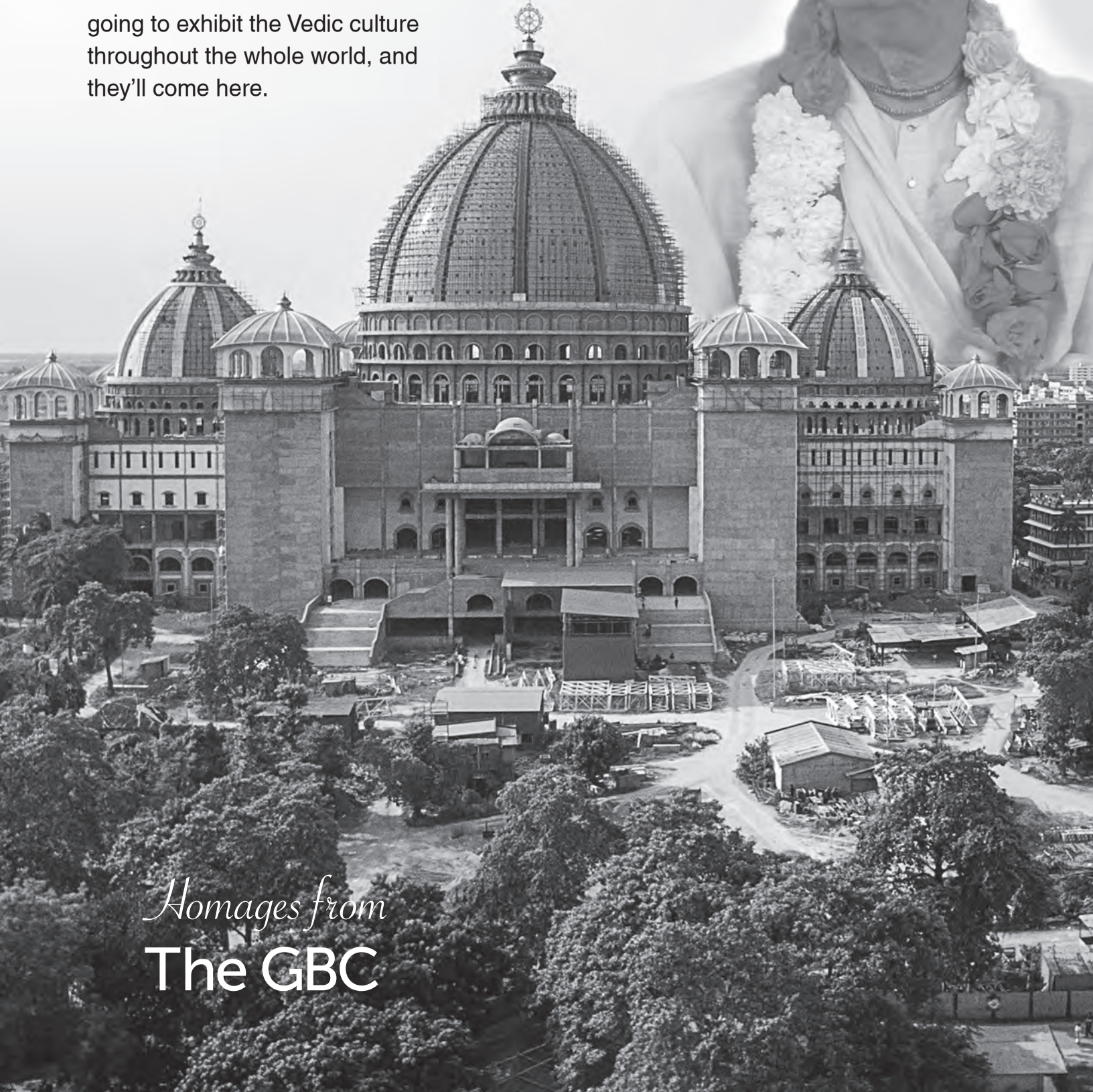
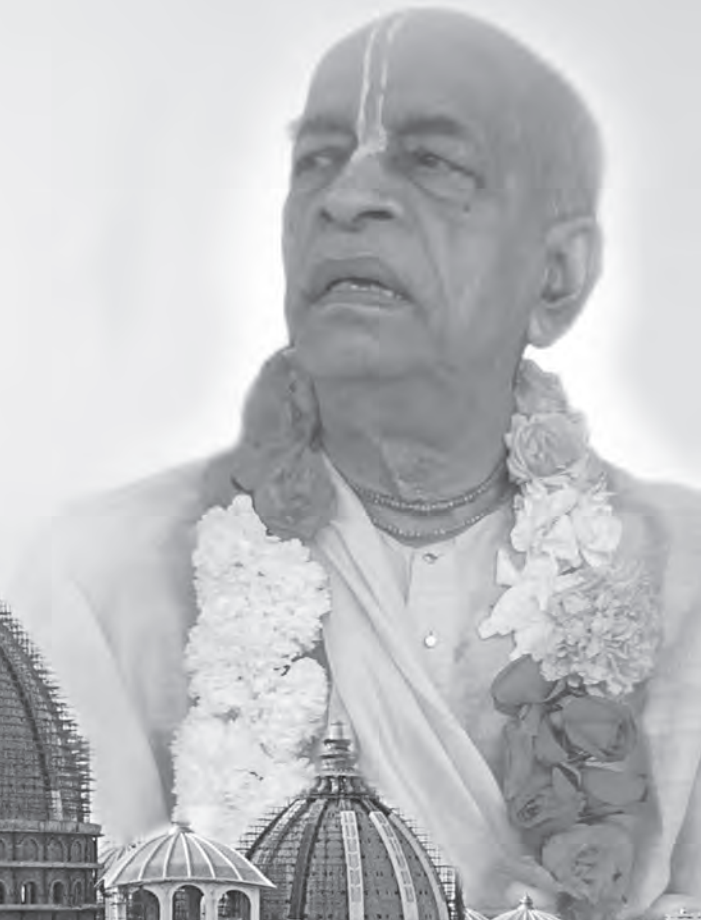


No “Understanding,” simply Vedic—
“Temple of Vedic Planetarium.” That’s all.
We shall show the Vedic conception of
planetary system within this material world
and above the material world. . . . We are
going to exhibit the Vedic culture
throughout the whole world, and
they’ll come here.



Homages from
The GBC

Anuttama dāsa

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*

Please accept my humble obeisances at the dust of your lotus feet.

This year, in which we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of your launching *Back to Godhead* magazine, the editors aptly chose to re-print the opening article you wrote in 1944 for the first issue ever published, entitled “Back to Godhead.”

I was stunned, pleased, and inspired by your words. They awoke in me a deeper sense of how fortunate I am to be your follower, student, and disciple. How proud I am to have a master as capable as you to guide me, protect me, and engage me in your service.

Your words were so relevant for those war-torn years! And how relevant are those same words today, a time of seemingly endless war—war between nations, war between religions, war between genders, and war between humanity and the earth itself.

Most might expect the inaugural edition of your magazine to be a time to draw the line, so to speak, to define who we are as Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, in sharp contrast to other traditions of the world, and to focus exclusively on our unique identity and message. Yet, you chose a different path. You chose for your readers a different path. You continue to inspire me to walk a different path.

Appropriately, in that inaugural article you glorify and refer several times to your “Divine Master Sri Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada” and his mission. You also introduce Lord Caitanya, “the Godhead incarnate.”

Yet, surprisingly, in explaining the purpose of your new journal—“to bring up a real relation of humanity with . . . the Supreme Personality of Godhead”—you also quote not one or two but eleven religious leaders, political leaders, and leading philosophers of the day, who are all outside the Vaiṣṇava tradition. What’s more, you don’t just mention these “leaders of all countries,” as you call them; you give them extensive and precious space in your nascent publication, allowing some to wax on for paragraphs—despite a government-imposed restriction on paper.

You quote the Metropolitan (Bishop) of India; the President of the United States; Herbert Hoover, the former President of the United States; Sir Stanford Cripps, the Lord Privy Seal of Britain; Mr. Wendell Willkie, an American political leader; the Foreign Secretary of Britain, Mr. Anthony Eden; the Archbishop of Canterbury (unnamed); Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishna, “the great Hindu philosopher”; a joint affirmation of “236 members of the British House of Commons”; and more.

It is stunning, intriguing, informative, and exemplary that you quote these personalities—especially in the inaugural edition of your publication. Why do you do so? I can never fully understand your strategies, but some identifiable reasons stand out.

First, it is significant that as a preacher, author, and ISKCON’s future founder-*ācārya*, you were aware of the influential global voices of the time. As early as 1944 you demonstrated that to engage with the world effectively we must not be isolated or unaware of events—and significant opinions—around us. You continued this strategy in 1959 with your first published book, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, which capitalized on the global interest in space travel.

Second, you chose to use the words of these leaders to validate your message, Lord Caitanya’s message.

This is the same methodology you employed years later when you directed the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust to include endorsements of academics, philosophers, and other influencers of the world in your books.

Third, you recognized that these influential people share a similar mission, or at least elements of a shared vision, of human progress beyond the dictates of the gross materialists. You continued in the same spirit years later. Wherever you traveled you directed your disciples to arrange meetings with political leaders, religious leaders, academics, industrialists, artists, media figures, and even neighbors to promote common purpose and understanding.

Fourth, you knew your movement would benefit by working in conjunction with such leaders. You resonated with their messages, and in fact you published and promoted their messages, including these: “India guided by God can lead the world back to sanity,” and “the world needs today . . . to return to sanity and moral spiritual ideals,” and “our plans will come to ship-wreck on the rock of human selfishness unless we turn to God, BACK TO GOD, that is the chief need of England and every nation.”

You even noted that you found inspiration from these leaders. You wrote, “These psychological movements of the leaders of all countries, combined with the order of my Divine Master . . . have led me to venture to start a paper under the above name and style Back to Godhead. . . .”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are the singular great messenger of *bhakti* and going back to Godhead for this age. Please bless me, and all your followers, with broad-mindedness and the ability to appreciate and partner with others as you so beautifully demonstrated in this historic article.

Prabhupāda, please protect us from the narrow-mindedness and divisiveness that so pollute the world today. Let us not be swept away by ignorance, selfishness, or pride, sometimes thinking that we are God’s sole agents, failing to comprehend the vast plan of the Lord.

As your first *Back to Godhead* article concluded, “Godhead is one without a second, . . . and there is no bar for anyone in the world, irrespective of color, creed, or nationality, to go back to Godhead.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, please empower us, your humble servants, to carry forward this great mission of love and redemption. Let us remain fascinated and inspired by your boundless compassion, remembering that all souls are the Lord’s servants and that there is “no bar for anyone in the world” to go back home, back to Godhead.

Your aspiring servant,

Anuttama dāsa

Badrinārāyaṇ 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*

A Perfect Life

In 1922, in colonial Kolkata, on the roof of a small house on Ultadanga Junction Road, in the soft shadows of early evening, a young man met his spiritual master, Om Viṣṇupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Homages from the GBC

That young man, known at the time as Abhay Charan De, was His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

And so our story begins. It is one of courage in the face of overwhelming adversity. It is the story of a compassion so deep that it breaks the heart of one who understands it.

Never had Abhay heard the message of Śrī Caitanya presented so boldly, so convincingly, and with such urgency. The meeting included a challenge: “*Why don’t you preach Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s message throughout the whole world?*”

Leaving, with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s words still ringing in his ears, Abhay thought, “*If I were not married, I could join his mission immediately.*”

But Abhay had his family responsibilities. Therefore he resolved, “*Let me succeed in business and thus help fund his mission.*” It was not an unreasonable proposal. Abhay was well-educated, his family was well-connected, and both his palm and his astrological chart predicted that he would achieve great wealth.

And yet, in his business endeavors he met with disappointment and setbacks again and again. Finally, after three decades-plus of trying, and having finished his family duties, Abhay retired to Vṛndāvana to consider his future and how to best execute the order of his spiritual master.

He knew his time was marked. The end of his life was not that far off. Going to the West was now or never. Taking *sannyāsa* and having printed the first three volumes of his *Bhāgavatam* commentary, he was ready. Departing from Kolkata on August 13th, 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda stepped on board the *Jaladuta*, bound for the USA.

But his path there was not greased with speed or ease.

After ten days on the boat, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in his diary: “*Rain, seasickness, dizziness, headache, no appetite, vomiting.*”

As noted in the *Līlāmṛta*:

The pains in his chest made him think he would die at any moment. In two days he had suffered two heart attacks. He tolerated the difficulty, meditating on the purpose of his mission, but after two days of such violent attacks he thought that if another were to come he would certainly not survive.

Finally, on September 9th, he wrote:

At 4:00 this afternoon, we have crossed over the Atlantic Ocean for twenty-four hours. The whole day was clear and almost smooth. I am taking my food regularly and have got some strength to struggle. There is also a slight tacking of the ship and I am feeling a slight headache also. But I am struggling and the nectarine of life is Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, the source of all my vitality.

After 35 days, the *Jaladuta* finally arrived in Boston Harbor. Observing the skyline of an American city for the first time, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

Most of the population here is covered by the material modes of ignorance and passion. Absorbed in material life, they think themselves very happy and satisfied, and therefore they have no taste for the transcendental message of Vāsudeva. I do not know how they will be able to understand it. But I guess You have some business here, otherwise why would You bring me to this terrible place?

What followed was such a profound display of tolerance, perseverance, courage, and compassion that it can be comprehended only by looking at its component parts.

Lest this narration become too long, let us consider only a few examples.

While recovering his strength in Butler, Pennsylvania, Śrīla Prabhupāda endured Sally Agarwal cooking broiled beef in the oven and saying “*Sorry for the smell, Swamiji*” as she flapped her apron trying to air out the kitchen.

In New York City, drunks would be passed out on the staircase and thus blocking the entrance to his small room on the Bowery. Śrīla Prabhupāda kindly noted, “*They would sometimes call out to each other, saying ‘Here comes Swami’ and then roll to the side, thus allowing me to pass. In this way, they were offering their respects.*”

On a far more dangerous level, he was chased out of his shared living space by his roommate, who had become crazed by LSD and was now wielding a knife and babbling incoherent threats.

There was a third heart attack that left a constant dull ringing in his head that lasted for a year and a half.

And it was not that the struggle ended once Śrīla Prabhupāda got ISKCON up and running.

One of his personal assistants, a recent *sannyāsa* initiate, was caught drying home-grown marijuana in the oven of the LA temple kitchen.

A trusted disciple from the early days sold the temple in Hawaii and left with the money.

After Śrīla Prabhupāda had worked so hard to start the project in Juhu, bewildered disciples gave the land back to the cunning and conniving seller, Mr. Nair. The struggle continued and was so fierce that at one point Śrīla Prabhupāda joked, “*As we have our temples named ‘New Vrindaban’ and ‘New Dwārka’, we can call this temple ‘New Kurukṣetra.’*”

One of his seniormost leaders, someone who Śrīla Prabhupāda was depending on to lead his booming New York temple and who was helping him manage his BBT, allured by a pretend-heiress to the Toyota Motors family fortune, gave up his services and faded away with her.

Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to forgive, to reinvigorate those fallen disciples who were willing to try again, and by sheer determination alone, he simply moved on.

Kṛṣṇa reciprocated with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s selfless surrender. One such golden confirmation was the New York City Ratha-yātrā of 1976. With three enormous and gorgeously decorated carts, hundreds of dancing disciples, the street lined by tens of thousands of onlookers swept up in the enthusiasm of the moment, came Lord Jagannātha triumphantly sailing down 5th Avenue, America’s parade route to congratulate conquering heroes, with Śrīla Prabhupāda sitting on one of the carts.

Let us close our story on another rooftop, far from the one in Kolkata of so many years ago. Sitting on the rooftop patio of ISKCON’s Manhattan skyscraper building after that jubilant 1976 Ratha-yātrā, Śrīla Prabhupāda looked out over the skyline of New York, the same city that had originally greeted him so indifferently. He contemplated how far his mission had come.

As amazing gifts were born out of the churning of the celestial milk ocean, by his churning of the ocean of ISKCON Śrīla Prabhupāda had given to the world 108 temples—many with magnificent Deities. He had initiated close to 5,000 disciples. Millions of books full of sublime Vedic wisdom had been placed into the hands of relief-hungry conditioned souls. There were farms, restaurants, schools, traveling bus parties, colorful Ratha-yātrās, and lively festivals spread across the globe. Lord Caitanya’s prediction that His holy name would reach every town and village was rolling forward, propelled by these great waves from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ISKCON.

Against all odds, from such humble beginnings, who would have predicted such an implausible story of success? One has to wonder, “*What was the cause?*” The answer is found in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s implacable, audacious personal faith and conviction in the purifying power of the holy name and the potency of the order of his spiritual master.

I could never do a pinch of what Śrīla Prabhupāda has done. But because I cannot do everything, I should do nothing? Let me at least do what I *can* do. I can give up my pettiness. I can give up my arrogance. I can give up my tendency to unduly criticize others. I can put my shoulder to the wheel of his mission and push with all the strength at my command.

In these ways I can hope to someday repay him for all that he has given to me through the guiding light of his perfect life.

Your obliged, indebted, and most-grateful servant,

Badrinārāyaṇ Swami

Bhakti Caitanya Swami

My dear lord and master Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to you, the savior of the fallen.

I remember you often, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I wonder how I got the good fortune to get your shelter and association. It is inconceivable. A most foolish person who was wandering aimlessly in this material world, trying but failing to find some satisfaction here, somehow meets the most merciful and capable spiritual leader of our time.

Other than causeless mercy, I can think of no possible explanation for this.

As Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī said to Lord Caitanya when they first met Him in Rāmakeli:

*na mṛṣā paramārtham eva me
śṛṇu vijñāpanam ekam agrataḥ
yadi me na dayisyase tadā
dayanīyas tava nātha durlabhaḥ*

“Let us submit one piece of information before You, dear Lord. It is not at all false but is full of meaning. It is this: If You are not merciful upon us, then it will be very, very difficult to find more suitable candidates for Your mercy.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 1.203)

We can admire these great *gosvāmīs* for showing such humility even though they were already exalted devotees of the Lord. But for us it is simply the truth. If it were not for your mercy, Śrīla Prabhupāda, our lives, and mine in particular, would have been hopeless. My life was already fully hopeless and pathetic.

Now our eyes have been opened, and under the shelter of your lotus feet we can see something of the way forward. We are standing on the threshold of eternity; all we have to do now is step across it. You have revealed to us the otherwise unimaginable beauty of the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and of Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

As Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says in his *Śaṅkalpa-kalpadruma*: “I offer my respectful obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Nanda’s son, who is the protector of the cows, who fills the three worlds with bliss, who is the master of the birthless and perfect *gopīs*, who is as dark as a monsoon cloud, and whose eyes are lotus flowers.”

In great humility Jīva Gosvāmī then talks of himself: “A *jīva* gradually growing old in Vṛndāvana tells his mind: ‘Fool, now you are close to death. Drink this nectar I give you. O mind, as you drink this nectar think of yourself as being in Gokula and think of the loving service you wish to offer the Lord.’ May the *gopa*-prince Kṛṣṇa, who makes the devotees blossom with happiness and who is the auspiciousness of all the worlds and the *gopīs*’ beloved, protect us.”

We are struggling through old age ourselves and are praying for the protection our *ācārya* is requesting. By your grace, Śrīla Prabhupāda, it may be possible for us to receive it. We prostrate ourselves at your lotus feet.

Your eternal servant,

Bhakti Caitanya Swami

Bhakti Chāru Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at the dust of your divine lotus feet.

Today is the day we are compelled to meditate upon Your Divine Grace and assess the inconceivable gifts we received from you.

Forty-three years ago I found the shelter at your lotus feet that totally transformed my existence. Prior to that, my life was a saga of continuous suffering. Although I tried to enjoy in so many ways, all my attempts ended in endless suffering. Today I feel so embarrassed to even think of them. But then I found you, and your mercy inundated my heart with abundant joy. I am eternally indebted to you for all have given me, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

By your causeless mercy I came to know that the Supreme Lord is not only a person but that He is Kṛṣṇa, whom I considered to be the greatest hero from my childhood. You taught me that His Deity form in the temple is nondifferent from Him. Although He is not moving, He is the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient Supreme Lord, who is also present in my heart as the Supersoul. He sees me from both within and without and is waiting for me to develop my loving relationship with Him.

Although I was born in Bengal and heard about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu from my childhood, no one ever told me that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Rather, I witnessed all kinds of abominable activities being conducted in the name of His teachings. Therefore, I never thought of following Him. You are the one who made me aware that He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and that He came as a devotee to elevate us to the topmost region of the spiritual sky, Goloka Vṛndāvana, where we can join Him in His eternal pastimes. Had you not come to pick me up from the gutter in which I was rotting, how would I ever have received such inconceivable good fortune?

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is through you that the world came to know the Supreme Personality of Godhead not as an object of fear but as our dearest friend, who is waiting for us to go back to Him in the spiritual world, where He sports with His eternal consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. When we re-establish our lost relationship with Him by surrendering unto His lotus feet, He allows us to enter that world of endless joy.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, you made us realize that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the transformation of Kṛṣṇa's love. She is His pleasure potency. Although They are one, They separated Themselves to enjoy Their transcendental loving affairs. Unfortunate souls who do not want to accept the existence of the spiritual reality beyond their sight mistake this most exalted spiritual relationship to be mundane and find fault with the Transcendental Couple. By so doing, they miss the golden opportunity you created for them to enter the world of endless ecstasy.

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, one afternoon in Bombay I was seated at your lotus feet, looking out at the as yet uncompleted Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Rāsavihārī temple from the balcony of your quarters. I told you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Although you taught me that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I still feel that I do not know Him. However, I know you, and you are my everything. All I want is to be with you, life after life." Without saying anything, you smiled in a way that conveyed everything to me. I offered obeisances to you with a voice ringing with gratitude, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, although I am totally unqualified, please let me stay at your lotus feet forever, engaging my entire existence in your service."

Desiring to remain at your lotus feet forever as your humble servant,

Bhakti Chāru Swami

Bhaktimārga 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*

It was evening *ārati* time,
Which began at a clock's precise chime,
And from that gorgeous shrine
Was projected softly your voice divine.

From the modest speaker box it came,
A sound that only purity can claim.
It was the subject of ten avatars,
Some declaring peace, others wars.

No vibration could dare match
Your depth and power the ear to catch
The pastimes of courageous heroes
And saints of softer mellows.

The harmonium you played hummed through
the song,
Causing the listener to crave and long.
These stories that you brought us,
These songs that you taught us,

Where relationships are foremost,
Leave *prema* as our anchor post.

Each stanza that you have sung
Resonates like a bell well rung.

Your message is of surrender to Him,
Done through mantra and hymn.
And passing through the gate we call "servant,"
Which means one who's never a deviant.

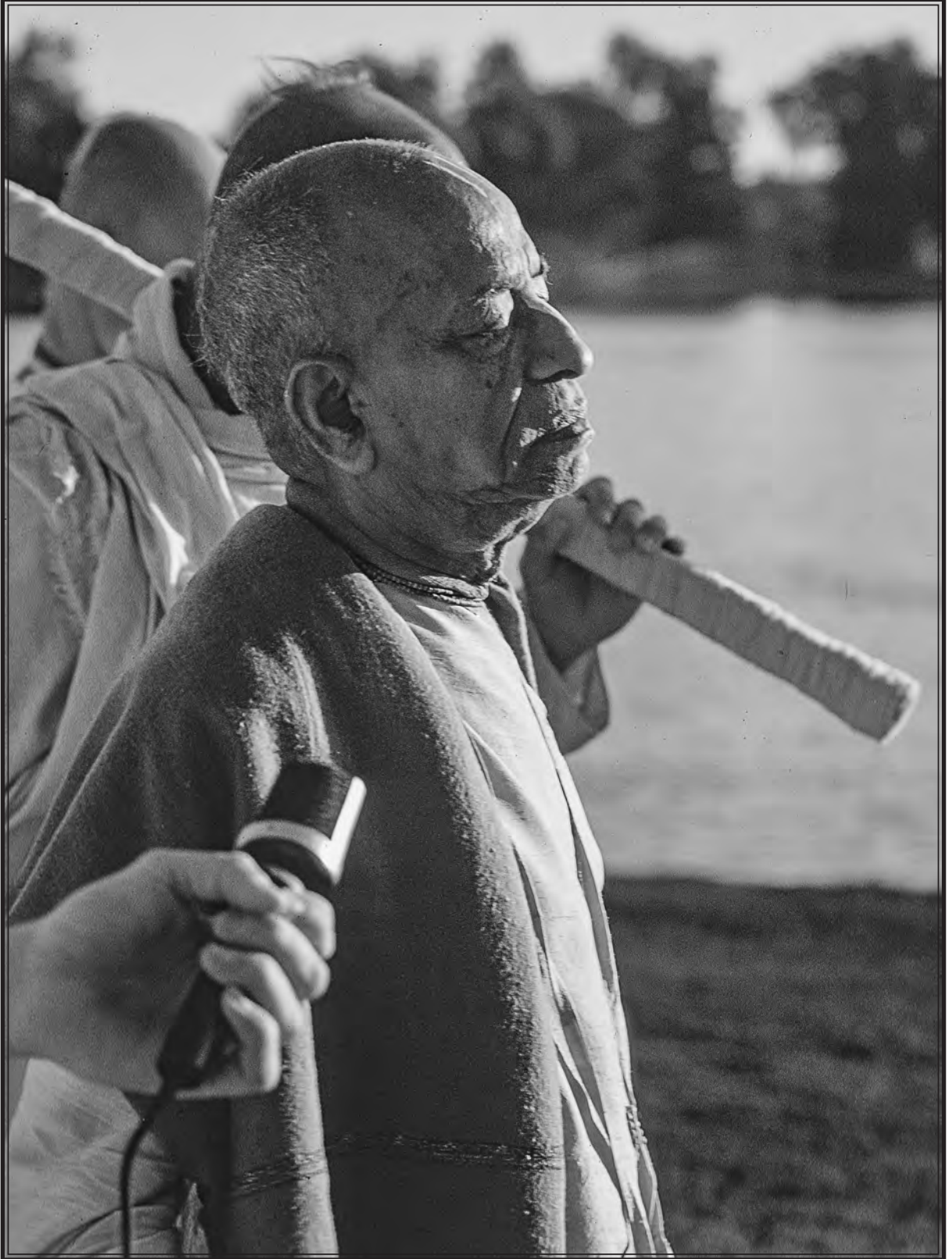
We're moved by the way you'd sing the tune,
Our emotions are stirred, peaked like high noon.
I wish the whole world could hear it, too,
Because it is happiness we all wish to pursue.

I must hear it again and yet again,
When the *pūjārī* presses "play" and then . . .

*Jaya jagadīśa hare
Jaya jagadīśa hare
Jaya jagadīśa hare*

Your servant,

Bhaktimārga Swami



Bhaktivaibhava Swami

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

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

I offer my prostrated obeisances unto the lotus feet of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

The Importance of Studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books

In last year's Vyāsa-pūjā offering I gave ten reasons why Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are meant for every person on this planet. This surely includes all the members of ISKCON. How much more *they* should study, understand, and apply the knowledge, wisdom, and instructions contained in all the books Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us. To read these books means to directly associate with him.

A couple of years ago, during the ISKCON Leadership Saṅga, a survey revealed that even after twenty or thirty years most leaders hadn't completed reading the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and a number of other books by Śrīla Prabhupāda, despite the fact that he emphatically emphasized the importance of studying his books. He once said that all ISKCON leaders should study his books every day for four hours.

Śrīla Prabhupada's books are the spiritual lawbooks for humanity at large, and especially for ISKCON members. These books reveal the essence of all Vedic knowledge. They are the compendium for understanding the philosophy and practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The essential qualification of ISKCON leaders is to simply repeat what Śrīla Prabhupāda has given in his books, lectures, and letters without subtracting anything or adding anything new.

Here I would like to give some quotations from Śrīla Prabhupāda regarding the importance of reading his books:

I am glad to see how nicely you are reading my books. Please continue to do this. We need so many preachers who are soundly versed in the scriptures to convince the world to take to Krishna Consciousness. [Letter to Vrindaban Candra, 9 November 1970]

You may please me the most by reading my books and following the instructions therein and by becoming fully Krishna Conscious in this lifetime. [Letter to Bahurupa, 22 November 1974]

I have already answered the most important question. "How to please Kṛṣṇa?"—by following all the regulative principles that I have given you, chanting 16 rounds and reading my books scrutinizingly. Everyone must do these things, otherwise they cannot understand Krishna Consciousness. [Letter to Ādi-keśava, 16 January 1975]

Thank you for reading my books and appreciating them. Please continue to do so. That will help you advance nicely in spiritual life. By reading my books and chanting Hare Krishna, your life will become perfect. [Letter to Mr. Lourenco, 14 March 1975]

The great gift to posterity that each generation of ISKCON can give is the gift of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his teachings in the form of his books, lectures, and letters. Thus, generation after generation will be able to receive the special mercy offered by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

By taking full shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda in his *vāñī* manifestation, all teachers in ISKCON, on various levels of advancement, will be able to authentically convey Śrīla Prabhupāda's real teachings, thus giving proper guidance, shelter, and protection to all.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's active presence will secure the unity and integrity of ISKCON.

ISKCON's teachings will remain consistent over space and time. Śrīla Prabhupāda's realized knowledge—endowing him with the specific potency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness—will not only be preserved but also developed. His books will remain central to us, for they contain insights and directions that await future development to be realized. Śrīla Prabhupāda's eyes will always remain the lens through which all future generations see our predecessor *ācāryas*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continues preaching through his books. I and many other ISKCON preachers have personal experience of this. When Śrīla Prabhupāda's books were translated into Mongolian, the Mongolian devotees understood the importance of printing and distributing Prabhupāda's books just by reading them, and later they did print and distribute them. I had difficulties explaining to them that they needed the permission of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. They argued, "What is the problem? Why are we being prevented from publishing and printing these books? They are so important." They were so enthusiastic! It took quite some time to convince them, but now they are cooperating nicely.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's book publication and distribution *kī jaya!*

Śrīla Prabhupāda's servant,

Bhaktivaibhava Swami

Bhūrijana dāsa

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

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

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your lotus feet, which only appeared to walk as if in the world of man but in fact walked forever in the holy dust of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

I often think of the will your Guru Mahārāja dictated early on the day of his departure. In it, he used the words *sympathy* and *sympathetic* four times. He chastised one great soul, saying he "should have been more intelligent and sympathetic." Another he complemented, saying his "sympathy for me brought me in connection with so many persons. . . . His sympathy knows no bounds." And he offered praise to a third, saying he "is also sympathetic to me."

Homages from the GBC

In the realm of devotional service, the concept of being sympathetic carries extraordinarily meaning. The simple dictionary definition of *sympathy* implies “comforting,” “encouraging,” or “supportive.” But the more graphic definition is found in music when a passive string automatically vibrates when a second string of similar harmonic qualities is vibrated. The first string, although previously stationary, has vibrated sympathetically with the second due to being in resonance with it. They are tuned to the same frequency.

How fortunate is that soul whose consciousness is sympathetically tuned in resonance with yours, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for that soul’s consciousness will be activated and moved by your consciousness. That soul will be hard-working, compassionate, unselfish, dutiful, learned, wise, austere, blissful, humble, bold, organized, intelligent, and above all eager to constantly serve Kṛṣṇa in great love.

When the consciousness of a disciple is sympathetically tuned to resonate with the heart’s desire of his master, as yours was with your Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, then that disciple is truly a disciple, as you were a true and supremely sympathetic disciple, and will “dance” in amazing ways, as you “danced” in amazing ways.

To be a sympathetic instrument was your prayer upon arriving at Boston’s Commonwealth Pier on September 18, 1965:

Somehow or other, O Lord, You have brought me here to speak about You. Now, my Lord, it is up to You to make me a success or failure as You like.

O spiritual master of all the worlds! I can simply repeat Your message, so if You like You can make my power of speaking suitable for [the people’s] understanding.

Only by Your causeless mercy will my words become pure. I am sure that when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts they will certainly feel engaddened and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life.

O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands. So if You have brought me here to dance, then make me dance, make me dance, O Lord, make me dance as You like.

On this auspicious day in which we honor your appearance, I wish to praise your many disciples who dance in amazing ways in their sympathetic attempt to please you. But most of all I wish to honor you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, whose example of selfless, dedicated, filled-with-*bhakti* service is incomparable. It is ever-expanding, world-encompassing, and inimitable. You turned the world into a field in which Kṛṣṇa could be glorified. You’ve left your presence, your guidance, and your legacy to illuminate the standard of pure devotion in the form of your *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, your *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and your *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

You’ve given so much, you’ve blessed so many, and you offer a sympathetic life to all. May we learn to resonate sympathetically with your desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. May a drop of sympathy for you and your cause take birth in my unsympathetic, barren heart. And to that heart of yours, which is fully sympathetic to your Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, I pray to surrender.

Your servant,

Bhūrijana dāsa

Bīr Kṛṣṇa dās Goswami

*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*

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my prostrated obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to your divine grace.

One of the many challenges we face in the expansion of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the diversity of viewpoints that manifest in executing and spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Of course, you were well aware of this and advised us:

In the material world there are varieties, but there is no agreement. In the spiritual world there are varieties, but there is agreement. That is the difference. The materialists, without being able to adjust the varieties and the disagreements, make everything zero. They cannot come into agreement with varieties, but if we keep Krishna in the center, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our men meet in Mayapur every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. With all GBC and senior men present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But if we fight on account of diversity, then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful. One section of men have already gone out, therefore we must be very careful to maintain unity in diversity, and remember the story in Aesop's Fables of the father of many children with the bundle of sticks. When the father asked his children to break the bundle of sticks wrapped in a bag, none of them could do it. But, when they removed the sticks from the bag and tried one by one, the sticks were easily broken. So this is the strength in unity. If we are bunched up, we can never be broken, but when divided, then we can become broken very easily. [Letter to Kīrtanānanda, 18 October 1973]

You used this phrase “unity in diversity” in different contexts: (1) that the Lord has both a personal and an impersonal aspect, (2) that there is unity in the diverse manifestations of the spiritual realm and of the material realm, (3) that everything is simultaneously and inconceivably one with and different from God (*acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*), (4) that our devotees come from different backgrounds but have one purpose, (5) that different varieties of food all have the single purpose of nourishing the body, and (6) that we should strive to keep the movement together in spite of different viewpoints.

There is tension between unity and diversity in many areas of our Kṛṣṇa conscious lives. This may be in reference to different services in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement; e.g., one may consider his or her service to be most important. In relationship to preaching there are also many different approaches; e.g., one may consider his or her approach to be more productive, whereas others may consider that approach to be a deviation. There are diverse opinions concerning management; e.g., whether it should be centralized or decentralized. The subject matter of raising children may also be contentious, etc., etc., etc.

If we try to impose too much uniformity, we lose individual initiative, creativity, inspiration, dynamism, the ability to attract diverse segments of the population, and the very spirit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we allow too much diversity, we break apart, become spiritually weak, and deviate from your vision of changing the direction of this materialistic civilization.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you informed us that nothing external can impede the progress of the Kṛṣṇa

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consciousness movement, but that our internal conflicts, if not handled with the understanding of unity in diversity, can be a major impediment.

Unalterable principles need to be understood and followed. Mature devotees should ascertain and accept details that can be adjusted according to time, place, and circumstance. Doing this is a challenge we face in serving your lotus feet.

We should appreciate one another and have loving relationships with one another, regardless of different opinions concerning adjustable details.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I pray that you allow us to have the intelligence to understand these points and apply them.

Your servant,

Bir Krishna dās Goswami

Devāmrita Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most respectful obeisances at your lotus feet.

Forty-one years have passed since you departed from the ordinary vision of this world. Those four decades without your physical presence have brought your followers both humbling setbacks and exhilarating breakthroughs. The amazing tribute to you is that, with all our variegation and diversity, we still march on, seeking your pleasure.

In your *Gītā* purport to 12.14 you state that a devotee “is a completely perfect mystic because he is fixed in the instructions received from the spiritual master.” The aspiration for this pinnacle of *bhakti* mysticism I hold high on my head—the same place where I would love for your lotus feet to rest.

Whatever years or days I have left in this body, I beg that my sensitivity to your words and desires increases daily.

I have been under your shelter for more than twice the number of years I lived without it. Noting that expanse of time in your service, I seek protection from the nemesis of familiarity and casualness in the guru-disciple relationship.

In Kali-yuga the ravages of time spare no one: anything not spiritually tied down—fixed in maturing *bhakti*—will deteriorate.

Therefore I long for a closer walk with you. This is my plea. Grant it, Śrīla Prabhupāda, if you please.

Your insignificant servant,

Devāmrita Swami

Dīna-śāraṇa Devī Dāsī

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

At your lotus feet
I bow down again and again,
Especially on this, your glorious appearance day!
Their emanating cooling grace
Makes them the ideal place of surrender.
Never wanting to leave them ever again . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

After Dhruva's many years of severe austerities and penances
To achieve a kingdom greater than his father's,
The Supreme Personality of Godhead finally appeared . . .
Dhruva Mahārāja was speechless . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

Only when the Supreme Personality of Godhead
Touched His conchshell to Dhruva Mahārāja's forehead
was he able to glorify Him . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

The Supreme Personality of Godhead
Granted Dhruva Mahārāja more boons
Than he could ever desire . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

Though apparently rendering selfless devotional service,
I am in reality
Completely entangled and absorbed in material activities . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

By your unlimited mercy
You are rewarding me with much more
Spiritual transcendence than I could ever wish . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

As Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna
That all persons on the battlefield
Were already dead

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And that just by surrendering unto Him
And faithfully performing his *kṣatriya* duties
Arjuna would reap all fame and glory . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

Similarly Lord Caitanya predicted that
When we surrender unto Him
And faithfully perform our preaching duties
The holy name will be chanted in
Every town and village . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

For all the incredible mystical deeds you are performing
For the pleasure of your spiritual master
And the welfare of all sentient beings . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

At your lotus feet
I bow down again and again,
Especially on this, your glorious appearance day!
Their emanating cooling grace
Makes them the ideal place of surrender.
Never wanting to leave them ever again . . .

So I am today at your lotus feet . . .

Wanting to be your insignificant servant,

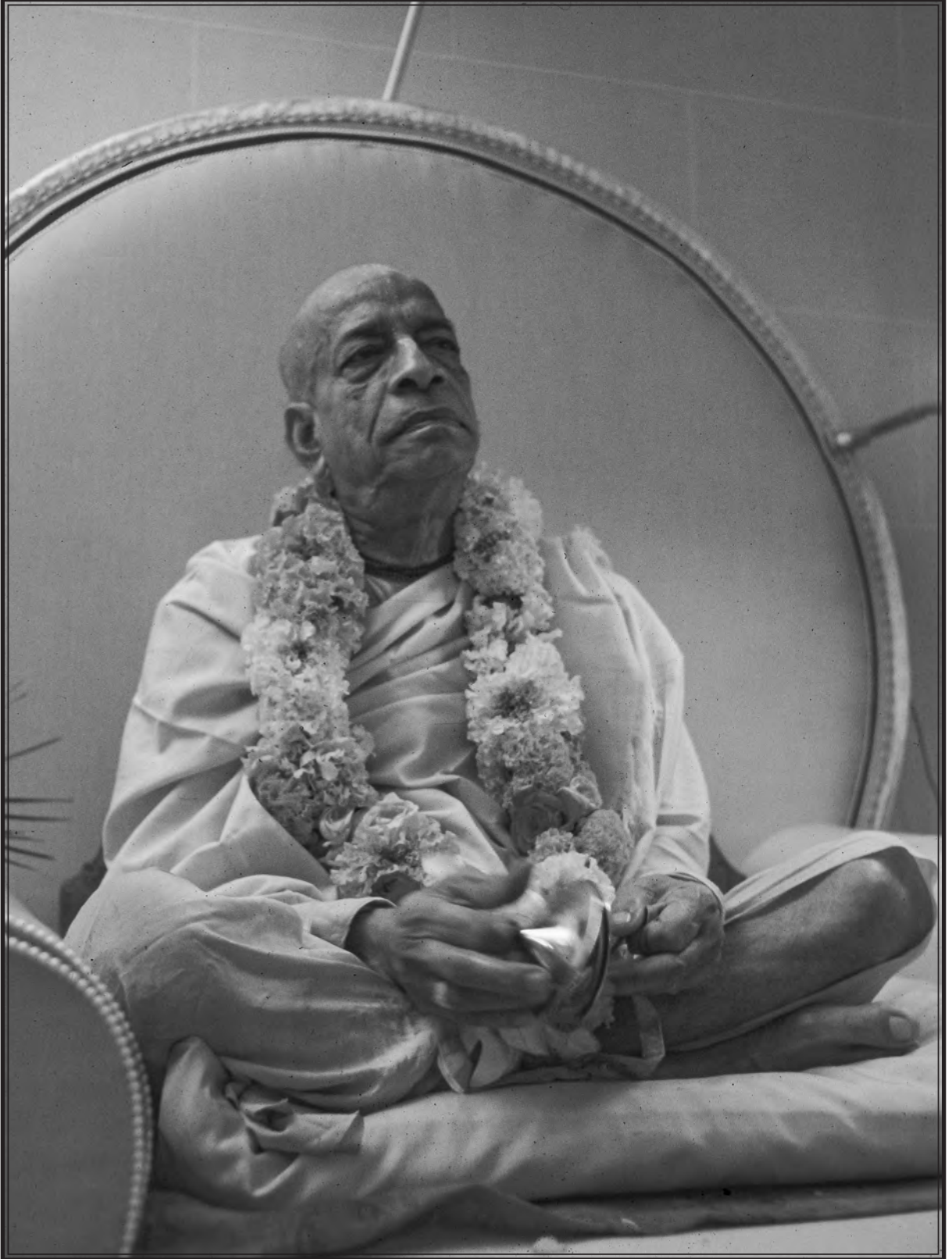
Dīna Śāraṇa Devī Dāsī

Giridhārī Swami

My dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at the dust of your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace.
Today, as I meditate upon you and your many saintly qualities, a vivid memory appears in my mind's eye.

In June of 1976 I was fortunate to be one of several hundred devotees assembled at Los Angeles International Airport to receive you. Spirits ran high as we entered the airport with unstoppable enthusiasm.



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You were returning to North America after a year's absence. Naturally, all of us were feeling intense separation. We longed to see you, hear from you, and serve you in whatever ways would please you. You were our everything, our purpose for living in this world. Indeed, your every wish was our command.

As we made our way to your arrival gate, a human passageway formed for you to walk through—and we began a sweet, soul-stirring *kīrtana*. Your plane taxied to the gate, the *kīrtana* intensified, and the devotees' eyes sparkled with great anticipation. Finally you emerged from the gate and we had the first glimpse of your transcendental golden form! We, your devotees, offered obeisances in unison and then came forward to shower you with rose petals and hand you bouquets of flowers, all the while chanting and dancing with total abandon.

Soon the middle of the corridor became a moving walkway, with devotees running along both sides chanting and dancing, totally oblivious to their surroundings. Time seemed to stand still as passengers and airport staff stood frozen in bewilderment.

From my vantage point, I saw a mother and her young daughter sitting in chairs some twenty feet ahead of you and the *saṅkīrtana* party. Perhaps due to the loudness of the *kīrtana* and the tumult created by the large number of devotees, this mother was startled and instinctively sought to protect her child from the perceived danger. She grabbed the hand of her young daughter, and they quickly jumped up onto their seats and stood there, eyes opened wide with astonishment or perhaps even fear.

In the midst of this chaos, you saw this mother and daughter and your eyes met theirs. Understanding the situation, you told one of your servants to hand them two of the flowers from the bouquet you were carrying. Upon their receiving and smelling those flowers touched by Your Divine Grace's lotus hands, the faces of both mother and child at once transformed. They grinned from ear to ear and radiated happiness and peace. It was truly an amazing sight to witness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you gave me a glimpse of what it means to receive the causeless mercy of a pure devotee. Of the hundreds, if not thousands, of people who were in the airport that day, somehow you chose to deliver those two souls your mercy in the form of two *mahā* flowers. Why? That only you can say for sure. But I am convinced that their path back to Godhead was paved by your causeless mercy that day.

As I reflect on this sweet pastime of yours, I am reminded of the following passage from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

*mahat-kṛpā vinā kona karme 'bhakti' naya
kṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu, saṁsāra nahe kṣaya*

“Unless one is favored by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service. To say nothing of *kṣṇa-bhakti*, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.” (CC *Madhya* 22.51)

For one who obtains your mercy, the impossible becomes possible, and for one who fails to do so, the possible becomes impossible.

As one of your many followers, I too would like to please you and receive your causeless mercy. But how to best please you?

In one lecture you sum it up nicely:

Bahulāśva: What is the thing that will please you most, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Bahulāśva: What is the thing that would please you the most?

Prabhupāda: Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Devotees: Hare Kṛṣṇa!

Prabhupāda: That is the simple thing. You are chanting. I am very much pleased. That's all. I came to your country to chant, that you chant also along with me. So you are helping me by chanting. So I am pleased. But this tendency is very nice, that you want to please me. That is very good. And to please me is not very difficult.

Devotees: All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda: Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that “Under My order, every one of you go and preach and become spiritual master.” And what is that order? The order is that “Whomever you meet, you talk to him about Kṛṣṇa.”

*yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa
āmāra ajñāya guru hañā tāra ei deśa*

He says that “Under My order, you become a spiritual master.” To become a spiritual master under the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not very difficult— unless we adulterate, mix in something nonsense in His teachings. If we simply present as it is, then every one of us can become a spiritual master. (Lecture, 16 July 1971, Detroit)

From your words, I extract a *sūtra*: “Practice, taste, and distribute.” It is an open secret that you wanted us to chant the holy name, worship the Deity, hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, serve the pure devotees, and reside in the holy *dhāma*, all with the utmost attention and free from offense. From the sincere practice of these potent forms of devotional service, one relishes an ever-increasing sweet taste. One who has obtained this taste develops unstoppable determination to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others through the essential processes of distributing your books, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *maha-mantra*, and Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*—through any and all projects and programs that package the same.

Sincere practice gives taste, and taste fuels the desire to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness far and wide. This simple process that you have given us is not only self-sustaining, but ever-expanding as well.

On this day of your Vyāsa-pūjā, I pray for your causeless mercy to always sincerely practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to dedicate the remainder of my life to helping others do the same.

Aspiring to be your humble servant,

Giridhārī Swami

Girirāj Swami

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

*namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāñī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Meeting My Perfect Master

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I wish to tell you about my journey to meet you—and how your journey to meet me was effective.

In my youth I aspired to attain perfect happiness, and soon I realized that such happiness could not be achieved materially, but only spiritually. And, through reading spiritual books, I came to understand that to achieve spiritual perfection I needed a guru. In fact, I read that I didn’t even have to *choose* the

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guru. He was already there; all I had to do was find him. So whenever I heard about a guru anywhere, even a thousand miles away, I would go to meet him.

One teacher I met was a Zen master, supposedly enlightened and certified by another enlightened master in Japan. I had read a book he had written, and when I heard he was holding a three-day retreat at his ashram in Rochester, New York, I went. Upon my arrival I found that his students were not very happy. But I thought, “Anyway, they’re just students. Let me meet the master.”

During the retreat he held meditation sessions in which everyone had to sit up straight and look at the wall, concentrating on some object he had placed there. The master walked around with a stick, and if he thought any of us was falling asleep or that someone’s mind was wandering, he would hit the offender. After one such session, some of his students asked him about his recently having become angry. “Yes, it’s true,” he said. “I lost my temper; I shouldn’t have.” I started to doubt whether he was my guru. Still, I had read that a Zen master might appear ordinary and that one might not recognize him, so I thought, “Maybe this is part of it.” But my doubt remained. Later, he came to Boston, near Brandeis University, where I was studying. After his talk and demonstration, someone in the audience asked about Vedānta. “I have enough trouble keeping up with Zen,” he answered. “How do you expect me to know about Vedānta?” My previous doubt was confirmed: “He is not my perfect master.”

Then a *haṭha-yogī* came to Brandeis to give a lecture. He had long hair and a beard and flowing robes. He said that by yoga you could attain complete mastery over your bodily functions, including the movements of the bowels. You could actually command your intestines: “Ascending colon, advance! Transverse colon, advance! Descending colon, advance!” and finally, “Rectum, pass!” I was really looking for a guru, so I thought, “Anyway, maybe.”

After the lecture, I tried to meet the swami, but he was leaving for the airport. I wanted to ride with him in his car, but there was no room, so I rode with some of his students. On the way, they discussed the various foods they missed since they had joined the ashram. So I started to have some doubts. But then I thought, “Anyway, they are just the students; the master may be on a much higher level.”

When we arrived at the airport, I beheld the swami. There he was: long flowing hair, beard, draping orange robes, a flower in his hair, a twinkle in his eyes—the very picture of Indian spirituality. But then I saw him tightly embracing his women disciples. And I knew: “He is not my perfect master. I have to keep looking.”

Next I heard of an “enlightened” psychology professor who was teaching at Antioch College, in Ohio, which was known as a progressive university, and I wanted to meet him immediately. Ready to do anything to find my guru, I got in my car and drove the seven hundred miles. When I arrived, with great anticipation and eagerness I searched out the professor’s office and inquired about him from his secretary. “He’s playing golf,” she informed me. “Playing golf?” I asked incredulously. “I thought he was supposed to be enlightened.” “That is his Zen,” she replied. “Oh, no!” I thought. “Playing golf? He is not my perfect master.”

Although I was disappointed about the professor, the Antioch campus was full of people interested in spiritual life, and while I was there I spoke with some of them. Some students in the Student Union told me about a guru who had recently visited the campus. “The guru is in the heart,” he had said, “where he sits on a lotus flower. You can actually see him and speak with him.” “Wow!” I thought; “*that* sounds attractive.” That night I tried to really focus on my heart. And indeed, I got a definite impression that there *was* a divine personality there, with whom I could have a sublime, personal relationship. And he seemed just about to speak. I was very excited, and I became eager to meet him.

Back at Brandeis, one of my psychology professors invited J. Krishnamurti to speak. I attended the lecture, and during a break I told my professor that I wanted to meet Krishnamurti. “Why?” my professor asked. “I may want him as my guru,” I replied. “Oh, he doesn’t accept disciples,” my professor said. “He doesn’t even touch money.” My professor was impressed. But I wasn’t. I thought, “If he is actually able to help people, why should he refuse to take disciples? Just to be renounced? He is not my perfect master.”

I kept searching. I already had the idea that you don’t have to choose your guru, that he is already there. I even had a mental picture of what he looked like—and he didn’t have hair. All the swamis and

yogis I had encountered had long hair and beards, so I was starting to despair: “How am I ever going to meet my guru?”

Then one day I saw a poster on campus: “Lecture—Bhagavad-gita As It Is—Swami Bhaktivedanta.” My friends and I were supposed to go to the movies that night, but I wanted to attend the lecture instead. When I suggested that, however, one friend in particular got really upset. “Why can’t you be normal like other people?” she complained. “All you want to do is see swamis and yogis.” And the argument became so intense that I decided not to go. I didn’t want to disappoint my friends, so I tried to go along with their idea. But something inside me was impelling me to go to the lecture. Finally I said, “Okay, let’s go to a later show. But first I have to go to the lecture by the swami. I promise, he will be the last one I go see.”

My friends reluctantly came along, but because we’d been arguing, we arrived at the auditorium late and missed the lecture.

Entering the auditorium, I beheld an elderly Indian gentleman—you—sitting on a cushion onstage. To the side, a young devotee (Satsvarūpa dāsa) sang into a microphone, and other devotees were dancing in a circle around you. The sound of Satsvarūpa’s singing was reverberating off the bare brick walls. One by one, students from the audience jumped onto the stage and joined in. I felt like going up, too, but I knew my friends wouldn’t approve; that would have been too much for them. More students were jumping up, climbing on the stage, and joining the circle, dancing. I kept trying to focus my eyes on you, but I couldn’t; your effulgence was too great.

When the *kīrtana* ended, one of the devotees announced that they needed a lift to Harvard Square or to Boston. As my friends and I were still going to the movie and it was at Harvard Square, I invited the devotees to ride with us, and everyone piled into my station wagon. I was driving, and also in front were two ladies. In the back seat were three or four devotees, and in the rear compartment were my friends and I don’t know how many more—I don’t think we could have fit anyone else.

Satsvarūpa was squeezed in the rear with my best friend, Gary. Because of our impersonal readings, my friend was saying that ultimately everything was void. And Satsvarūpa was saying, “There is no void in the creation of God.” But my friend kept insisting: “Everything is ultimately void.” I was overhearing them from the front, and puffed up as I was, I thought, “Oh, how silly that they are arguing over this.” I thought I had it all figured out. So I turned to the back and announced something I had read in some Zen book: “It is not void, and it is not not-void, but to give it a name, we call it the void.” I thought I had resolved the whole controversy. But still, they kept arguing.

One of the ladies up front with me was Jāhnavā. I had been trying to understand all the different paths and philosophies, so I asked her about Zen. “This world seems real,” she said, “but it is illusory, like images on a movie screen. Now, if you withdraw your consciousness from the screen, you will find that there is a beam of light.” I thought, “This is the best explanation I’ve ever heard, even better than the Zen books’.” “And if you keep following that beam of light back,” she continued, “you come to a point.” I thought, “Wow, this is getting to the void.” But then she said, “But behind that point there is a projector, and behind the projector there is a person.” Then I thought, “This philosophy encompasses everything that Zen does, and more.”

Then I asked her about Yogananda. She dismissed him out of hand: “Oh, he is just a shopkeeper. Whatever you want, he keeps in stock. You want yoga, he will give you that. Whatever you ask for, he pulls off the shelf.” Then she said, “At his ashram in California he has a Gandhi peace memorial. But Gandhi wasn’t a worker for world peace. He was a politician who wanted to drive the British out of India.” She just dismissed him: “He doesn’t even know who Gandhi is.”

“She is speaking with authority,” I thought. But I sensed that it couldn’t all be coming from her. How was it possible for a girl of only twenty or so to have so much knowledge and speak with such authority? Then I thought, “This must be coming from her teacher. I want to meet him.”

When we got to Harvard Square, I let the devotees out. But as I was driving away, I realized that I didn’t know how to get in touch with them. How would I meet the guru? I immediately stopped the car, jumped out, and ran after them. I caught up to one, Patita Pāvana. When he stopped, he turned his head and pointed to the crowd around us. “You see these people?” he said. “They’re all sleepwalkers. They

don't know what they're doing, or why. They're just conforming." His words were so intriguing and deep; I wanted to hear more.

Suddenly I became aware of the honking of horns all around us. I'd left my car in the middle of the roundabout, and the traffic at Harvard Square was backed up. The honking kept getting louder. "I want to meet the Swami," I said. "Quick, give me the address." He jotted down the address on a slip of paper and handed it to me. "Come at seven," he said, "tomorrow night." I could hardly wait.

The next evening when I arrived, the small storefront temple was packed with young people. You were sitting on a cushion at the far end. The walls were decorated with exotic paintings, and the aroma of incense filled the air. When you began speaking, I had difficulty understanding what you were saying. You had a thick Bengali accent, and the philosophy was new to me. But I did hear you say that out of many thousands of men, one would seek perfection. "That's me!" I thought. "He's talking about me!"

After the lecture, you called for questions. Someone asked, "Since everything comes from God, or Kṛṣṇa, does *māyā* also come from Kṛṣṇa?" You replied that everything comes from Kṛṣṇa, just like everything comes from the sun. The cloud also comes from the sun, although it covers our vision of the sun. But the sun is never covered by the cloud; only our vision is covered.

I was burning to ask my question. "There are so many swamis and yogis," I began, "and each recommends a different process of self-realization, and each says that his is the best. So how do I know which is actually best?"

You responded, "What is your goal? Do you want to serve God, or do you want to become God?" How brilliant—how perfect! I was asking about the means, but to determine the best means, we must first establish the end, the goal.

"When you seek after God, then God, who is situated within your heart, will give you all facility. But if you want to *become* God, you will be cheated; you are cheating yourself. How you can become God? You are trying to become God, then how you became a dog? God cannot become a dog. God is always God.

"The Māyāvādī philosopher says that 'I am God, but by *māyā* I am thinking I am not God. So, by meditation I shall become God.' But that means he is under the punishment of *māyā*. God has come under the influence of *māyā*? How is that? God is great, and if He is under the influence of *māyā*, then *māyā* becomes greater than God.

"So, the idea is that as long as we shall continue this hallucination that 'I am God,' there is no question of getting the favor of God. Then you do your own business, and try to find yourself whether you are God or something else. As soon as I think 'I am God,' I am cheating myself. Who will help you? That is going on. Everyone is thinking, 'I am God.'

"So, what you are thinking? You are trying to become God? What is your idea? Or you are thinking there is no God?"

"I am thinking that there is God," I replied.

"There is God? You are thinking like that?"

But I knew that I couldn't cheat you, so I replied, "Yes. But I can see that I was trying to become God."

"So, you are trying to become God—that means you are not God. Is it not? How you became not-God? God is so great that He never becomes not-God. So, your conclusion should be that 'I am not that God who is great. I am a different God who becomes sometimes not-God.' Therefore you are a different God from that God who is great. Is it not?"

"That is a fact. Because you are part and parcel of God, you are minute God; therefore you have the potency of becoming not-God. Just like a fire and a spark of the fire: A spark, when it is in the fire, is bright fire, but as soon as it goes out of the fire, it becomes extinguished. But the big fire never becomes extinguished. Similarly, you are not that big fire; you are that small spark. You have fallen down; therefore you are not God. Now you have to raise yourself again to the fire, and you will again be a blazing spark.

"So, that is the difference. That is stated in the Vedic literature. Every living entity is Brahman, but the Supreme Brahman is Kṛṣṇa. He never becomes not-God. We see in Kṛṣṇa's life, when He was a child on the lap of His mother, He was God. So many demons were killed. He didn't have to meditate to become God. While He was playing, He was God, and when He was fighting on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, He

was God. That is God. Not that sometimes not-God, sometimes God. That is not God. God is always God, in any circumstance. That is God.”

As you were speaking, I got the clear impression that you knew everything about me, that you were seeing right into me, into Waltham, into my apartment, into my bathroom, right to the wall on which I had pasted a sign I had inscribed in beautiful ornate lettering: YOU ARE GOD.

My search was over. I offered my obeisances. I had found my spiritual master.

The devotees put their heads on the floor and offered obeisances. I also kept my head on the floor in surrender—for a long time. I felt so glad. I had finally found my perfect master and wanted to surrender fully. At the same time, I also felt ashamed and humiliated. My abominable desire to become God had been exposed; everyone there knew I had wanted to become God.

After some time, I heard the sounds of devotees bringing plates of food, *prasādam*, to their guests. Something inside prompted me to look up. I expected everyone would be glaring at me, but no. People were blissfully taking *prasādam*, and when they saw me get up they simply smiled.

Moments earlier, when a devotee had offered you a large plate of *prasādam*, you had responded, “I am not God; I cannot eat so much.”

The *prasādam* I was given looked just like everything else in the temple—colorful, attractive, and variegated. Because of macrobiotics and other speculations, I never expected a feast. Where to begin? I picked up what must have been a cauliflower *pakorā*, put it in my mouth, bit into it . . . and felt an explosion of taste. One by one, I sampled the preparations: *baḍās*, sweet rice—every taste new, incomparable. I thought everything was perfect: the guru, the *prasādam*, the chanting.

I loved the chanting. The devotees had a sign with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra written in Indian-style lettering. During the *kīrtana*, as I was looking at the letters on the sign, they started to move, dissolve, form, and unform themselves. This was the kind of indication I’d been looking for, and everything told me that you were indeed my spiritual master.

From the time you answered my question and I bowed my head, I surrendered. From that first meeting, my whole life’s purpose became to bring people to meet you. And I was able to do that for many years. But when you passed away, I wondered, *What will be my service now?* My whole service had been to bring people to you.

Now I understand that you are always present, and that by speaking of you, hearing about you, remembering you, and, most significantly, by studying your books and following your instructions, by practicing and preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, serving your mission, we can experience your presence. So I can continue doing what I was doing when you were personally present—introducing souls to you—which is what I feel most natural doing. Because I know that somehow or other, if someone comes in touch with you, his life will be successful.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Your eternal, humbled servant,

Girirāj Swami

Gopāl Krishna Goswami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I wish to offer my most fallen obeisances at your lotus feet a thousand times.

You are a bona fide representative of Śrīla Vyāsadeva and hence entitled to receive Vyāsa-pūjā every year. Being a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, your desire is to make everyone Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is why you emphasized the importance of reading and distributing your books. Your books have changed the lives of millions around the planet. Two days ago I met a young Indian man in Kurukshetra. This man owns a shop that repairs almirahs. He recounted how a year ago someone gave him an almirah for repair. When he opened it he found three of your books. He started reading them and was moved by your presentation. He eventually came in touch with devotees, and he is now a good devotee. He, his wife, and his parents are all chanting sixteen rounds. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are continuing to preach through your books.

On February 26, 2019, Prime Minister Modi visited the Delhi temple for unveiling the Astounding Bhagavad Gītā. This astounding *Gītā* was designed and produced under Madhusevita Prabhu's supervision in Italy. This *Gītā* is the largest religious book ever published. It has 670 pages, weighs 800 kilograms, and stands 2.8 meters high! A year ago, Kṛṣṇa gave me the opportunity to get involved in this project. The honorable Prime Minister garlanded your *mūrti* on the stage. In his speech he spoke highly of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and your contribution to spreading Lord Kṛṣṇa's message. The Prime Minister said, "All of you associated with ISKCON have dedicated full energy and creativity to develop this *Gītā*. This *Gītā* is a symbol of the devotion and dedication of the followers of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda." The Prime Minister stated that the *Bhagavad-gītā* is India's most inspiring gift to the whole world. It is the wealth of the whole world. He further stated that you had completely dedicated your life to preaching the *Gītā*. Facing all kinds of challenges, with an indomitable will you started ISKCON in order to present Lord Kṛṣṇa's message to the world. The Prime Minister performed *ārati* to the Astounding Bhagavad Gītā. He was very impressed to see the display of your *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in forty-four different languages. All the major news channels in India broadcast this event live at prime time, allowing millions of people to witness this historic event. The media reported to our Communication Director, Yudhiṣṭhira Govinda Dāsa, that the event was an outstanding media success. Millions had your *darśana* on television and saw the Astounding Bhagavad Gītā. Many senior ISKCON devotees were present for this auspicious occasion.

With the passage of each day, I have become more and more convinced that your movement is the only hope for humanity. Just as Lord Caitanya converted tigers, snakes, and deer into devotees, you have convinced millions of animallike human beings to take to the path of pure devotional service. I pray for your causeless mercy so that I can follow your instructions and inspire book production and distribution. You also wanted us to build temples to spread the Lord's message. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* you called these temples spiritual hospitals. I pray that with your blessings I may be able to complete the projects we have started.

Your fallen servant,

Gopāl Krishna Goswami



Guru Prasād Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my prostrated obeisances at you lotus feet, which provide a most secure shelter for those devotees seeking pure *bhakti*.

I continue enumerating the twenty-six qualities of pure devotees, the next being *maitra*, friendly to all. Lord Kapiladeva described the qualities of a *sādhū* to His mother: *titikṣavaḥ kārūṇikāḥ suhṛdaḥ sarva-dehinām*. “A *sādhū* is tolerant and compassionate and therefore the friend of all embodied beings.” You have explained on various occasions that there are three types of friends. A *bandhu* is a relative, a *mitra* is someone for whom we feel affection, but a *suhṛt* is that friend who only desires everyone’s benefit, without any desire for something in return. Certainly you fulfill and surpass the definition of *suhṛt*. Just as Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura would loudly chant 100,000 names (one third of his chanting) for the benefit of all living entities, you dedicated every word, thought, and deed to bringing the highest benefit, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, to all.

Your friendship sometimes manifested as a casual conversation to make a devotee feel better, or to share a moment of intimacy, showing how you only desired their spiritual progress. On other occasions, as seen in many of your other attributes, your friendship might appear to be something else when shown through chastisement or admonishment. As Kṛṣṇa mentions in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.13), when there is no envy toward any living entity, real friendship manifests, followed by compassion. Kṛṣṇa demonstrates how one divine attribute leads to another. Arjuna pleaded with the Lord to convert His casual friendship into a form that would yield the greatest benefit.

I pray that you give me the vision to see all of your instructions and indications of how to conduct my activities, words, and thoughts in such a way that they bear the fruit of *bhakti*. Your friendship has always been present in every word spoken by you, but only by your divine grace can I perceive it. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Your fallen and needy servant,

Guru Prasād Swami

Hridayānanda dās Goswami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I bow in reverence at your lotus feet. I come to you with a simple prayer—that you petition your Lord Kṛṣṇa to mercifully empower your servants to restore your Western mission to the glory that you created for it. As we walked with you one morning in Rancho Park, Los Angeles, you stopped and wonderfully recreated Lord Kṛṣṇa’s dialogue with Arjuna, speaking both parts.

Lord Kṛṣṇa: Just be My instrument, Arjuna. I have already slain these soldiers. But you take the credit.

Arjuna: But how can I accomplish such a great task?

Lord Kṛṣṇa: I have already done it Myself. But I want to give you the credit. So just be My instrument.

Prabhupāda, you then spoke in your own voice and said, “Just as Lord Kṛṣṇa defeated the Pāṇḍavas’ enemies at the Battle of Kurukṣetra and thus spread His own glories, so the Lord will spread His *saṅkīrtana* movement. But He wants to give you the credit. So take the credit and become the Lord’s instrument. Otherwise, He will give the credit to another devotee. But why don’t you take the credit and make your life perfect?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, we humbly volunteer to be your instrument, because you are the Lord’s greatest instrument. Please empower us to restore your Mission to its rightful prominence in a fallen and suffering world.

Your aspiring servant,

Hridayānanda dās Goswami

Jayapatāka Swami

My dear spiritual father Śrīla Abhay Charan Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda,
Please accept my respectful obeisances.

*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*

On your Vyāsa-pūjā I would like to offer you my humble homage.

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You have blessed me with your divine association and picked me up from the pool of material, conditioned life—the ocean of birth and death. You have given me the holy *dhāma* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Many other countless blessings, too. You have given me many instructions to fulfill for realizing your mercy on the world. You could have stayed in Vṛndāvana and gotten your spiritual emancipation, but you accepted great risk and austerity to carry out the order of your spiritual master to preach the message of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu to the Western world.

I was blind, thinking that serving my senses was the goal of life. But you showed me how serving Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, Śrī Śrī Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadra, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the actual purpose of life and that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is my only shelter. In this way you gave real meaning to my life and enabled me to taste real happiness for the first time.

Over the last twelve years I have had many health challenges. I was trying to carry out your instructions despite these challenges, but in early 2018 the doctors told me that unless I had a liver and kidney transplant within three to five months I would reach a point of no return and would leave my body. So, wanting to try to fulfill some more of your instructions, in the latter part of last year I got a liver and kidney transplant, and by the time of your Vyāsa-pūjā this year, one year will have passed.

I would like to see Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, the Aṣṭa Sakhīs, Māyāpur-candra, the Pañca-tattva, and Prahlāda-Narasimhadeva established in the new Temple of the Vedic Planetarium. I would like to see the Vedic Planetarium up and running. Also, you instructed me to develop the Navadvīpa-maṇḍala Parikramā and Gaura-maṇḍala-bhūmi and facilitate the unification, in some form or other, of the Saraswat disciplic succession. You also wanted me to expand the outreach of Kṛṣṇa consciousness unlimitedly by establishing and expanding the congregational preaching in ISKCON while seeing to the mass distribution of your transcendental literatures. You wanted me to guide and care for the disciples you have sent me, so that they can be useful in spreading your message and achieve success in their lives. You said that I shall stay in Māyāpur and work through my assistants, and later you said that I should also travel around the world, since that is the duty of all *sannyāsīs* (but now my traveling days are challenged). And there were many other things you instructed me to do. You once said to me: “I have given you the spiritual world, so now you develop it.” When we just had just five devotees in Māyāpur, you said that eventually we would have a city of 50,000 devotees. Right now we have over five thousand, so gradually your prediction is taking shape.

I have written several memoirs, but the more I write the more I remember. Also, I’m trying to write the pastimes of Lord Caitanya—they are recounted in various books. Of course, there is no limit to His pastimes, but at least I want to give some more extended experience of how wonderful Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda and Their associates are. You have given yourself to all of us and given the *vāṇī* of Lord Caitanya. I appreciate how you have engaged me in His service and thus kept me away from the clutches of the illusory energy. So, on this sacred day commemorating your appearance, known as Nanda-mahotsava, the day after Janmāṣṭamī, I beg for your continued mercy and glorify you for the unlimited mercy you have showered upon us all. All glories to Your Divine Grace.

Your insignificant disciple,

Jayapatāka Swami

Kavicandra Swami

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

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

As time passes, the importance of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books becomes more prominent.

When I first joined I heard that Śrīla Prabhupāda had said, "My books are better than I am." Śrīla Prabhupāda put so much energy into writing his books, and then inconceivable efforts into getting them published and distributed. The description of his work in Delhi to get his first three *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* volumes printed is most inspiring. We can never duplicate that. He was alone, with no supporters. His Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, had told him, "If you ever get money, print books." Śrīla Prabhupāda based his movement on that instruction. He printed books even when he did not have money.

How can the books be better than him?

His books can be everywhere at the same time. Anyone who reads them submissively will have Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal association.

His books will be present for thousands of years after his physical departure.

His books provide the blissful service of distributing them and thereby bringing Śrīla Prabhupāda into the lives of millions and billions of souls all over the world.

His books are connecting us with the previous *ācāryas*, back to Lord Brahmā.

We are sure, therefore, that everyone in human society will welcome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, even though it is now presented with so many faults, for it is recommended by such an authority as Śrī Nārada, who has very kindly appeared in this chapter. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.12, purport]

Śrīla Prabhupāda has given everything in his books. We learn what is the real goal (purpose) of human life and why and *how* to achieve it. His purports guide us in detail. I get many "how to" questions. The answers are always found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often read his books. He said, "I want to see what Kṛṣṇa has written." He translated *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and organized a society that is a continuation of *caitanya-līlā* and *sādhū-saṅga*, i.e., *bhāgavata-kathā*, *saṅkīrtana*, and *vaiṣṇava-sevā*.

Prabhupāda: Some way or other, if they read my books they will be benefited. There is no doubt about it. [Garden Conversation with Dr. Allen Gerson, 22 June 1975, Los Angeles]

If you chant always Hare Krishna, read my books, and preach this philosophy sincerely, then Krishna will provide you with all facility, and you will not fall down into material entanglement. [Letter to Devotees, 30 March 1967]

In conjunction with this you should always read my books daily and all your questions will be answered and you will have a firm basis of Krishna Consciousness. In this way your life will be perfect. [Letter to Hugo Salemon, 22 November 1974]

Please do not fail to chant 16 rounds, rise early, read my books carefully and follow all the regulative

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principles. [Letter to Gandharva Dāsa — Bombay 12 January, 1975]

Yes, as a Sannyasi and GBC your first duty is to read my books. Otherwise how will you preach? In order to remain steadily fixed in Krishna consciousness there must be a sound philosophical understanding. Otherwise it will become only sentiment. Whenever you find time please read my books. [Letter to Satsvarūpa Goswami, 5 January 1976]

When we read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, we are inspired to distribute them. When we distribute them, we get realizations of the potency of the transcendental literature.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is always personally present in his books.

Kavicandra swami

Madhusevita dāsa

My most dear Father and Master Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to your divine appearance day.

Time is taking its toll on me proportionately to my lack of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

How many more years I will be able to celebrate your Vyāsa-pūjā with a lucid mind is not for me to know, but I pray to Lord Nityānanda to keep infusing my heart with some inspiration for the purpose of glorifying you, who are the very meaning of my life and the lifeblood of my every attempt to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

I know you are present.

I know you are observing every aspect of your ISKCON.

Are you satisfied with our service?

Have we been able to imbibe and foster your impeccable strategy for establishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness amidst the changing times and circumstances of the material world?

Please don't give up on us.

I, for one, still feel like a child badly in need of his father's protection.

Never mind what the outward appearance may be: projects, disciples, achievements . . . In my heart the dire need of your sustenance is ever increasing, and so is the fear of losing your mercy.

Kindly forgive these rambling, incoherent words of mine that can't glorify you properly, but the only certainty I have in life is that for a castaway like me you are the only shore.

Whatever it may take, allow me to rejoin you at the end of life.

Your persistent servant,

Madhusevita dāsa

Mālatī Devī Dāsī

*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*

Dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I offer you my full *daṇḍavat* obeisances, with my head at your lotus feet. I have nowhere else to place my head and my heart, or indeed my soul, except at your lotus feet.

His Holiness Bhakti Tīrtha Swami once said that he wrote to you every day during your presence and continued to do so after your physical departure to maintain his loving connection with you. I appreciated this gesture, but found that it was not my calling to write you every day but rather once a year on your Vyāsa-pūjā day, and that even that could be awkward for less advanced persons like myself. I find my solace in talking to you every morning and evening and in absorbing myself in reading your lucid purports.

It seems that ISKCON is at a critical junction, with an increasing number of your disciples departing from this world, hoping to follow you in their service, and a great number entering our eighth decade of life, continuing out struggle against *māyā*, hoping to somehow or other actually find ourselves with an honest taste for the holy name and uninterrupted devotional service. I am still in that struggling camp, with my head at your feet, begging for your continued mercy so that I never again stray, begging that today I may finally chant sixteen rounds without offense, or even one mantra or even one “Kṛṣṇa” or “Rāma” without offense. You wrote to Kṛṣṇa Dāsa on Sept 9, 1972: “You mentioned that your pathway has become filled with stumbling blocks, but there are no stumbling blocks, I can kick out all those stumbling blocks immediately, provided you accept my guidance. With one stroke of my kick I can kick out all stumbling blocks.”

My unhappy realization is that I am obviously not prepared for your merciful kick, remaining among the doglike stubborn people that you often mentioned. Now, in my old age, with no time to spare, I beg for your merciful kick and pray that I gracefully receive it.

One of your eternal dāsīs,

Mālatī Devī Dāsī

Mukunda Goswami

*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*

Homages from the GBC

Shakespeare, Poetry, and Śāstra

When leading Hollywood actress Julie Christie visited the First American Transcendental Exhibition at the Los Angeles temple in 1977, she paused at the third diorama. The sculpture depicted the changing body as described in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, second chapter, thirteenth verse. She immediately began to recite the following passage from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. . . .

Then she had to stop, as she was glued to the diorama before her. The passage continues:

And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloone,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

(By the way, "sans" in French means "without.")

As you may have detected already, this offering is in the form of a seminar. I'm going to talk about Śrīla Prabhupāda's relationship with William Shakespeare and a bit about poetry in general.

Maybe Śrīla Prabhupāda's education at Scottish Churches' College had something to do with his recall of Shakespeare and other English poets. Lecturing on the third chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* on May 27, 1966, in New York, he said:

I think there is a line in Shakespeare's literature, "The lunatic, mad, and the poet," or something like that, "all compact in thought." [The reference is to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Scene 1: "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact."] So a madman and an

ātma-rati person, self-satisfied man, outwardly you will find there is no difference, but inwardly, oh, there is vast difference.

Shakespeare hit on some Vedic truths. Sometimes great English poets, inadvertently or in the name of intellectual philosophy, write of truths that sound almost *śāstric*, or the poets sometimes convey meaning to philosophy or historical incidents described in Vedic texts. Śrīla Prabhupāda often quoted renowned poets of India, some of whose writings surpassed even those of the West.

In his “To be or not to be” soliloquy, Hamlet is considering death. Some of his thoughts are expressed in these lines:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

In a sense, the five Pāṇḍava brothers suffered the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” when they tolerated the Kauravas’ many atrocities, including the attempt to denude their wife publicly, the setting of their house on fire, and the arrangement for a demon to kill them. Despite these abominations, which took place prior to the final battle, the Pāṇḍava princes didn’t retaliate. Moreover, their saintly mother prayed for more such tribulation so that she could better remember God. Thus mother and sons tolerated the many “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

In the end, however, the Pāṇḍavas fought Duryodhana and company on the battlefield, thus taking “arms against a sea of troubles” (tyranny and atheism) and ending the strife, the “sea of troubles”—the kingdom of godlessness. They had taken “arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing” ended them. In this case the Pāṇḍavas engaged in sanctioned capital punishment. *The Laws of Manu* state that those who set fire to one’s house or kidnap one’s wife must be punished by death. One who punishes such aggressors is, according to *śāstra*, without sin.

In another of Shakespeare’s plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks:

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.”

She was referring to the clan war between the Capulets (Juliet’s family) and the Montagues (Romeo’s patronymic). These two families opposed the amorous liaison of the young couple. During a lecture at Northeastern University, in Boston, on April 30, 1969, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Lord Caitanya says, ‘It doesn’t matter. If you have got any bona fide name of God, you chant that. You chant God’s name.’” Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda intimated, as Juliet did, that the particular name is not as important as the substance being named. Śrīla Prabhupāda repeated this concept many times.

It is a fact that poetry is an integral component of *all śāstric* verses. It is a form of *ruci* in which the excellence of elements is highly visible, especially to masters of the Sanskrit language. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that all *ślokas* are poems.

Śrīla Prabhupāda once said that many of us, even those ignorant of the Sanskrit language, could recognize the cadence of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse that ends with *padam padam yad vipadām na teṣām*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s general manner of speech was particularly poetic. He brought deep and greater meaning when he used words like “skyscraper” and “wildfire.”

In the list of twenty-six qualities of a devotee, the word *kavi* (poet) appears as the twenty-fourth. Indeed, the author of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja—*kavirāja* meaning “king of the poets” or “poet-king.”

Throughout Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings he often referred to Cowper, Ben Johnson, Emerson, Kipling, Jayadeva, Vālmīki, Brahmā, Vidyāpati, Tagore, and others. Some were referred to anonymously: he simply

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characterized them as Hindi, Bengali, or Indian poets. The British intellectual Ben Johnson is said to have said, “Poetry speaketh somewhat above a mortal mouth,” intimating that poetry can have a supramundane effect.

Yann Martel, the Canadian winner of the 2002 Booker Prize for his book *The Life of Pi*, wrote poetically, “Choosing doubt as a philosophy of life is like selecting immobility as a means of transportation.” Earnest Hemingway’s style of writing of fiction is sometimes said to be poetic.

Sometimes fiction writers incorporate biblical phrases. For example, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee writes, “Let the dead bury the dead.” (Matthew 8:22) This phrase appears at a turning point in her famous novel.

Seminar question #1: Doesn’t Śrīla Prabhupāda, quoting *śāstra*, state in several places that *all* compositions, no matter how eloquent or brilliant by linguistic standards, are totally useless if they do not properly glorify the Personality of Godhead? So what would you say to this?

What you say is undoubtedly true. However, I am certain that poetry has its place in Kṛṣṇa conscious literature and in the preaching of *paramahamsas*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s servant,

Mukunda Goswami

Nirañjana Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

The time has come once again to express my glorification of you in a written homage on the anniversary of your divine appearance in this world.

Last night I was watching *Hare Krishna: The Mantra, the Movement, and the Swami Who Started it All* for the fourth time. Each time I watch this movie, focused exclusively on you and the devotional achievements you accomplished within such a short period of time, achievements recounted with such deep love and appreciation by those who are following you, I can’t help but become emotional.

However, there is one point in the movie when I’ve burst into tears every time I’ve watched it.

After we hear your disciples describe how your movement was being attacked and accused of being a “brainwashing cult,” and then hearing the details of the legal battle that took place in the New York State Supreme Court, we hear your disciple Amarendra Dāsa triumphantly say, “You know . . . that was a big victory for Śrīla Prabhupāda.” At that point my eyes immediately tear up. Amarendra was referring to the Supreme Court judge’s opening statement as he pronounced his verdict: “The Hare Krishna religion is a bona fide religion, with roots in India that go back thousands of years.”

I was there while all this was happening, Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was intimately connected with those who were fighting for you in the New York State Supreme Court. In Boston, I was closely connected with the devotee whose parents were fighting against you in that very same courtroom. I even went to his home when he was kidnapped, along with many other devotees who were also connected with him, in an attempt to rescue him from those who were known then as “deprogrammers.” I remember being influenced by it all, while serving you and the mission you entrusted to us—your disciples—to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness without compromising the truth. You always demonstrated this to us by your pure and uncompromising example.

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I've listened so many times to your 1977 room conversations in Māyāpur. On March 20, 1977, your disciples read you the article from the *New York Times* with the headline "Hare Krishna Brainwash Case Thrown Out in New York." You triumphantly responded, "Now we have got a sound position." Then Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami read you the headline on the front page of the *Times of India*: "Hare Krishna Movement Is a Bona Fide Religion."

You then said, also triumphantly, "So my mission is now successful. I went there, and this is now recognized after twelve years. Loitering in the street, nobody cared for me. Alone carrying books."

You orchestrated it all, Śrīla Prabhupāda . . . not only establishing Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West but even up to the last detail of fighting the court case. Now, more than forty years later, I am thinking deeply of these words you spoke at that time:

"So my mission is now successful."

What did you mean? I've understood that you meant that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was accepted as genuine. You also meant that you had fulfilled the order of your Guru Maharaja in an incomparable way. Very shortly thereafter, you were quoted in this connection as saying, "By false propaganda you cannot suppress the truth."

In November of that same year, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you left us, having fulfilled your mission. Your International Society for Krishna Consciousness was firmly recognized in the United States' lawbooks as a genuine religion. As all the testimonies given since then have confirmed, it was you, the genuine guru, who came to the West on the order of your spiritual master to establish this genuine process of devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa throughout the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the evidence is clear. You were successful. I must now confess to you that today I am feeling a very heavy weight of responsibility to help ensure that your movement remains the success you recognized it to be, now and for generations to come.

In other words, I know that I must be genuine, too. That weight is bearing very heavily on me as I stand before you today.

On this most auspicious anniversary of your divine appearance in this world, I beg you to please make me your genuine disciple, one who will never leave the lotus feet of my genuine guru. Please let me serve you until my last breath and give me the strength to always speak the truth as you did, with the same conviction you had—that "the truth can never be suppressed by any false propaganda."

In the dust of your lotus feet,

Your eternal servant,

Nirañjana Swami

Praghoṣa Dāsa

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

On this most important day of every year, we have the special honor and opportunity to offer you thanks and glorification for the extraordinary gift you have given us. Not just given to us but given to the entire population of planet earth. This remarkable benediction you have given was delivered at great personal risk and involved you making an enormous sacrifice that few, if any, would ever have voluntarily undertaken, at least not exclusively for the benefit of others.

As inevitable time relentlessly marches on, one thing that never changes is the most unfortunate propaganda that as technological, scientific, and social advances are made, the negative aspects of material nature are ever being reduced, it only being a matter of time before they are conquered altogether. I guess by now it should not amaze me how practically everyone buys into that fantasy propaganda, but it does! Fortunately, though, you have given me both the tools and the protective shield that allow me to avoid being sucked in by this delusional disinformation. Your wonderful example also inspires me to try to continue doing my bit to assist in removing this delusion, which keeps so, so many people spellbound.

If we analyze the pipe dreams and unicorns that so many misguided materialists have offered and promised us over the millennia, we quickly realize they are just a tsunami of will-o'-the-wisps!

When I was a child, plastic was presented as a wonder product that was versatile, cheap, durable, light, and colorful. Now, fifty years later, it is the biggest threat to the sustainability and very existence of our planet. I also remember my first lesson in one of your temples: after my first night there, I was brushing my teeth and left the water running; a devotee immediately turned off the tap and chastised me for wasting Kṛṣṇa's energy.

Whether it be the climate crisis—your answer: respect Kṛṣṇa's energy—or whether it be the constant threat of war, or indeed *actual* wars all over the planet—your answer: give up our identification with the temporary body and focus on our real identity as eternal spirit souls—or whether it be the many health crises, such as obesity—your answer: a perfectly balanced diet of *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*—or whether it be “new” problems such as Brexit—your answer: nationalism will never lead to anything positive—we would not have had the essential benefit of your lessons if you had not embarked on that courageous journey fifty-four years ago and delivered to us, out of your causeless mercy, the eternal message of liberation from this material world through service to our dearmost transcendent Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

I can never thank you enough—what to speak of repay you—for all that you have given me and continue to give me every single day.

Thank you ever so much, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Your lowly servant,

Praghoṣa Dāsa

Prahlādānanda 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*

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s philosophy of unity in diversity is a practical explanation of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s philosophy called *acintya-bheda-and-abheda-tattva*, simultaneous oneness and difference. In the material world there is much diversity but little unity. In Brahman there is unity but no diversity. In the spiritual world and in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is the proper balance of unity in diversity.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted ISKCON’s leadership to discuss unity and diversity and implement it in a practical way so that the spiritual revolution envisioned by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the previous *ācāryas* would become a reality. By trying to serve the mission of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu under proper authorization, devotees can invoke the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who will then fulfill their aspirations and plans by using such sincere followers and servants as instruments. However, the success of this arrangement requires that devotees work under the GBC body, accepting the authority of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s strict servants, and not work under independent leaders with their own followers and finances.

The GBC’s specific duty is to help organize the world *saṅkīrtana* movement and systematically engage all kinds of devotees on all different levels in convincing people that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

All bodily systems—digestive, circulatory, respiratory, etc.—are of equal importance. A body is considered healthy when all its systems harmoniously work together and no one system dominates the others. Śrīla Prabhupāda compared ISKCON to the body of Lord Kṛṣṇa. ISKCON also has its “bodily systems”: outreach, worship, devotee association, membership, ministries, leadership, etc. Only when all these systems work together in balance and harmony is it possible to have a healthy ISKCON, in which members naturally grow spiritually. That growth will develop men and women of character, who are empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa to organize and expand the *saṅkīrtana* movement simply for His pleasure.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 12.8, purport) Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the result when this program is not followed:

The words *daivera kāraṇa* indicate that by dint of providence, or by God’s will, the followers of Advaita Ācārya divided into two parties. Such disagreement among the disciples of one *ācārya* is also found among the members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivrājākācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next *ācārya*. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of *ācārya*, and they split into two factions over who the next *ācārya* would be. Consequently, both factions were *asāra*, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master.

ISKCON should not follow this path. On the contrary, ISKCON should value, understand, and synthesize the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas* without selfish interest. In this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa will bless ISKCON leaders with the spiritual knowledge that will enable them to cooperate and thus intelligently organize the expansion of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement through unity in diversity.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's aspiring servant,

Prahlādānanda Swami

Rādhānāth Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my heartfelt obeisances.

This year we are grateful to present to you a very special offering. For the first time since 1930, devotees have been entrusted with the full care of the rooftop terrace of number 1 Ultadanga Junction Road in Calcutta. The divine pastime that took place here in 1922 is our very life and soul. It was here that you first met your eternal Guru Mahārāja, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. At the commencement of that first meeting a seed was planted in your heart. Your Guru Mahārāja instructed you to spread the love of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu throughout the world in the English language. The seed of this instruction germinated in your heart for forty-three years. Then in 1965 it sprouted as you left India on a cargo ship, the M.V. *Jaladuta*. You told us that when you arrived in New York City you had nothing except a crate of your translations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and this instruction of your Guru Mahārāja. Soon, that seed grew into a glorious desire tree with hundreds of branches around the world and millions of flowers in the form of your loving devotees. These flowers have distributed hundreds of millions of the same seeds in the form of your books, *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, *prasādam* distribution, and numerous other outreach activities.

In 1922 the house on Ultadanga was called Bhaktivinoda Asana. It was the place where your Guru Mahārāja began the outreach of his Gauḍīya Maṭha.

In March of this year we acquired this historic but sadly neglected property. Days after, I sat on the rooftop terrace and in my heart's meditation I could almost see, hear, and feel your interaction with your Guru Mahārāja—an exchange that would fulfill the prophecy of Lord Caitanya and would forever change the world. I am praying that devotees from all over the world will come here to have this experience.

On many occasions you spoke about this pastime: “I was very happy to be defeated by my Guru Maharaja.” “At that moment I accepted Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as my eternal master.” “I took this order of my Guru Mahārāja as my life and soul.” “My only qualification is that I have tried to carry out the instruction of my Guru Mahārāja.”

In 1973, in Los Angeles, on the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, you spoke about this event. The words you spoke at that time have awakened in me a profound appreciation for all my godbrothers and godsisters, especially for your beloved Guṇagrāhī Goswami Mahārāja, who recently departed in Vṛndāvana. You revealed your heart to your followers:

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What he desired, I am trying little bit, and you are all helping me. So I have to thank you more. You are actually representative of my Guru Mahārāja [crying] . . . because you are helping me to execute the order of my Guru Mahārāja. Thank you very much.

We are hopeful that in 2022, on the hundredth anniversary of the historic first meeting with your Guru Mahārāja in Calcutta, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium in Śrī Māyāpur Dhām will be inaugurated. It will be an offering of love and gratitude to you by the worldwide community of devotees (with special thanks to Ambarīṣa Prabhu).

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, the oceans you crossed to give us Kṛṣṇa consciousness are like insignificant puddles compared to the limitless oceans of your love for Rādhā-Govinda-deva and your compassion upon all living beings. I pray that it is forever remembered that the only qualification of all your followers, for all generations, is their deep appreciation for you and your shoreless ocean of compassion.

Helplessly praying for your mercy,

A servant of your servants,

Rādhānāth Swami

Rāmāi Swami

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

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

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, at the top of the front cover of your *Back to Godhead* magazine, the following motto always appears: “Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.” The source of this motto is a verse from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 22.31):

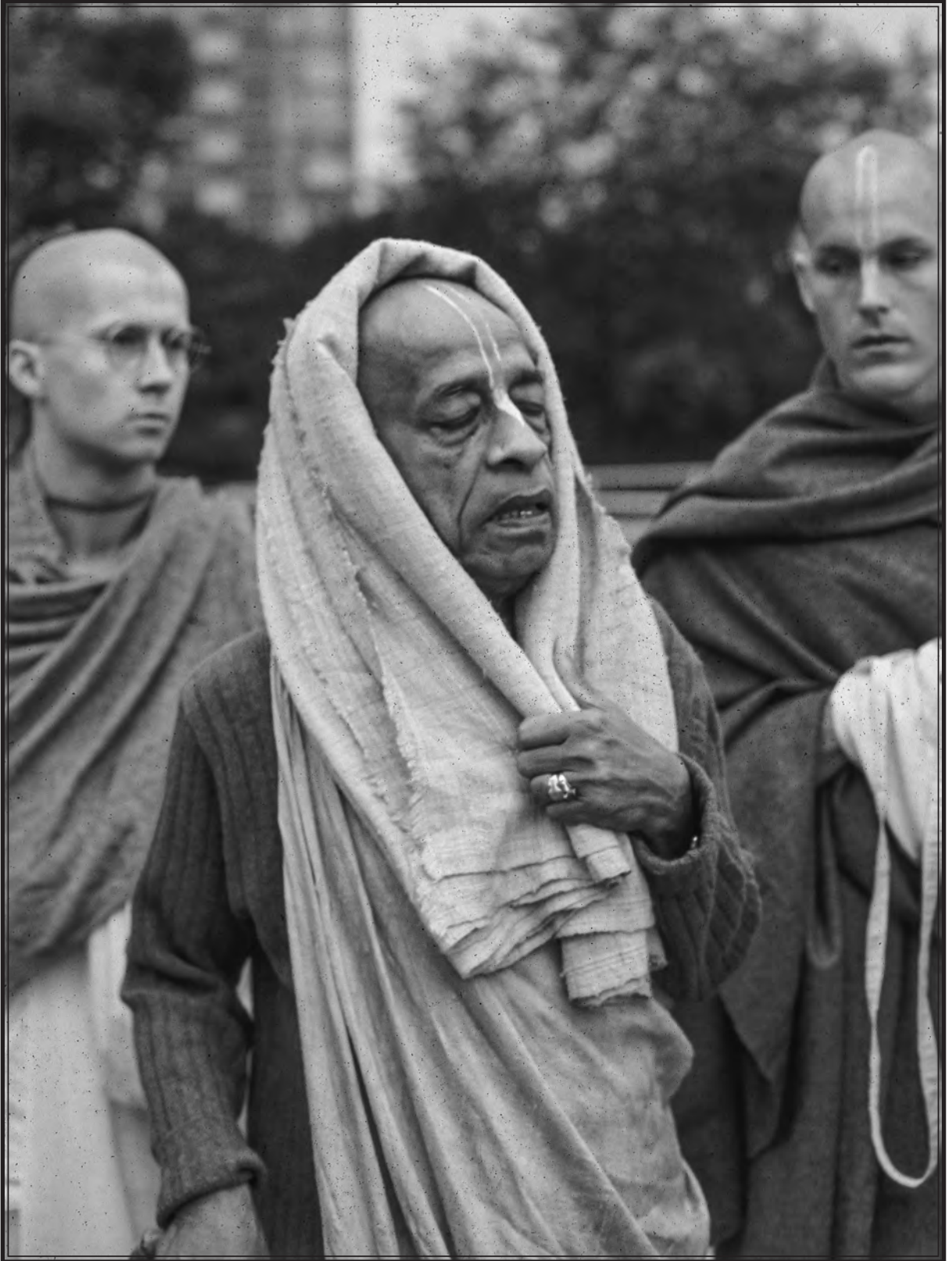
*kṛṣṇa—sūrya-sama, māyā haya andhakāra
yāhān kṛṣṇa, tāhān nāhi māyāra adhikāra*

For us, your disciples, you were our light, and before you came, we were in ignorance and darkness. You were the one who showed us the light of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, His most merciful incarnation.

In your purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.16 you state, “Kali-yuga is so saturated with vicious habits that there is a great fight at the slightest misunderstanding.” We are seeing this more and more. The polluted atmosphere affects even the devotees, and so sometimes they also quarrel among themselves.

At the end of the same purport you state:

If we want actual peace, we must open the road to understanding of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa and



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glorify Him for His virtuous activities as they are depicted in the pages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for enlightening us with the true perfection of life. If we always keep your instructions and example in the center, we will attain the ultimate goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Dear master, let my prayer prevail,
For much I long to tell your tale.
Moved by your guru's words, you began
A worldwide movement, O saintly man.

Many disciples came, good and true,
To help you spread the mission, too.
They followed your orders, were loyal and bold,
And by your mercy became lofty-souled.

We remember with joy and pride
How you were always by our side.
Everything went on by your grace;
All obstacles we were able to face.

Strong as the tiger or the bull,
With lotus eyes so large and full,
Like sun and moon adorning the sky—
Your high qualities we glorified.

Traveling the world, O mighty sage,
Though your body was marked by age,
Most eloquent of men, a holy guide,
You pushed back Kali-yuga's tide.

All around there was unholy fire;
You extinguished it, by the Lord's desire.
Some looked upon it with dread;
Nevertheless, from the front you led.

It was not easy, but you were blessed,
Solemn and successful in your quest.

To the highest duty you adhered;
In this way, you were always revered.

The world was veiled in blinding night,
And no one knew what was right.
Where were the leaders in any state?
Good from bad they failed to separate.

But in the future, rulers of the land
By Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's side will stand.
Already we see this coming true
By your efforts and because of you.

Lord Caitanya, the mercy incarnation—
His desire will spread to every nation,
Sure to increase more and more,
To far away places and distant shores.

Like Indra pouring down heavenly rain,
Nectar will drench the burning plain.
The Lord made this mighty prediction;
It will be fulfilled without restriction.

Prabhupāda, you came in His holy line,
So brilliant, wonderful, and divine.
You served Kṛṣṇa with mind and soul—
Please help us reach that lofty goal!

Your unworthy disciple,

Rāmāi Swami

Ravindra Svarūpa dāsa

*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*

Dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I am here to pay homage to your achievement and to beg you to allow me to carry on your mission and also recruit and inspire others to do the same.

You have given us the ways and means for successfully gathering many resources—material, mental, social, intellectual, and spiritual resources—to further your mission. However, as you well know, we also have too often diverted those resources for our own, separate purposes while trying to hoodwink ourselves and others into thinking our own aims are really yours—and Kṛṣṇa’s.

We have a lack of faith in you. Faith is the steadfast, strong conviction that just by executing our service to Kṛṣṇa we will accomplish everything else needed—automatically, with no need for separate endeavor. (So we are informed in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 22.62).

Today I am reflecting on one service in particular, one very special, important mission you gave me that to this day remains uncompleted. It is true that this mission was furthered after your departure, yet it still awaits its consummation. Over the years I have come to take it more and more seriously, reflecting on its import not only for committed devotees but also for the entire human race.

It began during the 1976 Gaura-pūrṇimā festival in Māyāpur, when I was summoned by your servant Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja. “Śrīla Prabhupāda,” he said, “wants to talk to you.” He brought me to you, and you placed before me a plan to establish in Śrīdhām Māyāpur what you called “ISKCON Bhāgavata College.” You also told Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja to compile a list of ISKCON devotees in the West who already had undergraduate degrees; from these would come the students at ISKCON Bhāgavata College. The faculty would be composed of me and others who had PhDs. Then you instructed me to go to the University of Calcutta and confer with the proper authorities about affiliating ISKCON Bhāgavata College with that institution.

Thus it became clear, as we talked, that what you wanted in Māyāpur was a degree-granting graduate research institute. (You were using the word “college” in the British sense: “A society of scholars incorporated within, or in connexion with, a University, or otherwise formed for purposes of study or instruction” says the Oxford English Dictionary, which cites “the ancient colleges of Oxford [such as Balliol and Trinity]” as an example.) You told me that students at our ISKCON Bhāgavata College would prepare their dissertations under our direction, and that The University of Calcutta would give the final exam and award the degree.

And that degree, you announced, would be: “PhDB: Doctor of Bhāgavata Philosophy.”

Having taken in this astounding proposal, I said to you, “We will need to have a big research library.” You responded, quite firmly: “Only our books.” An image of a bookshelf three or four feet long lodged itself in my mind. I knew I would have to bring up this misgiving sometime. But immediately, you wanted me to meet with our Māyāpur authorities to design a dedicated building for the college. Then I was to leave Māyāpur for Calcutta, there to consult with the appropriate authorities at the University of Calcutta regarding affiliation.

As it turned out, the university authorities were quite interested. Over a few days, I met several times with the Inspector of Colleges, who emphasized that our college would need a “large research library.” I knew this already. The Inspector then suggested that I visit the Ramakrishna Mission’s institution in Calcutta to get an idea. I did. Their library was huge.

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By the time I had finished up in Calcutta and Māyāpur, you had already gone on to Vṛndāvana. There, in your quarters at the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira, I met with you again.

You were encouraged by the university's interest, which you seem to have expected. With some trepidation, I brought up the sticking point: "They say we need to have a large research library, Śrīla Prabhupāda. But you said, 'Only our books.' What'll we do?"

"Oh!" You exclaimed at once, "We will have a huge library: all the works from the four *sampradāyas*."

Those words of yours immediately infused me with a potent emotional mixture of relief, amazement, joy, and gratitude.

Then I suggested to you that the best way to stock this library was to send teams of devotees to the various repositories around India to microfilm the Vaiṣṇava works there, many of which would be rare, out of print, or even in manuscript.

You approved. Further, you said that the American BBT should immediately start funding this program, and the BBT's Sanskrit department there should begin to compile a list of books.

I am sorry to have to record that, unfortunately, not much happened. The BBT Sanskrit department was enthusiastic, but their funding was limited. They did some microfilming themselves, but only of Gauḍīya literature. And while the American BBT was enthusiastic about distributing books, the opposite—acquiring them—did not light any fires.

While I was still in a state of discouragement, a letter arrived from one of our leaders in India saying that the ISKCON Bhagavata College project had been canceled because there was no longer a need to establish the college in Māyāpur. They had found, he said, "another way to get visas." (In those days, Western devotees made up much of ISKCON India's manpower, and apparently some thought of the Māyāpur college as scheme to bring in Western devotees on student visas.)

My discouragement deepened. The next year, when I arrived in Māyāpur for the Gaura-pūrṇimā festival, Bhavānanda Swami greeted me with an urgent question: "Where have you been!? The Inspector of Colleges from Calcutta was here two times!" I told him about the letter I'd received saying the project had been canceled. "What!" he exclaimed, astonished and outraged. I was even further discouraged.

You, Śrīla Prabhupāda, were ill; I was not able see you; you gave no classes. And ISKCON—as you surely know—was soon to undergo, after your departure from this world, a series of crises that put its future in great jeopardy.

Yet I am happy to report that nevertheless, as if by *daiva* (which you called "the unseen hand of the supreme"), your desires are in the process of being fulfilled—sometimes because of our actions, sometimes in spite them. Those desires of yours are thus extraordinarily potent and resilient.

For example: the library project you wanted was picked up again and carried out over the years. Garuḍa Dāsa and I formed an "Institute for Vaishnava Studies," and with the help of scholars like Professor Thomas Hopkins we were able to secure a generous grant for the library project, and annually teams led by devotees were able to go throughout India copying texts. Later, Professor Charles White, from American University, was enlisted as one of the principal scholars of Vaishnavism to work on the project. After he retired, he was then able to dedicate several years to complete the project by properly cataloging the entire microform collection and getting the catalogue published.

At the same time, Prāṇava Dāsa, from Sweden, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Prāṇava has gone on to gather a great collection of documents and information about his subject, including writings of your Guru Mahārāja that are as yet unpublished.

Meanwhile, Hari-śauri Dāsa, who had been massaging you when we talked in Vṛndāvana, understood the importance of the project and was able to transform a donated flat in Kolkata into The Bhaktivedanta Research Centre, a first-class, climate-controlled library housing many rare books and even manuscripts.

And in Māyāpur, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium that you wanted and described in some detail is, by your mercy, going up and filling out.

Yet now I am particularly concerned about that perfect complement to the temple, the one that you had described to me: ISKCON Bhāgavata College. I see it as the complement to that temple because the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium presents this world, this *brahmāṇḍa*, just as it is described in *Śrīmad-*

Bhāgavatam. And this world, to say the least, is not the world that most people today can see.

I see one important function of ISKCON Bhāgavata College is to research, explore, and explain that cosmos as given in the *Bhāgavatam*. That world, the world ordinary people cannot perceive, is in fact the real world, the world that is *īśāvasyam idam sarvam*, pervaded and controlled by the Lord.

If we perceive our world—and ourselves as well—as separate from or independent of the Lord, we are seeing neither our world nor ourselves as they are. Therefore ISKCON Bhāgavata College, together with its adjunct, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, have a common mission: to train all people how to see the world and all its contents properly.

This proper way of understanding has been propagated in Māyāpur by Lord Caitanya, and it is summarized in the formulation *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. This formulation states that while nothing is different from Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is different from everything. In other words, the Lord both transcends the world and includes it as well. This is our *darśana*, our way of seeing. To attain that knowledge scientifically—that is, by our own systematically cultivated direct perception—we must concentrate, purify, and intensify our consciousness, chiefly by *mahā-mantra* meditation. The principles that make this possible are conventionally thought of as moral principles, but they are in fact even more than that: they are epistemological principles, principles of knowledge. This knowledge gives us direct perception of transcendence, as Kṛṣṇa states at *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.2, using the word *pratyakṣa* for “direct perception.” Breaking it down: *prati*, in front of; *akṣa*, the eye.

In many, many places, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you have set forth this *darśana*, and your Māyāpur Temple and College are dedicated to explicating it.

Here is one wonderful instance of your describing it, in the purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.33:

The conclusion is that both the material world and spiritual world are considered to be the body of the Supreme Lord. We can understand that the material body is caused by the spiritual body and is therefore an expansion of the spiritual body. Thus when one takes up spiritual activities, one’s entire material body is spiritualized. Similarly, in this material world, when the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement expands, the entire material world becomes spiritualized. As long as we do not realize this, we live in the material world, but when we are fully Kṛṣṇa conscious we live not in the material world but in the spiritual world.

With gratitude that surpasses my means of expression, I beg to remain your eternal servant,

Ravindra Svarūpa dāsa

Revatī Raman Dāsa

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my respectful obeisances unto your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace!

Śrīla Prabhupāda, out of many, many thousands of spiritual preceptors, you are the rare crest jewel. Therefore, under your guidance I take this golden opportunity to surrender my insignificant life, with all its disqualifications and deficiencies, to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the golden *avatāra*, to you, my glorious grand-spiritual-master and most expert *sevaka-bhagavān*, and to your exalted disciples. Your lotus feet are the abode of the ocean of transcendental nectar for those who sincerely and seriously follow

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your instructions. I pray to Your Divine Grace to bless me so that I may always carry your lotus feet in my heart as my life and soul. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you have given us the path of pure devotional service and have opened the door to Goloka, the spiritual world, to all classes of people, no matter how fallen and conditioned they may be.

You state in your purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.15, “Pure devotees of the Lord are more powerful than the waters of the sacred river Ganges. One can derive spiritual benefit out of prolonged use of the Ganges waters, but one can be sanctified at once by the mercy of a pure devotee of the Lord.” Therefore, those who are not so well situated on account of being attached to material sense gratification are mercifully given an opportunity to realize transcendence simply by coming in touch with your enlightening, prolific, and profound presentation of *bhāgavata-dharma* in your books. Just as a philosopher’s stone turns base metals into gold, so your touch awakens Kṛṣṇa consciousness in millions and millions of hearts throughout the world. Thus we are sure that you are none other than the personification of mercy and compassion descended to establish the Lord’s will.

At *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.68–69 Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes His dearest devotee, and it’s a description that exactly fits Your Divine Grace:

For anyone who explains this supreme secret to the devotee, devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in the world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are so fond of your transcendental books, and book distribution is your heart and soul. Through your books everything unfurls. I have seen this practically in ISKCON Tirupati—it’s complete magic! Your book distribution program develops from your followers’ overflowing faith in your books and the divine example of your devotional service. So, our responsibility is simply to follow your instructions without any compromise or interpretation.

In your temples everyone has a chance to actively take part in devotional activities. Śrīla Prabhupāda, the branches of your International Society for Krishna Consciousness worldwide are our only hope for remaining pure and for joyfully executing the regulative principles of devotional service. In this way we’ll become empowered to set a good example and effectively preach, continuing your legacy. Worldwide propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was predicted by Lord Śrī Caitanya, who said, “In as many towns and villages as there are on earth, My name will be chanted and heard.” And, Śrīla Prabhupāda, no one has matched Your Divine Grace in fulfilling that prophecy. You expertly used all your energy to train your disciples and send them to every nook and corner of the globe, which you yourself circled more than a dozen times. ISKCON has now become firmly established worldwide. In the future, ISKCON will undoubtedly be renowned as the only genuine spiritual movement of the whole world.

You are the foremost propounder of Lord Caitanya’s congregational chanting of the holy names worldwide. In one song Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sings, *nārada-muni, bājāya vīṇā, ‘rādhikā-ramaṇa’-nāme*. And in the purport to that song Your Divine Grace explains that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s soul would be completely happy if the whole world would be inundated with the ecstasy of chanting Kṛṣṇa’s holy names. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you have fulfilled his desire. You are such an extraordinarily qualified personality! Your Divine Grace must be accepted as the captain of the ship of devotional service. On this suitable ship, we can cross over the difficult ocean of Kali-yuga, which deteriorates all the good qualities of human beings.

I’m an insignificant soul and offer my prostrated obeisances before my beloved grand-spiritual-master. I pray only that I may have the strength to overcome all hindrances in executing your mission and vision.

Your eternal servant,

Revatī Ramaṇ Dāsa

Śivarāma Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at the *cintāmaṇi* dust of your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace, the fearless champion of your disciples and followers.

On January 26th of your last year with us, while in Jagannātha Purī, you attended an evening function to inaugurate the publication of a book on a contemporary of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In attendance were the most respected *pāṇḍās* and dignitaries of Purī. All *brāhmaṇas*, of course.

The setting was a pandal on the beach. After some problems with the sound system, you disclosed how “in our humble way” ISKCON was “trying to introduce the Jagannātha Svāmī culture” around the world. Ratha-yātrā was the beginning of that cultural introduction. You told how the first ISKCON Ratha-yātrā was held in 1967 in San Francisco, and how by 1975 the San Francisco Ratha-yātrā was recognized by the city council as a holiday and acknowledged by the police as drawing a crowd of people who were not “a window-breaking crowd.” Then you spoke of the London Ratha-yātrā, where the *Guardian* newspaper criticized the Ratha-yātrā as “a rival to Nelson’s column.” New York, Melbourne, Sydney, and Paris followed, you said. “So in the Western countries Ratha-yatra is being introduced one after another. And Jagannātha Svāmī is attracting the attention of the Western people.”

Then you began the thrust of your talk, your purpose for speaking. You argued that Jagannātha’s popularity would bring tourists to Purī, which would obviously benefit the temple, hotels, shops, and government—everyone.

But there was a problem. “Unfortunately, you do not allow these foreigners to enter the temple.” You were not pulling any punches. Your voice was commanding but appealing. “How it can be adjusted?”

It could be. But local customs ran deep. And while the locals appreciated you in their own way, that appreciation wasn’t deep enough to accept that you could transform *yavanas* into *brāhmaṇas*. You understood that. Still, you had come with a purpose and a message. Maybe they would hear.

You do not expand the mercy of Jagannātha! . . . He is not only this Purīnātha or Oriyānātha. He is Jagannātha. . . . That is the definition of Jagannātha: *sarva-loka-maheśvaram*. . . . So why you should deny the inhabitants of *sarva-loka* the *darśana* of Jagannātha?

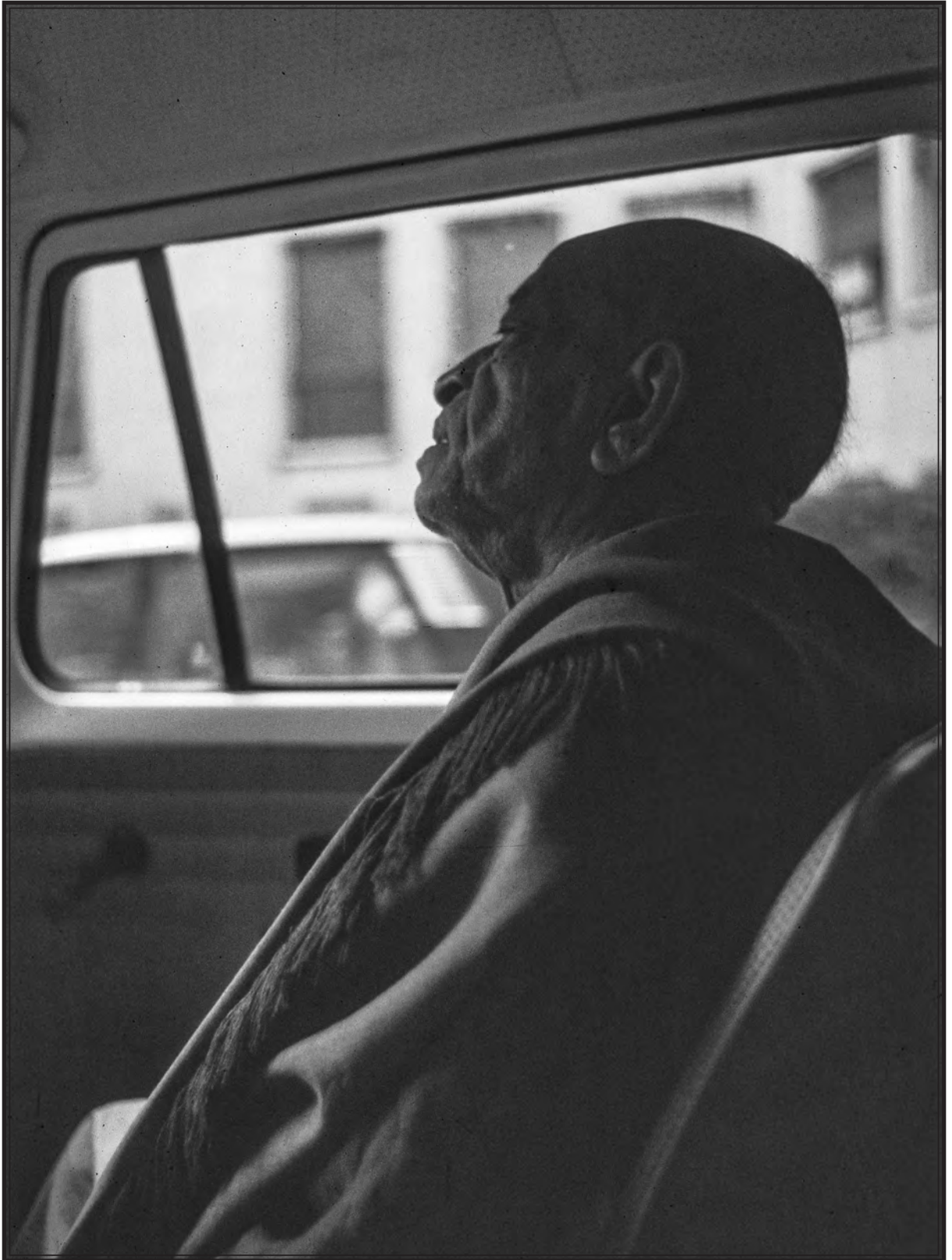
You chided your audience: “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never approved such thing . . . Why you should resent? This is not very good.” You quoted Sanskrit, and to those in the know it was clear that you had called them candidates for hell. Without breaking stride, you then supported your indictment with the strength of your achievements: “We have translated into English the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And they are being received very nicely. In the Christmas period, in a week from 17th to 24th December, our devotees have sold books—small and big—17 lakhs.” And there was the BBT, massive temple expenses, and the two hundred buses—all to “preach this Jagannātha cult all over the world.”

Again you appealed to your audience. After all, they were all learned. “I do not know what is the cause. Here you are all present, many learned scholars and *paṇḍitas*, so you consider why this restriction should be there.” These words were reminiscent of Kṛṣṇa’s chiding Arjuna by saying “You’re speaking like a *paṇḍita* while mourning for what is not worthy of grief.”

But if they remained adamant, so what! “Of course, if you do not allow, there is no—I have to say—loss on the part of the foreigners because Jagannātha has already gone there and they are worshipping.” We were already getting Jagannātha’s *darśana*. Not only that: Jagannātha had even crossed the ocean to help your mission. Even if his *pāṇḍās* didn’t understand, Jagannātha was for *sarva-loka*.

And then you unleashed your final rebuke: a condemnation!

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“But it is an etiquette that, to give someone . . . to the Vaiṣṇava. *Vaiṣṇava-aparādhā* has been very much condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You should welcome them, to receive them well.” To restrict pure devotees was an offense. *Vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. The thundering waves on the beach went quiet.

“Offense?!” many of the *paṇḍitas* would think. “Are these Westerners even Vaiṣṇavas to be offended?”

You answered the Purī *brāhmaṇas* with an invitation to see the ISKCON world for themselves, “You also come there! See how there are so many Jagannātha temples, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples, how They are being worshiped, how these foreigners they have become pure Vaiṣṇavas.” Yes, pure Vaiṣṇavas! We strictly followed four regulative principles and diligently chanted the *mahā-mantra*. On the basis of the scripture and precedent that you cited, “why you should not receive them as Vaiṣṇavas and give them proper reception?”

And while offering an olive branch to “combinedly work for Jagannātha,” you shook a stick: “remove this restriction or short-sightedness.”

That was it! You had ended! But after thanking your audience, you had to be reminded why you were there. The book! The inauguration! Without saying the name of the author you added, “This book is now inaugurated! Thank you very much.”

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda! Although you were repeatedly invited to see Jagannātha in the temple, you refused. You would not go until your disciples could.

Thank you! Only a decade before, your followers had lived in decadence, yet you stood on that podium and praised those same disciples to the most aristocratic representatives of Vaiṣṇava culture. To those of high birth and good fortune you raised us as equals on the basis of what you declared to be our service and surrender to Jagannātha.

But may I humbly submit a perspective of my own!

Our credentials were not our service and surrender to Jagannātha but our service and surrender to you. For us you were, and still are, everything, even while Jagannātha remains the Lord of the *lokas*. You are our everything for reasons too numerous for me to count. But on that evening in January, one reason shone forth like the rising full moon over the Purī ocean: despite our past, despite our lack of Vaiṣṇava culture, you were proud of our *guru-niṣṭhā*, our faith in you.

But how could we not have faith in a person who valued us and stood up for us as you did? Thank you.

Your servant forever,

Śivarāma Swami