

MY ŚIKṢĀ-GURU AND PRIYA-BANDHU

MY INSTRUCTING SPIRITUAL
MASTER AND DEAREST FRIEND

Remembrances of
Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

*Compiled from selected interviews,
lectures and writings of*
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

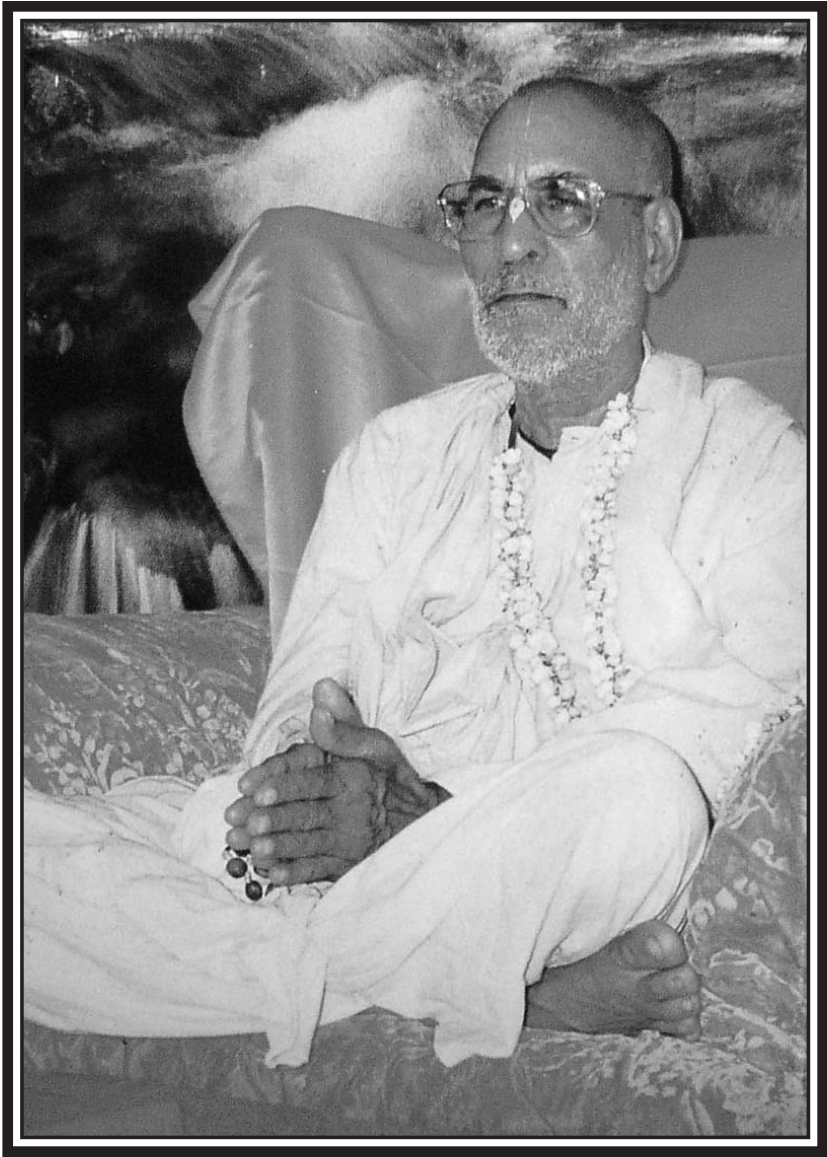
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Vṛndāvana, Uttar Pradesh, India



**Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja**



**Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Swami Prabhupāda**

Acknowledgements

Compilation and Editing: Mūla-prakṛti dāsī

Assistant Editors: Mañjarī dāsī, Ṛṣabhadeva dāsa, Śyāmarāṇī dāsī, Śānti dāsī

Typists: Madhurika dāsī, Sukhadā dāsī, Vasanti dāsī

Diacritics: Ānītā dāsī

Technical Assistance: Janārdana dāsa

Layout and Design: Kaliya-damana dāsa, Ānītā dāsī

Cover Design: Madana-mohana dāsa, Haridāsa

Printing: Prema-rasa dāsa, Niścintya dāsa

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is a collection of recollections and reflections about His Divine Grace Śrīla A.C. Bhāktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, from one of his earliest *śikṣā* followers and friends, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. These accounts of his association with Śrīla Prabhupāda span over thirty years, since they first met in 1947.

Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja was happy to share his fond memories of this long-standing and affectionate relationship, and excerpts from a variety of his informal interviews and statements have been used. We have lightly edited his English, because English is not his native tongue. Had he presented these memories and appreciations in Hindi, the details and heartfelt explanations would have been still more eloquent and detailed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *nitya-siddha* devotee. He never had to advance from a conditioned life to pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, it may be noted that the descriptions Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja give of his *nara-līlā* (human-like pastimes) have nothing to do with this material environment. They are only meant to help instruct others how to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Our sincere hope is that in reading this booklet, the worldwide audience of devotees will receive enlivenment by hearing inspirational memories about our *mahā-bhāgavata-guru* from one of his most intimate admirers. Where this humble effort is not of the highest quality, or if it fails in any way to properly represent Śrīla Prabhupāda or Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, we beg for the forgiveness of the merciful Vaiṣṇavas. We pray that our most beloved Śrīla Prabhupāda will be pleased with our desire to more deeply discover and glorify his transcendental personality, pastimes and *saṅkīrtana* mission.

Aspiring servant of Hari, Guru and Vaiṣṇavas,

Mūla-prakṛti dāsī

REMEMBRANCES OF ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVEDĀNTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

CHAPTER ONE

OUR FIRST YEARS TOGETHER

His Association with Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

My *gurudeva*, *om viṣṇupāda* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, would often speak to me about his godbrother, *parama-pūjyapāda* Śrī Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Bhaktivedānta Prabhu. At that time, before his *sannyāsa*, we affectionately called him Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu, or Prabhu. My *gurudeva* always told me how, from the very beginning, this godbrother was so dear to their Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He explained to me that his Śrīla Prabhupāda had always highly and intimately regarded Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu and had requested him to write articles for the *Harmonist* magazine and other publications. Their Guru Mahārāja had especially ordered him to preach in the English language, and to distribute widely this knowledge of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and His teachings in the Western countries.

According to my *gurudeva*, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu was a very great personality, very *yuktivādī* (good at giving logical arguments), and always *nirvika* (bold). He was a preacher of *satya* (truth) who was not afraid of anyone. I had already heard so many times about him from my *gurudeva* and from others. I had heard how he was such a close friend to Gurudeva, such an excellent writer, and such a sincere and qualified devotee. At that time I had not yet seen him, but seeing by ears is even more powerful than seeing by eyes.

Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu was a bosom friend of my *gurudeva* ever since they first met in the association of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda’s Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1922. During those years, he was a *grhastha* and was said to be very beautiful. In 1940, after the departure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, there was turmoil in the Gauḍīya Maṭha. One party wanted to arrest some of the senior Vaiṣṇavas, and cases were filed in the Calcutta court. At that time, our *gurudeva*, then known as Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī, was *akiñcana* (without material possessions) and he travelled to Prayāga, Allahabad. There he stayed at the Rūpa Gauḍīya Maṭha for a few days. Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu, who had his family residence and business in Allahabad, invited our *gurudeva* to come and stay in his home as a guest, and they lived together there for the next four or five months. During this extended time, they became very near and dear to each other. They always discussed *Bhagavad-gītā* and many other subjects concerning *guru-sevā* for their Śrīla Prabhupāda and his mission. (See Endnote 1.)

When my *gurudeva* lived with him for those months in Allahabad, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu organized much preaching for them everywhere in that city. He had cultivated numerous associates from his pharmaceutical business, and knew many educated, qualified people. He also arranged for my *gurudeva* to give extensive lectures on Vedānta. Together they defeated the *māyāvāda* philosophy, and also several influential Catholics and other Christians; those persons were favorably impressed by the bona fide arguments and *siddhānta* so expertly presented.

Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu appreciated this preaching so much. He would often tell me, “Your *gurudeva* is so logical, and he is such a great philosopher. That is why I have selected for myself a very best friend like your *gurudeva*.”

Founding Gauḍīya Vedānta Samitī

My *gurudeva* was then called Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī Kṛti-ratna. The name Kṛti-ratna, which means “one who is a jewel among managers,” was awarded to him by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda because he managed the Gauḍīya Maṭha so expertly. This was before my *gurudeva* took *sannyāsa*. In his heart there was a desire to show *Vedānta-sūtra* as *bhakti-sūtra*, and he quoted *śloka*s of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to prove this. He would always state, “Wherever there is any sign of *māyāvāda*, *bhakti* cannot be preached in full force. So we have to remove *māyāvāda* at the root.” Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu also liked this idea very much. “We must kick out *māyāvāda*,” he would often say. Both of them had this understanding; they were very united in their preaching.

Gurudeva gave the name “Bhaktivedānta” to those of us who took *sannyāsa* from him, and when they formed an organization they called that Samitī “Gauḍīya Vedānta”, which denotes that Vedānta is synonymous with *bhakti*.

After the divine disappearance of their Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and after the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution had broken apart, my *gurudeva*, together with Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu and Narottamānanda Brahmācārī (later called Śrīla Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Mahārāja), filed the establishment papers for the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samitī. This was done on April 7, 1940, the day of *akṣaya tritīyā*, in a rented house at 33/2 Bosapada Lane, Calcutta. (See Endnote 2.)

Although they separated from the political upheaval taking place within their Guru Mahārāja’s institution, they did not give up Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda or his mission and *siddhānta*. They wanted to re-establish his bona fide ideas and instructions, but they did not give up his Gauḍīya Maṭha. Therefore, the names of the Maṭhas established by the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samitī were Devananda Gauḍīya Maṭha, Uddharana Gauḍīya Maṭha, Keśavaji Gauḍīya Maṭha, and many others.

Our First Meeting

In 1947, I was in Calcutta as the personal servant to my *gurudeva*, and one day there was an inauguration of a new branch of the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. It was a large assembly and many Vaiṣṇavas were present there. During the lecture given by Gurudeva, a *grhastha* devotee came in at the back door. Upon seeing him, Gurudeva stopped speaking and asked me to bring him forward. That devotee humbly hesitated to come forward, but my *gurudeva* ordered that he come all the way to the front. Gurudeva showed great respect to him and insisted he sit next to him on the platform. I looked up at Gurudeva, silently questioning, “Who is this devotee?” It was very rare that he had done this with others. Afterwards he told me, “This is Abhaya Caraṅāravinda Bābu, my dear godbrother. He is a very special disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. He is very humble and qualified. You should take note of him, you should hear carefully from him, and you should serve him.”

At that time I would cook breakfast, lunch, and any other meal for Abhaya Caraṅāravinda Prabhu and many of the other senior Vaiṣṇavas. I would also wash their clothes and clean for them. He would watch me, and became pleased with me. He was happy to see my service for my *gurudeva* and asked me many questions about myself, like where I was from and where and how I had joined the *maṭha*. We spoke together, and he was satisfied with my replies. I was also very impressed with him, and attracted to him. This is when I began my service to him in my heart and in my work.

I am thinking now how very fortunate I was to have met him long ago, and to have served him. We had so much affection for each other that I cannot explain my heart sufficiently. He stated in one of his letters to me that from the first time he saw me, there was affection between us and that we shared a transcendental relationship of spontaneous love. He wrote that, as his Śrīla Prabhupāda had great faith and love for him from the beginning,

he similarly had love and well-wishing for me. (See Endnote 3.)

He was a powerful speaker, and his lectures were most influential. Discussing translations from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by first giving word-for-word meanings, he would then present thorough explanations; and what he spoke was beautiful. In those days there were many senior disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, such as Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrīla Tīrtha Mahārāja, Śrīla Śrauti Mahārāja, Śrīla Naimi Mahārāja, Śrīla Yayavar Mahārāja, Śrīla Audalomi Mahārāja, Śrīla Vaikanas Mahārāja, Śrīla Purī Mahārāja, Śrīla Giri Mahārāja and Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja. All these disciples were like tigers and thunderbolts, being well-versed in *siddhānta*. They would often come to visit my *gurudeva*, and I was able to serve them. Though Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu was then a *grhastha* living outside any *maṭha*, he was considered by all to be extremely qualified. He was very bold and never compromised with anyone regarding the established *siddhānta* – never. He defeated and convinced everyone by his realized preaching.

In those days I often saw him associating with his godbrothers, and he had many deep friendships in all the temples where they assembled – in Calcutta, Navadvīpa, Chinchura, Allahabad, Bombay and Delhi. He was often meeting with godbrothers, traveling to different *maṭhas* for celebrations and discussions, and he always behaved towards them with affectionate dealings. When his godbrothers gathered, he would show respect to them because he was a *grhastha* at that time. And, even though he was married then, all the *sannyāsīs* and senior *brahmacārīs* highly regarded him because he was a learned scholar and a potent, brave preacher. He was known by all to be abhaya, fearless.

Editorial Sevā

Our magazines, *Gauḍīya Patrika* and *Bhāgavata Patrika*, were started in 1953. At that time, Gurudeva requested Abhaya

Caraṇāravinda Prabhu, “I want to establish publications in Bengali and other languages, and I would especially like you to write articles for them.” Earlier he had written articles for the *Harmonist*, and now he continued to write many wonderful essays, *Gītā* purports, etc. He wrote so marvelously that everyone praised him. He challenged all who were opposed to pure *bhakti* at that time, especially the ‘Mūrgī Mission’. He called the Rāmakrishna Mission ‘the Mūrgī Mission’, because the members ate chicken. In fact, they ate flesh, eggs and many other abominable things.

Vivekananda and his Rāmakrishna Mission were very prominent in those days. They were renowned by the public, who thought, “Oh, these are such high-class devotees. In all of India, only they are following the Vedas, and all others are not. The Gauḍīya Mission and others are not Vedantic.” Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu wrote a two-part article about the Mūrgīs. He began with the first part; and when the second part was also printed, all but the Mūrgīs were astonished and convinced. Many requested him to write more articles like these, which called for the reform of religious institutions.

At that time the president of India was Dr. Radhakrishnan. He was very scholarly and his English was quite erudite, but he was world-famous as a very bold *māyāvādī*. He wrote an article in English saying that the soul in Kṛṣṇa’s body was God, but Kṛṣṇa’s body was not God. He said that, as with our body and soul, there was also a difference between Kṛṣṇa’s body and soul.

Guru Mahārāja was not here then, but Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu was and wrote a very powerful article in response. He quoted many strong examples from *śāstra* and declared to the President, “Those who speak like this are rascals. In Kṛṣṇa there is no difference between *deha* and *dehī*, the body and its possessor. All His qualities, pastimes and names are transcendental. If one does not have a very pure and realized *guru*, he cannot understand this idea. You have no *guru*; you are reading *śāstra* yourself. Just as Gautama Buddha became

śūnyavādī, so you are just like that. At some time in South India you met with the very renowned Śaṅkarācārya's teachings, but you have not read Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī; and you have never read Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. You should try to know what is *acintya-bhedābheda*. Do not be sectarian. You are an authority in India, the President, but you are not an authority in religion. You will have to learn something from us.”

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja appointed Śrīpād Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu to be the editor-in-chief of the Bengali *Gauḍīya Patrika*, and I was also in the editorial board for the Hindi *Bhāgavata Patrika*. He usually submitted his articles in Bengali, and sometimes, if he wrote an article in Hindi, I would edit and then submit it. This is because his mother language was not Hindi. Mostly he wrote his articles for our *Gauḍīya Patrika* in Bengali. I then translated these into Hindi and printed them in the *Bhāgavata Patrika*.

This was before the time of tape machines, and Prabhu was expert in the skill of stenography. During lectures of my *gurudeva* and other senior Vaiṣṇavas, he took shorthand perfectly and recorded those talks in his notebooks. His accurate transcriptions were also used for articles in the *Gauḍīya Patrika* magazine. Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu continued writing for our magazines every month for many years, and some of those original editions are still preserved at our *maṭha*.

Jhansi

I went twice to visit *pūjyapāda* Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu while he was preaching in Jhansi. The first time I traveled on the train with some of the *brahmacārīs*; the second time I went there to see him with my *gurudeva*. We stayed four or five days each time.

He had made some connections earlier, during his frequent travels there for business. Some persons had a building which

was suitable for a *maṭha*. Prabhu invited us to consider it for one of our *maṭhas*, but our *gurudeva* was not prepared to settle there. He did not have enough *brahmacārīs*, and he also favored a larger city like Mathurā.

The gentleman who had originally invited Prabhu, Ācārya Prabhakara Miśra, had become his initiated disciple. I don't know whether Prabhu gave *dīkṣā* to him or not, but he said that he had accepted this man. I think he had given him *harināma* only. At that time Prabhu was translating *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*; and this disciple used to help him to correct his Hindi because it was mixed with Bengali.

During his stay in Jhansi, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu personally brought a large and very beautiful *mūrti* of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu from Bankura (near Mednapore, West Bengal). This is where many deities are made, especially for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. He had first ordered the deity and then brought Him to be established in that temple. He had been doing some regular *pūjā* alone there in Jhansi, but the deity was not yet installed.

Prabhu invited Gurudeva, and we came to visit there for the installation. Although we arrived for the program, the installation did not take place. This was because Guru Mahārāja discussed with Prabhu about the manner in which those sponsors were allowing him to use the *mandira*. When he told us that they could order him to leave at anytime, Gurudeva said he thought it might be better if a document was received. There was a discussion between Gurudeva and the sponsors, and he made a condition before all present: “If you give the *mandira* to *pūjyapāda* Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Bhaktivedānta Prabhu, he will be the master of all properties and activities therein. He will do everything according to our *sampradāya*.” The sponsors, on the other hand, were in the mood that the temple should be in their charge, and he would be like a priest. Both Prabhu and Guru Mahārāja rejected their conditions.

My *gurudeva* and I returned from Jhansi to Mathurā on the

train. Prabhu didn't come with us then, but after some days he arrived with the Caitanya Mahāprabhu *vigraha* and put Him in the care of my *gurudeva*. Gurudeva then installed that very beautiful Caitanya Mahāprabhu here on the altar in our Keśavaji Gauḍīya Maṭha, where He is still being served to this day.

Residing in Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha

My *gurudeva* and I were present on the day Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu came again to the Keśavaji Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1955. We embraced him and he embraced us. Before coming, he had been successful with his pharmaceutical business in Allahabad, called Prayaga Pharmacy, and it was very famous. Many important personalities of India, including the Prime Minister, were customers in his shop. Later on, however, he had to sell it. Then he traveled to all the important cities of North India, such as Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Agra, Jhansi, Mathurā, and other towns to sell the medicines he had made from his own formulas. Kuñja-bihārī Prabhu, a senior disciple in the *maṭha*, was especially devoted to him during this time. He helped to carry his bags and also to bring him *prasādam* while he worked.

After a while this business also came to an end, and Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu gave up his household life and all its possessions in Calcutta. He again came to Mathurā, this time without belongings. He brought a medical formula for treating ringworm, which he distributed to the shopkeepers, store-to-store, but sales were not good. He was living in a room he had rented by the Yamunā, in Hooli Wali Gully near Bengali-ghāta. He had been there three or four days when I went to see him. I told him, “Prabhu, why are you staying here?” He was very humble and didn't want to impose himself upon us, so I forcibly took his luggage and told him, “I will not let you go anywhere else. We are here. We are your sons. You are our *gurudeva*'s godbrother and are very dear to us. We want to care for you. I will not allow you to stay here, separate from us.” I brought the

brahmacārīs, Kuñja-bihārī Prabhu, Śeṣāśāyī Prabhu and some others, and we took what few utensils he had and brought him to live in our *maṭha*.

I requested him, “Please stay here with us, preaching *Bhagavad-gītā*, writing and so on. I know that no one is assisting you now. I want to personally serve you. Please live here forever; we never want you to leave.” He became so glad.

I gave him a room adjacent to mine. His room was there (pointing to the room one door from the kitchen), and my room was here. There were only two rooms then, his and mine. At that time there was no *mandira* in our Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha.

We had very little facility to offer him, because nothing was there in our *maṭha*. There was just one bathroom, but still we were very easily able to live peacefully and accomplish everything we had to accomplish. At that time he also had nothing to show to others: “This is mine.” He had only his body and *ātmā* – no *paisa* at all. He only had some copies of his *Back to Godhead* magazine, his *Gītā*, and three or four volumes of a Bengali *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which are now preserved in our library. He had no bedding, and no extra boxes or personal belongings.

We gave him one small room and many large books. Śrīpāda Nṛsiṃha Mahārāja (one of his godbrothers) and I donated some Sanskrit and Bengali books to him. There he began to write many English translations and articles. Day and night he would stay in his room and do this, and he also chanted a great deal of *harināma* and very beautifully sang *bhajanās*. We did not know when he ever took rest. He slept only a short time in the morning, because all during the night he was awake, and throughout the day also. He became so pleased with this arrangement of staying with us, and our Guru Mahārāja also became pleased when he was informed of this.

We continually requested Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu to give *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes. Usually there not many devotees attending, because only a few of us lived in the *maṭha*

then. We were just beginning the Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha temple, so we had just five or ten persons. But very high-class, learned gentlemen from Mathurā would often come to hear him speak. I was known then as a good *kīrtaniyā* in the Gauḍīya Maṭhas in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, so I would perform *kīrtana*. Prabhu would lecture, explaining in his discourses the word-by-word meaning of each verse under discussion, and very erudite scholars were attracted by his classes. During this time he would also give *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* classes in the evenings, to those of us who lived at the *maṭha*. His devotion for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His pastimes was very deep. Later on, after he took *sannyāsa*, he often gave these classes in English, even though almost no one in the *maṭha* could understand English. He would say that he was “practicing”.

I would sometimes joke with him, saying, “Oh, you may try to be responsible for your children and your wife, but they are rejecting you.” One of his sons was not very favorable, and another was somewhat favorable but not wanting to serve him. So I would say, “Prabhu, why not take more service from all of us? You should not go back there. I will beg from door to door and arrange to get you rice and any other items.”

When Prabhu first came to Mathurā to stay with us, he had an ailment which he humbly and silently tolerated. Because he was expert in medicines, he always used Ayurvedic or homeopathic remedies when necessary and avoided allopathic treatment. I was fortunate that he confided in me, saying, “I do not have faith in any doctors. If they demand to operate, I may die.” I told him that he could not die; he had too much important *sevā* to do. He agreed and said that he was very determined to fulfill his *gurudeva’s* order to preach all over the world. I said that I knew of a bona fide doctor here in Mathurā who had cured others. He let me take him there, and I stayed by his side during the entire operation. I hesitate to mention these details, because it may sound as if I was helping him. Actually, I know he was bestowing his mercy to allow me to perform intimate service.

We would often visit each other's rooms, and sometimes we would joke together about various topics. He was very fond of joking, and when he would laugh it was very sweet. He joked in an especially delightful way, with a slightly playful smile. We also had many philosophical discussions together, speaking about such topics as *Prahlāda-caritra* and Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We read many scriptures together, and he would deeply discuss the matters he wrote about in the *Gauḍīya Patrika*. Sometimes he would have talks with one, two, three or five disciples of my *gurudeva* in my room. There were also some big officers and other important gentlemen who came to hear him speak, and they would say, "Oh, Abhaya Caraṇa Bābu is such a learned and advanced person!" Everybody would glorify him.

Prabhu was very enthusiastic about cooking, and he often declared that all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas should be expert in cooking for Kṛṣṇa.

During the many months he stayed at Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, the two of us would perform *sundara-ārati* together each evening. He would always play the *mṛdaṅga* very expertly, and I would play the *kartālas* and sing. He liked my singing very much and always requested me to lead the *kīrtana*. Someone asked me, "Why doesn't Prabhu also sing? He has a beautiful voice as well." I replied, "Yes, surely he does, but there are times he doesn't sing because he is experiencing intense devotional feelings and weeping." I have heard this also on some of his cassette recordings.

Accepting Sannyāsa

He had been the manager of Bengal Chemicals and was so expert that he had arranged another company himself. But there were problems. He had come to Allahabad and managed a very big medical shop, but after some time that also had difficulty. He then engaged in a little more business, but Kṛṣṇa would not allow it to continue. Then he came here.

As we once talked together in 1959, sitting side-by-side, Prabhu said, “When I first met Śrīla Prabhupāda, and when he gave me initiation, he told me that I should preach in English in Western countries. He also told me this over twenty years ago in Calcutta.” He continued, “That which I feared has come on my head, and now I see that I cannot successfully remain in business.”

I replied, “Do not try for this anymore. You are not a person to do anything associated with worldly business. Kṛṣṇa and your *gurudeva* want you to preach in Western countries. You have such important work to do, and you are so qualified.” We laughed together about this in a friendly way.

Guru Mahārāja and Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu were bosom friends – they had lived and served together. Both were intellectual giants and very erudite persons from high-class families. So I now encouraged him to accept *sannyāsa* from our *gurudeva* and then go to preach in Western countries. Then, when my *gurudeva* later arrived from Navadvīpa, I told him, “Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu is your friend. He can obey you because you are elder.” Gurudeva was a *sannyāsī* and Prabhu was in *grhastha-veṣa* (the dress of a householder).

Earlier, when I had written to Gurudeva that *pūjyapāda* Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu was staying here with us, he told me, “He is my bosom friend. Show him all respect and give him all facilities.” I had known him since 1947, and I realized how highly qualified he was. Pūjyapāda Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrīla Śrauti Mahārāja, and Guru Mahārāja would always give him great respect and hear from him, even though he was a householder. At this time, therefore, I requested my *gurudeva* to apply some pressure so that he would take *sannyāsa*. Gurudeva then called him and said, “Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and all the other boys are encouraging that you take *sannyāsa*. I also support this idea. Do not hesitate to take the renounced order. You are so qualified. Please take *sannyāsa* now. It will be very beneficial.”

Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu thus agreed to accept

sannyāsa, and the ceremony was held the very next day. That day was the auspicious Viśvarūpa-mahotsava. Prabhu asked me, “How should I prepare?” I told him, “Don’t worry, I will arrange everything.” I prepared *bāhira-veṣa* (*sannyāsa dhotī*), *uttariya* (*sannyāsa* upper cloth) and a *daṇḍa* with my own hands. I taught him how to wear these, and then I performed the fire *yajñā*. Akiñcanā Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja came, and Śeṣasāyī Brahmacārī, Kuñja-vihārī Brahmacārī, Parijataka Mahārāja and many other persons were also present. Now, most of these devotees have departed.

Sanātana Prabhu took *sannyāsa* with him, after which he became Bhaktivedānta Muni Mahārāja. He was ninety years old and had said to him, “If you agree to take *sannyāsa*, then so shall I.” He is also no longer here, having joined the eternal service of Kṛṣṇa.

I recited the *yajñā-mantras* and performed the ceremony. Akiñcanā Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Prabhu’s intimate godbrother and friend, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa continuously, from 8:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M., in a most sweet and deep manner.

My *gurudeva* then gave Prabhu the *sannyāsa-mantra*. The *sannyāsa* name which he gave him is “Swāmī.” This is one of the bona fide *sannyāsa* names; it means “controller” and “master.” The title “Bhaktivedānta” had already been awarded in Calcutta by some of his godbrothers, and “Mahārāja” is a formal ending for those in the renounced order.

This name “Swāmī” was just fitting because Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja became the controller of many, many *jīvas*’ hearts, due to his being strong and faithful to his *gurudeva*. This is why we affectionately call him “Swāmiji,” not in any common way but showing the greatest respect. (See Endnote 4.)

After the ceremony, Gurudeva requested Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja to speak. He spoke in English, although almost everyone present could not understand that language. He explained that just at this time he remembered his *gurudeva*’s

specific orders to preach in the English language. He said, “I feel fortunate to accept *sannyāsa* from my godbrother, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. I have known him for a long time and he is my close friend. He is a very bona fide disciple of our *jagad-guru* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He has kindly given me this *sannyāsa* order, and Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and Śrīla Muni Mahārāja have also given me inspiration to do this. The order of *sannyāsa* means to preach the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the mission of the *guru* everywhere. My *gurudeva* instructed me to preach in English, in Western countries, and that is why I am writing English articles and books. I am praying to Kṛṣṇa, Gurudeva and all the Vaiṣṇavas that they give me the power to preach this mission all over the world.”

Excerpts from his speech and a description of the ceremony were printed in a news article in our *Bhāgavata Patrika*. The well-known photograph of our *gurudeva* sitting between Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Muni Mahārāja was taken on that day. Kuñja-bihārī Brahmācārī was formerly a wealthy devotee and had previously helped build our *matha* financially; so now he gladly donated the five *paisa* he had saved for a photographer’s snapshot. Thus, today, we can all honor this *sannyāsa* portrait.

It was a special privilege for us to participate in assisting Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja in accepting *sannyāsa*. For the next three days after the ceremony, Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja stayed together with him in his room. They were especially close and confidential with each other. After this, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja went to Agra to preach at a program he had arranged. He was always coming and going, engaged in *guru-sevā*. We kept his room open for him for the next five years, and during that time he wrote some of his books, like *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, here. His three volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* were not printed yet, so he continued writing and editing them here. The manuscripts were then given to the press in Delhi and gradually

published. He was also writing *Back to Godhead* and other publications. He had done some translating before, in Calcutta and Allahabad, but here he was easily able to concentrate and thus he accomplished so much.

Some persons don't consider the taking of *sannyāsa* to be very valuable or of much importance, but it is actually so important. I think that if Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja had not taken *sannyāsa*, perhaps he would not have done what he did in Western countries. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja himself explains in his books that it is favorable to accept the renounced order for preaching. In India, everyone has honor for *sannyāsīs*. In *sannyāsa*, one gives up something but gains everything. As explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: mukunda sevana-vrata*. A *sannyāsī* thinks, "I only love Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. I don't know anything else."

The *sannyāsa-mantra* is very helpful in attaining the *kṛṣṇa-prema* which Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and all the other Gosvāmīs have tried to give us, and this is superior to all supermost attainments. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to give this type of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, and therefore the taking of *sannyāsa* is very important. Don't think it is a minor point.

At Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Mandira

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja and I are godbrothers in regards to *sannyāsa*. I had taken *sannyāsa* before him, in 1954, and he took *sannyāsa* in 1959. However, I always considered him my superior and behaved towards him as my *śikṣā-guru*, but Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja never treated me as a disciple. Rather, he always accepted me as a bosom friend. He had me sit on the same seat with him while we were chanting *jaṇa*, performing *kīrtana*, and also sometimes making *capātīs* together. He would roll the *capātīs* and I would put them on the fire, and then we would offer them.

We would also sit on the same bed together. One time I came to visit and gave him my *cā dara*, because he had no *cā dara* to put on his bed. He had only one torn quilt there. The walls were crumbling, but he was too absorbed in his *bhājana* and *sevā* to care for that. He performed intense *tāpasya* and *sā dhana* in that *kuṭīra*, in that most sacred *tīrtha*. I feel fortunate to have received his association there.

During those years at Rādhā-Dāmodara, he was consumed in the writing of his translations and purports of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Whenever I visited him, I would try to offer him assistance. In those days I was editing the *Patrika*, which left me very little time. Still, we would often associate together there in his small *bhajan-kuṭīra*. Sometimes we took *prasadam* with the Rādhā-Dāmodara Gosvāmīs. He and I also performed *parikramā* of Rādhā-Dāmodara, walking together and paying respects at the *samādhis* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, and especially Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Preparation and Departure for America

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja spent considerable time in Delhi before he went to America, because this is where he was printing and distributing his books. He published three volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there. I went there several times to be with him, and we stayed together in his rooms at the Chippiwada Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple.

He preached vigorously in Delhi; wherever he went, he preached to the public. He spoke about Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission to everyone he met, and he also engaged me beside him. Then, when he was in America, he wrote and encouraged me to continue preaching to the people he had cultivated there. (See Endnote 5.)

When Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was leaving to go to America, he described everything to me about his travel plans. He told me

how, in Bombay, he had been given a ticket to travel across the Atlantic Ocean to Boston by freighter, and he described his route and his arrival there. He had great faith and a careful preaching strategy. His goal was to set up Vaiṣṇava institutes and dormitories there. Showing great confidence in the holy name, he said that even if at first the new students felt that they must take meat or wine, he would do what was necessary to begin their *bhakti*. He asked me to accompany him, and I begged him that I could not go without the permission of my *gurudeva*, who had ordered me to manage the *maṭha* in Mathurā.

One day he announced to me, “Now the time has come and I am going.” He was leaving for the Port of Calcutta and was to visit Māyāpura also. I came and said good-bye, and I took his footdust and put it on my head. Before he left he requested me to keep a regular correspondence with him, which I did, and we wrote many letters to each other in those next years. A few of these letters are printed in the pamphlet *Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Letters from America*. Unfortunately, most of his other letters to me were loaned and have not yet been returned.

Later he wrote me to send him his books from his room in Mathurā, where many of his thick volumes were stored in his cabinet. His books were very dusty, and I cleaned and packed many boxes of them for an entire day. I then shipped those books by boat to New York. When we visited his rooms at the Los Angeles Temple in 1996, I was touched to see several of those same books still there in his bookshelves. I tried faithfully to perform all the services he requested.

Return to India

When he returned to India in 1967, I met him and his disciple, Kīrtanānanda dāsa, at the airport in Delhi. He had instructed me to do this in his telegram. When we met, he told me many wonderful accounts and details about his preaching in America, and how miraculous were the results. Humbly, he felt that all this was only the mercy of his *gurudeva*, and the desire of Śrī

Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates. One special thing he told me was how he first chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in Tompkins Square Park in New York City. Chanting for several hours, he had kept his eyes closed, deeply hearing and depending completely on that mercy.

We stayed together in Delhi for seven days at the Chippiwada Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple. Because Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was sometimes feeling ill, he would send me along with Kīrtanānanda dāsa to represent him in his preaching programs. He always encouraged us to preach very strongly. He wanted everyone to see his Western Vaiṣṇava, and so he took us to chant and preach to people he knew in Delhi.

After a few weeks, another of Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's disciples, Acyutānanda dāsa, came to stay in Vṛndāvana. Because these two were Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's disciples, I sat together with them and honored the *mahā-prasāda* they had prepared. All the caste Gosvāmīs, and almost all of Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's godbrothers, would never take any *prasāda* or even the water that Kīrtanānanda dāsa and Acyutānanda dāsa offered them. The reason they refused was that those disciples were Westerners and had previously eaten flesh. I spoke out against this policy and encouraged others to accept Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's disciples as bona fide. I explained how Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's preaching to foreigners was completely authorized and directly in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and our *guru-varga*. I think that most of the Indian Vaiṣṇavas have now accepted this.

During this first trip back to India in 1967, Parama-pujyapāda Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja came to visit my *gurudeva*, his *sannyāsa-guru*. At that time, my *gurudeva* was in weak health and was confined to his bed in Calcutta. They had a confidential visit then, and this was their last time together in this world. My *gurudeva* was overjoyed at Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's devotional service to their Śrīla Prabhupāda. He expressed his appreciation and glorified his extensive preaching, and he pledged to cooperate in that preaching work.

They also discussed my *gurudeva's* helping to arrange a donation of land for Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's future Māyāpura temple. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja were also present on that occasion.

After Śrīla Gurudeva departed from this world in 1968, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja, along with his disciples, sent us a telegram of condolence.

He also sent a long letter to Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja in Navadvīpa. He also delivered a lecture about Śrīla Gurudeva in Seattle, Washington, and there he described the history of his awarding him *sannyāsa*. He spoke about the great appreciation and affection he had for him, and how he had now entered Kṛṣṇa's abode. We heard later from some of his disciples that he shed tears when he received the telegram telling of our *gurudeva's* entering *nityā-līlā*.

In his letter to Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja asked him to send a photo of Gurudeva, because he wanted to place it on his temple altars in the West. He also wrote and asked me to send a picture to him. I remember that in one letter he requested me, "Please send me a picture of your *gurudeva* so I can have a portrait painted for displaying with our disciplic succession in all of our temples." (See Endnote 6.) Somehow we were never able to arrange that, but I know that if we had been able to, he would have used it.

Preaching in India

In 1969, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja came again to Navadvīpa, and stayed for a week or two with a large group of disciples at our Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha. Nikuṅja Brahmācārī and others helped give everyone accommodations, special *prasāda* and mosquito nets, and made all other arrangements.

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was looking for land in Māyāpura, desiring to make an *āśrama* and *mandira* there, but the

inhabitants of Navadvīpa told him that he should do it in Navadvīpa Town. They said that the birthplace of Mahāprabhu was there in Prācīna Māyāpura, and they tried to convince him to make his temple there. But he decided, “No, I will not do that. I will establish it on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s side.” This is where Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had established Māyāpura and Yogapīṭha, on the eastern bank of the Gaṅgā, across from Navadvīpa town. At that time it was the rainy season and the land was flooded everywhere but, even so, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja traveled to the other side of the Gaṅgā to arrange for purchasing his land.

On one occasion, some of his godbrothers in Māyāpura suggested to him that he not allow himself to be called “Śrīla Prabhupāda.” They also feared that he was not preaching the purest devotional standards but was, rather, altering the strict Gauḍīya Maṭha process too much, out of deference to the Westerners. I defended him, saying, “I don’t believe this. He has not given anything new. Far and wide, in the English language, he is preaching our same mission ‘in a new bottle.’ Nothing is new, and I don’t see anything wrong. He has wonderfully preached this mission of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura everywhere. If his disciples truly follow *guru-bhaktā* (*guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas*), they will continue his line. I don’t believe that just because he is doing some revolutionary preaching it is a problem. He is marvelously executing his *gurudeva*’s orders.”

I also explained, “They may call their *gurudeva* ‘Prabhupāda’ or ‘*om viṣṇupāda*.’ I think in the future age, more disciples in the line of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda might also call another qualified spiritual master ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda,’ because it has been allowed in *sāstra*. Disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda who had agreed that they would not take this name, out of deference to him, can keep that agreement; but because of his high *bhakti* and world preaching, and because of their devotion for him, if Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja’s disciples call him ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda’ there is no harm. If you want

to reject him for this reason, I don't agree." Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, myself and a few others explained this to the other devotees, especially in private.

On a few occasions, some of Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's godbrothers in Māyāpura directly asked him why he accepted the name "Śrīla Prabhupāda," and we once heard the explanation he gave to them. He humbly told them, "When Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura left this world, some of the godbrothers took everything of his mission, including his names like '*om visnupāda*' and '*paramahansa*.' All that remained for me was my 'Prabhupāda' himself. He is my Prabhu, my master, and I am always at his *padā*, his feet. His feet are my only possession and shelter. So when my young disciples began to call me that, I considered it to be true. If anyone calls me 'Śrīla Prabhupāda', I only remember my *gurudeva's* lotus feet and how I am situated there. If others think that I am an offender or proud, I request them to please accept my understanding."

During the following years, 1970–1977, I was constantly traveling and preaching throughout India. Because our *gurudeva* had departed from this world, I was very busy with management affairs in our *mathas*. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was also very busy during those years, continually travelling around the world, so he and I were not able to meet together often. Unfortunately, I was not there for the opening of the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira, which was established in 1975, near the time of Gaura Pūrṇimā. He invited me, but I was not in Mathurā at that time, because we were so busy in Navadvīpa. During most of those years, I was not regularly present in Mathurā, so he did not come back to visit our Maṭha. If I had been present when he was in Vṛndāvana, I would have invited him and he would have come.

In the earlier days of his preaching in the West, many of us wanted to directly help him, but the time was not ripe. There were only a few of us living in the *matha* then, and we were all busy preaching in India. We were not doing as much preaching as he was, but we were busy, and my *gurudeva* had ordered me

to render certain services. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was busy on a big scale and we were busy on a little scale, but both of us were busy serving *guru* and Gaurāṅga.

Another difficulty was that in those early days most devotees knew very little English, especially in the matter of speaking. Therefore, although there were some who were very strong in *bhakti*, they were not able to meet and communicate with the Westerners.

At that time, there were some high-class devotees who did not externally manifest themselves as being qualified. I knew of about ten or more Indian devotees, including some of Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's godbrothers and others who were initiated by them, who came to serve with him in India when ISKCON was newly established there. Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Dīna-bandhu Bābājī Mahārāja, Govardhana Prabhu, Ananda Prabhu from Orissa and several others came. But they did not know English and they appeared to be insignificant, so hardly any of the Westerners understood their qualities. Now almost everyone can speak English, but not then. Although we could not personally join Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja, many of us were very proud and overjoyed that he was preaching so gloriously.

CHAPTER TWO

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA'S DISAPPEARANCE LĪLĀ

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Desire to go to Govardhana (Excerpts from a Mathurā Class, 1993)

In his last days, Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja requested his disciples, “Take me to Govardhana. I want to go there just now. I don't want to go by car. I will go by bullock cart, like Nanda Bābā, Yasoda-maiya, all the *gopīs*, and all the Vrajavāsīs.” He wished for this opportunity, but he could not go; I knew this fact. Actually he went there with his soul, his transcendental body. He is always there among Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, by *tad-anurāgi janānugāmī* (following those eternal residents of Vṛndāvana who possess inherent spontaneous attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa (see *Nectar of Instruction*, Verse 8)).

His desire was to go to Govardhana, and He also expressed his real intention in the matter of this desire: “Govardhana, please give me residence near you.” In all of Vraja-maṇḍala, Gokula is the best place, because Gokula is where Kṛṣṇa was born from the womb of Yaśodā and where He performed His childhood pastimes. In Gokula there is a multitude of cows, *gopīs*, and *gopas*, and the main *gopa* is Kṛṣṇa. He resides in Gokula, which includes Nandagrāma, Varṣāṇā, Kāmyavana, and Vṛndāvana. In all of Gokula, Vṛndāvana is the best place, and in Vṛndāvana, Govardhana is best. In all of Govardhana, his two eyes, Rādhākunda and Syama-kunda, are the best. The sweetest and most attractive pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa take place there. Parama-pujyapāda Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja therefore wanted to go to that place, because the best of all Their pastimes is performed there. There, *rasa-līlā* takes place in a special way. So much attractive *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is enacted at Girirāja Govardhana, and

therefore devotees pray, "O Girirāja, please fulfill my desire to witness these pastimes." Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja wanted to go to Govardhana with the same idea in mind.

His life's ideal and principal desire was to give *vraja-prema* to the world, but first he had to spend a long time preaching *vaidhī-bhakti*, cutting away the jungle of atheism and *māyāvāda*. He desired to translate the *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* in full, and especially to describe elaborately the pastimes narrated in the Tenth Canto. But Bhagavān called him back to His *nityā-līlā*. Perhaps Kṛṣṇa did not want him to remain in separation from Him any longer, and therefore Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's desire to go to Girirāja Govardhana was fulfilled by Bhagavān's calling him back to Girirāja Govardhana in Goloka Vṛndāvana.

Girirāja Govardhana is our primary shelter because *prema-bhāva*, the mood of pure ecstatic love, is the highest there. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja wanted to relish this pinnacle of *kṛṣṇa-prema* – and to distribute it to the residents of this world. Therefore, like Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, and my own worshipable *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja also wanted residence near Govardhana. Govardhana is the best place in Vraja for both *sādhakas* and *siddhas*. If a *sādhaka* who does not have *prema* performs *bhajana* there, he will get *prema*; and if a perfected devotee goes there, he will relish Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's *nityā-līlā*. He will also receive *darśana* of the *mahābhāva* which is most dear to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Those who are most intelligent want to serve the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on the bank of Rādhā-kunda. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja explains this in his *Nectar of Instruction*. Such devotees want to be there; and if they cannot be there in their body, they can live there by mind and heart. Devotees like Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadasa Kavirāja Gosvāmī -- all have

permanent seats there. Have you gone there? If you go there with any high-class, advanced devotee, you may see something, for everything is there. The Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī are also there, performing *ārādhana* (worship) of the *gopīs*. Those who are always present there in their transcendental bodies, under the guidance of Sri Rūpa-maṅjarī and Sri Rati-maṅjarī, are the topmost devotees. We want to follow them. This is the mood of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, and also the mood of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja.

This is actually the highest glorification of Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja. If one does not understand this glory, he is unfortunate because he is not actually touching his glory. Such a person cannot glorify him properly. Devotees must appreciate him for his most elevated qualities, especially describing his highest love and affection for Śrīmatī Rādhika. We should not desire that all high-class devotees, *uttama-bhāgavatas*, come down to the level of *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*. I know that Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja wanted to be there in Govardhana forever, and to serve there. He actually realized the above-mentioned prayer, written by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

Visiting Him in His Last Days

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was becoming very ill, and our Sukhānanda Prabhu was offering him naturopathic massages with Ganges water. Before he went abroad to England, Sukhānanda Prabhu came to Vṛndāvana for two hours every morning and evening for fourteen days to massage him, and these massages helped him. We also sometimes visited and spoke with him then. Once we came at a time when he had hardly eaten or even taken water for many days. Still, he affectionately greeted us and, as he had always done with all, he lovingly offered us the opulent *mahā-prasādam* that had been prepared and offered by his disciples. He exclaimed how nicely his young students were trying to serve their *gurudeva* and Kṛṣṇa. Even though he himself

had eaten nothing at all for so long, he made sure, in such a careful and affectionate way, that each of us took *prasāda* to our full satisfaction.

Some godbrothers and associates were paying visits to him in his room around this time. Akiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bon Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Vaibhava Purī Mahārāja, Indupati Prabhu (from Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja's temple), Ānanda Prabhu, and many more devotees came to see him. We also came several times to be with him, along with our *brahmacārīs* like Śeṣaśāyī Prabhu, Śubhānanda Prabhu, Premānanda Prabhu, and sometimes others. There are tape recordings of some of these conversations, but most of them were in Bengali or Hindi.

Just before Kārtika month in early October, when our annual Vraja Maṇḍala *parikramā* was about to begin, Parama-pūjyapāda Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja sent for me. He requested his senior *sannyāsīs* and many others, "I want to meet with Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja." A few of them then came by car and requested me, "Śrīla Prabhupāda wants you, so please come now." I was in the midst of giving evening discourse to our *parikrama* party, but I came immediately.

When I arrived in his room at Kṛṣṇa-Balarama Mandira, he was quite silent. Some boys were singing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and some *sannyāsīs* and other disciples were silent. After some time he opened his eyes and indicated with his eyes for me to come close. He was so enthusiastic before his death – not his death, no – his entering *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. He was not speaking, but when he saw me he showed his happiness. The devotees were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa very softly in Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's special tune, and all could see that he was not speaking now.

I offered *praṇāma* to him, *śāntyā praṇāma* (standing and silent), because I saw that there were many persons present and no space for me to offer full *praṇāma*. When he saw me he at once said, "Oh, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has come." He wanted me to take a seat on his bed. He tried to sit up, but I put my hands on

him and said, “Please lie down, and I will sit over here.” He then motioned for me to come nearer to his bed and said, “I want to speak to you.” He wanted me to sit closer to his ear, so he told some disciples, “Bring a chair,” and I sat on it near to his ear.

First he began to weep; his heart was melted. From the core of his heart he told me, “Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, can you excuse me? I feel that there is cause for you to forgive me. For the sake of preaching I have told my disciples some things, which perhaps I should not have said. Also I spoke very strongly about my godbrothers in one letter, which was then sent to everyone. I said that we are preaching and others are not, that they are *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs* who don’t preach but are idle. I said that none of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas helped me – that they only take *mahā-prasādam* and sleep.”

At this time, many of his *sannyāsī* disciples were watching. His words and mood implied to me many things about how he had wanted to encourage his young students. As we are careful with babies, so he had sometimes instructed some of them not to mix with his godbrothers and the other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. To save his newcomers from becoming disturbed or confused, he sometimes told them not to visit anywhere else. One reason was that a few of his godbrothers had done some wrong things. Also, his disciples did not understand the Indian ways of indirect, subtle meanings. Also, he did not want them to lose heart due to criticism from any Indian Vaiṣṇavas who may not have understood their sensitivities and his style of training them.

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja had been a member of the Gauḍīya Maṭha for a very long time and he knew the regulations and *siddhānta* – but he could not teach all his disciples everything in just a few years. He had been cultivating many Vaiṣṇava Westerners from different countries, but they still lacked our Vedic culture and *sadācāra* (devotional habits). He had given his young disciples instructions to avoid other Vaiṣṇavas, just to protect them from becoming discouraged. He would say, “Although they are not fully trained, their devotional attitude is so

nice. I am praying to Guru Mahārāja and the *rūpānuga-guru-varga* to bless them all. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, and Śrī Baladeva Prabhu will surely give them their mercy.”

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was remembering all these things, and he now requested me, “Kindly tell the other Vaiṣṇavas that I have made this offense, and to please excuse me. I have so much sorrow for this.” I told him, “You are my *śikṣā-guru* and a pure Vaiṣṇava. I know that you cannot do anything that is not in the line of *bhakti*. You have done these things only for the purpose of serving your *gurudeva* and Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and we also do this. All of us are indebted to you; there is no question. We know the prediction: “*pr̥thivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma.*” You have performed a miracle; you have spread His glories everywhere. We don’t think that you have done anything wrong, so I have nothing for which to excuse you. But I will relay your request to the senior Vaiṣṇavas. You are my *śikṣā-guru*; whatever instructions you give me I will follow with absolute sincerity.” Tears were very sweetly falling from his eyes. He was acting in such a humble way, as if he was not a good Vaiṣṇava; but actually he was like Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

He continued, “Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda ordered all of us to preach in Europe and America. That was his strong desire. His other desire was that we all work together to preach. I didn’t waste a single moment. I tried my best, and to some extent it has been successful.” His voice was choked with emotion as he continued to speak: “If we can work conjointly, then, as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declared, this *saṅkīrtana* movement has great possibilities.”

Then he told me, “I want you to help take care of my disciples. I want them to be good and qualified devotees. If they come to you, please care for them.” Many of his disciples were nearby, so he softly whispered in Bengali, “When I went to the West, I caught so many monkeys in my net. Really, they are very

expert in quarreling among themselves like that. They are still very young and untrained. So I request you that after my departure you will help them in every respect.” Considering the implications of this order from my *śikṣā-guru*, I hesitated. Then he grasped both of my hands in his own, looked deeply into my eyes and asked me to promise to help. Therefore I agreed, saying, “I promise that according to my ability and my *bhakti-siddhānta-tattva* (understanding of the conclusive statements of *bhakti*), I will always be ready to help them as you request.”

Then I told him, “I want to say something to them.” Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja at once became inspired and called to them, “Oh, you should all come near and hear Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Please take into your hearts what he is speaking.” Then I told them all, “Don’t think that Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja is leaving this world. *Gurudeva* is eternal. You are fortunate to have such a bona fide *guru* and Vaiṣṇava. You should try to preach his mission more and more enthusiastically. If you are after material things, you will find yourselves quarreling over name, fame and worldly gain. You will not be following his teachings. You will not be following his mission; you’ll be doing wrong. So don’t pursue your own self-interest. Give up all these things. To serve Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja, and to preach his mission, you should be united with all the devotees. Don’t quarrel with others over a small point. Don’t expel anyone from this mission by finding small faults. Try to behave like friends, with brotherhood, and then you can preach. If you have difficulty with any of these things, then, as Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja has requested me, you can come to me and I will try to help you from the core of my heart.” They all listened to me then, and this was recorded on a cassette tape.

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja turned his head slowly, looking over the devotees as they gathered in closely. Then he slowly lifted his hand, as if to call them to attention, and said, “Listen to Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Don’t fight amongst yourselves. I have given all direction in my books.” Then he lowered his hand.

After this Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja told me, “I pray to you that you will put me into my *samādhi* with your own hand. I don't want to take *samādhi* from anyone else's hands. I think you are the proper person. After my *samādhi*, arrange to celebrate my *mahotsava* separation festival. You should give some amount of money to all the seven temples in Vṛndāvana and to all the Gauḍīya Maṭhas. It depends upon you how much – 201 rupees, 1001 rupees – according to your discretion, whatever you recommend. They should all hear these instructions and arrange to pay. Arrange a *mahotsava* festival also in Mathurā and invite all the senior Vaiṣṇavas to the feast. Invite all the Vaiṣṇavas in Vṛndāvana. Do this for me, and again I am telling you that you should always help my devotees.”

[EDITORS' NOTE: For special insight into the historical record, we have chosen to include here excerpts from the transcription of an original taped recording. These memories and personal insights were spoken in a temple class shortly after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure by one of his senior disciples, Bhāgavata dāsa, who had been present at this same occasion described by Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja above. We pray that the assembled Vaiṣṇavas will treat this information with sensitive care, as such topics are generally not for public discussion.]

“While Śrīla Prabhupāda was lying there, he assumed a certain pose. But we couldn't understand it. We just thought he was lying on the bed. He had his hands in a certain way, his head was in a certain way, his legs were in a certain way, and he arched his body in a certain manner. Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said, “Oh, he is in such and such *mudrā*. It's a type of *mudrā*.” He said, “This is exhibited by someone in the last period before he passes away. It indicates that he is dancing with Kṛṣṇa. When he exhibits this form in the bed, it means that he is dancing with Kṛṣṇa; it is a dancing pose.” Some people may try to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's relationship with Kṛṣṇa, but this indicated a specific pastime.

“Then he brought in his *brahmacārīs*. He has a little choir there in Mathurā. Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and the *brahmacārīs* began to sing *Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī-pada*. Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has a beautiful voice, a very baritone voice: ‘*Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī-pada, sei mora sampada.*’ He sang very, very slowly. Everyone was crying. The whole room was in tears, and everyone was very, very shook up. Then, as the night continued, the *kīrtana* continued on and on.”

[*This second account is a continuation of the previous tape-recorded class, describing recollections of November 14th, during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final five hours.*]

“. . . Śrīla Prabhupāda started exhibiting extraordinary activities. He started to roll back and forth on the bed, back and forth, and he would flail his arms in the air and then suddenly stop as if he was stunned. He wasn’t speaking at all, and then he would groan. Then suddenly he would belch very, very loudly, then he would shed tears and tremble, and then he would roll again. In this way he would continue on and on in so many different postures.

“At first everyone was horrified. Then Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja came, and he was the last one with whom Śrīla Prabhupāda communicated. I don’t know what Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said to him because I never asked him. Someone should ask him that. He entered the room and Śrīla Prabhupāda was shaking about, flailing his arms. Then he went right up to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ear and whispered something. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped, and Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja whispered something. Śrīla Prabhupāda put up his hand and shook it like he had given benediction. Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja understood what he meant, and then he put his hand down.”

His Divine Departure

When we arrived in those final hours on November 14th, he was not speaking. I felt at that time, by seeing his face, that he

was fully remembering the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. I think this was great mercy coming from Kṛṣṇa, because he had served Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa for his entire lifetime. For that special person, Kṛṣṇa absorption is there. Entranced in this way, his eyes were closed and he was exhibiting special symptoms. It was a very touching scene. He had no pain, no distraction. At that time his mouth was so beautiful. It was like a blossomed rose, like a lotus.

These are the signs of a very great personality. Otherwise, another may cry, "I am dying, I am dying," and the face will be so ugly. But he was never like that. He was like a beautiful lotus flower. I knew what he was doing. I have seen others also, including my *gurudeva*, entering *aprakāṣa-līlā* (Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes). I have seen Pūjyapada Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī, Śrīla Jagannātha Bābājī Mahārāja (a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Prabhupāda), Śrīla Narasiṁha Mahārāja, and Śrīla Padmanābha Mahārāja. I have seen many devotees when they departed, so I could judge what was transpiring. They would call out, "Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa" and "Rādhē Rādhē." There are particular signs at that moment, which show that someone is remembering Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja was exhibiting all those signs. He was very beautiful and very exalted. There was no sign of pain and no attachment to the body or anything else. He was no longer anxious for his young disciples, nor for any of the outward things he had established in his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Now there was nothing else – only remembering Kṛṣṇa.

Our *brahmācārīs* were softly singing some *bhajanās*. At that time, I saw that he was fully satisfied, and thus I was also fully satisfied. I knew then that he would surely go soon, but there was no sign when he would go; he would leave now, or in a short time. He had previously talked with me, when he was in his external consciousness, but he did not request me to stay. I was not in a hurry, but I was thinking that just after my leaving for Mathurā he would enter into *nitya-līlā*. We left to return to

Mathurā, and we were informed that he departed a few hours later.

Shortly after that time, we returned to the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira and made all arrangements for his *mahotsava*. According to his wishes, we took him on procession to most of the important deities of Vṛndāvana. There were so many of his disciples and other persons chanting in that procession, and all of the Vrajavāsīs came out into the streets to honor him. After this, I prepared his body. I wrote the special *mantras* on his chest and forehead with *tilaka*. I used salt for his body, and then, following all of the proper Vaiṣṇava procedures, I put his transcendental body into *samādhi* with my own hand.

In Mādhurya-rasa

Prema cannot be contained within the material body. One with a material body can attain up to the stage of *svarūpa-siddhi*. Yet, we see that *rasika-bhaktas* (those who are already internally situated in their exchanges with Kṛṣṇa in His *līlā*) have *prema* and also appear in a body. We should understand, therefore, that their body is not a worldly material body. This body cannot bear to hold *prema*. In such a mood of separation, it would burst into pieces.

To understand this, we must perform *sādhana-bhajana* and become qualified. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was always in that mood, but he did not externally manifest it. He kept it hidden within himself. He had to suppress all his actual moods for his preaching purpose. His *prema* was displaying itself inside, but it was not fully manifest externally. Otherwise, all would have been madness and the preaching would have been stopped. The *uddīpana* (stimulus) was always there, but inside. When he went to the West there was *uddīpana* for preaching. He preached, “You are not your body,” and he preached *Gītā*, Jagannātha worship, etc. At the end, he came back to Vṛndāvana-dhāma, relishing all the internal moods, and he was always deeply

hearing and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He told us, "My home is in Vṛndāvana." 'Home' means his loving home, his real home.

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja was surely in *mādhurya-rasa*. Some may say, why not *sakhya-rasa*? I am not denying this, because everything is present in *mādhurya-rasa*. All other *rasas*, like *vātsalya-rasa*, *sakhya-rasa*, and so on, are included in *mādhurya-rasa*.

So it may be said that all *rasas* were in him; he was not deprived of *sākhya-rasa*. He had written some statements in his poems, and he had special affection for Gaura-Nitai and Kṛṣṇa-Balarama. But he was certainly in *mādhurya-rasa*, because his *sannyāsa-guru*, my *gurudeva*, gave him the *sannyāsa-mantra*, the *gopī-bhāva-mantra*, in our *rīpānuga* line. Just as Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and his *gurudeva* were in this *rasa*, and just as he wrote in his realizations, in the purports of his books, he was surely in *mādhurya-rasa*.

CHAPTER THREE

MY MESSAGE IS ONE WITH HIS

Sometimes it sounds to some that I am speaking certain things that Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja has never said. When a seed is planted, it will naturally grow into a tree with branches. Are these branches not included in the original seed? Are they coming from somewhere else? Because it is a tree, all its parts will naturally manifest; they are all hidden within the seed. Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja has written everything in his books. I am not saying anything new. Everything that I speak is coming directly and exclusively from the authentic literatures of our *ācāryas*. I also try to give examples from Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's own purports, in his own words. So his tree will certainly grow. New leaves will come and that same tree will give more and more shade. As we water that tree, so many beautiful flowers and fruits will come; that is sure. That watering process is hearing, chanting and remembering *hari-kathā*.

Parama-pūjyapāda Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja has planted many seeds of *bhakti*. Some seeds are sprouting, some are growing, and some have leaves – two leaves, four leaves, six leaves and more. But there are also many seeds that are drying up. Many devotees have lost their strength and their faith. Some *sannyāsīs* are leaving *sannyāsa*, and many sincere devotees are feeling disconnected and disheartened. These creepers which Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja has planted need water to be sprinkled upon them.

One Vaiṣṇava can never be exactly the same as another. All details of expression cannot be identically the same; there must be some difference. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are not exactaly the same. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī are in the same line but are not completely the same. The leaves of any tree, like a mango tree, are not all the same; there must be some difference. So we are

also in the family of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and therefore we are included in the same tree. It cannot be said that there is any real difference between us, since we are in the same bona fide disciplic tree.

I was never interested in collecting many followers, and I didn't want to initiate many disciples. For a long time I have been active as a *śikṣā-guru* for the devotees in the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samīti. Similarly, I want to offer *śikṣā* to anyone who is interested. Now I have accepted Western *dīkṣā* disciples, but my original intention was to help everyone become strong by *śikṣā*. I want the devotees to benefit from the *śikṣā* of all bona fide Vaiṣṇavas. I want them to advance more and more in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to have love and affection for each other and for all other Vaiṣṇavas. I want to see Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's movement become healthy and strong.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja tried to help in this same way, because he was also requested by Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja. He never called the devotees or tried to cause any disturbance. Many were attracted and came and wanted to hear *hari-kathā*, and he was distributing *hari-kathā*. Other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are also doing this. We are speaking *hari-kathā* here, and thus so many devotees are thirsty to receive help. The concept and *siddhānta* of *śikṣā-guru* and *guru-tattva* is not yet widely understood and accepted. The *śikṣā-guru* does not compete with the *dīkṣā-guru*. He assists the devotees in strengthening their relationship with their *dīkṣā-guru*, and in understanding and carrying out their *dīkṣā-guru's* conclusions. I am bound to serve Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja in these ways, because he is not only my *śikṣā guru*, he is also my bosom friend.

Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāja's order to me was that I help his devotees. If I am obeying him, then I may be disobeying others. In any case, even if the whole world is on one side opposing me, I will be on the other side, trying to obey him. I only want to teach what is pure *bhakti* in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and all our *ācāryas* down to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja.

I want to be welcome in his temples, where he performed his pastimes. I want to take his footdust, pay my respects, and especially worship at his place of *samādhi*, which was performed with my own hands. I have an open heart and open arms; my door is always open to anyone. My intention is to help everyone who comes to me, to establish a beautiful temple in their heart where Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa can be served.

I am praying at the lotus feet of my *dīkṣā-gurudeva*, and at the lotus feet of my *śikṣā-guru* and *priya-bandhu*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja. May they bestow their mercy on all of you and also on me. If after first giving mercy to all of you there is some left, then may they give it to me as well. From my heart, I care for all of his followers who try to carry out his orders and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I am begging all of the Vaiṣṇavas to be sympathetic to my attempt to serve the lotus feet and mission of our beloved Srila Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja. He has kindly given me the opportunity to serve him, and I am offering my heartfelt *puṣpāñjali* at his lotus feet.

ENDNOTES

1. *Rays of the Harmonist. Vol. 2 No. 1. "The Mission of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja". Translation from the Hindi article in Bhagavāta Patrika of Feb. 1998, by Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja (pg. 26–27).*

During this unfavorable situation, around 1938–40, Śrī Kṛti-ratna Prabhu (one of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *brahmacārī* names) had spent a few days in Prayaga, at Śrī Rūpa Gauḍīya Maṭha. There he met Śrīmad Abhaya Caraṇa Bhaktivedānta. These two godbrothers had been intimate friends since 1922. Śrī Abhaya Carana's business in Prayaga was in an unstable condition. In spite of this he still remained enthusiastic to preach the message of *bhagavad-bhakti*, and in fact both godbrothers were very enthusiastically preaching the message of *śuddha-bhakti* in Prayaga and Allahabad. . .

During this same period, in 1940, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī (Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *brahmacārī* name) came from Māyāpura to the town of Navadvīpa along with Pūjyapāda Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Narahari Brahmacārī "*Sevā-vigraha*", Śrīpāda Biracandra Prabhu, and some other godbrothers. At Navadvīpa, he founded Śrī Devananada Gauḍīya Math in a rented house in the locality of Tegharipada, and from there started the preaching of *śuddha-bhakti*.

On April 7, 1940, the day of *akṣaya-tṛtīya*, pūjyapāda Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī Kṛti-ratna founded Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samīti at 33/2 Bosapada Lane, Calcutta, in a rented house. At that time Pūjyapāda Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Bhaktivedānta, Śrī Nṛsimhānanda Brahmacārī, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-kāruṇya Brahmacārī, Śrīpāda Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī (the present *ācārya* of the Samīti, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja) and many other Vaiṣṇavas were present."

2. *Their Lasting Relation. "Letter of Condolence" from Śrīla Prabhupāda to Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja. Seattle, Oct. 22, 1968 (pg. 37–38).*

I have a very close connection with Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samīti. Yourself, and particularly Śrīpāda Vamana Mahārāja, are well

aware of the fact that I am one of the three persons who founded Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samitī. We had conceived of the idea of the formation of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samitī at Bosapada Lane, Calcutta, even before Śrīla (Bhakti Prajnana Keśava) Mahārāja accepted *sannyāsa*.

3. *Śrīla Prabhupāda's Letters from America to Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Return address c/o Gopal Agarwal from Butler, Penn. Sept. 28, 1966. (pg. 15)*

I received your letter dated September 20, 1966, on time. Our relationship is certainly based on spontaneous love. That is why there is no chance of us forgetting one another. By the mercy of *guru* and Gaurāṅga, may everything be auspicious for you. This is my constant prayer. From the first time I saw you I have been your constant well-wisher. At his first sight of me, Śrīla Prabhupāda also saw me with such love. It was in my very first *darśana* of Śrīla Prabhupāda that I learned how to love. It is his boundless mercy that he has engaged an unworthy person like me in fulfilling some of his desires. It is his causeless mercy to engage me in preaching the message of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Raghunātha.

4. *A Note on the Word "Swāmiji"*

His Divine Grace Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda was addressed by many names throughout his life. His parents gave him the birth name, Abhaya Caraṇa De. At his initiation by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thakura, he became Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu. Later, in 1939, he was honored by an assembly of his godbrothers with the title Śrī Bhaktivedānta. During his *gṛhasṭha* years, many of his friends affectionately called him Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu, Abhaya Babu Prabhu, or Prabhu. These references are shown in the *Lilāmṛta*, and Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja also recalls them. In 1959, during his *sannyāsa* ceremony, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja awarded him the formal name 'Swāmī'; and he became known as Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Maharaja.

'Swāmī' with 'ji' (Swāmiji) is actually a designation of special respect and intimacy. At first, Prabhupada's disciples addressed him as Swāmiji but, as this is not proper for ordinary *dikṣa*

disciples, his disciples and followers later addressed him as ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda’ (representative of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa). Because the devotees in the Gauḍīya Maṭha have, for over a century, been accustomed to addressing Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thakura as ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda’, to avoid confusion, Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja generally refers to him by his *sannyāsa* name, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja, or Swāmiji. Because of his extremely intimate relationship with our Prabhupāda, this is proper.

Many Western devotees will hear Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja uttering the name ‘Swāmiji’ with reference to our Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although Śrīla Mahārāja always sees Śrīla Prabhupāda as his *śikṣā-guru*, because they were also intimate friends, he often uses this affectionate name. Some devotees misunderstand, thinking he is showing insufficient respect by not always saying ‘Prabhupāda’, but actually he sees him in the most glorious light. When others, those who are not on his level, his own disciples and also Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples, imitate him by using the word ‘Swāmiji’ and not uttering the traditional proper honorific titles, Śrīla Mahārāja corrects them.

5. *Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Letters from America to Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. From Butler, Penn., on Sept. 28, 1966.*

My room is locked in Delhi. If you or any of your faithful preachers want to preach in Delhi, let me know. If you want to work in Delhi, you can use that room and preach. If you continue going to Delhi, then my publication work can be taken care of under your observation. You wrote to me, “You can engage me in any preaching work in India, and according to my ability I shall always be ready to do so.” So I can preach whole-heartedly by your good wishes.

6. *Their Lasting Relation. “Letter of Condolence”.*

P.S. If you have any nice photograph of Śrīla Mahārāja, then kindly send it to me. I will get a life size oil painting made of it, and, along with a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I will place it in my prominent centers, particularly New York, Hollywood, London, and so forth.

