Homages

GBC
Dear Śrila Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble and prostrated obeisances. I fall before you to beg that I may always be blessed to serve you.

The months and years go by much faster now. It has been thirty years since you physically left this mortal world. Still, by your grace, I wake every morning and rededicate myself to try to serve you.

Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us in the Bhagavad-gītā that this world is unlimitedly mutable. So also are the desires, distractions, and disturbances that try to pry my mind from fully committing myself to you. These allurements reinvent themselves year after year, but it is just old wine in new bottles.

But that wine can be so intoxicating. Like an apprentice warrior on the battlefield, I often look left or right and see colleagues, and some great generals, wounded—and sometimes dragged from the field—by the enemies of pride, lust, anger, and greed. And stupidly, I think I may be invincible, or at least sufficiently clever to avoid disaster.

Śrila Prabhupāda, please help me stop being such a fool. Without your mercy, I have no shelter.

There is little time left, especially for those of us you directly initiated. Daily our lives wind down, and our bodily powers diminish. Yet, as we grow older, we are challenged, inspired, and embarrassed by your example. You practically started your worldwide mission at 70! At 50-plus, I confess I am already wondering when I can slow down.

The difference clearly is love. You love your guru, Śrila Prabhupāda. You love Lord Caitanya. You love Lord Kṛṣṇa. And you love the forgetful souls who loiter in this material world. I still love the illusion of independence, despite that illusion’s repeated kicks upon me.

Śrila Prabhupāda, please help me learn to love as you do. Without your mercy, I have no shelter.

In this age, spiritual awakening does not come easily. Therefore, you gave to all of us the International Society for Krishna Consciousness to “systematically propagate” spiritual knowledge. It is through this systematic association that we can be protected and gradually become lovers of God.

But it is hard to cooperate within a society. I have my own ideas. I see the mistakes of the past. I question authority. I see the flaws in others. I like some devotees, others I may not. Yet you, knowing all these shortcomings, ordered us to cooperate. You even told us, “I am ISKCON.” Therefore, it seems, because I claim to be your follower I must share the responsibility and burden of helping ISKCON to be a better reflection of your divine qualities.

Although our collective shortcomings may blemish the ISKCON society, as your servant I can offer my heartfelt apologies to help cleanse it. Although harshness among us may damage commitment, I can choose instead to offer loving words to help heal it. When shared offenses have diminished the seeds of faith, I can strive to offer humble service to enhance it. And, although my weak mind may sometimes see only obstacles and problems, I can choose instead to see opportunities to serve.

Śrila Prabhupāda, please bless me to be such an instrument in your divine hands. Without your mercy, I have no shelter.

Your servant,

Agnitama Dāsa
Badrinārāyaṇa Dāsa

“nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāminī iti nāmine

namas te sārasvate deve gaura-vāni-pracārīne
nirviṣeṣa-śāṅkavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tārine”

Recently, I was asked, “You were raised in the USA, brought up as a Christian, and set to follow the trajectory of a predictable life. What was it that caused you to jump that track and dedicate your life to Kṛṣṇa?”

The answer was simple: “I met Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

As I was growing up, the priests I knew had no good answers when I asked:

“If God is omnipotent and all-merciful, why are innocent children born into conditions of great suffering?”

“How is it fair that we live only one short life, much of it spent clueless and just trying to get through the day, yet if we don’t accept Jesus we will burn for eternity in hell?”

“You [the priests] are encouraging me to be good and go to heaven, but what will I do when I get there? Frankly, from what I have heard so far, it all sounds quite boring.” [Mark Twain said, “Heaven for the climate, hell for the company.”]

In addition to the fact that they had no good answers, the priests I met were eager to catch the ball game and they thought nothing of grabbing a beer and a burger. Frankly, beyond their occasional attempts at piety, they were not that much different from everyone else.

I looked toward Buddhism, as well as the usual assortment of yogis from India. But I had to wonder that if there is an individual consciousness that manages to transit from lifetime to lifetime (as these yogis and teachers all freely admitted), then how lofty was the goal of a process that ultimately aimed to extinguish it?

When I asked, “If it is all ultimately one, then what caused the one to become many? What was the genesis for our individual identities and desires?” I was told “It is all beyond words.” Naturally, I had to ask, “Then why do you spend so much time traveling and speaking?”

Out of frustration, I came to the conclusion that theism and spiritual thought were for old ladies and those afraid of death. It must be that we live in a random, thoughtless universe and the appearance of order, pattern, and symmetry are only our wishful thinking.

Then I met Śrīla Prabhupāda, first via his Bhagavad-gītā. Here at last was a profound and convincing voice. One by one, my questions were answered by his clear and irrefutable logic. I was an eternal spirit soul, there was a design throughout creation that sprang from beautiful Śyāmasundara, and best of all, even I could realize Him by pure devotional service.

Finally, late in the summer of 1969, I met Śrīla Prabhupāda personally. I was struck that here was someone so obviously fixed in transcendence yet simultaneously the most focused, awake, and real person I had ever encountered. While the priests, yogis, and so-called philosophers could not even talk a good game, both by his words and by every deed Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that Kṛṣṇa was real and that we could know Him intimately.

To this day, I remember walking into the little temple (a recently converted Baptist church in west Los Angeles) and listening as Śrīla Prabhupāda dismantled a college professor’s impersonal challenge. When asked by another audience member why the death rate was so high in India, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “The death rate is the same everywhere—100%.” He said, “You think that you are sitting on the floor, but I am sitting on the hand of Kṛṣṇa,” and he promised that if we followed the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously we would someday feel the warm rays of the sun as our lover’s embrace.

He ended by saying that although the world is full of doctors, scientists, and successful businessmen, the suffering continues, both individually and collectively. With deep conviction he appealed, “The only
shortage in this world is a shortage of God consciousness. Why not give just one life to Kṛṣṇa and do some real good for yourself and others?"

I was convinced then and remain so today. Śrīla Prabhupāda, your mercy is all I am made of. Having received so much kindness already, I shouldn’t ask for more. But I pray that someday soon I will become worthy of being your disciple and do real good for myself and for others.

Your insignificant servant,

Badrinārāyaṇ Dāsa

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**Bhakti-bhṛṅga Govinda Swami**

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances to your lotus feet.

Your feet are more soothing than thousands of full moons. As the rays of the full moon cause the kairava lotus to blossom, the cooling rays of your feet have caused the lotuslike hearts of Vaiṣṇavas throughout the world to fully blossom and relish the joy of loving Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda, the past few years have been a great challenge for me. Circumstances have often caused me to feel helpless and without hope that success may ever come. Before you, I have shown myself to be a classic fool.

The saving grace has been your kindness, which has manifested in your instructions, in harināma, and in the loving care which your ISKCON society of Vaiṣṇavas has endlessly shown.

Time and time again you have shown yourself to be the true messenger of Śri Caitanyadeva. Despite my despair and my foolish thoughts and actions, you have continued to encourage me and give me hope. As Lord Caitanya is patita-pāvana, so are you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for you are His perfectly qualified messenger.

Surely my struggles are far from over. I am quite sure that I will exhibit my incompetence many more times in this life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I pray that you will continue to be merciful to me and allow me to serve you. Whether my situation appears favorable or not, if you kindly allow me to remain serving in your mission of distributing Lord Caitanya’s message, my life will be complete.

I forever thank you for your kindness. Though I understand I can never repay what you have done for me, I pray that my incompetent service will be the slightest sign of my gratitude.

Your eternal servant,

Bhakti-bhṛṅga Govinda Swami
My dear lord and master Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to you, the savior of the fallen souls.

I would like to be a Prabhupāda man. I am convinced it is the right thing to be. I would like to be known as a Prabhupāda man, at least if it will inspire some others to also be Prabhupāda people.

Today is Rāma-navamé, the anniversary of the appearance of Lord Rāmacandra in this world, and I have been reading verses from the 10th and 11th chapters of the Ninth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam regularly in classes over the last week or two. One thing that has particularly struck me about Lord Rāma is his absolute faithfulness to Mother Sītā, as you describe there, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In the purport of 9.10.54 you explain how Lord Rāma went to great efforts to rescue Sītā when She was kidnapped. He could have easily manifested more Sītās and not worried about the original one, but He went out of His way and endured so much because of His dedication to His eternal consort. When I was reading this purport I thought of you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and your absolute dedication to your spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. You were his man, and you never let anyone else come between you and him.

You told us that this was the secret of your success in expanding the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In a Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class you once said:

Yes. This is the order. Guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete koriyā aikya. Now cittat means consciousness or heart. “I shall do this only, bas. My Guru Mahārāja told me; I shall do this.” Cittete koriyā aikya, ār nā koriho mane āśā. So it is not my pride, but I can say, for your instruction, I did it. Therefore whatever little success you see than all my Godbrothers, it is due to this. I have no capacity, but I took it, the words of my guru, as life and soul. So this is fact. Guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete koriyā aikya. Everyone should do that. But if he makes addition, alteration, then he is finished. No addition, alteration. You have to approach guru—guru means the faithful servant of God, Kṛṣṇa—and take his word how to serve Him. Then you are successful. If you concoct, “I am very intelligent than my guru, and I can make addition or alteration,” then you are finished. So that is the only.

So on this day I am praying that I can follow in your footsteps, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and not become deviated from your lotus feet. And then when this body is finished I hope that when the devotees talk of me they will say, “Yes, he was a Prabhupāda man.”

Your most fallen servant,

Bhakti Caitanya Swami
My dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

When you gave me initiation I was serving you as your personal servant, and since I had to be with you all the time, I could not go out to collect guru-dakṣinā to offer you. In the evening the newly initiated devotees came to you to offer their guru-dakṣinā, and I realized what a mistake I had made. When everyone left I expressed my terrible feeling of guilt and embarrassment to you for not offering any guru-dakṣinā. In your usual kind and affectionate way you said, “You offered yourself. That is the best way to pay your guru-dakṣinā.”

With my heart steeped in feelings of fulfillment and gratitude, I offered my obeisances to you, saying, “Śrīla Prabhupāda, I offer my self to you. Please accept me.” When I got up I saw that you were looking at me with an affectionate smile on your face, and my heart began to dance with joy.

Since then my life has been inundated with your abundant mercy. You allowed me to serve you in the most intimate way, gave me the opportunity to be with you all the time, expressed your trust in me, and eventually claimed me as your exclusive property by giving me sannyāsa.

My good fortune started when I met you for the first time. Your Divine Grace asked me to translate your books into Bengali. I was told that you were very particular about the translation of your books into Bengali. Therefore, you did not want just anyone to translate them. What pious act I must have performed in the past that gave me this inconceivable good fortune.

The first book you wanted me to translate was the Bhagavad-gītā. And throughout the day I used to just translate and then read the work to you. You would correct me whenever it was necessary and praise me when it satisfied you. In this way you taught me how to render this service. The devotees used to eulogize my good fortune, saying that I had become an object of your special mercy. In those days translating your books was my only service. After translating the Bhagavad-gītā, The Nectar of Devotion, The Science of Self-Realization, and Kṛṣṇa book, I was thinking of translating Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, but some devotees suggested I translate Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and offer it to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu during His 500th appearance-anniversary festival in 1986. I managed to complete it in time, but unfortunately that year ISKCON went through some major crises, and as a result in 1987 the GBC body was restructured and I had to join the body as a member.

That extremely demanding managerial responsibility practically halted my translation work. Although my days were packed with endless activities, at the end of the day I would feel as if I had done nothing because I did not translate your books.

Finally, in 1993, I resolved that I would complete the translation of your Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the last book left to translate, as my offering to you on your centennial in 1996. Many devotees expressed their doubts that I could accomplish such a task in such a short time. Some even told me it would be impossible to translate thirty volumes in just three years. But by your causeless mercy, that apparently impossible task was accomplished. I not only managed to translate the books, but I also got them printed before your centennial.

In 1995, when the translation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was completed, I decided to make a TV serial on your life, called “Abhaya Charan,” and its telecasting started in the Indian National TV channel the day after your centennial celebration. Although initially I thought it would take two years, eventually it took eight years to complete. It was indeed a mega series, and I had to shoot all over the world.

In 2004 you brought me to Ujjain to engage in a massive project that would spread over hundreds of acres of land. It began with the construction of a temple for Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā–Madana-Mohana, and you completed that marble masterpiece in less than ten months. Now that the āśrama and guesthouse are complete, you are about to start the construction of a fifteen-storey IT park. Then a spiritual theme park, a film studio, a 3D animation studio, an international residential school, a flight training academy, an Ayurvedic and nature cure hospital—the list goes on endlessly.

You are a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Therefore you are empowered by Him and nothing
is impossible for you. You will make all these wonderful things happen. It is through these achievements all over the world that your ISKCON movement will spread to every town and village, fulfilling the prediction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Please allow me to become an insignificant instrument in your hands. Then, I know, my existence will find its true purpose and my life will become successful. On this most auspicious day, Śrīla Prabhupāda, this is my only prayer at your lotus feet.

Aspiring to remain your humble servant eternally,

Bhakti Chāru Swami

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Bhaktimārga Swami

The flower child’s protest—
Out with establishment!
Out with the church!
On with a mission—a search!

How radical we were,
And you before us,
So daring and bold
To hit New York’s cold.

The time was just right—
Ears were open,
Minds mature,
Innocent hearts craving for the pure.

The park was the place—
People beat drums,
Bell-bottoms were swaying
While you were there praying.

The chant was so novel.
How eager we were, yet
Commitments were fragile.
A few stayed the while.

Our nature was such
That there were flames within—
A fever, desire,
A fire that goes high, higher.

You convinced us then
To shed our burden,

To follow some code
And reject the overload.

Some of us changed while
The world’s burning persists.
Like a powerful horse,
Modes are in great force.

Are we upholding
Those great expectations
You had for us all
In preventing others from further fall?

Have we abandoned courage
For comfort and ease?
And put compassion to the side
While taking an easy ride?

We are all gauged.
Our success is measured
By how much we have tossed
Illusion ’til she’s lost.

Please, Your Divine Grace,
Hold this lost child in place.
Mold me as you will.
Where vacant, please fill!

Bhaktimārga Swami
Homages from
the GBC
Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

I am an insignificant granddisciple of yours engaged in the service of your most beloved society, ISKCON, for your pleasure. Thank you very much for engaging me in the service of holy dhāma at Māyāpur. Though I am not so efficient, still I am trying my best, with all sincerity, to serve your society as much as possible. I am not sure what I am doing—how perfect it is or where will it lead me finally. I have so many doubts. Still, I am fixed in my service, sure that I am serving a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, one who has no personal motives but whose only desire is to spread the glories of the Lord and thus deliver souls all around the world. I think just by serving your instruction I will be purified and one day attain the goal of my life.

Whenever I face any trouble, I think about you—how much trouble Your Divine Grace went through to establish this movement. When I feel very much disturbed by different situations in this movement, I control myself by thinking of my Guru Mahārāja, His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami, remembering how he has tolerated everything—so many ups and downs—while steadily serving for your pleasure. The movement Your Divine Grace started has to be developed and spread to every person in every corner the world.

I feel my life will be successful if by your mercy I can stay in this movement and serve nicely.

Thank you very much.

Your humble servant,

Bhakti Puruṣottama Swami

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Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to your all-auspicious Vyāsa-pūjā celebration!

We are eternally indebted to Your Divine Grace for giving us your eternal shelter in this material existence, where every conditioned soul is obsessed by the desire for self-satisfaction. You came to this world with only one desire: to eternally benefit us all.

Whenever we feel lonely and forlorn, whenever we think that everything goes wrong, we turn to you. Your voice, your glance, your very example in everything you do, encourage us to not give up, to hang on, to not let go of our desire to surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Whenever we feel that everything hurts, whenever we feel that we’ve had enough, whenever we feel like throwing our hands up in despair, we turn to you. You are our eternal well-wisher. You are the one who is filled with unalloyed compassion and who constantly desires our well-being.

Whenever we feel like we are losing our direction, whenever we feel tossed away by the waves of worldly longings, whenever we feel far away from our desired goal, we turn to you. Just by our hearing
your voice, the various distractions of the illusory energy of the Lord immediately begin to dissipate.

And whenever we might feel encouraged and inspired in our lives and practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and rewarded with some success, we also turn to you. We want to offer you whatever meager results we can. Your satisfaction is the perfection of our lives.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the following verse from the Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya (13.2) perfectly describes how we feel about you: “O devotee of the Lord, the purpose of the visual sense is fulfilled simply by seeing you, and to touch your body is the fulfillment of bodily touch. The tongue is meant for glorifying your qualities because in this world a pure devotee of the Lord is very difficult to find.”

Your insignificant humble servant,

A. C. Bhaktivaibhava Swami

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**Bhūrijana Dāsa**

**Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya**

11

They say that Great King Canute
To no avail ordered the relentless ocean tide to cease,
learning that tide abides for no man.

Yet nine-plus centuries later
you again ordered Kali’s murky tides back
in the name of Nitāi and Gaura
by the strength of your constant kīrtana
of Kṛṣṇa’s holy names.

You attacked Kali with your divine books—
Filled with darkness dispelling light.

You attacked Kali with devotional rural communities—
havens, free from Kali’s torturous yokes
of bad association, debt, and pollution.
Village life: simple living, high thinking,
Hard work, fresh vegetables, and contented cows.

With the force of logic backed by śāstra
you attacked atheistic scientists,
the lynchpin of Kali’s progress.
Ferociously, 
impelled by the force of your Vraja-realization, 
you attacked impersonalist Māyāvādīs, 
those murderers of true spiritual life.

You also attacked with sweetness, 
for none can resist the precious bejewelled dhāmas 
of Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana.

But it was always a battle, 
and you, always fearless at Their lotus feet, 
fought fixed in devotion, fixed in focus 
on your mission—Their mission.

And now, years later, 
little Bhūrijana dāsa, 
still your aspiring servant, 
still of little understanding, 
still watches you in awe, 
still prays 
that your tolerance 
and kindness and mercy 
will continue to support him 
and will uplift him 
in his devotional service— 
for he has no other hope.

Bhūrijana Dāsa

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**Bīr Krishna Dāsa Goswami**

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

\[
\begin{align*}
nama \textit{ omn viṣṇu-pādāya} & \textit{ kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya} \textit{ bhū-tale} \\
srīmate \textit{ bhaktivedānta-svāminn} \textit{ iti nāmine} \\
namas \textit{ te sārasvate} & \textit{ deve} \textit{ gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe} \\
\textit{ nirviśeṣa-sānyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tārīṇe}
\end{align*}
\]

I was recently watching a film made during one of your tours of Australia. There were what seemed to be thousands of devotees and guests dancing and chanting with abandon. Devotees playing big bass drums accompanied the chanting. First they were dancing and chanting in front of Your Divine Grace (you were seated on the stage in front of the multitude). Then you motioned to them, indicating that they should circumambulate the large mūrti of Lord Caitanya in the center of the room. Following your
directions, the crowd jumped and danced around Lord Caitanya like Hanumān’s associates rejoicing after they had found Sītā Devī.

The camera then focused on your face. Words cannot describe the happiness and compassion that radiated from you. Your causeless concern for others was manifest for all to see.

There are important lessons to be learned from observing this film:

First of all, we can appreciate your purity. You are preaching only out of concern for others. There is no ulterior motive. No attachment to profit, adoration, and distinction. Simply love for all, as Prahlāda manifested in his prayers to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva:

O best of the great personalities, I am not at all afraid of material existence, for wherever I stay I am fully absorbed in thoughts of Your glories and activities. My concern is only for the fools and rascals who are making elaborate plans for material happiness and maintaining their families, societies and countries. I am simply concerned with love for them. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.43]

Then we can understand that what will please you and what you are desiring for us is that we chant Kṛṣṇa’s names purely and arrange for others to become absorbed in chanting Kṛṣṇa’s names purely. That is the goal of all the arrangements we are making in our Kṛṣṇa conscious society.

We may be opening up large temples, conducting sacrifices, arranging big festivals, etc., but we should not forget the purpose.

The designation you gave our society, “The Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement,” is quite instructive in this regard. Of course, chanting the holy name is the yuga-dharma and you are Lord Caitanya’s perfect representative, who are stressing this most important aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Therefore I am praying at your lotus feet to give me the strength and intelligence to come to the pure stage of chanting, to engage others (as your instrument) in making advancement toward this stage, and to have no ulterior motive in my preaching activities.

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

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

All glories to Your Divine Grace!

Your servant,

Bīr Krishna Dāsa Goswami
Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my prostrated obeisances at your lotus feet.

In your devotional service, dedicated followers can see how pure love of Kṛṣṇa surcharges all three phases of time. First, your vapū bequeathed to us the wealth of an inconceivable past. This most sublime personal estate—the Prabhupāda memories—enriches our days and nights.

Then, through your vāṇī association, you share with us a now, a present, that defies mundane conceptions. Our heart’s solace and sustenance is indeed that “thou art living still in sound,” especially as the recorded kirtanas in the form of your books. Furthermore, because of both the past and the present that you’ve already bestowed, a resplendent future in bhakti awaits us—in either the ISKCON here or the version in the spiritual world, where, as you said, somehow we’ll all recognize one another.

Your gifts, strategies, and goals have withstood the century’s change. The question becomes not “Are your goals and you still relevant?” but “Are we, as your followers, still relevant?” During the sixties and seventies, we had difficulty matching the vigorous pace of your morning walks. Since your physical departure, the decades have revealed how challenged we are to keep up with your spiritual vision, mandates, and strategies.

The foundation and preparation you gave us for the twenty-first century bring to mind a famous humorist and social commentator’s quip: “When I was a teenager, I thought that my father didn’t know so much. Then, upon reaching my thirties, I was shocked to perceive how much the old man had learned.” I’ve grown up to realize, even more, that you had always been over the next hill, far ahead of us—in ISKCON vision, scope, and insight. Yearning to follow in your wake, clinging to your coattails, I beg for the genuine humility and pure motives required to be your effective servant.

Aspiring to be a real disciple,

Devāmrita Swami

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My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

As I meditate upon Your Divine Grace, I recall seven precious moments that led to my taking shelter of your lotus feet. Each of these precious moments connected to the next in clear succession, arranged by you and the Divine Couple.

The first precious moment was when I cried out to the Lord for guidance. I knew that God existed, but I wasn’t sure who He was. I prayed with as much sincerity as I could gather, and asked God to reveal Himself to me. At the same time, I doubted my qualification to ask such a question of the Supreme Lord.

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Giridhārī Swami

Precious Moments
Why should God reveal Himself to such an insignificant soul as me? But considering that God must have a compassionate nature, I pondered that He could reveal Himself to anyone He wished.

The second precious moment was when the Lord answered my prayers. That day, I purchased an old, weather-beaten copy of your Bhagavad-gītā As It Is from a second-hand bookstore. The shelves were filled with hundreds of books on spirituality, but I felt a magnetlike attraction to the cover painting of Pārthasārathi. I read the book cover to cover, without hardly putting it down, and realized beyond a shadow of a doubt that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead and you were His pure devotee.

The third precious moment was when I started corresponding with Svarūpa Dāsa in Los Angeles. He was the corresponding secretary for interested readers at the time. In our exchanges, he preached to me and sent a catalog of spiritual items that could be purchased. I purchased more of your books, your recorded lectures, kirtanas and bhajans, and japa beads. It was then that I started to chant sixteen rounds a day.

The fourth precious moment was when I started to listen to your recorded lectures, kirtanas and bhajans for hours each day. That spiritual sound vibration was so powerful that it pierced my heart. I felt that you were speaking directly to me and freeing me from millions of lifetimes of sinful reactions. It was a very purifying experience.

The fifth precious moment was when I first saw film footage of you. Seeing you speak and act for Kṛṣṇa and His devotees was overwhelming. It brought tears to my eyes. This was the first time I saw you, and it kindled a blazing fire within me to become your disciple.

The sixth precious moment was when I greeted you during one of your Los Angeles airport arrivals. When you walked out from the arrival gate, you appeared goldenly effulgent. Hundreds of devotees were loudly chanting and running to keep up on either side of the moving walkway on which you stood. It appeared as though you were floating through the airport. Your presence commanded respect, and even nondevotees stood transfixed by your gaze.

The seventh precious moment was when you were leaving for your walk the next morning. You had just gotten into the car, and it was backing up onto Watseka Avenue. I was standing some distance behind the car, looking into the rear window. All of a sudden, you turned around and looked out the window at the devotees. As you were scanning the crowd, our eyes met and locked for a brief moment. There was great compassion in your eyes, and you seemed to be saying “Where have you been all these lifetimes? Now you have the shelter of guru and Kṛṣṇa.”

These seven precious moments brought me in touch with you. I still can’t call myself a disciple of yours. But I am trying to learn from my senior godbrothers and godsisters what it means to become a genuine disciple. By their mercy, perhaps one day I will actually become your true disciple and take advantage of what your eyes said to me thirty-five years ago. “Now you have the shelter of guru and Kṛṣṇa.”

Aspiring to become your true disciple,

Giridhārī Swami
My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my prostrated obeisances at your lotus feet. All glories to Your Divine Grace! All glories to your causeless mercy!

“Lord Nityānanda,” as you taught us, “is the original spiritual master.” He is an incarnation of Balarāma, who is the first expansion of Kṛṣṇa and the first being to perform the functions of a spiritual master—to serve Kṛṣṇa and give knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. While acting as a spiritual master, Nityānanda manifests His own nature, which is most merciful (nityānanda sahaj dayāmaya: “Nityānanda was by nature very merciful.” [ Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 6.49]). And we think of your mood of compassion, which you demonstrated as you acted as a spiritual master and world ācārya, and how close it is to Lord Nityānanda’s.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the author of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, said of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu, premē matta nityānanda krṣṇa-avatāra/ uttama, adhana, kichu nā kare vicāra: “Because He is intoxicated by ecstatic love and is an incarnation of mercy, He does not distinguish between the good and the bad.” Ye age padaye, tāre karaye nistāra/ attēva nistārītā mo-rena durācāra: “He delivers all those who fall down before Him. Therefore He has delivered such a sinful and fallen person as me.” ( Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi 5.208–09) We pray to be worthy to say the same of you.

Age padaye: to bow or fall down before the spiritual master, to surrender to the spiritual master, is the first qualification for any disciple. The Bhagavad-gitā instructs, tad viddhi pranipātena poripraśnena sevayā. First, pranipāta: you must fall down, surrender, before the spiritual master. And anyone who falls down before you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, even though he or she may be durācāra (sinful and fallen), will be delivered. In other words, being durācāra is not a disqualification for receiving your mercy, as long as one has the qualification: age padaye—one should fall down before you. In other words, one should be humble and sincerely follow your instructions.

How will you deliver them? That is explained by Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura:

brajendra-nandana yei, śacī-suta hoilo sei,
balarāma hoilo nitāi
dīna-hīna yata chilo, hari-nāme uddhārilo,
tāra sākṣe jagāi mādhāi

“Lord Kṛṣṇa, the son of the king of Vraja, became Lord Caitanya, the son of Śacī, and Balarāma became Nītāi. The holy name delivered all those souls who were lowly and wretched. The two sinners Jagāi and Mādhāi are evidence of this.” (Prārthandā)

Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda came to reclaim the most fallen souls by giving them hari-nāma, the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, to chant. In other words, They deliver people through the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And by engaging in bhakti-yoga and chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, the fallen souls gradually awaken their love for Kṛṣṇa (golokera prema-dhana hari-nāma-sanātkārana).

Once, in Bombay, an Indian gentleman approached you and cried, “Swamijé, Swamijé, only you can save me. Only you can deliver me. Please be merciful. Please save me.” And you replied, “I cannot save you. You have to save yourself. But I can give you the process by which you can save yourself.” Following Gaura-Nītāi, you brought hari-nāma with you to deliver the fallen souls. Yet although you offer it to us freely, still, we have to take it.

You gave us detailed instructions on how to chant and achieve the ultimate goal of life, but we have to do our part. Another time in Bombay, a disciple said to you, “Please give me your mercy so that I can follow your instructions.” And you replied, “My mercy is that I have given you my instructions. Now you have to follow them.” And you gave the example that if someone has fallen in a well and a benefactor comes and hands down a rope, the person below cannot pray, “Please make my fingers curl around the rope.” The benefactor has sent down the rope, and he is prepared to pull you up, but you have to hold on to it. You said, “My mercy is that I have given you my instructions. Now you have to follow them.”

You give mercy, but we have to take it. And the qualification for taking it is genuine humility. That is the meaning of pranipāta. If we are humble, we will bow down; we will surrender and submissively follow your instructions.

In the earlier days of the movement, in 1968, after a talk in Seattle, you asked for questions, and a young man remarked, “I feel that as beings we are all more or less equal. So I don’t feel that I have to bow down to anyone.” You replied, “You have diagnosed your own disease. That is the disease of materialism.
Everyone is thinking, ‘I want to be master. I don’t want to bow down.’” You continued: “You don’t want to bow down, but you are forced to bow down.” The man admitted that he was subordinate to his boss but maintained that he didn’t want to bow down to anyone spiritually. Your Divine Grace replied, “You are being forced to bow down to everyone. You are bowing down to death, you are bowing down to disease, you are bowing down to old age. You are bowing down to so many things. You are forced.” Once we come to understand this, you explained, we can ask ourselves, “Where shall I be happy even by bowing down? . . . That is Kṛṣṇa. Your bowing down will not be stopped, because you are meant for that. But if you bow down to Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s representative, you will be happy.” By bowing down to Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s representative, to Nityānanda and His representative, to Your Divine Grace, we will be truly happy—if we truly bow down. We will gain eternal happiness (nityānanda).

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmi says that anyone who falls down before Nityānanda Prabhu—even if he or she is durācāra, sinful and fallen—will be delivered. And he gave himself as an example: “He saved even me.” That sentiment arose from his profound humility. The more famous example is Jagāi and Mādhāi. As Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura said, Gaura-Nitāi have come to deliver all who were lowly and wretched, and the proof is Jagāi and Mādhāi (tāra śākṣi jagāi mādhāi). Now you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, have delivered thousands of such sinful, fallen souls. And practically, you have admitted it yourself: “Nityānanda Prabhu delivered Jagāi and Mādhāi, but a servant of Nityānanda Prabhu, by His grace, can deliver many thousands of Jagāis and Mādhāis. That is the special benediction of the disciplic succession. . . . If one is true to Gaura-Nitāi’s service in the disciplic succession, he can even excel Nityānanda Prabhu’s service.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 16.65, purport)

After Jagāi and Mādhāi surrendered to Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they promised never to sin again, and with faith they took up the chanting of the holy names. Thereafter, Gaura-Nitāi never referred to their sinful pasts. At the time of initiation, we also promise to refrain from sinful activities and to regularly chant the holy names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. May we remain true to our vows.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are an incarnation of mercy (kṛpā-avatāra). And in distributing mercy you did not consider who was good or bad (uttama, adhama), high or low. You saved all who fell down before you. And thus you expanded the merciful mission of Gaura-Nitāi. As stated in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 7.11):

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkūṭana
kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana

“The fundamental religious system in the Age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the saṅkūṭana movement.”

No one in history had ever spread the saṅkūṭana movement like you. You spread it all over the world, which no one else had ever done, to the highest and to the lowest. Thus we conclude that you were empowered, a śākyāveśa-avatāra. And if we consider further, we may conclude, as one of your godbrothers suggested, that you were empowered specifically by Nityānanda Prabhu—to deliver the durācāra, the sinful and fallen. And you did that. You were an incarnation of mercy, and you offered kṛṣṇa-nāma to everyone, without discrimination, and you inspired, or induced, people to take it. “He delivers all those who fall down before Him. Therefore He has delivered such a sinful and fallen person as me.”

A dear friend in Mumbai, a leading industrialist as well as a wonderful devotee, Hrishikes Mafatlal, who was initiated as Kṛṣṇacandra Dāsa, told me that he felt that every devotee should see the footage taken of Śrīla Prabhupāda when he first came to America, to see the people he was preaching to on the Lower East Side of New York and in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. “We cannot imagine the people Śrīla Prabhupāda was preaching to,” he said. “Until you actually see the films, you cannot have any idea.” It is beyond the power of words to describe the people that Your Divine Grace influenced when you first came to America. Just the fact that you came, that you lived among them, that you spoke with them, that you invited them and cooked for them, is amazing. (“Them” includes people like me.) And that you induced them to accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness is beyond human comprehension.

At first you didn’t even have your own place to stay. You were living in different places in New York. At one stage you were living with a young man who seemed to be interested, and you were hopeful
that you could train him as a Vaiṣṇava. But one day, on a dose of LSD, he went crazy. He stood before you—he could have done anything—and you ran down the four flights of stairs onto the streets of the Bowery, the worst part of New York, notorious throughout the world. And you didn’t know where to go. You had no place to go.

Then you went to the loft of another young man, Carl Yeargens. Carl was living with his wife in one large room, with areas partitioned off for the bedroom and kitchen. Carl was nice. He liked to be with you. He was interested in Indian culture, and you were teaching him Sanskrit. You all were living together, but his wife didn’t very much appreciate having you there all the time. So that became uncomfortable.

Then Carl approached Michael Grant, who was later initiated as Mukunda Dāsa, and they rented a small storefront and apartment for you. But even then you were living among drug-addicted hippies, who were most fallen and sinful in their habits and morality. But you did that for us, just to save us.

Later, the poet Allen Ginsberg wrote:

Swami Bhaktivedanta came to the USA and went swiftly to the archetype spiritual neighborhood, New York’s Lower East Side, and installed intact an ancient, perfectly preserved piece of street India. He adorned a storefront as his ashram and adored Krishna therein, and by patience and good humor, singing, chanting, and expounding Sanskrit terminology day by day, established Krishna consciousness in the psychedelic (mind manifesting) center of America East. To choose to attend to the Lower East Side, what kindness and humility and intelligence!

Of course, a full description of your merciful activities would take volumes and even then would be incomplete. I dare say that even Lord Ananta, with His unlimited heads and tongues, with unlimited time, could not finish speaking about your glories. Still, I shall describe just one small but telling incident.

One of your early disciples from the Lower East Side had come to India, when the movement in India was still quite new. You had centers in Calcutta and Bombay and a small rented place in Delhi. The temple president from Calcutta phoned Bombay and informed your secretary that that early disciple was smoking marijuana (ganJA), and asked what he should do. Through your secretary you replied, “Tell that devotee that if he doesn’t stop smoking ganJA, I will reject him.”

After the phone call, Tamal Krishna Goswami asked you, “Is it true that you would reject him?”

You said, “No. I cannot reject anyone.”

Then Tamal Kṛṣṇa Goswami said, “But isn’t there a limit? Don’t you have to draw the line somewhere?”

And Your Divine Grace replied, “There is no limit to Lord Nityānanda’s mercy.”

That was your mood in giving mercy. You wanted to give everyone the chance to chant the holy name in the association of devotees, in the hope that it would reform and transform them.

Most of the time people don’t want to take the mercy, but somehow or other you convinced them, or induced them, to take it. You said that giving Kṛṣṇa consciousness to fallen souls in Kali-yuga is like feeding medicine to a horse. It takes six people to feed medicine to a horse: one on each leg, one to hold the jaws open, and one to put the medicine in. That’s how hard it is to get people to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—but you did it. You said that to make one disciple you had to spend gallons of blood, that to deliver one disciple you had to spend hundreds of gallons of blood. And you did. And that is what you wanted us to do, too.

In a lecture in Los Angeles, you told us, “To approach Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa you need the mercy of Lord Caitanya. And to get the mercy of Lord Caitanya, you need the mercy of Lord Nityānanda. And to get the mercy of Lord Nityānanda, you have to approach people like Jagāi and Mādhāi.” So we start way down at the bottom, and we end up way up at the top. That is the extreme mercy of Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda, which you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, came to give us.

How is it that this highest kind of devotional service—the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa—is being offered to the most fallen people in Kali-yuga? Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura answers, “It is like a king who becomes intoxicated, goes into his treasury, takes out his most precious gems, and then goes out on the street and starts giving them away to the poorest people on the road.” How can you explain it? It is his choice. They are his jewels. He can do with them what he wants. And in his intoxicated state he distributes them very freely.
Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is intoxicated with love of God. He is an incarnation of mercy, and He delivers anyone who falls down before Him, without considering who is high and who is low, and gives them the highest perfection of love of Godhead, through the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Anyone who gets Nityānanda Prabhu’s mercy will get Lord Caitanya’s mercy, and by Lord Caitanya’s mercy he will get that most priceless jewel of devotional service, pure love for Kṛṣṇa, vṛja-bhakti. That has all been made possible for us by your mercy, Śrīla Prabhupāda. So we are eternally indebted to you. I cannot express how indebted we are.

nantopayanty apaçitīṁ kavayas taveśa
brahmāyuñäpi kåtam åddha-mudah smarantaḥ
yo 'ntar bahis tanu-bhrātām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann
ācārya-caitya-vapūṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti

[As Śrī Uddhava said to Śrī Kṛṣṇa:] “O my Lord! Transcendental poets and experts in spiritual science could not fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the prolonged lifetime of Brahmā, for You appear in two features—externally as the ācārya and internally as the Supersoul—to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.29.6)

Although we can never repay our debt to you, if we have the mood of wanting to repay that debt, then we should follow your merciful example, as you wrote after your Vyāsa-pūjā one year: “If you at all feel indebted to me, then you should preach vigorously like me. That is the proper way to repay me. Of course, no one can repay the debt to the spiritual master, but the spiritual master is very much pleased by such an attitude by the disciple.” We should work together to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, following in your footsteps, in the mood of Lord Nityānanda—only by your mercy.

But how can I preach when I don’t really practice? And how can I practice when I haven’t really surrendered? Here too I must pray for your mercy—your causeless mercy—my only hope.

Your durācāra servant who refuses to bow down,

Girirāj Swami
Gopāl Krishna Goswami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

I beg to offer my most fallen obeisances at your lotus feet. This year we are going to celebrate your 112th birth anniversary, and I am feeling completely unqualified to adequately glorify your transcendental achievements. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are the greatest of all spiritual preceptors.

We all know the struggle you went through first in India and then in America to establish ISKCON. It was only due to your determination and firm faith in your spiritual master’s order that you were able to fulfill Lord Caitanya’s prediction that the holy name will be chanted in every town and village on this planet. To be a disciple means to be disciplined. When Prakāśānanda Sarasvati asked Lord Caitanya why he was chanting and dancing like a madman, Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied that His spiritual master had considered Him a fool and hence asked Him to just chant and dance. Similarly, we should always consider that we are fools in front of you, and with faith and determination we should follow your instructions.

You have given us perfect knowledge in your books. We do not have to read any other book or go to any other personality outside your institution to pursue spiritual life. You instructed us to follow in the footsteps of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and to endeavor to save every conditioned soul by giving them Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are the perfect ambassador of Lord Caitanya.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you once said, “ISKCON is my body, and book distribution is my heart.” You wanted your temples to be well managed, devotees to be well trained, and book distribution to keep expanding. Real success will only come when we work together to fulfill these goals.

On this auspicious day, I beg you to bless me to develop purity, compassion, and determination to follow your instructions. Please bless me so that I can remain a tiny instrument in spreading your mercy in India and other areas where I work. Once again I want to express my gratitude for your having saved me from material life, and I pray that I always remember your lotus feet and divine instructions.

Your eternal servant,

Gopāl Krishna Goswami

Guru Prasād Swami

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble prostrated obeisances in the dust of your lotus feet. All glories to your divine service, which has illuminated the path to Kṛṣṇa for the whole world.

I continue to address you with the vision of the qualities attributed to pure devotees, which you manifested to the highest degree. The next quality is akiñcana, without possessions.

While still living with your family, you always engaged in preaching, not caring for the pleasures of family life. Rather, you wanted only to satisfy the desire of your Guru Mahārāja. After leaving your family, you accepted the most austere conditions. After taking sannyāsa and going to Vrindavana, you stayed in simple rooms, first at the Vaiṣṇī-gopālajī temple and later, under even more austere conditions, at the
Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Tolerating the onslaught of extreme heat and cold, you worked relentlessly with no facility.

You came to America without virtually nothing but your books, which of course were a great treasure—a treasure you would give to all of us. That treasure is always in the possession of a devotee, who thereby possesses Kṛṣṇa.

In your purports to the prayers of Queen Kunti, you comment on the word akiṇcana-vittāya: “A living being is finished as soon as there is nothing to possess. Therefore a living being cannot be, in the real sense of the term, a renunciant. A living being renounces something for gaining something more valuable.”

And further in the same purport:

Akiṇcana means one who has nothing to give materially. A factual devotee, or mahātmā, does not give anything material to anyone because he has already left all material assets. He can, however, deliver the supreme asset, namely the Personality of Godhead, because He is the only property of a factual devotee.

Your possession is Kṛṣṇa, and you are freely offering Him to the world. This is the principle of yukta-vairāgya, which was manifested visibly by your Guru Mahārāja, and also completely by yourself. You taught us how to renounce, which means to see everything as Kṛṣṇa’s property, by pointing out that spiritually there is a higher sense of possession. To see that everything belongs to God is perfection.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, please give me the ability to see that I don’t need anything in this world except devotional service. I beg to remain sheltered at your lotus feet to receive the unbounded mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Then I will understand that I have everything.

Your unworthy servant,

Guru Prasād Swami
Dear Śrila Prabhupāda,

I bow at your feet, for you proved yourself to be a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Among your many selfless acts in this world, you, a great lover of Kṛṣṇa, tolerated living in a world in which practically everyone offends Kṛṣṇa by negligence, forgetfulness, or even by virulent envy.

We can know you only through pure devotion. This means that we must pass the regular tests that Lord Kṛṣṇa creates for us. All these tests require us to consider, understand, and act for your selfless pleasure, as we conduct our own lives.

As one must become fire to approach the sun, so to approach you one must become like you. We must dedicate our life to your mission, which, because of your transcendental purity, is in fact the mission of Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earth.

As we grow older in your service and pass through the various ages you passed through in your earthly life, we can better understand, on a human and spiritual level, some of what you experienced and tolerated in order to save us. Thus spiritual advancement, in the context of human aging, must increase our appreciation and gratitude toward you, our eternal savior.

Thank you, Prabhupāda, for enduring all the trouble of a spiritual parent, as you lovingly bring us back to our eternal home with Kṛṣṇa.

Again bowing at your feet, I remain, now and always,

*Your servant who tries to serve you,*

Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami

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**Jayapatāka Swami**

My dear spiritual father Śrila Prabhupāda,

Please accept my respectful obeisances. All glories to your lotus feet!

I offer my prostrate obeisances to Your Divine Grace’s lotus feet on the occasion of your Vyāsa-pūjā celebration.

Your Divine Grace is most mercifully uplifting the fallen souls and engaging them in Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s devotional service. I remember that you instructed us in Śrīdhām Māyāpur that after your departure we should see to it that ISKCON is maintained at least at the level you left it. Your Divine Grace also said that you would be happier if we could increase and improve ISKCON, but that we should at least be careful
not to allow it to deteriorate. Your followers have been working diligently to expand the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that every decade ISKCON has more or less doubled in size and number of temples. In addition to ISKCON centers doubling many times, the congregation has also expanded, with literally thousands of Kṛṣṇa conscious groups now existing all over the world. These include Nāma-haṭṭa groups, Bhakti-vṛkṣa groups, and Councilor groups.

There is also an enthusiastic and sincere effort to build the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, with His Grace Ambarāṇa Prabhu leading the initiative. We need your blessings to make this attempt successful.

Your Divine Grace asked me to do many things, including expanding the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness unlimitedly. I am trying to fulfill your desires in the various areas in which you have instructed me. If I am able to do anything you asked me to do or improve on anything, I know this is possible only by Your Divine Grace’s blessings. Without your blessings I am not able to do anything successfully. Many devotees want to help me fulfill your mission. Please also bless them so that they can please Your Divine Grace, either directly or by helping me to serve you.

When I remember all the mercy Your Divine Grace showered upon me from the very beginning of my Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I am so grateful. I want to always maintain my vows to Your Divine Grace and bring many souls to your lotus feet. We are depending on your mercy to bring devotees to Your Divine Grace so that you can then offer them to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in your eternal devotional service to Him.

Hoping to please Your Divine Grace, I would like to please my godbrothers and godsisters. Sometimes it seems hard to do so, since they are not always pleased with me. Only by your causeless mercy will I be able to fulfill your instructions and also please my spiritual siblings.

On this day of your Vyāsa-pūjā celebration, we remember Your Divine Grace’s glories and your unlimited, wonderful, transcendental qualities. I am your insignificant spiritual son. I am trying to follow sincerely in the footsteps you have left for our guidance. Please always keep me under the shelter of your divine lotus feet.

Your servant always,
Jayapatāka Swami

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**Kavicandra Swami**

_in aṇa-ačārya-timirāṇḍhasya jīvanāṇjana-çalākāyān cañsur unmālitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ_

I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who has opened my eyes, blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the torchlight of knowledge.

_in orā viṣṇu-paraṁ kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale śrīmatai bhaktivedānta-svāminī ṭī ṭīnāṁ_

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

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

The effects of your preaching work are spreading more and more. One big scientist just declared that through his scientific discoveries he “has found God.” He and many other scientists are saying the there should not be a conflict between science and religion. You inspired His Holiness Bhakti Śvarūpa Dāmodara Swami in that field, and the influence of your teaching is reaching many scientists.

I just came from Thailand. Hundreds of souls there are taking up the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One young girl is the best student in her school. She tells everyone that her success in studies is due to her chanting sixteen rounds of the mahā-mantra daily. Many devotees are students at the university. Buddhist professors are taking interest in hearing the philosophy of the Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.

In my travels I am often asked how I became a devotee. I am not really a devotee, but I tell them something of how, in this lifetime, I came to be able to hear from you and take up the process of sādhanabhakti under your guidance.

I left my home town thinking that to find a guru I would have to go to California. Some time after I left home, “My Sweet Lord,” by your dear student George Harrison, started playing on the radio. I was very much attracted to that song. I later learned that you had taught him “to write songs about separation from Kṛṣṇa.”

Then I heard more of his songs. Two of them really influenced me. One song had the line “Chant the names of the Lord and you’ll be free.” I did not know what the names of the Lord were. I was too dull-headed to connect that to the mahā-mantra, which was in “My Sweet Lord.” I was praying that if I could learn “the names of the Lord,” and I took a vow that if I did learn them I would chant them.

The other song was “If Not for You”:

If not for you,
I couldn't even find the door,
I couldn't even see the floor.
I'd be sad and blue, if not for you.
Without your love I'd be nowhere at all.
I'd be lost, if not for you.
I just wouldn't have a clue, if not for you.
Without your love I'd be nowhere at all.
I'd be lost, if not for you.

I thought for sure the George was singing about God. Since he was such an exalted personality, I was convinced that finding God was the most important thing in my life. My friends thought I was crazy. Now that I know more of the history of your relationship with George, I think that he was singing about Your Divine Grace.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura expresses a similar sentiment in his song Gurudeva!

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

Fortunately, soon I saw a devotee blissfully chanting the mahā-mantra in front of the University of Arizona. I was able to go to the temple and learn the names of the Lord that would set me free:

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare
The devotees gave me your Śrī Īśopanisad, and after reading that I knew I had found a guru who could really teach me how to know “My Sweet Lord.”

By your causeless mercy the society of devotees around the world is increasing. At the moment, especially in India, your ISKCON is flourishing. Your Rādhā-Rāsvāhā Mandir in Juhu, Mumbai, is receiving ten thousand guests daily. On Saturdays, fifty thousand, and on Sundays, a hundred thousand. They are seeing the beautiful Deities, studying the dioramas, hearing melodious kirtanas, buying many books, and taking prasādam. In New Delhi there are seven ISKCON temples. There are many Jagannātha Ratha-yātrās all over the world. To describe all of them would fill this book many times.

I am still fortunate to be in the association of your devotees, and I pray that I will be able to become a useful instrument in your mission to serve Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

“I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.” (Robert Frost)

Your aspiring servant,

Kavicandra Swami

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Madhusevita Dāsa

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

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

Dear Śrila Prabhupāda,

Please accept my prostrated obeisances. All glories to your transcendental appearance day!

I am meditating on how different you are from us ordinary conditioned souls, and how special and unique is your merciful touch on us. As the sun, the air, and the land in holy dhāmas like Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana are different from the ordinary sun, air, and land, so your form, your glances, and your words are different from those of the conditioned souls. We may not clearly perceive the nature of the dhāma due to our immature condition, judging as somewhat ordinary what we see, breathe, or walk upon. In the same way, we may not clearly perceive that your form is not that of an ordinary Bengali gentleman, that particles of saffron emanate from your lotus mouth, and that your words are not within the boundaries of mundane semiotics.

Nevertheless, the transcendental potency of all aspects of your personality pierces through the limitations of matter and our clouded vision, proving its absolute capacity of freeing the conditioned souls from illusion and taking them to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, and thus demonstrating unequivocally how you are differently situated.

Just seeing a picture of you, hearing someone speaking of you, or reading one of your words causes a revolution in the heart of the conditioned souls. This is so because Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have invested Their personal power in you to make an unprecedented impact on the misdirected lives of the human beings of Kali-yuga.

We have witnessed so many examples of how you personally intervene, through the most unforeseen
channels and in the most unexpected times, to reach to the heart of a blessed soul, giving him Kṛṣṇa against all odds. How sad it is to sometimes see you being dragged down onto a field of anthropological, sociological, or somewhat mundane plane of research and study:

One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods. [Lord Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava at Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.27]

We sometimes find even devotees pondering about your contribution from those mundane perspectives, losing the sight of your transcendental nature, thereby putting themselves in a precarious spiritual position.

But paradoxically, anyone that somehow or other has had association with you, even though disenchanted, distant, or somewhat intelligent, can become, by the power of your mercy, an unknowing bearer of that mercy, and the “immediate deliverer” of an otherwise lost soul.

A case in point is my own story in joining the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As a confused, lazy, hopeless hippie, I started my journey toward the East by traveling overland from Europe. My destination was India, which I reached after one month by passing through places like Persia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Although my mind was a mare magnum of various Eastern doctrines, naïveté, and drugs, I had the firm determination to find the purpose of life. Needless to say, I ended up in Katmandu, Nepal, a city which at that time was a hub of the vagabond life of the hippie generation.

I had met the devotees for the first time in London in 1969, where a brahmacārī had tried to offer me a magazine. But I hadn’t been able to connect with them and become a devotee. This time things happened differently.

There was a place near Katmandu called Swayambhu, where many young people rented cheap rooms for thirty rupees a month in simple cottages. It so happened that close to my room were staying two saffron-dressed devotees. (I later found out they were sannyāsīs.) My knowledge of English was rudimentary at best, but since I played guitar and one of them had been a singer in the early sixties, we somehow connected and started to associate. I knew nothing about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy. They were falling down from the standard and had begun taking various drugs.

One night I was offered some LSD by one of the devotees, and thereafter he started to talk about all these far-out things he knew. When, after some time, the other devotee arrived on the scene, I had an experience and vision I can’t describe.

A few weeks later, after a bloody battle with my mind, I decided to join them in the then Katmandu “temple,” where on one hand they took care of me by teaching me Kṛṣṇa conscious principles, and on the other a most irregular standard was maintained.

Later I came to know that one of the two devotees had been your secretary, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and had acted in a crazy way toward you. I recall him stating on many occasions that the Supreme Truth is ultimately impersonal, and other crazy things. Years later I heard he had died of an overdose.

Still, just a brief association with fallen devotees, in the most awkward circumstances, had captured me and brought me close to Kṛṣṇa. This was possible because of their having been in touch with you, and because of your unparalleled power in reaching the fallen souls. I remember those devotees with affection and gratitude; despite their shortcomings, I remember their hearts as resplendent due to your presence.

Though the consciousness of an individual may be distorted or even antagonistic to the Supreme Lord, if the mercy of a mahā-bhāgavata touches that individual, he can become an instrument—aware, partially aware, or unaware—in liberating other fallen souls. Then what to speak of the liberating ability of someone who endeavors sincerely to follow the mahā-bhāgavata by serving him and following his orders strictly.

Thirty-five years later, I still wonder at the magnificent grace that you channeled through those devotees to reach a deranged vagabond on a dark night in Nepal. That remembrance reinforces my deep conviction that no matter what we do or come up with in our efforts to expand this movement, the simple contact with you is the supreme good fortune we can offer anyone. Therefore the best, the only,
and the sweetest way to help another creature in this world of birth and death is to put him or her in contact with you; this is the perfection of compassion and the essence of preaching.

Please help us all remember this fact, protect us from forgetfulness leading to the pride and vainglory of thinking we are the gurus, friends, and deliverers of the fallen souls, and engage us as your humble servants, life after life.

There is no greater accomplishment and bliss than becoming attached to you.

*Your happily ever-indebted servant,*

Madhusevita Dāsa

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**Mālatī Dāsī**

**Dearest Śrīla Prabhupāda,**

Please accept my most humbly offered obeisances at your lotuslike feet. Your feet are blissfully soft and fragrant. May they always rest upon my head and remain in the core of my heart.

Today is “tax day” in the USA. It means that all of the citizens who are gainfully employed must pay their dues to the government of this great land. It is tough-love day for most people and generally very painful. Unless you are an expert cheater, you will probably be cheated. Such is life in the material world.

You told us that even if we want to be cheated, we should go to Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa proclaims in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that he is the gambling of cheats. You said, “If Kṛṣṇa chooses to deceive a person, no one can surpass Him in His deceit. His greatness is not simply one-sided—it is all-sided.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you exposed us to the harsh realities of a temporarily pleasurable life. You showed us how real pleasure begins with renouncing false pleasures, yet you insisted that we didn’t have to give up anything. “No, just add Kṛṣṇa to your life!” You soberly told us that there was “no love in the material world,” even as we were desperately trying to find it; then you solaced us with thrilling descriptions of the true lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all pleasure.

We were a generation that campaigned for peace in a world of strife-filled illusions. You heroically informed us that hopes for international unity would fail because “your international feelings and my international feelings are overlapping and conflicting. We have to find the proper center for our loving feelings. That center is Kṛṣṇa.” You explained that the equation of perfect balance meant “simply putting Kṛṣṇa in the center.” And you boldly stated, “When I say Kṛṣṇa, I mean the Supreme Lord, the all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead.” How wonderfully clear and concise you were and remain so to this day. It is you who are our oasis throughout new age, old age, and any age.

So, as today is the tax deadline, it is also the Vyāsa-pūjā deadline. The burden of a love-filled debt is upon all sincere disciples and followers to pay our dues in the form of our yearly offering to you. I submit these few words, your words, at your feet in loving living memory of you on this, the day of your most sacred appearance. May I become your worthy servant so that you will always appear in the depth of my heart, day after day after day. In anticipation of that day to come, I remain

*Your hopeful servant forever sold out to you,*

Mālatī Dāsī
Dear Śrila Prabhupāda,

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

For your pleasure I would like to glorify one of your dear disciples. Her name is Īśā Devī Dāsī. I’m sure that you must be proud to have such a disciple. She fulfills one of your most important instructions—to always remember Kṛṣṇa and to never forget Him. Īśā Dāsī is ninety-one years old, and in the thirty-five years that I’ve known her, I’ve never heard anything other than kṛṣṇa-kathā come from her mouth. Her preaching was always simple but profound. “Kṛṣṇa is God, you know! He can do anything!” Many times I’ve heard Īśā say this in response to what seemed to others a dilemma. But for Īśā, there was never a dilemma. She would tell everyone she met about Kṛṣṇa, including all the devotees in the Boston temple. She would regularly take the hundred-mile bus trip to Boston on Sundays, and then would return to her home the same day. All day long she would be busy serving the Deities in whatever way she could. And she would serve those living in the temple by constantly reminding us that we are servants of Your Divine Grace and the Supreme Lord.

In the summer of 2006, Īśā had a severe stroke. As we later found out, it was not her first stroke. Tests had shown that she had had many before this one, which left her unconscious at the foot of the stairs leading to her home in Hyannis, Massachusetts. Shortly after her stroke, we were notified by Īśā’s closest friend in her hometown what had happened to Īśā. Sandy, who later told me how she had become friends with Īśā, informed us that Īśā had been hospitalized and had been moved shortly thereafter to another hospital for rehabilitation. We were warned that Īśā had lost all her memory as a result of the stroke. She could not remember her name or where she lived. She even had to be retaught the most basic bodily activities such as eating and dressing.

The following day I called Sandy while she was visiting Īśā in the hospital. Sandy asked Īśā, “Would you like to speak to Nirañjana Swami?” Īśā grabbed the phone and sang the full Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to me and ended with an exuberant “All glories to Śrila Prabhupāda!” I immediately understood that at least some memory was there.

The next day I planned a visit to the hospital to see Īśā and to meet Sandy. I wanted to learn more about her and how it was that she came to know Īśā. Sandy told me that fifteen years prior, Īśā would regularly visit the health food store in Hyannis where Sandy worked. Īśā would always preach to her about Kṛṣṇa and you. Sandy became captivated by Īśā’s charm. She learned that Īśā lived alone and that she had no family members except a niece who was antagonistic toward Īśā’s devotional practices. Soon thereafter Sandy began spending some time every day with Īśā and would help her with shopping and other domestic tasks. It was clear to me that she admired Īśā for her devotion to Kṛṣṇa and to you. Sandy claimed that she was not a “devotee,” but it seemed to me that she knew a lot about Kṛṣṇa, you, Vṛndāvana, and even about some of the devotees in Boston. I could see that Sandy loved Īśā and felt that in her heart she really wanted to accept everyone connected to Īśā, including Kṛṣṇa.

Shortly after our discussion Īśā was wheeled in to meet with us. She turned to her therapist and in a commanding tone asked, “Are you a vegetarian?!” The therapist was taken aback, but Sandy had a bright smile. “That’s the Īśā I know!” Sandy said. The therapist had to respond to Īśā’s rebuke. “Well, I don’t eat red meat” she said, “but, you know, it’s so hard to have a balanced diet without eating some forms of meat.” Īśā would not accept her excuse, and another devotee, Dāmodara, who had also come to visit Īśā, had to take over and explain that there were ways to have a fully balanced vegetarian diet. “I guess now I’ll have to look into it,” the therapist said.

Some days later a group of us visited Īśā again. Īśā had been missing her japa beads. Apparently they broke at some point during her fall. One devotee offered his beads to Īśā, who immediately held out her hand and graciously accepted them. Īśā had a huge smile on her face and looked just like a young child receiving a long-awaited present on Christmas Day. She immediately put her right hand into the bag and began chanting japa as if nothing had happened since her last round. She looked perfectly “at home”
with her new set of beads and continued to chant japa for some time.

What deeply impressed me the most about Iśā’s memory was the way she answered the following question from one of her therapists while Iśā was eating lunch. The therapist came over to Iśā’s table, sat down, and asked her, “Edith, where is your home?”

“My home?” Iśā asked. Then with the most serious and very deep look on her face, she replied, “Vṛndāvana.”

“What’s that?” asked the therapist.

And Iśā replied, “Oh, Vṛndāvana is my home.”

That’s all she could say in response, but I was convinced it was enough. No stroke was going to take Iśā’s memory of her real home away. Lord Paramātmā was preserving all that she had, and no doubt He will carry all that she lacks.

To quote Mother Iśā: “Krṣṇa’s God, you know! He can do anything!”

Thank you, Mother Iśā, for glorifying Śrīla Prabhupāda by your perfect example of Krṣṇa consciousness. And thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for giving us Mother Iśā.

Your eternal servant,

Nirañjana Swami

Parañ Gati Swami

My dear master, your unfathomable transcendental qualities are very difficult to understand, but somehow my heart can perceive some of their greatness on occasions such as the sacred day of your divine appearance.

Over the past few years the GBC Body has repeatedly reviewed many concepts, such as how to improve ISKCON’s performance for the benefit of future generations. These strategic planning sessions have an overall goal—to reorganize the many-faceted ISKCON society—and the GBC Body has worked with a true team spirit to achieve this goal. Many positive things are taking place in your ISKCON, and with your blessings and protection we shall strive with confidence and hope to create a solid foundation for future generations.

If all the members seriously follow your instructions, then your invaluable ISKCON society will be able to grant shelter to all the members. Therefore, I beg to remain your humble instrument in your mission to inundate the entire world with Śrī Caitanyadeva’s message.

Your unqualified servant,

Parañ Gati Swami
Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

Recently I was reading the BTG article that described the growth of ISKCON in Russia and other CIS countries—those belonging to the former Soviet Union. The article told how you first planted the seed of Kṛṣṇa consciousness there, and how amazing it was that you had the vision to understand how widely Kṛṣṇa consciousness could be spread in that atheistic place.

I first had the opportunity to visit Russia in 1986, along with Bhakti-vikāsa Mahārāja. At that time Russia was still part of the Soviet Union and very much under the grip of communism. As part of an Intourist tour group, we had to stay in grubby but costly hotels and go on bus tours in Moscow and Leningrad. Many devotees were in prison, labor camps, or psychiatric hospitals. Before going, we had to be trained to be very cautious and to always watch out in case someone was following us.

It was a cold November day when we arrived, just at the onset of winter weather. Dark, drab, dank, dismal, miserable. People’s faces looked blank, glum, and gray. There were long queues to purchase the few items available in the shops, and the atmosphere in general was fearful, repressive, and depressing. On first impression it seemed like a very, very difficult situation in which to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Moscow must have been very similar when you first went there. You also stayed in an Intourist hotel. You could not lecture or preach openly. However, you were not at all daunted by the government restrictions or any external difficulties. You could see the vast potential for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You could see that among the Russian people were so many sincere candidates for devotional service. You were determined to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in that vast country.

We had only one contact address, the apartment of a devotee’s mother. However, when we went to the building with the street address we were given, we found it was the wrong building. We wondered what to do. In the hope of finding her, we tried the same apartment number in the next building, and by Kṛṣṇa’s grace it was correct. That lady took us by underground metro train to meet the devotees. And what a wonderful experience it was to meet so many ecstatic souls crammed into a small apartment! One could really see your incredible potency in their blissful faces. Suddenly it was like being back home in the spiritual world with so many dear friends amidst the sounds of kirtana, the smell of incense offered to Kṛṣṇa, and delicious prasādam—early Russian style.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to visit the CIS again and again and to witness the growth of ISKCON there. Gradually the devotees were allowed to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness more and more openly. Of course, that did not just happen automatically. Rather, it happened because the devotees were convinced and determined to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness despite opposition from any quarter. That conviction and determination they inherited from you, Śrīla Prabhupāda. They have spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness far and wide throughout that vast land, opening many centers and distributing enormous amounts of books. That vision and plan they inherited from you. That is the paramparā system. You taught and acted as your predecessors did, and the devotees in the CIS have similarly caught up the same spirit and are continuing to follow in your footsteps and expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Nowadays there are many wonderful festivals held annually in different parts of the CIS, and at some there are 3,000 or more participants. It is such a spiritually inspiring experience to join so many bright-faced devotees in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa kirtana and hearing the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Your Divine Grace. May your fame (and theirs) be spread all over the three worlds.

I pray that I may be able to continue to be the servant of the servants of Your Divine Grace in the association of such sincere souls.

Your insignificant servant,

Prabhaviṣṇu Swami
Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

Whenever I sit down to write an offering to you, I cannot separate what I write from what I do. In other words, glorifying you in writing should be matched, if not excelled, by my daily service to you and your ISKCON movement.

You stated many, many times that giving the message of Lord Caitanya was para-upakāra, the highest welfare work. As devotees, we clearly understand this point because no matter how people’s economic standards are improved, not matter how many hospitals are built, no matter how many schools are built, no matter how clean the environment is made, no matter how many peace settlements are made around the world, no matter how the security of nations is improved, and no matter how many scientific advancements are made, without understanding the science of spiritual life, people will continue to be sold a false dawn and will continue to face traumas that no amount of human intervention will allay.

However, for the first time in the history of this world you have made available to the masses Lord Kṛṣṇa’s essential message in this regard:

mām upetya punar janma duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ sarisiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāṁ

"After attaining Me, the great souls, who are yogs in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection." (Bhagavad-gītā 8.15)

There is little doubt in the minds of the devotees that of all worshipable people you are the most worshipable. Every other day around the world we hear of this statue or that memorial being unveiled for some politician or peacemaker or scientist or artist or sportsperson, etc., I will feel far more worthy of writing these offerings to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, when I manage to assist in having your glories properly unveiled to the world. There should be no one better known to the population of this planet than you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Your servant,

Praghoṣa dāsa
Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

With each day that passes, as I grow older and my responsibilities increase, I gain deeper insight into the sacrifice of compassion that you extended to the world. And gratitude floods my heart.

Over the years I have come to realize that my deepest happiness is found in such moments of gratitude. Especially when, in your presence, I feel like a tiny, helpless child praying that you may empower me to assist you.

Unmotivated devotional service is the unrivaled message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. It is the doorway through which we can enter the pastimes of Rādhā-Gopinātha in the forests of Vyḍāvana. In the line of Lord Caitanya and Rūpa Gosvāmī, you have bestowed this rarest love upon us through your every word and deed. It is a wonder to witness how your influence, beyond time and space, affects devotees’ hearts.

The following is a recent testimony.

Last year, Śyāmasundara Prabhu’s health was critical. Without a liver transplant, death was imminent. He severely regretted that he hadn’t yet completed his memoir about you. Would anyone be willing to undergo the risk and agony of donating two-thirds of their liver? That was the sole hope for his survival.

About a week later: “Who are you?” gasped the doctor at the University of Chicago Medical Center, addressing Śyāmasundara Prabhu. “Twenty-five volunteers from around the world are standing in line, eager to donate their liver for you.” Stunned, she remarked, “Apart from close relatives, no one will endure such pain, not even for movie stars, rock stars, or politicians. Who are you?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, your ISKCON has gone through turbulent times, but still, where else is there such a global family willing to make such sacrifices for each other? This you instilled into our hearts by your unconditional love.

Gopinātha Prabhu was the first to spontaneously come forward. However, he entrusted the final decision to his wife, Pārijātā Devī, who was mother to his two-year old son Rāsanāth. Was she willing to risk the fate of widowhood, with a baby, at such a young age? Pārijātā Devī’s appeal was firm: “In your lifetime there may never again be such an opportunity to please Śrīla Prabhupāda. We have been taught that to be the servant of his servant is the way to his intimate blessings.” She consented.

Doctors warned Gopinātha that it would be a ten-hour surgery, with serious risks, followed by a painful three-month recovery. However, after a series of rigorous tests, he eagerly made the offering.

Amazingly, Gopinātha Prabhu had never before met Śyāmasundara Prabhu. He was grateful to make the sacrifice only because he knew how dear he was to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and had heard of the wonderful service he had done for you. He believed that this was a token gesture to please you by serving those you love.

This is the type of devotion that you draw from our hearts. When we witness your life of pure devotion and hear your words, we long to reciprocate. And gratitude floods our hearts.

Your servant,

Rādhānāth Swami
To remember Śrīla Prabhupāda every day is my goal.
All obstacles will be overcome, I think.
Just as in the verse about Lord Caitanya:
Difficult things become easy when you remember Him;
Easy things become difficult when you forget Him.

He always said he was assisting his Guru Mahārāja in his mission.
I want to assist Prabhupāda in his, to the best of my ability.
Am I sincere in this resolve, or am I just making a show?
The material nature and my mind will always test me:
“Go ahead and do whatever you want,” they say.

I have to drag myself back to the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda.
His instruction and example form the correct window to view things through.
To not do that would be out of the question.

One time he told devotees to go to Singapore.
“When should we go,” they asked. They were thinking in a few weeks.
Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “So you will leave today?”
All they could say was “Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda.”
I want my mind and intelligence to behave like that.

Many of my godbrothers are far more advanced than I am.
I can see they are pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda and are empowered.
Maybe if I just hang on to their “coattails” I will be dragged along.
In this way I can think of Śrīla Prabhupāda—by seeing how they are doing it.
At least it would give me a better chance.

All things in the world come and go, but Prabhupāda and his instructions are here to stay.
I must dedicate myself to him and have no other life.
He showed me what real life is—something unknown to me before.
I have come out of a dense fog, but I am still a little hazy.
It is because I have not yet fully surrendered to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

My rascal mind is so stubborn and strong.
I must hold on to his lotus feet with all the strength I have.
I pray that my godbrothers and -sisters will help me.

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for your mercy and all that you have done for us.

*Your insignificant servant,*

Rāmāi Swami
Dear devotees of Śrila Prabhupāda,

Please accept my fallen obeisances at your feet. All glories to Śrila Prabhupāda! Through his mercy the mercy of Mahāprabhu has reached us.

On this day, all throughout ISKCON, we gather in ceremonies to express our love for Śrila Prabhupāda. It is only fitting and proper that we do so.

Even so, it is still more fitting and proper that we prove our love to him every single day.

“Prove”: Something is said to be “proven” when its fitness, its goodness, has passed a test.

On this day, then, I not only publicly express my love for Śrila Prabhupāda, but I also privately assess myself to see how well I have done in the test of love. I may sometimes be able to craft eloquent panegyrics in Prabhupāda’s honor, and it is pleasing to do so; yet the more difficult and trying task is to grade my own test of love. This is not so easy and pleasurable a duty as praise. However, it is the more important tribute.

“Where is the proof that you love Kṛṣṇa?” Listening in 1972 to a recorded lecture by Śrila Prabhupāda, I heard him pose this question—voice raised, coming down on the word “proof” with powerful emphasis. I was shocked: Did love have to be proven? If so, love is serious, heavy: not a mere sentiment, not a sweet swoon of joy or sympathy, easily drawn forth by a Donovan flower-child anthem. No: love must be proven. It has to pass the test. “If you love Kṛṣṇa,” Prabhupāda continued, “then you will follow His orders. That is the proof that you love Kṛṣṇa.”

(I quote from memory. I have been unable to find this passage in the Bhaktivedanta VedaBase, but many tapes from those days have been lost.)

Never have I been able to forget Prabhupāda’s simple and powerful exposition of love’s test. I have reflected upon it often. I came to apply this test to my love for Prabhupāda himself, as much as to my love for Kṛṣṇa. (Would this last sentence have been more accurate if I had cloaked the word “love” in the mantle of quotation marks—something like love, but not yet it?)

So: Where is the proof that I love Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda’s demand for proof of love raises the hurdle or crossbar far beyond the height set for sentiment, for shallow (even if sometimes intense) feeling. Of course, this proof is exactly what distinguishes the gold of bhakti-rasa from the fool’s gold of those called sahajiyās. They cry, they dance, they swoon in front of the altar before retiring for a bit of intoxication and copulation.

On this Vyāsa-pūjā day I also cry for Prabhupāda, I thrill to the remembrance of his association. The feelings are certainly real and strong, yet I must also assay them at this time to see if they pass Prabhupāda’s own test.

I am ashamed to confess that I never do as well as I ought. Nevertheless, I do not avoid the examination. I only pray that Prabhupāda may not be as harsh a grader as I am. I am not without hope.

I beg also for your mercy, you true devotees of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Please encourage and enliven this fallen soul with your teaching and your example of love for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Because I am weak, this test is so much easier to take when there are many, many others taking it with me.

Hoping to be Śrīla Prabhupāda’s servant by your mercy,

Ravindra Svarūpa Dāsa
My dear and most respected spiritual master and eternal father,

Please accept my most humble and respectful obeisances in the dust of your most merciful lotus feet! All glories to Your Divine Grace! All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda!

I wish to reaffirm my acceptance of you as the captain of the ship—namely, the sacred devotional scriptures, which are forever directing this valuable human form of life’s activities toward the ultimate attainment of the soul’s otherwise endless journey. By your divine teachings and personal inspiration you are continuously guiding us in our efforts to cross over the dangerous ocean of material existence.

We think that we have met Your Goodness by the will of providence, just so that we may accept you as captain of the ship for those who desire to cross the difficult ocean of Kali, which deteriorates all the good qualities of a human being. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.12]

Your magnificent gift of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, replete with your highly potent Bhaktivedanta purports—packed with endlessly potent instructions on how to fulfill the directives given by Śrīla Vyāsa-deva—is one of the greatest solaces in my life. I truly cherish this gift you have given us, Śrīla Prabhupāda. By first-hand experience I am firmly convinced that what you wrote in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam’s dedication page to your Guru Mahārāja also applies to you regarding your Bhaktivedanta purports:

He lives forever by his divine instructions
And the follower lives with him.

I want to remain forever with you, Śrīla Prabhupāda; by your divine grace, you have given us such a simple and sublime means to be forever with you!

When ācāryas completely take shelter under Your lotus feet in order to cross the fierce ocean of nescience, they leave behind on earth the method by which they cross, and because You are very merciful to Your other devotees, You accept this method to help them. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.31]

Here is one of innumerable examples. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.29.33) Lord Kapila instructs: “Therefore I do not find a greater person than he who has no interest outside of Mine and who therefore engages and dedicates all his activities and all his life—everything—unto Me without cessation.”

How to fulfill this instruction—“without cessation”—and so many other, similar high-level attainments outlined within the sacred scriptures, is detailed again and again by Your Divine Grace. Your purports carry the mercy particles of empowerment to fulfill these most elevated teachings. You are my life and soul!
As I gave a series of college lectures this semester on spiritual economics, one outstanding realization I had is that you gave us all we needed to know about this now-trendy topic. “Everything is in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books!,” I find great delight in declaring boldly to one and all! Factually it is so!

Inspired by your unequalled kindness, I have been taking part in a number of retreats and related events intended to help share this infinite mercy you are freely bestowing. I am delighted to report to you that the innate Kṛṣṇa consciousness of those who join in these retreats and festivals becomes intensely magnified and literally transformed, like magic, in such powerful Vaiṣṇava saṅga. The power of sharing your divine teachings with others in such forums is absolutely awesome!

Great attention is being paid at these retreats to increasing the quality of daily chanting, striving more and more—and consistently—to chant with greater taste and attraction to the holy name. I am gaining so much from these experiences, Śrīla Prabhupāda! I know that others are, too; this gives much additional solace to the soul, knowing that you are thereby pleased very much as well.

There is a sociological shift taking place here in North America. Wherever I travel in service to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I find young Americans who are stepping forward with great eagerness to solidly take up a life dedicated to the high ideals found in your teachings. They somehow receive a book, read it, and want to apply these teachings of pure devotional service very directly in their lives. This tendency was just not there for well over a decade. These young Americans just want guidance, and they want the genuine experience of a life in pure devotion. It is very inspiring! I only pray that we can provide the havens of shelter and loving reciprocation for these newcomers so that they continue joyfully and enthusiastically on their journey to Kṛṣṇa in the association of your followers.

All of these experiences are giving me the strength needed to execute the ever-mounting set of responsibilities you are placing before me. These duties are not lightweight. They are heavy. However, I feel your presence strongly in my day-to-day life. This gives me the courage and support I need to move forward. I also see others, younger devotees, stepping forward to assist your mission in various responsible ways, which is likewise very encouraging!

Please guide us, those who are carrying love for you in our hearts as the sole principle we live for, to manifest loving relationships among ourselves as we perform our diverse services. I am confident this will please you very, very much. Manifesting genuine loving relationships represents the future leadership of your movement.

Begging for your eternal service and association, Śrīla Prabhupāda, I remain

Your servant,

Romapāda Swami

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Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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

Last year I picked up a book of anecdotes spoken by pre-ISKCON acquaintances of yours. Later, on your disappearance day, I attended a screening of the film that went along with the book. The author’s intent was pure and simple: to share with others nectar about you.

Soon after watching the film, however, some devotees told me of how those stories affected them. They had come to believe that their knowledge of you—as taught in ISKCON—was incomplete without supplementary teachings from sources outside ISKCON. They thought that such extracurricular guidance would give them the “full Prabhupāda picture.”
This attitude reminded me of another controversy: Certain Vaiñëavas think that knowledge of the process of Kåñëa consciousness, as taught by Your Divine Grace, must be supplemented with teachings from certain gurus outside ISKCON. These additional teachings, they believe, will give them the “full picture of Kåñëa consciousness.”

I won’t delve into the second issue. The theme of this offering centers on the first, which is, simply put, “Who knows Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

Do your acquaintances, who may have met you during an epoch we ISKCONites missed, know you? Or do the devotees, who may never have met Your Divine Grace but who have given their lives to your mission, know you?

I propose that the persons who actually know you are the latter group, your dedicated servants—those who stand on street corners in the heat, cold, and rain to sell your books; who serve the Deities you installed in temples around the world; who tolerate the complexities and tribulations of working in, working with, or managing your spiritual institution; who work day and night to translate your books into almost every language in the world; who preach Lord Caitanya’s message worldwide, sometimes at the risk of their personal safety. These are the persons who know you.

And what about the acquaintances mentioned in that book and film? I suggest that these persons know something about you, but because they did not follow you, because they did not give their lives to your mission, they don’t know you factually.

The distinction between these two classes of persons is inherent in their respective identities as servant and acquaintance. A servant lives, eats, and sleeps with the master, attending to the master’s every need based on intimate knowledge of and relationship with him. An acquaintance is one who knows a person slightly but is not a close friend by dint of serious commitment.

In the Bhagavad-gītā (18.55) Kåñëa says, bhaktādy māṁ abhiyānāṁ yāvān yaś cāsmi tatvaatāṁ: “One can know Me in truth only by undivided devotional service.” From the Lord’s instruction, then, it appears that you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, can be known only by those who render devotional service to you—by your devotees. And those who are not your devotees cannot know you in truth—tattvaatāṁ. Because mere acquaintances lack service to you, they are barred from knowing your greatness, the importance of your mission, your desires, and your personality—including your eternal identity.

Still, some persons may challenge: How can Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers—especially the many who never met and will never get to meet him physically—come to know Śrīla Prabhupāda?

My answer is based on this statement by Lord Kṛṣṇa:

ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate
tesāṁ nityābhīhowuktānāṁ yoga-kšemāṁ vahāmy aham

“But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have.” (Bhagavad-gītā 9.22) In other words, complete knowledge of you is revealed to those devotees who worship you with exclusive devotion and uncompromised loyalty.

Such revelation comes from your own lips—from recorded lectures, informal talks, and morning walks—from the recordings and writings of those devotees of yours who personally associated with you, from your letters, and especially from your books, the reading of which you yourself said was the best way to know you. Thus knowledge of your personality comes from three sources: from you personally, from your intimate associates, and of course from Lord Kṛṣṇa. Revealed knowledge from these sources adds up to complete knowledge of Your Divine Grace.

This is not to say that your followers, ISKCON’s members, are perfect. Certainly they make blunders in their service to ISKCON, in guiding ISKCON, and in their personal lives. History speaks for itself. But as long as their desire and efforts are aimed at worshiping you and Kṛṣṇa with exclusive devotion, meditating on Kṛṣṇa’s and your transcendental forms, you and the Lord reveal to such sincere devotees complete knowledge of you. And in time they can become perfect followers—yoga-kšemāṁ vahāmy aham.

In conclusion, let me cite evidence to substantiate my claim:

In most, if not all, of the anecdotes in the abovementioned book and film, your past acquaintances admit that they finally recognized your greatness only when they saw the mature results of your preaching (although even then none came forward to serve you).
But the early members of ISKCON, though not from Vaishnava backgrounds and rarely from even faith-based or obedience-based backgrounds, recognized your greatness before the movement spread. In fact, they recognized your greatness when they met you.

Why? Because by hearing from you and associating with you, they developed pure, exclusive faith in you. That faith then qualified them to hear Krsna’s instruction “surrender to him.” And by such service and surrender, they quickly came to realize that “Here is the empowered acarya who has fulfilled Lord Caitanya’s prophecy. Here is the greatest Vaishnava.”

Similarly, even though many contemporary devotees may have had no personal association with you, if they remain constantly devoted to serving you with love, they will, by your and Krsna’s special mercy, be freed of all ignorance and will gain full knowledge of you, Srila Prabhupada.

Krsna says, “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” (Bhagavad-gita 10.10–11)

Therefore I say that members of ISKCON can claim, “We know Srila Prabhupada.”

Should devotees, then, hear anecdotes from your past acquaintances? That is a personal decision. If they do, however, they will not know more of you, and if they don’t, they will not know less of you. Everything devotees need to know about you, Srila Prabhupada, will be revealed to them through undeviating service to you. And that means knowing many things others cannot know.

*Your humble servant,*

Siwaräma Swami