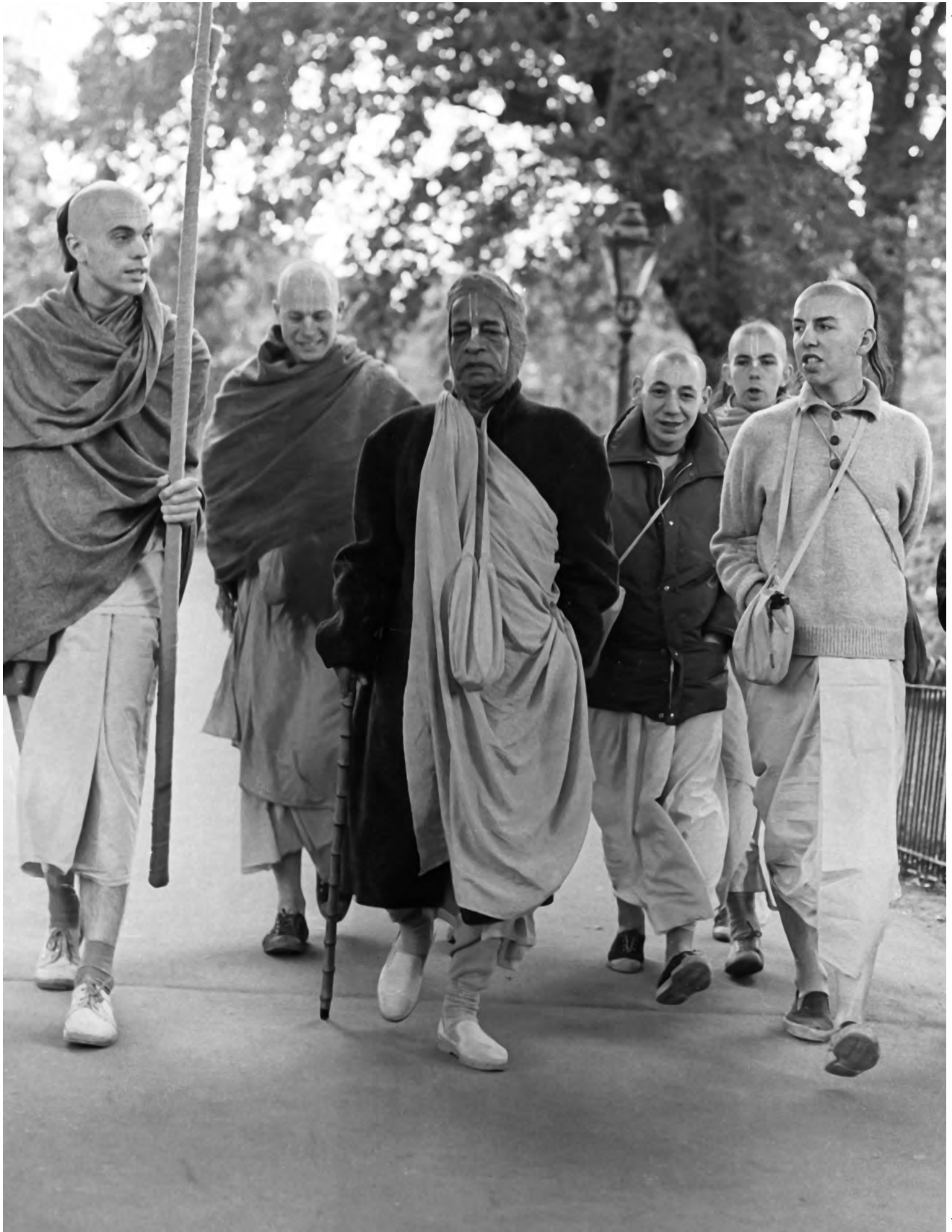
*ataeva tāñ-sabāre kari' namaskāra
nāma-mātra kari, doṣa nā labe āmāra*

I offer my obeisances unto them as a token of respect. I request them not to consider my offenses.

*vande śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya- premāmara-taroḥ priyān
śākhā-rūpān bhakta-gaṇān kṛṣṇa-prema-phala-pradān*

I offer my obeisances to all the dear devotees of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the eternal tree of love of Godhead. I offer my respects to all the branches of the tree, the devotees of the Lord who distribute the fruit of love of Kṛṣṇa.

[PURPORT] Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī sets the example of offering obeisances to all the preacher devotees of Lord Caitanya, without distinction as to higher and lower. Unfortunately, at present there are many foolish so-called devotees of Lord Caitanya who make such distinctions. For example, the title “Prabhupāda” is offered to a spiritual master, especially to a distinguished spiritual master such as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, or Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. When our disciples similarly wanted to address their spiritual master as Prabhupāda, some foolish people became envious. Not considering the propaganda work of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, simply because these disciples addressed their spiritual master as Prabhupāda they became so envious that they formed a faction along with other such envious persons just to minimize the value of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. To



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chastise such fools, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī very frankly says, *keha karibāre nāre jyeṣṭha-laghu-krama*. Anyone who is a bona fide preacher of the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu must be respectful to the real devotees of Lord Caitanya; one should not be envious, considering one preacher to be very great and another to be very lowly. This is a material distinction and has no place on the platform of spiritual activities. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī therefore offers equal respect to all the preachers of the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who are compared to the branches of the tree. ISKCON is one of these branches, and it should therefore be respected by all sincere devotees of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Following in the footsteps of the previous *ācāryas*, I would also like to humbly offer my respects to all your exalted disciples and granddisciples and great-granddisciples. By pleasing them I can please you. By serving them I can serve you. This is *ānugātya-sevā* or *ānugātya-dharma*. Both on this plane and in Goloka Vṛndāvana, this concept of being the servant of the servant is essential.

In your apparent physical absence, my esteemed godbrothers are my only shelter. If I can serve them and please them, I am confident this will please you. I accept your desire and instruction as coming through them.

I don't have the strength to approach you directly, but I can approach you through those who know how to serve you. I am very wretched, worthless, insignificant, and destitute, and I pray one day to be recognized as your disciple. So for the time being I will offer my respects to all of your followers without consideration of *guru-laghu-bhāva*, the conception of higher or lower.

You have touched the heart of so many devotees, and although over the years they may have temporarily drifted from the strict practice of *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti*, they still feel some incredible attachment to Your Divine Grace. In French it is *je ne sais quoi*—you possess a special, unique, indescribable quality that endears you to your followers.

Perhaps in some future lifetime I could call myself a real follower and disciple of Your Divine Grace, but for now let me rub my head in the dust of your true followers, whether they are *guru* or *laghu*.

I remain

Your servant,

Pārtha Sārathi Dās Goswami

Prahlādānanda Swami

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāñī-pracāriṇe
nirviṣeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Homages from Non-GBC Sannyāsīs

In *The Nectar of Instruction* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises us to be intelligent enough to distinguish between different levels of devotional accomplishment: from the neophyte (*kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*) to the intermediate (*madhyama-adhikārī*) to the advanced level (*uttama-adhikārī*). Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's books contain extensive information about these levels of spiritual attainment, it is still rather easy to become confused about one's own level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and that of others.

It is said that in Kali-yuga everyone is born a *sūdra* or lower (*kalau sūdra-sambhava*). A *sūdra* is one who identifies with the material body and is dissatisfied because of his or her material situation. A fortunate person, however, comes in contact with a pure devotee and begins the process of devotional service. But even if one sincerely tries to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one's conditioned nature does not disappear immediately. A neophyte devotee still identifies with the body and will, knowingly or unknowingly, to some degree perform devotional service to fulfill material desires.

In the beginning one generally approaches Lord Kṛṣṇa because of distress caused by one's sinful habits. But by regulated devotional service one gets the spiritual strength to avoid sinful activities and becomes detached from sinful desires. In this way, the root cause of sin is gradually diminished and all distress is alleviated. Next, the desire for material comfort becomes prominent. But by controlling the mind and trying to engage it in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one develops good qualities: one becomes friendly to others, and so the miseries arising from envy diminish. And as one's spiritual vision develops, one's mind becomes more and more situated in a state of equanimity, and one learns to tolerate one's own material circumstances and those of others. However, when one realizes that no amount of material satisfaction gives real happiness, a desire for real wisdom increases, a wisdom that awakens spiritual realization.

When one cultivates spiritual knowledge and wisdom, one remains unaffected by the dualities of material existence. From that platform one comes to the mode of goodness and acquires the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*. Once situated in the mode of goodness, one understands the value of devotional service and tries to increase one's enthusiasm to please Kṛṣṇa—"Endeavor executed with intelligence in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is called *utsāha*, or enthusiasm." (*Nectar of Instruction*, verse 3) Such enthusiasm to please Lord Kṛṣṇa inspires the Supreme Lord to reveal Himself to His devotee, and thus the devotee begins to understand the meaning of peace, real knowledge, and happiness. As a result one becomes steady on the intermediate platform as a *madhyama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava. But a devotee should not expect that he or she will immediately progress from a neophyte devotee to a steady engagement on the spiritual platform of consciousness.

Compared to an ordinary person or even an ordinary *yogī*, or sage, a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* is a rare and highly elevated person. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this:

Prabhupāda: *Kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* means he must be a *brāhmaṇa*. That is *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*. The spiritual life, *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, means he must be a qualified *brāhmaṇa*. That is *kaniṣṭha*. What is esteemed as very high position in the material world, *brāhmaṇa*, that is *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*.

*arcāyām eva haraye pūjām yaḥ śraddhayehate
na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ*

The *brāhmaṇa* means from the material stage gradually he is elevated to the spiritual stage. And below the *brāhmaṇa* there is no question of Vaiṣṇava. [Room Conversation, *Varṇāśrama System Must Be Introduced*, 14 February 1977, Māyāpur]

A neophyte devotee should try to come to the intermediate platform as soon as possible. This depends upon the devotee's sincerity and seriousness about achieving the higher platforms of devotional service. Indeed, actual devotional service begins at the level of liberation from the misconceptions of material affection and identification. At the stage of *anārtha-nivṛtti* in devotional service (giving up unwanted habits), one is liberated from the effects of *anārtas* and *aparādhas* (offenses). When one chants at the *nāmābhāsa* stage, gradually these impurities are removed. One is no longer attached to material hankering and lamentation, and one sees all living entities as Lord Kṛṣṇa's servants and reciprocates with them according to their devotional qualification (or potential lack of it) to engage in devotional service.

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One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me. [*Gītā* 18.54]

Practicing devotional service on the *madhyama-adhikārī* platform gives one the spiritual inspiration for spontaneous and other more advanced levels of *bhāva-bhakti*, *prema-bhakti*. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda cautions the sincere neophyte not to imitate more advanced devotees, for this will stop devotional progress and will eventually even end the attempt to rise to the level of pure devotional service. If one imagines that one has already reached perfection, why make any further attempt to achieve that perfection?

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised us to preach the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those who follow the instructions of the previous *ācāryas* and repeat their message to others become dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa will not allow such devotees to remain devoid of spiritual awareness and devotional feelings. Thus, after studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, one should practice one's *sādhana* sincerely and then distribute transcendental knowledge to others, especially in the form of transcendental literature. At the same time, we should learn to give up unnecessary anxieties, material attachments, material desires, and misconceptions arising from misidentification with the material world. We should take shelter of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and have faith in pure devotional service.

Your aspiring servant,

Prahlādānanda Swami

Śacīnandana Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmīne*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

With gratitude we join the large chorus of millions of voices who glorify you on your divine appearance day. The three worlds resound as devotees and others recite your numerous qualities with joy in their hearts.

They all know that a pure devotee of the Lord who is 100% surrendered to the will of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is extremely rare, and that only he can fulfill the purpose of creation: to bring fallen souls back to their original God consciousness. Such a liberated soul is no longer subject to the laws of karma.

*na karma-bandhanam janma vaiṣṇavānām ca vidyate
viṣṇur anucaratvaṁ hi mokṣam āhur manīṣiṇaḥ*

"A *vaiṣṇava* does not take birth under the jurisdiction of karmic law. His birth and disappearance are transcendental. The wise have declared that the servants of Viṣṇu are eternally engaged in the liberated

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service of the Lord and therefore free from the laws of material nature.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 10.113, quoted from the *Padma Purāṇa*)

Your main tool in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness was definitely to engage the fallen souls in chanting the holy names. In your own words:

I have not come to teach you, but only to request you to please chant the name of God. [*Science of Self Realization*, chapter 4a]

So our request to all, we are requesting all over the world the same thing, “Please chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, be cleansed in your consciousness and understand your spiritual identity.” [Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.10, Rome, 25 May 1974]

This year, when I visited Śrīvāsa Aṅgam, where the *kīrtana* of Mahāprabhu started, I was overcome with gratitude toward you. As we were reading from the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* about those early nocturnal *kīrtanas*, I could see how you have kindly taken the chanting out of India and distributed it all over the world.

I remembered a film of you in Tompkins Square Park, New York, where you chanted unassumingly under a tree surrounded by dozens of curious young Americans. Suddenly you briefly opened your eyes—and I was struck by the tremendous power that burst forth. It was clear that you were just about to fulfill a big vision: you were releasing a flood wave of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mercy, which was soon to spread its influence all over the world. Not only were you recruiting new devotees—no, you wanted them to be part of Śrī Caitanya’s mission and yours!

The main means in the mission:

Once, towards the end of His stay in this world, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explained His mission in a nutshell. He told Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya what He considered to be the main means of attaining *kṛṣṇa-prema*:

By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart, and awaken all varieties of devotional service. The result of chanting is that one awakens his love for Kṛṣṇa and tastes transcendental bliss. Ultimately, one attains the association of Kṛṣṇa and engages in His devotional service, as if immersing himself in a great ocean of love. [*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya* 20, 13–14]

In His manifest *līlās* Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had first trained His devotees in closed quarters at Śrīvāsa Aṅgam. No nondevotees were allowed in the *kīrtanas*—not even Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura’s stepmother.

After some time the devotees were requested to engage in *kīrtana* in their own homes. The Muslim government became alert and threatened to violently stop all further *kīrtana*. They would not tolerate the spreading of Hinduism. This was not a threat which could be easily ignored. The invaders were known for their tortures and had proven on numerous occasions that they would not spare even saints the most painful punishments one could imagine. Mahāprabhu’s response was one of full defiance: He called for a mass-civil-disobedience *saṅkīrtana* demonstration and, chanting and dancing, led a procession of hundreds of thousands of His followers down the banks of the Gaṅgā to the house of the governor, Chand Kazi, and made him His follower. Mahāprabhu’s followers then took the Kazi’s sign, a moon that was slim on both sides, and put Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* over it. Everyone thus knew: the suppression of *saṅkīrtana* in Navadvīpa had been overcome.

Later Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declared: “Those who chant in *kīrtana* are protected by the Sudarśana *cakra* of the Lord.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, in the early days you also chanted in closed quarters with your first followers. You wanted to make them strong and fortify them against inner and outer obstacles. Then you sent them out all over the world, trusting that Kṛṣṇa would protect your “Hare Kṛṣṇa people.”

From time to time you called us to your shelter—during festivals like Ratha-yātrā or when you visited our various countries. In your lectures you always placed your main emphasis on the chanting of the

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Lord's Holy Names. The message was clear: "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's all." During our *kīrtanas* you would often raise your arms, and then crowds of devotees and guests would go wild and dance with abandon.

Once during a well-attended public program in Koenigstein, Germany, a visitor got upset with the enthusiasm of the singing devotees and challenged you, "This chanting is self-hypnosis!" Calmly you replied, "No, it's self-purification."

On your appearance day I would like to request a blessing from you.

O most merciful master, please cast a compassionate glance upon me. Somehow you named me Śacīnandana Dāsa, "servant of Śrī Caitanya, the son of Mother Śacī." I can understand more and more that the chanting of the holy names is your most valuable gift. Please ignore my numerous disqualifications and engage me more and more in your and Śrī Caitanya's mission of spreading the holy name. For this end I beg you to empower my dry heart so that I can chant the holy name with love and affection. Then my efforts will be effective and I may please you so that you smile happily in my direction. That's all I want.

With lots of gratitude,

Your humble servant,

Śacīnandana Swami

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāminn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Viraha Bhavan
Stuyvesant Falls, New York

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I wish to write a Vyāsa-pūjā homage to you, but first I want to give you a brief confessional report of my own situation.

I recently had a very vivid dream of you. You have said that dreams of the spiritual master should be taken seriously. In this dream I felt the deep, urgent need to write you a letter. Somehow I thought it could be delivered even though you disappeared almost thirty-five years ago. I wanted to tell you why I am not preaching so actively as I did when you were present. I wanted to tell you of the very real handicap of my longstanding chronic headaches. I know that you already understand this about me, but I felt a deep emotional need to write you in a letter before I meet you face to face. I wanted you to be sympathetic to my plight. And I would tell you that I am still writing—on my website, by publishing books, by keeping up with correspondence—and lecturing at festivals. So in this dream we had contact through my intense desire to write you a letter. That's all.

And now to my homage. You are still my exclusive, worshipable spiritual master, and I am your subordinate disciple, to be directed by you. As time passes I grow in appreciation for what you have done for me and for the world. Your exemplary disciple Mukunda Mahārāja has written a wonderful memoir

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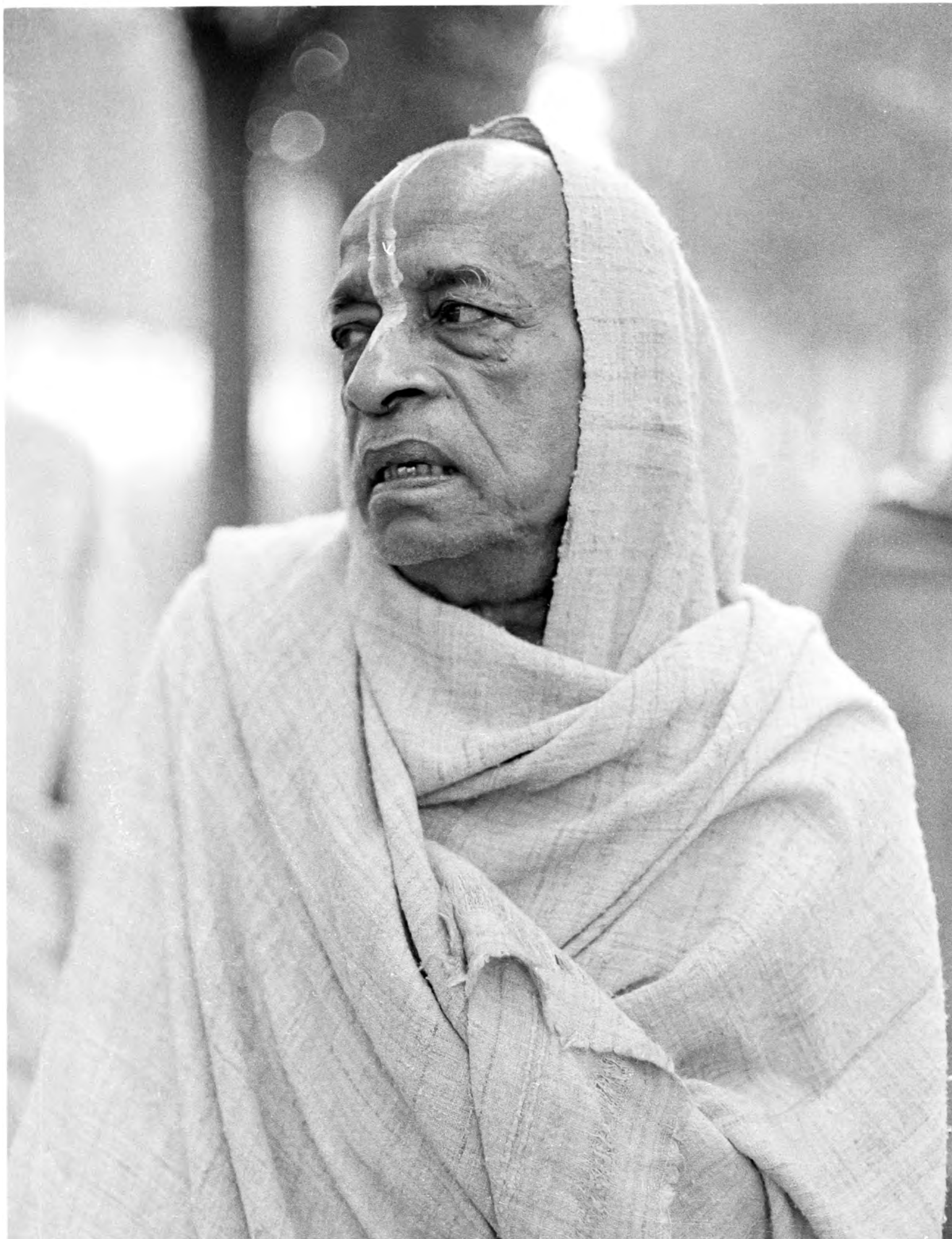
of you entitled *Miracle on Second Avenue*. You truly created a miracle there in 1966 by attracting serious followers to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with you and hear your lectures on *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. You arrived in the West at age seventy, at a unique moment in the social history of the United States, when thousands of young Americans were open to spiritual experimentation and were renouncing the standard values of materialism, as taught by their parents and government. If you had come a decade earlier or a decade later, you would not have found an audience as receptive to your radical proposal to drop out of the rat race for material success and embrace a life of very accessible ecstasy in service to the all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa sent you at the perfect time to start the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the West. By your saintly determination and charismatic friendliness, you attracted young people, first on the Lower East Side of New York City, then in the Haight-Ashbury heart of hippieland in San Francisco, and very soon in many other cities of America, and then in England and Europe. You established *āśramas* in rented buildings, and gradually, through the sales of your books by disciples, you were able to purchase impressive buildings where larger numbers of devotees lived and went out onto the streets to chant *harināma* and create great attraction. Your movement grew like wildfire.

You gave the greatest importance to the writing, printing, and distribution of your books. Your spiritual master had told you, “If you ever get money, print books,” and you took that instruction to heart. Beginning in India, you printed a newspaper, *Back to Godhead*, with Kṛṣṇa conscious articles on topical issues. When you accepted *sannyāsa*, you turned your attention to beginning a commentated English translation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Within a few years, by begging donations, you printed three volumes comprising the entire First Canto. You brought those books with you to America, and I bought the three volumes before I was even initiated. I dove into them and loved them despite the printing errors and grammatical mistakes. You gave a wealth of Vedic information, drawing from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas* and adding your own sweet personal touch. You declared the *Bhāgavatam* to be powerful reading matter capable of defeating the atheistic notions and empowering the reader to be able to convince others of the *bhāgavata* conclusion. Within a few years, under your personal direction, your educated disciples produced edited versions of your Indian originals, and your disciples produced illustrations that were included in editions of your books printed by a prestigious Japanese printing firm, Dai Nippon. You rose at 1:00 A.M. and worked on your books, and gradually you produced the Second, Third, and Fourth Cantos, etc. The devotees learned techniques for selling the books in public places, and the income went for supporting the temples as well as printing more books.

I won’t go into further details of the history of how you developed ISKCON. This history has been elaborately recounted in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* and many memoirs written by your disciples. I just want to thank you for coming to this world to pull us out of the material entanglement and engage us in Kṛṣṇa’s service. Had you not come, we would still be at the bottom of the well, with no one to lower a rope to help us get out.

I want to thank you for the special attention you gave me when I first approached you. The very first time I was alone with you in your room, I asked you if there was a stage of spiritual advancement from which one didn’t fall back. In my own life I had often made resolutions to stop sinful habits, but in the end I always gave in to them. You answered me with one word, “Yes.” You were so firm and confident that I immediately imbibed determination to follow the four rules. I came to you in the early summer of 1966, so I was eligible to take initiation at the first initiation you gave, on Janmāṣṭamī. But I held back. I had recently been discharged from two years’ compulsory service in the Navy and was enjoying my so-called freedom, living as a hippie on the Lower East Side. I was donating my money to you and attending all the classes, typing your manuscripts, and obeying the rules—but I hesitated to surrender myself to a spiritual master. I attended the Janmāṣṭamī programs at the storefront until the afternoon, but then I went to my apartment and skipped the initiation. Instead I engaged myself in typing your manuscript.

The next day I came to you with the typed pages. You were alone and you let me in. You remarked that I was absent from the initiation, but you said it was all right. I gave you the typed pages, and you looked them over and said they were well done. Then you gave me a few grapes. I foolishly thought, “I worked so hard typing into the night, and all I get is a few grapes?” Then I prepared to go. You gave me more manuscripts to type, and then you said, “Doing this typing is not a mechanical exchange. If you will love me, I will love you.” These words had a profound effect on me. They broke down my barriers of



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resistance and all the reasons I had for not being your disciple. Here I was demanding special attention from you, but you were telling me it was a two-way street. I had to love you, and then you would love me.

I left your room fully joyful and desiring initiation. The next day when I was in your room you took a phone call. You were making some arrangement for the marriage of two of your disciples, Mukunda and Janakī. When you hung up the phone you told me about the marriage and personally invited me to attend. Personal touches like this were just what I needed. I went to the wedding, and when I saw all the newly initiated disciples with their spiritual names and red chanting beads around their necks, I regretted my decision to avoid initiation. Within a few days I asked you if I could be initiated. You said, “You’ll have to be a vegetarian.” I said I already was. Then you said you were going to hold another initiation in two weeks, on Rādhāṣṭamī.

And so on Rādhāṣṭamī 1966 I became your *śiṣya* and have never regretted it. You always treated me with respect and regarded me as sincere. I thrived on being a responsible son, and even when I had to serve in separation—by going to Boston while you traveled around the world—I felt intimately connected to you, writing many letters, and periodically I got to see you in person. You selected me to be on the GBC, awarded me *sannyāsa*, and later called me to join you and be your personal servant and secretary. As your institution grew big, you grew a little less accessible than when you lived at 26 Second Avenue and we saw you every day. But I maintained a vital relationship with you by traveling with the Library Party and distributing your books to colleges, and later by agreeing to your personal request that I take up the service of being editor of *Back to Godhead* magazine. I visited you in India three times during your final illness in India in 1977, and was present for your disappearance.

During the time of introducing the system of carrying on the disciplic succession with initiating *gurus*, your ISKCON went through tumultuous times and a crisis in faith. But reforms were set in place, and you remain the pre-eminent *śikṣā-guru* for all your followers, at present and in the future. We are only safe when we are keeping you in the center of our lives and following your instructions.

You are ISKCON’s flag of victory. Your books will be the law books for humanity for the next ten thousand years. By pleasing you, we please Kṛṣṇa. When we displease you, our whereabouts are unknown. You are the eternal resident of Vṛndāvana whom we must follow if we wish to enter Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s service in Goloka Vṛndāvana. We must not be overintelligent and run after other gurus but listen only to those who are your strict followers. You are possessed of *kṛṣṇa-śakti*, which empowers you to spread the holy name all over the world. You are *jagad-guru*, or *guru* for the whole world, and you personally traveled all over the world many times just to keep your devotees alive and to attract new members to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You are the kind father-figure for all your spiritual children. You are able to keep close personal relationships with hundreds of persons and make them feel dear and accountable to you. As Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami has written in his Ph.D. thesis on you, you are a bona fide prominent theologian of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology. According to Lord Kṛṣṇa’s definition of a pure devotee in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, you are very, very dear to Him. You always remembered Kṛṣṇa and never forgot Him and told everyone you met to surrender to Him. If I had a hundred mouths I could not adequately describe your glories. I will end my homage by begging you to never kick me away but allow me to be your humble servant life after life.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Smita Krishna Swami

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,
Please accept my humble obeisances in the dust of your lotus feet.

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I'm not sure whether or not I really humbly bow down at your lotus feet. What is humility? You are the example of humility because, as you said, you never deviated from the order of your spiritual master and just repeated the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it has come down through the chain of *guru-paramparā*. You said that this was your credit. So for us humility means to humbly follow your instructions. But in your preaching you were bold. So humility must mean to humbly but boldly follow your instructions, your directions, your example. . . . Śrīla Prabhupāda, I cannot compare with you. Thus I bow my head at your feet.

The dust of your lotuslike feet. Was I ever close to that dust? In some ways I was. For me the dust of your feet was your speech. Those special moments when I actually was with you on your morning walks; they were not many, but some. And those precious times I could listen to your lectures as you sat on the *vyāsāsana*. Then there was nothing else to think about or worry about. I was at your feet, in the dust of your feet. For me that is you.

Others were actually close to you and served you personally. That was a service I was not qualified for, not was it required of me. But by your mercy I had my personal service to you. There was *saṅkīrtana*—*harināma* and book distribution—and other preaching services. They constituted my personal service to you. I took these services personally.

There were moments I wanted to write you a letter but did not. I was too shy. What would have happened if I had written those letters? But, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I did write one letter to you. I am happy for that. And I guess you are as well. That letter made a difference. I got initiation—you accepted me as your initiated disciple. Thank you for that, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Maybe that letter was enough: one drop, one significant drop, of your mercy.

Sometimes it feels as if you are nearby, and then I cry. You are my spiritual father—you nourish me spiritually. But sometimes I feel you are far away. But one day—who can say?—I will pay my obeisances in the dust of your lotus feet and say, “Here I am. Thank you for bringing me back.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I believe you remember us all. All those who remember you are remembered by you. In your mind, in your heart, there is a place for me as well. In that place I like to pay my obeisances to you, listen to you, and serve you forever. And Kṛṣṇa will not be far away, to be served and loved.

In the mornings we read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—the verse of the day, with your translation and purport. Through your translations and purports we are getting close to you and Kṛṣṇa. *Nityam bhāgavata-sevayā*: may it go on forever. May I forever pay my obeisances in the dust of your lotus feet.

Your endeavoring servant,

Smita Krishna Swami

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Subhāg Swami

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāminn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda, today is your auspicious appearance day, a day when we joyfully celebrate your appearance and try to understand your greatness. Also, on this special day we remember what you have done to bring people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and how you have taught us to serve a guru. We are unlimitedly indebted to you and pray that we can do some service for you. Please accept my humble obeisances.

In *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and many other places in your books you state that *bhakti* means “devotional service.” As the spiritual master for all your followers, you gave general instructions concerning devotional service, but you also gave personal instructions to many. I would like to tell you the services I am doing for your pleasure according to your personal instructions to me, as far as I remember them. I have traveled within India and other countries, such as Bangladesh, as per your instructions. In addition, I have also visited Singapore, as well as Indonesia and some of its many islands, along with Malaysia. The devotees in these countries, being humble and submissive, have been very encouraging and inspiring to work with.

Preaching In Indonesia

As a part of my preaching programs in Indonesia, I have started festivals like the Ciḍā-dadhi Festival in Bali and Sulawesi, which attracted many devotees from different islands and different temples. Many devotees were very much enthused, and they worked throughout the night prior to the festival, cooking and preparing *prasādam*. Many of the devotees joyfully heard Lord Nityānanda Prabhu’s pastimes. Now all the devotees wish to conduct this festival every year.

I was invited by one of the biggest bookstores in Indonesia, Gramedia, where they arranged interactive sessions on your *Bhagavad-gītā*—large-scale programs in their biggest outlets in Bali and Surabaya. I and the devotees with me had a great opportunity to preach and to distribute your books, especially your *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, as well as to distribute *prasādam*. The programs were very successful and given good media coverage. In particular, the *Jawa Post*, one of the most prominent newspapers in Indonesia, published an article glorifying your *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and its circulation around the world. I have been invited to preach and to distribute books in Gramedia’s outlets in other cities also. They expressed their desire to arrange such programs for me whenever I visit Indonesia.

In Bali I was invited by some of the well-known schools, where we held successful programs and interacted with the students. I was also invited to give a presentation at a conference organized by the Indonesian branch of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, held at the Udyana University, in Denpasar. Many professors (local and international) and students from various departments attended this conference. Many took your books and highly appreciated your teachings. I am sure this pleases you, because as we distribute these books to the educated people, common people will follow suit and become attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Now the devotees in Bali are gradually becoming enthusiastic and are coming out of their “mouse-holes,” as you said in one of your prayers. Our whole Society is a preaching movement. We are all about distributing books, the holy name, and *prasādam* and making devotees. The devotees in Bali began a program in a big park in the city where many people gather. The devotees do *saṅkīrtana*, and many people who come to the park are attracted. I personally attended this weekend *saṅkīrtana* program, which included book and *prasādam* distribution. The *grhaṣṭha* devotees contribute significantly toward

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the *prasādam* distribution *sevā*. Many interested men and women are joining, in increasing numbers. Gradually the Bali devotees have increased this park *saṅkīrtana* to twice a week, and recently I was informed that they will begin doing it three times a week. I am sure this pleases you, because the *brahmacārīs*, *grhasthas*, and *mātājīs* are all joining in and chanting and dancing in the center of the city and attracting many new people to our movement and philosophy.

From Bali I went to Sulawesi (another big island of Indonesia), where the devotees conducted a Ratha-yātrā. They successfully organized the first Ratha-yātrā in Sulawesi, and the *ratha* was built by the devotees themselves. Also, this year in Jakarta the first Ratha-yātrā festival was held. The GBC of Indonesia, His Holiness Kavicandra Mahārāja, attended the festival to inspire the devotees. A huge number of people attended this Ratha-yātrā and joined the devotees in chanting and dancing. The devotees also distributed books and *prasādam*. The devotees will now conduct this Ratha-yātrā festival in Jakarta every year. Top Government officials, including the governor of Jakarta, attended the function. Although the governor was seeing the chariot of Lord Jagannātha, as well as the Lord Himself, for the first time, he was full of praise for how the devotees had nicely decorated the *ratha* and the Deities. He also highly appreciated the way our devotees conducted the procession.

This is all by your mercy, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I simply want to be your insignificant humble instrument so as to fulfill your desires, to make you and Lord Jagannātha pleased.

Preaching in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh most of my preaching was concentrated in colleges and universities. At one such program, held at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, in Dhaka, we got a very good response from the students, many of whom took your books and expressed their appreciation again and again. A similar program for the public was held at Mirpur. In Bhramanbaria, our local devotees there arranged very nice school and college programs; both students and the teachers became very much enlivened after attending our PowerPoint presentations depicting your message, as given in your *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. We did good book distribution there, and the heads of the schools and colleges were so much pleased that they invited us to come every time we visit Bangladesh.

We also had a nice seminar at Barisal Digha Girls' College. Some of our devotees, namely, Jayarāma Dāsa, Anantadeva Dāsa, and Tulasī Dāsa, took the initiative to start preaching activities, especially book distribution, at Netrakona, and because of their sincere efforts and support from the ISKCON authorities in Bangladesh, they were able to conduct the first Ratha-yātrā in the area. The nine-day festival was well received by the locals. Indeed, everybody appreciated our prasadam distribution, slide shows, and book distribution.

Narayanganj was the last leg of our trip. We had a program at the local Nāmahaṭṭa center and distributed a large number of books. The whole temple hall was packed with devotees. In the Marine Technology Institute, around fifty students gathered to listen to my talk on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and many received your books, started chanting, and are now filling up their *sādhana* charts.

Preaching in India

I was invited to attend the Bhaktivedanta Institute conference in one of the most prestigious venues in India, the Vijnana Bhavan, in New Delhi. The program was organized by the disciples of His Holiness Bhakti Swarūpa Dāmodara Swami. This conference was attended by the president of India, Her Excellency Smt. Pratibha Patil, and many students from all parts of India also attended. It was a very successful conference, and the event was given good media coverage. In attendance at the function were Nobel laureate Werner Arber (the “father of biochemistry”) and P.B. Sharma, vice chancellor of the Delhi Technological University. The local GBC secretary, His Holiness Gopāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami, was also among the invited dignitaries, and he spoke at the occasion. Thereafter I was invited to another Bhaktivedanta Institute conference, at Utkal University, in Bhubaneswar, which was attended by Richard R. Ernst, a Nobel laureate in chemistry, and the King of Puri, Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb. Many college and university students from the local universities also took part in the seminar. Book distribution and *prasādam*

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distribution were two of the main parts of the function. I am very pleased to see that the disciples of Bhakti Swarūp Dāmodar Mahārāja are doing their best to continue his mission of glorifying you by preaching to the scientists, for I know that this pleases you very much.

Your insignificant servant,

Subhāg Swami

Śukadeva Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most respectful prostrated obeisances at your divine lotus feet.

Spiritual life is dynamic. Because it is on the level of consciousness, we have to deal with our thoughts and emotions, and we have to similarly deal with those of the people around us. The whole world is revolving around matter, including the body, which is simply a lump of matter. And as you have taught us, matter follows material laws and thus is always under the influence of time. Except your followers, no one in the world knows the spirit soul and God and the principles governing their relationship. As Your Divine Grace said many times, How can the *Gītā* commentaries of people who have not accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord help them or others surrender to Him?

After I read your books for the first time, it appeared so simple to understand the spirit soul and God, Kṛṣṇa. The devout Hindus are surprised and stand back when they see that I believe only in Kṛṣṇa, with no compromise or confusion or doubt, as though I have seen Kṛṣṇa face to face. They do not understand that listening to a pure devotee of the Lord like your divine self is as good as hearing from Kṛṣṇa or seeing Him directly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, by introducing Kṛṣṇa into my life you have enabled me to permanently put aside the anxiety about basic material necessities in worldly life, along with the hankerings and lamentations of material life. You have also enabled me to put aside dependence on fallible things and people of the world. I have no feelings of loneliness or boredom, as do those leading stereotypical material lives in this world. I have the Absolute Person to work for, who is perfectly able to reciprocate with me, and who can guide me out of the mire of material existence. You have shown me how, while living here in the world of matter, I can rise and live above matter.

Simply put, you have given me the perfect, practical way to live the complete life of a devotee, helping myself and helping others. Generally in this world there is always a clash between self-interest and the interest of others, but the beauty of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is that the real interest of all of us is one. You have given the perfect analogy: If we drop stones into one spot in a pond, waves will form that do not clash with each other but rather complement each other, but if we drop the stones into different spots in the pond, the multiple waves will conflict.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you said that a Vaiṣṇava should live peacefully under all circumstances and at the same time discharge his duties. So if there is discord within ISKCON, it is not the defect of the philosophy but of our application of it. At the International Leadership Saṅga we recently attended in Māyāpur, we learned a lot about how to resolve such discord by keeping you and your teachings in the center of our society and our practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Millions of Nobel prizes awarded to you would not do justice to what you have given the world to help people find real life, real liberty, and real happiness.

I can only stick to your books, your followers, and your ISKCON in my efforts to grab the greatest

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treasure, pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Despite all my failings, kindly keep me in the cooling shade of your divine lotus feet and save me.

The eternally aspiring servant of your servants,

Śukadeva Swami

Trivikrama Swami

Dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda!

Recently I listened to some of my godbrothers describe how they were influenced in various ways by your person and how these influences have kept them in the service of you and Lord Kṛṣṇa over the years. I was, and continue to be, influenced by your person in a myriad of ways.

Most prominent to me was your kindness. You exhibited this in unparalleled ways by your always being willing to extend yourself and even inconvenience yourself if it would in any way be of spiritual benefit to others. As you once famously told Jadurāṇī Devī Dāsī, “For Kṛṣṇa’s service you could even stand on my head.”

This quality of yours was readily apparent in all your dealings. If any of us showed a little service attitude, you would immediately reciprocate with enthusiasm and encouragement.

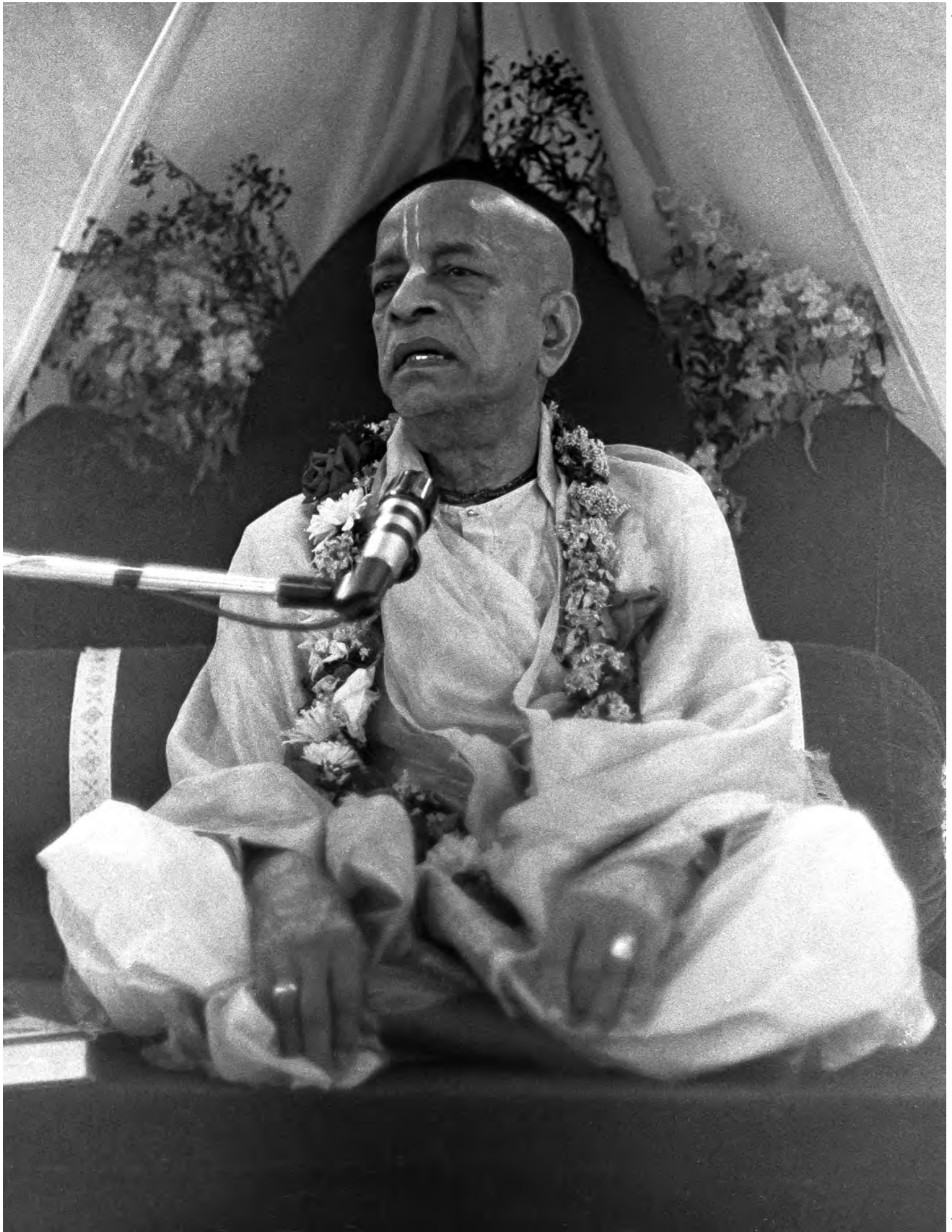
How could we ever give up the service of such a superhuman person? This is not just the flattery of an admiring disciple: you consistently showed superhuman qualities because of your being transcendently situated beyond the moods of material nature.

What great good fortune to have met such an exalted person!

Aspiring to remain always fixed at your lotus feet throughout eternity, I remain

Your insignificant servant,

Trivikrama Swami



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Varṣāṇā Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to you on this most auspicious day.

While the sacred tradition you represent has no beginning or end, tracing out its roots in cosmic antiquity and looking to its future unfoldings provide an expanded frame of reference for my attempts at appreciating and glorifying your appearance.

All *jīvas*, beginning with the first created being, are endowed with creative potential. The potential invested in Brahmā is shared in minute quantity by all of his descendants.

Creation is initiated with sound. From the seed form of sound, the music of love conveyed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute touched the heart of Brahmā, illuminated his consciousness, and enlivened his spiritual senses. Thus he awakened to know and to answer his calling—to create the universe as a reflection of the spiritual world.

From the sound he sang, galaxies spiraled into being, expanding into universes—all intended to facilitate the conditioned souls in the pursuit of their own desires and destinies.

Words are sound. Sound begins in the subtle element of ether and then develops into the form of thoughts and words.

The consciousness and environment born of thoughts and words will be either spiritual or mundane, depending on the sounds we choose. The atmosphere evolving from mundane sound constitutes a place of refuse, appropriate for crows and creatures like them. Conversely, the realm of transcendent sound creates a place of pilgrimage for swanlike souls.

Today, inundated by the Internet age, we are engulfed in words that emerge from a digital world to take birth, grow, transform, and change in color as they dance across screens of all shapes and sizes. Those words whisper, speak, scream, and shout to capture our attention, dominate our consciousness, and dictate our behavior.

The Internet has primarily made the word informational. And, if we approach The Word—scripture—in that mode, we will receive only information. We see repeated confirmation that those who approach scripture without submitting to spiritual discipline may “master” volumes of spiritual understanding without actually growing and maturing in their spiritual lives. This is a futile and potentially destructive path, in that one grows in information about spiritual life without living in a spiritual way.

The Tower of Babel is emblematic of this approach. That monument represents the endeavor of mortals to make a name for themselves. Their efforts led only to the heights of pride, self-deception, confusion, disintegration, and alienation.

The pure Absolute Truth conceals Himself from such ascending pursuits.

Survival in this Internet age requires desensitizing ourselves to the clamoring voices of the impure words surrounding us. This is risky, in that our insensitivity may also deafen us to the subtle and tender voice that counsels from within.

Whether we know that inner voice to be conscience or Paramātmā, His guidance is essential. Truly it is only in submission to the instructions of Gurudeva that our hearts can be open to discern the word of God, His *śuddha-nāma*, and the path back home.

The quest for the Absolute is synonymous with the appearance of Śrī Guru. We can not realize Kṛṣṇa as separate from Guru any more than we can know Guru apart from Kṛṣṇa. They are inseparable aspects of the sacramental word. Śrī Guru and *śāstra* are similarly inseparable, being respectively the active and passive agents of the Absolute Truth.

The name and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa constitute a realm that material senses, mind, and intellect can never touch, conceive of, approach, or attain. The scriptures consist of divine sound, identical with the absolute person, compiled in a language that is inaccessible by empiric approach. Yet the Lord so graciously agrees to descend through our layers of conditioning in order to take root in our hearts in the form of transcendental sound vibrating from the lips of His pure devotee. The Absolute Truth reveals

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Himself as The Living Word in this personal form. As sacramental sound, Śrī Guru kindles the fire of devotion in our hearts.

The Absolute Truth descends through the channel of submissive aural reception, revealing Himself in proportion to our growth in faith and love. True love is expressed in giving our heart to Śrī Guru. In reciprocation the sacramental word, after purifying our minds and enlightening our intellect, blissfully and gracefully descends deeper, to take birth in the core of our hearts. There He develops personality as the Living Word, awakening our dormant soul from its comatose condition.

The chain of disciplic succession from Brahmā to his current representative embodies living communion with Absolute Truth via The Word. In time, Veda-vyāsa gave written form to the spoken word. Through his agents in the *paramparā* he continues to edit, emphasize, present, and comment on the scriptures in a manner ensuring that revelation thrives. With your appearance, Śrīla Prabhupāda, The Word developed further into a form suitable for the understanding of a modern Western audience.

The power of Godhead to convey Himself through the medium of Guru and *śāstra* forms the living communion we celebrate on this most blessed occasion. Vyāsa-pūjā commemorates this covenant with the power of the Lord, who acts through Vyāsa to communicate the nature of divine reality, as well as the process for conditioned souls to approach it.

Even though I had heard of the concept of a Living Word in the religious tradition of my childhood, the dichotomy between words and actions in that line crippled my infant faith. It was only in hearing from you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that my faith was revived and fortified. In your divine example, the perfect integration and personification of words and deeds were dynamic. We were blessed beyond measure to witness the perfect disciple who became our perfect master.

As I sat at your lotus feet, hearing *Kṛṣṇa* book on Janmāṣṭamī evening in 1972, the portals to the spiritual sky opened wide. The next day, worshiping you on Vyāsa-pūjā, I was literally transported into the realm described in *Kṛṣṇa* book. By your grace I briefly experienced the treasure awaiting those who attain perfection in the worship of Śrī Guru. In your presence on that hilltop, I experienced such complete unity and harmony both internally and outwardly. Even though I was not qualified to stay in such a beatific state, its impression has never faded. That memory sustains me as I pass through the lonely valleys and arid regions when *Kṛṣṇa* seems so distant and life so futile.

Now, thirty-five years after your return to the spiritual world, our relationship continues and develops as I serve your sacramental sound in the form of your *vāñī*.

Your pastimes and precepts are exemplary in the way they complement one another and flow as a single current of devotion. They leave an example and lead the way to the destination from where you still beckon us to follow.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, bless me that my inspiration for shelter in your words not be motivated by a desire to be more informed but rather to be formed, reformed, and transformed by them. May I submit to be mastered by your words rather than seeking to master them. By offering words of glorification to you, may I cultivate the seed you planted in my heart and nurture it to fruition. In so doing I connect with the deeper internal voices speaking ever so sweetly. Among them, you are most prominent as the one who lives and speaks within me, fulfilling my deepest desires and aspirations, guiding my spiritual destiny. You do all this from the world that forever endures and expands in the form of sacred sound.

Your servant,

Varṣāṇā Swami

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Vedavyāsapriya Swami

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most prostrated obeisances. All glories to Your Divine Grace for continuously showering your mercy upon the ever-growing worldwide ISKCON Vaiṣṇava community.

We can perceive your plan for the distribution of your mercy when we contemplate how you intelligently designed ISKCON as a worldwide preaching federation of your faithful disciples and granddisciples. Even second and third generations of devotees are receiving your bountiful mercy through their practice of your systematic teachings. They recognize that your mercy plays the most important role in their spiritual lives.

This year I lost six disciples within six months, and their passing away in different circumstances gave me spiritual confirmation of your unfathomable mercy.

Three were very young, in their twenties. One was a young *mātāṅgī*. She was swept away in the sea at Swarga Dwar, in Jagannātha Purī, along with two devotee friends, after having *darśana* of Lord Jagannātha. She had been inspired to come for the first time to India on pilgrimage to the holy places. The success of her devotional service was in giving up her material body at Purī. Leaving one's body at Śrī Kṣetra affords one immediate liberation to continue one's devotional life. The second of my young disciples who left his body was a twenty-two-year-old Vraja-vāsī *brahmacārī*. He had been very ill. I was personally instrumental in taking care of him from his childhood. To leave the body in Vṛndāvana is most glorious, since such a departure promotes the soul to intimate devotional service of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. My third young disciple to depart was Bhānu Dāsa, who very enthusiastically served Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi in his temple during the daytime and worked hard to support his family at night. He would communicate only with devotees. He sacrificed himself beyond his physical capacity, for he was born with a defective heart. But he could not get the required medical attention when the health crisis came, so he happily chose to tell his companion to keep chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* along with him as he left his body. His sudden departure shocked me and the entire devotee community. But I was enlivened to learn from one of his friends about his Vaiṣṇava attitude at the end. His passing away was not in vain, for his good character and his fidelity to Guru and Kṛṣṇa were unimpeachable. He must have been reborn in a situation that afforded him a better opportunity to continue his advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The way he passed is confirmation that the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* makes devotees courageous in the face death and able to retain their confidence in your mercy.

Then there was my own mother, who passed away at an advanced age while retaining her Kṛṣṇa conscious composure till her last breath. I was with her for one week in the hospital. She wanted me to be with her because she considered me her guru from the beginning of her devotional career. Both my parents, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura Dāsa and Harīsarūpa Devī Dāśī, desired that I be with them at their last moment. I was fortunate enough to fulfill the desires of them both, although ten years separated their departures. My father had had the glorious association of Your Divine Grace in the form of your recorded chanting of the *mahā-mantra*, and this enabled him to know the time he was going to pass. At that time he gave me his right hand to hold and leaned forward so that I could support him with my left hand and loudly chant the *mahā-mantra* in his left ear. In less than ten minutes he left his body. My mother witnessed all this, along with two other family members, who were also chanting along loudly. So my mother wanted me to be present when her turn came. Amazingly, her Kṛṣṇa consciousness was far advanced, for she had lived a very simple but pure Vaiṣṇava brahminical life like my father. In the week I spent with her before her departure, she would become absorbed in telling me about her kitchen duties and related memories of her young days, which she repeatedly blurted out in her

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delirium due to kidney failure. But when I would cause her to come to her external senses, she would open her eyes wide and give me a big smile. Then she would become shy and say, “Oh, it is nothing.” We stopped all medications to let her go naturally, and that caused her hands and legs to begin twitching. She would hold her *japa-mālā* open in two hands, but her twitching would make it fall to the bed. Yet she would insist that we give her the *mālā* back, or she would grope for it with her twitching hands. This went on until the last day. When the time approached I placed under her pillow an electronic device that continuously plays Your Divine Grace’s chanting of the *mahā-mantra*, and your chanting guided her back home, all the way to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s kitchen, where she may be happily serving.

Another of my disciples who passed away was the devotee wife of my best friend, who is one of your dear spiritual sons. Like my mother, she was a simple devotee housewife. Somehow or other this lady and her husband had been my shelter at the very beginning of my spiritual life, and it was at their place that I lived, served, and assisted in raising their two sons. I was summoned to come to her bedside for her final journey. She was undergoing rapid multiple system failure. Seeing her imminent death approaching fast, she became grave, but at the same time her face was graced with a wide transcendental smile and wide-open eyes. Many devotees were fond of her due to her gentle, loving demeanor, and lots of them converged at her deathbed and served her through chanting the *mahā-mantra* and giving words of comfort. She responded to all of them with a calm and grave smile, like a self-realized *muni*.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, if you had not so mercifully graced us with your *vapu* and *vāṇī* forms, which are gross manifestations of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, along with your subtle mercy, which reaches out to a wider realm through your granddisciples’ *saṅkīrtana* efforts, it would be difficult to understand the nature of ignorance, the cause of our miserable life. Your granddisciples are reminders of my own salvation. Therefore, along with them, you are my totality, and I am ever obliged to serve you as a whole.

Begging to serve you eternally, I remain

Yours,

Vedavyāsapriya Swami

Yadunandana Swami

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

*namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

*naiṣāṁ matis tāvad urukramāṅghriṁ
sprṣaty anarthāpagamo yad-arthaḥ
mahīyasāṁ pāda-rajo-bhīṣekaṁ
niṣkiñcanānāṁ na vṛṇīta yāvat*

”Unless they smear upon their bodies the dust of the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava completely freed from material contamination, persons very much inclined toward materialistic life cannot be attached to the lotus feet of the Lord, who is glorified for His uncommon activities. Only by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious and taking shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord in this way can one be freed from material contamination.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 7.5.32)

Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā 2012

Beloved Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at the dust of your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace.

Serving your mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the association of your servants is a great source of joy and inspiration for me. By your desire, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement continues reaching the hearts and homes of many people around the world.

In some *yātrās*, like India, UK, or Russia, the number of devotees and people who identify themselves with ISKCON has grown year after year, and the movement is either becoming well established in mainstream society or is seen as a challenge to the established culture of the country, indicating that the leaders are acknowledging its importance. In other places, due to a lack of mature leadership, good organization, or resources, devotees struggle to maintain a few small centers and are dealing with difficulties in developing their community. But in all cases the essential processes of devotional service—hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, associating with devotees, worshiping Kṛṣṇa, and experiencing the atmosphere of the holy *dhāmas*—are present to a greater or lesser degree. For all this, you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, are the primary source of inspiration and empowerment.

In the early days of ISKCON you would always encourage your disciples to increase their services in quantity and quality. Thus, we are reminded that there is so much more to be done in spreading Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *saṅkīrtana* movement. In every town and village of the world *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's worship should be performed. Systematic educational and care programs for the growing number of devotees and newcomers should also be developed everywhere. You always taught us to “think big.” To successfully fulfill your desires for the benefit of everyone, all kinds of devotees need to cooperate in performing a vast variety of services. As you wrote in Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 9.34):

Here Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu indicates that the distribution of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* should be performed by combined forces. Although He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He laments, “How can I act alone? How can I alone pick the fruit and distribute it all over the world?” This indicates that all classes of devotees should combine to distribute the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* without consideration of the time, place, or situation.

In serving you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, my present focus is Kṛṣṇa conscious education. As you taught us in many parts of your books, systematic education is essential to preserving the *guru-paramparā*'s legacy. This is perhaps one of the areas where more work needs to be done. As early as 1972 you wrote:

Now I want that we shall concentrate on making our devotees Kṛṣṇa conscious and ourselves becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious, and not be so much concerned with expanding ourselves widely but without any spiritual content. Just like boiling the milk, it becomes thicker and sweeter. Now do like that, boil the milk. [Letter to Rūpānuga, 9 May, 1972]

In your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you have given humanity unlimited invaluable teachings, which have the power of positively transforming the world. To systematically transmit your teachings we need to create hundreds of outstanding educational institutes and schools, in which, as you would put it, the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is taught in a relevant way to both adults and children. In this regard, when a disciple proposed the idea of starting a university you told him, “Do it.” I can almost see Your Divine Grace telling us: “Don't just talk, but do it.” Thus, the responsibility of establishing an effective educational system to preserve your teachings and spread them around the world rests on us, your servants, especially those who have a position of leadership, be it local, regional, or global.

I pray to Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu for the intelligence, strength, and ability to contribute my little share in the execution of your great mission.

Always begging for your mercy in the service of your servants,

Yadunandana Swami