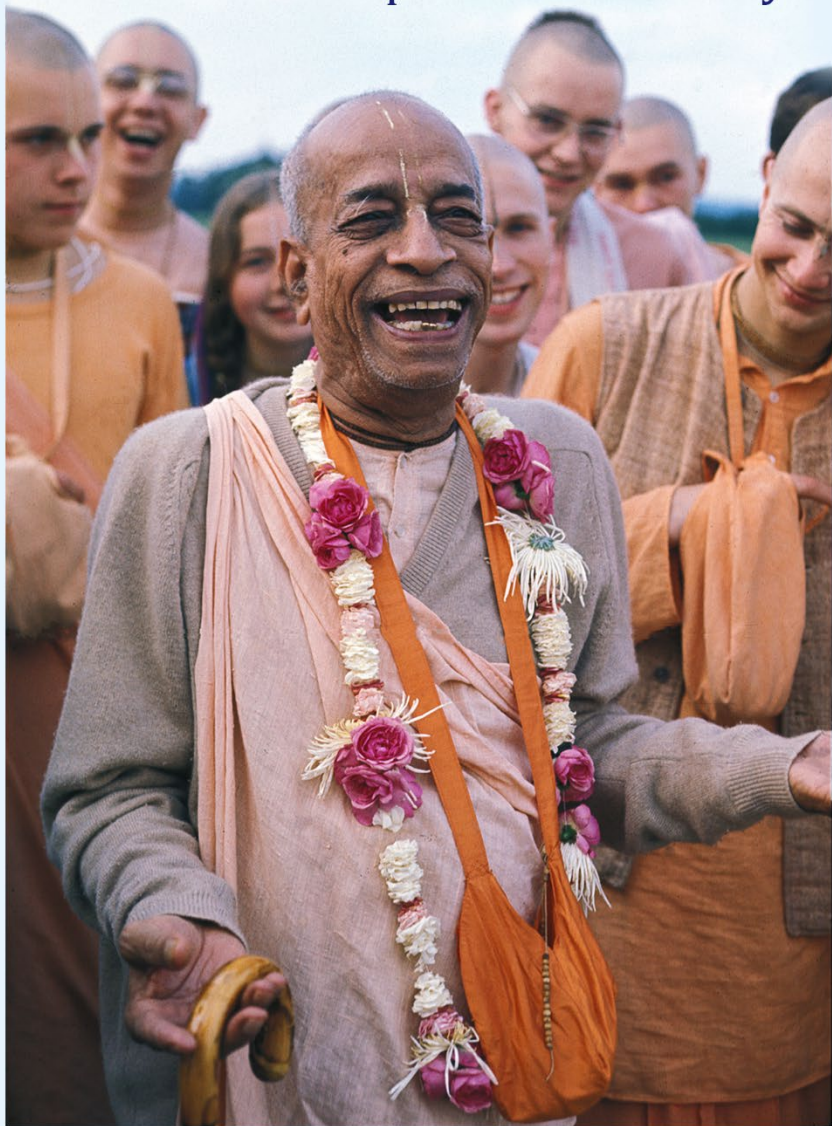


Śrīla Prabhupāda

And His Disciples In Germany



Bhakti Gauravani Goswami

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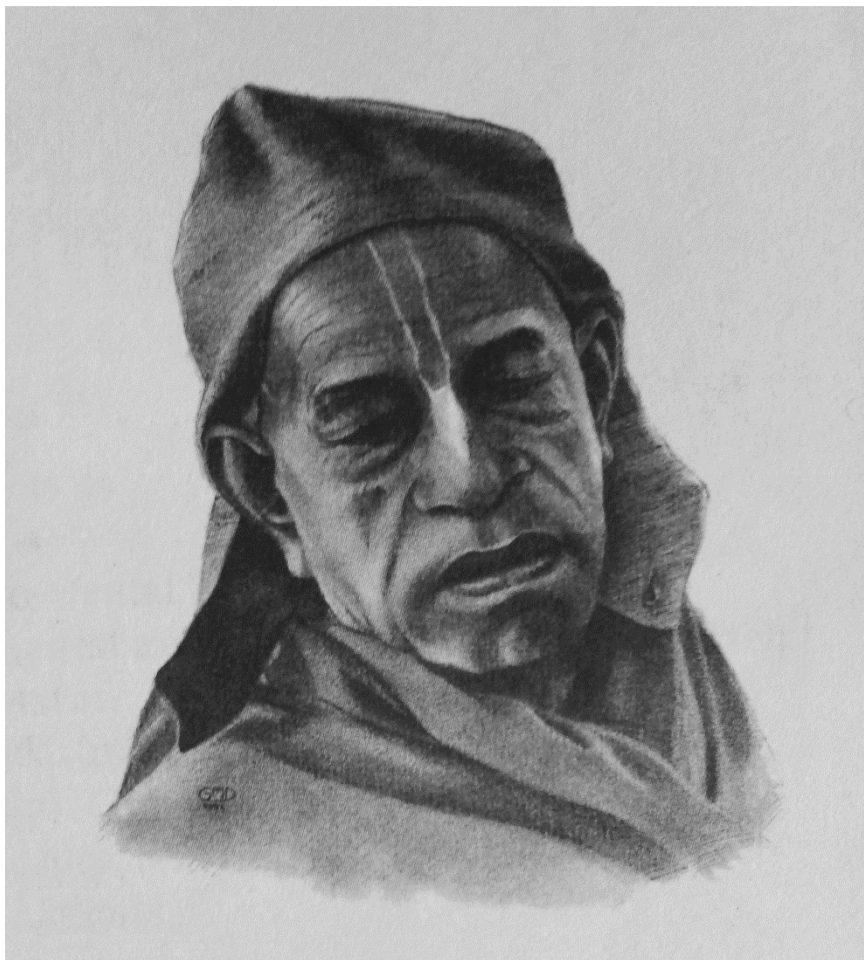
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Dedicated to
my eternal spiritual master

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In the spring of 1994, as the twentieth anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's visit to Germany in June 1974 drew near, I toyed with the thought of compiling the reminiscences of those of us who were there with him into a booklet for his Centennial in 1996.

I wrote an open letter to my godbrothers and godsisters proposing the idea and sent it to Vaidyanātha, who had taken up the work of reuniting Prabhupāda's family in Germany. I asked him to consult the leading devotees in Germany and see whether they felt positive. They did, and so he published my letter in his Project Unity Forum, a publication sent periodically to the German Prabhupāda disciples around the world.

Then, during the 1994 Vyāsa-pūjā celebration at Niyāda-nṛsimha-kṣetra in Germany, Vaidyanātha proposed that my idea become an official project for Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial. And new ideas began to spring up. Devotees wanted to include Prabhupāda's first visit to Germany in 1969 in the booklet, and some said that the history of our movement's pioneering years was essential. I had also proposed compiling in one book those of Prabhupāda's lectures and conversations that took place in Germany. Before I knew it, my initial, seedlike ideas sprouted and grew into flowering plants.

I thought of a three-part book: (1) a collection of anecdotes; (2) lectures, morning walks, and room conversations; and (3) ISKCON Germany's history from 1968 to 1977. I planned to publish it in German as a limited, deluxe edition for a select audience of devotees and congregational members.

As I began working on the recollections of Śivānanda, who was Prabhupāda's servant in Hamburg in 1969, however, I realized that it would be much more natural to weave the anecdotes, letters, lectures, and historical events into one narrative.

After completing one hundred pages, I sent the English manuscript to Vaidyanātha and his brother, Śacinandana Swami. In their enthusiastic

Preface to the First Edition

response, they suggested that I continue to write the book in English so that devotees all over the world could share the nectar.

And nectar there was aplenty. As more and more interviews came in, I discovered that the hearts of the devotees are Prabhupāda-nectar-storehouses. Their memories—some weighty, others light—fell together like pieces of a puzzle to form a big picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda, that unique transcendental messenger of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who directly or indirectly transformed the lives of so many people.

We wanted to gather the remembrances of all Prabhupāda's disciples connected with ISKCON Germany (there were about 170), but we heard from only a fifth of them. I hope the others will write to me and send more remembrances.

I felt that, besides contributing memories of direct experiences with Śrīla Prabhupāda, devotees should also tell how they came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Their stories show another of Prabhupāda's glories—that you didn't have to meet him in person; he worked through his books and disciples.

To think deeply about a spiritual being such as Śrīla Prabhupāda is an intense and purifying experience. Undoubtedly, it is also blissful, simply because of the transcendental nature of the subject matter. It is a sobering experience to be reminded of the high ideals Prabhupāda stood for and to consider how we measure up to his expectations. And it is an instructive experience to witness his actions and reactions in various situations, especially difficult ones.

The hard times described in this book presented a major challenge. How was I to deal with them responsibly? To spread a spiritual movement in the material world is a daunting task, and to err in the process is practically unavoidable. ISKCON in Germany went through a few traumas, and I did my best to present the facts objectively.

Hari-śauri, who faced a similar problem in the writing of his *Transcendental Diary*, writes, "It is certainly not my intention to cast anyone in an embarrassing light. Nevertheless, things did happen, which, due to our immaturity in devotional service or our lack of comprehension created problems that only His Divine Grace could resolve. We can take

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these incidents in the same spirit that Prabhupāda himself did: he never condemned anyone because of his or her sometimes negative behavior. Rather he worked to improve both the situation and the person involved, to the benefit of all. He was corrective and supportive in every situation, and these incidents should be viewed from that perspective.”

Despite its dark spots, the bright full moon is glorious, and despite its shortcomings, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in Germany—and all over the world—is a glorious enterprise. In the soothing rays of the full moon, no one pays undue attention to the few dark spots.

If, after reading this book, only one person feels that his or her appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples has increased even to the slightest degree, I shall consider my effort successful.

Vedavyas Das

Jalón, Spain

October 27, 1995

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Disappearance Day

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Twenty-five years have passed since the First Edition was printed and presented at the Centennial Celebration in Mayapur in 1996. Since then the book has been translated into other languages, and I had the good fortune to meet some of my godbrothers and -sisters who I hadn't seen for 30 years or more. I interviewed them and included their memories in this second and enlarged edition just in time for the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Appearance of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, on August 31, 2021.

May the story of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples in Germany continue to enliven all readers, young and old.

Bhakti Gauravani Goswami (fka Vedavyas Das)
Advaita Ācārya's Appearance Day
February 18, 2021

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

June 2026. After thirty years, this book has finally been published in the German language as well, and I arrive in Cologne with fifty copies.

To my joyful surprise, I meet an old companion there, Bhakti-bhūṣaṇa Swami, to whom I immediately present a copy. He is one of the very first disciples whom Prabhupāda initiated in Hamburg 57 years ago, and he still travels tirelessly from temple to temple, passing on Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the next generations.

As Mahārāja leafs through the book, looking at the photos awakens memories in him that have not yet been published. Some date back to 1969, when Śrīla Prabhupāda first came to Germany; others are from 1977, when he traveled to the West for the last time and visited England.

Introduction

The fact that new memories still surface even after so many years shows how profoundly the encounters with Śrīla Prabhupāda have shaped the lives of his disciples.

Two weeks later, another joyful surprise follows. Guru-Gaurāṅga, a godbrother who preached in Switzerland in the early 1970s and was present when Prabhupāda first visited France, calls me to clarify some questions he has about ISKCON Germany's history after 1977.

During the conversation, he tells me his own memories of various experiences with Prabhupāda during his 1972 visit. Gratefully, I add these new anecdotes to Chapter 9.

May these additional accounts help the readers come a little closer to Śrīla Prabhupāda and his early disciples.

Bhakti Gauravani Goswami

25 June 2026

Pāṇḍava-nirjalā Ekādaśī

A NOTE ON THE NAMES

The memories in this book are narrated by the respective contemporaries from their present-day perspective (e.g. Bhakti-bhūṣaṇa Swami). In the stories themselves, however, they are referred to by the names they bore in the 1970s (e.g. Stefan and, after initiation, Sucandra) in order to preserve the historical atmosphere. Conversely, a speaker who was a *sannyāsī* at the time is referred to in the stories by his *sannyāsa* name, even if he later gave up the *sannyāsa* order and took up again the name he had received at initiation.

A NOTE ON THE SANSKRIT WORDS IN LETTERS

I have left the Sanskrit words in Prabhupāda's letters as he originally wrote them, that is, without diacritical marks.

INTRODUCTION

This book narrates the beginnings of ISKCON in Europe, with its primary focus on Germany during the 1970s. Drawing on direct testimonies, letters, personal recollections, and historical descriptions, it offers an insider's portrait of a young spiritual movement that was growing rapidly while at the same time confronting significant external and internal challenges.

Here the reader encounters the voices of devotees who actively participated in establishing the *saṅkīrtana* movement in countries such as Germany, England, France, Holland, and Sweden, as well as in the translation and distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, temple life, and their direct relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is neither an idealized narrative nor an institutional chronicle, but a living memory in which spiritual enthusiasm, human shortcomings, organizational tensions, and the constant guidance of the spiritual master converge.

One of the central themes of the book is the role of Prabhupāda's books—their translation, production, and mass distribution—as a fundamental instrument in the expansion of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. These pages show that book distribution was not merely an external strategy, but a spiritual practice capable of transforming both those who received the books and those who distributed them.

The historical context—marked by the Cold War, widespread distrust of new religious movements, and, in some cases, open institutional hostility—forms the backdrop against which the events described here unfolded.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence runs through the entire book like a guiding thread. His instructions, letters, corrections, and words of encouragement reveal how he guided his disciples even in complex and sometimes chaotic situations, repeatedly emphasizing essential principles: honesty, spiritual seriousness, and the primacy of devotional service over personal ambition or external success.

This book does not seek to judge individuals in retrospect or to offer simplistic conclusions. Its value lies in presenting events and experiences as

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they were lived, allowing the reader to grasp the complexity of a formative period of ISKCON in Germany and to draw lessons that remain relevant today.

Ultimately, the story that follows is a story of learning: how a group of young people, with all their limitations, endeavored to serve their spiritual master and carry out a mission they understood to be transcendental, under extraordinary circumstances.

CHAPTER 1



A Transcendental Desire

The world we are living in is—according to the Vedic point of view—the prison house of God’s kingdom. And just as an ordinary prison exists only because of the misconduct of a few citizens, so the material world exists only because some rebellious souls turned away from the Supreme Authority, Kṛṣṇa. But a prison isn’t only a place of punishment; its underlying purpose is to educate and rectify the inmates and make them law-abiding citizens again. Similarly, the ultimate purpose of the creation is to reform its inhabitants and lift them up to their original, constitutional position as eternal loving servants of the Supreme Lord.

Fortunately, Kṛṣṇa is so kind that He descends into this world from time to time to explain the process of rectification. He comes in His original form or various incarnations, and He sends His pure devotees to represent Him and canvass on His behalf.

A little more than five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa appeared as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the role of

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His devotee. One reason He did this was to inaugurate *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord, as the most effective method for self-realization for this age. He predicted:

*prthivīte āche yata nagarādi-grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*

“My name will be praised and chanted in every town and village throughout the world.” (Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Antya 4.126)

But within two hundred years after Lord Caitanya’s disappearance, His following began to deteriorate, and cultural and religious intolerance, nurtured by the Mogul and British rules, helped obscure His sublime teachings. Not until the nineteenth century, by the effort of the great *vaiṣṇava ācārya* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, was the timeless mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s *saṅkīrtana* movement finally revived, culminating in the discovery of Śrī Caitanya’s birth site at Māyāpur, West Bengal, in 1888. Fervently desiring the fulfillment of Lord Caitanya’s prediction, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura prayed:

When will that day come when all greatly fortunate souls in countries such as England, France, Russia, Prussia [Germany], and America will take up banners, kettle drums, *mṛdaṅgas*, and *karatālas* and thus cause the ecstatic waves of *harināma-kīrtana* and the singing of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s holy name to rise in the streets of their towns and cities?

In 1891, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda published *Śrī Godruma Kalpatavi*, a description of his Nāma-haṭṭa program, and there he wrote under the section *Vartta* (Announcements):

Our preachers of the holy name carry the banner of the Lord from village to village in a selfless, dedicated manner, preaching and fulfilling the order of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This type of preaching of eternal religious principles will spread in a short time, not only all over India but throughout the whole world.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had prayed to the Lord for a “Ray of Viṣṇu,” a competent son to assist him in his mission. In 1874, with the birth of Bimala Prasad, Kṛṣṇa fulfilled his desire. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura instilled

his own preaching spirit in Bimala Prasad, who later became known as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta faithfully continued the work of his father by preaching all over India and establishing sixty-four temples. He even sent some of his disciples to foreign countries: Burma, Great Britain, France, and Germany. As a result of their preaching in Berlin, one German seeker, Ernst Schulze, became attracted to the *vaiṣṇava* philosophy and traveled to India in 1934, where he received *harināma* initiation from Bhaktisiddhānta. After accepting the renounced order of life he became known as Sadānanda Swami.

In London, one English lady, Miss D. C. Bowtell, received *harināma* initiation from one of Bhaktisiddhānta's disciples and was given the name Vinoda Vāṇi Devī Dāsī.

But when there was no indication that their preaching would become more effective, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta called his missionaries back to India. He was disappointed. He had been most desirous to fulfill the vision of his father, and he repeatedly urged his disciples to take up the important task of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness beyond the borders of India.

When Abhay Charan De, who later became known as A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, met Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī for the first time in 1922, Bhaktisiddhānta requested him to dedicate his life to preaching the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in English in the West. Although family obligations prevented Abhay Charan from immediately taking up his spiritual master's order, he nevertheless always kept the words of his *guru* in his heart, determined to fulfill the transcendental order in due course of time. In preparation for this great task, he began writing a commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* and, in 1944, began publishing a monthly magazine called Back to Godhead.

After taking *sannyāsa* in 1959 and completing an English translation of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (with his extensive commentary) in 1964, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami arranged to go to the USA to carry out the order of his spiritual master. Taking with him two hundred sets of his three-volume edition of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he sailed to America in August 1965. Both the crossing and the first months

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after his arrival in September 1965 were difficult, and while subsisting only on the sales of his books to bookstores and interested individuals that he met, he sent letters to his godbrothers and other religiously minded people in India and asked for their support.

In January 1966, Śrī Padampat Singhania, a wealthy businessman and devotee, offered to help construct a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in New York City. Bhaktivedanta Swami was delighted and expressed his heartfelt gratitude. Amazingly, although still struggling alone, he urged him to take part in turning his vision of forming a society of devotees into reality—a society not limited to the US but one that spanned the globe:

I am very glad to learn that you wish to construct a Temple of Sri Sri Radha Krishna with nice architecture and the idea is quite appropriate for a personality of your position. You are a great devotee of Lord Dvarakadhisa traditionally.

It is the duty of every Indian to preach the cult of Bhagavatam in every part of the world and your cooperation in this attempt will be highly appreciated by Lord Dvarakadhisa. Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita has said that one who helps in the matter of preaching the principles of Bhagavad-gita is the most favorite of the Lord. So this knowledge should be distributed systematically and we Indians specially the Hindus and more specially the Vaisnavites must abide the instruction of Lord Krishna to distribute the knowledge all over the world.

America is just in the middle. On one side of America is Europe and on the other side is Asia. So we can expand the Bhagavatam mission both ways. On one side towards England, Germany, Italy etc. and on the other side towards China, Japan etc. If we sincerely do this work, Lord Krishna will help us in so many ways, and because you are a sincere devotee of the Lord, you have very kindly responded to my humble call.

At the beginning of 1966, Swami Bhaktivedanta had neither disciples nor temples, but, as is apparent from this letter, his isolation in no way deterred him from fulfilling the transcendental desire of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, which was also the desire of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and the desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Getting financial support from Sri Padampat, unfortunately, turned out to be more difficult than he expected. The government of India had

A Transcendental Desire

placed restrictions on foreign exchange. Therefore, in May, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote to his godbrother Tīrtha Mahārāja, asking him to use his contacts with government officials to obtain the required permission, and again he expressed his firm conviction that the preaching of Lord Caitanya’s message all over the world would be successful:

I am enclosing herewith the letter of Sri Padampat Singhanian of the J. K. Organizations, Kamla Tower, Kanpur dated 14th January 1966 which will speak for itself. I think you may also know the gentleman and he is competent to spend any amount for a nice temple of Sri Sri Radha Krishna in New York. The Singhanian family is traditionally devotees of Dvarakadhisa and therefore they are the right persons to take up this transcendental service of the Lord. Srila Prabhupada [Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati] wanted such temples in cities of foreign countries, such as New York, London, Tokyo, etc., and I had personal talks with him when I first met him at Ultadanga in 1922.

If we can open one center in New York, there is great potency for opening other centers also, not only in America, but also in Europe, Japan, China, and many other places, just to fulfill the desire of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Unfortunately, his godbrother could not offer the required help, and thus the construction of a temple in New York never materialized. Against all odds, however, Swami Bhaktivedanta continued his preaching efforts and gradually attracted a small number of followers.

By September 1966, he had established his first preaching center and accepted his first Western disciples, and in January 1967 he went to San Francisco, where one of his first students, Mukunda Dāsa, together with his wife Jānakī and some other devotees, had opened a temple. After his return to New York City in May, Swami Bhaktivedanta’s health deteriorated, and he decided to return to India to recuperate—or to die peacefully in Vṛndāvana if that was Kṛṣṇa’s desire.

Still, despite all difficulties, he was constantly meditating on how to fulfill the order of the previous *ācāryas* to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, as suggested by an incident that took place just before his departure to India on August 23, 1967.

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Brahmānanda recalls this in his article, “Swamiji’s Departure,” which was published in one of the early Back to Godhead magazines:

Some devotees ride with Swamiji in the taxi. Brahmānanda sits in the front crying, and Swamiji reaches over and slaps him on the back—a father giving his loving son support, a pat, and Rāyarāma only rivets his eyes to Swami, ever-attentive.

Swamiji says: “There is no question of separation. The sound vibration fixes us up together, even though the material body may not be there. What do we care for this material body? Just go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and we will be packed up together. You will be chanting here, and I will be chanting there, and this vibration will circulate around this planet. I may be going, but my Guru Mahārāja and Bhaktivinoda are there. I have asked them to kindly take care of all of you, my transcendental children. The grandfather always takes care of the children much better than the father. Do not fear.”

And Swamiji says, “I think this is what Kṛṣṇa desires. I have come to you, but now in this old age I may be going to Vṛndāvana, and you may be coming there to me and be trained up, and we will spread this movement all over the world. Rāyarāma—you will go to England. Brahmānanda—you want to go to Japan or Russia? That’s all right.”

Once in India, it did not take long for Swami Bhaktivedanta to regain his strength and health. Immediately he resumed his plans to spread the *sankīrtana* movement on a worldwide scale. On September 23, he wrote to Rāyarāma, reminding him of their agreement to start a temple in London:

Yesterday morning I sent Kīrtanānanda to London with a letter of introduction to Miss D. C. Bowtell. [...]:

I hope this lady who is supposed to be a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavī will receive him well and there is possibility to start a center. You were to start for London by the beginning of November. If Miss Bowtell gives us her cooperation and Kīrtanānanda is successful in his mission, you hopefully will reach there timely, and on receipt of a favorable report, myself and Acyutānanda may also go.

But Kīrtanānanda did not stop in London; he decided to return directly to the United States. His spiritual master was disappointed but remained

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undaunted. On November 11, he wrote to Brahmānanda:

If there is one sincere soul, that is sufficient to start a new center. With this expectation, I wanted to send Kīrtanānanda to London, but he has proven himself unworthy. When I arrive in the States, I may ask Rāyarāma to go to London and your good self to Russia and Gargamuni to Holland.

On November 30, Brahmānanda suggested in a letter to Swamiji that he could tour Europe and then proceed to India to purchase devotional paraphernalia. Swami Bhaktivedanta planned to stopover in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Hawaii on his way to San Francisco, and thus he replied:

I duly appreciate your program for European tour, as well as coming to India for doing business. While I shall try to open some branches in the Pacific, you can also try to open branches in parts of Europe.

To the uninitiated observer, Prabhupāda's visions of opening temples anywhere and everywhere without much previous planning or organization may seem utopian. But his plans and activities were simply based on absolute faith in the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He was determined to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. He had incorporated his Society of devotees as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, not as the American Society for Krishna Consciousness. Knowing that he was trying to fulfill the desire of the Supreme Lord and that everything ultimately depended on Him, Prabhupāda wrote to Rāyarāma on December 14:

We may all go together to London and start a branch there in grand scale, so also in Amsterdam and in Berlin or Moscow. We have to save the world people from the misconception of voidism and impersonalism. "The absolute is sentient Thou hast proved, all impersonal calamity Thou hast removed." These lines were presented by me to my spiritual master, and he was highly pleased with me. Let me follow the same principle and my Guru Mahārāja will bless me.

One week later, Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged Brahmānanda:

In Europe, wherever you go, you must arrange for opening a center. May Kṛṣṇa give you more and more strength, my dear child. I am poor, but

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Kṛṣṇa is very rich. I can simply pray to Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa is very great and magnanimous; He can do everything for you and for us all.

Full of enthusiasm for preaching, Prabhupāda sent him another letter five days later:

We should not only publish in English but also in other important languages such as French and German. I have also noted down your program for European tour. I am very glad that you are preparing the groundwork for starting our centers in London, Amsterdam, and Berlin. It may be that we can add another in Tokyo. Yes, we must have hundreds of such branches for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Upon arriving in San Francisco in December, Prabhupāda revealed to the devotees another vision he had always cherished, namely to form a *sankīrtana* party of a dozen or so expert devotee musicians and travel with them all over the world. Again he wrote to Brahmānanda:

I am very much ambitious for leading a kirtana party, especially all over your country and Europe. Hansadutta is trying to organize this party. If you can move with this kirtana party, say a batch of 12 to 15 heads, all over the States, as well as Europe, I am sure we will be more popular than the so-called yogi Maharishi Mahesh.

This was not a new idea. Before coming to the West, Śrīla Prabhupāda visited a *vaiṣṇava* friend in Bombay named Harikrishnadas Agarwal. This friend had expressed his desire to help organize a *sankīrtana* party. Because Prabhupāda had recently received an appreciative letter from Harikrishnadas, he reminded him of their past plans and indicated that now the time had come to combine efforts::

I think a very nice Sankirtana party can be organized to travel all over the world. I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of Sankirtana, if performed by serious devotees, can attract people on the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth; then the spiritual instruction from the Bhagavad-gita can be implemented very nicely. So my first concrete program is that if you agree to organize such a Sankirtana party, a batch of American students may join, and I can combine these American and Indian devotees together under discipline.

A Transcendental Desire

The American boys are being trained up strictly on spiritual line, which I have already explained to you in my last letter. Similarly, the Indian boys or girls must be spiritually trained; it is only by spiritually trained persons that the vibration can implement spiritual seeds in the heart of the audience, not otherwise. So, if you agree to cooperate with me in this direction, then I wish to go with a batch of American students to your care and stay in Bombay for some time, and try to open a branch in Bombay of our society. Here we have got six temples already, and they are nicely being managed by the American Vaisnavas under strict discipline, without their being born in any Hindu family.

I have begun this movement in this country America, and I think I am successful. I have many hundreds of Krishna Bhaktas in this country, and they are increasing in number daily. And why not in India and in Pakistan? We are trying to get admission in the U.N. as non-governmental organization. And when successful, we shall introduce this cultural movement in all countries, including Russia and China.

GOVINDA DĀSĪ: Prabhupāda was often spinning a globe around, and he would say “Brahmānanda will go here, Gargamuni will go there.” He would just be turning the globe and pointing at all the different countries. It was amazing because after all, here we were, a handful of teenagers, unable even to brush our teeth properly, but Prabhupāda had it all planned out in his mind—that he would send us all over the world and open temples in all kinds of places.

And he was extremely interested in Russia. He always talked about Russia and how Russia should receive the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

By mid-May of 1968, Hansadutta informed Prabhupāda of difficulties in organizing the *kīrtana* party in Montreal, where he was in charge of the temple, and Prabhupāda suggested the alternative—that he go to Germany and open a center there, an idea he repeated a few weeks later in a letter to Śyāmasundara:

Krishna wants me traveling throughout the whole Western part of the world, and therefore I think it is Krishna’s desire that now I shall shift my activities, at least for some time, to the European countries. As far as I

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remember, you know German as well as Dutch, so after we have started our London branch, you shall have to go to Germany, and I think Hansadutta can help you there, because he also knows some broken German.

At the same time, Prabhupāda continued meditating on how to convert his dream of a World Saṅkīrtana Party into reality, and thus he wrote to Mukunda a couple of weeks later:

I wish to form a nice Kirtana party, consisting of 12 heads: 2 mridanga players, 1 harmonium player for melody, 1 tambura player, and at least 6 cymbal players. In this way 12 heads shall perform Kirtana very rhythmically and melodiously. The harmonium should be practiced just to follow the song; not simply for tuning. I think you can very well organize this Sankirtana party, and if we have a successful Sankirtana party, with me, backed by our books and literature, we can make a nice propaganda of this sublime movement in all the European cities.

And if we are successful in Europe, then we may go to other countries also in Asia. In India also, if we go with this Sankirtana party, we shall be very much welcome and there is great possibility of cooperation of the richer section of India. So, I am thinking of organizing this nice Sankirtana party very seriously, and you may also think in that way.”

Prabhupāda wrote this letter from Montreal, where he had gone in early June. He would stay there for three months and carefully plan how to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Europe, as he had indicated in an earlier letter:

I shall remain in Montreal for June and July, then we shall go to England and possibly from England, we may go to Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, etc. Now, man proposes, God disposes. I do not know what is Krishna’s desire, but I have chalked out my program like this. Pray to Krishna that He may give me strength to render some service to you and to the humanity at large.

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The Montreal temple was opened by Janārdana Dāsa, a French Canadian devotee whom Prabhupāda sent to Montreal from New York in October 1966. Janārdana was to prepare an exhibit of Kṛṣṇa conscious literature for the World Expo in the spring of 1967. Prabhupāda also wanted a center there. He once said in a letter that he would consider his mission successful if he could have temples in New York, San Francisco, Montreal, and London.

In the winter of 1966, an American draft dodger named Samuel Greer arrived in Montreal. One year earlier, Sam had traveled by boat from Canada to Europe. He had spent most of the summer and autumn hitchhiking across Europe—visiting Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Florence—and parts of North Africa. He had then tried to settle in Great Britain, but he had been denied entry, so he had decided to move to Canada instead.

SAMUEL GREER: In Montreal, I rented an apartment near McGill

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University in a cheap student area. One evening, at the student union, I met Janārdana, who had come to hang up posters announcing a Mantra Rock Dance at the Montreal Hare Kṛṣṇa temple. I spoke to him, and he invited me to come. I didn't go to the Mantra Rock Dance, but I did eventually visit the temple. Right from the beginning, I felt a special attraction for *prasādam*, the sanctified food offered to Kṛṣṇa, and the temple's spiritual atmosphere, so I began to come more often.

A few weeks later, after regularly attending classes on *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Sam moved into the temple. Six months later, in July 1967, Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated him by letter and gave him the name Śivānanda Dāsa Brahmācārī. In the summer of 1968, Śivānanda finally met his spiritual master in person.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: During Śrīla Prabhupāda's visit to Montreal, we devotees would often accompany him on his morning walks. On one walk, I told Prabhupāda about the different places in Europe I had visited. After listening with great interest, Prabhupāda said, "Oh, you should go and open temples in all those places." I was not aware of the fact that Prabhupāda had been planning for a long time to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness beyond North America. Therefore, when I got word that he wanted someone to go to London to open a temple, I became excited. London was famous for being the center of the European counterculture scene, led by the Beatles, and for its large Indian community. So I volunteered to go there and start a temple.

But Prabhupāda seemed to feel that I was not the right person and replied, "That's all right, but I think for the time being you had better stay here in Montreal." The reason, as far as I can judge in retrospect, was that Prabhupāda understood I was still somewhat immature and not quite able to handle myself very well in the world.

But then the subject came up again. I think I was probably as eager to have an adventure as I was to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness and please my spiritual master. Because I had hitchhiked around Europe before and never had difficulty finding a place to stay, I felt I could handle the situation.

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Consequently, I asked Prabhupāda again about going to London. Finally, he relented and said okay. Then he added, “You know, I was a Calcutta boy. I never got cheated when I came to New York.” He was intimating to me that I wasn’t very experienced. But because he saw my eagerness to go, he let me go.

Full of enthusiasm, I immediately contacted my mother and asked her to donate the money I would need to fly to Europe and get started. She agreed, but only on the condition that I go back to college. Not quite sure what to do, I asked Prabhupāda, “If I go back to college, what should I study?” He was a little hesitant, but eventually, he said, “Well, you should study English.” Of course, I never went back to college, but my mother got the benefit of helping the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

It did not take me long to make arrangements for the journey. I felt quite confident that it would be successful, because this was Lord Caitanya’s movement, and it was bona fide. Nevertheless, while boarding the bus to the airport, I turned to Hansadutta and asked, “Once I get there, what do you think will be the best way to start?” His reply was simple: “As soon as you get off the plane, sit down where there are some people and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, accompanying yourself with hand cymbals, just as Prabhupāda did in New York two years ago. When a crowd has gathered, give a short explanation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and ask for a small donation to spread the mission. This is sure to be successful.”

A few hours later, I was airborne and on my way to the other side of the Atlantic. Before becoming a devotee, I had tried to go to London twice (first as a draft dodger and later on my return from North Africa) and both times I was refused. Now, as a devotee, I arrived in England with a shaved head and *sikhā*, with *tilaka* on my forehead and dressed in a *dhōtī*. Besides that, I carried a little Lord Jagannātha in my suitcase. The customs officers cut the Deity’s cloth looking for drugs, but of course, they didn’t find any. Still, highly suspicious of my intentions, they flatly refused to let me into the country. Thus I had to go elsewhere, and I decided to take the next flight to the nearest destination. That happened to be Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands.

The Netherlands was one of the more liberal countries in Europe, and

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Amsterdam in particular was a Mecca for the blossoming hippie culture. I had no trouble getting through customs, and I soon found myself chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on Dam Square, the place downtown where the youth met. My out-of-this-world appearance caused quite a stir, and soon a reporter took photographs and asked questions. The next day, one of the major newspapers in Amsterdam carried an article about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and my preaching, and I happily sent it to Prabhupāda. In my report, I mentioned that a boy from Finland had shown interest in our philosophy and was helping me in some ways and that from conversations with him I had gotten the impression that the people in Amsterdam were not too well off. It thought it would be difficult to find a permanent place for a temple. Therefore, I was thinking of where else I should go and finally settled on West Berlin. I also told Prabhupāda that I really missed both his association and the association of my godbrothers. Prabhupāda replied immediately, in a letter dated August 27, 1968:

I am so glad to receive your letter dated August 21, 1968, and I declare herewith that Krishna desired you to go to Amsterdam, and therefore, you were not admitted in England. I have seen also the description of your little activities in Amsterdam, but I could not understand the language. But one thing I observed in that article, there is publication of my name, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta. So this indicates that your tour in Europe is going to be very successful. I am glad that you are going to West Berlin, and I hope you will duly receive this letter and be courageous and always chant Hare Krishna. You will be successful. Similarly, I came in New York, in 1965, in the same position, and gradually many students like you have come to me. So don't be disappointed. Do and try your best and Krishna will give you all help.

These assuring words gave me a lot of encouragement, and with renewed faith and determination, I boarded the train to West Berlin. After arriving there, I stayed for the first few weeks at a youth hostel. Afterward, I started to move around, staying at different places, once even at a monastery, but I knew I had to get a fixed place. Sometimes I would sit down and have *kīrtana* on Kurfürstendamm, Berlin's famous shopping street.

In Montreal, Hansadutta had given me a begging bowl and some cards

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that read “Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and your life will be sublime!” I put the bowl and cards in front of me and began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and naturally, people would throw some coins into the bowl. When a big enough crowd gathered, I would stop chanting and preach. Because I did not know any German, I had to find somebody in the crowd who understood both English and German and could translate. West Berlin has a big university, and there were always some students around who volunteered, so I rarely had a problem.

Shortly after Śivānanda’s departure, Śrīla Prabhupāda received a letter from one of his disciples in San Francisco, Kṛṣṇadāsa, who expressed a desire to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda immediately suggested that he join Śivānanda in Germany.

During Prabhupāda’s next visit to San Francisco, in mid-September, he discussed the details with Kṛṣṇadāsa and another new disciple, Uttamaśloka, a German-born young man who had lived in America for fifteen years and wanted to accompany Kṛṣṇadāsa and translate Prabhupāda’s books into German.

Prabhupāda felt enlivened by their preaching spirit and immediately informed Śivānanda about these encouraging developments:

I have just talked with Krishnadas and the German boy, Uttama Sloka das, and they are prepared to join you by the end of this month. Sriman Uttama Sloka is already initiated, and he is a German scholar also. He has shown me his translation work on my essays in English, and it appears that he will be a great help in the Berlin center. I am trying to inject in him the basic ideals of Krishna Consciousness philosophy and this morning we had one nice discussion.

So the Berlin temple will be one of the most important centers in Europe, and I hope that in the future we will be able to train many Germans who are very intelligent personalities in the European countries. You know that I have got already one German godbrother [Sadānanda Swami], and he has influenced another German scholar, Vāmana Dāsa [Walter Eidlitz], who has written a very nice book on Lord Caitanya, in German.

So in that great country, people are very much interested in India’s original spiritual and cultural life, and Krishna Consciousness is the most perfect

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order of such cultural understanding in India. Lord Caitanya is the symbol of India's original culture and perfect scholar for exposition of India's philosophical thoughts, based on the Vedic knowledge. I hope our books, Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and Srimad-Bhagavatam will in the near future be translated into German language and distributed to the noble nation of Germany.

You may not think for the time being of any other branch, at least for the coming one year. And as soon as Krishna das and Uttama Sloka go there, please make combined effort to popularize this Krishna Consciousness movement in that country. They will take with them a mridanga drum. And I understand that in Germany they make very nice harmoniums. Please take information of them and let me know immediately, otherwise, Krishna das will take a harmonium from here, along with mridanga.

This Krishna Consciousness movement through music, philosophy, spiritual culture, and personal behavior culminating in ideal character of the devotees—all these heavenly contributions combined together—will certainly bring about a major change in the life of Western people.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: Prabhupāda's letter was, of course, very encouraging, but to be all on my own was not easy, and after some time, I became somewhat restless. Thus I thought that maybe I should travel again and go on to Switzerland. When I consulted Prabhupāda about that, he wrote, "You can earn \$12 by traveling, but you can earn \$13 by sitting, provided you know how to sit in a place. Certainly, you can preach well by traveling, as I also came to your country, but since I sat at 26 Second Avenue, in July 1966, the society has developed to its present shape." Taking his advice to heart, I again began to look for a place.

In the last week of September, I found a little storefront in Kreuzberg, on Manteuffelstrasse. It was not a prestigious neighborhood. The buildings still had big holes in them from the artillery fire of World War II. Nevertheless, I moved in and started to hold *kīrtanas* regularly. From time to time, I would also go and sit down and chant near the Gedächtniskirche, the famous bombed-out church that stands as a war memorial in the center of Berlin.

After a week or so, Kṛṣṇadāsa and Uttamaśloka arrived. After analyzing the situation and considering that more and more young people were

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leaving West Berlin, which was a divided city at that time, situated like an island in the middle of communist East Germany, we concluded that moving to West Germany would be more effective for preaching. Consequently, we decided to go to Hamburg, the nearest important city.

After arriving in Hamburg, we had the same problem as before: we did not know anybody and we had very little money. Fortunately, we were allowed to stay for some time at the Deutsch-Dänische Akademie. Although we had not found a suitable place for opening a temple, Prabhupāda encouraged our efforts. On October 21, he wrote:

In London also they have not opened a branch yet, but they are doing kirtana performances daily, twice or thrice—in parks, schools, colleges, clubs, societies and private houses; so our propaganda is not stopped. So, even you have not found out any place at Hamburg, you three together you can chant Hare Krishna kirtana in the same way as they are doing in London and other cities. We are more or less concerned for preaching. It does not matter even whether we have got a temple or not, but if the preaching work goes on, that is a great satisfaction.

After a month or so, we found a place we could afford, a storefront on Eppendorfer Weg. Because it was a rather small place, we had to put up a partition. On one side was the temple room, and on the other side, we had our kitchen, which consisted of a sink and a hotplate sitting on a radiator.

At that time, we did not have any literature in German, and thus there was no question of collecting funds by distributing books. Prabhupāda advised us to get jobs to maintain the temple. Kṛṣṇadāsa became a goldsmith's apprentice while Uttamaśloka and I found work in the Botanical Garden. Whenever we had time, we went out to chant in the streets and in this way continue our humble preaching efforts.

I informed Prabhupāda about our activities and also asked him several questions. His reply came at the end of January 1969:

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated January 14, 1969, and I have noted the contents. I am pleased to note that you enjoy going out into the streets chanting and preaching from Bhagavad-gita. This is a very good attitude and in accordance with the teachings of Lord Caitanya that the process of Sankirtana should be presented to men

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all over the world. So as you are able you should continue to go into the streets to chant, and I am sure that the others at your temple will appreciate going with you as they are available. Surely this practice will attract many people there to take some interest in this Krishna Consciousness movement.

Regarding your request for cooking information, it is best if you will consult Yamuna Dasi in London. She is very expert cook, and will be able to answer any questions you have regarding prasadam preparations. I understand that Yamuna has written a recipe book which they are trying to have printed in London soon, so this also will be available to help you in this connection.

Regarding serving your godbrothers, this is a very good practice. The Spiritual Master is never without His followers, so to serve the Spiritual Master also means to be the servant of His disciples. When you want to serve the king, you must also serve his minister, secretary, and everyone who serves him. And to serve his servants may please him more than to serve the king personally. So the Spiritual Master is not alone. He is always with His entourage. We are not impersonalists. We take care of every part of the whole, as much as one should take care of his hat as well as his shoes. Both are equally important for the upkeep of the body. I hope that you will understand this rightly.

It is important that we preach the message of Krishna Consciousness exactly as we have heard it from our Spiritual Master. The same philosophy and spirit must be there exactly. Just like we preach in this country exactly as we have heard from our Spiritual Master, but there are changes due to the time, circumstances, and the trainees. The spirit of the disciplic succession may not be changed, but there may be adjustments made to suit the special circumstances.

Regarding your last question about the importance of chanting; this chanting process is the only way of attaining full Krishna Consciousness in this age of Kali-yuga. Lord Caitanya stressed upon this point, and we may take it from His authority that no other method will prove to be successful in this matter.

So continue to push on our Hamburg center as far as possible. You have gone to Germany, not even knowing how to speak their language, and you are trying to give to them the rarest jewel, Krishna Consciousness. I know that Krishna is very pleased with all of your efforts there, and surely He

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will give you all facilities to come out successful in your efforts. I hope this will meet you in good health.

Knowing that without any literature our preaching would be ineffective, we thought of getting a mimeograph machine. When I informed Prabhupāda of our plans, he sent us an encouraging letter:

I have noted with much pleasure that you are planning to mimeograph our essays in the German language. This is good news and please do it nicely. These literatures must be made available to all peoples so they may take interest in Krishna and seek to learn more. This will attract many people to begin chanting and learning this philosophy.

So try in this way, it is very important endeavor. In the United States we have now published Bhagavad-gita As It Is and by next month we should receive Teachings of Lord Caitanya. So if you can also present our literatures in the German language, it will be very successful.

Eventually, we found a mimeograph machine at a bargain price, and soon we were printing leaflets, translated into German, by Uttamaśloka.

After a few months, Uttamaśloka became restless, and he eventually gave up his translation work and left the temple. Being aware of his disciples' difficulty in Hamburg, Prabhupāda arranged for another devotee to join them, Jaya Govinda, who had been staying in India with Acyutānanda. After hearing about the preaching in Germany he had written a letter to Prabhupāda:

I think of the printing press lying idle (as far as I know) in Germany, and as printing and the graphic arts field is what I have the greatest amount of experience and training in, that seems to be the place for me to go.

So on Prabhupāda's request, Kṛṣṇadāsa arranged for Jaya Govinda's airfare, and by the beginning of May 1969, he was in Hamburg.

In the meantime, as Prabhupāda had assured them, Kṛṣṇa made more arrangements to help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Germany. Beginning in early 1968, Prabhupāda had been corresponding with Mario Windisch, a German living in Sweden who had met Vāmana Dāsa, one of Sadānanda

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Swami's disciples. Mario showed strong interest in Lord Caitanya's philosophy, and he joined Prabhupāda in Montreal just after Śivānanda had left for Europe. On April 3, Prabhupāda wrote to Kṛṣṇadāsa, who had become discouraged with Uttamaśloka's departure and was thinking of returning to the US:

Last night one German boy was initiated by me; [his name is Mandali Bhadra] and he will be entrusted for rendering all of my books into the German language. From now on, therefore, there will be no difficulty to publish the German edition of Back to Godhead on your newly purchased press. You should take the indication given by Lord Krishna: The press is already there, the press worker, Jaya Govinda, is coming, and the German scholar [Mandali Bhadra] has joined our institution. Don't you see the indication by Krishna that we must make propaganda in the German language in that part of the world? So, you have to adjust things by the indication of Lord Krishna.

Don't do anything whimsically. The direction comes through the spiritual master, and anyone who abides by the order of the spiritual master to give shape to the wish of the Lord, he is a perfectly surrendered soul.

By the beginning of June, Śivānanda had wonderful news for Śrīla Prabhupāda: the first fruit of their preaching activities. A young artist named Oliver had decided to live in the temple and become a devotee. Prabhupāda was extremely pleased, and he impressed on Śivānanda the incalculable value of such a rare soul:

I am so much encouraged to learn that one very nice German boy has come to live in your temple. This is clear evidence that you are all working sincerely to serve Krishna, and now one sincere soul has been so attracted by this, that he is also coming to join you. Actually, if one true Vaisnava goes to any place in the world, then the spiritual instincts of the more advanced souls he comes into contact with will be awakened, and they will automatically be attracted.

Please take nice care of Oliver, and help him in whatever way you can. In Krishna Consciousness every man is so important because all of the activities of a devotee of Lord Krishna are beneficial to all living entities. So, if there are any questions that he would like me to help him with, I am always at your service to help in any way I can.

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VĀSUDEVA DĀSA (Oliver): When I was seventeen or eighteen, I felt deeply dissatisfied with the concepts of reality, morality, and ethics presented by society. I intuitively knew that there must be another reality beyond the phantasmagoria of mundane existence, and I hoped to come in contact with this reality by experimenting with art, mainly through painting, music, and happenings. In the course of these artistic experiments, I became more and more convinced that this other reality was not an imagination but a tangible truth that could be experienced.

In the spring of 1969, a friend of mine gave me an invitation card for a feast at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Hamburg. One Sunday, I went to the storefront on Eppendorfer Weg, where Śivānanda and Kṛṣṇadāsa received me. After we had exchanged some words of introduction, they explained to me that before the feast they would chant the holy names of God—the words were embroidered onto a cloth hanging on the wall—and that I was welcome to take part.

To sing together with the devotees in *kīrtana* was a special, ecstatic experience. From the very beginning, I abandoned myself to chanting. I felt like I was elevated to a different level of existence, a level beyond the burdensome routine of material life. I only regretted that the *kīrtana* didn't go on forever.

Then the feast was served. The smell and taste of *prasādam* was another unique and wonderful experience. During the meal, the devotees played Prabhupāda's first record album, Govinda, and his voice left a deep impression on me.

I liked everything about the temple—the music, the food, the devotees—the only drawback was communication. Neither Śivānanda nor Kṛṣṇadāsa spoke German well enough to explain the philosophy to me, and my knowledge of English was too limited to hold a conversation. Nor were there any books or magazines in German. But all these limitations were not so important to me. By Kṛṣṇa's mercy, I had acquired a little taste for chanting His holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

A couple of weeks later, the deep significance of the holy names dawned

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on me, and I got a glimpse of their absolute and transcendental nature. I had tried to express spiritual emotions in a painting titled “Absolute Immediate Spontaneity,” and I became acutely aware of the difficulty of transmitting spirituality through a material medium. But the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s holy names was different: I did not doubt that chanting with the devotees had been a pure, spiritual experience.

Thus I decided to go to the temple again. This is what I was looking for. I wrapped my painting in a cloth and went to Eppendorfer Weg to share my realization with one of the devotees. Śivānanda received me and listened patiently to my clumsy attempt, in broken English, to explain the meaning of Absolute Immediate Spontaneity. I doubt he understood a word of what I was saying, but he made me feel at ease and simply encouraged me to continue my spiritual quest, especially by chanting God’s holy names and visiting the temple.

By the end of May, my desire to live with the devotees had become so strong that I decided to move into the temple. The determining factor was actually the holy name. Since my first visit, Kṛṣṇa’s name had captivated me, and I felt that to be near the name and serve the name was best possible in the temple in the association of other devotees.

During the first Sunday feast, as a member of the temple community, I had great difficulty speaking about Kṛṣṇa. Being inexperienced, I felt unqualified to preach, and thus I was terribly afraid to talk to guests. I became so desperate that I just left the temple room and escaped to the basement, where I broke into tears and prayed to Kṛṣṇa: “What is the use of my existence if I cannot even speak about You or my experience with You?” That very moment, an inner transformation took place, and my heart became filled with a feeling of joy. Enlivened, I went upstairs and simply began to speak about my experience with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. It was amazing how my relationship with the guests turned into a warm and loving exchange.

On Saturday and Sunday mornings we took a rug to sit on and went out to chant the holy name in public. Often Śivānanda and I went alone, one of us playing mṛdaṅga and singing and the other distributing invitation cards. But generally, once I began to chant, I found it difficult to

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stop. I used to become so absorbed in the holy name that I felt the transcendental vibration engulf everything, and I had the desire to sing louder and clearer and let the holy name resonate even more and penetrate the walls of the nearby buildings, the trees—the whole universe. Poor Śivānanda was always frustrated when I didn't stop after some time, because to hand out invitations was not such a nectarean engagement; it involved tolerating insults from nasty people who didn't like to be approached by a devotee.

Later I went out almost daily, generally in the afternoons, and by myself. I took a small handcart to transport the rug, straw collection basket, and *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*. I would then sit on the sidewalk where the Reeperbahn begins and chant the *mahā-mantra* for five or six hours. I became so used to doing this that I practically couldn't live without going out and chanting the holy name every day.

Sometimes, in the evenings, I would also go to the communes, where most people were under the influence of marijuana and LSD. I felt it was my special mission to try to purify the depressive atmosphere there with the holy name because I had lived in communes for almost two years. I wanted to share my good fortune with my former friends. Generally, they tolerated me, and I was free to speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and hold *kīrtana*. It was a special joy to see some of them become enlivened by the chanting and take part in it.

At the end of June, the devotees in Hamburg presented Śrīla Prabhupāda with more wonderful news. With the help of Jaya Govinda, they had finally printed the first German issue of Back to Godhead in German: Zurück zur Gottheit. Deeply grateful, Prabhupāda wrote to Jaya Govinda:

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated June 23, 1969, sent along with your German language Back to Godhead. It is very, very nice. You have achieved a great blessing from my Guru Maharaja. My Guru Maharaja had an ambition to publish the message of Lord Caitanya in all the languages of the world, and when He was present in India, He published six magazines in five languages; one in Hindi, one in Assami,

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two in Bengali, one in English, and one in Oriya. Your Zurück zur Gottheit is certainly a unique gift to me, and I shall ever remember it.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: After we got the magazines, we could finally do *harināma* and book distribution more effectively. We would go out, put down a rug, sit down and chant, and put out a stack of magazines.

At the beginning of August, another boy decided to move into the small storefront at Eppendorfer Weg. Stefan, a friend of Oliver, had seen the devotees since they had arrived in Hamburg and had gradually been incorporating Kṛṣṇa consciousness into his life.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI (Stefan): Like many of my contemporaries in the late '60s, I experimented with LSD and mescaline—not to induce a state of forgetfulness but with the aim of gaining insights into a higher reality.

I was working in a graphics company. Although the job paid well, I felt empty and dissatisfied. I knew that life was meant for something else. In my frustration I even contemplated not letting myself becoming older than thirty—old age looked bleak and purposeless.

In my quest for meaning, I read books about mystical and spiritual subjects. I delved into the lives of Jesus and Ramakrishna, imagining myself to be them. After studying a book about Zen Buddhism I took a long walk with my friend Oliver. We walked all night, waiting for some realization.

When the flower power movement began to spread to Europe in late 1967, London became its center, so I went there in the summer of 1968 to get firsthand experience of it. But I soon returned to Hamburg frustrated. It must have been around that time that I first heard the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, because I remember a television show featuring Allen Ginsberg chanting the *mahā-mantra* on a small harmonium during a happening in London.

It was sometime in the fall of 1968 that I saw a devotee for the first time. I was about to cross a square near Reeperbahn when I heard the faint ringing of a pair of *karatālas*. Then I saw a bald figure dressed in a dark suit and white shirt sitting on a straw mat on the sidewalk, with a small basket

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in front of him. He had his eyes closed, and he seemed absorbed in his chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. It was Śivānanda. As soon as the sound of the cymbals entered my ears, I sensed a certain familiarity with it—as if I had heard this before. I watched from a distance, then kept walking. But the sight made a deep impression on me.

Shortly after that, I saw Śivānanda again. He and Kṛṣṇadāsa were flanking the entrance to a rock concert and handing out a German translation of The Peace Formula. One of them was wrapped in a *harināma* chadar, a popular wrap among hippies, and the impression I had was that amid all the hypocrisy that these two persons dressed like monks were real. They had a mystical air about them, but they weren't fake. They were genuine.

A few months later, in early 1969, Kṛṣṇa gave me another opportunity. I used to hang out in Hamburg's most famous hippie club, Grünspan, which featured several displays on each side of the entrance hall, where bands and other publicity and news would be announced. I noticed that one of the windows was different from the usual displays: the devotees were using it to advertise Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the Sunday feast. There was a small picture of Kṛṣṇa in the center and lines going out in all directions, like a halo, and then there were statements by famous personalities about chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa: Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and Prabhupāda. Of course, I didn't know about Prabhupāda. I had a hard time figuring it out, but because the invitation to the Sunday feast mentioned free food, I figured they were advertising a restaurant.

Then I began living in various communes, and one day a young man joined us who believed in Jesus. This person turned out to be Uttamaśloka, whom Prabhupāda had sent to Germany to help Śivānanda. Because of some difference of opinion about the role or position of Jesus Christ, Uttamaśloka had disassociated himself from the devotees and became a member of our commune.

We had a big altar at one end of the main room, where everyone could place the picture of their worshipful object. There were photos of all kinds of so-called yogis and saints; there were mystic symbols, lights, and so on; and there was also a picture of Prabhupāda. Amid all the hodgepodge I felt

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a special attraction for Uttamaśloka because I sensed he was different. He wasn't an ordinary hippie but was into something serious. He was a strict vegetarian, wasn't frivolous with the opposite sex, and rose early in the morning. To me, he was fascinating.

One spring day in 1969 Uttamaśloka took me to the temple at Eppendorfer Weg for the Sunday feast. Tasting *prasādam* for the first time was an exciting experience, especially because sweet and salty preparations were served on the same plate. That, mixed with the smell of incense, made everything unusual and exotic. Śivānanda gave a lecture, but because he knew hardly any German, it was a real mishmash, and I guess very few visitors could make heads or tails of it. But we all were somehow attracted by the spiritual atmosphere. During the lecture some of us sat in yoga postures with our eyes closed, concentrating on the words of wisdom being spoken. We also sat like that during the *kīrtana*, imbibing the flow of transcendental vibration. Weeks later I began to visit the temple regularly for the Sunday feast, but I wasn't thinking of joining. I was not yet ready to give up my ways.

One Saturday night in spring, as I was about to enter the Grünspan, I heard the familiar sound of *kīrtana*. I turned around, and there were the devotees across the street, seated on the sidewalk, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Besides Śivānanda and Kṛṣṇadāsa, now there was also my friend Oliver, who had joined them recently. Although this group of devotees acted like a magnet for me and I felt an almost irresistible attraction for the chanting, I preferred not to get entangled. Thus I walked a bit down the street and sat on the hood of a parked car to watch them from a distance.

Then Śivānanda recognized me. He immediately waved his hand and indicated to me to come over. I had no other choice than to cross the street. I sat down beside him, and surprisingly, he handed me a pair of *karatālas* and asked me to chant. When we finished he said, "See? Your little lotus is already growing." Today I can understand that he meant the creeper of devotional service, but at the time I couldn't figure out what he was talking about, although I liked it because it sounded so mystical.

Śivānanda helped me the most in the beginning; he acted as my *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*. He had a sweet personality and was merciful. The others

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were more reserved, not prepared to give themselves so easily. He was kind and easily approached.

Next, I got a bead bag and *karatālas*, and I started to chant a couple of rounds regularly. The devotees had no German literature at that time, but I got some American BTGs that had wonderful drawings of Kṛṣṇa with a psychedelic touch, and these naturally appealed to me. Once, I went to a forest to meditate away from the bustle of the city, and I spent hours contemplating the drawings of Kṛṣṇa and chanting His holy name. I kind of tried to penetrate into Kṛṣṇa consciousness on my own strength, without surrendering. In fact, I felt more attracted to Uttamaśloka's personality than to life in the temple. I thought I could be like him, learn the practices and do them myself.

Nevertheless, I was coming to the temple more often, especially at *prasādam* time, and so the devotees asked me at one point for a donation to help meet the expenses for my eating. I ended up in the kitchen helping Maṇḍalibhadra make *capātīs*. That was my first engagement in devotional service. I rolled *capātīs* for hours—they were the main staple in those days. The devotees used to eat huge stacks of delicious buttered *capātīs*. It was a real science to make them, and for me, it was a nectarean occupation.

I was still living in the commune, and Śivānanda, dressed in a *dhotī*, used to visit me there with the hope that I would join the temple. In fact, he used to cook *prasādam* for everyone and invite us to chant with him. The commune was located in one of the sleaziest parts of town, St. Pauli, on the first floor of an old apartment building. Prostitutes who lived below and above us would often line the sidewalks at night.

In the early summer when the weather was quite pleasant, I took out my tiny *karatālas*, opened the window, and sat there to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. As soon as the holy name began to vibrate, I noticed its effect on my surroundings: the birds became quieter and the atmosphere peaceful.

Having gained some confidence, I sometimes went to the city center or some other place to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa amid the passersby. I also went to the Alster river, where people used to sit and relax in the sun, and alone or sometimes with friends from the commune, chant the holy name there. For us, it was a mystical sound vibration, and we would observe how others

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reacted to the sound—the swans and ducks and people.

Once, I chanted all by myself on Gänsemarkt, a square in the heart of Hamburg with office buildings on all sides. Although I was chanting alone, the sound of the *karatālas* was so penetrating that people opened their windows to see what was going on. These were my first experiences of *harināma*—all by myself, as a hippie.

Then July came, and because Uttamaśloka had gone to Copenhagen, I decided to go there also with a young couple who had some interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and had become vegetarians. The hippies in Copenhagen had taken over an abandoned military base and converted it into an enclave, an imagined world of harmony—Christiania—and there were thousands of people living together, each one on their own trip, doing their own thing. I sat down in the middle of Christiania, as I had seen Śivānanda do in Hamburg, closed my eyes, and chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa. I felt a strong attraction for the chanting, and for me, there was nothing more important than chanting the mystical sounds of the holy name.

But then my friends went somewhere else, and I was by myself again. I couldn't talk to anybody about Kṛṣṇa because everybody was spaced out in their own world. So I decided to return to Hamburg.

I went straight to the temple—and there something really special happened, something that affected me deeply. When I knocked on the temple door, Śivānanda opened it, and as soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, "There he is!", as if they had been waiting for me all this time. By this small gesture, he really won me over.

But I still had things to settle, and later I went home. As soon as I entered the house I got into a heavy argument with my father. He was complaining that I was useless and was taking advantage of their home for eating and sleeping. He told me to go and live somewhere else. I couldn't believe it. It was something I had never expected, but the funny thing is that I immediately accepted it. I grabbed the few things I had and left. I went to the street and called a taxi. Then my mother came out crying, and my father, shocked that I had taken his words so seriously, begged me to stay, but I simply got into the taxi and left.

Life in the temple was extremely austere. The devotees were so poor that

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for breakfast we had only oatmeal with some sugar and water most of the time, and occasionally we added some milk, but rarely. But whatever it was, it tasted like nectar to me.

After moving into the temple I gave up my job and donated all my savings, which I had thought of using for a trip to India to find a *guru*. That idea had been part of my spiritual quest, but now I just turned over everything I had. I gave up trying to find enlightenment on my own. But I still had attachments. I kept my long hair and I didn't wear a *dhōṭī*, for example.

After a short time, to my surprise, I was asked to get a job again, because the temple was in financial difficulty. The income from donations was small and insufficient to meet the daily expenditures. I was not happy to go to work and associate with non-devotees again, but I accepted it as a necessary austerity to maintain Kṛṣṇa's temple and improve it as much as possible for a long-awaited event: the visit of His representative: Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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Kṛṣṇadāsa, Śivānanda, and Jaya Govinda had sufficiently arranged and decorated their temple by June of 1969 to feel confident that they could invite Śrīla Prabhupāda for a visit. But he informed them that he preferred to come in August, when the devotees in London, who had still not found a suitable place for a temple, might also be ready to receive him. Finally, on August 21, a telegram arrived at Eppendorfer Weg 11 with the long-awaited message:

ARRIVAL HAMBURG FLIGHT 409 LUFTHANSA AUGUST 25 AT
6:10 A.M. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: We didn't know very well how to receive Prabhupāda, so we put down a rug in the airport's arrival hall, sat down, and held *kīrtana*.

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VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: The role of the spiritual master wasn't clear to me. Jaya Govinda had brought a painting of Prabhupāda from India, but there he looked so thin and sick that I had difficulty appreciating his transcendental qualities.

My mundane concept of Prabhupāda's external features dissolved when I saw him at the airport. As soon as he came through customs, everything seemed to become illuminated by the golden hue of his shining face and his saffron-colored robes. As Prabhupāda approached us, he didn't seem to be walking—he was almost dancing, floating above the floor. We offered obeisances and continued to chant, and his smile indicated that he was pleased by our effort to give him a befitting reception by chanting the holy name.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: When Prabhupāda came, we remained sitting and continued to chant. I was impressed to see him dressed in beautiful saffron silk, looking effulgent and aristocratic. One Indian gentleman had accompanied us, and after Prabhupāda exchanged a few words with him, Prabhupāda, his secretary Puruṣottama, and Maṇḍalibhadra, who had a taxi waiting, walked toward the exit. As Prabhupāda passed us we didn't know whether to continue chanting, offer our obeisances, or get up and follow him. Then Jaya Govinda jumped up and ran to Prabhupāda, throwing himself at his feet. Visibly moved by his disciple's loving feelings, Prabhupāda affectionately rubbed his head. Afterward, he got into the taxi, and we quickly gathered our things and took a bus to the temple.

MAṆḌALIBHADRA DĀSA: Prabhupāda said little during the taxi ride. He remarked that the nicely constructed buildings reminded him of the houses the Westerners had built in Calcutta. It was early Sunday morning, and the streets of Hamburg were almost empty. Half an hour later the taxi reached Fruchtallee, where we had rented an apartment. It was on the fifteenth floor of a high-rise, only a five-minute walk from the storefront, which was too small to accommodate guests.

Prabhupāda liked the arrangements, and soon he, Puruṣottama, and Śivānanda, who would be his personal servant during the visit, had made

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themselves quite comfortable. Śivānanda told Prabhupāda he had invited an Indology professor from Hamburg University for the next day but that he had no other preaching engagements arranged and was afraid that not many people would attend Prabhupāda's evening lectures, scheduled for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Prabhupāda was not disturbed; he had come primarily to encourage his disciples and help them advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Preaching to the public was important, but maintaining and increase the devotees' spiritual awareness was his main concern. He even brought with him small brass Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities he had thought of installing in Hamburg.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: After we went to Prabhupāda's apartment, I heard that his dictaphone was broken and that he needed a tape recorder. I volunteered to help. My father had a reel-to-reel machine. So I rushed home, convinced my father to lend it, took the machine, and went back to the apartment. Then I was led into Prabhupāda's room because I had to explain how to use it. When I was about to leave I asked him whether I could be initiated, and he simply moved his head in agreement.

That evening around seven o'clock, we assembled again in Prabhupāda's apartment. As I stepped out of the elevator, I perceived the fragrance of incense and the sound of a harmonium. The instrument had been donated by a Mr. Samantha, a Calcutta businessman who had emigrated to Germany. He appreciated the devotees, and he sold Prabhupāda's first record album, *Govinda*, in his shop.

We had to kind of cram into the small room. Prabhupāda was sitting on his bed with the harmonium and singing *Kibā jaya*, while Puruṣottama offered *ārati* to the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. The ghee lamp got passed around, and I learned how to touch the flame and then my forehead. I sat right in front of Prabhupāda and watched his fingers on the keys. In such a unique and intimate situation I felt completely in another world.

After *ārati*, Prabhupāda stopped playing. We could hear somebody running a circular saw nearby, and its penetrating scream abruptly reminded us again of the material world. Despite the distractive noise, Prabhupāda addressed the devotees briefly. Maṇḍalibhadra's mother had

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also come, and when Prabhupāda told her that a good son comes from a good mother, she looked moved. She appreciated Prabhupāda. She later offered to help us in Berlin, where she lived.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: Once it was confirmed that Prabhupāda was coming, we needed a *vyāsāsana*. I wanted to do something special for him, so I volunteered to build one. But when I asked for money to buy wood and cloth, Kṛṣṇadāsa, who was in charge of the petty cash, told me that the financial situation didn't allow for such a heavy expenditure and that I should go out and beg for the materials.

So I went to Hamburg's biggest department stores—Karstadt, C&A, and Penndorf—and asked for wooden bars, plywood boards, and fabrics. A Hare Kṛṣṇa monk with a shaved head and *dhōtī* was still an unusual sight, and people thought I was a foreigner and readily helped me. Soon I had everything I needed. A couple of days later the seat was ready. Because it was a little shaky, Śivānanda had to sit down on it to make sure it would hold the weight of a man and not collapse. As a final touch, I added a light blue canopy.

When Prabhupāda saw the seat he gave it a skeptical look. My heart almost stopped when he climbed the three small steps, touched the canopy to see whether it was secure, and finally, with some difficulty, managed to get through the wooden bars and sit down. He looked again at the canopy over him, not trusting that it would really hold, and then turned to the small group of disciples and guests in front of him.

Prabhupāda's first lecture took place the evening after his arrival. Pleased to see the two new boys, Oliver and Stefan, seriously following Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he warmly welcomed them and a few guests, including Dr. Franz Bernhard, the Indology professor Śivānanda had invited. Prabhupāda began with a soft *kīrtana*. He had been told that the neighbors complained when the chanting got too loud and that they had even presented their case to the authorities. Sitting in the tiny Hamburg temple, Prabhupāda had his doubts about whether the place was adequate for installing Deities.

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After the lecture, he had a long meeting with Professor Bernhard. The Indologist politely and respectfully asked Prabhupāda to teach him the difference between the philosophies of Advaita-vāda and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. During the discussion, he said he thought of the devotees as hippies because Allen Ginsberg seemed affiliated with them. The next day Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed concern about this in a letter to Brahmānanda, who helped oversee the publication of Back to Godhead magazine in the US:

I am pleased to inform you that our journey from New York to Hamburg was very comfortable, and we safely arrived at the scheduled time. The boys were present to receive us, and the apartment they have selected is very nice. I am sending herewith a letter addressed to Hayagriva.

The second part of the Ginsberg conversation article should not be published, and our policy should be to only publish our Krishna Consciousness articles in various forms. We are not concerned with any other movement save and except Krishna Consciousness in its pure form. In India it is said that a little bit of a pure thing is much better than huge volumes of impure, adulterated things. So please try to follow this policy and publish in BTG only pure Krishna Conscious articles.

I think establishment of the Deities here will not be possible because the place is not very settled up. There is objection by the health department for performing kirtana. Anyway, they are doing very nicely, and in Monday's meeting one Dr. Franz Bernhard, a learned scholar in Indology, was there, and he is very interested in our movement. Yesterday I had discussion with him for about two hours and he is impressed, as you will find I have explained to Hayagriva in his letter.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: Dr. Bernhard had studied Vaiṣṇavism, but didn't agree with many of its philosophical concepts. When he asked a question regarding "cosmopolitan consciousness," Prabhupāda cut in: "Where is your cosmopolitan consciousness? You are killing animals out there," referring to a slaughterhouse not far from our temple. He explained that real cosmopolitan consciousness means Kṛṣṇa consciousness because the devotee sees all living entities equally. After all, the animals are also part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed two and a half weeks in Hamburg, from

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August 25 until September 11, and although the sky was usually overcast and it was rather cool for summer, he regularly went out for a morning walk.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: Except for a few occasions I was his only companion because Prabhupāda’s secretary had the idea that if only one person accompanied him on his walk, then he would be able to relax. When I asked Prabhupāda about this, he dismissed the idea: “What is this? How can you relax when you are taking a walk?” Anyway, the idea prevailed that generally only one person should go with him—and that was me. But from time to time, the other devotees came along with us.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: One morning we went up to Prabhupāda’s apartment as he was getting ready for his walk. Śivānanda was helping him put on long underwear.

Usually, he wore his dark coat and a hat made of artificial fur, but this time he wrapped an orange shawl around his head. When Kṛṣṇadāsa chuckled at the way he put on the shawl, Prabhupāda remarked, “Oh, you don’t dress like this here?”

Whenever I went on a walk, I would have to quit at one point and go to work. So I’d offer my obeisances right there on the street. One morning I became so absorbed in offering prayers that when I got up, Prabhupāda and the other devotees were already gone and people were staring at me and wondering what I was doing on the ground.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: When we accompanied Prabhupāda on his morning walks, I usually went a little ahead to clear the path, remove obstacles like fallen branches, or indicate puddles of water. Once, we sat down on a park bench, and because it was still wet, I spread my jacket for Prabhupāda to sit on. When he actually accepted my humble offering, I was overjoyed and later wore that jacket until it was almost in shreds.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: On one walk—I think it was on the last day of August—Prabhupāda expressed the desire to see the harbor. So we took

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the S-Bahn, the city train, and got off at Landungsbrücken. While walking along the waterfront we saw an ocean liner being pulled by a tugboat. When the big ships enter the harbor, they have to turn off their engines and get parked. Observing this, Prabhupāda said, “Just see: this ship is very, very big, but it is pulled by a little boat. Similarly, when we turn off our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we get pulled away by māyā.”

Generally, after coming back from the walks, I would go into the kitchen and start cooking. To be honest, I was not a good cook—I had hardly any experience—but somehow or other it worked out that way. For breakfast, I usually prepared cut fruits and fried nuts. Down the street was a fruit shop, and the owner was very favorable. When he learned that Prabhupāda had come, he offered to get first-class fruits at the wholesale market, which we then bought from him at a very reasonable price.

Prabhupāda had brought small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities with him, and once, while I was in the kitchen preparing lunch, he came to the door and said, “Come with me.” I followed him into his room, where he opened a little closet that had been converted into a temporary altar for Their Lordships. “You are in the kitchen,” he said, “but you should know that you are actually cooking for Them, not me.” Well, at that time, there were only a few installed Deities in the movement, and I had practically no idea what Deity worship meant. Looking back, I can only appreciate Prabhupāda’s kindness in trying to make me aware of the meaning of serving the Lord in His Deity form, but I have to admit that I didn’t understand much of what he tried to tell me.

Prabhupāda ate frugally, so usually, there were enough remnants left on his plate to serve as my breakfast. I have to confess that I was rather selfish at that time, so I used to eat all the remnants myself.

But one morning there were hardly any remnants left, and I was still hungry, so I made some cereal by cooking farina in water with sugar. I bowed down and offered it with the standard prayers, and when I got up, there was Prabhupāda in the doorway.

“What was that?” he asked. I explained to him that I made some cereal. “You are not getting enough to eat?” he asked.

“Well,” I replied, “I was a little hungry this morning.”

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He said, “All right, come here.” He went to the stove and told me that he would show me how to make *halavā*. And he made it really fast. I think it didn’t take him longer than five minutes. He put some ghee and farina in a pot and turned the flame all the way up. Usually, when you make halavā you toast the farina slowly, and you mix the sugar with the water and keep that separate until the end. But Prabhupāda didn’t do that. He cooked the farina with the ghee very quickly, then added some sugar, poured water over it, and pshhh! That was it. When it was finished, he said, “When you want to eat something, you make this.”

After breakfast, Prabhupāda would chant on his beads and answer his mail as I prepared his lunch. Because of my very basic knowledge about cooking, I thought the best vegetable I could prepare for him was eggplant. Every day I made a different eggplant dish. Then one morning Prabhupāda called me into his room. “What are you cooking for lunch today?” he asked. “I hope it’s not eggplant.”

“Oh no!” I thought, “now I’m in trouble.” And I humbly submitted, “Well, Prabhupāda, what would you like?”

“Do they have cabbage here?” he wanted to know. In America, the Germans are known as Krauts because of their great liking for sauerkraut, which is made from cabbage, so I replied, “Oh, yes, Prabhupāda, they have lots of cabbage here; that’s no problem.”

After I got the cabbage and went into the kitchen, suddenly he appeared at the door and asked, “Do you know how to prepare cabbage?” My assuring reply didn’t convince him, so he explained, “You take the cabbage and cut it into very fine shreds, then put it into a pot with butter, salt, and pepper, and cover it. No water. The cabbage will cook in its own juice.” So I did that and he liked it very much.

Once, we tried to get some mangoes, but we could only find green ones. We knew that Prabhupāda liked a mango along with his noon meal because it had some medicinal quality, but the green mangoes were rather hard, and I wasn’t sure how to prepare them. That day Prabhupāda came again to the kitchen to see how I was doing and what I was making. When he saw the green mangoes and learned that I wasn’t sure what to do with them, he said, “Here is how you prepare them: You peel the mangoes, cut

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them up, then you melt some sugar, mix the pieces with it, cook it for a while, and afterward you put it all into a container and let it soak.” So I did that. What happens is that after about a week the juice of the mangoes amalgamates with the sugar and the whole thing turns a purple color. I guess it’s some sort of mango chutney. Prabhupāda would take a little bit of that every day with his lunch.

Just before this incident, Prabhupāda had come to the kitchen door and told me out of the blue, “You shouldn’t waste anything.” So after I prepared the mango chutney, I had the mango skins on the table and I thought, “Gee, I have to be careful not to waste anything.” So I went to Prabhupāda and asked him, “Well, what shall we do with these?” He sort of smiled, because obviously, you throw the peels away, but he said, “Oh, if you want to do something with them, add some mustard oil and salt and eat them like that.” So I took some of the mustard oil that I was using for Prabhupāda’s massage, added a little to the peels, put on some salt, and tried to eat them, but they really tasted awful. Later I took that preparation to the temple and some of the devotees tried it, but nobody liked it except for Maṇḍalibhadra, who ate it all.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: The first time Śivānanda brought us the remnants from Prabhupāda’s *prasādam* we immediately crowded around him and stretched out our hands. He had some *khadi* sauce, which he had put into a crystal tube. It was a very small quantity, and he gave each devotee only a few drops. The taste was indescribable. To us, it tasted like pure nectar.

Apparently, Śivānanda had problems making the chaunks, because after Prabhupāda left, the owner of the apartment complained about the kitchen. There were stains and splashes all over the walls, and the cupboard was sooty. The whole place smelled of ghee and incense. We had to paint the entire kitchen to bring it back to its former state.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: Prabhupāda used to take his massage at 11:30 a.m., just before lunch at 1:00 p.m. After a short afternoon nap, he would receive devotees and guests in the temple, and in the evening he drank hot

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milk and went to bed around 10:00 p.m. I don't know what time he got up because I was always fast asleep. He translated during the night, working on *The Nectar of Devotion*. An hour after sunrise he would go out for a walk.

So around 11:30 a.m. I would finish cooking and then go for the massage. Giving Prabhupāda a massage was special because it's such an intimate bodily service, but just like with cooking, I didn't know much about it. Prabhupāda had to show me by giving me a massage first and simultaneously explaining its purpose. He said, "When the body becomes old, the stomach begins to produce bad airs, and if these airs are not distributed throughout the body by massage, then sickness will come." He liked to receive a really vigorous massage, and he wanted me to push as hard as I could, but I was trying to be careful. I was always thinking, "This is the body of my spiritual master." Consequently, Prabhupāda mildly rebuked me, calling my efforts "love pats."

Serving Prabhupāda as nicely as possible was intense, so I was a bit nervous in my service. I experienced it as rather demanding because I had a pretty tight schedule. As a result, I sometimes felt tired on the morning walks. I think Prabhupāda noticed it. One day we came out of the house, went along the road, and then strolled through a little park. We went around a lake and came to a few park benches. Suddenly Prabhupāda stopped and said, "All right, let's sit down for a while."

When Prabhupāda sat he was poised, his back perfectly straight; his back didn't even touch the backrest. But I was so pooped out that as soon as I sat down I sort of slumped into the park bench.

After a while, I glanced over at Śrīla Prabhupāda and saw that he was sitting like an aristocrat. Then Prabhupāda turned his head and looked at me, and I looked at him, and I thought, "Oh no, I can't sit like this when Prabhupāda is sitting like that," so I pulled myself up and sat straight just like him. Prabhupāda looked over again and simply nodded in approval, as if to say, "Yes, that's the proper way to sit".

After returning to the temple I reported this humorous incident to the devotees. The next morning a whole bunch of devotees came with us on the walk. We went to a different park, but Prabhupāda again sat on a

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bench, just as he had the day before. All the devotees, being prepared, sat down just the way Prabhupāda did, very poised and with their backs nicely straight. When Prabhupāda saw all the devotees sitting like this, he smiled and nodded in approval.

One Sunday, because of my intense schedule as his servant and because I had also cooked the feast at the temple, I didn't finish my rounds. I had maybe four rounds left. The next morning my mind was really agitated, and I was bordering on being offensive. Of course, I tried to control myself, but during the morning walk I asked Prabhupāda, "What should we do if we are too busy to finish our rounds in one day?" His answer was, "You should lose sleep to have more time!" I thought about that and felt that the day before that wouldn't have been possible for me, so I spoke up again. "What if that's not possible?" Prabhupāda looked at me and replied, "Then you should make them up the next day." I guess because of my not having finished my rounds I was in sort of a challenging mood, so I said, "What if that's not possible?" Prabhupāda stopped and looked at me sternly. "Then you should work for Kṛṣṇa!" I immediately grabbed my beads and began to chant, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Another time we were sitting on a park bench with Maṇḍalibhadra. He used to take notes on everything Prabhupāda said because we had no portable tape recorder. A woman came by with her dog. Although it was a public park and we were sitting there peacefully, all of a sudden the dog started barking at us. Prabhupāda commented, "Just see! This is the doggish mentality. We are not doing anything; we are not even on your property, and you come along and bark at us."

One evening, Prabhupāda selected for his lecture a verse from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa:

*viṣṇu-śakti parā prokta kṣetrajñākhyā tathā parā
avidyā-karma-samjñānyā tṛtīyā śaktir iṣyate*

"The potency of Lord Viṣṇu is summarized in three categories: the spiritual potency, the living entities, and ignorance. The spiritual potency is full of knowledge; the living entities, although belonging to the spiritual

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potency, are subject to bewilderment; and the third energy, which is full of ignorance, is always visible in fruitive activities.”

Prabhupāda explained that energy and its source are non-different, just as sunshine and the sun globe are essentially the same in quality, although they manifest differently. Similarly, the Lord’s energy is spiritual, but it manifests in different ways. He explained:

So everything is simultaneously one with and different from the Supreme Lord. There are two classes of philosophers. One class says that God and the living entities are different, and another class, the monist philosophers, say that God and the living entities are one. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy says that God and the living creatures are simultaneously one and different. They are one in quality, just like the energy and the energetic, the sunshine and the sun globe. Qualitatively, in the sunshine there is heat, there is illumination, light. In the sun globe, there is also heat, there is illumination, but the degrees are quite different. You can bear the heat and illumination of the sunshine, but you cannot go to the sun globe or bear the heat and temperature there.

Next he explained that although Kṛṣṇa and we living entities are qualitatively one, we were quantitatively minute—in fact, smaller than the atom. Then he said that even if by our scientific research we could count all the atoms in the cosmic manifestation, still we would not be able to perceive the Supreme Personality of Godhead with our material senses. He quoted the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.234):

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

“Because Kṛṣṇa’s form, qualities, and pastimes are all on the absolute platform, the material senses cannot appreciate them. But when a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and renders service by using his tongue to chant the Lord’s holy name and taste the remnants of the Lord’s food, the tongue is purified, and one gradually comes to understand who Kṛṣṇa really is.”

As his young audience listened with rapt attention, Prabhupāda described the importance of engaging the tongue in the Lord’s service. In this way,

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all the other senses can also gradually be controlled. Citing the *prasādam* prayers by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, he compared our present conditioned state with that of a fish caught in a net and said that our imprisonment within this network of ignorance is being prolonged only on account of the dangerous senses:

This human form of life is a great boon to the living entity, who is traveling through the cycle of birth and death, perpetually changing his body. Here is the opportunity—the human form of life. We can utilize the tongue properly and get out of this cycle. *Sevonmukhe hi jibvādaḥ*. *Sevā* means “service” and *jibva adau* “beginning from the tongue.” So if we can keep our tongue engaged always chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, then we can keep ourselves always in contact with Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa, the sound, is not different from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is absolute. Therefore, as soon as my tongue touches the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, that means it immediately associates with Kṛṣṇa.

So if you constantly keep yourself associated with Kṛṣṇa by chanting this *mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, then just imagine how you are being easily purified. And your tongue wants very palatable dishes to taste, so Kṛṣṇa is very kind; He has given you hundreds and thousands of palatable dishes, remnants of foodstuff eaten by Him. You eat. In this way, if you simply make it a determination that “I shall not allow my tongue to taste anything not offered to Kṛṣṇa, and I shall engage my tongue always in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa,” then all perfection is within your grasp. All perfection.

Prabhupāda said that purified chanting will eventually lead to experiencing transcendental bliss, and therefore Rūpa Gosvāmī expressed the desire to have millions of tongues and ears to relish the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. But he also warned the devotees not to imitate such an advanced stage by trying to understand Kṛṣṇa with their present, impure senses. This would invariably lead to mistaking the loving affairs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for ordinary dealings. To rise above the material platform was possible only when the mirror of the heart was cleansed by offenseless chanting.

On September 3, Prabhupāda and his followers observed Janmāṣṭamī, the anniversary of the advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Devotees customarily fast, chant,

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and read throughout the day and night on Janmāṣṭamī, but Prabhupāda selected the morning of this auspicious occasion to give initiations.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: When Prabhupāda saw me sitting there with my long hair, he asked the older students why I hadn't shaved up, and they, in turn, asked me. But we were all so inexperienced that we couldn't give a satisfactory explanation. With the ceremony about to begin, it was too late to do anything about it. At one point in the conversation, Prabhupāda referred to a picture of the Pañca-tattva and said something like, "You either shave your head or never cut your hair." I got initiated as I was, and being attached I didn't shave up even afterward. Only gradually I began reducing the length of my hair, cutting it a little shorter from time to time.

When I was supposed to hand my beads to Prabhupāda so he could chant on them, they were tangled, and I was unable to unknot them. He looked at me gravely and said, "This is māyā."

The requirements for being accepted as a disciple were minimal. Prabhupāda gladly accepted Oliver and Stefan as his disciples, though they had lived in the temple only a few weeks, and he even accepted a young couple who had just begun visiting.

As the initiation ceremony began, Prabhupāda showed the initiates how to purify their hands and explained the meaning of a *mantra* they had just repeated after him:

*om apavitraḥ pavitra va sarvāvastham gato 'pi va
yaḥ smaret pundarikākṣam sa bahyābhyantaram śuciḥ
śrī viṣṇu śrī viṣṇu śrī viṣṇu*

"One may be impure or pure; in any condition, if he remembers the Lord, whose eyes are like lotus petals, he becomes externally and internally purified. Śrī Viṣṇu! Śrī Viṣṇu! Śrī Viṣṇu!"

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to purify people of the contaminated condition of material existence. A living entity is pure because he is part and parcel of the supreme pure, God. But due to his impure condition, he has forgotten his eternal relationship with God. So this initiation means that one is being accepted as a student by the spiritual master to promote him gradually to the purified state where he can realize

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himself and God. In the contaminated state, we cannot approach. Just like if you want to enter a certain place, then you must adjust to the conditions. People are going to the moon. There it is supposed to be very cold. So people go with a certain type of suit. Similarly, if you want to enter into the spiritual kingdom, the planet where Kṛṣṇa lives, you must be purified.

Prabhupāda added that the attempt to go to the moon is bound to fail because people cannot adjust to that planet. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he said, is so powerful that it enables us to adjust our condition in such a way that after leaving this body we can enter Kṛṣṇa's planet. If we always keep ourselves in touch with the vibration of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare—then it is guaranteed we can keep ourselves pure and free from all material contamination. He concluded his talk by saying:

So on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, we are trying to distribute this knowledge at least in this part of the world. Now, those who are fortunate will take it and be benefitted. It is up to you. Every individual soul is independent. He may accept or may not accept. But if he accepts, it is good for him.

God never interferes with your independence. No. He will never do that; otherwise, what is the meaning of the living being? Dull matter has no independence. Even a big mountain has no independence. It stands still. But a small ant, even a microbe, has independence because it is a living creature. So God has given you a little independence.

That independence does not mean you shall misuse it. You shall use it properly. And what is that proper use? To be engaged in His loving service. Just like you citizens of this German state, what you are meant for? You are meant for rendering service to the state. This is a small state. But there is a huge state called the cosmic manifestation. That state belongs to Kṛṣṇa, or God. So naturally, you have to render service to the supreme state, the supreme will. As long as you are rendering service to the state properly your independence as a citizen is there. But as soon as you rebel against the state, your independence is gone. Similarly, this conditional life is due to our rebellious condition toward God. As soon as we agree to surrender and be one with Him by transcendental loving service, the whole thing becomes adjusted. So the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to

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teach people, to give them this practical suggestion, and to help them elevate themselves to that platform.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: I had a hard time following what Prabhupāda said in his lecture because of his heavy accent, but I still listened attentively, because he was so serious and such a unique personality. Just by looking at him all the time I accepted whatever he said.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: After Prabhupāda finished chanting on each candidate's beads, he called the prospective disciples forward one by one and asked them to state the four regulative principles. Then he handed over their beads and gave them new names. Oliver became Vāsudeva Dāsa; Stefan, Sucandra Dāsa; and the couple received the names Viśvanātha Dāsa and Kuntī Devī Dāsī. That Prabhupāda initiated the couple surprised all of us. It was only his causeless mercy and his intense desire to fan even the smallest spark of interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They had shown no qualification other than a little attraction, and sadly, a few weeks later, they left and never returned. When we informed Śrīla Prabhupāda by letter, he indirectly indicated in his reply that part of the reason for their leaving might have been our inexperience in dealing with them.

I am sorry to learn that Viśvanātha and Kuntī Devī did not take this very seriously. What can be done? They will have to wait to the next life, or if Krishna's mercy is there, they will come back surely. I am pleased to learn however that the nice girl who was at the Vyasa Puja ceremony is now coming more often. Any person who becomes interested, try to educate him or her rightly. Everything depends on preaching.

Prabhupāda had instructed his older disciples to arrange for the necessary ingredients to perform the fire sacrifice. After the grains, the ghee, and some firewood (the pieces of an old wooden box) were assembled, he prepared a small sacrificial arena in the temple room and, with Kṛṣṇadāsa assisting him, lit the fire and performed the ceremony.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: After the initiation ceremony Prabhupāda distributed flowers to everyone, and later we were allowed to go to his room. I took advantage of the opportunity and gave him a painting of Kṛṣṇa that I had

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prepared for him. I was a little anxious at the prospect of being alone with my spiritual master, but as soon as I came into Prabhupāda's presence my anxiety disappeared. He was like a father. When I showed him the painting, he looked at me with a smile, and pointing his finger at Kṛṣṇa, he said, "This is Vāsudeva and you are Vāsudeva Dāsa, the servant of Vāsudeva." I simply nodded in agreement. I didn't really understand the profound meaning of Prabhupāda's words. I had only a vague idea of what it meant to be a servant, what to speak of being Kṛṣṇa's servant.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: In the late afternoon on Janmāṣṭamī we assembled in the temple room and Hayagrīva, who had arrived from the US the day before, read from the manuscript of Kṛṣṇa Book. Prabhupāda, sitting on his *vyāsāsana*, was simply absorbed in listening to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. This Janmāṣṭamī was the first time I had ever fasted, and I was gradually becoming weak and spaced out. We sat for hours listening to Kṛṣṇa Book.

In the evening Prabhupāda had his head shaved—something he usually did only every Ekādaśī—and Kṛṣṇadāsa, who regarded this as his favorite service, carefully shaved Prabhupāda's head while the rest of us watched.

Shortly before midnight Mr. Samantha and another Bengali businessman visited us. After midnight, when Prabhupāda was about to break the fast, they offered him a plate of fruits they had prepared for him. He had a short conversation with them in Bengali. I met one of them many years later in Hamburg, and he told me that Prabhupāda had asked them to help us.

The following day, the devotees observed another auspicious event: Vyāsa-pūjā, the celebration of the spiritual master's appearance. In his lecture, Prabhupāda spoke about the duty of a genuine spiritual master and expressed his desire that all his disciples take up that duty and become the next spiritual masters:

It is not that the spiritual master is a particular man. Spiritual master is a truth. So what is that truth? The truth is *saṁsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka-trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam*. The whole world is in the blaze of

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material pangs, threefold miseries. And a person who is authorized to deliver people from that material pangs, he is called “spiritual master.”

So, the spiritual master's duty is to save the living entities who are so much embarrassed by the forest fire. That is the duty of spiritual master. *Samsāra-dāvānala-liḍha-loka*. The whole world is blazing, and just like in the blazing fire of the forest, the animals are going here and there, and some of them are dying, the whole world is like that. And how that blazing fire can be extinguished? You cannot send there a fire brigade, or you cannot get some pots of water and try to extinguish that wide fire. It is not possible. Then how to extinguish it? The extinguishing is possible when there is cloud overhead and there is incessant pouring of water. Then the forest fire extinguished. No artificial means, no scientific means. Fire brigade or this fire extinguisher, we have invented so many things, but when there is forest fire all these things are nonsense. Nothing can be used. The only use, means, is when there is pouring, incessant pouring of water from the cloud. That is made by God. That is not in your hand. You cannot produce cloud. By God's arrangement, the cloud is there. Ghanāghanatvam. The example is given, “Charitable just like the cloud.” Why this example is given? When cloud pours water, it is so sufficient that there is no comparison. But if you want to pour water, a bucketful of water, how long you will do it?

So, spiritual master means he must be just like the cloud. How it is possible? It is possible. It is possible, provided he follows the disciplic succession of spiritual masters. Then it is possible. He must inherit the power from the superior source. Then it is possible that by his teaching, by his lessons, the forest fire which is burning within our heart, it can be extinguished, and the person who receives such spiritual instruction bona fide, he becomes satisfied. This is the process.

Now, this spiritual master's succession is not very difficult. Of course, my students, they offer me so much respect, but all these respects are due to my spiritual master. I am nothing. I am just like peon. Just like peon delivers a letter. He is not responsible for what is written in that letter. He is not responsible for what is written in that letter. He simply delivers. But a peon's duty is that he must sincerely carry out the order of the postmaster and deliver the letter to the proper person. That is their duty. Similarly, this parampara system is like that. Every one of us should become a spiritual master because the world is in blazing fire. Now, of course, time

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is very high. So to understand the spiritual master... Spiritual master is not a new invention. It is simply following the orders of the spiritual master. So all my students present here who are feeling so much obliged... I am also obliged to them because they are helping me in this missionary work. At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual master. Every one of you should be spiritual master next. And what is their duty? Whatever you are hearing from me, whatever you are learning from me, you have to distribute the same in toto without any addition or alteration. Then all of you become the spiritual master. That is the science of becoming spiritual master. To become a spiritual master is not a very wonderful thing. Simply one has to become a sincere soul.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: I remember this day vividly because of the tremendous anxiety I went through. I had just been initiated the day before, and now I was supposed to deliver an homage in front of Prabhupāda. He sat on this weird *vyāsāsana* that Vāsudeva had built according to Jaya Govinda's design—a kind of wooden box with four pillars and a canopy. Prabhupāda had difficulty getting on and off it. But when I saw him there, I had a strong realization that he is beyond designations like “man or woman.” I saw him as a truly transcendental personality.

Speaking in front of the spiritual master is difficult. Because I knew so little English, I spoke in German. Halfway through my brief offering I became emotionally overwhelmed and began to cry. What I said was sentimental, because we were all real greenhorns as far as philosophical realizations were concerned, but the emotional content was intense.

After everyone spoke their offerings, we held a *kīrtana*, and I remember this as the first time we ever got up and danced. Until then we had been accustomed to sitting down during *kīrtana*. But Jaya Govinda began to dance with raised arms in front of Prabhupāda, and we followed suit.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: Two days later, we observed Ekādaśī. After breakfast Prabhupāda sat in his chair by the window with a chadar over his head, completely absorbed in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He chanted like this all morning long, something he usually didn't do. When the time came for his massage, he got up and came over to me and said, “You should pray to

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Kṛṣṇa for me.” I was taken aback. I stammered, “Prabhupāda, I don’t think it will work.” But he calmly replied, “Why not? You are a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.” So I left it at that. I felt deeply touched by his humility, the inconceivable humility of a pure devotee.

During his stay in Hamburg, Prabhupāda was not only preoccupied with the spiritual growth of his disciples, but he also showed concern for their material well-being.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: During Prabhupāda’s visit the sun came out for maybe two days, not more, so it was pretty chilly in the mornings. One morning, after returning from our walk, we were waiting for the elevator and I was rubbing my hands together trying to ease their numbness. “Are you cold?” Prabhupāda asked me, and he touched my hands. “Feel my hand.” I was surprised by how warm it was. Then he put his hands on his chest and said, “If you keep this part of the body warm, then the rest will be automatically warm.” Prabhupāda was so kind and affectionate.

But as soft as Prabhupāda could be, he could also be as hard as a thunderbolt. He took great care of his mail. The first few days, while taking his morning walks, he would look at the mailboxes to see what time they were emptied. One morning he handed me some letters and asked me to take them to the mailbox, and he wanted me to do it right away. But I brought the letters to the temple and gave them to another devotee, who gave them to another devotee. Eventually, after some days, the letters got mailed, but somehow Prabhupāda found out about it and was upset. He reprimanded me, “You are irresponsible!” I didn’t dare to say anything in response. I simply nodded and resolved to become more responsible.

Prabhupāda was practical and never wasted anything. For example, he opened the envelopes he received, then sliced open the sides and used the blank sides for notes.

One morning we saw a lot of junk in front of the houses. It was Sperrmülltag, the day of the month people can put oversized junk, like furniture, out on the street to be picked up. As we were out walking, Prabhupāda pointed with his cane at something he considered useful, like a chair or cabinet, and said, “Why don’t you get one of these?” We

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explained to him we already had enough things because we would also go out on Sperrmülltag and look for stuff we could use. Then, after walking further, Prabhupāda pointed at another object and said, “Oh, why don’t you get that?” Someone responded, “I think we have that already.” Then again he pointed out something else, and we explained we did not need it. We had almost made it back to the temple when Prabhupāda spotted a rug that looked like a Persian carpet. He said, “You don’t have one of those!” And we didn’t! So we picked up the rug and brought it back to the temple. One devotee cleaned it, and we put it down on the temple room floor. Prabhupāda liked it a lot. It can be seen in the picture that was taken on Janmāṣṭamī after initiation.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: The elderly woman who owned our flat lived on the third floor of the building. She was almost blind, and she was happy to have the devotees with her because she was by herself and we were energetic young men who could be helpful in many ways.

After hearing the devotees enthusiastically and constantly praise Prabhupāda, she became excited to meet him, but during his evening lectures, she would sit behind a curtain that separated the temple room from the staircase. She felt too shy to come into the temple. One evening Prabhupāda went to the bathroom, which was in the hallway. As he opened the curtain, he was suddenly standing in front of this woman. She was taken by surprise—her eyes and mouth were wide open. Śivānanda introduced her: “Prabhupāda, this is the landlady.” Seeing that she had been sitting there all the while Prabhupāda asked, “Oh, she’s a devotee, too?”

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: Prabhupāda told me that he wanted to open a bank account. I took him to the nearest branch of the Hamburger Sparkasse, on Eimsbütteler Chaussee. A young woman attended us, and while she filled out the forms I tried to get a glimpse of the checks Prabhupāda wanted to deposit. But he held his hand over them the whole time. When he signed, I watched with curiosity, and it struck me how he moved the pen deliberately and conscientiously, writing his name slowly, one letter after

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another.

A few days later, during our walk, we saw the same girl—the bank clerk. Being a *brahmacārī* I thought the proper thing to do was to avoid looking at her, especially while walking with my spiritual master, so I ignored her and turned my face down. But Prabhupāda nodded and greeted her cordially. Then he turned to me and said, “That was the lady from the bank.”

Once, he asked me why the German people are so fat. I thought it was probably because they eat a lot of meat, but I didn’t feel right to say something about meat-eating. Instead, I said, “Prabhupāda, I think they eat a lot of potatoes.” I’m not sure whether or not he could read my mind or whether he simply knew the reason, but he immediately countered, “No, they eat a lot of meat.”

Another incident gave me the feeling that Prabhupāda actually could read my mind. One day we took him to walk near the Christuskirche, a church, and I was thinking about why we become sick; I was meditating on disease and its origins. Is it because we are in *māyā* or for some other reason? Somehow I couldn’t formulate the question properly, but Prabhupāda suddenly stopped and, out of the blue, said to me, “90 percent of all sickness is caused by the mind.”

As his visit came to a close, I apologized for what I felt had not been a nice experience for him: the inadequate storefront temple, the lack of preaching programs, the cold weather, the few guests, and a mere handful of inexperienced devotees. But Prabhupāda didn’t seem to mind. He simply said, “We are doing our preaching work whether or not there are a lot of devotees.

On one of his last evenings in Hamburg, Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured on the need to inquire about solving the problems of material existence. Such inquisitiveness, he said, differentiates human and animal consciousness. After giving some examples of how an advanced civilization finds solutions to problems, he asked his audience:

So what is the ultimate problem? The ultimate problem is that we do not want to suffer, but we have to suffer. That’s all. We want a comfortable,

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peaceful life. This is the ultimate problem. Is it not? Just think it over. In Sanskrit it is called *atyāntika-dubkha-nivṛttiḥ*: to solve the problem of miseries. We don't want any kind of misery. We don't want to suffer. We want a very peaceful and joyful life. But that is not possible in this material world. That is the problem.

He gave one of his favorite examples to illustrate the fleeting nature of material happiness, John F. Kennedy: “He had a very nice wife, children, honor, prestige, everything. He was riding in procession, people were honoring him, and within a second—finished.”

After enumerating more problems that people face, Prabhupāda asked his audience:

Then what is the solution? That solution is there in *Bhagavad-gītā*, in the seventh chapter, fourteenth verse: “This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” Yes. The solution is we have to surrender unto the Supreme. Just like if you are arrested by the police, then it is very difficult to get out of their clutches. But if you are a good citizen, a soul surrendered to the state, there is no problem. The police have nothing to do with you. Is it very difficult to understand?

Prabhupāda impressed on his listeners the urgency to perfect their lives:

So before death overcomes you, you make a solution to the problem. Those who have come in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and have been initiated should be very determined that in this life we shall make a solution. No more coming back again to the cycle of birth and death. That should be our determination. We should be determined to make a solution and go back home, back to Godhead, where we get an eternal, blissful life of knowledge. This is the sum and substance of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

When he asked for questions, one devotee wanted to know if it was possible to become Kṛṣṇa conscious in this lifetime. Prabhupāda told his audience:

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It is possible in one second, provided you are serious. It is not difficult. *Bahūnāṁ janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate*: “After many, many births, when one is intelligent, wise, fully grown in wisdom, he surrenders unto Me,” Kṛṣṇa says. So if I am intelligent, then I will see: “If that is the goal of life, that after many, many births one has to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, why not surrender myself immediately?” This is intelligence. Why shall I wait for many, many births if this is a fact? So that requires a little intelligence. It does not require many, many births. It requires a little intelligence. Take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously; then your problems are solved. Now, if you don’t believe in it, then come to argument, come to philosophy, come to reason. Go on arguing. There are volumes of books. You can be convinced. You can learn it. Every answer is there in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. You can try to understand it with your reason, with your arguments.

Prabhupāda then added a fascinating explanation about relativity:

So it requires relative intelligence. This world is relative. One can become immediately Kṛṣṇa conscious, within a second, or one may not become Kṛṣṇa conscious even after many, many births. So it is relative. If you have got sufficient intelligence, you can accept it immediately. If there is less intelligence, then it will take time. You cannot say that “It will be possible after so many years.” That cannot be said. It is relative. Everything is relative. For a human being, from here to here, one step; and for a small microbe, it is ten miles from here to here, ten miles for him. So everything is relative. This world is a relative world. There is no such formula that “One can be Kṛṣṇa conscious after so many years.” No. There is no such formula. One may not become Kṛṣṇa conscious even after millions of births, and one can become Kṛṣṇa conscious within a second. But within this life, we can become perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if we take it seriously. Especially you are all young boys. We expect you’ll live at least fifty more years. Oh, that is sufficient time. Sufficient. More than sufficient. More than sufficient. If for fifty years one chants simply “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa,” he is sure to become perfect. There is no doubt about it. Simply if you chant this *mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa—oh, there is no doubt about it.

The First Visit

Next, a question was asked why some people accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness and some do not. Prabhupāda repeated that the choice is ours. If something stopped us, it was *māyā*, illusion. The only remedy, he said, was to take stronger shelter of Kṛṣṇa by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He appealed to

his listeners to induce people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa; they would receive the real thing and become happy:

Don't be misled by thinking that "There are no problems in life. We are very happy—eating, sleeping, mating." This is animal life. There are so many great problems. Very great problems: birth, death, old age, disease, and repeatedly. *Bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate*: the universe is manifested, again non-manifested, again manifested, again non-manifested. So stop this problem. *Yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama*: go to Kṛṣṇa's abode. And what is the difficulty? You do your own work and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. We don't say that you stop your business, stop your occupation. You remain. Just like he is a teacher [pointing to Hayagrīva]. All right, he is a teacher. He is a jeweler [referring to Kṛṣṇadāsa]. Remain a jeweler. He's something. He's something. That doesn't matter. But be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Think of Kṛṣṇa. Take *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. Everything is there. And be happy. That is our propaganda. You learn yourself and preach this cult. People will be happy. Simple method.

On September 11, 1969, around noon, Śrīla Prabhupāda boarded a Lufthansa flight to London. In his hand baggage, he carried the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa he had hoped to install. In anticipation of worshipping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the devotees had painted ornate letters on the plate-glass window of their storefront: Radha Krishna Tempel. But Prabhupāda had instructed his disciples to look for a better place.

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Immediately after Prabhupāda's departure, Kṛṣṇadāsa began looking for a bigger place. Within a week he found a vacant office on the third floor of an old warehouse on Bartelsstrasse, a small street in the industrial section of Hamburg. Compared to the storefront, the six-room office seemed spacious, and the location was not bad because it was not far from the S-Bahn station Sternschanze, only a few minutes from downtown by train. In other respects the location and the office were far from ideal: the entrance could not be seen from the street because the building stood in the back of a yard, and there was no bathroom or shower. But the devotees' report to Śrīla Prabhupāda conveyed enthusiasm, and in response, he wrote to Śivānanda on September 26:

I am so pleased to learn you have found out a very nice place. My suggestion is that you take a first class temple site; never mind if the rent is little higher. Kṛṣṇa will give you strength. But try to find out first class place for Kṛṣṇa, and make the throne very nicely as per sample I have given.

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Then I shall go again and install the Deity. The sooner you do it is better, because when it will be cold, I must leave Europe.

I always remember you for your kind personal service and walking with me on the street. So you are so kind upon me, Kṛṣṇa will bless you with advanced Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and you will be spiritually very happy. Thank you very much.

The devotees moved into Bartelsstrasse at the beginning of November and did their best to convert the old warehouse into a temple. Soon the walls and window frames shone a bright yellow, the old wooden floor a dark brown, and there was a sign downstairs that told visitors they had come to a temple of the Internationale Gesellschaft für Krischna Bewusstsein e.V.

* * *

The devotees in London, meanwhile, had also found a place for a temple, a five-story building near the British Museum. An Indian man donated a set of beautiful marble Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, and Prabhupāda wanted to install Them as soon as possible. Thus he focused his attention on preparations for inaugurating the London temple.

Kṛṣṇadāsa, eager for Prabhupāda to return to Hamburg and install Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at their new place, asked his spiritual master about an auspicious day for the installation and details concerning the ceremony. The reply came on November 7:

To celebrate the Rasa Lila Ceremony decorate the Deities very nicely with flowers; as many as possible, ornaments, garlands, nice light demonstration, and much distribution of Prasadam. That will be a very nice day for opening the Radha-Krishna Temple. So if by chance I do not go, then Tamal Krishna, who is arriving in London this Monday, will go. He and Yamuna are both expert in the matter of Deity decoration, so there will be no difficulty for the opening ceremony. So arrange for this ceremony without fail, and let me know immediately if you have got a pair of Radha-Krishna Deities in the new consignment [from India]. If not, the Deities with me will go back there.

In late August the devotees in England had released a recording of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra with George Harrison's help. Radha Krishna Temple

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(London), as the singing group was called, conquered the European charts.

In Germany, the single “Hare Krishna Mantra” had made it to Number 3 on the pop charts. When the group received an invitation to tour Germany for a week in late November, Prabhupāda sent Tamal Krishna, one of his experienced managers, who had recently come from Los Angeles to help organize the London preaching. Prabhupāda asked him to perform also the Deity installation on his behalf.

TAMAL KRISHNA GOSWAMI: Śrīla Prabhupāda reminded me of the installation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that I had observed him perform in Los Angeles and said that everything should be done exactly in the same manner. In the middle of our busy concert schedule, we set one day aside to install the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. Were it not for Prabhupāda’s order I would not have been considered qualified to undertake such a serious responsibility. Perhaps this was the first time in the history of the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya that the Deity form of the Lord was being installed and a fire sacrifice performed by someone born outside India. Of course, birth in India was not in itself a qualification nor a guarantee of being Kṛṣṇa conscious. The *ācāryas* in our disciplic succession were all greatly exalted, pure personalities, transcendental to such bodily designations. But actually, I was not qualified. I had little personal experience of Deity worship.

In Los Angeles, as in all of our temples, the standards were still simple enough that a single *pūjārī* could handle all the worship. I had never even offered *ārati*. And as for the intricacies of performing an *abhiṣeka* ceremony, I had observed it only once before. But all of my insufficiencies were more than covered by the intense desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was he who was actually installing the Deity, and I was simply the officiating priest. By his request, Kṛṣṇa agreed to descend and accept the form of the Deity as non-different from Himself. Prabhupāda was an unseen participant, for without his presence that day, Kṛṣṇa would certainly not have manifested.

As I went through the motions of *ācamana*, vibrating the sacred *mantras*, bathing and dressing the Deities, and finally igniting the

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sacrificial fire, Śrīla Prabhupāda was the guide directing every action. With each successive *svābhā*, the devotees threw grains mixed with clarified butter and the fire blazed brightly. Kṛṣṇa was pleased; it was a successful sacrifice. At the end, with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa installed on Their throne, we offered *ārati* and danced and sang ecstatically to celebrate the auspicious occasion of the Supreme Lord's appearance.

Much more than before, the temple room had become a place of reverential worship. There was a feeling of security and shelter because of the presence of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. All of this had taken place by the mercy of the spiritual master. By his blessings, we were now experiencing the blessings of the Supreme Lord.

Thus on November 23, 1969, on the auspicious full-moon day commemorating Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *rasa-līlā* pastime, the first Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Europe was inaugurated. Simultaneously, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, in Their sound incarnation—the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra—were making Their impact felt in the lives of thousands of conditioned souls.

MUKUNDA GOSWAMI: Because of the success of the song Hare Krishna Mantra, our group, Radha Krishna Temple, became famous all over Europe. On arriving in Hamburg, the first thing we did, despite the cold, was to go out on the street with all the devotees and perform a tremendous *kīrtana* in front of a record shop. The owner was very happy because he was selling our record. Soon hundreds of people curiously surrounded us. Obviously, they had seen nothing like it, and they stood and stared. But it seemed that they appreciated the chanting.

In the evening we were scheduled to play at the famous Star-Club, where the Beatles had begun their career in 1962. It was a rundown place on the Reeperbahn, Hamburg's infamous red-light district, and everything was dirty and uninviting. We had expected something better. The whole place was dark; even the lighting was dim.

TAMAL KRISHNA GOSWAMI: It was doubtful that the club-goers that evening considered us anything more than a musical group. They were unaware that the "performance" was actually an eternal ceremony

conducted for the pleasure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They had come to be entertained, to dance, and to get drunk, and they greeted us enthusiastically with applause, expecting us to turn them on to an evening of sense gratification.

Our intention, of course, was totally different. We had only Kṛṣṇa's pleasure in mind. We began by singing the *praṇāma-mantras* to Śrīla Prabhupāda, then The Prayers to the Six Gosvāmīs; next came the Pañca-tattva mantra. Finally, we hit them with Hare Kṛṣṇa. As the rhythm began to pick up, couples rose to their feet, moving away from their tables onto the dance floor. As they gyrated about, moving in time to the *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*, they never suspected that they were taking part in the *yuga-dharma*, the great chanting for deliverance in the Kali-yuga.

The next day we were on national TV performing *kīrtana* in the marketplace of Kiel. The cameras photographed us in our *dhōtīs* and *sārīs* as we marched along the sidewalks and passed out the German edition of Back to Godhead, entitled *Zurück zur Gottheit*.

MUKUNDA GOSWAMI: Our concert in Kiel turned out to be one of the most amazing events I have ever experienced. Until then the whole music business didn't seem too promising. We had mainly encountered degenerate, unintelligent people, interested only in drugs and alcohol. Other than George Harrison we hadn't met anyone with spiritual inclinations. After the disappointing experience at the Star-Club we thought, 'Well, that's what Germany is like,' so we didn't expect anything different in Kiel.

We had been booked at the Krüger Klub, a former cinema that had been transformed into a dance hall. All the seats had been taken out, so there was only a stage and a gigantic ballroom. The building was in bad shape. There was no running water, no toilets, and to our dismay, there weren't even any microphones on stage. We had been announced as the only group for the evening, and the thousand or more teenagers who would come expected a regular concert that would last for two or three hours. But we knew only two or three songs other than Hare Kṛṣṇa. So as more and more people poured into the hall, many of them intoxicated and boisterous, our

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anxiety grew—maybe they would become violent. Probably they were expecting Rock ’n’ Roll, but here we were, eight Hare Kṛṣṇas without even a microphone.

Fortunately, Sucandra had come with us, so we asked him to address the crowd and explain the situation. After everyone calmed down, he said [in German], “Hare Kṛṣṇa! Good evening, everybody! We are sorry that there is no microphone. And to be honest, we don’t have a repertoire of many songs. Actually, we are not here to present a show. We have something to share with you. Therefore it is very important that you all participate. Please repeat after me: ‘Hare!’” He pointed to a banner we had brought with the *mantra* written on it. In the beginning, they were a little shy, but soon more and more people joined in, and after some time, when he said “Kṛṣṇa,” the whole crowd responded enthusiastically and in unison: “Kṛṣṇa!” In this way, Sucandra taught them the *mantra*. Then he asked them to sing along with us, and we rehearsed a simple melody until they got used to it.

There must have been at least two thousand teenagers, and as we led them in the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa they became more and more ecstatic. When we began to dance, they also began to dance. We even taught them to dance with their arms raised like Prabhupāda had shown us. We told them, “This is the Swami Step,” and they all danced with raised arms, just like seasoned devotees.

Soon the *kīrtana* picked up speed and volume, and after twenty minutes we stopped and said the *praṇāma* prayers. Naturally, all the devotees bowed down and exclaimed, “Jaya!” To our amazement, these kids also bowed down and repeated “Jaya!”

When we got up, they suddenly started to shout rhythmically, “Zu-ga-be! Zu-ga-be! Zu-ga-be!” We were perplexed; they seemed to have enjoyed the chanting, but maybe they had become upset for some reason? Then Sucandra informed us that they were asking for an encore; they wanted to chant more. Relieved, we continued *kīrtana* for another thirty minutes, but as soon as we stopped they again shouted “Zugabe! Zugabe!” We didn’t know what to do. So we got down from the stage and held a resounding *kīrtana* on the dance floor. We were in the middle, and all

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those young people were dancing around us. Then we made two rows and started to jump and dance up and down the aisle. Then we danced in a circle and everyone followed us. Once in a while, somebody came forward to play on one of the *mṛdaṅgas*. The crowd went wild. Some caught the devotees by their arms and shoulders and jumped up and down like mad. It was almost hysterical. We felt the situation was getting out of hand. The only thing that calmed them down to some degree was more *kīrtana*. We had to play louder and faster; otherwise, who knows what they were going to do?

We beat the drums so heavily that our hands bled. Splashes of blood were all over the place—on the *mṛdaṅgas*, our *dhōṭīs*, the floor, people’s clothes. But they didn’t care, and it seemed they really liked it that we didn’t care either. We were all carried away by the ecstasy of chanting—and time stood still. The *kīrtana* continued for almost three hours, and although we were completely exhausted, we didn’t know how to stop..

Then a devotee spotted a turntable and amplifier onstage, so we stopped the *kīrtana* and put on our record of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. We turned the volume all the way up—it was deafening—and apparently, the audience liked it. They were satisfied that the *kīrtana* somehow or other continued. We watched from backstage as everybody chanted and danced, although we weren’t there anymore. And when the record was over, all of them bowed down as they had done during the live *kīrtana*.

When we returned to the stage, the crowd applauded for several minutes. Sucandra thanked them, but when we were about to leave the stage they again shouted “Zugabe! Zugabe!” Again we put the record on. There was no question of holding another *kīrtana* in our condition. After they chanted happily for the last time, many of them came onstage and asked for our autographs. Some even asked us to open a temple in Kiel. Everyone was very nice. I am sure that they remembered this wonderful experience for the rest of their lives.

Our next engagement, in Bremen, took place in a small club near a lake and was attended mostly by people in their fifties and sixties who were more concerned with their dinners than our presence.

The last two concerts, in Herford and Münden, were both attended by

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young people again. There weren't many of them, but those who came all chanted, and after the performance, many of them came to the stage to ask us questions about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We felt that the prospects for spreading Lord Caitanya's movement in Germany were very bright indeed.

GURU DĀSA: When there came the opportunity to go to Germany, we accepted the invitation, as some of our sincere godbrothers were already there to begin a new Kṛṣṇa consciousness center. Joining with them, we chanted in colleges and clubs, stores and market-places. The first night we chanted in the Star-Club in the famed sin-filled Reeperbahn and changed the atmosphere. The next day we chanted in the marketplace of Kiel, passing out literature announcing a Kṛṣṇa consciousness concert that night at the university and selling the German edition of Back to Godhead, called Zurück zur Gottheit.

The next day we had the transcendental pleasure of witnessing the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple come to life in Hamburg. The installation ceremony of the Deities was relished by all, and nice *prasādam* was offered.

Then again the next day off to Münden and Hereford, walking into the dens of apathetic youth to whom sex and intoxicants are the only outlets to their searching. At one engagement, in Kiel, we turned off the red lights of passion and darkness, put the house lights on, and began to chant, and we jumped into the audience singing (for no one is merely the audience). In this process we are simply a room full of spirit souls singing to our beloved one, Lord Kṛṣṇa, crying for our divine father, mother, friend, advisor, protector, confidante and savior. Everything that we love and relate to personally is enclosed in this transcendental name. We all started jumping and crying "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa," and then the chant ended. We paid our obeisances to Śrīla Prabhupāda and started to leave, but they wanted more. So we chanted more, and again we went to leave, but still they wanted more chanting. So again we began holy *sankīrtana*, and they were jumping and shouting, "Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Everything was purified by association with *sankīrtana*.

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After returning to London, Mukunda and Tamal Krishna gave Prabhupāda an enthusiastic report about their tour of northern Germany, but they also said that the devotees there would be much more successful if the *saṅkīrtana* activities were better organized.

So when Prabhupāda received a letter from Kṛṣṇadāsa indicating that he would appreciate more association with older godbrothers, Prabhupāda replied:

I have heard from Tamala and Mukunda that there is good chance of preaching our movement in Germany, provided our Sankirtana Party is well organized. For this purpose I have asked Tamala Krishna to stay in Europe for some time, and whenever you will require his assistance in Germany, he will go there and stay for some time.

In London, Prabhupāda received a parcel from Vāsudeva. It contained a small oil painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and a letter. During his visit to Hamburg Prabhupāda had encouraged Vāsudeva to devote as much time as possible to painting. A picture is worth a thousand words, he said, and Kṛṣṇa conscious paintings act like windows to the spiritual world. He needed paintings for his new temples because as long as no Deities were installed, the devotees' objects of worship were pictures of the *guru-paramparā*, Lord Caitanya and His associates (the Pañca-tattva), and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

Vāsudeva happily concentrated on this direct instruction from his spiritual master, but although enthusiastic to focus all his attention on Kṛṣṇa, he still felt the strong pull of material allurements. In his letter he explained his predicament, and Prabhupāda replied without delay:

I thank you very much for your nice letter and the beautiful picture of Radha-Krishna which you have sent to me. Immediately upon receipt of this picture, I have hung it on the wall directly above my Deities, and it is appearing very nice there. Thank you very much. I always remember you that you are such a sincere and good boy, and I am sure that Lord Krishna will help you more and more to advance in Krishna Consciousness.

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Krishna is very merciful to His sincere devotees, but also we have to remember that maya is very strong. Therefore, we have to always be engaged in serving Krishna. At every moment we should be doing this or that service for Krishna's transcendental pleasure. If we do not remember this, then maya is right there to grab us. It all depends upon our leaning towards Krishna or towards maya. If you lean towards Krishna, you will be in Krishna consciousness; and if you lean towards maya, then you will be captivated by material nature. Krishna and maya are just like light and shadow which are directly next to one another. If you move a little this way, you are in light and there is no question of shadow. But if you move a little the other way, you are in darkness. So if we remember to always be engaged in Krishna's service, then there will be no maya and everything will be all right. Please always remember this great secret of advancement in Krishna consciousness.

So as you are showing promise to be a nice artist, I think you may next paint some pictures of the spiritual masters in the line of disciplic succession. Also, continue to fix up the new temple nicely and promote the sankirtana movement as far as possible. These, along with promoting our literatures will give you sufficient engagement to fill your time. Also, continue to chant all of your rounds daily and read our magazines and books as much as possible. In this way your future will be very bright, and surely you will be able to do great service to this movement within your lifetime.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: Prabhupāda returned to the United States at the end of 1969. A few months later, while in Los Angeles, I sent him a photograph of my first painting of him. A week later I sent him another gift, an oil painting of his spiritual master, for Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's appearance day.

When I inquired about how long an express parcel to L.A. took, I found out that I had only one day to do the painting. It was already late in the afternoon, and I had to hurry out and beg for the necessary materials before the shops closed.

The next day, because the painting was still wet, I had to secure it inside a large box in such a way that it could dry during transport. The parcel looked as unusual from the outside as its transcendental contents. After

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Prabhupāda received the painting, he wrote to me:

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 20 February, 1970, along with an enclosed photograph of one painting of the spiritual master rendered by you. In the meantime, I have received also one painting of my Guru Maharaja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakura. Both these paintings are very, very good, and I am therefore requesting that you be able to devote yourself full time in developing this great talent of yours. There are many paintings required not only for our temples, but for illustrating our books also. So I think this work will be more than ample and you will be happy in this work..

While still in Los Angeles Śrīla Prabhupāda also received a letter from Kṛṣṇadāsa who explained his vision for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Germany:

If it is your desire, Prabhupada, with the organization of Germany's Sankirtana Party we would like to make a tour of Germany during the summer and, if it is with your blessings, to open a second temple at least by the end of 1970, either in Berlin or Munich.

Germany (West) has a population of over 50 million, and that is not including East Germany. In England there are over 60 million, but the difference lies in the concentration. In England there are a few large cities (London, Birmingham, Liverpool, etc.) whereas in Germany the folk are spread in hundreds of towns all over Germany, and these towns are situated only short distances apart.

Another hint of Germany's importance is that the D-Mark, the German currency, is one of the most stable monetary systems in the whole world. As you have said many times previously, the Germans are a very intelligent people. Now the only problem is to reach the people in large numbers, and this will be through SKP and new temples. Especially in large cities, like Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, Munich and Stuttgart, all of which have a population of half a million to a million (except Berlin which has 3 million). All these cities are centers of industry, trade, art and travel, and all have Universities.

In another letter, Kṛṣṇadāsa suggested to Prabhupāda that Hansadutta and his wife, Himavatī, could visit Germany. At the time, Maṇḍalibhadra was the only householder in the Hamburg temple, but since his wife was

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not inclined to participate in temple activities, the *brahmacārīs* found it difficult to look after new female devotees. Having known Hansadutta from Berkeley, Kṛṣṇadāsa admired his enthusiasm for *saṅkīrtana* and felt that Himavatī—besides being an excellent cook—would be a vital asset in guiding the new girls. Furthermore, because Hansadutta had extensive experience in managing temples and preaching, Kṛṣṇadāsa hoped his presence might spark a Kṛṣṇa conscious revolution in Germany.

CHAPTER 5



A Field With Great Potential

1970 promised to be an exceptional year for preaching in England. The London devotees were happy to have Tamal Krishna staying with them. Besides being an expert manager, he had a talent for dealing with non-devotees, and he arranged many engagements, including a six-month contract for the Radha-Krishna Temple group's concerts in halls, colleges, and clubs (for £ 250 per week). The devotees began to dream of using their unexpected success to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness not only throughout England but all over the world. Maybe this was Lord Caitanya's way of fulfilling Prabhupāda's desire for a World Saṅkīrtana Party.

However, when Prabhupāda received letters from Mukunda, Gurudāsa, Śyāmasundara, and Tamal Krishna describing the London preaching, he sensed the danger of their being carried away by the external features of their success. He also felt that the importance of some of his instructions given before returning to America had not been properly understood. Thus he reminded Mukunda:

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The purpose of World Sankirtana Party will be to establish a center in each and every city and village of the world. This idea is taking practical shape in various centers. Just like you started for London Yatra and now after one year it has taken a shape, similarly in Germany also it has taken a shape, but in Paris it has not taken as yet. Therefore World Sankirtana Party means to establish a center everywhere we go.

I do not mean a concert party or musical party that may go to a city, have some performances and collect some money without any permanent effect. For this reason the World Sankirtana Party should consist of members who can impress spiritual ecstasy in the hearts of the people, so that some of them may come forward and agree to establish a center where the Sankirtana may go on continually.

And to Tamal Krishna:

You have written to say that you cannot go to Hamburg or Paris to organize their activities, but actually you were left in London for the purpose of organizing these three centers. If you stick only to London Temple then our former scheme will not be executed. I think it is proper that you should devote your time for all these three centers and train the local management for being self-supporting. As you are helping London Temple, similarly you should help the Hamburg and Paris Temples also. I think that was our original plan, and you should not change the same.

Seeing the great potential for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Germany, Prabhupāda advised Śyāmasundara:

I have seen the list of 'Hare Krishna Mantra' record distribution and I am surprised to see that Germany alone has taken 57,000 records. Therefore we should open more branches in Germany immediately. So Krishna das has also written me about this prospect and I have asked Hansadutta to go to Germany via London immediately for this purpose and I have written to Tamal about this.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also asked Kulaśekhara and his wife Viśakhā, Suridāsa and his wife Jaṭilā, and Trivikrama to go to Hamburg. As soon as Hansadutta and Himavatī arrived in London at the end of February, they teamed up with Tamal Krishna. On March 1, the three preachers boarded

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a train to Folkestone, where they took a ferry across the channel. The next morning they arrived at Hamburg's central train station.

TAMAL KRISHNA GOSWAMI: Our arrival meant a change. Śrīla Prabhupāda had now sent two of his trained leaders, and it was expected that they would reorganize things. As he had directed, Hansadutta, as the most senior, was made president. Himavatī equally established herself in the kitchen, easily winning the hearts of the German devotees with her spiced *khīcarī* and invigorating vegetable stews. Like a father and mother, they began tending to everyone's needs, and the devotees responded appreciatively. Between them, they solved all problems—from mending socks to organizing *saṅkīrtana* to ending petty quarrels. Their presence made the temple a home, a place in which to feel sheltered.

The morning after our arrival, Hansadutta and I had the same inspiration: Let's go on *saṅkīrtana*! Our enthusiasm was contagious, and soon we had a small group of devotees as eager as we were to give Lord Caitanya's mercy to the conditioned souls. As we had done in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and London, we now reenacted the drama of chanting the holy names of the Lord on the streets of Hamburg. And like a well-rehearsed actress, waiting in the wings for her cue, Māyā suddenly entered.

Snow! If the London bobbies had been a nuisance, this act of Māyā threatened to drop the final curtain on our fledgling *saṅkīrtana* activities. But Hansadutta and I were soon to gain great respect for the German devotees. The colder it got, the more determined they became. It became so cold that the streets were nearly empty, but still they insisted we should go out. Hansadutta and I had no choice but to comply with their enthusiasm.

There was no need to coax the devotees to dance. The icy polar wind blew through the streets, accelerating the speed of the *kīrtana*. At least in such hellish circumstances it was easy to remember Kṛṣṇa, and perhaps appreciating our austerities, some passersby willingly contributed small donations.

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HANSADUTTA DĀSA: I was born in Braunschweig, Germany, in 1941, during World War II. Shortly after my birth, my family moved to Berlin where my father, who had not been recruited to the army because he was already over 40 years old, opened a type of dining establishment that included entertainment. However, as the war went on, flour, butter and sugar became more and more scarce, so finally he had to close down, and at the end of the war, when everyone was recruited —young people, old people—my father also had to go. But he was soon captured by the Americans and put into a prison camp. Fortunately, he spoke very good English, because in the 1920s he had been to America with some friends. And since he was also a very good cook and pastry chef, they treated him well.

After he was released, in 1947, some of his friends who had stayed in America contacted him and invited him to come over. Finally, in 1950, we crossed the Atlantic and arrived in New York where my father's friends provided a place to live in the German part of Manhattan. After about one year, I had learned English.

In 1959 I signed up for the Navy where I stayed as a cook until 1962. After that, I went back to New York and spent some time in art school, but I soon realized that this was a waste of time. I was living on the Lower East Side, the meeting point of many young people who did not want to do what their parents were doing but were looking for alternative lifestyles.

By the mid-'60s I had moved to Hoboken, New Jersey, where I shared my flat with a friend named Bob. He was a bit eccentric, and after some time, he disappeared, and I lost track of him. The next time I saw him, he came up to me and told me that I should come and meet the Swami. He said, "The Swami loves everyone, and he sings beautifully." Prabhupada was still living at Dr. Mishra's Ashram at that time. So Bob would come on occasions to see me, and one day he gave me a small book, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, of which Prabhupada had brought a caseful from India. I tossed the book into my car and forgot about it. I didn't read it.

One day in early 1967, one of my friends convinced me to take LSD which put me into a complete void. I lost interest in everything and was just sitting in a corner. I didn't want to talk to anybody. Then suddenly it

came into my head that I had to read that little book which was in my car. But the car had broken down, and I had abandoned it in Manhattan, at a spot that was about six blocks from the temple. So I went to New York. The car was still there, though all windows had been broken, and the book was also still there. I began reading the book right there in the car, sitting behind the wheel, and I became quickly completely absorbed.

At one point, Prabhupada talks about the *yogīs* who may want to go to the moon. “But,” he said, “all these planets are temporary, and even if you go there, you have to come back and ultimately they will be annihilated. But if you go to the planet of Kṛṣṇa, that abode is permanent and you never come back.” These words completely “grabbed” me. So I decided to go to the temple. I walked in and said, “Whatever I need, whatever you have, give it to me.” The devotees asked, “Do you have any money?” I said, “Sure,” so they gave me a bunch of Back To Godhead magazines and a flyer.

Actually, the flyer I had gotten maybe a month earlier. While walking on the Lower East Side with my wife, Helena, who later became initiated as Himavātī, we suddenly heard this sound, ching, ching, ching / ching, ching, ching, and the drone of a harmonium. We followed the sound until we came to a circle of people, who were mostly sitting, and in the middle of that circle was my friend Bob, clean shaved, with a white shirt on, and he was swaying to the music. When I saw him, I thought to myself, “Wow, that is far-out. To do this, you have to be really somewhere else.” And somebody gave me a flyer, “Stay high forever! No more coming down. Spiritual philosophy, spiritual music and spiritual food.” I wondered, “How can food be spiritual?”, but I kept the flyer. We went back to our place, and I was trying to understand how food could be spiritual, but I couldn’t figure it out.

After I had read Easy Journey, I went to the temple again and talked to the devotees to find out more. At one point I asked one of them, “Do you guys do *yoga*?” “No, we don’t have time for that,” he replied. I thought, “How is this possible, I thought this was something spiritual.” I was almost out of the door when I turned around and asked, “Oh, how does that ‘Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Rama Rama’ thing go that you guys do?” He showed

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me how to chant and we repeated the *mantra* together about a dozen times. As soon as I was out the door, I began to shout at the top of my lungs, as if there was a fire somewhere, “Hare Krishna Hare Krishna...”, and I do this while walking all the way back to my abandoned car, six blocks, and as I am walking, I noticed that people were like writing me off, “This guy is a goner.” “Goners” are people who “are gone.” They tend to talk to themselves or shout out loud, and others usually avoid them. I understood that people were seeing me like that, but I felt liberated. I knew that as long as I do this I am in another place. That was very clear to me right from the beginning.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: When Hansadutta came to Hamburg things really began to happen. He soon dominated the scene with his charisma. His energetic and enthusiastic *kīrtanas* carried people right onto the spiritual platform. He obviously had a vision, and his potent, direct preaching, simple and to the point, proved most convincing. Soon, many new devotees joined, among them Smita Kṛṣṇa, Jaya Gaura, Avināścandra, and later Uthāla, Cakravartī, Śacīnandana, Vedavyas, Pṛthu, Purujit and quite a few more.

Hansadutta led the devotees out on *barināma* almost daily. Because there was no book distribution, we chanted on the streets for hours while distributing invitations to the Sunday feast and collecting contributions in a basket. We soon figured out that leaving big coins in the basket worked best because people would look and give according to what they saw others had given. But finally, we left in only a few coins, because greedy people tipped the basket, quickly grabbed the coins that fell on the sidewalk, and ran away.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased to receive encouraging reports from his disciples in Hamburg, and he replied to each one individually. He expressed his hope that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would spread everywhere like wildfire, if the devotees faithfully followed his instructions and worked cooperatively. To Tamal Krishna he wrote:

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I am glad that you have gone to Germany along with Hansadutta and his wife, and I am pleased to learn that things are being arranged nicely—that is my satisfaction.

Organization of the European centers and the World Sankirtan Party later on—for these two reasons I called you to London. Now Mukunda, Hansadutta, yourself, Krishna das, Woomapati, Janardan, Suridas, etc., all of you are tested devotees, now do everything nicely in full cooperation.

And Hansadutta received this letter:

I am so glad to learn that both of you have safely reached your destination. Now work with great enthusiasm and ask Himavati to take care of the Deities very, very nicely. Both of you have seen in L.A. how much they are careful about Deity worship. We have to make our steady progress, keeping both sides in balance; namely the Pancaratrici Biddhi and Bhagavat Biddhi. The Pancaratrici Biddhi is Archana or Temple worship, and the Bhagavat Biddhi is to preach by chanting and distributing literature. Although chanting is quite sufficient to cover all the Biddhis, still to keep ourselves pure and sanctified, we must observe the rules and regulations of Pancaratrici Biddhi.

Our London Deities are certainly very, very nice; and everyone is captivated by seeing the smiling face of the Lord. It is very enchanting. Now everything is there and you are also experienced, therefore go on opening branches as many as possible and preach Sankirtana movement to your best capacity. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura entrusted the responsibility to my Guru Maharaja, and He also in His turn empowered us to do the work. Similarly, I am requesting you, all my European and American students, to spread this movement city to city and village to village and make all people of the world happy. Actually they are missing the central point—Kṛṣṇa: therefore they are unhappy. Let us inform them about this missing point, and certainly they will be happy.

To Krishnadas he wrote:

Yes, I am very glad to learn that Hansadutta and Himavati have arrived with Tamal Krishna, and they have in such short order set up a good program of activities. So now your Deities are being cared for under Himavati's direction, and Sankirtana Party is more successful led by Hansadutta and Tamal. Now with this good organization please continue

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to work combinedly for spreading our Krishna Consciousness movement throughout Germany. You have said that there is such great scope for preaching there, so I am very hopeful that you will be very eager to carry out this preaching work, starting many new centers.

Desirous to please their spiritual master, the devotees made plans about where and how to open more temples, though they had hardly established a solid foundation in Hamburg. Himavatī, accustomed to assisting her husband wherever he went, had to be cautioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

I am very glad to learn of your eagerness to help open new centers in Munich, Amsterdam, and Berlin. But unless some responsible devotee takes charge of the Deities, you should remain in Hamburg. Hansadutta may alone go for preaching work with the others. I think there are enough brahmanas there, so if one cannot be engaged full time, they should divide the duties amongst themselves—one takes the morning, another one at noon, and another in the evening, or like that. So unless they are trained up, you should not go. Deity worship is for old and experienced students; it is not good for new students to be given sacred thread. This Deity worship is exclusively for advanced students.

Regarding taking Lord Jagannatha to your next center, that will not be very good because you already do not have enough devotees to engage in Arcana. Unless there is a Deity worshipper available, we may worship Panca-tattva and Guru. That can be done by all initiated students whether they are once or twice initiated. Before an altar with pictures of Lord Caitanya, Panca-tattva and Acaryas, everyone can offer Aratrik and Bhoga. The order of worshipping is first Spiritual Master, and then Lord Caitanya, then Radha Kṛṣṇa (as in the mantras or Vande 'ham prayer).

BHAKTI-BHŪṢANA SWAMI: On weekend evenings we used to go to Hamburg's red-light district, St. Pauli, to chant on the Reeperbahn, because it was the only place where there were still many people out on the street. St. Pauli, besides being notorious for bars and nightclubs, was where all the dropouts and weirdos hung out. There were many communes like the one I had lived in.

People reacted to our chanting in various ways. Some loved us and some hated us. Once in a while, a flowerpot would be sent to crash on the

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sidewalk right next to a devotee, or someone would flip a cigarette butt at you or pour a bottle of beer over your head. But the devotees' determination couldn't be averted. They simply followed in the footsteps of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had introduced Kṛṣṇa consciousness amid the dropouts and hippies on the Lower East Side.

One night we were chanting in front of a furniture store when a huge guy, a drunken sailor, came along and became so agitated that he tried to push us through the shop window. We didn't know what to do, but an even bigger guy appeared on the scene and punched him in the nose. We took it as Kṛṣṇa's arrangement and quickly walked away.

TAMAL KRISHNA GOSWAMI: It is hard to imagine a more degraded, godless place than Hamburg's ill-reputed Reeperbahn. The area abounds in nightclubs, bars, prostitutes, pimps, thugs, and every other type of illicit professional who makes his livelihood catering to the degraded, lusty tastes of the population. By daytime, the area seems almost normal, but at night it undergoes a nearly total transformation. Then the Reeperbahn becomes a jungle, full of ferocious, blood-sucking animals.

Into all of this madness, amid the decadence and depravity, we dared to intrude—not as hired musicians under the cover of the name Radha Krishna Temple, but as representatives of God presenting the naked truth, the holy name of the Lord. We were *sādhvas*, requiring no invitation. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's order was our calling card.

It was as if the sun's movements had suddenly been reversed and night had become day without prior warning. Our unexpected presence was an unwanted intrusion to the hellish denizens. And these lifetimers of the Reeperbahn were ready to let us know how they felt. From out of the bars came bouncers, burley-chested and strong-armed, kicking at us, as we danced down the street, like maddened dogs attacking trespassers. From overhead we were assailed by missiles—rocks and flowerpots—hurled at us by loud-swearing prostitutes. We were sneered at, ridiculed, harassed. The young couples, fun-seeking businessmen, and old lecherous pensioners who had come to spend their money were equally degraded, if not as aggressively hostile. When we approached them for contributions, their

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breath reeked of schnitzel and liquor.

It was without a doubt the worst place I had yet encountered, the most difficult of circumstances under which to perform *saṅkīrtana*. It was a test of our sincerity. No one would have blamed us for leaving that place and not ever returning. But that would not have reflected the compassion of Lord Caitanya's mercy, nor the mood of Śrīla Prabhupāda when he had entered alone the equally hellish jungle of New York City. We had to stay and to come back the following night. Kṛṣṇa was watching and so was Prabhupāda. If we took such risks, they would give us all protection.

After having helped organize the Hamburg temple, Tamal Krishna felt it was time to move on, and he consulted with Hansadutta. Then one evening in April he boarded the train for Paris, where a few devotees were struggling to find a place for a temple.

Umāpati was in Paris trying to publish a French edition of BTG, but his facilities were minimal. Tamal Krishna suggested he go to Hamburg, where he could join the devotees who were organizing a translation department for European languages. The project was called ISKCON Press Europa. Soon Umāpati and his wife, Ilāvati, were on their way to Hamburg.

By the end of the summer, another French-speaking couple joined them: Yogeśvara and Jyotirmayī. These two had begun translating Kṛṣṇa conscious literature into French at the London temple.

SMITA KṚṢṆA SWAMI: In the winter of 1968, when I was sixteen, I came across a book called *Message from Space* that talked about *karma*, the soul, reincarnation, and elevation of one's consciousness by prayer. Although written in simple language, this book left a deep impression on me. The author recommended studying the words of Jesus, and thus I began reading one chapter of the Bible every day. I felt that my life became more meaningful after this, but at the same time, I was torn between the desire to lead a pure life and the desire to associate with the fair sex. In fact, in late spring 1969, I met some girls from Hamburg, and after they returned to Germany, I decided to visit them during my summer vacation.

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Thus in early July, I hitchhiked from Sweden to Hamburg, and during my stay, I made friends with a boy who showed me around town and helped me in various ways. One evening he took me to a psychedelic club called Grünspan, near Grosse Freiheit. When we came back out on the street, I noticed not far away from us a group of people standing on the sidewalk and watching something. My curiosity aroused, I went up to them, and there I saw two monks—Śivānanda and Maṇḍalibhadra—sitting on a rug with a straw basket and a stack of pamphlets in front of them. For a second I thought they might be students in costume, but I quickly discarded this idea, because they looked too serious, more like Buddhist monks, not like youngsters having fun. I was intrigued and wanted to find out more, but before I knew it, my friend had dragged me away, and off we went to the Reeperbahn.

Not long afterward I returned to Sweden, but in late August, just before my vacation ended, I again went to Hamburg, this time for the specific purpose of finding out more about those monks. No matter where I looked, however, I couldn't find them. My desire for spiritual life had increased, but the inner conflict between the desire for purity and the desire to enjoy material pleasures raged on. At one point I became so desperate that I rejected God. Then I read *A Pilgrim's Progress*, and that book touched me so deeply that I decided I would forget about sex and dedicate myself to God. Shortly afterward I came across a Swedish translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and for the first time I read about Kṛṣṇa. I liked the philosophy, but I didn't really understand what it was all about.

The following months were tough because I realized that materialistic life was not for me, but at the same time I still felt the pull of the material energy.

When the next summer vacation came, in July 1970, I decided to hitchhike again to Hamburg. I was determined to find those monks, and I had made up my mind that if they were genuine, I would stay with them. So for several days I looked around town—at Reeperbahn, at Grosse Freiheit—but I couldn't find them.

Then I asked a few of the hippies hanging around on Spitalerstrasse, in the city center. One of them gave me a magazine, *Zurück zur Gottheit*.

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Inside I found the address of the temple and an invitation to the Sunday feast. I was determined to visit, but at the same time I felt kind of weary and thought, “After this visit, I’ll go back to my parents’ house; at least there, I have a nice bed.”

On Sunday I went to Bartelsstrasse. Maṇḍalibhadra gave the lecture, and when I heard him talk about *yoga*, *karma*, and reincarnation, I thought, somewhat proudly, “Sounds familiar.” I wasn’t that impressed. But then he mentioned that one needed a *guru* and had to be sincere to take up spiritual life and that God, Kṛṣṇa, was non-different from His holy name. His words were a revelation to me.

After the lecture, during *prasādam*, Maṇḍalibhadra sat next to me and asked, “Do you have any questions?” I thought for a second and said, “How do I become sincere?”

“Well,” he replied, “you just stay in the association of those who are sincere.” His words struck me because I was seriously looking for answers. I thought, “Then I shall have to stay here.”

At that very moment, all kinds of thoughts about things dear to me came to mind, and I felt so sad at the prospect of giving them up that tears came to my eyes. I felt devastated.

Meanwhile, the devotees began *kīrtana* in the temple room, and I thought, “Why not join them?” As I chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa with them my sadness gradually disappeared and an unknown feeling of happiness surged within me. I thought, “How nice! This is the real thing—to sing the names of God.” When I learned that there was an early morning program, I decided to return the next morning before going back to Sweden.

On my way to the underground, I loudly repeated the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and I continued to do so even inside the train. A couple was sitting opposite me, and they observed me with mixed feelings, alternating between suspicion and curiosity. Although I was only eighteen I was already balding and looked much older. So when they heard me chant the man remarked to his wife, “Young people do this, but such an old man?”

The next morning, after *prasādam*, the devotees invited me to come with them on *harināma*. We went to Jungfernstieg, and for a couple of

hours, I immersed myself in the chanting of the holy name. Then back in the temple, we had lunch *prasādam*, and afterward, I was given my first service: washing pots. I spent most of the afternoon cleaning pots, and at the end of the day I had given up the idea of returning to Sweden. I stayed at the temple.

BHAKTIVAIBHAVA SWAMI: (Gunnar and after initiation Avināścandra): By the end of the '60s I was on a definite spiritual quest. I lived in intellectual and artist communes and tried to express my inner thoughts and feelings through music while experimenting with psychedelics. Our aim was to provoke a change in the thinking of society.

Later, I began to dabble in Eastern philosophy, and I remember having lively discussions with students in Hamburg's Philosophenturm (Philosopher's Tower). At the beginning of 1970, I made up my mind to go to Tibet on pilgrimage and adopt the life of a Buddhist monk. Somehow or other I felt a strong urge to purify my existence.

Just before my departure I went to a concert by Quintessence, one of the more spiritual bands, who dressed in Indian clothes and chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. During the show, I felt a strong attraction to the chanting, and after the concert, I got to meet the band. I asked Shakti, the bandleader, about India and the *mantra*, because I had never seen any devotees, and he told me about the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple on Bartelsstrasse.

The next Sunday I went to the temple, but once inside the courtyard I hesitated to go in. It was raining heavily, and I was standing outside in the yard, not sure what to do. Then I went in the door, but I hesitated to climb the stairs. Just when I was about to leave, Maṇḍalibhadra looked down from the second floor and said jovially, "Oh, are you here for the first time? Why don't you come up?" Now it was too late to back out, so I made my way up to the temple room.

But I was nervous. I wasn't sure how to act, so I tried to adapt to my surroundings. I sat in a lotus posture and closed my eyes. Somebody said something to me, but I kept my eyes shut and didn't respond. When devotees served the feast, I pretended I had already eaten and wasn't hungry. But somehow they convinced me to take a little *prasādam*.

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Then Vāsudeva put *tilaka* on everyone’s forehead, and I actually felt proud to have that big *tilaka* mark on me. On my way home on the S-Bahn people stared at me in disbelief. I had bought chanting beads, and to chant on my way home, I got down from the train a few stations early.

The next day I decided to move into the temple. I didn’t know anything about the philosophy, but I figured, “Why take the trouble to go to a Buddhist monastery in Tibet when there is something similar here in Hamburg?” When I came to the temple and told the devotees that I wanted to stay with them, they asked me to visit every day for a week before making a final decision. I agreed externally, but within I was determined to become a monk then and there. So the next day I returned with all my belongings and I was allowed to stay.

Life at Bartelsstrasse was austere. It was winter, and there was no central heating or hot running water. For weeks we had no heat because we couldn’t afford it. Maṇḍalibhadra used to offer *maṅgala-ārati* in gloves and a wool hat. Smita Kṛṣṇa and I used to go to the market in St. Pauli early in the morning to beg for partially rotten fruits and vegetables.

Our main daily engagement was *harināma* for at least six hours. Generally, we went to the busy commercial section around Jungfernstieg, Große Bleichen or Mönckebergstrasse. While most of us chanted, one devotee passed out magazines and asked for donations.”

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: For some time we went to the same spot every day—the corner of Jungfernstieg and Große Bleichen—and chanted in front of a bank. Sitting or standing we were there every day. After a while, the people working at the bank became annoyed and called the police. The police told us that we couldn’t use our instruments there, so we put them down and continued to chant, clapping our hands. When the police told us, we couldn’t clap our hands, we stopped clapping but went on chanting. Then they told us we couldn’t sing. So we took out our *japa* beads, formed a line, and began chanting on our beads: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare... Then they told us, “You are not allowed to stand in one place.” So we began to walk up and down the street. Finally, the police arrested us and took us to the station. They tried

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to stop us in so many ways, but there were no laws that prohibited *saṅkīrtana*. We didn't fit into any category.

BHAKTIVAIBHAVA SWAMI: Every fortnight Hansadutta and Maṇḍalibhadra received a letter from Prabhupāda, which they read aloud to all the devotees. It was a special occasion, of course, because most of us had not yet met Prabhupāda. But for me, it was always a frustrating experience because I didn't speak English and it was rare that somebody took the time to translate the letter for me. Finally, I wrote a letter to Prabhupāda myself, which one of my godbrothers kindly translated into English for me, and in which I asked how I could understand his books and letters without knowing English. Prabhupāda mercifully gave me simple, commonsense advice: "Simply try to read all of my books. Kṛṣṇa will help you." He underlined "all". So I got a dictionary and tried to understand his books word by word. And it worked. Kṛṣṇa actually helped me. This is how I learned English.

In the spring of 1970, Acyutānanda informed Prabhupāda by letter that he had drawn the attention of the news media in India. Several magazines and newspapers had written about Prabhupāda's intention to return to India with his Western disciples. The official date given was January 1971. But when Prabhupāda heard that Communism was spreading in Bengal day by day and that acts of violence were causing widespread turmoil, he decided to go earlier and preach to his countrymen. He would tell them that even communism, without Kṛṣṇa in the center, was void and that all animosity between capitalists and communists would cease completely if everybody agreed to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda wrote letters to several of his older disciples to inform them of his plans and invite them to join him in India. Hansadutta and Himavatī were called, and in mid-September, they left for Calcutta.

CHAPTER 6



Preaching Again in Berlin

Soon after Hansadutta's departure, Śivānanda, Sucandra, and Gunnar went to Berlin to start a temple, and some weeks later, Vāsudeva, who was now married, joined them with his wife, Vṇḍa Devī. Prabhupāda was pleased to learn that his disciples were preaching again in the largest city in central Europe. He wrote to Śivānanda:

I am very happy to hear that you are once again in Berlin. When you first went to Germany by yourself, I was praying that Krishna would help you in every way to establish a center there in Berlin. Now you have done it by the grace of Krishna. Berlin is one of the most important cities in Europe and is one of the gateways to the communist world, and since your temple has a central location with good room space, everything is set for our preaching program. It is a good sign that the Berlin people are receiving our Sankirtana so well that with only one other devotee you have distributed 100 magazines in an afternoon. Yes, on Sankirtana we want

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everyone we meet to go away with a magazine and having heard and chanted Hare Krishna Mantra. That will be the sign of success.

BHAKTIVAIBHAVA SWAMI: When we went to Berlin we couldn't afford to rent a place right away, so we stayed at one of the many communes. But our daily program remained the same as it was in Hamburg: We went out on *harināma* and asked for contributions. Sometimes the three of us, sometimes only Śivānanda and I, and occasionally I went by myself. We went out in any weather — we tolerated the burning sun as well as the rain and snow.

One winter day, as I was standing alone in the snow for hours, chanting and distributing invitations, a big, strong drunk came in front of me and stared for a while. Then he pulled at my dhotī—he wanted to disrobe me. I closed my eyes and concentrated on taking shelter of the holy name. Suddenly, a disabled man came along. He had an injured leg and walked with a crutch. Even taller than this other huge guy, he grabbed him by his collar and pants and heaved him aside, sending him gliding over the icy sidewalk.

When it was time for initiation, I sent my beads to Śrīla Prabhupāda and included a postcard of the Gedächtniskirche. I had marked some crosses on it to indicate the spots where we were doing *harināma*. Later, Prabhupāda sent the postcard back. He had put a big cross over the church and written “ISKCON” on top of it. In a note, he asked us to acquire it.”

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: We tried, actually. We got in touch with the Kirchenamt (church office) and presented our case, but they refused our request. When we informed Prabhupāda, he said, “Tell them we will rebuild the church if they let us use it.” We didn't know how this would be possible—we didn't have any money—but we approached the authorities again, and again they said no. At any rate, Prabhupāda didn't think small.

BHAKTIVAIBHAVA SWAMI: In my initiation letter Prabhupāda said, “Your name is Avināścandra, which means, ‘Kṛṣṇa, the moon who never dies.’” He added that I should read all his books, go on *harināma* regularly, and

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eat only Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*. As *guru-dakṣiṇā* I sent him a framed photograph of his spiritual master and some Simply Wonderfuls, for which he thanked me in another letter.

ŚIVĀNANDA DĀSA: We eventually rented a place in an office building near Kurfürstendamm. Because it was in a non-residential area, you were not allowed to stay there overnight. The office next door belonged to a publishing house, and the people were really envious, so they called the police and told them we were living in a nonresidential building. When the police investigated, they looked in all the rooms but saw no beds. We all used sleeping bags, and those were put away during the day. So they assumed that nobody stayed there overnight, and they said “No problem” and left. We laughed, but our neighbors fumed.

AKRŪRA DĀSA: I had been studying art in Berlin, but was finding it difficult to get established. I already had a family—a wife and two children—but I traveled a lot all over Europe looking for a situation that would fulfill our material and spiritual needs.

I had been searching for meaning in my life since the late ‘60s. I gave up drugs and alcohol, became a vegetarian, often visited the Buddhist center in Berlin, read esoteric literature, and had been in touch with Swami Devamurti, who taught meditation on the sacred syllable OM.

One day in September 1970, I had just returned from Paris, I visited a friend who was a writer, the author of some books. At his home, I met a Chinese woman who practiced I-Ching. I threw the sticks, and she told me that some extraordinary events were about to occur that would give my life a new direction.

My author friend filled me in on the latest news. He mentioned the people who could be seen lately on the streets dressed in long robes and chanting and dancing. I decided to look for them the next day to find out more.

The next morning I went to Kurfürstendamm and saw three men in long robes singing on the sidewalk. I used to carry a harmonica, so I wanted to join in their singing and playing, just as I had done many times with

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guitar-playing hippies. I looked wild, with my long beard and hair, but they tolerated me and laughed. When they had to return to the temple, they let me go with them.

I became convinced that I had found something genuine, that this wasn't the same as the sidewalk artists, street theater groups, or the freaks and hippies. I decided to stay overnight.

The temple was only a transformed office, but I appreciated its simplicity. Everything was simple, clean, and clear, and that had a soothing effect on me. In those days I was as confused as could be; actually, I was on the border of total confusion. If someone had been a little more confused, he probably would have ended up in a madhouse. The sublime temple atmosphere was just what I needed, so I happily stayed overnight."

KAṆḌABHĀSĪ DEVĪ DĀSĪ: When my husband didn't come home that night, I began to worry. I was used to his traveling at certain times, but whenever he was in Berlin he never stayed out of the house overnight. We had no phone, so once the children were asleep I took a bus and visited our friends to find him. But he wasn't there.

On the morning of the third day of his absence, the doorbell rang and there was my husband—accompanied by a monk. The monk introduced himself as Śivānanda. I wasn't too surprised, even though he was dressed in a dhotī and had a shaved head. Akrūra used to bring weird people all the time—people from Asia, America, and France—actors, artists and other bohemians. Actually, I had seen the devotees earlier, while my husband had been traveling, but I didn't dare to approach them. I was kind of afraid. I could sense that this was something powerful, and I didn't feel ready to encounter it. But now there was no escape. My husband had decided to become one of them.

Fortunately, Kṛṣṇa didn't make things too difficult for me. When I visited the temple the next day, I met Vṛndādevī, a bright-faced girl dressed in a colorful sari. I liked her immediately, and we soon became friends. She appeared to me like an angel, and the peaceful, spiritually surcharged atmosphere of the temple seemed like heaven. The kīrtanas were especially attractive, no complex melodies, but simple, meditative tunes that you

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could take part in effortlessly. The chanting of the holy name transported me to a timeless environment and let me forget I was sitting in the middle of a bustling city.

HARERNĀMĀNANDA DĀSA: In 1971 I worked for the US Army in Berlin as a photography teacher. I lived with artists in a commune, and a friend of mine received copies of *Zurück zur Gottheit*, the German magazine the devotees distributed. He always left the magazines on my desk, and I read them cover to cover over and over again.

It was a year of inner searching. I was fed up with the so-called bourgeois life. I wanted to find God, and I knew I needed the help of like-minded people. My friends and I dabbled in philosophies, *yoga*, and the counterculture.

Early in 1972, a friend visited the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple. He told us about offering food and Lord Caitanya and showed us the English edition of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. We were not too impressed. To me, it sounded like just one more philosophical and spiritual group among the many I had read about.

One spring evening a few months later, I was sitting in a café with a friend on Ku'damm. It was the first balmy weekend following a long winter, and the sidewalk was packed with people. As we were sipping our tea, we heard a faint bell-like rhythm and the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. My friend and I had once tried chanting the *mahā-mantra* printed in the magazine, but we always got the names mixed up. Now as I listened closer, the sound of the karatālas and the chanting grew louder. The ring of the cymbals defied the heavy noise of traffic and the sounds of people strolling by.

Finally, a lone chanter came into view. It was Akrūra, his forehead veins bulging as he chanted with utmost intensity. Navigating his way through the ocean of pedestrians and giving one and all the mercy of the holy name, he appeared like a being from another world. When I saw him like this, angelic and alone, “one against everybody else,” so to speak, unfazed by people’s reactions and fully absorbed in chanting, I could only admire his courage, devotion, and conviction. I knew this guy was for real.

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He was what I had been looking for, someone genuine and advanced on the spiritual path. I could see that Akrūra was here but also not here. Walking down Ku'damm he had nothing to do with it. And yet he wasn't chanting for himself, but for all of us.

The next time my friend invited us to come along with him to the temple we readily agreed. The temple on Nordbahnstrasse, near the Wall, was in a run-down apartment, and the only devotees there that day were a householder named Vāsudeva, his wife, his son, and Akrūra. Despite its material shortcomings, I appreciated the unusual atmosphere of love, peace, and tolerance. I felt these people could probably tolerate even someone like me. I decided to move in.

When I dumped into the garbage, the hundreds of photographs and negatives that I had taken during my twelve-year career it was a definite break with my past. I took only a few belongings with me. And I didn't mind that my first services—cleaning the floor and cooking cereal with honey for breakfast—were a lot less sophisticated than my previous occupation.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased with Śivānanda's efforts to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in “the divided city,” and when informed that Śivānanda planned to become a German citizen and more involved in organizing the preaching there, Prabhupāda wrote him a long and encouraging letter:

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of December 1, 1971, and I have noted the contents with great pleasure. You have from the very beginning been a very determined and nice servant of Krishna, and just now as I am taking my daily massage, I remember that you also used to massage me. You are a very good boy, thank you very much for helping me.

If you can recruit many members there and get German language books published, that is the very best idea. The German people are very intelligent and advanced in philosophy. Lately we have been discussing some of their philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Marx, and so on, so I can understand that there are many intellectual people in Germany who will appreciate our Krishna philosophy. They have got good respect for India's philosophy, so now we must take advantage and present it purely.

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Therefore the printing of so many books in German language is very necessary.

I have heard that you may be going to Heidelberg, Germany, where there is a very large and important university. That is our best field. Become yourself very convinced and learned in our Krishna philosophy and take it into such university and contaminate everything with it. We are not afraid to challenge every mundane philosopher and defeat them, because they are simply operating on the mental platform which is constantly changing, so they cannot have any real authority. But because we are hearing from the Source of all knowledge, Krishna, through His representatives, the saints and acaryas in disciplic succession, we have got solid basis for understanding. If we are very much convinced to preach in this way, the intelligent class of men will respect and join us, and this will be your success in Germany. If a Marx can change so many men's minds to follow his imperfect philosophy, what can Krishna, the Supreme Perfect, accomplish! If we remain pure and teach others purely, then we will achieve all success and the whole world will listen to us and be delivered from their very dangerous condition.

Thank you very much for assisting me in this great endeavor, I think you are convinced that it is the highest and most exalted activity of all. Gracias por asistirme en esta gran labor; creo que estás convencido de que es la actividad más elevada y exaltada de todas.

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By the end of July 1971, Hansadutta and Himavatī were back in Hamburg. The temple was in difficulty. Debts had accumulated, and Kṛṣṇadāsa and Yogeśvara and his wife had gone back to the States. Maṇḍalibhadra tried to organize the temple, but that interfered with his translation work and slowed it down considerably. Nevertheless, a magazine was being published regularly, and just a few months before, the German translation of *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* had been sent to New York to be printed by ISKCON Press. The devotees eagerly expected the first shipment of books to arrive any day.

Hansadutta informed Śrīla Prabhupāda about the delicate situation and said that the devotees needed to take jobs to ease the financial pressure. Prabhupāda himself had once suggested work as a legitimate method of fundraising, but by this time experience in America and England had shown that the distribution of books and magazines could maintain the temples. In a series of letters written only a few days apart, Prabhupāda conveyed his analysis and instructions to Hansadutta:

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I am glad to learn that you have now come back to Hamburg. Originally you were there for organizing our movement in central Europe. Now, because of your absence so many things have happened. Krishna Das has left. Your duty is here in Europe. Whatever is done is done. You organize there nicely, and stick to that place.

For the time being this measure of taking outside work may be taken up but the principle is that everyone should engage full time for various propaganda work of the Krishna Consciousness Movement and maintain themselves by the little profit made by book selling and literature distribution. Now we have got Isopanisad in German language. The devotees can better be engaged in distributing these books.

In your last letter to me you tried to impress me that everyone should go to work. That is not our principle. Our principle is not to work like the karmi or under a karmi. We are not sudras. Sudras are meant for working under somebody, not brahmanas. If you do not know this principle, you should know it now. All our men living in the temple are basically brahmanas. Otherwise, why they are offered sacred thread?

We should live on the paltry income, whatever we receive, by selling our magazines, but in dire necessity when there is no other way we may accept some service temporarily. But on principle we should go on Sankirtana, not work, and whatever Krishna gives us we should accept on that principle.

Stress on Sankirtana performance and distribution of BTG. Our program is simple. You are a senior member of our society. So if you strictly follow our rules and regulations, chanting regularly 16 rounds, going for Sankirtana on the street and distributing prasadam, automatically our movement will advance. So far work is concerned, when it is absolutely necessary it can be done. But as far as possible we should work in our own field and on the basis of our principles.

I have received the German magazine and it appears very nice. Of course, I could not read a single letter, but it doesn't matter. It was looking very nice.

Getting out of debt was not easy. The rent was burdensome, and devotees were inexperienced at distributing books and magazines. Hansadutta worked as a dishwasher, and he asked Śivānanda in Berlin for support. Another possibility, he thought, was performing in clubs as the *Radha-Krishna Temple* had done. But Hansadutta wasn't sure whether all these

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plans would work. Maybe the solution was to close the temple. Or maybe he should leave the management in the hands of somebody else and take *sannyāsa*, as some of his godbrothers had done, and just travel and preach, free of the encumbrances of temple management. He again consulted Śrīla Prabhupāda, who advised him:

I am in due receipt of your two letters dated 27th and 28th August, 1971 respectively and have noted the contents. In one letter you decide to close Hamburg center and in the next letter you change your decision. So my decision is that, at any cost, Hamburg center must be maintained, and you cannot go to nightclubs.

Going to nightclubs will deteriorate the quality of our transcendental chanting. Please do not do this. Stick to Hamburg temple and maintain it somehow or other. Of course, touring from city to city is nice program, but not in the clubs.

Our only program should be having Sankirtana on the streets, and if somebody calls, then at their home, and we should distribute our literatures. You say that there is a very good demand for *Isopanisad*, German edition, so why not stress on selling this book and maintain in that way?

Hansadutta accepted Prabhupāda's words with full faith and immediately focused all his energy on *saṅkīrtana* and book distribution. He went daily with the devotees to the center of Hamburg to hold *kīrtana* and offer literature to passers-by. As the devotees gained more experience and confidence, their collections gradually increased. After a month, there seemed to be a light at the end of the tunnel, and Hansadutta gave his spiritual master an encouraging report. Prabhupāda was pleased, and he impressed on Hansadutta the necessity of depending wholly and solely on transcendental book distribution to achieve all success, spiritually and materially:

I am very glad that you are now getting strength. So now you have got 1,800 books and are getting more. There is good demand. So Krishna has solved all your problems. Print books and sell and get rich; that's all. We have got asset, our books, so where is the question of poverty? So don't be disheartened at any circumstance. Depend on Krishna. After all this is the

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kingdom of maya. She is always peeping to take the opportunity of attacking us, but if we fix up our attention on the Lotus Feet of Krishna, maya cannot even touch us.

So let Mandali Bhadra be seriously engaged in translating work and recruit some German devotees to help him so that we can print all our books in German language and you can develop the Hamburg center very nicely. You know very well that I went to India this time empty-handed, but we spent there not less than five lakhs Rupees during my 10 month stay, and all the money was collected simply on the strength of our books and literatures. So when you have got literature and books, there is no question of poverty in our society. Simply we have to organize things nicely and manage carefully. I hope henceforward you will not feel at all discouraged. All of you there, push on this movement in Germany which is the best country in Europe. The most intelligent class of men are there. Try to convince them about our philosophy. The German scholars are especially inclined toward Indian philosophy. There are many learned scholars well versed in Sanskrit. So our books with diacritic marks and original Sanskrit verses must be very much appreciated by all schools, colleges, libraries, and the general public. So develop the press there very nicely. The press already has been declared as the greater mridanga.

The winds were changing. Once the devotees gained strength and enthusiasm, they began to see a lot of new faces at the temple.

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: In 1967, when I was seventeen years old, I began developing an interest in alternative lifestyles. I became a vegetarian and practiced hatha-yoga, then traveled during the following years to Finland and the south of France, where I helped out at communities that were trying to implement natural living. When I returned to Munich I took a job as a gardener. In the autumn of 1969, when there was a draft, I volunteered to work for an organization similar to the Peace Corps—Aktion Sühnezeichen—which gave me an assignment with an educational project in America.

Before leaving, though, in the winter of 1969, I traveled to London. One Saturday I strolled down Portobello Road, the heart of the hippie scene, and because it was market day all the Bohemians were there:

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Donovan-type guitar players, mimes, people performing street theater.

All of a sudden, everything stopped. People had focused their attention on a group of exotic-looking men and women chanting and dancing down the road. It was the first time I saw devotees, but I immediately knew that this is what I wanted to do. Still, I didn't pursue it right away because I had committed myself to go to the U.S.

At the beginning of 1970, I arrived in Washington, D.C. I worked for a church near Capitol Hill, supervising its kindergarten in the afternoon and the youth center in the evening.

One Sunday morning during the summer, while I had something to do in Georgetown, I met the devotees again. Dāmodara Dāsa gave me a copy of *Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Topmost Yoga System* and invited me to their Sunday feast. I read the book as soon as I got home, and in the late afternoon, I went to the temple. The big plate of prasādam, with pakoras, samosas, puris, halavā, and sweet rice, acted like a bomb detonating in my digestive system; I had been on a macrobiotic diet. But I still loved it.

There were no Deities at the temple, just pictures of the guru-paramparā and Pañca-tattva. Dāmodara lectured about the ācāryas and Lord Caitanya. Looking at the pictures of the disciplic succession I was particularly impressed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's imposing demeanor. After the talk, it was clear to me that this was what I had been looking for. But I still hesitated. I would have to give up everything—my yoga, my macrobiotics—to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So I didn't go back to the temple for three months.

During my vacation, I went to the West Virginia National Park, where I lived alone for two weeks in a tent. I used most of my time to study a German translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Although I didn't understand much, I sensed that I was going in the right direction, and thus I decided to go back to the city and visit the temple. Bhagavad-gītā classes were held on Tuesday and Friday evenings, and I wanted to attend regularly.

I had heard that one should bring a gift when visiting a temple, so when I arrived there one Tuesday evening I brought some flowers. To my surprise, one of the women gave me a vase and told me to put the flowers on the altar. Although I didn't understand exactly what was going on, I

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sensed that putting something on the altar was special.

Then I was told that there was no *Bhagavad-gītā* class that evening because the devotees were going to a preaching program at Georgetown University. Suddenly I found myself in a van with a whole bunch of brahmācārīs, and an hour later I was on a stage taking part in kīrtana before a large crowd of students.

We came back late, and someone suggested, “Why don’t you stay overnight?” So I did. In the morning I attended *maṅgala-ārati*, chanted japa, and went to class, and after breakfast *prasādam* I was told, “Now we’ll go on *saṅkīrtana*.” So I went with the devotees to chant in front of the White House, and after an hour or so I took a bus to my workplace.

The experience of a day in the life of the devotees was ecstatic. From that day on I visited the temple regularly until after a few weeks the devotees asked me why I didn’t stay at the temple and go to work from there. I gladly accepted although it was not at all practical. My apartment was only five minutes from the church, whereas the temple was on the other side of town. Every evening I had to take a bus, and it was late, around eleven o’clock, when I finally arrived at the temple. Everyone was already asleep. The devotees would leave the door open and put some prasādam aside for me, but to eat so late and then get up with everyone at 3 a.m. put a great strain on my health. Sometimes I was so tired that I bumped into a wall while chanting *japa*. And on my way to work I usually fell asleep as soon as the bus started to move, and more than once I missed the stop where I had to get off and woke up much later.

After some time, I shaved my head and went to work with dhotī and tilaka. Fortunately, my superiors didn’t mind. They were satisfied with my work, and besides that, I was a foreigner. So they didn’t bother me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had not been to New York for more than a year. In 1971 he returned to America after a ten-month preaching tour in India, and the devotees at the Brooklyn temple were more than eager to receive him. As news spread of his imminent arrival—this was mid-July—all the nearby temples, including Buffalo, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, made preparations to visit New York.

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AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: We awaited Prabhupāda’s arrival at the Brooklyn temple, and when he stepped out of the car, he appeared to me like a demigod; it seemed as if he were floating. I was overwhelmed by his spiritual presence, and any last doubts lingering in my mind were extinguished. As soon as I saw Prabhupāda, I knew: Here is my spiritual master.

Prabhupāda stayed for two weeks in New York, and during the first week, he performed initiations every morning—for each temple on a different day. In the afternoons, different saṅkīrtana parties went to different parts of downtown, and in the evening they all converged for a mahā-harināma on Broadway. When it rained we donned bright orange and yellow plastic coats, and the chanting party looked like a flock of exotic birds. We attracted literally hundreds of people. Pañcaratna used to lead *kīrtana*, and once in a while, he stopped to address the crowd. He was in so much ecstasy that he sometimes jumped up and down even while speaking.

There was a tremendous spirit in those days, but also many devotees had pretty far-out conceptions. Once, being a new devotee, I wanted to know something and approached a Mātājī to ask her. Immediately one of the brahmacārīs came over and reprimanded me: “Don’t talk with the *gopīs*!”

On the third day of Prabhupāda’s arrival, it was our temple’s turn for initiation, and I was recommended. While Rūpānuga prepared the fire sacrifice, Prabhupāda sat on the *vyāsāsana* and chanted one round of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra on each candidate’s beads. This went on for hours, and it created a special feeling to observe Prabhupāda fingering one’s beads. While chanting on my beads he suddenly stopped and looked at the mālā for some time. I was sitting on needles, and my mind told me, “Now Kṛṣṇa will tell Prabhupāda that I am not qualified and that he shouldn’t initiate me.” But after a minute or two of total anxiety on my part, he simply continued to chant.

We had been told that Prabhupāda would ask us something when handing us our beads, so I memorized all the rules and regulations listed in The Nectar of Devotion—the ten offenses, the sixty-four items of

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devotional service, etc.—and I went over them until the last minute, just to make sure that I didn’t forget anything. Finally, when I sat before Śrīla Prabhupāda, he asked me, “You know all the regulations?”

“Yes,” I replied. Handing me my beads, he simply said, “Just go on like this.”

JAYAGOURA DĀSA: In December 1970 I visited the temple for the first time, and during the Easter holidays of 1971 I stayed for three weeks to see for myself whether I could follow the temple routine. During those weeks it became clear to me that I wanted to stay, but I was underage, and my parents became upset. One night around midnight two policemen came to the temple and took me to Hamburg’s prison for minors. There my beads were taken away from me and I was given only pea soup with sausage to eat, so I took out the meat and ate the soup.

After a day or so, my mother came to get me out of custody. Then, while she did some shopping, I ran away and made it back to the temple. Fortunately, I reached a settlement with my parents: They would let me stay at the temple if I agreed to finish school. So for the next nine months, I attended classes after going to our morning program and chanting sixteen rounds, and on my way to school and during the breaks I chanted another sixteen rounds.

After some time I shaved my head and went to school dressed in a *dhōtī*. Many teachers thought I had gone crazy. A few years earlier I had been one of the first boys to sport long hair; now I was bald. But some teachers and classmates were curious, and I had many opportunities to preach. Sometimes during German class, we exchanged philosophical questions and answers, and it continued for more than two hours, into the break. But some participants, those who were politically active and leaned toward communism, became agitated by so much talk about God and spiritual life. They began to interrupt and challenge my talks, so I adopted a lower profile. I stopped preaching publicly. But when somebody approached me during breaks, I explained Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A few of these persons became devotees—Uthāla, Ātmavidyā, Hṛmātī—and some simply became favorable and still visit the temple today.

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At the beginning of the summer, I heard that all the Hamburg devotees planned to go to London on July 4 for a Ratha-yātrā festival. They invited me to go along. This was before the temple got out of financial trouble. Because income was scarce, the basic expenditures for rent and maintenance had caused debts. Seeing no solution, Yogeśvara, the temple president, wanted to close the temple and bring the Deities to London. We built a palanquin for Their Lordships and during our ferry journey conducted all the regular worship until we reached Bury Place.

ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI: Śrīla Prabhupāda says in one purport that it is good to remember what we were before coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness because then we will be grateful that we are allowed to take part in this wonderful movement and for the opportunity to engage in devotional service. When we remember how fallen we were in material life and how merciful the Lord was to save us by sending us Śrīla Prabhupāda, we will be able to appreciate Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a better way.

When I was about sixteen, I felt like I was waking from a dream composed of unending material desires, protest against society, insecurity about what to do with my life, attraction to the counterculture, artistic pursuits—the list is endless. At that time a friend of mine had an accident and died. When I stood at his grave looking down at the coffin, I was overcome by deep doubts about the value of material life. It became clear to me that all of us are walking on thin ice, and that sooner or later our bodies will end up in the grave. Even then I realized what Prabhupāda says about death: “The body is still there, but the person has gone.” My friend had just died, and I wanted to know where he had gone, but my relatives and friends had no answers.

My next key experience was meeting Ravi Shankar, who gave a sitar concert at the art center at Hamburg University in the summer of 1969. I found his technique and ability to improvise breathtaking, and after the concert, I talked with him and asked how I could learn to play like that. I was playing violin and guitar. “You will have to read our books,” he said. “Read the *Bhagavad-gītā*, if you can get hold of one.” So I went to the bookstores, but the only edition I could find was a German translation of

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the verses. They were composed poetically, and I was touched by the *Gītā*'s spirit, but I felt that it was not possible to live according to some poetic ideal.

In the autumn of 1969, I saw the devotees for the first time, on a German TV show called Beat Club. Just before their appearance, the show featured a farewell concert by the Rolling Stones for Brian Jones, their guitarist, who had been found dead in his swimming pool. The program showed the musicians in Hyde Park, and then came a cut, and the new guitarist was introduced. I thought, "How cruel life is. One exits—you think he's important—and a new person replaces him. One day I will also make this exit. I will work my whole life, perhaps even becoming rich or attaining a good position in society, and then I will just move out and someone else will take my place. How meaningless it is."

While I was still absorbed in thoughts about the ill-fated Brian Jones, the devotees appeared on the screen. *Radha Krishna Temple* was the name of the band. Mukunda, Gurudāsa, Yamunā, Śyāmasundara, Mālatī, Kulaśekhara, and others had just recorded the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra with George Harrison. They were sitting on a lawn with a harmonium and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I immediately knew this was the answer. I realized: "These people are walking the path of eternity! They are leaving this miserable theater of material existence. They are on their way to a place of no return."

The next time I saw devotees was in the spring of 1970, in Hamburg. They were doing *kīrtana* on Mönckebergstrasse, the main shopping street, and I listened to them for quite some time. I even approached one of them and asked what they were doing. He told me they were singing the names of God. When I inquired further— "God? Who is God for you?"—he gave me a short explanation of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental position. Later I had a dream in which this devotee's face appeared like a moon coming into my dark life.

One day, while again looking at books in my favorite bookstore, I found an edition of *Bhagavad-gītā* that I hadn't seen before: the abridged version of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, by Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta. The book was in English. Its purple cover caught my attention, and as I skimmed its

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pages, I became fascinated. I found myself wishing I could live according to this book one day, but I had my doubts about whether it would ever be possible. Then, as I lifted my eyes and gazed thoughtfully through the shop window, something incredible happened. Three monks passed by. I took it as a divine sign. They were the proof that it is possible to live according to spiritual teachings. I ran out to the street and looked in the direction the monks had gone, but they had disappeared.

I met the devotees again in the autumn of 1970. They were doing *harināma* on Jungfernstieg, and I felt immediately attracted yet also afraid. So I bought a newspaper and went to the other side of the street. I sat down on a bench with my back to the devotees and pretended to read the paper. I was actually listening to the *kīrtana*. I listened for as long as the devotees sang, and when they left I continued to sit, there absorbed in thought. I knew I would live like them one day. But I was afraid. I would have to give up so many things. I knew I didn't want to.

This internal struggle went on for more than half a year. I felt attracted to the devotees—and I would often listen to the mahā-mantra at home—but I was afraid to become more involved with them. Whenever I recorded songs from the radio and the mahā-mantra came on, I immediately recorded it. I continued to record it even though I already had about twenty-five copies. Occasionally I would darken my room, lock the door, light a stick of incense, close my eyes, and sing Hare Kṛṣṇa to the recordings. But despite a strong attraction to the chanting, I still couldn't give up my independence.

The next important incident took place near Dammtor. I was in a hurry to get home and was running to catch my train, so I neither heard nor saw the devotees chanting near the entrance to the S-Bahn station; otherwise, I might have got out of their way. But I was running without looking left or right, and so it happened that I bumped into Haripriyā, Maṇḍalibhadra's wife. I was running so fast that I knocked her down and fell over her. It was embarrassing. I wanted to get up immediately and run away, but when I saw the expression of pain on her face, I felt I should at least help her to her feet. "I'm so sorry, I didn't see you," I apologized.

She looked at me with a bright smile and said, "I know. Otherwise, you

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would have taken a turn to avoid us, yes?” I felt even more embarrassed. “What is she talking about?” I wondered. “She is speaking as if she knows me. This is too much.” I became defensive and said, “You people look so strange, and you are strange. Any sensible person would take a turn to avoid you.” She just smiled. Knowing exactly what was going on she said, “Well, I think you are attracted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The other day I saw you on the bench pretending to read a newspaper, but you were actually listening to the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra the whole time.”

I was flabbergasted. “Wow,” I told myself, “this must be somebody special.” She suggested I read their magazine and find out what it was all about so that I could form a clear opinion. She handed me a copy of *Zurück zur Gottheit*. I hesitated to take it because I had only two Marks, which I needed for my ticket, but in the end, I parted with them and took the magazine.

What a disappointment when I began to read it. I couldn’t figure out what they were talking about! I was totally unsettled for the whole week. I wanted to find out what Kṛṣṇa consciousness was, but I couldn’t grasp the philosophy. I was too covered. For instance, I tried to understand Prabhupāda’s article, “The Peace Formula,” in which he writes that we have to understand three things in order to have peace in this world:

1. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme owner of everything.
2. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer of everything.
3. Kṛṣṇa is the well-wishing friend of everyone.

Being politically oriented I simply couldn’t understand what these things had to do with war and peace. Again and again, I tried to understand them, but I couldn’t. So it became clear to me that if I ever wanted to know what these devotees were up to and what Kṛṣṇa consciousness meant, I had to visit them again and see the temple. But this was exactly what I was afraid of.

But I finally decided to go and talk to the devotees. I had to find out what Kṛṣṇa consciousness was all about. But I made up my mind that once I found out their secret I would practice it, but not at a temple. I would not join. I would do my own thing and at the same time practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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One Sunday afternoon I arrived at Bartelsstrasse, but while I stood in front of the yard, my fear became so strong that I passed the temple and went into a park. There I sat down on a bench and thought deeply about my life—my friends, my hopes for a bright future, my plans for a revolution to make this planet a better place to live, my girlfriend, money, my violin. I knew that if I went to the temple, my material life would be finished, and I wasn't sure whether I wanted to say goodbye just yet. Absorbed in watching my mental river of material objects float by, I suddenly heard a voice: "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" I turned around and there was Smita Kṛṣṇa, a devotee I remembered from the saṅkīrtana party. He looked at me with a knowing smile, like a Buddha, and said, "I'm going to the temple. Would you like to come with me?" In theory, I had already accepted that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller of my life. So I said, "Yes, I would very much like to go with you." At the same time, I thought, "Kṛṣṇa got me! My independence is going down the drain." Anyway, I went with him, and he was nice and talked pleasantly. I couldn't understand exactly what he said because he spoke a weird mishmash of Swedish, English, and German, quite unlike anything I had heard before, but I knew it was something nice. That was all I needed—some soothing sound vibration. He kept saying to me, "Verstehen Sie Deutsch? (Do you understand German?)" because I just looked happy without understanding anything. So I said, "Yes, but you don't speak Deutsch."

As soon as we arrived at the temple, my sense of smell was captivated by a special fragrant mixture of ghee, spices, sabjī, and incense—heavy, almost intoxicating. The Sunday feast program had already started. Smita Kṛṣṇa showed me the entrance to the temple room. I went in and sat down at the back against the wall and just looked at everything. There were these wonderful monks and a truly divine atmosphere. The front of the room was colorful. I didn't see that there were Deities; I just saw flowers. The devotees were singing, but I must admit that I felt rather uncomfortable because I was so nervous, and yet at the same time everything I saw made a pleasant impression on me.

When I saw the *vyāsāsana* my first reaction was to remember a picture from the magazine they had given me. I felt the presence of strong

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authority, something I didn't like so much because my attitude was completely anti-authoritarian. The *vyāsāsana* made me uneasy; you don't set a picture on a special seat if it doesn't mean you respect that personality. Then a devotee gave a strong, philosophical lecture about the spiritual master. I didn't understand much, but I remember that he compared people who climb a mountain and need a guide to those who want to make spiritual advancement. He said you have to be careful not to step on so-called snow bridges because they appear solid but will break and you might fall into a chasm. You need a guide.

After the lecture and more chanting, *prasādam* was served, and this is how Kṛṣṇa really hooked me. When I tasted halavā for the first time, I became totally blissed out. I had never eaten anything like it. I asked for seconds and thirds. Finally, the devotees told me, "Sorry, but we have to serve others also." Then they took the halavā pot out of the room to serve the servers. I just followed the pot and sat down in line with the servers, and they said, "Sorry, but we've given you three helpings, and everyone else has been given only two." I apologized, but said, "But it's so good! Please give me more."

"All right," the devotee serving the *halavā* said, "but no more after this. Take your *halavā* and get lost."

"All right, then please give me a lot of *halavā*, or whatever it is, because then I will get lost faster."

After the feast, down in the courtyard, one of the guests suggested that we "smoke to digest all this." I replied that I had found something better. I was totally sure that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was my way. I was no longer afraid. I knew I would never smoke again. I already knew the four rules and regulations from the magazine, and I decided to follow them. Then I went home.

Two weeks passed before my next visit. It was on a weekday, and the devotees were too busy to meet me. So I waited on the sofa in the reception room. Finally, Maṇḍalibhadra came in and told me, "Sorry we don't have much time today. Please come back on Sunday." I was disappointed. I said, "But I've come all the way just to find out what this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is." He answered, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to be aware that God is

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everywhere.” Then the telephone rang, and he had to go. I was left sitting on the sofa, thinking, “God is everywhere.” When he came back he continued. “Yes, He is Paramātmā, the Supersoul. He has four hands and a crown.”

Far-out! I liked the idea immediately. Then he had to go again because his wife was calling him. I was sitting there thinking, “God is everywhere.” Then he came back and said, “By the way, when I said everywhere, I meant everywhere. He’s in every atom and in between every atom.” Then he had to go again after just one or two sentences.

Wow, amazing! Next to me, there was a metal filing cabinet, and I thought, “He is in that filing cabinet, but not inside. He’s in the atoms and in between the atoms of that cabinet.” I had never thought such a thought. Then Maṇḍalibhadra came back and said, “I’m sorry. I hope you don’t mind, but there is so much going on today. Can’t you come back Sunday? We really have no time.”

“No problem,” I said, “I have enough to think about.”

On my way to the S-Bahn station, I was thinking, “God is everywhere! He’s in the hearts of all these people. He’s in the air. He’s in the S-Bahn construction. He’s everywhere!” Then I don’t know what happened. It was as if from everywhere I heard the sound of the holy name, like a soft whispering: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare. The entire atmosphere seemed to vibrate with the holy name, like a cosmic symphony. Ecstasy! My first ecstatic experience in Kṛṣṇa consciousness! I sat down at the train station and even missed my train. I was thinking, “Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, and I have finally found a way to Him.”

Later, I worked part-time as a gardener and supported the temple with donations. One day the devotees told me that Prabhupāda would be in London. As soon as I heard this, I wanted to go and see him. Then, sometime later, one of them asked me directly, “We want to go to London, but we don’t have the money. Can you help us?” I had my plans for the money I had been saving, but then I thought, “They want to see Prabhupāda and I want to see Prabhupāda,” so I emptied my bank account and gave everything to the temple.

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We took the temple's Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities with us. On the ferry, we gave Them a cabin of Their own, and we would always hold kīrtana on deck, even in a storm. We were young and liked adventure. We sang, and it was the nicest sea journey I've ever made.

On the evening of Prabhupāda's London arrival, the devotees all went to the airport to meet him, but his flight from New York was delayed and it got to be quite late, so most of the devotees went back to the temple. I stayed. Prabhupāda's flight landed around midnight.

The majority of us were resting on seats in the waiting lounge when suddenly a few devotees standing watch near the customs area began to shout "Jaya Prabhupāda!" These magical words brought us immediately to our feet. For me, the sound of Prabhupāda's name and his imminent arrival transformed the airport. A mystical light seemed to be illuminating everything.

One devotee began to chant, and the kīrtana soon grew more intense. Then Prabhupāda appeared. My first reaction was "Oh, he is so small!" But then I thought, "But he is great in spiritual power." As he came toward us, I threw myself down (as did the other devotees) on the floor of Heathrow Airport. I had only just shaved up—I saw it as a present to Prabhupāda—and now, my shaved head offered at his feet, I waited for him to pass.

Once I thought he had passed I lifted my head, but to my surprise, I saw his slippers before me. I looked up and looked right into Prabhupāda's eyes. He seemed to welcome me into his family. I was overwhelmed, and at that moment something transpired between Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee and this fallen soul: I could feel his immense potency in attracting souls to Kṛṣṇa. When I saw Prabhupāda standing before me, aglow with spiritual mercy, I felt much attraction to his lotus feet. It became clear to me that I should surrender to him. And I knew he recognized me and would accept me.

On the way back to the temple at Bury Place, I remembered something I had read in one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books: "By this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we are trying to give information of how one can be transferred directly to the Goloka Vṛndāvana planet, Kṛṣṇaloka. That is our mission." I felt happy and secure under the shelter of Prabhupāda's lotus feet.

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When he lectured, his eyes would wander over the audience while he explained Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You felt that he was preaching directly to you. One incident showed me how a pure devotee can infuse a receptive soul with conviction and spiritual strength. The devotees were going to Oxford Street to chant and distribute magazines. I was standing outside wondering whether I should go with the saṅkīrtana party or stay back and study Prabhupāda's books. I looked up at his window and he appeared there, looking down at the harināma party. Pleased at the sight, he smiled broadly. Immediately it was clear what I should do.

I remember that day well. Prabhupāda's glance and smile had made me so enthusiastic that even after the party returned I went back out with Vāsudeva, and we just continued to chant and dance through the streets of London and distribute *Back to Godhead* magazines. We felt so inspired by Prabhupāda's presence and spiritual potency that we didn't care for anything else in the world. Just as Lord Caitanya would give people spiritual energy simply by looking at them or embracing them, so Prabhupāda empowered his followers.

SURABHĪ DEVĪ DĀSĪ: I was born in Australia, but in my late teens I developed the desire to go to England. In 1971, I decided to make the journey by ship, and thus I began to work in Sidney to get the money for the trip. One day, a friend of mine met the Hare Kṛṣṇas on the street, and they invited her to the Sunday Feast at the temple. She asked me to come with her, and we arrived at the temple the next Sunday. The first thing I saw when entering the temple room was a picture of a man on a cushion and another picture of Kṛṣṇa with a cow. Earlier my mother had warned me about sectarian religious groups saying that there are men who say that they are God. So, when I saw the picture on the cushion I thought, "Uh, this must be one of those men my mother was talking about."

Then the feast was served, and I really enjoyed it, especially the sweet rice, and then there was chanting which I also liked, but I didn't really understand what it was all about. That was my first encounter with the devotees.

Some months later, I arrived in England and from there I went to

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Amsterdam and other places in Europe. At that time, George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" had just come out, and I really loved this song. In Amsterdam, someone told me about the Cosmos, a meditation center where young people gathered and bands were playing psychedelic music. So I went there, and there I met the devotees again. They used to go to the Cosmos three times a week to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and distribute *prasādam*. That's when I tasted *halavā* for the first time which was an incredible experience.

One evening, the devotees made an announcement asking for help to organize a festival at their temple on Bethanienstraat. I really liked the devotees, so I went there and was greeted by Kiśorī and Bhūmadeva. Kiśorī gave me *prasādam* and Bhūmadeva sat down with me and spoke about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. From that day on, I used to go to the temple regularly, and one day Bhūmadeva told me about mangala-ārati, how wonderful this ceremony is, at 4:40 in the morning, so then I began going to mangala-ārati every day. In this way, my life began to change.

Some weeks later, I packed all my bags and presented myself at the temple. The devotee who opened the door said, "Oh, you're coming for *mangala-ārati*." "Yes", I said, "and I am coming to stay forever". This was in June 1971, and thus I stayed in Amsterdam for eight months, and I absolutely loved it. All the *brahmacārīs* were like my elder brothers and we used to go out on *saṅkīrtana* every day.

In July we heard that Prabhupāda was coming to London for the Ratha-yatra festival, and the devotees were all excited about it and they wanted to go, but they were lamenting that they couldn't afford the fare. I had some money in the bank, so I offered to pay for everyone's fare. But then we learned that Prabhupāda was sick and wouldn't come in July but later. He came in August and we all went to London to be with him. And there I got initiated. On the day of initiation, I was really nervous, and Prabhupāda could see that. When he gave me my name, he said: "Your name is Surabhī Devī Dāsī, the name of a transcendental cow who gives an abundance of milk." Then he added: "Don't be afraid. If you follow these principles, you will go back to Godhead in this lifetime."

I stayed in Amsterdam for another six months, and then I was asked to

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go to Germany because in Hamburg they needed a cook. While on the train, I really felt sad and even cried a few times, because the devotees in Amsterdam had been like family to me, and now I was on my way to an unknown place.

But Kṛṣṇa was very kind to me. Hansadutta and Himavatī were in charge of the Hamburg temple, and they took care of me in such a wonderful way, like a father and mother, that I soon forgot my misery.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: In my early youth, I was born in 1950 in Germany, I was steeped in the Christian faith, studying the Bible regularly, but by the mid-‘60s other influences had become more prominent, and at one point I felt that I had become an atheist. This thought was deeply troubling to me because in the Gospel of John Jesus says, “Those who follow me shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” If this was true, then why had I been snatched out of God’s hand? After all, I had been faithfully praying for many years. Why was I now an atheist? This should not have happened. So, I blamed God.

In 1971, while I was living in Hamburg, I saw the devotees for the first time. They happened to chant near the Grünspan, a music club where I usually went on weekends to hang out and listen to live bands playing. My first impression was that these people are weirdoes, and thus I went to the other side of the street to avoid a direct encounter.

But then a decisive event changed my life. After watching repeatedly a movie about a poet who was searching after God, I very much identified with this person and adopted his prayer like a mantra. Again and again, I prayed, “God, if You exist, please give me a sign.” Shortly after that, while walking through an Underground station, I noticed a display on the wall, which had a picture of Kṛṣṇa holding a calf. There was no explanatory text, not even the mahā-mantra, only an address and an invitation to the Sunday Feast.

I noted down the address and the next Sunday I went to the temple at Bartelsstrasse. When I heard Maṇḍalibhadra give class, I was deeply impressed by the way he presented the philosophy and his obvious conviction. I intuitively knew that what he said was not speculation but

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the absolute truth. The next thing that made a lasting impression was the āraṭi ceremony. The pūjārī offered *ārati* to the Deities with such devotion that I took this experience as the sign I had been waiting for. From that day on I visited the temple regularly, and it was Smita Kṛṣṇa who always took care of me. He did not preach much philosophy but simply told stories from Kṛṣṇa Book. While doing this he was smiling all the time, as his name indicates: Smita Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, “the servant of the smiling Kṛṣṇa”. His presence made me realize that only somebody who experiences real love could be so happy.

All this made such a strong impression on me that I understood, “If I keep coming, one day I will stay”, which frightened me. So I stopped coming. But after six weeks I couldn’t bear it anymore and began to visit again.

The living conditions at Bartelsstrasse were austere. Because it was an old warehouse, there was no bathroom. There was a small toilet with a sink, and there was another sink in the kitchen. Every morning, instead of a shower, the devotees’ wash was a lick and a promise, and once a week they went to a public bath to take a full shower.

In those days, the devotees were very poor and had accumulated substantial debt. They had fallen behind in their rent payment, so much so that the owner was threatening to obtain an action of eviction. Fortunately, I had a good job and was thus able to help out to some extent.

At the beginning of the summer, word came to us that Śrīla Prabhupāda was coming to London for the Ratha-yatra festival in July. When I heard that he needed a new recording machine for his translations, I bought an Uher tape recorder, a state-of-the-art recording machine that in the early ‘70s was used even by the FBI, governments and radio stations all over the world.

The devotees wanted to go to England, of course, but there was no money. So, I paid for everyone’s ticket and wanted to go with them. As was common in those days, I had long hair, and I was told that I could not come in front of Śrīla Prabhupāda like that. Reluctantly, I agreed that Avināścandra shave me up. However, when we got to London, we were told that Prabhupāda wasn’t coming until August. Therefore, after a week

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or so we returned to Germany.

Once back in Hamburg, my parents found out about my new lifestyle and tried to get me back. Therefore, Mandalibhadra suggested that I go to Berlin to join Śivānanda and Avināścandra, which I did. During my stay, Avināścandra sent a letter to Prabhupāda together with 1 kg of marzipan and a postcard showing the Gedächtniskirche, a famous spot in the center of Berlin where we were doing *harināma* every day. After one month or so, a letter came from Prabhupāda wherein he thanked for the marzipan saying that it was similar to a Bengali sweet and he also included the postcard with a note saying that we should buy the church.

While I was in Berlin, Hansadutta took over as temple president in Hamburg. He negotiated with the landlady and thus avoided the eviction, and he asked the devotees to find work to pay off the debt. When he informed Śrīla Prabhupāda about it, he received the following reply:

My Dear Hansadutta,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated 10th August 1971 and have noted the contents. For the time being this measure of taking outside work may be taken up but the principle is that everyone should engage full time for various propaganda work of the Krishna Consciousness Movement and maintain themselves by the little profit made by book selling and literature distribution. Now we have got *Isopanisad* in German language. The devotees can better be engaged in distributing these books.

Therefore, after a few months, the devotees gave up their jobs again, but we had at least some funds and thus we could print invitation cards. When we distributed these cards, we asked people for a contribution of 1 Pfennig (less than a 1 cent in those days), to cover the printing cost, and of course, people would give more, at least 10 Pfennig or even 50 or 1 DM. In this way, the cornerstone for future book distribution was laid.

In the summer of 1971, we received a shipment of the first edition of the German *Īsopaniṣad* that had been printed by ISKCON Press in New York. At the beginning of 1972, we got our first VW van, and in March we drove down to Munich to celebrate Gaura Purnima with 2.000 *Īsopaniṣads* and 16 devotees all packed in that van. We also did *harināma*

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in the city and tried to distribute the books but without much success. By Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, one of the guests who came to the temple was a professional salesman. When he learned that we had thousands of books for sale, he explained to Hansadutta the five principles of a successful sale: to get attention, to arouse interest, to awaken the desire to have the product, to overcome objections, and to close the sale. Hansadutta picked up this technique and put it into practice with immediate success. As far as I know, he presented it during the next GBC meeting, and this is how book distribution in ISKCON began.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: As soon as I heard that Prabhupāda would come to London and we would go there to see him, I painted a miniature of the Six Gosvāmīs for him. When I presented my little gift in the presence of a few other devotees, he was so moved that tears began gliding down his cheeks. For many years, he had lived next to Rūpa Gosvāmī's *samādhī* in Vṛndāvana, and his spontaneous reaction showed me that he was undoubtedly a very intimate associate of the direct disciples of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Shortly after his arrival, Prabhupāda asked me to touch up the Deities at Bury Place, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Londonīśvara. He stood behind me to supervise the work, and he was quite specific about Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's smile. Although it was intense to work under the watchful eye of the spiritual master, I felt doubly rewarded once the retouching was successfully completed.

A few days later, Prabhupāda called me to his room and explained in detail another project he wanted me to get involved in: the design of the temple in Māyāpur. His enthusiasm was fresh and contagious, like that of a child, and I became so inspired that for weeks I slept only a few hours a night. I wanted to spend as much time as possible on the drawing board.

As soon as the first acres of land in Māyāpur had been put into ISKCON's name in May, Prabhupāda had begun making concrete plans to develop the project. He had asked Acyutānanda Swami, who was in charge of supervising the preliminary work of fencing and building a straw hut, to

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submit a weekly progress report. Now, as the first sketches of the future temple were being done, Prabhupāda informed his managers in India of the development. To Girirāja in Bombay he wrote:

I have already engaged Nara Narayana, Vasudeva and Ranchor to prepare a grand scale plan for the Mayapur land, and as soon as it is prepared, Nara Narayana will go there.

To Tamal Krishna, who was now the GBC for India, Prabhupāda wrote:

We are making a very gorgeous plan for Mayapur, and if you all together can give shape to this plan, it will be unique—if not in the whole world, then at least in all of India. I am giving instruction to all the workers here and they are doing nicely, I think when Bhavananda and Nara Narayana go to India, they will carry the plans with them.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: I used to sleep in front of Prabhupāda's door, and sometimes he came out in the middle of the night just to discuss a new concept. He envisioned exactly where paintings of kṛṣṇa-līlā and caitanya-līlā should be displayed. Again and again, he came up with new ideas, changed them back and forth, and even did some drawings himself. It became obvious to me that the construction of a wonderful temple at Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's birthplace was one of Prabhupāda's most cherished dreams.

ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI: I was fortunate enough to take part in some preaching programs the devotees had arranged in London. Prabhupāda would sit on his vyāsāsana and preach with great concentration. At the end of the talk, he would invite everybody to join in the kīrtana. One evening, during kīrtana, he suddenly stepped down from his vyāsāsana with great dignity and began to dance. Naturally, when Prabhupāda danced, all the devotees also danced, and the whole audience also danced in ecstasy.

On some days Prabhupāda went to the temple room while everyone else was taking breakfast *prasādam*. He would stand in front of the Deities for a long time, apparently absorbed in prayer and direct communion with Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Londonīśvara.

One incident reveals how I came to understand that the pure devotee is

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in touch with Kṛṣṇa and that Kṛṣṇa tells him everything. I used to wash the Deity plates after the morning offering, and I didn't like this service at all. One day, the temple president came into the kitchen and declared, "Prabhupāda says that the Deity plates are dirty. Kṛṣṇa has told him. He requests that this be corrected immediately." I thought, "Oh, no, this is my fault; I didn't wash them carefully enough."

Although after Prabhupāda's arrival I felt blissful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I later found myself tossing in an ocean of doubt. Māyā had come to test me. She confronted me with my attachments: friends, schoolmates, band members, my girlfriend—all of them had come to London to take me from the temple. Even my grandfather, on his deathbed in Hamburg, was asking for me. I became weak. I became resistant to Prabhupāda. I thought, "I'll leave this movement. There is simply too much to give up." But I needed a reason to leave, so I decided to catch Prabhupāda in a contradiction by asking him a question. I foolishly wanted to show him my superiority.

The next morning after the lecture I challenged, "If Kṛṣṇa is all good, and if He is the creator of everything, why has He made this material world, which is full of troubles for us conditioned souls?" At first, Prabhupāda didn't seem to understand me. I had to ask my question a second time. But again he said, "What is it?" I already felt a little miserable.

The third time I asked it, Prabhupāda acknowledged my question and replied forcefully: "Not Kṛṣṇa has created *māyā*, you have created *māyā*!" His strong words blasted my rebellious mind like a bomb. Kṛṣṇa was not at fault. I was!

In this way Prabhupāda saved me. That was enough. I decided not to leave. I surrendered. I had already packed my things, but I unpacked them again while thinking, "I will stay in this movement no matter what. I may make it in this lifetime or it may take me many lives." Prabhupāda blessed me with his mercy."

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: Kṛṣṇadāsa arranged for me to get married in Berlin, and I returned to Hamburg late in the summer of 1971. Soon I had to get a job to maintain myself and help clear the temple's debt. But then

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everybody stopped working, and I wrote a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda explaining to him that I was frustrated being employed by non-devotees and would rather go somewhere and preach, leaving my pregnant wife in the care of the temple. Prabhupāda didn't approve of my idea:

Your duty is to take charge of your wife. So you can stick to your job and maintain your wife and family and give as much as possible to the Hamburg temple. You cannot be irresponsible to your wife and child. That is not allowed.

Over the years, Prabhupāda would be confronted with similar situations a number of times, because some of his male disciples realized soon after getting married that accepting a wife was a serious responsibility and often more of a burden than a source of enjoyment. And he went to great lengths to impress upon his young followers that he expected them to be responsible. A striking example is the following extensive instructive letter to one of his male disciples. There Prabhupāda goes into great detail explaining the scope of responsibility that *grhastha* life entails:

Simply get married without considering what is the serious nature of married life, then if there is little disturbance, or if I do not like my wife or my husband, let me go away, everyone else is doing like that. So in this way the whole thing is becoming a farce. You say that your "association together was hindering your advancement." But Kṛṣṇa consciousness marriage system should not be taken in that way, that if there is any botheration that means something is hindering my spiritual progress, no. Once it is adopted, the *grhastha* life, even it may be troublesome at times, it must be fulfilled as my occupational duty. Of course, it is better to remain unmarried, celibate. But so many women are coming, we cannot reject them. If someone comes to Kṛṣṇa it is our duty to give them protection. Kṛṣṇa has informed us in Bhagavad-gītā that even women and sudras and others inferior class of men can take refuge in Him. So the problem is there, the women must have a husband to give protection. Of course, if the women can remain unmarried, and if there is suitable arrangement for the temple to protect them, just like in the Christian Church there is nunnery for systematic program of engaging the ladies and protecting them, that is also nice. But if there is sex desire, how to control

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it? Women are normally very lusty, more lusty than men, and they are weaker sex, it is difficult for them to make spiritual advancement without the help of husband. For so many reasons, our women must have husband. That's all right, but if once they have got a husband he goes away so quickly, that will not be very much happy for them.

Now I do not know the situation in your particular case, I am simply giving you the general policy or background understanding. We should never think of our so-called advancement as being conditioned by or dependent upon some set of material circumstances such as marriage, vanaprastha, or this or that. Mature understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness means that whatever condition of life I am in at present, that is Kṛṣṇa's special mercy upon me, therefore let me take advantage in the best way possible to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and conduct my spiritual master's mission. If I consider my own personal progress or happiness or any other thing personal, that is material consideration. If there was unhappy adjustment for becoming married, why you got married at all? Whatever is done, is done, that is a fact, but I am only pointing out that once before you did something without proper study of your real responsibility, now you are contemplating again some drastic action in a similar manner. Therefore consider it carefully in this light. There is one verse from Bhagavad-gītā: *yaśman nodvijate loka lokan nodvijate ca yah/harsamarsa-bhayodvegair mukto yah sa ca me priyah*, "He for whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anxiety, who is steady in happiness and distress, is very dear to Me." (12.15)

One mistake of judgment often made by the neophyte devotees is that any time there is some disturbance or some difficulty they are considering that the conditions or the external circumstances under which the difficulty took place are the cause of the difficulty itself. That is not the fact. In this material world there is always some difficulty, no matter in this situation or that situation. Therefore simply by changing my status of occupation or my status of life, that will not help anything. Because the real fact is that if there is any difficulty with others, that is my lack of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not theirs. Is this clear? Kṛṣṇa says that His dearest devotee is one who does not put others into difficulty, in fact, who puts no one other into difficulty. So try to judge the matter on these points, whether or not you are putting either your wife or yourself into some difficulty.

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The right understanding of Bhagavad-gita is Arjuna's understanding. In other words, Arjuna came to the conclusion that he must perform his occupational duty, not as a material obligation, for reasons of wife, family, friends, reputation, professional integrity, like that—no. Rather he must conduct the functions of his station of life only as a devotional service performed for Kṛṣṇa. That means that devotional service is what is important, not my occupational duty. But it does not mean that because occupation duty is not the real consideration, that I should give it up and do something else, thinking that devotional service may be carried on under whatever circumstances which I may whimsically decide. Kṛṣṇa recommended Arjuna to remain as he was, not to disrupt the order of society and go against his own nature just for convenience sake. Our occupational duty is not arbitrary, that means once we have taken up some field of action, if we are advanced in our understanding, then we shall not change it for another. Rather our devotion is the important factor, so what does it matter what I am doing so long my work and energy are completely devoted to Kṛṣṇa?

Just like Kṛṣṇa, He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He has no work, neither He has anything to do, still He comes here to teach us this lesson. He accepts not only His occupational duty as cowherd boy, royal prince, but also He accepts married life, He enters politics, He is philosopher, He is even chariot driver during a great battle, He does not give example of Himself avoiding His occupational duty. So if Kṛṣṇa Himself is exhibiting by His own conduct what is the perfection of existence, then we should heed such example if we are intelligent. Even supposing there is wife at home, with children, that does not matter, that is no hindrance to our spiritual life. And once we have accepted these things, occupational duties, we should not lightly give them up. That is the point.

Of course, our occupational duty is as preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So we must stick to that business under all circumstances, that is the main thing. Therefore married, unmarried, divorced, whatever condition of life, my preaching mission does not depend on these things. The varnasrama-dharma system is scientifically arranged by Kṛṣṇa to provide facility for delivering the fallen souls back to home, back to Godhead. And if we make a mockery of this system by whimsically disrupting the order, that we must consider. That will not be a very good example if so many young boys and

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girls so casually become married and then go away from each other, and the wife is little unhappy, the husband is neglecting her in so many ways, like that. If we set this example, then how the thing will go on properly? Householder life means wife, children, home, these things are understood by everyone, why our devotees have taken it as something different? They simply have some sex desire, get themselves married, and when the matter does not fulfill their expectations, immediately there is separation—these things are just like material activities, prostitution. The wife is left without husband, and sometimes there is child to be raised, in so many ways the proposition that you, and some others also, are making becomes distasteful. We cannot expect that our temples will become places of shelter for so many widows and rejected wives, that will be a great burden and we shall become the laughingstock in the society. There will be unwanted progeny also. And there will be illicit sex life, that we are seeing already. And being the weaker sex, women require to have a husband who is strong in Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that they may take advantage and make progress by sticking tightly to his feet. If their husband goes away from them, what will they do? So many instances are already there in our Society, so many frustrated girls and boys.

So I have introduced this marriage system in your Western countries because there is custom of freely intermingling male and female. Therefore marriage required just to engage the boys and girls in devotional service, never mind distinction of living status. But our marriage system is little different than in your country, we do not sanction the policy of quick divorce. We are supposed to take husband or wife as eternal companion or assistant in Kṛṣṇa consciousness service, and there is promise never to separate. Of course if there is any instance of very advanced disciples, married couple, and they have agreed that the husband shall now take sannyasa or renounced order of life, being mutually very happy by that arrangement, then there is ground for such separation. But even in those cases there is no question of separation, the husband, even he is sannyasa, he must be certain his wife will be taken care of nicely and protected in his absence. Now so many cases are there of unhappiness by the wife who has been abandoned by her husband against her wishes. So how can I sanction such thing? I want to avoid setting any bad example for future generations, therefore I am so much cautiously considering your request. But if it becomes so easy for me to get married and then leave my wife, under excuse

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of married life being an impediment to my own spiritual progress, that will not be very good at all. That is misunderstanding of what is advancement in spiritual life. Occupational duty must be there, either this one or that one, but once I am engaged in something occupational duty, then I should not change that or give it up, that is the worst mistake. Devotional service is not bound up by such designations. Therefore once I have chosen, it is better to stick in that way and develop my devotional attitude into full-blown love of Godhead. That is Arjuna's understanding.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: Then I made friends with a hippie visiting our temple in Hamburg. He was from Munich. He lived in a commune on the outskirts of the city. He invited the devotees to come, and I thought I should go there and live with him. I could take my wife with me. The Hamburg devotees thought it was a great idea because in this way they would get rid of me—after all, householders were a burden for the temple.

The Munich commune was in a two-story house, and I moved in with my friend. I was shaven-headed, with *tilaka*, and wore a *dhōtī*, as usual, and the first thing I did was hold *kīrtana* and afterward cut up *prasādam* apples and pass them out. In the beginning, everybody came and took part out of curiosity, but later they began to lose interest.

Every day I went out on *harināma* with my wife. We put down a straw mat on the sidewalk on one of the busy shopping streets in Munich and chanted with a small pair of *karatālas*. I would place a poster of Śrīla Prabhupāda in front of me, along with a sign that read, “I am a disciple of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I have come to your city to open a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple. Please help me.” People would throw coins into a basket, and from time to time I would stop chanting and give a short explanation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, inviting interested persons to come to see me.

A few persons visited me at the commune, some of them well-dressed in suits and ties and carrying briefcases. The commune members became uneasy having all these visitors, so they had me shift to the basement to a dark room painted black. A red light bulb hung from the ceiling. I knew it was time for a change.

Fortunately, I had been introduced to a couple living in the city, and

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they invited me to their home. There I held programs and distributed prasādam. When I asked them to help me find a place for a temple, the woman told me that there was a storefront for rent across the street from their house.

I moved in. It was an old building, and the part I rented consisted of one long room and a bathroom. I partitioned the room with curtains—one part for a temple room, one part kitchen, one part my wife’s room, and so forth. I put two copies of the *Īṣopaniṣad* in the window—one showing the cover and the other open so people could read a verse and purport. Many people stopped to look.

It was an old house, and there was an open exit in the back of my room, leading to a staircase. After a short while, our neighbors began to freak out because of the early morning kīrtanas and the clouds of incense and cough-inducing masala regularly wafting through the vents. In fact, every day when one resident came down the stairs to go to work, he mockingly repeated the last line of one of our chants: “Jaya jagadīśa hare! Jaya jagadīśa hare!”

We received a case of *Īṣopaniṣads*, but we didn’t know how to distribute books, so I would sit on my mat, put the books in front of me with a sign next to them—5 DM—and wait for somebody to pick up a copy from the stack and give the requested donation. The result was very meager, but all that changed as soon as Hansadutta came to Munich with the Hamburg devotees and showed us how to do *saṅkīrtana*. He taught us to put a magazine into a person’s hand, show a picture of the devotees, and say, “This is us. This is our magazine. This is me. We are doing this and that.” After the devotees learned the technique, our distribution increased beyond our wildest expectations.”

When Prabhupāda received Sucandra’s progress report on the preaching in Munich, he assured him of Kṛṣṇa’s help if he simply dedicated himself to canvassing on behalf of the Supreme Lord:

I am very glad to know that you are working sincerely to distribute this great science to the people of Germany. Not only the people in Germany, but all over the world, people are suffering due to lack of this knowledge.

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When the son is suffering, the father is also afflicted. So Krishna, the Supreme Father, does not like to see his parts and parcels suffering in the material world. To deliver the fallen souls, He gives His instruction, He sends His representatives, and sometimes He even comes Himself just for the benefit of all the living entities. So it is our duty, as His representative, to canvass, “Please take this knowledge and make your life successful.” So all of you continue to push on this movement with ever-increasing enthusiasm, and Krishna will help you.

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: In the late summer of 1971 I returned to Germany. When I arrived at the Frankfurt airport, I called the Hamburg temple, but no one answered. Later I found out that the devotees had lost the phone line because they couldn’t pay the bill. I took an overnight train to Hamburg and a taxi from the central station to Bartelsstrasse. We drove up and down the street several times, unable to find number 65; there was no sign, no picture, no *mahā-mantra*, nothing to indicate the existence of a temple. Finally, after asking someone, I found the warehouse in the backyard. That was a sobering experience. The run-down building was a stark contrast to the temples I had known in America.

The devotees had just received the first printing of *Śrī Īṣopaniṣad*, but no one knew how to distribute books. I had a little experience from doing *saṅkīrtana* in Washington, D. C., and when I passed out twelve books in one day, the devotees couldn’t believe it.

But as time went on, the others gained experience, and soon my *saṅkīrtana* results were rather mediocre. So I became the cook, treasurer (for one day), temple commander, *saṅkīrtana* leader, and finally, *pūjārī*.

The standard of Deity worship was extremely simple. We didn’t know anything about chanting special *mantras*. While chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, we simply poured a *lotā* of warm water over the Deities. The paraphernalia was kept on one of the shelves of a cupboard in the *prasādam* room, where the devotees kept their bowls. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had five outfits and Lord Jagannātha three. Every morning I stood before the little drawer with the Deity clothes and thought, “My God, which outfit shall I put on today?” At the very beginning, we used the same garlands for several days. In the

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evening they were put into water to keep them fresh until the next morning.

The *bhoga* was simple, but Himavatī was such an expert cook that she always managed to cook tasty preparations even from the most basic ingredients. We never went to a grocer or supermarket to buy anything; instead, we went to the wholesale market once a week and begged from the merchants or picked through the half-rotten produce they had thrown out. Because the entrance to the market was restricted to professionals, we had to climb over a barbed-wire fence.

One Sunday morning, Śācīnandana and I went, and we got only a box of coconuts and a bag of potatoes. Thus during the whole week, we had only coconuts and potatoes: fried coconut with mashed potatoes, grated coconut with boiled potatoes, sliced coconut with roasted potatoes...

Apart from the toilet, there was only one sink in the whole temple. It was located in the prasādam room, and it served all our purposes. We used it to wash pots, dishes, clean *ārati* paraphernalia, shower, and wash clothes. Before taking a shower you filled the sink with water—cold water because there was no hot running water—and then you climbed into a plastic tub in front of the sink and fetched water from the sink with a plastic measuring cup. We had no curtains, but later we got a second tub, and while one person soaped himself, another rinsed himself.

In the beginning of winter, I remember Śācīnandana, who suffered from poor circulation, turn blue when he was taking his showers—it was so cold. Even hours later his skin color did not return to normal. Despite all these hardships, he was always enthusiastic to preach. Whenever he had the opportunity, he lectured or spoke to guests.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI (formally known as Vedavyas Das): 1968, the year Śivānanda arrived in Germany, was an extraordinary time for Europe's youth. We'd just experienced what came to be known as the "Paris Spring" and the "Prague Spring", attempts by the younger generation to change the existing establishment. Burning barricades and violent clashes between students and police were still fresh in our memories,

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To my parent's dismay, I sympathized with the New Left and participated in protest marches against the Vietnam War chanting "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" and waving a poster of Che Guevara.

For many of us, 1969 was the year we first experienced psychedelics. Soon my interest shifted from an external revolution to an internal transformation. Herbert Marcuse was replaced by Hermann Hesse. In his book *Siddhartha* I encountered the names "Kṛṣṇa" and "Govinda" for the first time. I felt an inexplicable attraction—those names sounded beautiful—but I had merely an aesthetic appreciation for them.

In the fall of 1969, a schoolmate played for me a record produced by George Harrison on the Beatles' new Apple label. The singers were presented as "Radha Krishna Temple (London)". I envisioned a temple as it is described in history books, carved stone pillars and high ceilings, being unaware of the fact that any building devotees use for worshipping the Lord is transformed into a temple. George Harrison was known for being eccentric, but this was really far-out. Because I hardly ever listen to the radio, I did not know that the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra was famous all over Europe. The album didn't impress me as something I would want to listen to over and over again. I preferred the more ethereal music of Pink Floyd and Ravi Shankar.

What my schoolmate and most of the people around me didn't know was that since the spring I had been taking LSD and following Timothy Leary's philosophy. During our trips, my friends and I tried to tear down the walls of so-called reality and attain a continuous state of higher awareness.

But Kṛṣṇa didn't let go. During the summer of 1970, my favorite record was an album by Quintessence. The inside of the album cover displayed an intriguing collage. One photo showed an altar, with paintings of Jesus, Buddha, Viṣṇu, and others, and another showed a banner of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and people chanting. As my interest in everything from India grew, I eventually bought a sitar and tablas and began reading Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. I was on my way to becoming a full-fledged impersonalist.

In January 1971 I was drafted into the army and was stationed at

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Buxtehude, a small town not far from Hamburg. On most weekends I visited my family and friends in Düsseldorf, but sometimes I took the train to Hamburg and spent the weekend there.

Thus it happened that one sunny July morning, as I walked down Hamburg's Mönckebergstrasse, a young man dressed like a monk handed me a leaflet and asked for a donation. I gave him only a few coins, saying I was a poor soldier, but he didn't seem to mind and let me keep the leaflet.

After a while, approaching Dammtor, I heard music and singing that sounded Eastern. As I drew nearer I was struck by a peculiar sight. On a small bridge leading to a park, five figures were swaying back and forth, their arms up, singing to the lively rhythm of hand cymbals and drums. These people, with strange hats covering their bald heads, looked like visitors from another planet. I was intrigued and slowly approached. One devotee, who was handing out magazines to the crowd, approached me. We got into a conversation. And when he mentioned bhakti-yoga and the names "Kṛṣṇa" and "Rāma," I smiled knowingly. "Oh, I am also into this," I said as if I knew exactly what I was talking about. "My favorite books are Jñāna-yoga and Bhakti-yoga, by Ramakrishna." We didn't get into an argument, as far as I remember. Rather, the devotee simply handed me a card showing me how to get to their temple near Sternschanze and invited me to come to the feast that afternoon. I assured him I would drop by.

In the late afternoon, I took the S-Bahn to Sternschanze. It was easy to find Bartelsstrasse, but at number 65 there was no building, only a wall with a gate leading to a yard. I entered and looked around. I had been invited to come to the temple, and I was envisioning some majestic, pillared building, but there was nothing of the kind, only an old, run-down warehouse. Was this the right address? Then, next to an open door, I saw a sign that read: Internationale Gesellschaft für Krischna Bewusstsein, e.V. Following an arrow, I climbed two flights of stairs and was soon greeted by the aromas typical to any ISKCON temple: the transcendental fragrances of incense and *prasādam*.

A young *brahmacārī* let me in. His bright, smiling face, his radiant, clean-shaven head, and his saffron robes seemed to belong to another world. I was engrossed in material consciousness, but somehow I could

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appreciate that this person, who introduced himself as Aṣṭaratha Dāsa, was on a higher level, something I would have to endeavor for. Years later I would read in *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*:

During the rainy season, all living entities, in the land, sky and water, become very refreshed, exactly like one who engages in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. We have practical experience of this with our students in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Before becoming students, they were dirty-looking, although they had naturally beautiful personal features; because of having no information of Kṛṣṇa consciousness they appeared very dirty and wretched. Since they have taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their health has improved, and by their following the rules and regulations, their bodily luster has increased. When they are dressed with saffron-colored cloth, with *tilaka* on their foreheads and beads in their hands and on their necks, they look exactly as if they come directly from Vaikuṇṭha.

After we had exchanged some introductory words, the devotee asked me to wait—he would get me some *prasādam*, spiritual food. He came back with a plate of wet cauliflower, the only preparation that was left. I had come late. I relished the small yellow pieces, sprinkled with toasted cumin seeds. They tasted exotic, unlike any other food I'd ever tasted. How could a simple vegetable be so delicious? After my humble meal, I bought a magazine and a package of Spiritual Sky incense and thought about leaving. Then I was told there would soon be a ceremony in the temple. I sat down against the back wall and skimmed through the pages of *Zurück zur Gottheit*.

After some time, one devotee after another entered, bowed down, and offered prayers. That they touched their heads to the floor and remained in that position while murmuring something unintelligible struck me as weird, but stranger things were to come. While *ārati* was being offered my attention rested on the young men and women swaying to and fro, their eyes sometimes closed, arms raised, as if in a trance. I was oblivious to the altar holding the small Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lord Jagannātha. Looking at these people in another world made me feel out of place. Philosophy was one thing, but emotional trance? This wasn't for me.

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The next weekend I was back with my friends in Düsseldorf again—exploring the universe. I didn’t talk much about my experience at the temple, except to say that I had found good incense for our sessions. On the back of the incense packet was a picture of the universal form that impressed me. I accepted the impersonal concept, *tat tvam asi*, “You are that,” as the last word of transcendental knowledge. I identified with the central figure from whom everything emanated. I was everything and everything was me.

But doubts lingered. I had been told that everything I saw existed only because it was in my mind; it had no separate existence outside my consciousness. But did that mean that when I left a place the place ceased to exist until I returned? Then how was it that in the meantime changes took place? Changes were possible only if a place continued to exist during my absence. Something was amiss about this philosophy.

During the next months I visited the Hamburg temple occasionally, but mainly to purchase incense. One Sunday in late autumn, however, everything changed. The devotees presented me with the first book published in German: *Śrī Īśopaniṣad*. I started to read it that same night, and the invocation and Prabhupāda’s purport to it shook my impersonal conception to its foundation:

The complete whole, or the Supreme Absolute Truth, is the complete Personality of Godhead. Realization of impersonal Brahman or of Paramātmā, the Supersoul, is incomplete realization of the Absolute Complete. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha, and impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of His sat feature, or His aspect of eternity, and Paramātmā or Supersoul realization is the realization of His sat and cit features, His two aspects of eternity and knowledge. Realization of the Personality of Godhead, however, is realization of all the transcendental features: sat, cit, and ānanda, bliss. When one realizes the Supreme Person, he realizes these aspects in complete form (vigraha). Thus the complete whole is not formless. If He were formless, or if He were any less than His creation in any way, He could not be complete. The complete whole must contain everything both within and beyond our experience, otherwise He cannot be complete.

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I wasn't absolutely convinced immediately, but I kept reading. An inner voice told me I was on the right track. Prabhupāda's powerful words chiseled away at my stonelike ignorance. Ramakrishna also spoke about *bhakti-yoga*, but he described the devotee's remaining separate in relation to the Absolute as a matter of choice—and not one he favored. He said it was as if a salt puppet preferred to remain at the shore of the ocean instead of entering into the water, dissolving itself, and becoming one with everything. Prabhupāda smashed this conception:

Mental speculators do not know that Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Personality of Godhead, that the impersonal Brahman is the glaring effulgence of His transcendental body and that Paramātmā, the Supersoul, is His all-pervading representation. Nor do they know that Kṛṣṇa has His eternal form with its transcendental qualities of eternal bliss and knowledge. The dependent demigods and great sages imperfectly consider Him to be a powerful demigod, and they consider the Brahman effulgence to be the Absolute Truth. Kṛṣṇa's devotees who surrender unto Him in unalloyed devotion, however, can know that He is the Absolute Person and that everything emanates from Him. Such devotees continuously render loving service unto Kṛṣṇa, the fountainhead of everything.

This was the true meaning of *bhakti-yoga*: the part that emanated from the Absolute Person rendering loving service unto Him. By December it was clear to me that I had come to a crossroads. Prabhupāda was calling me, but the voice of attachment seemed equally strong. If I accepted Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I would have to give up doing my own thing, my hippie friends, my psychedelics, and countless other dear things. I would have to surrender. That night I hardly slept. In my mind, I was debating the issue. When the first light of day appeared, I concluded there was no other choice: I had to surrender. Truth is truth—there was no way around it.

I still had half a year of military service ahead of me, but I was eager to apply Kṛṣṇa consciousness in my life as far as possible. The Hamburg devotees supplied me with all the necessary paraphernalia to begin spiritual life: a set of *japa* beads, a beautiful Indian poster of Kṛṣṇa as Murāli-manohara, tapes of Prabhupāda's lectures, and a service. When Hansadutta learned that I had graduated with good scores in English and

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German, he asked if I would like to translate Prabhupāda's books into German. I readily agreed and was given a copy of "The First Step in God Realization," the first chapter of the Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which at that time was being published chapter by chapter. In the military, I had plenty of time, because I usually stayed in a communications tower waiting for Morse code messages. Writing by hand on the backs of the message-pad paper, I began what was to become my main service for the rest of my life: translating and producing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Although Hansadutta's return to Germany had changed the way the winds were blowing and book distribution was continuously increasing, Śrī Īsopaniṣad was the only book the devotees had to offer people. It was the same situation in Holland and France, and Prabhupāda noted that the slow production of books was hampering the overall effect of his preaching mission. He had hoped that ISKCON Press Europa, the multilingual translation department in Hamburg, would regularly produce literature in German, French, and Dutch. But the project had fallen apart.

Yogeśvara was now working at ISKCON Press in Brooklyn, New York, and was trying from there to prepare publications for Europe. At the end of 1971, when Prabhupāda received a copy of a Dutch *Back to Godhead*, he thanked his disciple and encouraged him to continue, but he also made it clear that he expected more:

I am very pleased to see that the foreign literature is being produced nicely under your enthusiastic supervision. Just try to increase more and more our output of such books and magazines in many languages. Otherwise how will preaching go on in these places? Though we have been settled in European countries for many years now, only now you are printing the first book in French language, and there is only one book done in German language. So the record has not been good, therefore our preaching work in these countries has not been going very well, and I think now things are not going too well in France and Germany centers. So if somehow or other you can produce profuse books for these places, spend your all time translating, organizing, printing, and distributing such books in foreign languages, then I think you will be able to improve the situation there. If

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there are amply books, everything else will succeed. Practically our Society is built on books. One book is not very impressive. Still, a blind uncle is better than no uncle at all, so it is very nice that one book has appeared, and that BTG is appearing at least several issues in other languages. But now try to produce at least four or five new books per year in several languages, plus regularly BTG every month. That will be your success.

Two weeks later, he emphasized the same point to Hansadutta:

I am always wondering why after so many years nothing can be done to print profusely my books and literatures in European languages. Translators are there, all facilities of German first-class printing machines are there—simply we are not serious to do it. Now you and Krishna das work combinedly to arrange for printing of so many books in Germany, French, and other languages. That will be a great help to me.

Krishnadas had already left Germany out of frustration with the seemingly hopeless situation, but when he learned that things were improving under Hansadutta's leadership, he reconsidered his decision and returned to Hamburg. Prabhupāda urged him to print and distribute more books:

Distributing literatures in German language is the most important task ahead, and it is very good your proposal to print locally—but why it was not done before? Anything locally available is better, if the supply is regular. If you can arrange for that, then do it. I do not know why in Europe nothing has been done to print books. So many years you have been there, and still there is no literature in European languages. Why is it that you cannot find out some formula for printing nicely? I think there is no shortage of translators. Better if you turn your attention to this project immediately.

“Whenever you get money, print books!” Prabhupāda had made these words of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī his life and soul, and he was firmly convinced that all success would come if he simply tried to carry out this instruction of his Guru Mahārāja. Consequently, he urged his disciples to follow in his footsteps and help him fulfill his spiritual master's order. Prabhupāda was so keen on getting his message across that he didn't limit his instructions to Hansadutta, who was now in charge of Germany in Kṛṣṇadāsa's absence; he repeated the instructions to all his disciples

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responsible for pushing forward the preaching: Śivānanda, Maṇḍalibhadra, and Sucandra.

When Maṇḍalibhadra assured Prabhupāda that he was dedicated to translating his books into German, Prabhupāda acknowledged his goodwill but again stressed the point of increasing the so-far meager results:

My first concern is that my books shall be published and distributed profusely all over the world. Practically, books are the basis of our Movement. Without our books, our preaching will have no effect. So I am so much engaddened that you are enthusiastic to please me in this way, and that you are very determined to continue translating profusely. If you can increase translating more and more, that will advance you more and more in spiritual life. Krishna will give you all help.

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A Time of Expansion

After Sucandra successfully opened a preaching center in Munich, in 1971, some of the other experienced devotees also tried to start centers. Within a few months centers opened in Heidelberg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and Düsseldorf.

The previous year, Prabhupāda had established the GBC, the Governing Body Commission, to help him manage his steadily growing movement. However, because the first GBC secretaries had acted for years as temple presidents, they tended to continue to get involved in the details of temple management and keep tight control on the initiatives of the new presidents. In a letter to Hansadutta, Prabhupāda clarified what duties he had in mind for his GBC secretaries:

So as GBC you must see to it that the highest standards of routine work are maintained throughout all the centers, and that chanting, rising early, cleansing, and all other aspects of our regular program may not be neglected. That is our first business. GBC men should not dictate very much, simply supervise and see that the standards are maintained. The

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individual presidents should be more managerial, more individual, and you can supervise, and if some defect is detected, you can make suggestions how to correct it. But if we lose individuality and simply become mechanical, what is the point?”

Actually, as far as Germany was concerned, officially, Kṛṣṇadāsa was the GBC while Hansadutta was in charge of the Mediterranean countries and the Middle East, although he had never been there. But Kṛṣṇadāsa had become unsteady and left Hamburg temporarily. In his absence, Hansadutta did all the practical work. He was spearheading the preaching in Germany and getting tangible results.

Kṛṣṇadāsa had left Germany out of frustration. By nature soft and easy-going, he found it difficult to deal with Hansadutta’s domineering personality. But when Prabhupāda learned that he had returned to Hamburg, he encouraged him to give it another try and to establish a working relationship with his godbrother:

I am very much pleased that you are now in Germany and that everything is going very nicely there. You stay there in Hamburg with Hansadutta for some time and make that center very strong, then you may both return as it was, and Hansadutta may go to his zone of Mediterranean countries and Near East, and you as husband and wife can conduct everything there. Mataji Himavati can train your wife or someone how to worship the Deities nicely, and you both stay there for the time being. You are both men of experience, so work together combinedly to make Germany zone very strong.

But Kṛṣṇadāsa soon concluded that it was too demanding to cooperate with Hansadutta. In early February 1972, he left Hamburg for Sweden. Although he had acted without consulting Prabhupāda, his spiritual master tried to encourage him by sending him an appreciative letter:

I am very glad that you are trying something there. I have heard Sweden is a very good field. So I have informed Hansadutta that you may stay there and work for opening a branch if there is good response. And so far money and books, I have informed Karandhara what is the position and he shall be sending you some money for immediately renting one place for temple, as well as sufficient stock of literatures. Without such books and

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magazines, our preaching work has no authorized basis, so there must be always books. Now you develop there very nicely, it is Krishna's grace you are there, so just as you practically developed first the Hamburg center, so you will be getting the extra credit for starting Sweden branch. [...]

I think that if you go on in this way and spend your whole time preaching and engaging others to hear you and become themselves engaged in Krishna's service, that will cure you of all misgivings and miserable conditions. [...]

And I am also aware that sometimes Hansadutta will be very stubborn, but he is also doing something there, so why not let him go on, and you take charge of opening branches in those northern European countries like Sweden, and that will be very much appreciated by me. If you require some more help in any way, just inform and I shall do the needful, do not worry.

Hansadutta increased the print run of *Zurück zur Gottheit* to 50,000 copies. For Prabhupāda, the key to success in any preaching effort was the distribution of transcendental knowledge, and he was extremely pleased when he heard Hansadutta was trying his best to fulfill this desire. *Phalena paricīyate*: he judged a thing by its result. New devotees were coming and new centers were being opened. To Prabhupāda, Hansadutta's success showed that he was the right person to spread Lord Caitanya's mission in Germany.

I am very much pleased to hear from Mandali Bhadra that so many BTGs in German language are being printed and distributed by you, and also that you have opened so many centers in Germany. You are the right person to control over Germany, so Krishna will give you strength, and I'm sure you will be successful. Your German blood injected with KC drug will do tremendous good to the German people. So I think that you shall remain in charge of German-speaking centers of Europe, and let us keep Krishna das in charge of Scandinavian zone, for developing Sweden and other places in the far northern part. Now you develop Germany very nicely, perfectly, and turn the whole nation into devotees, that is your task, and later we shall see, but I am thinking to appoint other qualified men to supervise as GBC members for Mediterranean, Near East, and African countries, as these areas also need to be developed, but you are so much

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necessary and important there in Germany, and practically Germany is the most progressive country in Europe, so I cannot think of your being absent from there.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was showering his blessings on Hansadutta, although he was aware of his disciple's driving, ambitious nature, which caused frequent clashes with his godbrothers. He also wrote to Maṇḍalibhadra on the same day he wrote to Hansadutta. Prabhupāda stressed again the importance of making the *vaiṣṇava* philosophy available to the German public:

It appears that in Germany we have got very good possibility, and I am glad to hear from Hansadutta that he has expanded more centers, and that all programs are increasing. That is his success and your success. Actually, everyone in the world can accept this Movement very easily. My angle of vision is that throughout the whole world everyone is good and innocent, only they have been misled and corrupted by rascal leaders. If you can organize everything nicely, the Americans and Europeans of the future will come out very nice, that is my opinion. [...]

As I have told you before, you are the chief editor of German BTG, in charge of its writing, translating, subject matter, content, everything, so I have complete trust in you for this, now do it nicely. When you are finished with Bhagavad-gita, then we shall see what shall be the next book for translating. But I think the German people are very philosophically-minded, and they will appreciate the higher philosophy of TLC, or the science of NOD. This we can decide later, first finish the work at hand. Actually, these four books: Krishna, TLC, NOD, and Bhagavad-gita, if these four books are translated and distributed widely in German language, alone they are sufficient to give everyone the whole contents of Krishna Consciousness subject matter. So try for all of them, why just one or two?

But Maṇḍalibhadra was feeling increasingly uncomfortable. In the beginning, he had appreciated Hansadutta's abilities to get things done and inspire others, but Hansadutta's freewheeling and sometimes eccentric personality was at odds with Maṇḍalibhadra's more conservative and structured character. As time went on, Maṇḍalibhadra took part less in the temple's activities, and naturally, his translation work suffered.

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Occasionally, he would come by for an evening *ārati*. As a family man, he was working a job, and the devotees did not hide their criticism of his often dressing in street clothes and putting on “water *tilaka*” (applying a *tilaka* mark on the forehead with water instead of clay, so it won’t be seen).

But besides disagreeing with Hansadutta about management, Maṇḍalibhadra had deeper misgivings. His wife was initiated by Vāmana Dāsa, a disciple of Prabhupāda’s godbrother, Sadānanda Swami, and Maṇḍalibhadra had been exposed to the views and mood of the Gauḍīya Maṭh, which in some ways were at odds with Prabhupāda’s preaching spirit.

Thus it came as no surprise that Maṇḍalibhadra gradually drifted further and further away until he stopped coming to the temple altogether. Hansadutta didn’t mind. Actually, he was relieved. It had been a headache to deal with Maṇḍalibhadra; as Hansadutta’s peer, he couldn’t simply be pushed around. And Hansadutta had completely depended on Maṇḍalibhadra to get translated texts to publish.

In conversations, Hansadutta had already prepared Prabhupāda for the transition. He had pointed out that the book production was being held up because Maṇḍalibhadra had been appointed as the ultimate authority. It was he who had to check all the translations, and this had become more and more of a bottleneck. When Prabhupāda heard this, he rescinded Maṇḍalibhadra’s authority and gave Hansadutta a free hand to manage the publication of his books.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: I had met Maṇḍalibhadra a couple of times, but only briefly, and we never developed a working relationship. By the time I moved into the temple to take up the translation work full-time, he had practically given up his affiliation with ISKCON.

The great task at hand was the translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The unabridged version had not yet been printed in English, but Hansadutta had received a copy of the final layout, and he was eager to publish this most important book as soon as possible. Being a new devotee I didn’t feel qualified to translate “the Bible” of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement by myself. Śācinandana loved Prabhupāda’s books. After only a year in the

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temple he was known to be well-versed in the philosophy, and he used every free minute to study. He wanted to translate, but his German lacked elegance, so we formed a translation team. Later, Pṛthu, another high school graduate, joined us and gave the manuscript a final reading.

PRṬHU DĀSA: The death of my younger brother at age seven figured decisively in my spiritual development. He died of cancer, and I asked our priest, “How is this possible because in the Bible it says that everyone reaps what he sows?” But the priest had no answer. I insisted, “It is clearly said that you reap what you sow, so what has my little brother sown that within seven years he has to die in agony from a cancerous brain tumor?” His head had been opened several times by the medical faculty of a university, but all their efforts were of no avail. So when I received no answer I turned toward atheism. I thought, “If there is no justice, there is no God.” I sympathized with Ernest Hemingway’s view of existence as “a trip from nowhere to nowhere, always and forever to nowhere.” This was in 1960.

In the mid-‘60s I read Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, and it became clear to me that the real meaning of “everyone reaps what he sows” is that we get the results of our activities from past lives. I became convinced of the law of *karma* and reincarnation. As in the physical world every action has a reaction, so on the human level everyone is suffering and enjoying the results of their deeds in due course of time. This made sense. And it answered the age-old question of Job: “Why do the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer?”

I then understood that my brother did not suffer without reason in the hands of brutal fate, which dishes out enjoyment and suffering without concern. Fate isn’t blind or random. The law of *karma*, combined with the idea of reincarnation, gave meaning to the sufferings and enjoyments in the world, death being the end of a chapter but not the end of the story. I became attracted to Eastern philosophies and began to read books about Tibetan mysticism, Buddhism, and Zen.

In 1968, I enrolled at the University of Bonn to study comparative religion. We read various scriptures, including the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and I could see that the East, particularly India, had all the answers. *Ex oriente*

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lux—light comes from the East.

Then I became sidetracked by the student revolution, joined a political commune in Berlin, and became a member of the SDS, the German Socialist Student Union. The next step in expanding my consciousness was to take psychedelic drugs because I realized that the external circumstances that influence consciousness are not everything, as the Marxists thought; there is also an internal dimension.

But after some time, the hopes for a new generation of “beautiful people” faded, and the counterculture turned ugly. People hadn’t changed a bit despite all the talk. Paradise was as far away as ever. In fact, everyone’s mind was wearing out, because the higher we flew, the further we fell. Having seen everything and done everything, I finally concluded that I had to choose between worship or suicide. I was convinced it was useless to live without a spiritual purpose.

During my student days, in 1967, I had heard a record by the Fugs that had the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on it. I had listened to it over and over again. And then there was the album by Quintessence, which also featured the *mahā-mantra* and contained the song “Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Gauranga.” It showed on the back cover a hodgepodge altar with pictures of Buddha, Shiva, Ramakrishna and other spiritual personalities. So I made a similar altar, where I burned incense and bowed down. And over my bed, I hung an enormous poster of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that I’d bought in a head shop in Frankfurt. Some Hindu gods, I thought. That was in the summer of 1970..

As the days and weeks passed, I wondered how to make my realizations a reality—what group of people to live with so we could practice spiritual life together. I began rising early, gave up psychedelic drugs, became a vegetarian, stood on my head and practiced *prāṇāyāma*. But above all, I was waiting for a sign from heaven, some sort of Writing on the Wall, to show me the path of perfection.

In late December 1971 a friend of mine confided in me he was contemplating suicide. We talked for hours, and then it occurred to me to light some incense and play my guitar. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra came to mind, and we ended up chanting for hours. Of course, we had no idea what we were doing, but it was a strangely ecstatic experience, and my

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friend began to feel unknown happiness deep within. He realized that it was only his thoughts that were driving him mad. We concluded he should just forget about watching the heavens and hells of his autobiographical drama, throw the film away, and become more positive. That helped him out for the time being.

The next day I met him again, and when I saw him coming toward me from a distance, I sensed that this was a crucial moment in my life. I went straight up to him and said, “Whatever you have, please give it to me. I have been waiting for this so long.” He looked at me strangely and said, “I have this book for you.” And he pulled an *Īśopaniṣad* out of his pocket. It was a magical coincidence. His parents had bought the book on the street in Hamburg and given it to him because they knew he was interested in spiritual things, and he was now giving it to me because he felt grateful that I had stopped him from committing suicide.

That evening I had booked a train to Paris, where my older sister was living, and during the ride, I read the *Īśopaniṣad* from cover to cover. Once I began, I couldn’t stop reading. It occurred to me that this ancient scripture contained the conclusion to everything I had thought and read about. It brought everything into focus. Whatever I had been thinking and wondering about, here it was, expressed to perfection. I came to the end and closed the book. It was four o’clock in the morning, December 28, 1971. The train was approaching Paris. I knew I had come to the end of a long journey.

I dumped my things at my sister’s and went to the Quartier Latin, a meeting place for students and hippies. Asking about the Hare Kṛṣṇas, I was directed to a shop whose owner knew the devotees. In his shop window, there was a *Kṛṣṇa Book* displayed, opened in such a way that you could see the front and back covers. And there I saw again a picture of the man I had read about in the *Īśopaniṣad*—Prabuddha—that’s what I thought his name was. When I saw the bright smiling face of the Prabuddha, I thought, “This is the man I have to meet. I have to know more about him.”

I got the address of the temple and took a metro to Fontenay-aux-Roses, a suburb in the South of Paris, where the devotees had rented a

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small house. When I arrived, Hari-vilāsa Prabhu was standing at the entrance. There were scents of incense and *prasādam*, and the whole vibration was something foreign and exotic. I walked up to him just as the devotees were preparing to leave for *saṅkīrtana*, and I said, “I want to join.” He replied, “Well, that can be done. In the meantime, try one of these,” and he pulled a white sweet ball from his pocket. I popped it into my mouth. He asked me, “How do you like it?” I said, “It’s simply wonderful!”

“Well, that’s what it’s called,” he said and smiled.

I went with them on *saṅkīrtana*. I walked behind them, and with my long hair and beard, I looked like Jesus beating a gong. By the time we came back in the evening, Maṇḍākinī Dāsī had prepared an outstanding feast. Then Hari-vilāsa gave an amazing lecture. Afterward, I walked up to him and said, “I want to join right away.”

“Are you sure?” he asked.

“Listen, this is what I have been looking for.”

He suggested, “Why don’t you go to Hamburg? You are German, so it may be better for you there.”

“All right,” I said, and I got back on the train, riding overnight to Hamburg on January 1, 1972.

When I came to Bartelsstrasse and climbed the stairs, I was again greeted by exotic scents, and the first person I met was Hansadutta. I did not need much convincing, so after ten minutes I gathered up my hair and asked, “What about this?”

While he was shaving me he explained that I had to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Someone handed me beads, and I began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. After one round I said, “All right, I’m done.”

“No,” he replied, “we chant sixteen rounds like that every day.”

I thought, “Sixteen? My God!”

In May 1972 Śivānanda went to Heidelberg to establish a temple. Shortly afterward, Pṛthu joined him, eager to help open a new preaching field in Germany’s most famous university town. Because it wasn’t easy to find a suitable place for a temple, Śivānanda was staying in the table tennis room

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at Heidelberg University's student union. The big hall of ping pong tables had a stage at the front, and Śivānanda lived behind the stage curtain.

PRTHU DĀSA: When I got there Śivānanda greeted me with a broad smile and said, "Welcome to the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple." It was dreadful because every evening the hall filled up with students who played ping pong for hours.

After some time we met a hippie couple who had taken *prasādam* at the temple in San Francisco, and they invited us to stay with them. From their flat near Main Street, we would go out every afternoon for *saṅkīrtana*. I would stand on one side of the street, chanting the *mahā-mantra* and *om purṇam adaḥ purṇam idam*, while Śivānanda stood on the other and distributed BTGs. Sometimes I would be surrounded by hundreds of people because the sight of Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees then was still something unusual in Germany. I always got into huge arguments with Christians.

Śivānanda suggested I approach Prabhupāda for initiation, and one day I came back from *saṅkīrtana* and saw these big beads hanging out of the mailbox. In the initiation letter that had been sent earlier, he wrote:

My Dear Son (Prthu Das)

Please accept my blessings. Upon the recommendation of Sivananda I have gladly consented to accept you as my duly initiated disciple. Your beads have been duly chanted by me and they are sent by separate post. I have given you the spiritual name of Prthu dasa Brahmachari. King Prthu was the ideal ruler of the citizens, so you should also set the example of ideal person and spread this ideal very widely to all the citizens of your country. I can understand that you are a very sincere boy and are very eligible candidate for going back to Home, back to Godhead. And the process is simple. follow the regulative principles, chant at least 16 rounds of beads daily, read our literatures, go for street sankirtana, etc. In this way keep yourself engaged in Krishna's business 24 hours and you will be really happy in this life and in the end reach the supreme destination.

Hoping this will meet you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

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One day, I saw a newspaper ad that offered a small house with a garden. The rent was only 400 DM, and the owner asked for a presentation. We went there in the afternoon. At least forty people had gathered in the little house, and one after another they went into a room to speak with the owner. There were solicitors, real estate agents, students, and housewives, and we devotees provoked some murmurs and giggles. When our turn came, Śivānanda explained Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the owner, and I said we wanted the house for preaching, teaching people about spiritual life, and if he would give us the place, we would convert it into a learning center. Finally, everyone had to gather in the hall and wait. Then the door opened and the owner's representative stepped out to give us the verdict. He coughed nervously and announced that the house would be rented to the Hare Kṛṣṇa group. Of course, that caused a bit of a sensation.

So we converted the house into a nice little temple. The vibration was upbeat, and we invited students to visit in the evenings. In this way it developed, and before we knew it, the place began to fill up. Then Hansadutta visited us and realized that we “had the scene” —in fact, a better scene than the Hamburg temple—and therefore he shifted his headquarters to Heidelberg. He used to sit in the hallway and preach all day. I brought people every day to the temple, and he just preached nonstop. It was heaven.

KṚṢṂA-KṢETRA SWAMI: In 1969 I enrolled at the University of California in Berkeley to study architecture. Berkeley attracted all kinds of characters—spiritual seekers, political agitators, and so on. I took an interest in spiritual subjects and read books on *yoga* and mysticism. And occasionally I visited so-called spiritual groups, but I almost immediately became convinced they were bogus.

Because I was passing daily through the main gates of the campus, I would see the Hare Kṛṣṇas, who would be at those gates about noon chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and distributing BTGs and *prasādam*. You couldn't avoid passing them. I would think, “Pretty far-out,” but I never spoke to them. Sometimes I stood at a safe distance and watched them. I thought, “You gotta hand it to these people, they always look happy.” I saw some

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genuineness to their happiness; it wasn't pasted-on joy. And they were devotees day in and day out, so it couldn't be fake. One black-bodied devotee playing *mrdaṅga* looked especially blissful. So all of this made a strong impression on me.

A few months later I met the devotees on *harināma*, and I stopped, listened, stood for a while, then sat down, but then they ended their session and moved on. Nobody talked to me and I was just left sitting there. The *kīrtana* had been sweet, and I was strongly attracted to it.

One day, as I was walking down Telegraph Avenue, I met a tall young man from the temple, which was nearby. He was carrying a bowl of fruit salad that resembled an orange sauce. It was Sunday, and this was probably a leftover from the feast. With a big smile, he was going around and daubing it out to everyone. I took a dollop in my hand and slurped it up. Two impressions hit me: its special, unique taste, and the blissfulness of the devotee, although he was so completely unassuming.

Once in a while, I took a BTG when it was presented to me, but as I skimmed through the pages, I felt it was all fantasy. I didn't take it seriously. I never read one from cover to cover. I sort of felt that it might be interesting to find out more, but, after all, I was a student; I didn't pursue it.

Some months later I was walking through what is called the Eucalyptus Grove, an area on the west side of campus, and in that park, I was thinking, "If I want to really understand what's what, I need a teacher." I hadn't heard the word *guru*, but I felt a need for nothing less than a perfect person to guide me.

Then, at the end of 1971, I decided to take a break from college, because the draft was off the table for me. The Vietnam War was on, and going to college was a convenient way to avoid going to Vietnam, but then Nixon started the lottery system, and I got a high enough number that I didn't have to worry about losing my student deferment. So I gave notice of withdrawal and went to Europe to see the world in a mood that something significant had to change. Maybe I would never come back. And, if all else failed, I had an address in Germany of an old business partner of my grandfather, where I could get a job.

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So I went to England first, and then started hitchhiking through Germany, France, down to Spain. In Barcelona a con man took me for practically everything I had; he left me just enough money to take a bus to Germany. Once there, I presented myself at the company I had a recommendation for, and they gave me a job as an office boy.

After five months (it was now June 1972), I had saved enough to venture out on my own again, still in the mood that I wanted to do something different. So one day I pondered, “What would be really different?” I thought, “I know! I should look up the Hare Kṛṣṇas and check them out.” I planned to stay with them for three or four weeks and then move on. I knew that they would probably be in places where hippies congregated, either in Berlin or Heidelberg.

I had been reading a book about Patañjali’s yoga system, and the author mentioned several times that this yoga is virtually impossible to practice nowadays, but that *bhakti-yoga* is feasible.

When I got to Heidelberg, I walked into the part of town where the big fountain is, and there were Śivānanda and Pṛthu on the steps playing *karatālas* and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I introduced myself and told them that I had encountered the devotees in California and wanted to learn more. So they took me to the room where they were staying, and there was Bhadra-varadhana, who kind of had preached to me for the first time in the US. But he wasn’t presenting the philosophy so well, and I wasn’t inspired by him to stay.

Still, I was attracted to Śivānanda’s nature: quiet, gentle, and level-headed, and not starry-eyed. I had seen enough starry-eyed spiritualism in Berkeley. So I asked him, “What is the effect of chanting?” He said only, “Oh, it is very powerful!” I thought, “Wow, that’s what I want.” Then he added, “You know, this is *bhakti-yoga*,” and that clinched it for me. He also offered me a little *prasādam*—a bit of cold rice and a morsel of *halavā*—not an impressive meal, but I liked it. I asked him about the devotees’ schedule, and when I heard that they got up at four o’clock in the morning, I immediately thought these people were serious. So I asked, “Can I also come at that time?”

“Sure,” he said.

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So the next morning I joined the devotees for *japa*. A few weeks later I was on the street in Stuttgart with a shaved head, dressed in a pink *dhōtī* made of some synthetic material, and selling *Zurück zur Gottheit* for one DM each. Just a month after I joined we were on our way to Paris to see Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

NIKHILĀNANDA DĀSA: I grew up in a small town near Hamburg, and as a child, I often accompanied my mother to the city for shopping. One day, in 1969—I was about twelve years old—as we were heading for the small bridge near the Botanical Garden, we saw a huge crowd of people pushing each other to get a look at a few exotically dressed young people playing drums and singing Hare Kṛṣṇa. I was spontaneously attracted and wanted to go nearer, but my mother pulled me by the hand and forced me to keep walking.

Since my early childhood I had been pondering religious questions, and my mother, who considered herself an atheist, could not provide any answers. Then I became interested in science and space travel, and I spent hours imagining all the wonderful progress humanity would make within the next few decades. One evening, the thought struck me that someday I would not be here anymore to witness all the scientific advancement. That’s how I became aware of death. That night I had a hard time falling asleep because I was constantly thinking about what would happen at the time of death. Would I continue to exist? Dissolve into nothing? Be a thought or wind or inert matter?

One day, my older sister’s boyfriend told me that people in Asia believe that the soul is eternal and wanders from body to body like a ray of light until it becomes liberated and returns to an endless spiritual effulgence. This idea fascinated me, and I felt it put me on the right track to find answers to my questions. I began to look for books on different religions and forms of meditation, but in those days there were only a few books about Zen Buddhism available that contained instructions on how to meditate. So I began to practice Zen.

When I was thirteen, I adopted the external appearance of the hippies—long hair, flower jackets, and Indian ornaments—and tried to overcome

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duality and break through the barriers of rational thinking.

In October 1971 a friend and I were in Hamburg, and in the evening we visited the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple out of curiosity. We had seen an article about the devotees in a magazine, and some of our schoolmates had been to the temple. A couple of weeks earlier, I had also seen devotees on the street asking people for donations, but I hadn't taken them seriously. I felt it was a sign of dogmatism to run around in bedsheets.

When we arrived at Bartelsstrasse it took us a while to find the temple, because we were expecting an Indian-style structure, not an old warehouse. When we finally located it and were climbing the stairs, the fragrance of incense filled me with excitement and anticipation. The devotees struck me as mystical and otherworldly. I was offered a plate of fruit *prasādam*, but arrogant as I was, I thought I was already self-satisfied and a sort of incarnation, so I took only one grape. Then we entered the temple room. But when the priest began to offer incense to the Deities, I felt I had seen enough, and we left.

Nevertheless, on our way home, we chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and in the following months, I would chant occasionally when I was alone and peaceful. Actually, that summer I had become a vegetarian and had also tried to practice *batha-yoga* and *prāṇāyāma*, and now that I was sometimes chanting, I became a bit stricter in my following of those processes. I rose early in the morning and gave up hanging around with friends who were partygoers and into smoking dope.

Many questions remained unanswered. Was everything only a product of our sense perception and thoughts, or was there a higher reality? I had read about *nirvāṇa* and Brahman, and to me, these concepts represented an ocean of love, but at times it all seemed too abstract.

I didn't feel inclined to join one of the meditation groups in Hamburg because they seemed after money more than enlightenment. I felt the need to find a *yogī* or *guru* who could teach me the real thing. I was toying with the thought of going to India, and I even began saving money and storing food for the trip, but being only thirteen I was hesitant to undertake such an adventure.

One sunny spring day in 1972 I was sitting on a park bench in a

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reflective mood. I felt I had come to a philosophical dead end. I had tried to reduce everything to passivity by emptying all thoughts, but I didn't feel happy. Even in dreams, I had concentrated on *nirvāṇa*. I had achieved being able to make mental images lose more and more of their form and color. In the park, I contemplated a tree in front of me. It was just standing there, tolerating both heat and cold in a state of complete passivity. It was near to the ideal of eliminating all activity, *nirvāṇa*, but that didn't mean the tree was an advanced spiritualist. I concluded that this could not be perfection.

And I was lonely. I had withdrawn from most of my friends, frustrated by their superficial attitudes. I told myself I did not have a single real friend. "Someone is my friend only when I give him something. Did I ever meet anyone who loved me for myself, who offered me a single thing without expecting anything in return?" When I brought to mind all the people I knew, I realized that none of them fit my ideal of a genuine friend.

Then I remembered my first visit to the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple. The monks had offered me a whole plate of fruit without asking me for anything in return. They were friendly and unconditional in their love. They seemed to be seriously into *yoga*, and maybe they even knew a bona fide master, a *guru*. I wanted to meet them again and ask them questions, but I thought that probably they had returned to India because I hadn't seen them during the winter. So I gave up the idea.

Sometime later, while walking down a street near Hamburg University, I noticed a small poster on a lamp post with a picture of a dignified-looking man in Indian dress. He had an aura of purity about him and looked absorbed in meditation. With his hands folded in prayer, he looked kind and merciful. It was Prabhupāda, and beneath the picture was a message inviting everybody to visit the temple, chant the holy names of God, and go home with an enlivened mind. So it seemed that the temple was still there.

A few days later I was in Hamburg again to buy some jasmine tea and incense, and near Sternschanze I saw a group of devotees coming toward me. They were distributing magazines to the passersby and asking for donations. I quickly went to the other side of the street. If one of them

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approached me, I would not be able to say no, being duty-bound by my identification as a spiritualist. But I had just enough money to buy tea and incense. Then Smita Kṛṣṇa, as if inspired by the Supersoul, crossed the street just as I did, and when we met, he stretched out his hand and offered me a magazine and an invitation. I gave a small donation and returned home without tea.

But I did not regret having bought *Zurück zur Gottheit*. On the cover was a beautiful picture of Kṛṣṇa, and the centerfold displayed a majestic photo of Prabhupāda, who looked like the very embodiment of selfless love.

The picture included the first verse of *Gurvāṣṭaka*: “The spiritual master is receiving benediction from the ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, so the spiritual master delivers the materially afflicted world by extinguishing the blazing fire of material existence. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is an ocean of auspicious qualities.” I instantly knew that I had found a bonafide *guru*. I hung both pictures on the wall of my room and looked at them over and over again. The magazine also had an ad for the newly translated *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, and since I had been looking for a translation of the Vedic literature for a long time, I decided to visit the temple the next Sunday and buy a copy.

At the Sunday feast, I was the only guest, and for three hours Cakravartī answered all my questions. Like a sponge, I absorbed his explanations of chanting, *prasādam*, and the nature of the soul and the spiritual world. Then it was time for *ārati*, and one devotee smeared a big white *tilaka* on my forehead. Hansadutta led a melodious *kīrtana* on the harmonium, and during the whole *ārati* ceremony I floated on a mystical cloud of bliss. I knew I had found what I was looking for, and I wanted to be part of it.

When my mother saw the *tilaka* and learned what it meant—it marks the body as a temple of God—she flew into a rage. I was only fourteen, and there was no chance to join the devotees yet, so I went to the temple daily after school, chanted some rounds, began to study *Īsopaniṣad*, and practiced the pronunciation of the *mantras*. Still, for many months I was convinced that God was ultimately the impersonal Brahman, and I

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couldn't understand the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa as a person. I thought that maybe the devotees were wrong on this one point and that Kṛṣṇa was just the representation of love and everything beautiful. Yet I was confident that these doubts would be cleared up in time. Although I was not able to live in the temple, the devotees were very kind to me and treated me as one of them. They encouraged me to just practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness at home.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: In the early spring of 1972, Jayagoura and Uthāla, two devotees from Hamburg, opened a temple in Düsseldorf, my hometown. Thus during my last few months in the military, I could combine visits to my family with visits to the temple, and I could also show my friends firsthand what Kṛṣṇa consciousness was all about.

But they didn't seem interested. They resented the fact that devotees accept God as a person and surrender to Him and His representative, the spiritual master. They wanted to follow their own path of enlightenment. One of them asked, "How do you know that some guy sitting in an attic somewhere isn't a *guru* as well?" Of course, it was possible, but why search for somebody unknown in an attic when Prabhupāda was already here? Our ways parted like that, but at least my friends had taken *prasādam* and thus made the first step on the path back home, back to Godhead.

One weekend in Düsseldorf, Uthāla suggested that I shave my head. I had been with the devotees for more than half a year now, so why hide it? I thought about it. Within a couple of months, I would be discharged from the army, so even if the soldiers harassed me it wouldn't be for long, and who cared anyway? I had enjoyed shocking people with my long hair, beard, and weird clothing; why not shock them with a bald head and flowing robes?

My arrival in Buxtehude caused a small stir. I was immediately summoned to the commander's office. After I explained briefly that I had become a monk, he dismissed me, shaking his head and saying, "Germany's young men aren't what they used to be." The major problem I faced was what to eat. I could not cook for myself, so I saw no other solution than to separate the pieces of meat from the meals provided by the canteen and eat

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the rest. When Uthāla learned of this, he explained to me that such food was contaminated and unfit. He offered to cook a bucket of *halavā* that I could take with me. That week my main meal every day was a big plate of cold *halavā* and some fruit.

Time passed quickly, and on June 1 I finally moved into the temple in Düsseldorf for good. The location was not bad—it was on one of the main arteries of the city and easily accessible by public transportation—but the building was run-down. It served as a shelter for drug addicts and third-world immigrants. The temple was on the top floor and comprised two small rooms. One served as an office, *prasādam* room, and bedroom, while the other served as the temple room. Uthāla had converted a small space under the roof into a makeshift kitchen. The sink was in the hallway, shared by other residents. There was no bathroom. To take a shower, we had to go all the way down to the yard and use the hose. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness was beyond material circumstances. I didn't feel that I had lost anything by exchanging my comfortable, spacious room at home for this.

We regularly went on *saṅkīrtana* on Düsseldorf's most prestigious avenue, the K nigsallee. Sometimes Jayagoura and I were by ourselves, so one of us would walk along the street and chant while the other distributed magazines and collected donations. Although the response was small, we were confident that by executing the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu all success was guaranteed. During those days I felt especially blissful because in two weeks we would drive to Paris to see Prabhupāda. It would be the first time any of us would meet our spiritual master in person.

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Sunrise in Paris

Śrīla Prabhupāda, scheduled to arrive in Paris on July 20, 1972, would not travel to Germany on his summer tour of Europe that year, so all the devotees in Germany, except for the *pūjārīs*, got into their vehicles and drove to France.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: We reached the Paris temple, located in the suburb of Fontenay-aux-Roses, on the evening of July 19. Devotees from France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, and England, had all arrived to be with Prabhupāda, and the small temple resembled a beehive. Wherever I went in the building, devotees were painting doors, walls, ceilings, and windowsills white and blue, and Bhagavān Dāsa, the GBC for France, was directing the whole show like a military commander. Some of the devotees painted right up to the moment Prabhupāda arrived.

The next morning, after breakfast, some seventy devotees drove to Orly, where Prabhupāda's flight from London was expected to land around noon.

JAYAGOURA DĀSA: When I saw Prabhupāda for the first time at the

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airport I saw nothing special right away, but as he approached, I noticed tears in his eyes. And when I bowed down to offer obeisances, tears also welled up in my eyes. I found out that many devotees had a similar experience, so my conclusion is that Prabhupāda displayed spiritual emotions and thereby moved us. He saw that we had become devotees only by Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Transmitting a mood of intense humility and gratitude, he was just like the rays of sunshine illuminating darkness.

BHARATA DĀSA: My first encounter with Prabhupāda at Orly was a big surprise for me. I had been initiated by mail only two months earlier, and my conception of Prabhupāda was that of a peaceful *yogī*. But he was so much different from what I had imagined. As soon as Prabhupāda appeared, half the devotees began to cry. The atmosphere suddenly became surcharged with an intense feeling of love of God and endless mercy toward all the fallen souls—truly overwhelming.

PRṬHU DĀSA: After arriving at the airport, the devotees began *kīrtana*. Along with some others, I went ahead to the customs area. As the sliding doors opened and closed and travelers came through one by one, I peeked through the doors and saw Prabhupāda twenty meters away. When he noticed us, he smiled and waved. I was so overwhelmed seeing Prabhupāda in person for the first time that I immediately fell to the ground and offered obeisances. I laughed and cried simultaneously. My body trembled, and within a few seconds, I experienced all kinds of contradictory emotions. That was my first experience of seeing Prabhupāda.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: My first direct sight of Śrīla Prabhupāda was at the airport. Some seventy devotees had converged in the arrival hall and were receiving him with a roaring *kīrtana*. At the moment Prabhupāda became visible to us, he smiled broadly and waved to the devotees. He was still yet to clear customs. The feeling from seeing him in person after hearing so much about him from devotees, seeing pictures of him, reading his books, and distributing his magazines was, of course, most exhilarating. His greatness seemed accentuated by his small physical stature and soft

golden effulgence. Noting that he was even shorter than I inspired in me a particular affection, perhaps blended with protectiveness. One of my first thoughts on seeing him was, “Yes, here is my eternal father.”

We all threw ourselves on the floor in *daṇḍavats* in two lines separated by an aisle for Prabhupāda. As he walked by me, his right lotus foot slightly touched my right thumb. Naturally, I felt especially blessed by the unsolicited, inadvertent touch of the pure devotee.

After I got up, someone told me to help retrieve Prabhupāda’s luggage from the baggage claim. Two or three of us dashed gleefully with Prabhupāda’s servant to the conveyer belt, happy to be able to render a small, practical service to His Divine Grace’s *tadīya* (paraphernalia). We knew that in his luggage Prabhupāda carried his books and translation work. Indeed, one large suitcase was particularly heavy. A huskier devotee carried that one, while I carried one of the smaller cases.

VAIDYANĀTHA DĀSA: When Śrīla Prabhupāda came out of the customs area, he was surrounded by a lot of people. To me, those people appeared like a gray mass, but Prabhupāda stood out like a luminous personality. With a huge smile on his face, he waved to the devotees. In contrast to the other passengers, who appeared to me like shadows, Prabhupāda seemed to be the only real person there.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: To receive Prabhupāda we formed two rows and an aisle from customs all the way through the arrivals hall to the area where Prabhupāda was expected to give a press conference. With our heads turned toward the sliding doors where he was expected to come through, all of us were absorbed in an ecstatic *kīrtana* in glorification of Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotee. Suddenly, the chanting gained volume, and some devotees began to jump up and down like mad. Prabhupāda’s appearance was imminent. Then I saw his head—golden-hued and effulgent, almost like something carved from precious wood. His spirituality was palpable, and it distinguished him from everyone around him. Prabhupāda’s bright eyes were glancing mercifully over the assembled devotees, and at the same time, he emanated a deep humility. As Prabhupāda strode down the aisle,

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devotees offered their obeisances one after another. Standing further down, I was waiting anxiously for Prabhupāda to pass, and when he finally was so near that I could almost touch him, I fell to the floor. My voice choked reciting the *praṇāma* mantras, tears of joy sprang to my eyes, and my body shook. The entire experience lasted only a few seconds, but it left an indelible impression on my heart.

As I began writing this chapter, I had not really intended to share this deeply personal experience with a wider audience, chiefly out of concern that it might be dismissed as sentimental imagination. However, when I discovered that several Godbrothers and Godsisters had undergone similar experiences, I decided to recount my own as well.

Years later, while reading the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, I found a section that confirms that seeing Prabhupāda with an effulgent countenance is not a figment of the imagination. In *Madhya-līlā*, Chapter 11, where the *beḍā-kīrtana* pastimes are described, Mahārāja Pratāparudra observes the devotees performing *saṅkīrtana* and exclaims, “Upon seeing all these devotees, I am very much astonished, for I have never seen such an effulgence. Indeed, their effulgence is like the brilliance of a million suns. Nor have I ever heard the Lord’s names chanted so melodiously”.

Prabhupāda explains in his purport (Cc. Madhya 11.95):

Such are the symptoms of pure devotees when they are chanting. All the pure devotees are as bright as sunshine, and their bodily luster is very effulgent. In addition, their performance of *saṅkīrtana* is unparalleled. There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the principles governing *vaiṣṇava* behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such *kīrtana* without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord’s glories.

So Prabhupāda was a living example of this phenomenon, and he mentioned on several occasions that his disciples were appreciated even by outsiders as “bright-faced,” having developed similar symptoms.

* * *

Bhagavān, Hansadutta and leading devotees of the French yātrā escorted Prabhupāda into the *Salon d'honneur*, a restricted reception room for dignitaries at the airport terminal, where the French media, guests and disciples were waiting. Guru Gauranga, a preacher originally from America, then based in Geneva, had traveled to Paris to meet his spiritual master for the first time. Because he spoke fluent French, he was chosen to be Prabhupāda’s live translator.

After a short *kīrtana*, Prabhupāda began his address by thanking the audience for taking part in the *saṅkīrtana* movement:

This *saṅkīrtana* movement was started by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu five hundred years ago for mitigating the sufferings of the people of the world. He predicted that in every village and every town on the surface of the globe, this *saṅkīrtana* movement would spread and people would become happy and find peace. ... Actually, this is happening now. So our simple method is, we go everywhere, all over the world, chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, and we attract people, especially the younger generation, boys and girls. Sometimes the newspaper reporters ask me why these young men and young women are very much attracted to this movement. I reply, “That is the success of the movement because the younger generation—they are the flowers, the future hope of the country, of the world—if they take this movement seriously, then the whole world will be happy.

Prabhupāda explained that many Indians were coming to the West to get an education because Western civilization is highly advanced, from the material point of view, but in India, the treasure of spiritual knowledge is meant for the benefit of all human beings regardless of their material position.

As he had done many times before, Prabhupāda observed that no scientific institution or university was studying the imperishable soul, which is the real purpose of human life:

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So it is a movement of the soul, not a political, social or religious movement. Those pertain to the perishable body. But the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement pertains to the imperishable soul. Therefore, simply by chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, your heart will be gradually cleansed so that you can come to the spiritual platform. Just like here in this movement we have got students from all countries of the world, all religions of the world. But they no more think of the particular type of religion or nation or creed or color. No. All of them think of themselves as part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa.

When we come to that platform and when we engage ourselves in our spiritual occupation, then we are liberated. So this movement is a very important movement. It is not, of course, possible to give you all details within a few minutes, but if you are interested, you can kindly contact us by correspondence or by reading our literature or by personal contact.

Anyway, your life will be sublime. We have no such distinction, that this is India, this is England, this is France, this is Africa. We think every living entity, not only the human being, even animals, birds, beasts, trees, aquatics, insects, reptiles—all are part and parcel of God. But the lower animals are unable to receive this knowledge. The human being has developed consciousness. He can receive this knowledge of the spirit soul.

So our only request is that you come forward and try to understand this philosophy and spread it for the benefit of the whole human society.

Thank you very much.

GURU-GAURĀṄGA DĀSA: The opportunity to serve as Prabhupada's oral translator for the first time was the privilege of a lifetime, or rather many lifetimes. Actively rendering a pure devotee's spoken words into another language live in front of an exacting audience was a very special form of *śravaṇam kīrtanam* (hearing and chanting), and I was keenly aware that my oral translation had to be perfectly aligned with Prabhupada's intent and message. Upon completing his address, Prabhupada opened the press conference to the restless French media representatives.

[The first reporter to ask a question was from France Inter, the flagship, national public radio station of France.]

France Inter reporter: O great master, would you kindly present yourself to the listeners of France Inter?

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Prabhupāda [to Guru-Gaurāṅga]: I have already explained what is our mission, what is this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. If he wants some particular answer, he can ask me.

Guru-Gaurāṅga: [translating for the France Inter reporter] He would like to know who you are, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and how old you are.

Prabhupāda: I am now 77.

Guru-Gaurāṅga [translating]: How long have you been the head of this movement?

Prabhupāda: Well, for the last 5 years.

France Inter reporter: Can you please describe the dress you are wearing?

Prabhupāda: You can ask about our philosophy. My dress? What will be the benefit for people to know about my dress? Instead of wasting time in that way... I can ask you why you are dressed in that way. That's not very important.

Guru-Gaurāṅga: [translates and then reminds the France Inter reporter to pose questions about the philosophy of Krishna consciousness.]

Bhagavān interjects: Anyone can answer those questions.

Guru-Gaurāṅga: [translating for the reporter] What do you think of the future?

Prabhupāda: Future you can guess... Because I am 77, I may die. But these young men, they will live and spread Krishna consciousness all over the world.

Guru-Gaurāṅga: Now he's asking about your childhood, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda: My childhood? I was all along a devotee, from my childhood. My father was a devotee, and he trained me to be a devotee.

Guru-Gaurāṅga: [again reminds the France Inter reporter to ask about the philosophy of Krishna consciousness.]

France Inter reporter: Are you happy? [devotees laugh]

Prabhupāda: What do you think? I'm happy or unhappy?

GURU-GAURĀṅGA DĀSA: And so it went on. Try as I might, I could not shake the persistent reporter from his line of questioning.

Impatient with the seemingly endless questions about his age, dress,

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childhood, prior civil status, etc., Prabhupāda expertly decided to handle the matter his own way. When the France Inter reporter asked him, “Do you have any children?” His Divine Grace responded affirmatively. The reporter followed up reflexively, “How many?” he inquired. With a twinkle in his eye, Prabhupada replied, “Many.” Of course, the journalist wanted to know precisely how many and fell into Prabhupada’s trap. Prabhupada replied matter-of-factly, “Many hundreds. Hunched over his notepad, the reporter began to scribble furiously about this startling nugget of information. With impeccable timing, Prabhupada added drily, “. . . and without my wife.” At first, the journalist thought that he had uncovered a real “scoop,” but when the devotees in attendance burst into laughter, the reporter sheepishly realized that Prabhupada’s disciples were those children!

When Prabhupāda finished his talk a crowd of chanting devotees escorted him to a car that would take him to the temple. Then all the devotees rushed to their vehicles to speed ahead and be at the temple in time for his arrival.

HARERNĀMĀNANDA DĀSA: For Prabhupāda’s reception at the temple we formed an aisle from the sidewalk to the entrance of the building. Judging from photographs in *Back to Godhead*, I had imagined Prabhupāda to be much taller, but although he was relatively small in stature, in overall appearance he was a noble personality. His hands especially caught my attention, they were very fine and aristocratic. My photographer’s eye made me think immediately that he was someone completely different from any other person I had ever seen.

Within myself, I accepted Prabhupāda immediately as a self-realized soul. I knew he was the right person. Back in Berlin, I had inquired from the devotees whether Prabhupāda was self-realized because I felt that, being conditioned myself, only someone who was not conditioned could liberate me. So when I finally saw Prabhupāda in person, I was immediately struck by his spiritual potency and was convinced that he was indeed a genuine spiritual master.

Some months before coming to the temple I had skimmed a copy of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* in a health food store. There I had seen a picture of Prabhupāda for the first time and read about how he had gone to New York. Since I had grown up in America and had personally experienced how hellish New York is, I was truly impressed that Prabhupāda, in his advanced age, with hardly any money or support, practically without preparation, had gone there to preach. For me, this was evidence of his genuineness. Only somebody with a genuine mission would have the courage to take such a step and undergo so much hardship.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: The Paris devotees had rented a hall and some rooms at L'Ecole d'Architecture, a school of architecture, where Prabhupāda was scheduled to give a couple of evening programs and where the visiting devotees stayed.

As was customary on such occasions, we held *kīrtana* until Prabhupāda arrived, sat on the *vyāsāsana*, and began chanting *Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava*. It was absorbing just to watch Prabhupāda chant; he seemed to become more and more immersed in thought of Kṛṣṇa's form and pastimes in Vṛndāvana with each successive repetition of the short song. His eyes would generally be tightly closed, but would occasionally open to dart swiftly about the room, glancing at the devotees and guests.

At the end of the program we held another *kīrtana*, and as the intensity of the chanting gradually increased Prabhupāda's head shook more and more, back and forth to the rhythm, as he played his *karatālas* and sang. A small girl, perhaps four or five years old, was dancing in front of Prabhupāda. As he opened his eyes and saw her, his grave demeanor suddenly transformed into a wide smile, and when the devotees saw Prabhupāda smile, it was as if the smile infused everyone with renewed energy. Thus the intensity and ecstasy of the *kīrtana* all of a sudden increased tenfold.

At the end of one of the lectures, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for questions. One middle-aged man, apparently a Christian, stood up and said: "I am afraid there is no religiosity present here whatsoever!" Prabhupāda responded immediately with a look of genuine concern. "Oh, you are

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afraid?” he wryly asked. His words so clearly cut to the core of the man’s ignorance that it left him dumbfounded, and he simply sat down without a further word. By this simple, disarming question, Prabhupāda communicated volumes. One felt how unfortunate such a fearful, confused, conditioned soul is that he cannot take advantage of pure transcendental teachings, the very essence of all religion, being delivered by a self-realized person full of compassion for the foolish denizens of Kali-yuga.

SURABHĪ DEVĪ DĀSĪ: In those days, men and women were not sitting separately in class, so I was sitting right in front of Prabhupāda. And we were also not practiced repeating the Sanskrit verses before the lecture, but here Prabhupāda had us chant the Sanskrit, and then he asked the devotees to also chant. When he turned to the ladies, I was in complete anxiety, because I was sitting right in front of him. Maybe he would ask me to repeat the verse, but I never ever had recited Sanskrit, so I was really afraid. Then he looked at me and asked me to chant. I was red all over the face and I tried to pronounce one word after the other, but I didn’t know how to do it. Prabhupada helped me along with every single word, and at the end, he smiled at me and said, “Very good”.

PR̥THU DĀSA: The devotees had planned to have an installation ceremony of a medium-size set of marble Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, and thus they were putting all their energy into making the preparations. Vāsudeva was painting the altar; in fact, practically the whole place was wet from fresh paint.

But when Prabhupāda assessed the situation, he became doubtful whether the French devotees would be able to provide the necessary standard of worship. He said, “These Deities need nine *brāhmaṇas* to worship Them. Do we have these *brāhmaṇas*?” When the reply was negative, Prabhupāda suggested that it was better to wait.

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: As soon as Hansadutta heard about this, he went up to Prabhupāda’s room and said: “Prabhupāda, I want these Deities!”

Prabhupāda simply said, “Then take them.” In this way Rādhā-Madana-mohana came to Germany. For almost three years They remained in Their Indian metal trunk because whenever Hansadutta asked Prabhupāda for permission to install Them, the response was the same: “Wait.”

DVIJAVARA DĀSA: In the spring of 1972, after having met the devotees previously in England, I went from Italy to Amsterdam and stayed there for some time in the temple at Bethanienstraat. I was not yet initiated and eagerly awaited Prabhupāda’s visit in August. Meanwhile, we were all busy converting the former garage into a temple room.

One day a devotee named Darśa arrived from India, carrying marble Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities with him. They had been ordered by Harivilāsa for the temple in Paris. The next day, Locanānanda and Bhugarbha arrived in a Volkswagen van to bring Darśa and the Deities to France. When I learned that Prabhupāda was coming to Paris soon, even before going to Amsterdam, I took the opportunity to go with them.

When we arrived in Paris the devotees were busy preparing the temple for Prabhupāda’s visit. The whole place smelled of fresh paint. The day Prabhupāda was coming, most of the devotees, I included, went to the Orly Airport where we all joined in a lively *kirtana*, eagerly expecting our spiritual master’s arrival.

As soon as I saw Prabhupāda walking out from customs into the arrival hall, I had all the ecstatic symptoms as described in the *Nectar of Devotion*. My first thought was that I may be dying: I was choked, I could not breathe, my hair stood on end, I was shaking and cold tears streamed from my eyes. It was all Prabhupāda’s mercy. As soon as I saw him, my realization was: “Finally I have met my real father.” And on the spot, I made up my mind that my life was his.

As the temple was quite small, all the visiting devotees were staying at the L’Ecole d’Architecture. However, since I was the driver, I was allowed to stay at the temple, where only the senior disciples were staying with Prabhupāda. I would sneak up to the attic, which was situated above Prabhupāda’s quarters and sleep there. Sometimes I could hear him chant *japa* or dictate his translations.

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One morning, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was leaving the house, he saw that the leaves of an ivy creeper that was growing there were wilted. He stopped and asked, “Why are these leaves wilted?” I remembered having watered that plant, but next to the base there was a rat hole, so whenever I put water, it would just gush down and disappear. So I said, “Śrīla Prabhupāda, I used to water the plant but there is a hole and the water goes down and vanishes.” He gave me a stern look and, pointing with his cane at the base of the creeper, said: “See to it!” I thought, “This is the first direct instruction from my spiritual master, I have to do something about it.” Later I mixed some earth with water and poured it into the hole until it was filled up. I understood that with Prabhupāda there is no excuse, you were expected to find a way to solve a given problem. It is not enough to simply try, there has to be a result.

The next day, while I was chanting *japa* outside the temple, I saw Hansadutta coming down the stairs holding a bundle in his arms as if he was carrying a baby. And right behind him, his wife Himāvatī also had a “baby” in her arms. Obviously, Prabhupāda was not handing out babies. Then it dawned on me that they were carrying the Deities that Darśa had brought from India. Later I found out that Prabhupāda had given the Deities to Hansadutta because the Paris devotees were not yet ready to install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. Instead, he told the devotees to carve Lord Jagannātha. This was done by Dayāmṛgya Dāsa, and those Deities are still being worshiped today in the Paris temple.

After one morning class, Yogeśvara asked Prabhupāda: “How does one get credit in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?” Prabhupāda became very sober and closed his eyes. After a few seconds, he opened his eyes and said: “One gets credit when he trains others and helps them to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: An outdoor initiation ceremony was scheduled to take place on Sunday morning, July 23. It was a cloudy and somewhat cool day. When about fifteen devotees, mostly from Germany, assembled in the Jardin du Luxembourg, a public park in central Paris, to take part in the ceremony over which Prabhupāda would preside, a small crowd

gathered, curious about the arrangements and strangely dressed people.

After Prabhupāda arrived and sat on the *vyāsāsana*, he gave a brief lecture, which was translated sentence by Jyotirmayi Dasi, a French disciple. Prabhupāda addressed the bystanders as much as the devotees: “If you want real liberty, equality, and fraternity, then you must take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Hansadutta, acting as a priest for the ceremony, began lighting the fire. Normally, the procedure is that the devotees first say their vows and receive new spiritual names and beads, and then the fire sacrifice is performed. This time, however, Hansadutta decided to go ahead with the fire sacrifice first. Just as we were concluding the ceremony with the final *mantras*, throwing the last grains into the fire and offering bananas into the sacrificial flames, it began to rain. I looked over to the *vyāsāsana*, but Prabhupāda had already left. Somewhat surprised, confused, and dismayed, the rest of us got up and prepared to retreat from the quickly increasing rain.

For me, this was a lesson in not taking the spiritual master’s presence for granted. At the same time, it was a lesson in preparing for times when Prabhupāda would not be physically present, a lesson which he expounded on in his *Bhāgavatam* lecture the next morning. Prabhupāda first chanted the *Ñad-gosvāmy-āṣṭaka*, and then lectured on the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Chapter 1, Text 15, which describes how the association of pure devotees is more purifying than that of the Ganges, which purifies only after prolonged use: “O Sūta, those great sages who have completely taken shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord can at once sanctify those who come in touch with them, whereas the waters of the Ganges can sanctify only after prolonged use.” I remember Prabhupāda giving the example of flight training, regarding the necessity of taking full advantage of the spiritual master’s instructions in order to be prepared for death: Eventually, the trainee must fly solo, in the same way, that we all, at the time of death, must leave the world alone, without help from others.

After the lecture, the devotees receiving first initiation were called forward one by one to make their vows before Prabhupāda and receive a spiritual name and a set of beads that he had chanted on. I remember that before I went up, one of the devotees called forward was Haryakṣa. Prabhu-

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pāda looked at his forehead and noticed that he was without the *tilaka* mark of a *vaiṣṇava*. “No *tilaka*?” he asked gravely, to indicate that he should immediately put it on before coming to receive his spiritual name.

I had been in some anxiety that I might forget one or another of the four regulative principles when saying my vows, but for some reason, Prabhupāda didn’t ask me to say them. Perhaps he saw my anxiety. He simply handed me the beads and said, “Your name is Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra Dāsa. It means the servant of the place where Kṛṣṇa appears, or Vṛndāvana.” In my excitement, I didn’t fully comprehend the meaning, but I understood that my name included the name “Kṛṣṇa.” This fulfilled a wish that had appeared within my heart since I first met Smita Kṛṣṇa in Germany: that it would be nice to be given a name that included “Kṛṣṇa.”

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: After *Bhāgavatam* class, Prabhupāda had all the beads draped over the side of his *vyāsāsana*, and his servant, Nanda-kumāra, started to call us one by one to receive the beads and our spiritual names.

There was one boy who had been a butcher before, and apparently, Prabhupāda had been informed about it. After the candidate had repeated the last regulative principle, “No eating of meat, fish or eggs,” there was a moment of silence. Prabhupāda looked at his prospective disciple gravely and said, “Please don’t kill any more cows.” The boy blushed and simply shook his head in embarrassment, and then Prabhupāda gave him his name: Mahārathi Dāsa, “the servant of one who can fight with one thousand enemies at a time.”

We were all amazed at Prabhupāda’s extraordinary mercy and compassion. Considering that cow killing is one of the most sinful acts, for which the culprit has to be born in the body of a cow and slaughtered as many times as there are hairs on the cow’s skin, remarkably, Prabhupāda never hesitated to accept even such a person as his disciple, provided he agreed to give up his sinful ways. In this way, he acted as the perfect representative of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who accepted even sinners like Jagāi and Mādhāi on the condition that they would not commit any more sinful activities.

GURU-GAURĀṄGA DĀSA: That morning Prabhupāda also gave *brāhmaṇa* initiation to a number of his first-initiated disciples, including me. I was called into his quarters and promptly offered my prostrated obeisances. I was seated right next to him, closer than I had ever been before. Prabhupāda blessed my sacred thread and looped it over my left shoulder draped diagonally across my chest. He then handed me a slip of paper with the Gāyatrī *mantra* printed on it, which I repeated after him aloud so he could correct my pronunciation. At Prabhupāda's request, I leaned in even closer to hear the sacred words pronounced by him. The pleasant, woody aroma of the sandalwood paste applied to his forehead for its soothing, cooling effect was unmistakable. Prabhupāda's voice dropped to a whisper as he spoke Gāyatrī into my right ear. He then showed me how to use the finger joints of my right hand to count the number of times I recited the *mantra*. Finally, Prabhupāda instructed me to keep the Gāyatrī *mantra* confidential and maintain strict daily cleanliness.

When it was all over, he leaned back, smiled, and said, "So, now you are *brāhmaṇa*. Would you like to worship the Deity?"

I was taken aback by the suddenness and directness of his question and the necessity to answer it on the spot, which I had not anticipated. Uncertain about making a commitment to become a temple *pūjārī* after having spent my first year in ISKCON worshipping images of the disciplic succession and the Pañca-tattva, preaching and going on *harināma saṅkīrtana*, I felt the heavy weight of the moment.

"I would like to do whatever pleases you," I replied timidly.

Prabhupāda pressed further: "I am asking if you would like to worship the Deity."

"I would like to do whatever you instruct me," I stammered, realizing that I had been unable to provide the answer that I thought he was looking for.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then shifted his approach: "What service are you performing presently?" he asked.

"I am preaching in Geneva, Switzerland. I traveled to Paris to be with you for the first time and be blessed by your association," I explained.

"Oh, I see," he replied. A profound clarity filled the room. "Preaching

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Kṛṣṇa consciousness is our number one business. Deity worship is secondary. Go back to Geneva, and continue your preaching in Switzerland.”

Leaving Prabhupada’s quarters, the weight of his final instruction settled into my heart as a sacred personal assignment.

Receiving brahminical initiation meant not only a formal qualification to worship the Deity on the altar, but marked, at least for me, a new, deeper level of serious commitment to my spiritual master and his mission.

I did not have the vocabulary for this at the time, but by sending me back to my prescribed service, I felt that Prabhupāda had recognized my readiness and eagerness to preach and had mapped out my role.

It was only in 1976, while reading the newly published *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, that I came across a term in *Antya-līlā* 4.144 that perfectly illuminated what had transpired that summer morning in Prabhupada’s quarters in the Fontenay-aux-Roses temple. Long before the publication of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Prabhupāda had recognized my commitment and assigned me a *prabhu-datta-deśa*, a field of service chosen and given by the spiritual master. My path was clear: I was to be a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Switzerland.

VĀSUDEVA DĀSA: We drove from Berlin to Paris in our Volkswagen bus. On one side of the van I had painted the spiritual sky with Goloka in the center, and on the other side, the cloudlike Causal Ocean with Mahā-Viṣṇu lying in it, and Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu inside an egg-shaped universe. When Prabhupāda saw the van, he immediately inspected the artwork.

However, when he looked at the painting of Mahā-Viṣṇu more closely, he became angry and chastised me. I didn’t have time to finish the painting, and two of Mahā-Viṣṇu’s four arms were only drafted. Prabhupāda didn’t approve of my decision to leave them like that and show something half-finished in public. He wanted us to do things conscientiously and perfectly.

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The Amsterdam Mess

After a week in Paris, Śrīla Prabhupāda visited Amsterdam, where the Dutch devotees received him in their small temple on Bethanien-straat for the first time. Although the center was new and none of the devotees were experienced, they had asked Prabhupāda to install the Deities of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā.

The devotees from Germany wanted to be with their spiritual master for some days more, and because Amsterdam was only a few hours' drive from Paris they all got into their vans and headed north.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: We greeted Prabhupāda at the Amsterdam airport with an enthusiastic *kīrtana* and escorted him to the VIP lounge where he settled down behind a huge conference table in front of a crowd of reporters. The room had no air conditioning, and it was a very hot August day. The devotees had not brought fans. So after I watched the pearls of perspiration running down Prabhupāda's face I finally grabbed a magazine and provided some cooling air. The next day one of the major newspapers

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published a photo of me standing next to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The caption said that one of the Swami's young disciples was serving his spiritual master by fanning him with a magazine.

For Friday and Saturday evening, the devotees had rented a hall in the Krasnapolsky Hotel, near the Dam, the main square in Amsterdam's downtown.

PRṬHU DĀSA: To attract people to Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture, Hansadutta and Revatīnandana Swami led a huge *barināma* through the center of Amsterdam and around Dam Square, and when they arrived at the hall, an immense crowd of hippies was following them. The *kīrtana* continued onstage for a good while until Prabhupāda came and sat on the *vyāsāsana*. He took his *karatālas*, chanted *Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava*, and gave a brief lecture. Then he called over Hansadutta, exchanged a few words with him, and got up and left.

Hansadutta told us that Prabhupāda had said these people were useless. Best was just to have *kīrtana* and give them *prasādam*; there was no use discussing philosophy—they were all intoxicated. So we had a festival program with nonstop *kīrtana* and distributed hundreds of plates of *prasādam*.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: One of my duties was to keep order. Four or five young men that nowadays we would call punks, started to smoke. I had them put out their cigarettes. Then, during Prabhupāda's *kīrtana*, one of them began to mock the devotees' dancing. We ignored him, and the rest of the evening passed without incident.

REVATĪNANDANA DĀSA: On Saturday we had an all-day program in Vondelpark. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us to just have *kīrtana*, because these people were degraded. He told us not to speak much because if we said the wrong thing, they might become agitated, even violent. I told him that I had experience with these kinds of people and that after ten or fifteen minutes they often became restless. "Yes," Prabhupāda said, "ten, fifteen

minutes maximum, and no questions.”

In the morning I began the program with *kīrtanas* and brief talks. Prabhupāda stayed in a nearby apartment. His front window faced the park. His servant later told me that Prabhupāda, hearing our program going on, came out on the balcony and stayed there for a good while. He obviously enjoyed hearing us preach by chanting and lecturing.

One devotee had picked up a chant in India: *he kṛṣṇa govinda hari murāri/ he nātha nārāyaṇa vāsudeva*. When Prabhupāda heard it he called us into his room and said, “This is not a Vedic mantra; this is a cinema song. An intelligent disciple just takes whatever his spiritual master provides for him, considering that to be sufficient. There are many names of God you can chant, but it’s best to take what comes in disciplic succession and what the spiritual master introduces.”

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: So many hippies lived in that park that there must have been at least four or five thousand people present when Prabhupāda got on the *vyāsāsana* and began to speak. I was again a member of the security crew, and suddenly the same group of punks approached the stage. When Pradyumna, Prabhupāda’s Sanskrit editor, spotted them, he found me and advised me how to deal with the guy who had been mocking our dancing: “If he does any nonsense, do something!” I had been a devotee for less than a year, and the words of one of Prabhupāda’s personal staff were like the absolute truth for me. From that moment on I kept an eye on this guy, and I even warned him that if he dared to cause a disturbance, I would take action. Wherever he went I followed him like a shadow. He ended up right in front of the stage staring at Prabhupāda, who was speaking to a huge crowd of young people. Then this fool dared to thumb his nose at Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was onstage, so I jumped on him like a tiger. He lost his balance and we both fell to the ground. Three or four other devotees rushed to help me, and a crowd of people gathered around us. Angry voices could be heard.

Suddenly we heard the sound of cymbals. Prabhupāda had begun to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. As the transcendental vibration of his voice filled the air, the tension diminished, and the situation calmed down.

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After the program, Prabhupāda called us in and reprimanded us for our foolish action. He was disturbed and said that only the chanting of the holy name had prevented a disaster: five thousand hippies fighting with a hundred of us. He said that it was one of our Western diseases to become easily angered and start a fight over a trifle.

The next day this guy I had attacked came to the temple and apologized. To my amazement, he admitted being impressed by the decisive action taken against him. And he stayed and became a devotee.

The incident made Prabhupāda thoughtful. On several occasions, he had mentioned that the hippies were the best candidates for spiritual life because they had voluntarily rejected the materialistic life of their parents to search for a better life. In fact, most of Prabhupāda's disciples came from the counterculture. But the counterculture's initial ideals were rapidly degrading into hedonism and cynicism, as he witnessed in Amsterdam. The next day, he wrote to Hridayānanda Mahārāja, who was lecturing at American university campuses:

We are observing here in Europe that many, many hippies have become disgusted with material life, but they are also now so much degraded that they will not hear our philosophy, simply mocking. So our devotees may become very much learned to remove their doubts and become very much fixed up in Krishna Consciousness, but so far preaching to the general public, especially the hippie class, it is better not to preach very much philosophy. Just somehow or other get them to chant Hare Krishna mantra, and if some of them are curious to learn something, they may purchase one of our books. Only if they chant with us, that will help them.

Over the years, Prabhupāda sometimes referred back to this experience:

“I saw in Amsterdam—simply full of hippies—lying down on the street, lying down in the park; no food, no shelter. It is going on. [...] They must be wanting something. They are in need of something. [...] You may be in need of food, I may be in need of some woman, he may be in need of some money. [...] In this way everyone is needy. Therefore, ultimately one should search after God. Then every need will be fulfilled.”

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PRTHU DĀSA: Early one morning we were strolling with Śrīla Prabhupāda through Vondelpark, where most of the hippies had spent the summer night in sleeping bags. My attention was drawn to a couple lying under a tree. They weren't asleep anymore but were already pretty busy with each other. I was curious to see how Prabhupāda would react, so I observed him from the corner of my eye. But Prabhupāda had been observing me, and when our eyes met, he shook his head in disapproval, as if to say, "No, no, we don't look! A devotee doesn't watch people engaged in lusty affairs."

REVATĪNANDANA DĀSA: When we passed the hippie couple Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked, "Just see! In the material world, it doesn't matter whether one is rich or poor, there will always be some facility for sex life."

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: We reached Amsterdam in the early morning on the day of Prabhupāda's arrival. As soon as we entered the temple, an *īṣṭa-goṣṭhī* was held to explain to everyone what to do. Preparations were still underway. Prabhupāda's reception at the airport had to be organized, the newly constructed wooden arches in the temple room had to be painted light blue and pink, and clothes for Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā had to be sewn.

When the question was asked, "Who knows how to sew?", one of the Hamburg devotees, for whom I had once made a bead bag, pointed to me and said, "He knows." Although I had only a little experience, on seeing the situation I thought, "Well, I've never made clothes, but somehow or other I'll manage to come up with something." So I agreed.

At noon on that Friday, we all assembled in front of the temple to greet Prabhupāda. Kīśorī Dāśī was struggling with her children. Her little daughter had been crying all morning and didn't respond to any attempts to calm her down. And there was no way to tell Kīśorī to take her daughter and leave. She insisted on being there with her kids to receive Prabhupāda. As soon as Prabhupāda stepped out of the car and saw the screaming child in Kīśorī's arms, he went up to Kīśorī, patted her daughter's head, and said: "Everything is all right." And immediately the child became quiet. I was amazed.

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The temple consisted of a fairly large temple room, a kitchen, an office, and another small room for the women devotees. The *brahmacārīs* stayed in the attic. We divided the women's ashram with a curtain, and in the front part I sat with Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā—and the fabric. The sewing machine was broken, so I had to sew everything by hand. And because the installation was in two days I had to work through the nights. My only companions on those two nights were a few mice, which ran all over the place.

I pictured in my mind our Jagannātha Deities in Hamburg and tried to create similar outfits. The turbans were the most difficult part, and it was only by Kṛṣṇa's mercy that I managed to make something that resembled a turban after numerous unsuccessful attempts at wrapping.

On Sunday morning I finished the last details, and being completely wiped out I went to rest in our VW bus because the installation was scheduled for that afternoon.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: On the morning of the installation I was asked to string garlands. Kīśorī Dāsī was in charge of the decorations and flowers, and she provided me with a needle and thread and buckets full of white, pink, and red carnations. This was the first time I had made a garland, and Kīśorī was too frazzled to give me detailed instructions or supervise my service. Akṣayānanda Dāsa, the temple president, had dumped all responsibility for the preparations on her head because he was busy preparing for his *sannyāsa* initiation, to be held that same afternoon right after the Deity installation. Kīśorī was sincerely trying to arrange everything, but the task was over her head. Disorder and confusion reigned.

How do you string a garland of carnations? I didn't know, and it didn't occur to me to do it lengthwise, by opening the flower petals and pushing the hard green part firmly into the previous flower so that at the end only petals would be visible. I pushed the needle through sideways and twisted the flowers so that the petals pointed in different directions. As long as the garlands were lying on a cloth on the floor, they looked all right.

The awakening came when, as a reward for my efforts I was allowed to

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garland Prabhupāda. I felt proud and satisfied that His Divine Grace was wearing one of “my” garlands, visible to everybody present. Shortly, however, my artistic arrangement of carnations began to disintegrate. One flower after another turned its head sideways exposing its green base. Besides being an unpleasant sight, the hard green parts must have pricked Prabhupāda, but he seemed undisturbed. He wasn’t concerned with his own comfort. He was more concerned with the preparations for the ceremony, because not only wasn’t his garland up to standard, many of the installation ingredients were missing.

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: I woke up at 3:30 p.m., anxious about whether the Deity clothes were still there, and after a quick shower I entered the temple room and made my way to the altar. This was not easy, because the temple was packed with people. There were so many guests that a lot of them had to stand on the sidewalk—there was just no room inside.

I peeped into the ladies’ ashram and felt relief—the clothes and the Deities were still there. But then I realized that hardly anything was prepared for the installation. Not that I knew exactly what was needed for the ceremony, but I had heard that the Deities would be bathed in milk and yogurt and then a fire sacrifice would be held. But I didn’t see any indication that these things were being prepared. I asked some devotees about it, but they didn’t even pay attention to what I said, because they were busy talking to guests and taking care of the press and the TV crew. So I thought, “What to do? I have to phone Prabhupāda. Something has to be done.” Nanda-kumāra, Prabhupāda’s servant, answered the phone. “I am not in charge here,” I said, “but from what I can see, nothing is being prepared for the installation.” He couldn’t believe his ears. Quickly, he gave me several instructions, especially that the Deities had to be wrapped in white cloth and that we needed big containers for the bathing. So we got a bedsheet from the neighbors, which we tore into three parts, and some big pots from a nearby hotel. Bit by bit some arrangements came together, but on the whole, they were less than paltry.

REVATĪNANDANA DĀSA: When we arrived with Prabhupāda at the

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temple we were greeted by an ecstatic *kīrtana*, and hundreds of curious onlookers were wondering what was going on. Prabhupāda smiled at the enthusiasm of his disciples, but his demeanor changed after he entered the temple room and looked around. “What is this? No fruits? No flowers? What are these pots that you want to bathe the Deities in?” The anger in his voice made everyone freeze. “I cannot bring the Lord of the universe here. This is a farce! How can you think that, with so little preparation, Lord Jagannātha will live in this place?” But after deliberating for a few seconds he relented. “All right, go ahead. But I don’t think this is very nice.”

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: One new *bhakta* had been living in the temple for a couple of weeks, and whenever he’d gotten disturbed the devotees had instructed him to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. So when he saw Śrīla Prabhupāda upset, he remarked to him, “Why don’t you just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa?” Without a word, Prabhupāda took his bead bag and began chanting *japa*. He continued on and off until the devotees had gathered the necessary paraphernalia and were ready to begin the ceremony.

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: Prabhupāda was frightening. When he saw the mess, he turned to his leaders and demanded, “Who is responsible for this? Who is the *pūjārī*?” Akṣayānanda summoned up his courage and said, “I told Kiśorī...”

“A woman?” Prabhupāda said, cutting him off and looking at him sternly, incredulity in his voice.

Icy silence. The atmosphere was so tense that you could cut it with a knife. I felt like disappearing into the earth. Such an embarrassing situation! My only thought was “I hope that at least the outfits will be all right.” Then Śyāmasundara, Prabhupāda’s secretary, lowered his head and asked shyly, “Shouldn’t we get some fruits?”

“Don’t tell me what to do!” Prabhupāda thundered.

Eventually, Kiśorī came in with the fruits—an enormous plate of fruit salad—and was promptly sent back to the kitchen. Some unbroken fruits were quickly brought, and Nanda-kumāra began bathing the Deities.

When he was finished, he took Their Lordships behind the curtains to be dressed. Kiśorī was supposed to do it, but she was a nervous wreck. So the first thing Nanda-kumāra did was to tell her she wasn't needed. I was standing nearby, ready to jump in if necessary, and he called me to help dress the Deities».

NIKUNJAVĀSINĪ DĀSĪ: My eldest brother was living near Bethanienstraat, and he visited the temple regularly to take *prasādam*. Sometimes he would even accompany the devotees on *harināma*. He was the first person to put me in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Unfortunately, he later got involved with Guru Maharaji, where he didn't have to follow any principles. But my second brother became very serious about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and was initiated as Aṅga Dāsa.

When Prabhupāda came to Amsterdam, Aṅga invited my parents and me to the temple to meet him. My brother told us, "This is a pure devotee, and even if you don't understand anything, whatever he says is pure sound vibration and has a beneficial effect." I was impressed and thought, "Oh, this is very special. I'm going to see this holy man, a very spiritual person." So I was really eager to go, and thus we went to the installation ceremony.

A television crew was there, and the temple was packed with people. The preparations for the installation were so deficient that Prabhupāda was angry. He was shouting, and the devotees were timidly running around trying to follow his directions. Even before seeing Prabhupāda, I was in a respectful mood, but I never expected him to be like this. Because of my eldest brother's involvement with Guru Maharaji, I had a certain concept of a *guru*. I had always seen pictures of Guru Maharaji with a big smile on his face—and his face was fatty and glowing—but here was Prabhupāda so angry. I thought, "Wow, this is serious business; this takes surrender. This is real spiritual life." I suddenly realized that the other things were all simply an external show, whereas this was real. But I didn't think I was ready for it. I had respect for the devotees because they took Prabhupāda's chastisement so seriously. They were in anxiety, trying to rectify the mess. Of course, I didn't understand what it was all about. There were some statues covered with cloth, and there was this area in the

Chapter 10

middle for fire, and Prabhupāda was yelling, and the devotees were running around, and it was all being filmed while we just stood there watching.

Another thing that amazed me was that Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't seem to care at all about the TV cameras or guests. He was doing the needful for a proper installation ceremony, and this really impressed me. He didn't care about making a good impression on the TV people by glossing over the whole affair. His only interest was to make the proper arrangements for Kṛṣṇa's service.

VAIDYANĀTHA DĀSA: I was surprised that such an elevated person, the leader of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, had become angry. In my mind, a transcendentalist always remained equipoised and serene. I didn't know yet that a devotee could show anger in Kṛṣṇa's service. I had been living with the devotees for less than a week. During the lecture, I was leaning against the wall, with my knees under my chin and my arms around them—the typical way you're not supposed to sit in front of the Deities. Prabhupāda must have noticed me because suddenly he pulled his legs up and sat on the *vyāsāsana* in exactly the same way and said, "It is an offense to sit in front of the Deities like this. Sit properly!" This is the only personal instruction I ever received from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I have been trying to apply it in its broadest sense: not only to sit properly in the temple but also to be always properly situated in devotional service.

REVATĪNANDANA DĀSA: Prabhupāda asked me to perform the fire sacrifice. While chanting the *mantras* I had difficulty separating the compound words properly, and each time I made a mistake Prabhupāda corrected me. I became so nervous that at the end I forgot to chant *namo mahā-vadānyāya*. Prabhupāda interrupted me. "You don't chant *namo mahā-vadānyāya*? I will do it!"

When it was time to light the fire, I picked up the ladle for the ghee with my left hand, being left-handed, and the wood with my right hand. When I realized what I was doing, I tried to switch the two quickly without anyone noticing, but Prabhupāda had already looked at me

disapprovingly, as if to say, “My disciples—just see!”

The only time I saw Prabhupāda smile that afternoon was when he handed Akṣayānanda his *sannyāsa* staff and made him Akṣayānanda Swami».

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: While all this was going on, Nanda-kumāra and I were busy dressing the Deities behind the curtain of the altar room. When we finally put Their Lordships on the altar, we realized the canopy was too small, or rather, that the columns supporting it stood just in front of Jagannātha and Baladeva. Nanda-kumāra thought for a second and said, “We have to take it off.” So we lifted the canopy off the altar. But where to put it? There was no room. We had to take it out, and there was no other way than to carry it through the packed temple room over everyone’s heads. Prabhupāda, who was lecturing, looked on with surprise.

But now the Deity room looked pretty empty. There was only the altar and a bare wall in the back. On one side a large painting of the Pañca-tattva leaned against the wall, and while looking at it I had an idea. “Why don’t we put that behind the altar?” I suggested. “Great idea,” Nanda-kumāra said. But there was nothing to support the painting because the altar didn’t reach back to the wall. The only solution was to put something on the floor. So Nanda-kumāra stuck his head through the curtains and shouted, “Bring books!” Heads turned in surprise. Because quite a few books were needed, a human chain had to be formed to pass the books to the altar.

When the curtains finally opened, the arrangement looked quite acceptable, and Nanda-kumāra performed the first *ārati* for the Deities. The atmosphere was by then relaxed and had even become festive, with a tremendous *kīrtana* shaking the entire building. After *ārati* huge quantities of *halavā* and Simply Wonderfals were served to everyone.

REVATĪNANDANA DĀSA: After the ceremony, Prabhupāda was about to get into the car when he asked his servant, “You brought some *prasādam*?” Nanda-kumāra looked at him with surprise. “I thought you would take your usual, simple meal instead of the feast,” he said. “No,” Prabhupāda replied, “this is a Deity installation. I want to take *mahā-prasādam*. Please

Chapter 10

go and get me a plate.” So Nanda-kumāra went back into the temple and came back with a big plate of *prasādam*.

The Amsterdam traffic made for a rough ride; several times the car stopped abruptly. When the driver had to brake again, the plate of *prasādam* slipped to the floor. Nanda-kumāra was in total anxiety. He hoped Prabhupāda would forget about the plate. But as soon as we arrived at the apartment Prabhupāda asked, “Where is the *prasādam*?” His servant explained what had happened, but Prabhupāda told him, “Bring it.” And he ate everything, just to show us how important *prasādam* is.

Prabhupāda’s anger had left a deep impression on the Amsterdam devotees, and they really felt sorry that their inexperience had evoked Prabhupāda’s displeasure. Akṣayānanda Swami came to apologize, but Prabhupāda’s mood had already changed..

REVATĪNANDANA DĀSA: I was surprised that after having shown so much anger, Prabhupada was now as serene as a lotus flower. I asked him about it, and he said: “It is for your education, not for me. A devotee does not get angry when he is offended, but when he sees that the Lord or a devotee is being offended, he shows anger.”

Then a question occurred to me. I knew from experience in India and elsewhere that I should never refer to Prabhupada as a pure devotee in front of him, because once I did so in India and he replied vehemently: “I am not a pure devotee, I am a rascal!” So I asked: “Srila Prabhupada, can you tell me something about the consciousness of a pure devotee?” “Yes,” he said, “ask.”

“At times it seems that a pure devotee can show a lot of anger, or be happy... how does it actually affect him?” I was thinking about how he now showed no trace of anger. Prabhupada replied: “The consciousness of a pure devotee is very deep, it is like the ocean. On the surface there may be many agitated waves, but when you descend a few meters, you find that everything is still.”

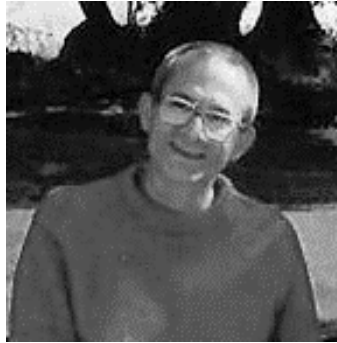
I understood what he meant instantly. He continued: “That is the consciousness of a pure devotee: so deep that nothing really disturbs it.

The Amsterdam Mess

There may be ripples on the surface, but underneath it remains very, very deep and serene.” I asked: “Is it like that even at the moment of death?” And he said: “Yes.”

Afterward, Srila Prabhupada reclined on a divan to rest for a while. Lying on his back, he pulled his knees to his chest with his hands and rocked gently while chanting in a low voice: “Haribol! Haribol!”

Germany 1969-1973



Śivānanda Dāsa



Śivānanda, Krishnadas and Uttamaśloka
in front of the temple at Eppendorfer Weg, 1969



Śivānanda and Oliver in Hamburg, 1969



Vāsudeva in Paris, 1972



Krishnadasa sirviendo prasādam
in the temple at Eppendorfer Weg, 1969



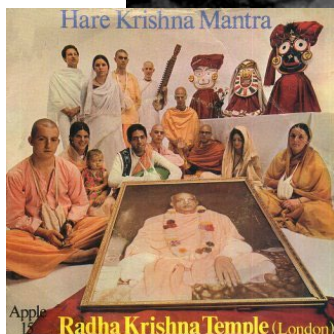
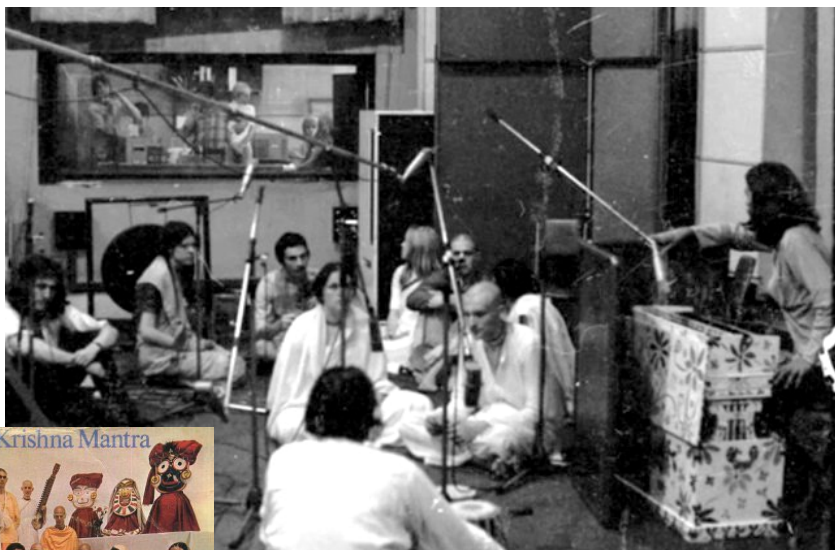
The Grünspar club in 1969



Jaya Govinda, Krishnadas, Vāsudeva, Sucandra, Maṇḍalibhadra
and Śivānanda after the initiations of Stefan and Oliver in Hamburgo, 1969



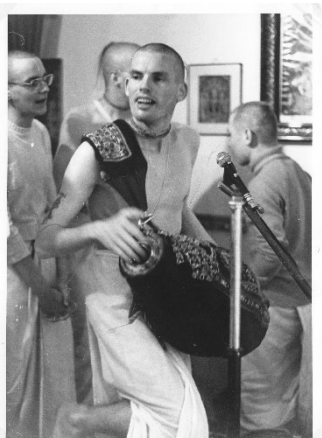
Śivānanda, Maṇḍalibhadra, Prabhupāda, Krishnadas
and Sucandra at Hamburg Harbor, 1969



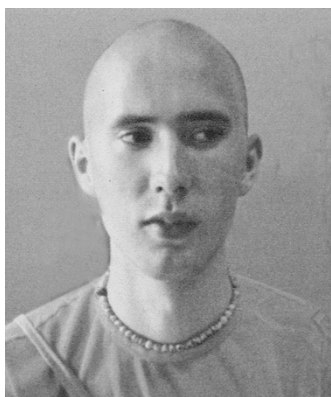
Recording the Hare Krishna mantra with
George Harrison at EMI studios in London, 1969



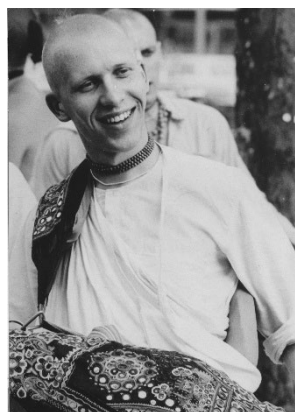
Prabhupāda with Patti Boyd, George Harrison
and Dhananjaya at Bhaktivedanta Manor, 1973



Hansadutta



Smita Kṛṣṇa



Avinaścandra



Harināma in downtown Hamburg, 1971



1970

The Reeperbahn and Große Freiheit in Hamburg's the Red Light district



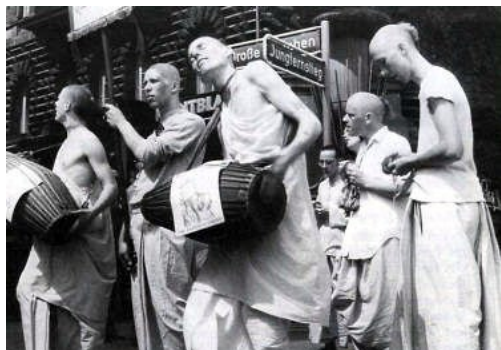
2020



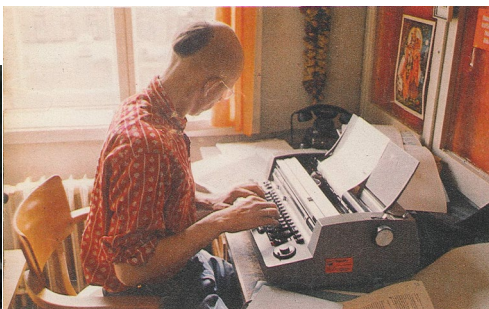
Jayagoura, second from right,
in the temple at Bartelsstrasse, 1971



Krishnadas preaching in Hamburg, 1970



Devotees chanting in Hamburg, 1971



Maṇḍalibhadra translating
in the temple at Bartelsstrasse, 1970



Devotees chanting in Hamburg temple, 1970



The first book
published in German



Śivānanda and Akrura chanting in Berlín, 1971

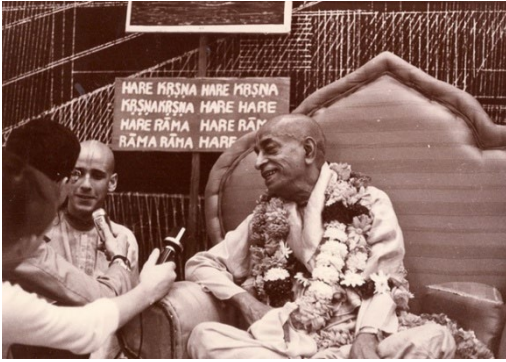


Surabhī Devī Dāsī in Munich, 1973

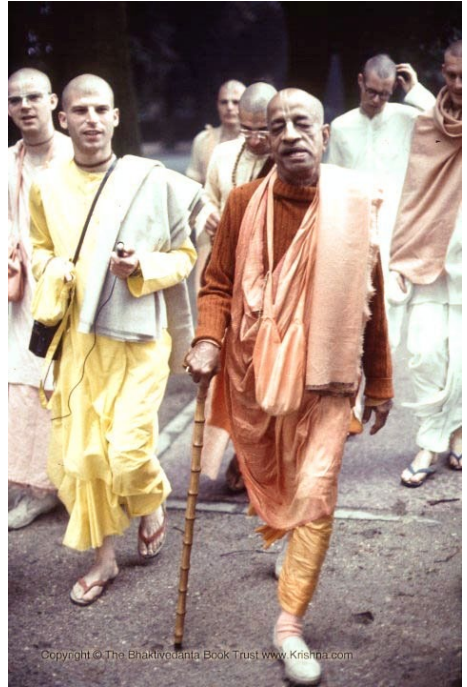


Prabhupāda in the temple at Bury Place, London, 1973

Paris 1972



Prabhupāda and reporters at the Orly airport.
Guru-Gaurāṅga is translating.



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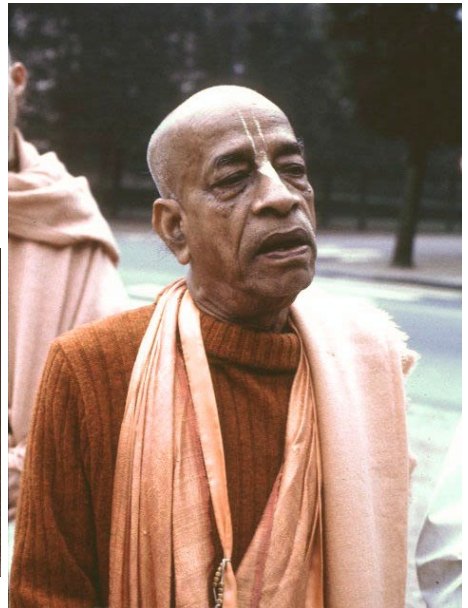


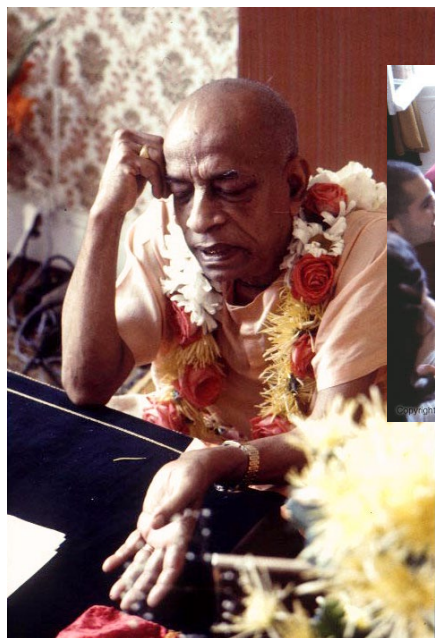
Prabhupāda gets into the car
that will bring him to the temple.



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Prabhupāda and his disciples
on morning walks.

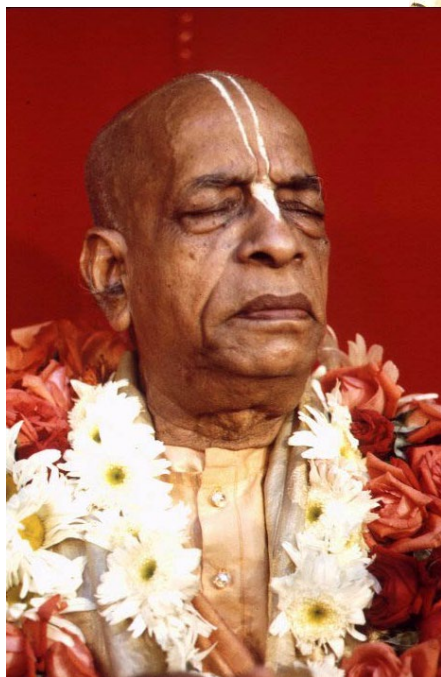


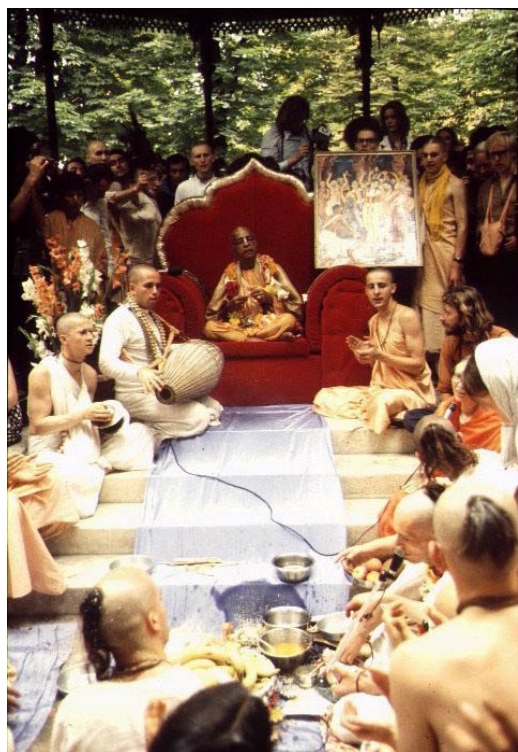


Prabhupāda in his room
at Fontenay-aux-Roses

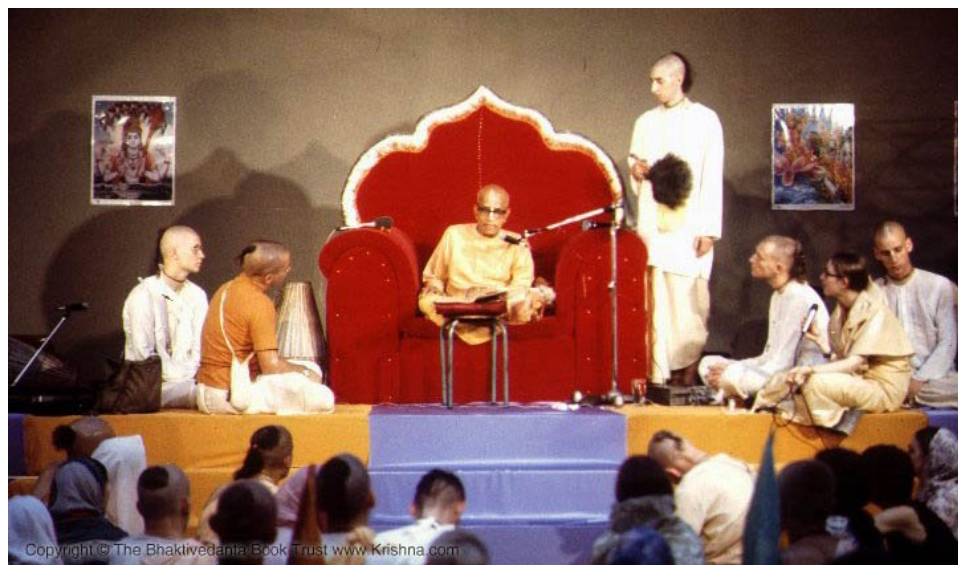


Public program at L'Ecole d'Architecture





Initiation ceremony at the Jardin du Luxembourg

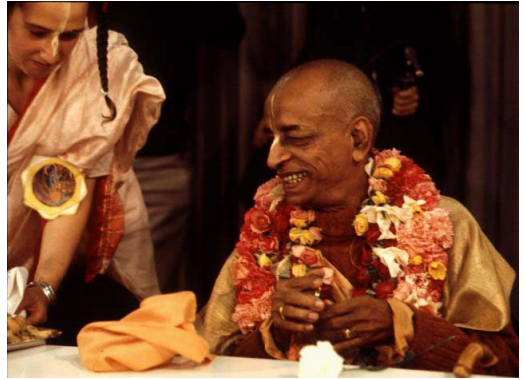


Public program at L'Ecole d'Architecture

Amsterdam 1972



Prabhupāda at a press conference in Amsterdam, 1972

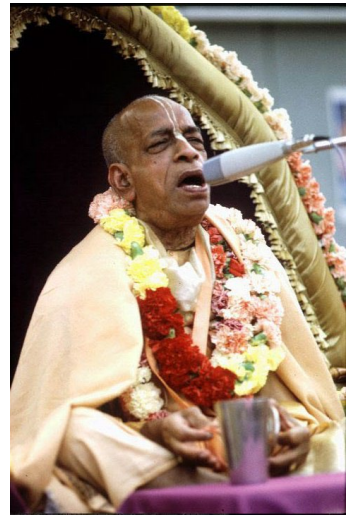


Surabhi with Prabhupāda

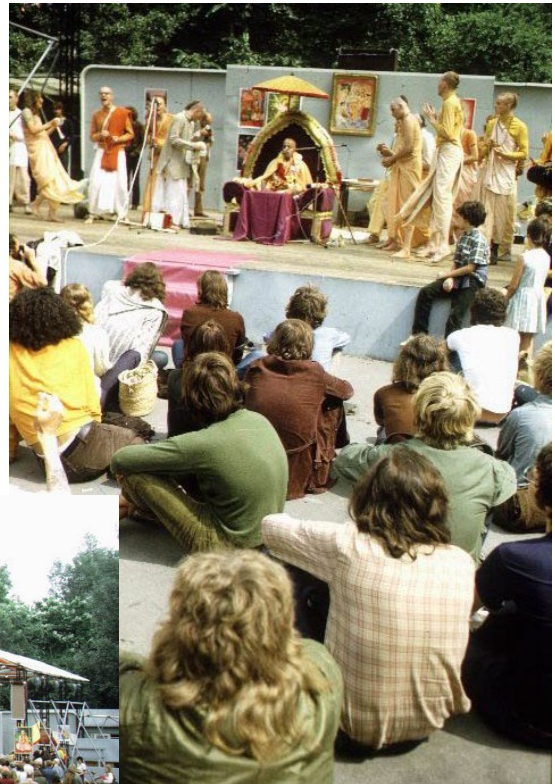


Public program
at the Hotel
Krasnapolsky



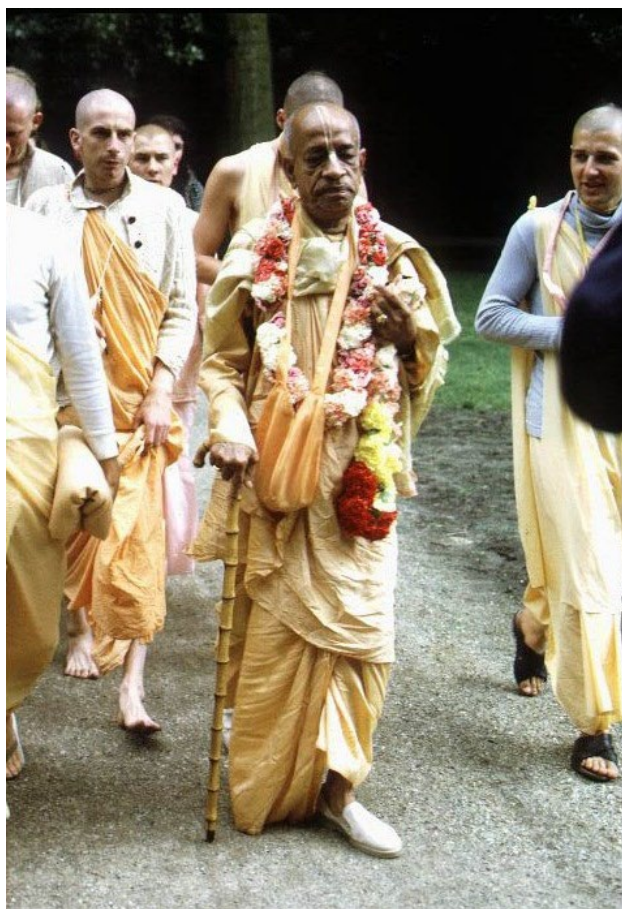


Public program
in Vondel Park

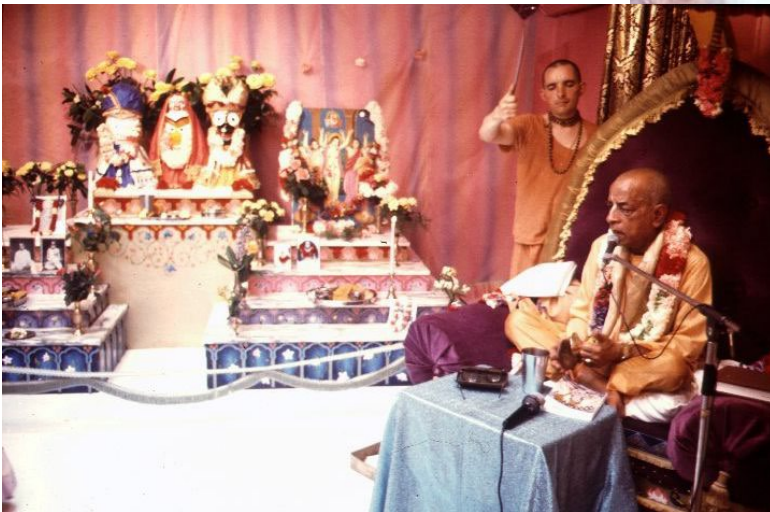
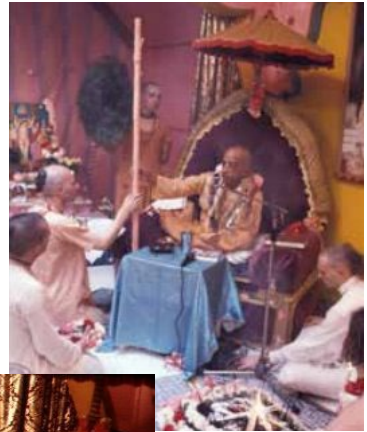
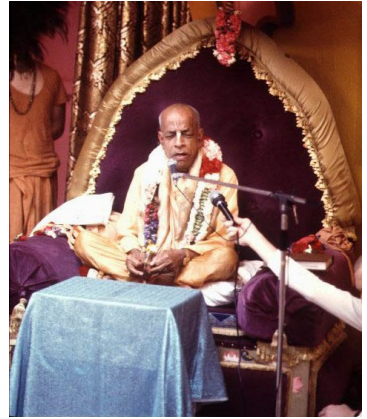




Prabhupāda's arrival at the temple at Bethanienstraat



Prabhupāda during a morning walk in Vondel Park



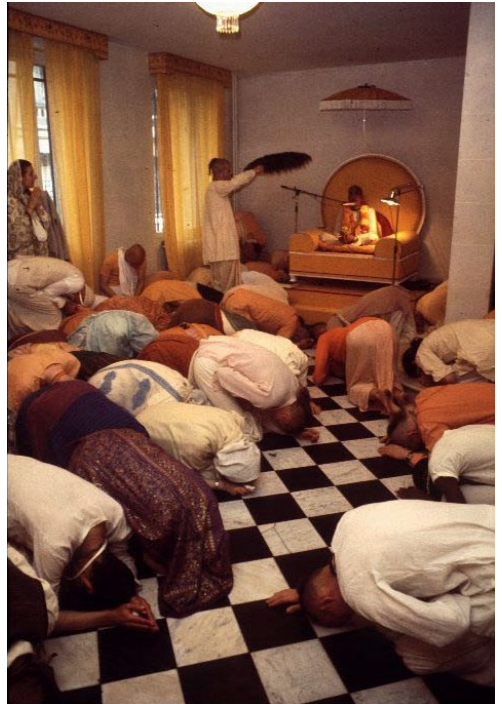
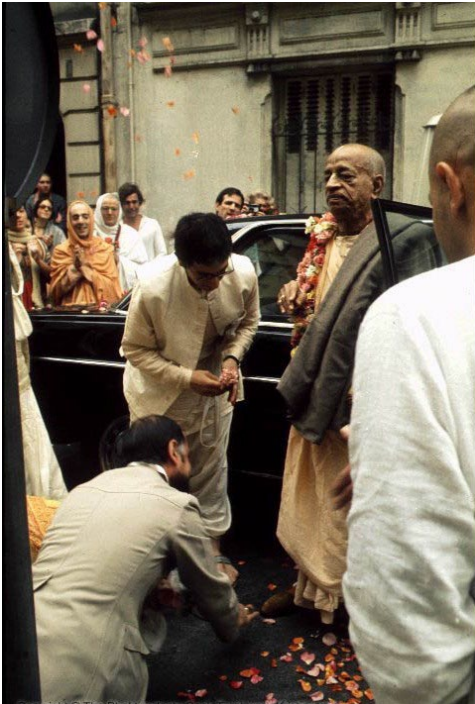
Prabhupāda
giving
sannyāsa
to Akṣayānanda

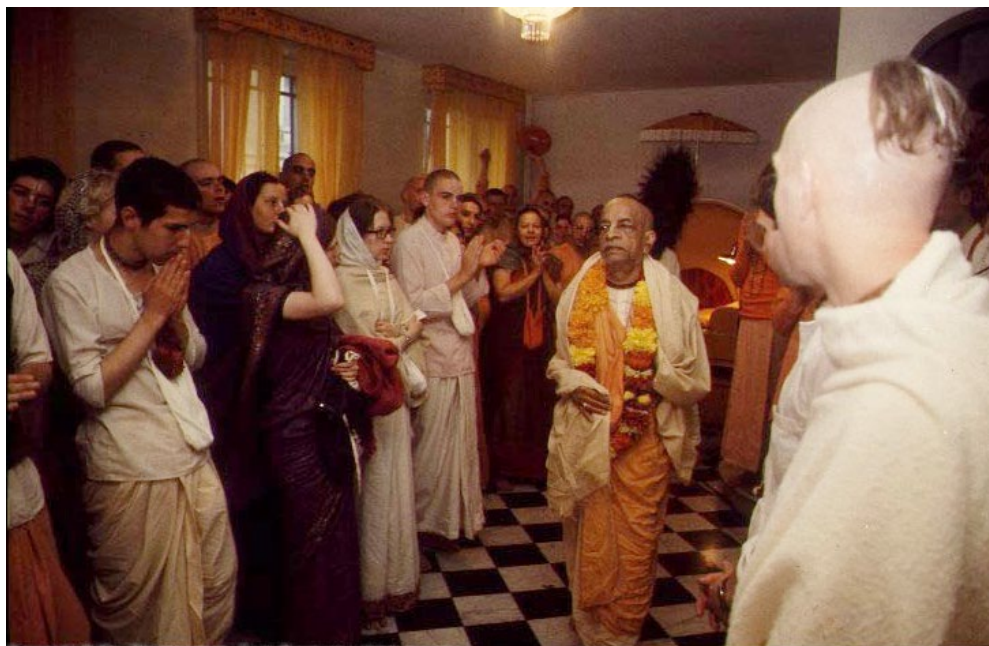
La instalación de Jagannātha, Baladeva y Subhadra

Paris 1973



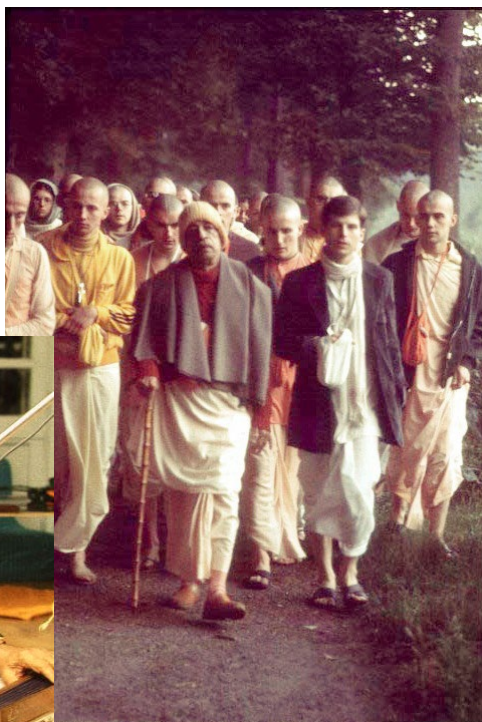
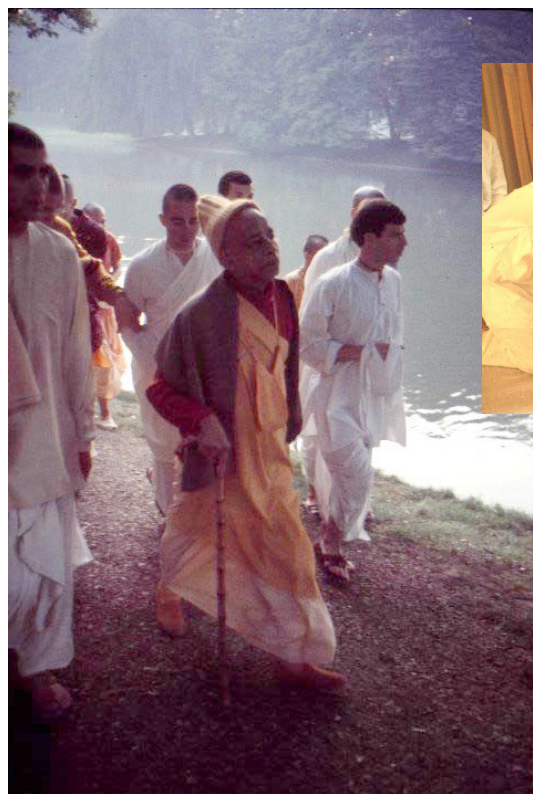
Prabhupāda arriving at the Orly Airport





The instalation of
Rādhā-Parisīśvara

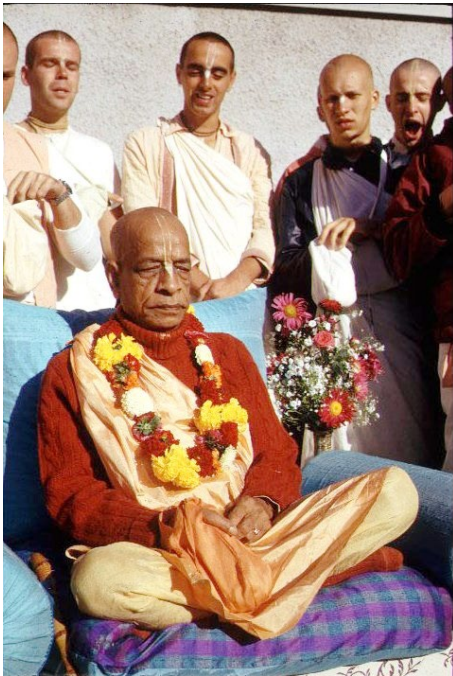


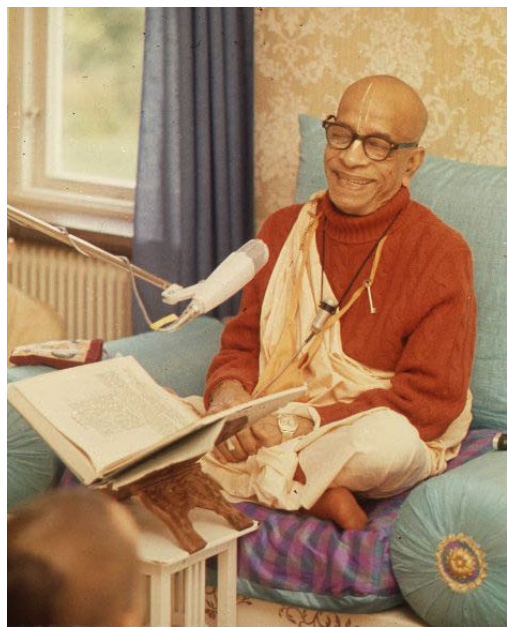


Sweden 1973

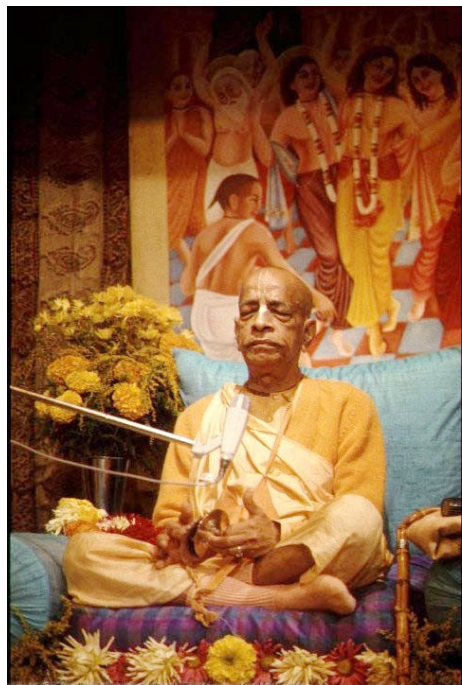
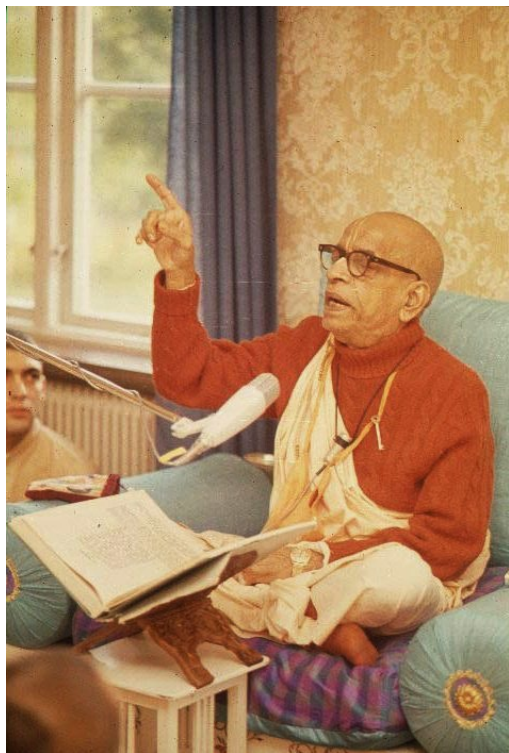


Prabhupāda and his disciples in front of the temple in Spånga

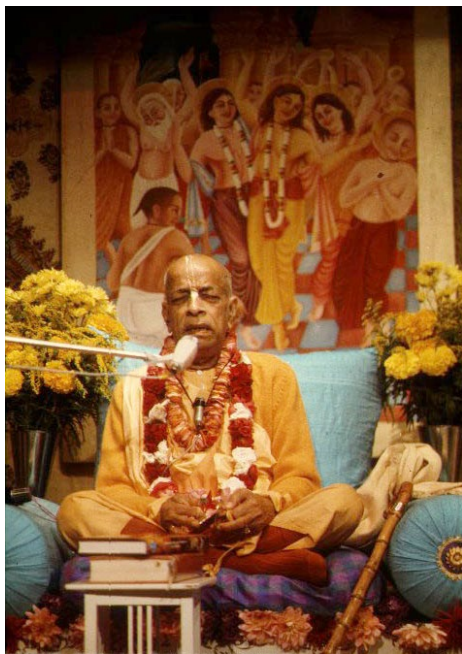


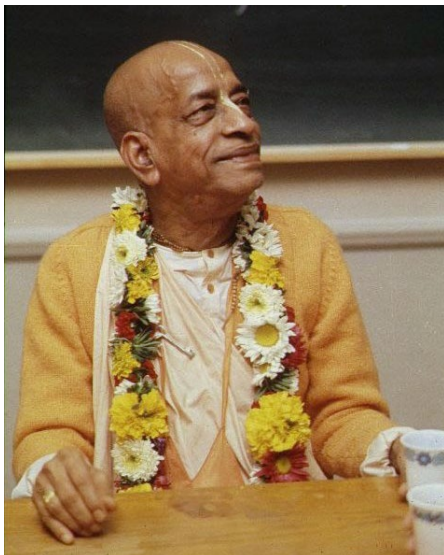
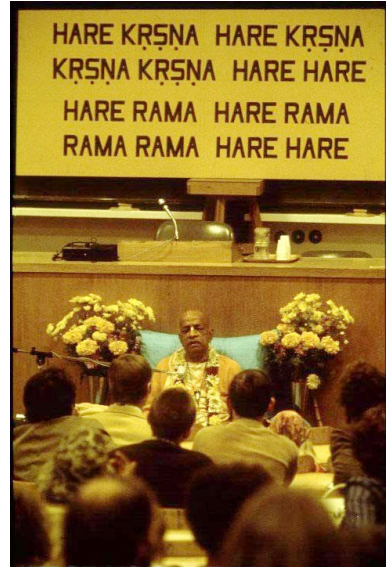


At the temple



At a public program

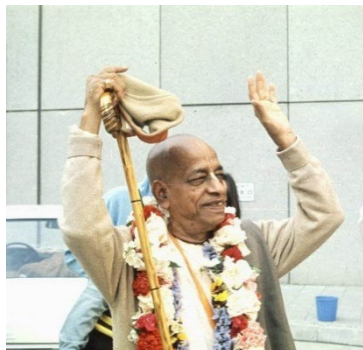




At Uppsala University



Hansadutta washing Prabhupāda's
lotus feet at the Frankfurt Airport



Greeting the devotees
outside the airport

Germany 1974



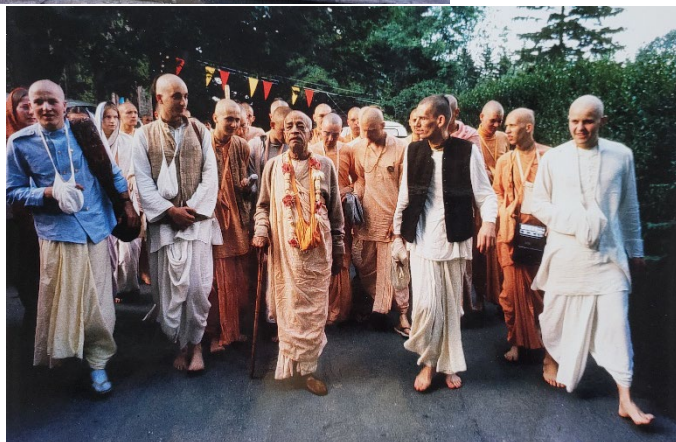
Prabhupāda
with Acchedya
as his driver



Prabhupāda speaking
while Vedavyas and
Smita Kṛṣṇa listen
with attention



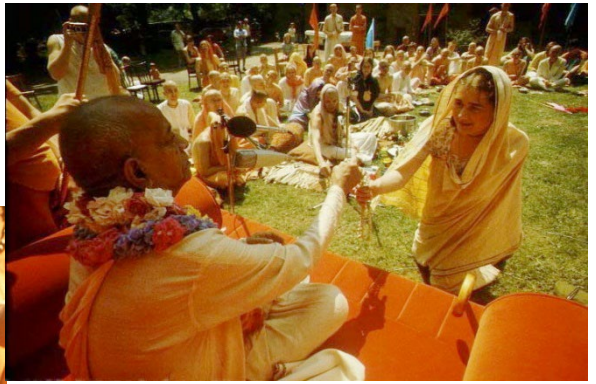
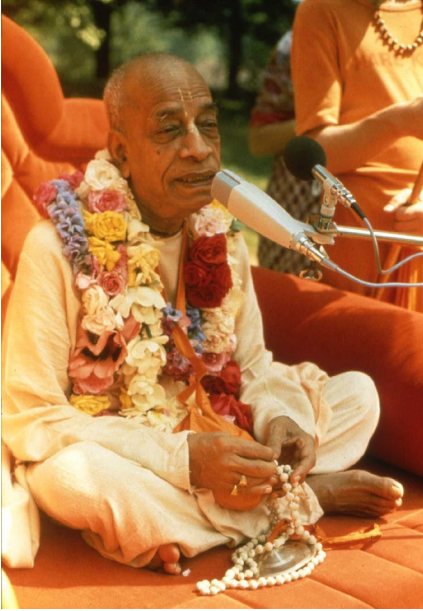
Schloss
Rettershof



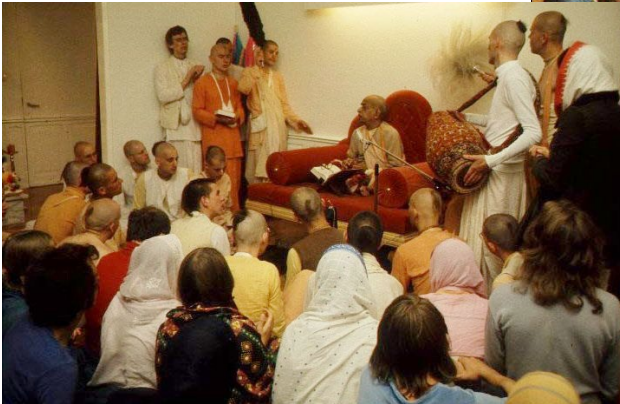


Prabhupāda giving initiations in the garden of the Schloss

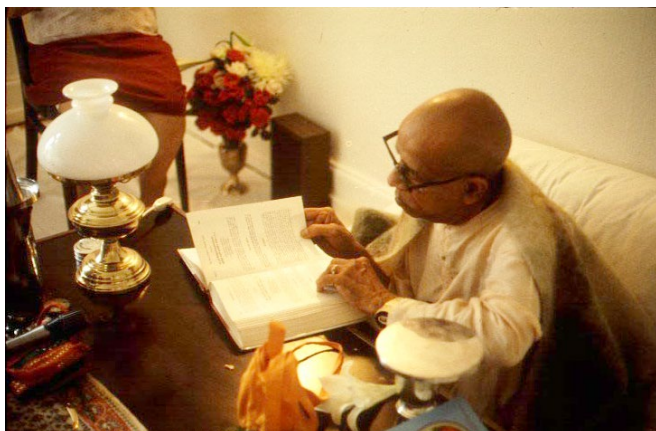




Nikuṅjavāsiṇī receives her japa beads and name



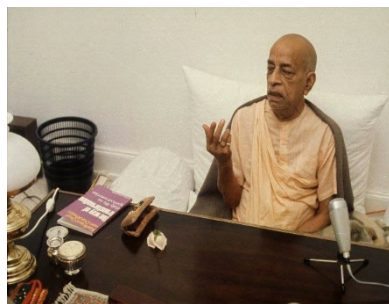
Prabhupāda speaking about the Bhagavad-gītā in the temple room

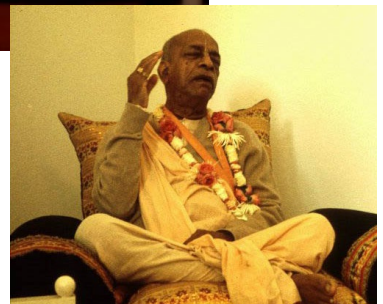
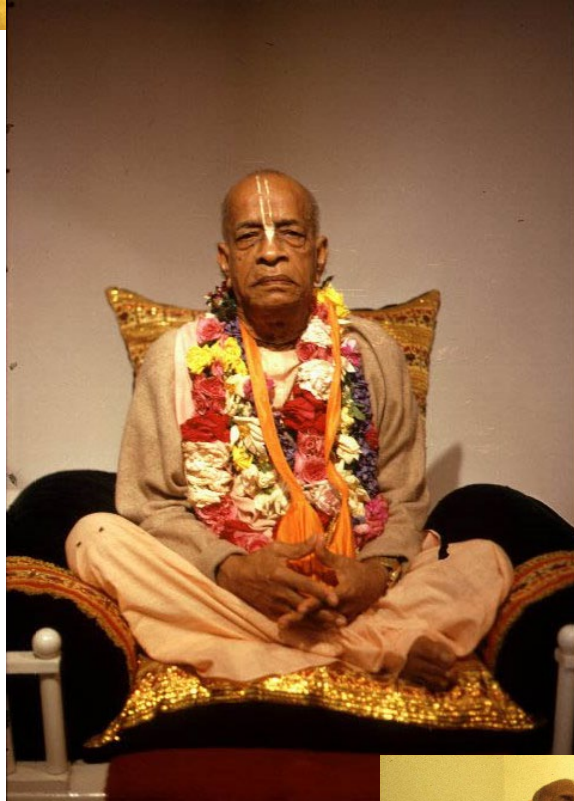
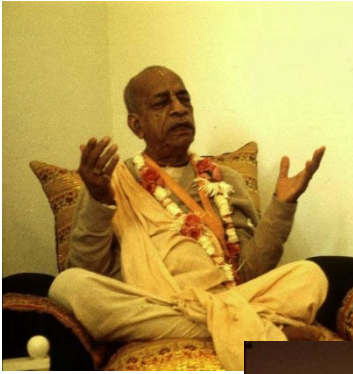


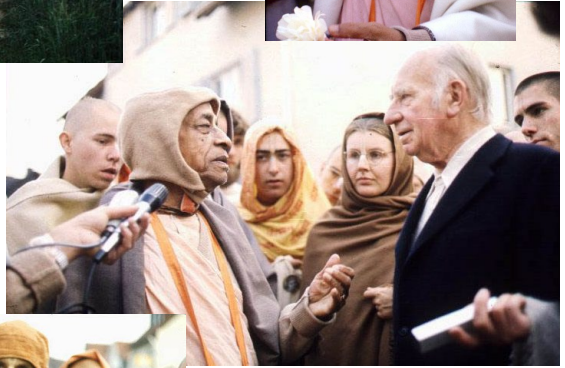
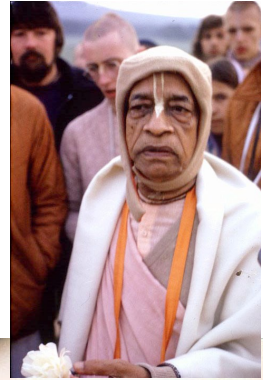
Prabhupāda in his room at Schloss Rettershof



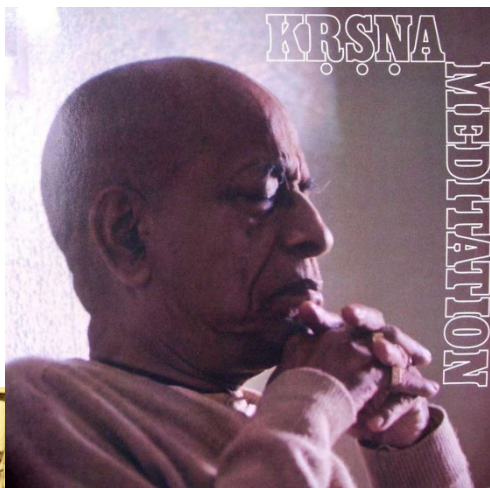
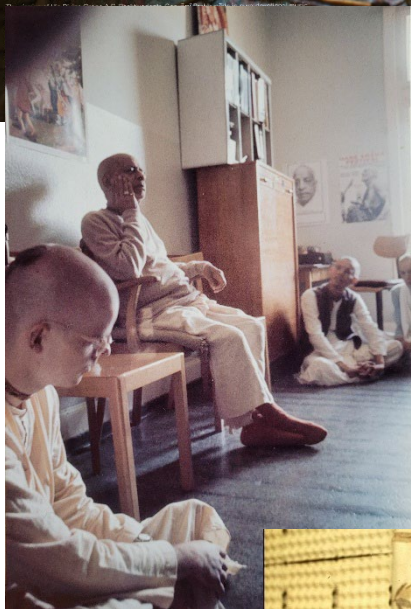
Prabhupāda speaking with Prof. Dürckheim











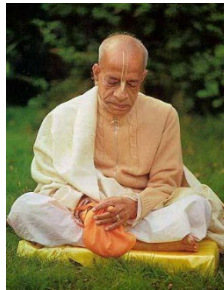
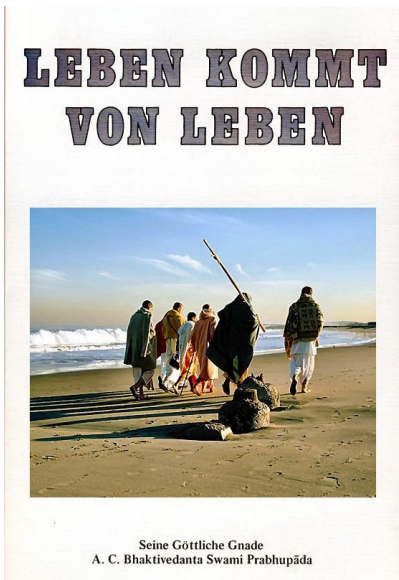
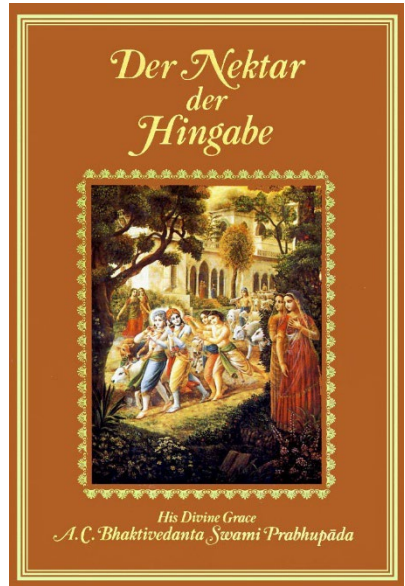
Prabhupāda recording
Kṛṣṇa Meditation
 at Schloss Rettershof



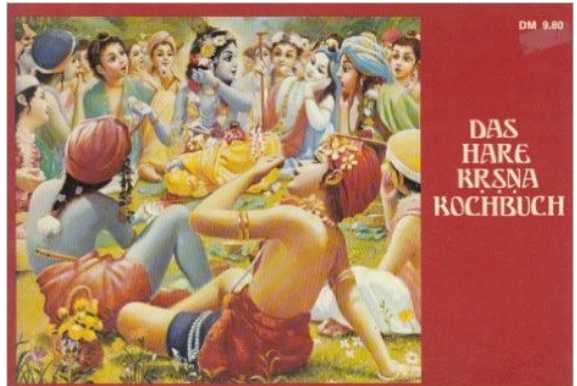
Prabhupāda at Bhaktivedanta Manor, 1977



The First German Books



When Prabhupāda saw his photo in *Der Nektar der Hingabe*, he said: “And just see, they have given such a nice picture of me, just like a submissive Vaisnava.”



CHAPTER 11



Festival Time

After two weeks of association with Śrīla Prabhupāda, the German preachers naturally felt enlivened to continue expanding Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout their country, but their manpower was stretched to the limit. It was increasingly difficult to attend to all the necessities, collect funds, and take care of guests. So while Prabhupāda welcomed Hansadutta's enthusiasm for preaching, he also cautioned him not to become overextended:

Now we have got so many students and so many temples, but I am fearful that if we expand too much in this way that we shall become weakened and gradually the whole thing will become lost. Just like milk. We may thin it more and more with water for cheating the customer, but in the end it will cease to be any longer milk. Better to boil the milk now very vigorously and make it thick and sweet, that is the best process. So let us concentrate on training our devotees very thoroughly in the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness from our books, from tapes, by discussing always, and in so many ways instruct them in the right propositions.

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On this platform you shall be able to carry on the work satisfactorily, but if there is lack of knowledge, or if there is forgetfulness, everything will be spoiled in time. So especially you must encourage the students to read our books throughout the day as much as possible, and give them all good advice how to understand the books, and inspire them to study the things from every point of view. In this way, by constantly engaging our tongues in the service of the Lord, either by discussing His philosophy or by chanting Hare Krishna, the truth is that Krishna Himself will reveal Himself to us and we shall understand how to do everything properly.

With his spiritual master's words in mind, Hansadutta met with the leading devotees in the autumn of 1972 and discussed the situation. The centers in Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, and Stuttgart had the most difficulties—each had only two or three devotees. They decided to close these three centers and concentrate on a more fertile region, a city with lots of young people. Their natural choice was Heidelberg, halfway between Frankfurt and Stuttgart and near other important cities like Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Wiesbaden, and Mainz. The most important feature was Heidelberg's world-famous university.

One idea they had to attract young people was to organize Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals. Cakravartī and Uthāla went to London, the music capital of the world, and bought a 2000-watt sound system with which they could stage a Kṛṣṇa conscious version of the increasingly popular three-day rock festival.

ŚILPARĀRIṆĪDĀSĪ: In 1969—I was fourteen years old and still in school—I saw the devotees on *harināma* in Hamburg. Somebody handed me an invitation to the Sunday feast. And when I went to the temple on Bartelsstrasse, the first thing that happened was that someone put *tilaka* on my forehead. Then I was ushered into the temple room for *ārati*, and after the lecture, I received my first *prasādam*: simply wonderfuls, *purīs*, and other preparations I didn't know.

During that visit, nobody bothered to preach to me. Probably I was considered too young a prospect for becoming a devotee. But I returned a few times because I really liked the chanting and *prasādam*. Finally,

Kulaśekhara talked to me. He told me about the difference between soul and body and that after leaving the body a devotee returns to the spiritual world, things like that. I didn't understand much, and I actually wasn't particularly interested in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but somehow or other I felt strongly attracted to chanting. During the next couple of years, there were several situations, especially when I felt a little fearful when I would chant silently to myself.

In 1971 I went to America where I developed a strong interest in *yoga*. I began to read books on it, and after returning to Hamburg I thought I should visit the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple again. Maybe now I'd understand more of the philosophy. When I came to Bartelsstrasse, I learned the temple had moved to a new location on Kapittelbuschweg.

I arrived in the evening, and since it was a weekday, I was the only guest. Vaidyanātha gave me *prasādam*, and I purchased a copy of *Śrī Īśopaniṣad*. In the temple room, I watched as the devotees got up one by one and, before the Deity, reported on the services they had done during the day. I remember Aṣṭaratha saying, "My dear Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, I cooked this offering for You, then I cooked that other offering for You, and another offering—actually, I have been cooking all day for You!" I thought, "What a wonderful life! These people are enjoying all day long."

Then Bharata urged me to go upfront and also say something. I was completely embarrassed. What was I supposed to speak about? I hadn't done anything for Kṛṣṇa. Afterward, there was a lecture, but I didn't pay much attention. Besides being the only guest I was the only girl in a crowd of *brahmacārīs*, which didn't add to my comfort. I actually felt relief as I finally closed the temple door behind me. I didn't want to come back soon.

After a half year or so, in the spring of 1973, as I was walking down Mönckebergstrasse, I met the devotees again. Durgama handed me an invitation to a Hare Kṛṣṇa festival being held in Hamburg's Amerikahaus. I was surprised that the Hare Kṛṣṇas were also doing festivals, so I decided to go and see.

Admission was free. The program was simple: *kīrtana*, lecture, *prasādam*, more *kīrtana*, another lecture, more *prasādam*, like that. Mostly Cakravartī lectured, and this time I felt that his explanations were

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answering a lot of questions I had always been pondering but had been unable to formulate. I immediately accepted that we are not the body and that our polluted consciousness is like a dirty mirror that has to be cleansed. I also accepted that the cleansing method is the chanting of God's holy names.

After the talk there was *kīrtana*, and Ātmavidyā jumped down from the stage and began moving through the rows in the audience—we were all sitting, watching the show like a concert—inviting us, with animated gestures, to take part. I was swept up by his enthusiasm and soon ended up onstage clapping my hands, chanting, and dancing. Those *kīrtanas* were really ecstatic.

During the break, the devotees served strawberry *halavā*, and Niṣpāpa offered me a music cassette featuring The Radha-Krishna Temple, which I readily accepted. After the festival was over I helped clean up, and when I was just about to leave the devotees draped me with garlands that had decorated pictures of Prabhupāda and the Pañca-tattva. They also gave me a huge plate of *halavā* to take home.

It was already late, and I had to hurry to catch the last S-Bahn train. It was a Saturday night, and the train car was packed with people, but luckily I found a seat. I must have looked pretty strange with those flower garlands around my neck and the big plate of *prasādam* on my lap, but I couldn't have cared less. I just had experienced a most wonderful event, which would eventually change my life. That night I listened to the Radha-Krishna Temple cassette over and over again until six in the morning—the music was so attractive.

From that day on I visited the temple regularly. I'd arrive each morning by eight and stay until the evening. The devotees engaged me in polishing the brass *ārati* plate, cleaning pots, and sewing. From time to time Jayagoura would sit next to me and read from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, or Bharata would show me his collection of photos of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then one day Jayagoura asked me when I would move in. I hadn't thought about it. Actually, I'd had the impression that I wouldn't be allowed to live there, so I was surprised at first. But then I thought, "All right." So I got my sleeping bag and moved into the temple.

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A devotee's life is simple. Everything is centered on serving Kṛṣṇa, and for me every aspect of it was blissful. After a while, Hansadutta asked me to go to Heidelberg, where his wife was living and the temple had better accommodations for women. I soon began to go out and distribute books in downtown Heidelberg.

RAMBHORŪ DĀSĪ: In the early '70s I was a college student at Gilford in Northern Carolina, studying religion and philosophy. I had become a Quaker, although I was from a Southern Baptist background. I was taking a *Bhagavad-gītā* course from a Māyāvādī professor teaching Indian Studies, and we had to pick out our own *Bhagavad-gītā*. So at a hippie bookshop, I found Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā* and bought it. My professor didn't like it. He said that Bhaktivedanta Swami tried to make something devotional out of something purely scientific. But I liked the book; it was picturesque, and I continued to use it. When I read that one should sleep not more than six hours I tried to regulate myself by going to bed at midnight and getting up at six, but without the association of devotees I couldn't really figure it out.

In the early summer of 1973, I met the devotees for the first time. Some *brahmacārīs* came to our college dressed in blue work shirts and yellow polyester bed sheets. They looked horrendous. Being a Quaker I felt sorry for them; I actually wanted to preach to them, because that was my duty as a Christian. I was living in a dormitory, and a *brahmacārī* was going around knocking on doors. I opened my door to him, and he fell to the floor in obeisances, and then he stood up, pulled out a book, and said, "Here, take it and give a donation." I didn't feel at all inclined. The guy looked so weird, but I think I bought a magazine just to get rid of him.

Then I saw him again at the library, and I thought, "I really should save this poor fellow; he is obviously brainwashed." So I sat next to him. I had learned at college that it is important in communication to make eye contact, but little did I know that a *brahmacārī* isn't supposed to look into a woman's eyes. So there I was, trying very hard to communicate with him, but he avoided looking at me. I was desperately trying to catch his eye, and he was looking at my shoulder. I lowered my head to catch his gaze and he

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lowered his to keep his eyes on my shoulder, and I thought, “These people are really pitiable.” It was about the most absurd attempt at communication I had ever experienced.

Later, while staying at my sister’s in South Carolina, I saw two devotees. They were on *saṅkīrtana*. They walked past me, talking to each other, and I was attracted by their vibration. I thought, “Oh, this sounds like the Quakers.” As a Quaker, I had also become a vegetarian and was into natural living. The sound vibration and mood of these two devotees resembled that of the Christians I hung around with. So that piqued my curiosity.

Then I went to Heidelberg for an ecumenical year abroad. We students were also supposed to go to Egypt and see places connected with Jesus, a kind of pilgrimage. So I went to a college in Heidelberg. But to the questions I asked—like, “What happens after death?”—the professors said, “We can’t deal with those things now; that is postgraduate material.” I became frustrated. I wasn’t taking religion to get a job. I wanted to get my questions answered. But no one was talking about them. I also tried to find the Quakers, and I found one address. I went to a Sunday gathering they celebrated, but most of them were over fifty years old. I realized that they were not going to be a source of community for me. I felt very alone.

Then I met Śilpakārīṇī on the main street in Heidelberg, and when I saw that she carried books I asked her for one. To my surprise, she was not all eager to sell me a book. Her face showed she was absolutely detached, full of love and peace. It seemed to me that she didn’t like to approach people, but that she was just doing her duty. Although she didn’t like it, she was doing it, and somehow I was impressed because in those days the trend was that people like the born-again Christians would come up to you, kiss or embrace you, and say, “Jesus loves you,” and I just hated that. But I was impressed that there was an element of sacrifice in her face and that she was not trying to get me. When I asked about the other devotees, because I was desperate to find them, feeling so lonely, she said, “Better not come to the temple now. Hardly anybody speaks English. Don’t bother to come until next week. Then one person will come who can talk to you.

So I called up the following week, and Hansadutta was on the phone.

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When I heard his voice I could understand that this person would tell me who I am, and I felt so at home with him, much more than with the materialists that I was going to school with. I immediately went to the temple, and the first thing that happened was somebody offered me a plate of *prasādam*. There was rice and *dāl* and everything piled on top. It was stone-cold, but it was absolutely delicious. It was just incredible food. Then they invited me to come every day, and they told me that to eat anything else was like eating poison. So I walked for half an hour every day and got *prasādam* until I decided to move into the temple.

MAṆIDHARA DĀSA: I was fourteen when my parents emigrated from Prague to Germany in 1968. Having grown up in a communist country I was disillusioned with social and political issues, and my main interest was in art, which was my way of communicating with the world. Being a foreigner I had hardly any friends, and thus I spent most of my time at home and painted.

In 1973 I began to study at the art academy in Karlsruhe, and there I met another artist who had become interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was walking around with a bead bag, and as soon as we became a little more familiar with each other, he began to preach to me. Later he became initiated as Ajātaśatru Dāsa. Indian culture and Buddhist art with its *mandalas* already fascinated me, and thus he immediately awakened my curiosity when he spoke about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

He showed me how to chant, and one Sunday he asked me to accompany him to the temple in Heidelberg. In my mind, I imagined a building like a Greek temple, with high columns, so I was surprised when he led me to a small house in the outskirts of the city. The first thing that amazed me was the pile of shoes at the entrance. I thought, “Why are these people collecting so many shoes?” Then I was told that I had to take off my shoes to go in.

The first person I met was Hansadutta. He had just shaved his head and had bloody cuts all over it. He immediately sat me down and began to preach to me. During the feast, I got to know other devotees, and on the whole, I was absolutely fascinated by their frank and open natures. I am an

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introvert, and never in my life had I met people who spoke to me in such a direct and friendly way. But I was also frightened; I knew they expected something from me.

I began visiting the temple regularly for the Sunday feast, and with each visit, the preaching strategy of the devotees became less and less subtle. Pṛthu, for example, was quite direct. He told me one day, “Just stay. There is nothing out there for you to do. Or is there anything you still want to achieve?” I couldn’t answer, because I actually didn’t have any concrete plans for the future. He went on, “Where will you go?”

“I still have to think,” I said kind of sheepishly.

“Think about what?” he insisted. “Do you see anything bad in what we are doing?”

“No,” I replied, “it’s not bad, but I am not sure I am ready yet.”

Then, during the feast, in front of everybody, he caught my long hair at the back of my head and held it up like a *śikhā*. “This is the right haircut for you!” he said with a broad grin. Although I was shocked at first, I was also taken in by his unusual and personal approach. He was like a big daddy. Devotees were so different.

At the beginning of 1974, I bought a *Bhagavad-gītā*, but I have to admit that I understood very little of the philosophy. I liked the chanting, though, and I was also fascinated by Prabhupāda’s *bhajanas*. I had one tape on which he sang *Gurvāṣṭaka* and gave a purport, and his voice made a deep impression on me.

I shared a flat with an artist friend who was also interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the only things we had—in an otherwise empty apartment—were the *Bhagavad-gītā*, chanting beads, and sleeping bags. So for some time, we followed a strict schedule of rising early, taking cold showers, and chanting sixteen rounds on our beads. Once we even fasted for three days. We were thinking of joining the temple, but somehow or other we couldn’t bring ourselves to take that final, decisive step.

But then one spring day everything just fell into place. I took my sleeping bag and a few other belongings and went to the train station. The train to Heidelberg arrived just at that moment, and I was on my way to the temple. I didn’t have a single penny and no train ticket. When the

inspector came I simply said, “I have no money, I am chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.” “All right,” he said and left me alone.

When I arrived at the temple, all the devotees had gone out to preach except Aṣṭaratha, who was the *pūjārī*. When he opened the door, I asked if I could stay. “Of course!” he exclaimed with a huge smile, and I thought to myself, “Wow, simply for that smile I’ll stay.

NIKHILĀNANDA DĀSA: After the summer of 1972, during which I had seen Śrīla Prabhupāda in Paris and Amsterdam, I had come to the firm conviction that I wanted to get rid of my long hair and become a regular devotee. I told my mother that I was determined to live in the temple but that I would continue to attend school and visit her regularly. In the end, she consented, and I joined the temple in Hamburg. Even my teachers and classmates accepted my new way of life, and I had the opportunity to give lectures on the introduction to *Īśopaniṣad* and distribute *prasādam* at school.

In November—I had recently turned fifteen—Cakravartī, the temple president, felt I was ready for initiation and suggested that I write a letter to Prabhupāda. I received the answer in December. Prabhupāda was willing to accept me, but he had not yet received Cakravartī’s recommendation and so wanted to wait. He said that he was pleased that I was engaged in translating his books and editing articles for *Zurück zur Gottheit*: “This is very important work. I need some men to dedicate their lives to publishing these books in all languages of the world. So if you can do this, that will be very nice.”

I felt much encouraged by his letter, and it helped me to convince the temple managers to free me from other services and give me more time to translate. Thus I soon moved into the translator’s office, a makeshift shed we had built on the temple’s terrace, where I had the opportunity to work with Vedavyas and improve my translation technique.

In March 1973 Prabhupāda formally accepted me as his disciple, and it wasn’t long before *māyā* put me to the test. My mother had changed her mind, and one morning two policemen came to escort me home. I set up an altar at home, and every day I went to the temple right after school to

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continue the translation work. On Sundays, I took the first train in the morning to arrive in time for *maṅgala-ārati*. It took me a year to convince my mother to let me live in the temple again.

By the end of 1972, Hansadutta was sending Śrīla Prabhupāda samples of the fine Bible paper he was considering for the German *Bhagavad-gītā* along with quotes from printers. Always eager to give his spiritual master results and receive encouragement, he gave the impression that the publishing of the German *Bhagavad-gītā* was imminent, although it would take another year to finish it. But Prabhupāda didn't mind reciprocating:

I know that the German printing and bookmaking is always the first class, so if you are satisfied then you may go ahead with printing as you have arranged. That is a very great step of progress in spreading this Kṛṣṇa Consciousness to the German people. Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement rests upon the words of Kṛṣṇa, so if people can read for themselves what Kṛṣṇa is saying, then they shall understand our movement. Otherwise it will be very difficult to convince them. So you have done the right thing, printing Bhagavad-gita in German language, and I very much appreciate that you have done this great service.

Hansadutta was ambitious and had a strong desire to distinguish himself and be recognized for his achievements. During the GBC meetings in India in March, he had expressed his desire to leave Germany and take up a position of responsibility in America, but Prabhupāda had not approved those plans and instead ordered him to concentrate his efforts permanently on preaching in Germany.

There were other things that disturbed Hansadutta's mind. Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement was growing all over the world, Prabhupāda found it a burden to chant on the beads of all his prospective students, and therefore he introduced the system that some older disciples would do it on his behalf, just as they were already performing the fire sacrifices in his absence. But Prabhupāda had so far selected only two *sannyāsīs*, Kīrtanānanda Swami in America and Revatīnandana Swami in Europe, for this service. Now Hansadutta was asked to send the beads of new

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devotees to Revatīnandana, and he was not happy with the arrangement.

Actually, he would have liked to take *sannyāsa* himself, but his wife was adamantly opposed and had written to Prabhupāda several times about her concerns. In reply, Prabhupāda had assured her each time that he would not give her husband *sannyāsa* without her sanction. He tried to pacify Hansadutta by explaining to him the nature of *sannyāsa*:

Actually, all of you are more than sannyasi. Anyone who has dedicated his life to Krishna, he is sannyasi, yogi, and everything. That is the statement of Bhagavad-gita: one who does not work for his personal benefit is a sannyasi. It doesn't matter what is his dress. So all our devotees are more than sannyasi. We are members of Krishna's family. Our aim is not to become a Mayavadi sannyasi, but to become family members of Krishna's devotees. Krishna maintains 16,000 families, and if you get a chance to serve in one of the families, then your life is a success. Real sannyasa means no more interest in material activities, but simply dedicated to Krishna's service. That is real sannyasa. So you are greater than a sannyasi. You train all these boys to be practical sannyasi in the service of Krishna.

But Hansadutta still felt that he was stuck in Germany, and although he was the undisputed authority there, it was a small kingdom compared to North America. When he expressed again his underlying dissatisfaction with his engagement and a certain discouragement because of not being able to apply his talents to the fullest, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote him a long letter explaining the difference between mature devotional service and whimsical action born of the desire to enjoy:

Now you appear little restless. I know that is your nature, you like to do big things and you are very capable and intelligent young man for executing tremendous tasks on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. But I think that you have got a huge field of endeavor in the German speaking countries and other countries of Scandinavia, Communist countries, and other places like that. Now work very vigorously to develop these places, that is your great task at hand.

You needn't look further to find some big challenge. The challenge is very near at hand. That means developing and expanding along the lines as you have begun. Of course, we are not ever very much anxious to repeat the same activity many times, that is the nature of the living entity, that he

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seeks to enjoy varieties of flavors. But mature understanding of activity means to take it as our occupational duty. That is to say, suppose I am established as a good carpenter, then it will be foolish if after some time I am thinking, “Oh, I have done this cutting of woods so many times, now it is becoming boring and uninteresting, therefore let me become a doctor.” No. That is not recommended by Kṛṣṇa, neither is it common sense.

Occupational duty means to stick with one type of occupation which is just suitable for me, considering that it is my duty, therefore I am throughout my life obligated to perform it to the best of my ability. This is mature understanding of occupation. That means I must not leave it even for so-called good cause, just like Arjuna wanted to stop his fighting activity just to avoid killing so many of his kinsmen, cousin brothers, and other friends.

So we are preachers on behalf of Lord Kṛṣṇa, that is our occupational duty, we haven’t got to search any further some new challenge or change our engagement. No, that has been already settled up. Now best thing will be to develop more and more what we have begun. I have built the skeleton of the building, but there is so much more work remaining before us. The GBC men are there, the world is divided into 12 zones for gradual development by these, my chosen right-hand men.

So, however you manage it, that you know best, my only point is that I do not like to see you become discouraged as you are indicating, because there is no actual cause for such discouragement. Rather there are all encouraging prospects ahead. Now you have started something tangible and solid in German-speaking countries, you are printing books, magazines, and distributing them widely, collecting huge funds, now the work is just beginning. So you have got a little facility now, utilize this opportunity to take advantage of Kṛṣṇa’s favoring you in this way.

Consider that each day shall be a new challenge for you to push on Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement within your range of managing. But I think that you are developing things nicely already, you are one of my senior disciples, and you know these things already, only you are little humble so you have said like that. Yes, even the devotee doesn’t care a pinch for even Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, like that, because devotees are the most exalted personalities as the servants of Kṛṣṇa, still they think themselves lower than everyone, and that humble attitude is their credit. What credit is there for

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someone who is himself actually lower than everyone but claims that he is better than everyone, or even he may claim that he is lower than everyone, still what is his credit? But the devotee, being the topmost grade of living entity, when he gives all credit to others and takes nothing credit for himself, that is his credit. Thank you, along with your good wife Himavati, for helping me in this way.

Hansadutta resigned himself to Prabhupāda's will that he stay in Germany and develop the preaching there, and he put all his energy into book publishing and organizing festival programs. To stage a Hare Kṛṣṇa festival was not a new idea. This was what Prabhupāda had planned for the World Sankirtana Party and what he had done with his disciples in India two years earlier. Therefore, whenever he received reports from Hansadutta describing the success of the festival programs in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, and Heidelberg, he gave him all encouragement to continue with this type of preaching. In several letters, written in May and June 1973, Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

I am very glad to hear how our festival program is going on so nicely in Germany. These festivals will be successful all over the world. As GBC member it is your duty to carefully make a broad program for implementing Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in every sphere of life, in this way we will become respected as the most important members of human society. I have carefully studied the contents, including photos of posters from the festival in Heidelberg. Your report is very encouraging to me. The communists by dry philosophy have spread practically all over the world. We are holding festivals, feasting, philosophy and salvation—why shall we not spread our influence and overthrow them? Regarding your plan to travel around the world staging such Hare Kṛṣṇa Festivals—yes, do it, you have my blessings.

Your progress in translating work is very nice. It is actually most important of all that this translating of books is going on at the same time as the festivals. I have seen the photographs of your festival blocking the traffic and I am very much encouraged. The pictures should appear in all languages and you should write an article for *Back to Godhead*.

Hansadutta gladly complied, and in the October issue of the American *Back to Godhead* magazine his description of the Heidelberg Hare Kṛṣṇa

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festival was one of the main articles:

On June 9th and 10th of 1973 the devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement from Germany, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, France and England assembled in Heidelberg, Germany, for the celebration of a massive Hare Kṛṣṇa festival. What is a Hare Kṛṣṇa festival? It is a transcendental event organized for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Just as in the material world a meeting or event is conducted especially to show respect and honor to a great man, so a Hare Kṛṣṇa festival is especially organized to please the Supreme Person.

In every community we find scriptures that give us names of God like Allah, Jehovah or Kṛṣṇa. Authorized scriptures like the Bible, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and Koran give hundreds of names for God, and through the mercy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu everyone can take advantage of the holy name of God by taking part in such Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals as the one conducted recently in Heidelberg.

Practically the whole city population was in one way or another connected with our Hare Kṛṣṇa Festival. To get the permission to conduct the parade on the Hauptstrasse (Main Street) and the fire ceremony on the Marktplatz (town square), we took permission from the director of city planning, and from the chief of the Heidelberg police, who was very happy to give our parade a police escort. We engaged a printer to do our poster, which an advertising company placed all over the city. The television people sent their man to film the festival. Thus at least for the time that our festival was in the planning and execution stages, people from all walks of life focused their attention either knowingly or unknowingly on Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, through the execution of their daily work.

The success of the festival program lifted Hansadutta's spirits. And he printed 100,000 copies of the next German *Back to Godhead*. Prabhupāda congratulated him on the fine layout: "The magazine is gorgeous, better than Dai Nippon [the printer of the American BTG]. Continue the standard, increase the pages, increase the articles, increase the distribution. May Kṛṣṇa bless you more and more."

Things were going well. Because of the festivals and the concentrated preaching in Heidelberg, devotees were joining in droves. The only drawback was that another summer would pass without Śrīla Prabhupāda

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visiting Germany. For several years he had regularly gone to London and Paris, but Hansadutta felt unable to offer Prabhupāda adequate facilities and attractive preaching opportunities. The temples were small and could not accommodate more than thirty devotees at a time. And so far he had not been able to attract the intellectual and scientific community, so there were no prospects of inviting prominent persons and university professors to meet Prabhupāda.

Consequently, the German devotees would again drive to Paris, where Prabhupāda was expected in August. And a few weeks later, they would go to Stockholm, where two young Swedish who had emigrated to Australia and been initiated there as Vegavān and Ajita, had returned to Stockholm in May and opened the first temple in Scandinavia.

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Paris Revisited

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement had experienced strong growth in France, and the ever-expanding community of devotees needed more space. Consequently, the temple had moved from the Parisian suburb of Fontenay-aux-Roses to the city center, to a prestigious location not far from the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Élysées, into a large, three-story corner building on Rue le Sueur.

Prabhupāda visited the new temple for one week in August 1973 and, at Bhagavān's request, installed marble Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, whom he named Rādhā-Parisīśvara.

MRDĀNĪ DĀSĪ: I was standing not far from Prabhupāda's *vyāsāsana*, where he was sitting, when the Deities were brought into the temple room. The devotees put Their Lordships just in front of him, so that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Prabhupāda were vis-à-vis, looking at each other. Then suddenly Prabhupāda got down from the *vyāsāsana* and began to rub Rādhārāṇī's face to remove a stain.

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AŚOKA-KUMĀRA DĀSA: I was fortunate enough to be right up front while Prabhupāda was offering the first *ārati*. When he was about to light the camphor lamp, he stopped and called the *pūjārī* over. What had happened was that a devotee had worked the camphor into the ghee wick instead of sprinkling it on top. Prabhupāda waited until someone brought camphor and put some crystals on the wick. Then he continued the ceremony.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: While offering the *ārati* Śrīla Prabhupāda was intent on offering each item with care and devotion, not to make a show, but to please Their Lordships with his humble offering. His method of offering the cloth struck me. He made several slow small circles with his wrist as he moved the cloth in a large clockwise circle around the form of the Lord.

NIKHILĀNANDA DĀSA: I was interested in photography, and Harernāmānanda kindly loaned me two cameras and let me accompany him into Prabhupāda's room to take pictures. While Prabhupāda preached to guests I had plenty of opportunities to take pictures from different angles. Sometimes when I was just about to push the button, Śrīla Prabhupāda would stop talking for a moment and look at me with penetration. I instantly froze and wasn't able to move my finger to take a shot. The devotees laughed at my shyness.

One evening it had become very late, and Prabhupāda's servant, Śrutakīrti, suggested that we leave and let Prabhupāda rest. But Prabhupāda smiled and asked, "Does anybody want to leave?" We all laughed; it was obvious how much we enjoyed the company of our spiritual master in such an intimate, relaxed atmosphere.

On another occasion, we were sitting in his room while a *kīrtana* in the temple, on the ground floor, was picking up in both speed and volume. The whole building seemed to reverberate. One devotee asked whether he should go down and stop it, but Prabhupāda remarked, "*Kīrtana* is always pleasing."

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: During one of the *darśanas* in Prabhupāda's

room, several devotees were present, and perhaps some guests, but the room was not crowded. It was in the afternoon. Suddenly a devotee walked in with a large plate of fruit, apparently from the four o'clock offering. Śrīla Prabhupāda at first appeared slightly annoyed at the interruption. That expression of slight annoyance struck me. It showed how absorbed Prabhupāda was in preaching and how detached he was from eating. He took a piece or two of fruit, then gestured for it to be distributed, and continued preaching.

PRTHU DĀSA: Arrangements were made for Śrīla Prabhupāda to speak from the balcony of the temple and address the devotees and neighbors. The municipality gave permission on the condition that we didn't use a sound system. When Śrīla Prabhupāda heard this he told the story of Gopal Ban, who had just gotten a new toilet, which he didn't want to have soiled by anybody. When a friend came by and asked him if he could pass stool, Gopal Ban said, "Yes, but on the condition that you don't pass urine at the same time. I'll stand next to you with a stick. If you dare to pass urine while passing stool, I'll hit you over the head."

MRDĀNĪ DĀSĪ: In those days the relationships between men and women on our *saṅkīrtana* party were quite relaxed and kind of intimate, and we used to get together and talk, mainly about *saṅkīrtana*. During Prabhupāda's visit, we happened to do this out on the street, on the corner, right under his balcony. When he noticed us he sent somebody down to tell us to stop it immediately—that it was *māyā*—men and women sitting together and chatting.

NIKHILĀNANDA DĀSA: Harernāmānanda asked Prabhupāda's secretary whether Prabhupāda would grant us twenty minutes in private to take pictures, and to our surprise and delight Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed. When we entered his room, he was sitting behind his desk and softly chanting *japa*. Then he stopped and took *tilaka* from a small silver box and renewed the *vaiṣṇava* mark on his forehead. While we were taking photographs, Prabhupāda turned to me and asked why I had two cameras. I was so

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surprised that I simply looked at him helplessly, but Harernāmānanda quickly explained that one camera was for color photos and the other contained black-and-white film. Prabhupāda nodded and continued chanting.

After a few minutes, I summoned up my courage and said, “Prabhupāda, may I ask you a question?” When he indicated that I should go ahead, I asked him, “It is said that one becomes blissful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but my experience is that I always commit so many mistakes and that I suffer when I have made a mistake. How is this?” After a short silence, he said softly, “If one repents, that is very good.” It sounded meaningful, though I wasn’t sure whether this answered my question. But I decided to leave it at that and think about it in the future. A few years later, I came across a verse in the Fifth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that says, in connection to the story of Jaḍa Bharata, “Although Bharata Mahārāja received the body of a deer, by constant repentance he became completely detached from all material things”.

Before coming to France Śrīla Prabhupāda had stayed for over a month in England. He had attended a successful Ratha-yātrā and met several important men, including a famous sculptor and George Harrison, the former Beatle, who had donated an estate near London, now renamed Bhaktivedanta Manor. Hansadutta had asked Harernāmānanda to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda on his European tour and take photographs.

HARERNĀMĀNANDA DĀSA: While I accompanied Prabhupāda in London, Paris, and Stockholm, I had opportunities to be with him in many circumstances: morning walks, lectures, room conversations, and public engagements. One thing that made a strong impression on me was Prabhupāda’s ability to adapt himself quickly and perfectly to a particular kind of person or audience. To me, it seemed mystical how he knew almost immediately where a person was at. On several occasions, he sensed right from the beginning where a conversation was leading and would answer questions even before they had been asked. Thus it happened that some of his guests would naturally stop questioning after a while and just listen,

because they could see that Prabhupāda was on their wavelength, addressing exactly the problems on their minds.

Another thing that impressed me was that Prabhupāda sometimes gave such simple answers that they left you completely dumbfounded. You would ask yourself, “Why didn’t I think of that? It’s so clear!” I actually burst into laughter once, because Prabhupāda’s answer was so self-evident.

One afternoon, Donovan, his girlfriend, and some of their friends came to see Prabhupāda. Donovan, another famous musician and good friend of George Harrison, knew a bit about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but those he was with had no idea at all. As Prabhupāda answered their questions and explained basic concepts, Donovan’s girlfriend became uneasy. She seemed afraid of Prabhupāda’s influence. Probably she sensed the danger of losing her man because Donovan was actually humble. He listened submissively and showed his willingness to accept what Prabhupāda said. So his girlfriend became increasingly nervous and repeatedly tried to bring the conversation to an end. Finally, she succeeded. Although Donovan was genuinely interested, he had to comply with her desire, and he excused himself for not being able to stay longer.

At Ratha-yātrā festivals Śrīla Prabhupāda usually sat on a *vyāsāsana* on Subadhra’s cart, but this time he surprised everyone by walking the whole way from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square. Of course, for me as a photographer, this was a unique opportunity to take shots of him as he danced in front of Their Lordships.

As the procession moved, devotees formed a protective circle around Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was constantly running ahead of them and then quickly turning around to get some good angles. Prabhupāda played *karatālas* and chanted, and whenever he began to dance, the devotees went wild. At intervals, he would stop, raise his arms, and turn around to see Lord Jagannātha. His face didn’t express what we would normally describe as ecstasy. His eyes were watery, and he looked deeply moved, almost sad as if feeling intense separation from Kṛṣṇa. He seemed oblivious to his surroundings: the roaring *kīrtana*, the jumping devotees, the shouting policemen, and the gaping onlookers. Prabhupāda was detached from it all, serene, fully absorbed in Lord Jagannātha. But simultaneously he was

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feeling compassion for all the people present.

At Bhaktivedanta Manor, I made it a goal to make a photographic study of Prabhupāda's face. He would give morning class in what is now the theater room. This part of the building faces north, and the tiny light bulb high on the ceiling provided inadequate lighting. There was no question of using a flash, because earlier Prabhupāda had chastised Bhārgava with strong words for tiptoeing in front of him with a camera, clicking and flashing, and disturbing his lecture. So I took a different approach. I put up a tripod at the rear of the room, changed from a normal lens to zoom, put in a supersensitive film, and attached a remote control for long exposures. In this way, I tried for the next two or three days to capture Śrīla Prabhupāda's face in its multifarious expressions.

One morning I was again looking through the viewfinder, and to my great surprise, I noticed that everything was brighter than usual. A quick glance at the ceiling confirmed that the lighting was the same; no additional light bulbs had been put in. So I wondered, "What's the matter? Same film, same lights ..." I looked at Prabhupāda and saw that he was radiant as if a golden effulgence were emanating from him. I remembered a similar incident some New York devotees had reported. Two policemen came toward Prabhupāda and his disciples on a morning walk. When they passed the group, one of them turned to the other and said, "Look! That man is glowing."

Now at Bhaktivedanta Manor, I was having a similar experience. I think this effulgence, which is sometimes depicted as a halo on old religious paintings, is a phenomenon of saintly persons, great souls, who are like transparent mediums that may at times manifest in this way their spark of the spiritual energy and their divine love».

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A Successful Week in Stockholm

Prabhupāda's visit to Sweden was scheduled for the second week of September 1973. Ajita and Vegavān, along with their wives, Kṛṣṇa-premī and Padmavatī, had been preaching in and around Stockholm for only half a year, but they had already met some important people, among them the Indian ambassador, a Sanskrit professor, and a psychiatrist. Prabhupāda had been invited to speak at the prestigious Uppsala University. The devotees from Germany were to bring their sound system and stage several Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals, each culminating in a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

He arrived on the morning of September 5. As usual, the devotees invited the media and held a press conference. For most reporters, this was their first encounter with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and Prabhupāda tried to impress on them the difference between matter and spirit:

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your kindly receiving me. This is the first time I am coming to this country, Sweden. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading all over the world gradually.

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It is a little difficult to understand this movement because it is completely on the spiritual platform. Generally, people do not understand what the spiritual platform is. At present we are a combination of spirit and matter. Matter we can understand, but on account of our long association with matter, we cannot understand what spirit is. But we can imagine that there is something which distinguishes a dead body and living body.

Prabhupāda gave the example of a father who has died:

Although he is lying on his bed, his children lament, “Our father has gone away.” This indicates that they can sense the difference between the corpse and the person they knew as their father. “So that is spirit,” Prabhupāda continued. “The one who has gone away from that body, that is spirit soul; otherwise, why are they saying, ‘Our father is gone?’ The body is there. So first of all we have to understand this distinction between the spirit soul and the material body. If we can understand the spirit soul, then we can understand this spiritual movement; otherwise, simply on the basis of material understanding it is very difficult to understand spiritual life or the spiritual platform.”

Prabhupāda then summarized his points:

“Spiritual life means eternity, a blissful life of knowledge, and material life means non-permanence, a miserable life of ignorance. This body will not stay and it is always in a miserable condition, but on account of our long association with this material life, we have become so dull-headed that it is very difficult to understand spiritual life, what spiritual activities are, what the spiritual world is, what God is, what our relationship with Him is. Therefore this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a kind of training to understand spiritual life and the spiritual world and God.”

Prabhupāda urged his listeners to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness by associating with the devotees who had now settled in Sweden and to adopt the simple process of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: “If we take advantage of this mantra chanting, then gradually our heart will be cleansed, and immediately we shall be able to understand that ‘I am not this body, I am spirit soul.’ Then real awakening will come.”

Prabhupāda gave the example of a man adrift in the ocean, who cannot become happy—no matter how hard he tries—until he is back on land.

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Similarly, our program is not to become happy by so-called adjustments of our material condition. That is not possible. Better come to the spiritual platform and act in spiritual life. Then there is a possibility of happiness. *Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti māmeti kaunteya*—in the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that those who are cultivating spiritual life, spiritual knowledge, for them, after giving up this body there is promotion to the spiritual world. That is eternal, blissful life, and that will make us happy. So if we become serious, if we actually want to be happy, then we must take to spiritual understanding.

Of course, in every country or in different parts of the world, there is some religious system to understand spiritual life. But unfortunately nobody is interested in any spiritual or religious system because they have been more and more induced to become addicted to the material and sensuous activities, and so they are going far, far away from spiritual life, and more and more confusion and disappointment is arising all over the world. To mitigate this sort of disappointment and confusion, one has to take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and attempt to understand the philosophy and act accordingly. Then people will be happy. That is our program. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

In the afternoon, Dr. Suneson, a Sanskrit professor, came to see Prabhupāda at the temple. He was a learned scholar who knew not only Sanskrit but also Hindi, Tamil and Bengali. To everyone's surprise, he was familiar with the *bhakti* tradition and expressed a keen interest in *kīrtana*.

Dr. Suneson: Do you sing any hymns, *kīrtanas*, in Bengali also?

Prabhupāda: O yes.

Dr. Suneson: Or mostly in Sanskrit?

Prabhupāda: No, in Bengali some.

hari hari bīṇāle janama goṇāinu
manuṣya-janama pāiyā, rādhā-kṛṣṇa nā bhajiyā,
jāniyā śuniyā biṣa khāinu

(On Prabhupāda's request the devotees bring a harmonium and he sings the entire song.)

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Dr. Suneson: Who has written this?

Prabhupāda: Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.

*narottama-dāsa kaya, nā ṭheliha rāṅgā pāy
tomā bine ke āche āmāra*

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura is singing, *hari hari biphale janama gonāinu*: “My dear Lord, I have simply wasted my time—*biphale*, without any profit. Because I got this human form of life, but I missed the opportunity for worshiping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.” *Manuṣya-janama pāiyā, rādhā-kṛṣṇa nā bhajiyā*. “And by doing this, I have taken poison knowingly.” *Jāniyā śuniyā biṣa khāinu*.

Then: *golokera prema-dhana, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*. “This *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is not any material thing. It is the ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana.”

*golokera prema-dhana, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana,
rati nā janmila kene tāya*

“But I have no attachment for this *hari-kīrtana*.” *Samśāra-biṣānāle, dibā-niśi hiyā jvale*: “My heart is always burning in material existence.” *Jurāite nā kainu upāya*: “But I did not make any means by which I can get out of it.”

Vrajendra-nandana yei, śacī-suta haila sei: “Formerly the same Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, who appeared as the son of Nanda Mahārāja, He has again appeared as the son of Śacīdevī.” And *balarāma haila nitāi*: “And Balarāma has appeared as Nityānanda Prabhu.” So Their business is: *dīna-hīna jata chila, hari-nāme uddhārila*. All sorts of sinful men, and materially suffering men, all of them have been delivered by these two brothers, Gaura-Nitāi, by preaching the *saṅkīrtana* movement. *Tāra śākṣī jagāi mādhai*: “They have delivered all kinds of sinful men. The evidence is Jagāi and Mādhai.” *Hā hā prabhu nanda-suta, vṛṣabhānu-sutā-yuta*. “My Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Nanda Mahārāja, You are now standing with Rādhārāṇī, the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu. So it is my appeal.” *Karuṇā karaha ei-bāra*: “Kindly be kind upon me.” *Narottama dāsa kaya, nā ṭheliho rāṅgā pāya, tomā bine ke āche āmāra*. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, ‘Don’t kick me away. I have no other shelter. Please take me.’” There

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are many very appealing songs in *vaiṣṇava* literature”.

Dr. Suneson: How old is this one?

Prabhupāda: It was written about 450 years ago. There are many songs by Narottama Ṭhākura:

*gaurāṅga bolite habe pulaka-śarīra
hari hari bolite nayane ba'be nīra
āra kabe nitāi-cānder koruṇā hoibe
saṁsāra-bāsanā mora kabe tuccha ba'be
viṣaya chāriyā kabe śuddha ha'be mana
kabe hāma herabo śrī-bṛndābana
rūpa-raghunātha-pade hoibe ākuti
kabe hāma bujhabo se jugala-pīriti*

There are so many songs:

*gaurāṅgera duṭi pada, jār dhana sampada,
se jāne bhakati-rasa-sār*

Many songs.

Also Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's songs. Then Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's songs. Locana dāsa's songs:

*parama karuṇa, pabuṁ dui jana,
nitāi gauracandra
saba avatāra-sāra śiromaṇi,
kevala ānanda-kanda
bhajo bhajo bhāi, caitanya nitāi,
sudṛḍha biśwāsa kori'
biṣaya chāriyā, se rase majiyā,
mukhe bolo hari hari*

In this way, there are so many songs. Very simple Bengali. Especially Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's songs, they have been approved by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura as Vedic evidences. Although written in Bengali, they are full of Vedic authority.

There are so many songs. So you have a devotional tendency. Develop it. Make your life successful. That is my humble suggestion. *Manuṣya-*

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janama pāiyā, rādhā-kṛṣṇa nā bhajiyā, jānīyā śunīyā... Anyone who has got this human form of life, if he does not engage himself in developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then he's drinking poison knowingly. *Jānīyā śunīyā biṣa khāinu*. *Biṣa* means poison. A great opportunity, this human life. That is our mission, that this modern civilization, they have created such entanglement that people are rotting and they are losing the opportunity of this human form of life—only on the basis of this bodily concept of life. [...] So by order of our superiors, we are trying to introduce. But we are very unhappy, seeing these people. They are spoiling their life in the bodily concept of life. They do not know what is going to happen next life. But there is a next life. That's a fact. As we had passed life as a child, as a boy, as a young man, similarly, we have a past life also. This simple truth, they cannot understand.

The next day, Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured at Uppsala University. Before his arrival, the devotees set the mood by holding *kīrtana* and singing *bhajan*as.

HRMĀTĪ DĀSĪ: Along with Hansadutta, Avināścandra, Vedavyas and Kṛṣṇa-premī, I formed part of a chanting group onstage. When Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived, all of us prostrated ourselves to offer *daṇḍavats*, and somehow or other I was lying right in front of the *vyāśāsana*. Prabhupāda unintentionally stepped on my hands, but it was as if they were touched by rose petals—his feet were so soft. Right afterward Pṛthu garlanded Prabhupāda, and he also stepped on my hands, but this time I felt pain.

Prabhupāda began the program by chanting verses from the Fifth Chapter of *Brahma-saṁhitā*, which contains detailed descriptions of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world. The devotees were invited to chant the last line of each verse with him: *govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*, “I adore Govinda, the primeval Lord.”

He began his lecture by explaining the verse, *advaita acyuta anādi ananta-rūpam*. Although both God and the *jīvas* are eternal living entities, the Lord never falls down from His position, whereas we sometimes fall. Prabhupāda briefly explained what the verse describes: that

Kṛṣṇa is the beginning of everything; that He has innumerable forms, one of which maintains the world; that He is ever youthful even though He is the oldest of all, and that He is easily available by approaching a devotee. To convey the meaning of *ānanda-cinmaya rasa* Prabhupāda explained that in the spiritual world everything is Kṛṣṇa's expansion and is therefore pure spiritual energy.

HRMĀTĪ DĀSĪ: When Prabhupāda described how everything in the spiritual world is an expansion of Kṛṣṇa—the *gopīs*, His father and mother, His friends, the trees and flowers, His calves and cows—he lifted his hand, and without turning around he pointed to Vāsudeva's painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa hanging on one side of the *vyāsāsana*, as if seeing it, to illustrate his words. He was so conscious of everything around him. I was amazed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda ended his talk with the verse, *cintāmaṇi prakāra sadmasu kalpa vrkṣa lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhīr abhīpālayantam*:

On Kṛṣṇa's planet there are many trees, many palaces, but they're all spiritual. *Cintāmaṇi* means 'spiritual.' The houses are made of touchstone. And Kṛṣṇa is very fond of tending cows. And what are those cows? *Surabhi*. *Surabhi* means you can take as much milk as you like and as many times as you like. Here in this material world, you have cows, but you can take milk only in limited quantity. In this way, if you read *Brahma-saṁhitā*, you'll get a complete description of the spiritual world, the spiritual entities, the Supreme Lord, His associates, His country, His pastimes—everything—very nicely described. And if we become attached to that place, then we can try—we can prepare ourselves—for going back home, back to Godhead. That is the perfection of life. That is the mission of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

The next afternoon Prabhupāda spoke to an assembly of professors and students at the University of Uppsala. Aware of their inclination for politics he selected text 41 of the eighteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*: "*Brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras* are distinguished by the qualities born of their own natures in accordance with the material modes." He began:

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Everywhere, even among the plants and beasts, these three *guṇas* are working. Just like some trees, they're useless; they produce neither any nice fruit nor flower. That is third-class, in ignorance. Cows are first-class animals, in the mode of goodness, supplying such valuable, nutritious food, milk. But the cats and dogs are third-class animals. This is the calculation of the three modes of material nature. Among human beings, or animals or trees or birds—everywhere, Kṛṣṇa says—in the higher planetary system, everywhere, these three modes of material nature are working. Therefore, in the human society, because there are three modes of material nature, the classifications should be made scientifically according to these three modes of material nature. And that is explained by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *catur varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam*, four classes of men.

Prabhupāda explained the qualities and duties of the different divisions and denounced the idea of a classless society as utopian. But then he introduced a new angle of vision: that we can transcend the conditioning of material existence by coming to the spiritual platform:

In the human form of body, although there are naturally such divisions, one can be raised to a higher position by this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As far as the material body is concerned, you cannot change the quality. This is already fixed. One has got his particular type of body by nature's arrangement, according to the quality. Now, if you want to change a person to a better quality, then you have to accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is on the spiritual platform, it has nothing to do with the material platform. From the material platform, you cannot change anyone's quality.

Prabhupāda pointed to his disciples as living proof and explained that they had easily given up all sinful habits by taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They had even forgotten their bodily designations as Americans, Englishmen, or Germans, he said. They weren't thinking of themselves as black or white. They now identified themselves only as spirit souls, eternal parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord.

Then he launched into an analysis of the soul and made the point that even animals and plants are souls, who deserve protection, contrary to the communist idea of caring only for humans. "So this is not an organized

society. An organized society means that there are first-class men, *brāhmaṇas*, who give advice to the second-class men, the administrators. And the administrative class will see that everyone is following the religious principles. And the third-class men, or the mercantile class of men, they should produce food.”

Having come back to the original topic of the divisions of society, Śrīla Prabhupāda next explained what it means to be a *brāhmaṇa* and stressed the need for an educational department to create first-class men.

After he concluded his talk, a lively question-and-answer session ensued, with one student, in particular, taking the initiative. Annoyed by the idea of a society based on what seemed to him to be the detestable caste system, he challenged: “Why do you have these distinctions?”

“Distinction...” Prabhupāda paused for a second thoughtfully, “exists only as long as you are not a devotee. You must have these distinctions. There is already the distinction.”

But the student hadn’t grasped the distinctions that Prabhupāda had explained. Again he challenged, “But why?”

“Why?” Prabhupāda asked with surprise. “Because there are third-class men, fourth-class men, first-class men. There are. How you can say, ‘Why?’”

His opponent avoided answering Prabhupāda’s question and began another argument, but Prabhupāda interrupted him to correct his stubborn attitude: “Do you think everybody is a first-class man? Do you think?” When the student admitted he did not, Śrīla Prabhupāda concluded, “Therefore, a first-class man should be like this, a second-class man should be like this. There is already first-class, second-class, third-class, fourth-class.”

Seeing that he was about to lose the debate the student changed tactics by focusing the attention on Śrīla Prabhupāda. “So you are saying that you are a first-class man, yes?” But he was wrong if he thought he had embarrassed or cornered his opponent.

As a humble *vaiṣṇava*, Prabhupāda didn’t have to juggle words to deflect the attack; he simply had to speak from personal realization: “I am a fifth-class man,” he said matter-of-factly. “I don’t claim anything, because

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I am the servant of everyone. I am a servant of the fourth-class man also.”

“But you are a *brāhmaṇa*; you are a first-class man,” the student continued to challenge.

Prabhupāda remained unfazed: “Now you may say first-class man, but I think I am a fifth-class man.” Still dissatisfied, the student became unintelligible and Prabhupāda had to interrupt him: “What is your point? I cannot understand.”

Now Hansadutta entered the discussion. Well aware that a pure devotee considers himself lower than the straw in the street and never defends himself against personal attacks, he regarded it as his duty to come to Prabhupāda’s defense. Why should his spiritual master have to deal with an unreasonable troublemaker? “What is your point?” he pressed the challenger. “You have to come to the point. Organize your question.”

When the student criticized Śrīla Prabhupāda for sitting on an elevated seat decorated with flowers, Hansadutta turned the challenge around: “So you want to sit there?”

“No,” came the answer.

“Alright. Don’t be envious. If you can sit there and give some knowledge.»

“I don’t want to sit there,” the student grumbled.

“Then what is your objection?” Hansadutta asked.

“What about all those flowers that you have killed so that he could be decorated?” the young man demanded. A round of applause from the students indicated he had touched on a common gripe.

Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to Hansadutta: “What is that?”

“His point is that so many flowers have been killed for your garland and to decorate the *vyāsāsana*,” Hansadutta explained. And he said to the student, “So you compare this to animal killing? Is this the same thing?” The boy was caught off guard. Hansadutta was quick to drive home his point: “Do you think that plucking a flower is the same as killing a cow in a slaughterhouse?”

“Of course not,” the student agreed, and then quickly added, “but who said so?”

Hansadutta pursued his own line of reasoning: “So you are not eating

any meat, fish, or eggs?”

“I do,” the student admitted, not seeing any connection between the two issues.

But Hansadutta made the contradiction clear: “OK, you are not practicing yourself what you are saying.”

But the student turned the tables: “But he preaches that you cannot do this, and he does not practice it.”

The time had come for some scriptural evidence, and Hansadutta quoted the *Bhagavad-gītā*: “About offering flowers Kṛṣṇa says, ‘You offer Me with love a little fruit, a flower, and water, and I will accept it.’ That’s the difference between killing an animal and a flower—Kṛṣṇa accepts fruits, flowers, a little water, but He doesn’t accept any cow or slaughterhouse killing.”

Far from being convinced by Kṛṣṇa as the final authority, the student immediately questioned the validity of the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead: “Why does He make this distinction?”

Prabhupāda had been sitting all the while on the *vyāsāsana*, watching his disciple’s preaching with pleasure, but now he again took over the discussion and explained the position of Kṛṣṇa’s devotee: “We are practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As Kṛṣṇa is making a distinction, we are making that. We are not manufacturing our own idea. That is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

He explained that the plucking of a flower is not actually killing, but the student interrupted him. “What is it?”

Prabhupāda appealed to his common sense. “Whatever. According to you, it is killing. But do you think that killing this flower and killing you is the same thing? If somebody kills you, that killing and this killing are the same? You think like that?”

The boy avoided the obvious and logical answer by turning the attention back on Prabhupāda: “In your opinion...”

But Prabhupāda didn’t let him get away with it. “Now, we don’t give such opinion,” he said.

The student retorted, “You did!”

Instead of getting involved in a heated argument, Śrīla Prabhupāda tried

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to appease his opponent by giving him the benefit of the doubt and offering him a way to save face: “No. Then you have misunderstood. You have misunderstood. Our preaching process is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa says, *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*, ‘Anyone who gives Me a little flower, a little fruit, a little water, like that, I accept that.’ So we offer this flower to Kṛṣṇa. We don’t use it independently. We take the remnants of His foodstuff or anything which is used by Kṛṣṇa. That is our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We do not take anything directly. That is our principle. That is our philosophy. So if Kṛṣṇa says that He can accept meat, then we can also accept meat. But He does not say that. He says, *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*. So we have to follow our principle as it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*. We cannot take any dictation from others. That is not possible.”

Realizing that he would get nowhere by arguing against statements that the devotees regard as divine in origin, the student changed his line of attack. He tried to shake the foundation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. “What makes you think Kṛṣṇa is God?” he challenged.

Again Śrīla Prabhupāda would not let himself be drawn in. Rather, he exposed the unreasonableness of the questioner. “Yes. If you know what God is, then you will accept God. If you know, ‘These are the qualifications of God,’ then you will accept God. Do you know what is the qualification of God?” The boy wasn’t sure how to handle the question. “Do you know?” Prabhupāda pressed him. “Just as we find out a physician. If I know what the qualification of a physician is, then I can understand who is a proper physician. Similarly, if you know what the qualification of God is, then you understand that Kṛṣṇa is God. It is not difficult. If you know what gold is, then you can understand what genuine gold is. If you do not know, then you may accept iron as gold..

The student made a last attempt to change the subject again. “Is it by pure logic?” he demanded.

But Prabhupāda didn’t let him off the hook. He asked him clearly and directly: “How do you understand God?”

“I don’t,” the student admitted.

“Then don’t talk of God!” Prabhupāda said emphatically. “If you don’t

understand God, then why are you talking of God? If you understand God, then you talk. And if you say ‘I do not understand God,’ then how can you talk of God?”

The speech before the Uppsala students was another demonstration of how difficult it was to convince even apparently educated people through philosophy and argument. Prabhupāda had seen this many times before, and this was one of his main reasons for stressing the importance of congregational chanting and *prasādam* distribution. That’s why he really liked the festival program. People might object to philosophical ideas, but they rarely objected to chanting, dancing, and eating a delicious feast. By enjoying themselves they unknowingly became purified and made spiritual advancement. If somebody wanted to know about the philosophy, he could purchase a book. Therefore, when Prabhupāda was invited to speak that same evening to a group of academics, including the Indology professor the devotees had met, he told the devotees to accompany him with an array of pots.

PRṚTHU DĀSA: He wanted us to give out hot *prasādam* right after the talk. So there we were, in front of scholars and intellectuals, with our steaming pots, which quickly spread the fragrances of tasty *purīs* and *balavā*, while Prabhupāda lectured on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It was quite distinct from an academic setting. But *prasādam* distribution was more important than creating the impression of being academic philosophers.

For his talk that evening Prabhupāda had chosen texts 1 and 2 of the thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. There Arjuna asks about material nature, its enjoyer, the field of activity, and the knower of the field. Prabhupāda first briefly explained the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as spiritual master and disciple and the necessity for a disciple to have a submissive attitude when trying to understand transcendental knowledge. He had in mind the defiant attitudes of that afternoon’s students.

Submission means I must approach somebody who is actually in a better position or higher position; otherwise, what is the use of approaching?

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Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā. And *sevā* means service. You cannot challenge. You approach such a person whose instruction you shall receive; you can inquire submissively, but you cannot challenge. That is not allowed in the Vedic system. *Samit-paniḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham.* Therefore, before selecting a teacher, you must decide whether you can submit to him. If you cannot submit, don't approach him; don't waste time.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda began to discuss the verses, he explained the meaning of God, defining Him as the supreme controller. A controller must be a person with the capacity to give orders, he said. One of his main objectives was to smash the impersonal conception of God so prevalent in modern Western thinking. The professors were familiar with the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Upaniṣads*, but they understood the Absolute Truth to be formless and beyond description.

True to his conviction that we begin to understand God by first understanding ourselves as spirit souls, Prabhupāda explained the first lesson of *Bhagavad-gītā*: we are not the body:

The soul changes from one body to another at the time of death, though no one wants to die. Why should we accept one type of body, live there for some time, and again change it? That we have experienced. Anyone of us desires that his youthful body may remain. We try to keep that youthfulness by so many medicines, by so many means. But nature will not allow you to keep yourself always youthful. That is not possible. You must change. Therefore one should be inquisitive: 'I don't want this type of body—old body, feeble body—more conditioned, with rheumatic disease and so many other diseases, cough disease. I don't want it, but I'm forced to accept this body.' This is our real problem. 'I don't want to die, but death is forced upon me.' So these questions should be raised by really advanced human beings.

Then Prabhupāda commented on the age-old question: Can you show me God? He said that our seeing power depends on certain conditions. We need light, for example. Therefore if we want to see God we have to fulfill a condition: we have to apply the ointment of love to our eyes. "Those who are saintly persons," Prabhupāda explained, "those who have trained

themselves in the affairs of love of Godhead, they can see God constantly within their heart. That is possible. So here, Arjuna is also a saintly person. He's not an ordinary man, because he's talking with Kṛṣṇa personally. If Arjuna has the chance of making friendship with God and talking with Him personally, everyone has the same capacity, provided we elevate ourselves to that standard of life: *bhakti, bhakti-yoga*."

When Prabhupāda asked for questions, it became obvious that the professors had not been much interested in his thoughts. Rather, they were caught up in their own academic considerations.

"What is the difference between the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Vedas*," one asked. This prompted Śrīla Prabhupāda to explain that the *Vedas* discuss many different topics, but the ultimate goal is to know God. Again he drove home his point that we cannot know God with our present senses. "With these material, blunt, imperfect senses, we cannot understand God. That is not possible. But if we can please God by our service, by our love, He reveals Himself. Revelation—that is the process. So simply by our speculation, research work, we cannot find out God. That is not possible."

Another scholar asked about the differences between Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. Prabhupāda gave the example of a hill that is seen differently from three different angles of vision: from afar it resembles a cloud; nearer, it is seen to be variegated; and close-up, one can see that it is populated by trees and animals. He concluded that ultimately the Absolute Truth is Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The word "personality" brought up another question: how he understood personality. When Prabhupāda quoted the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* that God is the chief person who supplies the necessities of all other persons, the professor interjected that the *Upaniṣads* declare that "the Unity is inexpressible." Still, Prabhupāda didn't budge. He gave more quotes indicating that God is a person, although His transcendental body is different from ours. Seeing that their views were irreconcilable, the professor who hosted the devotees politely brought the discussion to an end.

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HARERNĀMĀNANDA DĀSA: Śrīla Prabhupāda was seated behind the teacher's desk, while the Indology professor and his colleagues and a few devotees took the students' seats. To me, it seemed that those professors didn't understand anything. Their questions after the lecture showed that they were overloaded with information from their academic studies and were unable to appreciate straightforward explanations or simple answers.

After the talk, Bhārgava, another photographer, and I were alone with Prabhupāda, because the others were accompanying the professors out. Prabhupāda turned to us and asked, "What do you think? Was it all right?" Bhārgava expressed his appreciation for Prabhupāda's presentation, but I couldn't bring out a single word. It was as if my mind had gone blank. I thought, "Why does Prabhupāda ask me? He knows perfectly well where these professors are at."

In his presence, I was always overcome by awe and reverence. Actually, the longer I was with him, the more I learned to respect him. I felt rather insignificant around him. Although I regret today that I was not able to speak freely with Prabhupāda, I think it also had its positive side. It was safer. As he used to say, "Familiarity breeds contempt." So there was no question of my becoming too familiar with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

To be in his presence was an intense experience, at least for me. I always felt that his eyes were like X-rays. When he looked at me, it was as if he could read my face like an open book, and he made me completely aware of my conditioning».

NIKHILĀNANDA DĀSA: The next morning we were walking with Śrīla Prabhupāda near the temple. He didn't say much but was chanting softly on his beads. It was September, and the Swedish dawn was kind of chilly and foggy. When the large red sun finally rose over the horizon, Śrīla Prabhupāda remarked thoughtfully: "*Kṛṣṇa sūrya sāma*. Kṛṣṇa is like the sun." He thus reminded us that it is not difficult to see Kṛṣṇa in all things.

SMITA KṚṢṆA SWAMI: Before the public programs the devotees performed *harināma* in downtown Stockholm and invited people to come and hear Prabhupāda speak. On one occasion, probably with the

idea to give mercy to the most fallen, they invited a group of drunkards to come along. Fortunately, these guys were actually quite nice and didn't create any disturbance during the program.

As Prabhupāda lectured, he noticed them, and out of his desire to give anyone the chance to elevate himself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness he began to speak about the verse in *Bhagavad-gītā* where Kṛṣṇa declares that He is the taste of water:

Kṛṣṇa says, *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya*: any liquid thing, the taste which attracts you, that I am. Even you are a drunkard and are fond of tasting wine, I recommend that you simply think: 'This taste of wine is Kṛṣṇa.' That will make you a yogi, the greatest yogi. If you simply think this: 'I am tasting wine—oh, a very nice taste—this is Kṛṣṇa.' Is there any loss if you think like that? This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

MAṆIMANJARĪ DĀSĪ: Somehow or other I was fortunate enough to be among the devotees who accompanied Śrīla Prabhupāda to Uppsala that evening. In the classroom where the lecture took place, I was sitting in the second row, maybe three yards from Prabhupāda's seat. I wasn't initiated yet, and I was curious to find out why the devotees were always praising Śrīla Prabhupāda and speaking of him with such enthusiasm. So, for quite a while, I simply stared at him, almost in a challenging mood, and I practically didn't hear what he was saying. I wanted to find out what was so special about him by looking for external symptoms. But all of a sudden Śrīla Prabhupāda looked back at me, and when his eyes met mine, I felt as if I had been struck by a thunderbolt. I felt so uncomfortable that I didn't dare look at him for the rest of the evening. In fact, for the remaining days of his visit, I looked at him only from a distance.

On the final day, at the airport, Prabhupāda was surrounded by a few disciples. Hansadutta was leading the *kīrtana*. Suddenly something dawned on me. It was as if Prabhupāda spoke to me from within: "If you want to know me, you have to serve." I felt great relief. This was the answer. Not that I had read this in a book and was remembering it now. It was more like a revelation, like Prabhupāda's mercy on me to end my moroseness and confusion: devotional service would reveal everything.

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The day after Prabhupāda’s meeting with the professors was reserved for a Hare Kṛṣṇa festival. Posters had been put up all over Stockholm. Throughout the morning and early afternoon, a big *harināma* party led by Hansadutta brought the chanting of the holy name to the streets of Sweden’s capital. The devotees were so absorbed in the chanting that they continued it in the festival hall, where another group of devotees was decorating, setting up the sound system, and preparing *prasādam*.

MRDĀNĪ DĀSĪ: I was helping Himavatī roll *purīs* while Hansadutta led the *kīrtana* in the hall. Prabhupāda was expected any time. I really loved to chant and dance in *kīrtana*, especially in Hansadutta’s *kīrtanas*, so I asked Himavatī if I could go join in. When I was completely absorbed in chanting and dancing, hands in the air almost touching the ceiling, I turned around and there was Prabhupāda. He looked so pleased. He looked right into my eyes, and his look was so deep and endless that it took me a second to realize that I had to offer obeisances. I could see how much he appreciated it when we enjoyed chanting and dancing in *kīrtana*.

VIBHĪṢAṆA DĀSA: When Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the hall, the audience was waiting for him, and the people rose from their seats and bowed their heads to greet him. It was a spontaneous act, not like something in the TV studios where a red light goes on to indicate that people should applaud.

The subject of the lecture was “The Guru and Spiritual Life.” Hansadutta had suggested to Prabhupāda that he explain the *Gurvāṣṭaka* verses. Prabhupāda began by talking about the difference between matter and spirit and the material and spiritual worlds. He told his audience that it was up to them to decide where to go next: “The *guru* can help you transmigrate from this planet directly to the spiritual sky, where there are innumerable spiritual planets.” Prabhupāda mentioned the verse in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that says that according to one’s desires one can go to different planets. “That is called *saṁsāra*,” Prabhupāda said, “rotating within this material world. And that is compared to *dāvānala*, a forest fire.

He was steering toward the first verse—*saṁsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka tranāya karuṇa-ghanāghanātvaṁ*—but first he made the meaning of *saṁsāra-dāvānala* clear. After all, without realizing the misery of material life, why would anyone accept a *guru* to get out of it? Thus Prabhupāda gave several examples of the blazing forest fire of material existence: two World Wars, the Vietnam War, the Pakistan War:

You may try your best to live very peacefully, but nature will not allow you. There must be war. Especially in European history, there were so many wars: Carthaginian war, Greek War, Roman War, Seven Years' War between France and England, and Hundred Years' War. And the war feeling is going on, not only between nation and nation but also between man and man, neighbor to neighbor, even between husband and wife, father and son. This war is going on. This is called *dāvānala*, forest fire. In the forest nobody goes to set fire, but automatically by the clash or friction of the dried bamboo, there is electricity, and it catches fire. Similarly, although we do not want unhappiness, still by our dealings we create enemies and friends, and there is a fight, there is war. This will continue. This is called *saṁsāra-dāvānala*. Just try to understand. So *guru* means spiritual master, one who can deliver us from this forest fire.

A forest fire requires water to be extinguished. But where is the water coming from? From your bucket or from your fire brigade? No. It must come from the sky. It must come from the sky. When there will be torrents of rain from the sky, this blazing forest fire will be extinguished. These rains from the sky do not depend on your scientific propaganda or manipulation. They depend on the mercy of the Supreme Lord. So the spiritual master is compared to the cloud. From the cloud, there are torrents of rain. Similarly, a spiritual master is considered to be just like the cloud. The cloud takes water from the sea. The cloud hasn't got its own water. Similarly, a spiritual master brings mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Just see the comparison. He has no mercy of his own, but he carries the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the qualification of a spiritual master. A spiritual master will never say, "I am God. I can give you mercy." No, that is not a spiritual master. That is a bogus pretender. A spiritual master will say, "I am a servant of God. I have brought His mercy. Please take it and be satisfied."

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Prabhupāda then spoke about the symptom of material existence—*anxiety*—and said that the first test of a genuine spiritual master is whether his disciples are freed from anxiety when they follow his instructions. The second test is his constant engagement in chanting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead:

In this age of Kali, simply by chanting the holy names of the Lord, you can get all perfection. All perfection. And our movement, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is meant for that purpose. In India it is very popular. But in the Western countries we have just introduced it five or six years ago, and people are taking to it, and they are feeling happy. So this is the only process. Therefore the *guru* is always engaged in chanting. *Mahāprabho kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta*: chanting and dancing. Unless he himself performs chanting and dancing, how can he teach his disciple?”

Prabhupāda briefly described the third symptom, Deity worship, by mentioning that in Sweden the Deity had not yet been established, and then went on to the next verse and broadened its original meaning, surcharging it by his dynamic preaching spirit:

The fourth symptom is that a *guru*, a spiritual master, encourages *prasādam* distribution to the public. Ours is not dry philosophy, simply we talk and go home. No. We distribute *prasādam*, very sumptuous *prasādam*. If you eat *bhāgavata-prasādam*, then gradually you become spiritualized. It has the potency. Therefore it is said that realization of God can be done by the tongue: *sevonmukhe hi jīhvādau*. If you engage your tongue in the service of the Lord, then you realize God. So what is the tongue’s engagement? The tongue’s engagements are that you chant the holy name of the Lord and you take the *prasādam*, remnants of foodstuff given to the Lord. Then you become self-realized, God-realized.”

The next two verses of *Śrī Gurvāṣṭaka* describe the intimate relationship between the *guru* and the *gopīs*, but Prabhupāda avoided discussing these confidential topics in public and instead stressed the importance of constantly thinking of Kṛṣṇa. He applied the idea of taking part in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes to all levels of spiritual existence:

So the ultimate goal of the spiritual master is that he wants to be transferred to the planet of Kṛṣṇa, where he wants to associate with the

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gopīs to help them to serve Kṛṣṇa. Some spiritual masters are thinking of becoming assistants to the *gopīs*; some of them are thinking to be assistants to the cowherd boys; some are thinking to be assistants to Mother Yaśodā or Nanda, or to be the servants of God, and some of them are thinking how to become a flower, a fruit tree, or a calf or cow in Vṛndāvana.”

Prabhupāda explained again the difference between the material world and the spiritual world, but this time focused on the difference in the manifestation of love:

Real love is in the spiritual world between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Real love is between Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. Real love, friendship, is there between Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends. Real love between animal and man is there. Kṛṣṇa is loving the cows and calves. Real love between trees, flowers, water.

At the end, Prabhupāda reminded his audience again how simple it is to become Kṛṣṇa conscious:

The process is that you worship the Deity, you take *prasādam*, you chant the holy name, you follow the instruction of the spiritual master, in this way you’ll be trained up how to understand Kṛṣṇa, and then your life is successful.

The small temple room in Spanga, a village near Stockholm, was the converted living room of a house the devotees had rented, and there was no real need for amplification, but Uthāla still wanted to set up part of the festival sound system to amplify Śrīla Prabhupāda’s morning classes. However, when Prabhupāda began to speak, there was no sound.

He tapped the microphone several times and asked Hansadutta, “It is not working?” Uthāla frantically tried to find the cause. He checked the connections, changed leads, twiddled knobs, but without luck. Prabhupāda was annoyed yet amused, and ridiculed the Western mentality of depending on technology by quoting the last line of a verse by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita: *bahvārambhe laghu kriyā*, the arrangement is very big, grand style, but the outcome is insignificant. “What is the use of keeping big, big paraphernalia?” Prabhupāda asked. “What is the use of keeping a useless machine?” He mentioned the four examples given by Cāṇakya: *ajā-*

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yuddhe, a fight between two goats; *muni-śraddhe*, a festival by sages in the jungle; *dampatya kalabe*, a fight between husband and wife; and *megha garjane*, thundering clouds in the morning:

You have seen goats fighting? (The devotees laugh as Prabhupāda makes the sound of fighting goats) Ongh! Ongh! As if two big, big heroes are fighting. But as soon as somebody comes and shouts, ‘Hut!’, they will go away.

Muni shraddhe. In the forest, there are *munis*. So they are arranging for some festivals to offer oblations to the forefathers, *shraddha*. So what they have got? They have got some fruits and leaves. That’s all. So the arrangement may be that “Tomorrow, we are going to have this festival.” But the festival means some leaves and some water. That’s all. No utensils, no gold, no jewels, nothing of the sort. So this is another *bahvārambhe laghu kriyā*. Arrangement is very big, but fact is nothing.

And quarrel between husband and wife. In India, there is no question of divorce. So nobody takes very serious care when there is quarrel between husband and wife. One may say: “I’m going to leave you, I’m going to kill you...” and so many things. But after an hour, everything is finished. No more quarrel.

And when in the morning you see big clouds assemble and hear thundering sounds, rest assured, there will be no rain. So these things are *bahvārambhe laghu kriyā*. *Arambha*: the beginning is very gorgeous, but the end is nothing. So that is not good: *bahvārambhe laghu kriyā*.

Prabhupāda then turned his attention to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in front of him. He was lecturing from the Fifth Canto, from the chapter entitled “The Teachings of Lord Āṣabhadeva,” and the verse described the necessity of using the human form of life properly. For most of the lecture, he dwelt on one of his favorite topics: the degraded condition of modern civilization and its polished animal propensities of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending.

Toward the end of the class, Prabhupāda addressed his young followers directly:

Don’t waste your time. Finish your business of Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly. To waste time is not at all good. Why is it not good? *Yato ātmano ’yam asann api kleśada āśa dehaḥ*: because we have got this miserable

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condition of life, this body, because of our past action; now if we again create the same action, then we'll have to accept another body. This miserable condition of life will continue. Just finish it. Therefore, whatever time we have, whatever opportunity we have got, we have to prepare ourselves. No more taking a material body. And that is possible only if we are transferred to the spiritual world.

It had been a busy week in Sweden. Some days, Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken on two occasions and had met important people, such as the Indian ambassador. He was especially pleased with the festival program, which attracted big crowds of people and gave them a direct experience of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now, as he continued his world tour by leaving for Los Angeles, the German devotees, with renewed enthusiasm and strengthened conviction, returned to their preaching work in Hamburg, Berlin, Heidelberg, and Munich.

Prabhupāda derived obvious satisfaction from Hansadutta's preaching, especially the traveling *saṅkīrtana* parties. In Germany alone each week, more than a dozen VW vans made preaching excursions out from the different temples. The book and record distributors did hugely, and they returned only briefly on weekends for *kīrtanas* and sumptuous Sunday feasts.

He also liked the regular public festivals. But in his GBC report, Hansadutta indicated that it was becoming too expensive to regularly rent halls, cook food for free distribution, and have groups of devotees chant and dance (who otherwise could be collecting funds). On October 12, 1973, Prabhupāda sent a letter telling him to be shrewd in his planning:

Regarding the festival programs, you should not stop because it is not economic. You can earn from book-selling and then spend on the festivals. The festivals are very good for attracting the people; then you can easily inject the Krishna conscious poison into them.

He reminded Hansadutta to continue preaching with enthusiasm; then all success was assured:

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So your Sankirtana Parties are collecting very nicely, especially Amsterdam. As long as we go on preaching in this way, we will not starve. It is good that the Berlin party is traveling. To be stagnant is not good. Just like I am an old man, but I am always traveling. I am glad that the Hamburg Deity worship is going on nicely. Wherever there is Deities there must be first class care, arati, bhoga, cleanliness, dressing, regular classes. If this is not possible, then better to travel. Your translation process is very good, so do it nicely.

So you are doing excellent preaching, while I am here fighting with Mrs. Nair. I want that when this business is finished to return for Europe or America, perhaps via Africa. You will be pleased to know that the London devotees that you have trained in Sankirtana and book distribution are doing very nicely.

The German devotees I have seen both in Paris and Stockholm have impressed me by their enthusiasm. It is very encouraging, so train them nicely. The Germans are very intelligent, and they will be the future preachers. So give them nice translations of my books and you will have tremendous success in Germany. Our success is our enthusiasm. So everything we do should be done with enthusiasm, the chanting, reading, and following the rules and regulations.

You are experienced, senior member of the society, and Krishna has given you excellent opportunity for organizing Central Europe. I am sure you will be able to do something in Moscow. The young men there, are eager, only the government is a barrier. It is a good field there, you simply have to find the means, but rest assured that you will find many customers there. Your emphasis on book distribution is very good. You have enough centers. Let more devotees come, then consider opening more. The bus program is successful everywhere, so continue it.

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Preaching in Eastern Europe

Unbeknownst to most devotees, Hansadutta had also organized preaching behind the Iron Curtain. But he was very cautious to keep it a secret, because religious propaganda was strictly prohibited in the communist countries who aimed to create an atheist society, viewing religion as a hindrance to socialist progress.

Despite all obstacles, Śivānanda had been visiting East Berlin since 1971. Prabhupāda himself had visited Moscow in the summer of 1971, where he had spoken with Professor Kotovsky and accepted a young Russian man as his disciple giving him the name Anantaśānti Dāsa.

Hansadutta visited Moscow at the end of October and took a few books with him. Around the same time a book fair was held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and Cakravartī and Pṛthu went there to present Prabhupāda's books.

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PR̥THU DĀSA: When we pulled up at the Yugoslavian border in a van full of books, the customs agents didn't let us through, so we had to turn around. We decided to try another checkpoint. But since it was already noon, we stopped to take *prasādam* first.

After a while, a huge dog came near our van, and we began feeding it *capātīs*. Suddenly, I had an idea. We invited the dog into the van and drove to the border. As I had hoped, the dog became the focus of an argument. The border guards were adamantly opposed to allowing our dog into the country. They said, "You can't take this dog." We insisted we couldn't live without our dog. Finally, we agreed to let the dog go, and they waved us through—and we were on our way to Belgrade with hundreds of books.

We managed to get a booth at the book fair, and hundreds of Yugoslavians bought our books. We distributed *prasādam*, and many people took our address and later kept in regular contact.

When Hansadutta informed Śrīla Prabhupāda about his trip to Russia and the successful preaching in Yugoslavia, Prabhupāda was extremely pleased. He had a special interest in bringing Lord Caitanya's message to countries where conditions for preaching and practicing devotional service were the most adverse. He wrote to Hansadutta:

It is Krishna's mercy that you were able to take a copy of Bhagavad-gita to Moscow. It is very encouraging that the boy without any association is maintaining the standard. This is due to his chanting 16 rounds and following the regulative principles. Now he should be in your charge, so you kindly guide him and keep him in our atmosphere and utilize him properly, but steadily and cautiously; I am also glad to note the work going on in East Germany.

Try to impress upon them to make communism God-centered. God is the father of everyone, and we are all His sons. Everything is His property, and everyone has the right to enjoy it. Without being God-centered, Communism will fail. So we have got good potency to be the leaders of the world if we carefully push on this movement.

I am glad to note the work of Cakravarti and Prithu at the Belgrade Book Fair. This is real progress. So from all the literatures you are distributing, you spend this money for spreading Krishna consciousness in Poland,

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Czecho-slovakia, Hungary, and East Germany, and prepare men. Put all of our books into the local languages.

Yes, I want you give me the facility to write my books, but I can attend some meetings of important people and elites. You have taken the right view of the importance of my books. Books will always remain. That was the view of my Guru Mahārāja, and I also have taken it. Therefore I started my movement with my books. And we shall be able to maintain everything with the sales of the books. The temples will be maintained by the book sales, and if there are no more temples, the books shall remain».

EKĀ DĀSA: My first contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness was seeing a TV program in 1971 on Broadcast Free Berlin, a station banned in the former German Democratic Republic. The show documented new religious movements in West Germany but mainly featured the Hamburg devotees. Being philosophical, I felt attracted. But I lived in Potsdam, near East Berlin, so there was no way to meet the devotees.

Then I received a *Zurück zur Gottheit* magazine. In those days, citizens over sixty were allowed to visit the West, and many of them returned with books and magazines, though that was prohibited. I regularly borrowed Western literature from an acquaintance interested in esoteric philosophy, and he gave me the Hare Kṛṣṇa magazine.

In the spring of 1973, the East German government organized an international cultural event, the *Weltfestspiele der Jugend*. Young people from all over the world were invited to Alexanderplatz, a famous central square in East Berlin, and allowed to exchange their ideas freely, although no foreign literature was permitted. The government wanted to show the world that life in the German Democratic Republic was as normal as that in any other country.

PRTHU DĀSA: Śivānanda and I went across the border dressed as devotees, something impossible under normal circumstances. Although we couldn't take books we had many opportunities to preach. Hundreds of thousands of people attended the event, and we preached all day. Wherever we went in the square large crowds gathered around us within minutes.

During one talk I said, "Wherever there is motion, there must be life. Matter is dead unless it is touched by spirit." A Communist functionary

stepped forward and argued, “What about the atom? The electron and proton move around the neutron.”

I said, “That’s because Kṛṣṇa is inside the atom: *aṇḍāntara-stha-paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham*.” The guy shut up, the crowd cheered.

From time to time we asked everybody to give us addresses so we could send them literature, and from those contacts, a group gradually developed. One of them became the first East German devotee, Ekā Dāsa.

EKĀ DĀSA: I went to the event on Alexanderplatz to meet some interesting people. When I spotted two men dressed in monks’ robes, I remembered having seen this in the Hare Kṛṣṇa magazine. So I went up to them and said, “Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Śivānanda looked surprised to hear someone in East Germany greet him like that. After talking, we went to buy some food. Śivānanda offered it, and I took my first *prasādam*.

From that day on, Śivānanda regularly came to East Berlin, usually on weekends. He also brought the first books in German, one at a time, so he wouldn’t have a problem at the checkpoint. He gave me a bead bag and beads. And after a few months, he revealed that he had recommended me for initiation. He hadn’t asked me, but he felt I was a fit candidate because I was the only person in the East sincerely practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In January 1974 he came with the initiation letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda and gave me a new set of sanctified beads and my name. Before being initiated I didn’t even know that I was supposed to follow the four rules and chant sixteen rounds every day. I chanted regularly, but sometimes more and sometimes less. I only knew that if you were sincere, you could get initiated and get a spiritual name.

About a month later, we did *harināma* in public. It didn’t take long for the state security police to arrive and arrest us. They asked Śivānanda to leave the country, and they interrogated me for the rest of the day.

I soon attempted to escape to West Berlin, but I was arrested again and sentenced to two-and-a-half years in jail. I wasn’t allowed to keep any books or *japa* beads, so I made a *mālā* from strings, with knots as beads. Because I had no other engagement, I spent most of the time chanting. One day I actually chanted 108 rounds.

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From time to time, someone from the state security department would come to see me. He wanted to find out where I got the books. He even offered to release me from jail if I would work for them. I declined. After some months, they felt I was a hopeless case and asked me where I wanted to go. I told them I wanted to stay in East Germany, but the problem was that they didn't let me do what I wanted. Eventually, they gave me a form to sign, a petition to be released to the West. The East and West German governments had a treaty concerning unwanted citizens, and in autumn 1974, the West German government bought my freedom for 40,000 DM. I was allowed to go to West Berlin, where I moved into the temple.

At the end of December 1973, the German translation of Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* went to the printer. Hansadutta informed Prabhupāda and sent him a revised edition of *Jenseits von Zeit und Raum* (*Easy Journey to Other Planets*). Prabhupāda replied from Los Angeles:

Previously I have seen a copy of the German *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. It is very nice. The printing is very good, and I'm quite pleased. Thank you very much for helping me spread this transcendental knowledge to the German people. It is a great credit for you and all the German devotees, and Lord Caitanya will bless you with devotion to His lotus feet. I am very anxious to see our *Bhagavad-gita* in German, so as soon as it is completed, kindly send me a copy.

When *Bhagavad-gītā Wie Sie Ist* finally came off the press, it was almost time to go to India for the Gaura Pūrṇimā festival. Hansadutta decided not to send a copy by mail but to present the book to Śrīla Prabhupāda in person. In March 1974 devotees from all over the world would be coming together in Māyāpur to celebrate the appearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Śrīla Prabhupāda described his plan in a letter to Hansadutta:

We must meet at least once a year in Mayapur. Not only GBC shall meet, but many devotees from all parts of the world. In Mayapur, we now have facilities to accommodate more than a thousand people. We have a four-story building and enough space so that even on the balcony we can

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accommodate thousands apart from the rooms. There are all marble floors, and there is always natural ventilation.”

So at the end of February, Hansadutta, Himavatī, and the four temple presidents—Śivānanda, Sucandra, Cakravartī, and Pṛthu—flew to Calcutta. Prabhupāda was staying at the Albert Road temple for a couple of days before going on to Māyāpur. To receive the first foreign language edition of the *Bhagavad-gītā* from the hands of his disciples was for Prabhupāda a dream come true. He had Pṛthu read a few passages from *Bhagavad-gītā Wie Sie Ist* while he leaned back on his cushions and listened with closed eyes.

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Prabhupāda at Schloss Rettershof

After Hansadutta had returned from India, he received a telegram from Śrīla Prabhupāda asking him to look after the temples in England. The local GBC man had become sidetracked with a dubious business venture, and the managers at Bhaktivedanta Manor and Bury Place faced serious problems.

Hansadutta liked the prospect of taking charge of the prestigious British *yātrā*. Prabhupāda had first visited London in 1969, just after his two-week Hamburg visit, and he had returned every year, sometimes even twice a year, for stays of several weeks. Besides that, London's annual Ratha-yātrā festival was second only to San Francisco's. And a few months earlier, George Harrison had donated a large estate outside London.

Hansadutta wanted a similar place, a temple that would show the world that the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in Germany had become respectable and solidly established under his leadership. He looked at various large buildings, one of them a famous castle, Schloss Rheinstein, on the shores of the Rhine River. But the local government became alarmed at the

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prospect of Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees occupying a historical building, and it took action by offering financial help to another bidder.

A country castle, Schloss Rettershof, was only a twenty-minute drive from Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital. It nestled in the hills near K nigstein, a village in the Taunus, where many Frankfurt bankers and entrepreneurs had villas.

Although the rent was high and getting the place meant closing the city temples, Hansadutta was tempted. Money wasn't a problem, and he had a long-term plan to establish a farm community. But for now he wanted to concentrate his forces, form strong *saṅk rtana* teams, and over-flood the prosperous West German consumer society with Kṛṣṇa conscious books and records. So he rented the place.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: By the beginning of May, some devotees from Heidelberg moved into Schloss Rettershof. The place had been a boarding school. We translators quickly transformed a sunlit room on the second floor into an office, while the others began renovating the rest of the building. Their deadline was the second week of June when Śr la Prabhup da was expected to visit Germany for the first time since 1969. Within a month and a half the 19th-century castle was converted into a beautiful temple fit to receive the small R dh -Kṛṣṇa Deities presiding in Hamburg and Their pure devotee, Śr la Prabhup da.

Prabhup da's flight from Paris arrived in Frankfurt on Sunday, June 16, around 11 a.m. More than a hundred devotees from Germany, Holland, and England greeted His Divine Grace and escorted him to the VIP lounge, where he sat on a large, bright orange *vy s sana* brought from Amsterdam. In Germany, the only existing *vy s sana*, in Hamburg, was small and unimpressive, so it had been left in the reception room at the Schloss.

While Hansadutta poured a mixture of yogurt and warm water and rose petals over Śr la Prabhup da's lotus feet, Ga an tha D sa held a huge multicolored umbrella over Śr la Prabhup da's head. Himavat  and the girls had finished making the umbrella just the night before in a veritable sewing marathon».

ACCHEDYA DĀSA: On the morning of Prabhupāda's arrival, I was very nervous and full of excitement; this would be the first time I would meet him personally. I had read his books and followed his principles of freedom. I had been chanting more than 16 rounds every day and loved the *prasādam* and the *kīrtanas*, but I also felt that this person had been sent to me by God.

This may sound silly or sentimental, but in a very intense moment in 1972, I had prayed to God to please help me find a spiritual master. I prayed: "Please, God, if you really exist and can hear me, then send me a bona fide master." Shortly afterwards, in early 1973, I met the devotees for the first time.

In April 1974, Prabhupāda initiated me by mail. Now he would soon touch down on German soil, and I knew that wherever he walked, people would be blessed. This was overwhelming for my troubled heart. I was only 22 years old, and yet God had given me the chance to meet a very special soul—a liberated soul, someone only rarely found on this Earth. Why did I have such luck? I asked myself that many times.

But on that fateful morning, I had no time to think. I got up early and took a shower in the cold mountain water. My mind was racing, my heart was praying, and my soul was floating in a feeling of ecstatic anticipation. We worked the whole morning to put the final touches on Prabhupāda's room and clean up the mess that the previous day's renovation had left behind. The kitchen was like a factory production line: everyone was absorbed and fully concentrating on their service to prepare a huge feast for the more than one hundred devotees who were expected. We felt as if God himself was coming to visit us, since the visit of his dearmost representative carried the same meaning for us.

Later that morning, Hansadutta arrived with the car he had rented, a Mercedes 280 SE. When he came up to me and told me that he would like me to be Prabhupāda's driver during his visit, I was stunned and at the same time full of joy. I had no time to ponder my good luck, because it was already late and I had to hurry to put on a fresh *dhōtī* and *kūrta*.

Ten minutes later, we were hurtling down the Autobahn at breakneck speed, like knights leaving their castle to meet their king. Despite racing at

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200 km per hour, we made it safely to the airport, where I was able to park the big Mercedes in a special terminal for VIPs. With not a minute to spare, we ran up to the gate just in time, as only minutes later Prabhupāda came out of Immigration.

He appeared like an angel gliding effortlessly through the arrival hall. All the devotees immediately went into a trance of blissful ecstasy, shouting “Hare Kṛṣṇa” at the top of their lungs and falling on their knees to offer obeisances. Accompanied by a roaring *kīrtana*, we went with Prabhupāda into the VIP lounge where a *vyāsāsana* was already waiting. While Hansadutta bathed Prabhupāda’s lotus feet, a crowd of journalists stood staring at the extraordinary scene. They had never seen anything like it before. The next day, an article in a popular magazine stated that the devotees seemed to be on an LSD trip—only without LSD—but rather infused with the power of ecstatic God-consciousness.

NIKUNJAVĀSINĪ DĀSĪ: The day that we drove from Amsterdam to Frankfurt I was in great anxiety. I had done something to my left eye while putting in a contact lens, and my eye was constantly tearing and impairing my vision. I had also sprained an ankle, and I had difficulty walking, what to speak of dancing in *kīrtana*.

My service in Amsterdam was to clean the temple room, and afterward, I would finish my rounds sitting beside Prabhupāda’s *vyāsāsana*. Often I would lean against it and feel completely sheltered at his feet. It was like being with my father and receiving his protection. Then this same *vyāsāsana* was sent to Germany.

We arrived a little late at the airport, and Prabhupāda was already giving an arrival address. When I first looked at him from a distance, I couldn’t see him well, but then as soon as I saw the *vyāsāsana* and Prabhupāda again, my eyesight returned. There were no more tears, and I could see clearly. It was as if my picture of Prabhupāda came alive, his picture on the *vyāsāsana* where I saw him like my father. What a wonderful experience! My “picture” was moving and talking; it was my same Prabhupāda. As soon as I saw him, although he was far away, I felt so close to him that I thought, “Here is my real father.” I felt completely at home, like a lost child who has found her father.

Prabhupāda at Schloss Rettershof

RAMBHORŪ DĀSĪ: I thought a spiritualist had to have long hair and a beard, like Jesus, so I felt a little disappointed when I saw in photographs that Śrīla Prabhupāda had no hair. Besides that, he was an old man and didn't look at all romantic. I thought, "When I see Prabhupāda in person, I will be able to understand him." I thought I was spiritually tuned in and would figure him out just by looking at him.

When Prabhupāda arrived, it surprised me how short he was. Still, I experienced him as big and important. But because I was puffed-up, I had no access to him. When I couldn't penetrate him, I became embarrassed and thought, "If he sees me he will realize I am puffed-up." So I devised a plan to hide in the crowd and at the same time get a good look at him.

The *vyāsāsana* stood on a platform, and right in front of it, about ten meters away, was a couch for the reporters. The devotees had gathered around the couch in a semicircle. One devotee was fanning Prabhupāda with a whisk, another held a huge umbrella, Hansadutta was washing Prabhupāda's feet, and I was hiding behind the couch and peeking over the edge. Prabhupāda looked around, recognizing devotees he knew. And every time he looked in my direction, I felt I was erupting inside, like when you pop a boil and all the gunk comes out. It was the first time anybody had humiliated me in a way that was really helpful. Prabhupāda purified and softened all the garbage in my heart, and I just started sobbing. In the end, I felt thankful.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: After the press conference we escorted Śrīla Prabhupāda to a rented white Mercedes. Our fleet of vans led the way, their lights on and horns honking. We'd mounted a speaker on one van, and from time to time a devotee announced Prabhupāda's arrival. The rest of the time, a *kīrtana* tape filled the countryside with transcendental sound. To announce his visit, we had put up posters in the villages en route, and as we drove through those villages, people lined the streets or waved from their windows, just like during the visit of a head of state.

SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI: While riding to the castle, Prabhupāda felt happy. "My heart will become englanded when I hear a *mṛdaṅga* in a

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German village,” Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had said. He quoted Lord Caitanya’s statement that in every town and village the holy name will be heard. He said, “Our goal is a worldwide movement. Actually, we have communities all over the world, but our movement is still very, very small. It will expand, and the whole world can be united under Kṛṣṇa for peace.” Then he remained silent, but said later, “People’s only objection to us is that we are trying to prevent them from going to hell; therefore, they misunderstand us. It’s like when a man flies a kite on a roof and you see that he’s in great danger, about to walk off the roof. But he becomes angry when you tell him, ‘Look out! You’re in danger!’ Any gentleman will speak out if he sees another plunging into danger. But they object: ‘What? You have checked my movement?’ One world under Kṛṣṇa. We are not after domination, but we want to free people from death, old age, and disease”.

ACCHEDIA DĀSA: After the press conference, I rushed back to the car and waited with the door already open. As Prabhupāda approached, tears welled up in my eyes. I tried to hold them back but was unsuccessful. I felt like a helpless child—clumsy and embarrassed—but there was nothing I could do. I navigated the car through a dreamlike daze.

We left behind the great crowd of devotees dancing around the car, cleared the terminal, and began the drive toward the hills of the Koenigstein Forest. During the ride, Prabhupāda had crossed his right leg over his left knee in such a way that I couldn’t help but touch his foot whenever I shifted gears. After a while, he withdrew his foot and looked at me with a smile.

By the time we reached the Schloss, I was drenched in sweat, relieved to have delivered him safely. Later, Hansadutta told me that I had actually received special mercy: I had touched the feet of a pure devotee and made my spiritual master smile. I felt as though all my sins had been washed away, blessed by the presence of my guru.

ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI: When Śrīla Prabhupāda came for visits, devotees usually painted until the last minute, and we were no exception. The night before, I worked many hours scraping stains off the steps to the main

entrance. I thought, “Prabhupāda will soon put his feet here, and everything has to be perfectly clean.” When finally all the steps were spotless, I felt really proud of my work. But the next day, my attachment got smashed because Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the castle through the side door. Nevertheless, my disappointment could not decrease the joy of finally having Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotee finally with us.

Prabhupāda immediately went up to his room, and we poured into the central hall to immerse ourselves in a resounding *kīrtana*. The waves of the *kīrtana* rose higher and higher, and after a while, Prabhupāda’s servant leaned over the wooden balustrade and waved us up.

Although Prabhupāda’s quarters were not especially spacious, we all squeezed in. Prabhupāda said that throughout his life he had always given his best to satisfy Kṛṣṇa: “Even in my old age, I’m pushing on. I was never like the servants in Calcutta, who during the day go into a park and sleep. And when they return and their masters ask them, ‘What did you do all day?’ they say, ‘I was busy. I served you the whole day.’” Prabhupāda laughed and added, “I was never like that”.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: After saying this, Śrīla Prabhupāda removed his flower garland and had someone drape it around a painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa hanging on the wall. A short silence ensued while we sat there and looked at him expectantly. His secretary, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja, entered the room with a piece of luggage. Then he left and returned a few moments later with more luggage. Prabhu-pāda said, “You should always be busy like him.” That was the high sign: it was pointless to sit idly. So we offered our obeisances and went back to our duties.

NIKUṆJAVĀSINĪ DĀSĪ: That afternoon Śrīla Prabhupāda gave initiations on the lawn behind the Schloss. Hoping to be initiated I took a place among the many devotees who were sitting in front of plates with bananas and neck beads. My situation was a little unclear because we had just changed temple presidents. Pṛthu Prabhu, our new president, called me Nandā (my Western name is Nanya). Maybe he called me Nandā just to flatter me, but I think he had the impression I was already initiated, so he

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didn't put me on the list. I didn't know that. But when it came time to have somebody tie on my neck beads, one of the Dutch *brahmacārīs* put them on and I thought I was all right.'

The devotees were called forward by country, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was very strict about the procedure. He explained: First you offer *daṇḍavats* (even the women), not straight on from the front, but a little from the side; then you sit up and recite the regulative principles and "at least sixteen good rounds every day." Prabhupāda corrected devotees' mistakes. I thought, "When I go, I don't want to make any mistakes." I watched attentively as one devotee after another went forward. I didn't realize it was going by temples, because Amsterdam was first on the list. Soon all the devotees from the other temples had been called. Then the initiations came to an end, and I realized I had not been on the list.

A Dutch devotee, Vidāṅga Prabhu, noticed my predicament and quickly informed Satsvarūpa Mahārāja that they had forgotten me. So I was called. I offered my *daṇḍavats* and recited the four principles. Then I handed Prabhupāda a bead bag I had made for him as my *guru-dakṣiṇā*. He had me hand it to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja and then said to me, "Your name is Nikuṅjavāsiṇī [which I didn't understand]. This is a very nice name. It's the name of one of the *gopīs*." I felt happy and thought, "Just see! I waited until the end and I got the best name." I felt as though Prabhupāda had shown me a special favor. So I offered my *daṇḍavats* again and returned to my place.

But for days I didn't know my name! Devotees kept asking me what my name was, but I didn't know. I would tell them "it's the name of a *gopī*." Finally, three days later, a list of the initiates was posted, and I copied my name down on a piece of paper.

After giving us initiation Prabhupāda returned to his quarters and Hansadutta gave a talk. He said Prabhupāda had commented that a woman should be so well covered that not even the sun would see her. After his lecture, when we had held *kīrtana*, with the devotees running in circles around the fire in the hot afternoon sun, I tried my best to always cover my head. I thought it would please Śrīla Prabhupāda».

ŚILPAKĀRIṆĪ DĀSĪ: I had received second initiation, and after the fire sacrifice, the second initiates were asked to go up to Śrīla Prabhupāda's quarters and receive the Gāyatrī mantra. Nobody told me what to do, and when Satsvarūpa Mahārāja called me in I was shaking with nervousness.

After offering obeisances I sat on my knees next to the door and waited. I was alone with Śrīla Prabhupāda because Satsvarūpa Mahārāja had gone out. Prabhupāda looked up from behind his desk and said, "Come closer." I moved a little forward on my knees. "More," he said, and I moved another foot or two. "More!" he patiently insisted, and I moved closer again. After he had beckoned me once more and I was still only halfway to where he sat, he finally patted the floor next to him and said, "Come sit here." So I got up and sat down by his side.

I thought it was wonderful to be so close to Śrīla Prabhupāda. But I immediately checked myself and considered, "He is a *sannyāsī*; you shouldn't think like that." Prabhupāda was sober. He showed me a sheet of paper with the mantras on it, pointed to each word, and had me repeat them after him.

After he showed me how to count the *mantras* on my fingers, he asked me whether I could bring him some sandalwood paste for his headache. Because I'd been helping in the kitchen almost every day, I knew we had no sandalwood, not even for the Deities. I told Prabhupāda. But he probably thought that I didn't understand English well enough, so he asked me to get Himavatī.

I thanked him, offered obeisances, and ran out the door to find Himavatī. When I told her what had happened, she got upset with me. She was responsible for the standard of Deity worship, and my "inappropriate talking" had embarrassed her in front of Śrīla Prabhupāda. But then she became concerned for his welfare. In her room, she had a large *japa-mālā* hanging on the wall—carved from first-class sandalwood—which was both decoration and a way to give her room a pleasant scent. She sacrificed those beads. Prabhupāda got some paste to alleviate his headache, and Aṣṭaratha, the head *pūjārī*, got the rest of the sandalwood for the Deities.

It had been an eventful day, but when Hansadutta told Prabhupāda that

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the devotees were eager to hear him speak he agreed to give a brief talk on the *Bhagavad-gītā* that evening. He selected the first five verses of the second chapter, wherein Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna discuss the value of fighting the battle. After Satsvarūpa Mahārāja chanted the verses in Sanskrit, Prabhupāda emphasized Kṛṣṇa's instruction that everyone must execute some prescribed duty without consideration for personal loss or gain:

This is the set-up of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but the real purpose is to instruct Arjuna about spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding means, first of all, to know what is spirit. If you do not know what spirit is, then where is your spiritual understanding? People are too much engrossed in the body. That is called materialism. But when you understand spirit and you act accordingly, that is called spiritualism.

The bodily conception of life is foolishness. No learned man takes the body into serious consideration. Therefore, in the Vedic literature, it is said, "One who is in the bodily concept of life is nothing more than an animal." At the present moment, without knowledge of the self, the whole world is going on under the bodily concept of life. The bodily concept of life is there among the animals. The cats and dogs are proud of becoming a big cat or big dog. Similarly, if a man also becomes proud that he is a big American or big German, what is the difference? But that is actually going on, and therefore they are fighting like cats and dogs. So, we shall discuss more tomorrow.

The next morning, a group of disciples waited at the side entrance of the castle to accompany Prabhupāda on a walk. The mid-June morning air was still fresh, and Prabhupāda wore his hat and chadar during his first morning stroll past the wide cornfields stretching from Schloss Rettershof to the nearby village of Fischbach. The conversation focused on the theme he'd discussed the night before: the folly of accepting the body as all in all.

This body, either living or dead, it is not a very important thing. Now see! And the whole world is after this body. Kṛṣṇa says, "The body, either dead or alive, is not a subject matter for serious consideration." And for what is the world going on? Simply for bodily comfort. Body means senses. It is very difficult for the Western people to understand that the body is not an important thing and that the soul is the important thing.

Prabhupāda at Schloss Rettershof

He explained that without understanding the soul, it isn't possible to understand God, because the soul is a minute part of God. Referring to modern scientists, he said:

Simply they are trying to cover it: 'There is no soul. There is no soul. Life is generated from matter,' although they cannot prove it! A fool's paradise. The fools explain the living force in some way, and other fools are accepting. This is the position of Europe and America. It is a fool's paradise. It is paradise certainly—very, very big, big buildings and advancement—but all rascals and fools. Fool's paradise.

The rays of the early morning sun gradually gained strength and evaporated the blanket of mist over the valley. Contemplating the rolling hills covered with corn, Prabhupāda denounced the foolish idea of overpopulation:

If nature likes, it can produce three times, four times this production. *Prakṛteḥ kriyamānāni gunaiḥ karmāni*: after all, nature is producing. But we do not know how to deal with nature. Therefore there is some scarcity. And we say overpopulation. There is no question of overpopulation. There are so many hundreds and thousands of birds within this forest and other animals. They have no problems of overpopulation.

He encouraged Hansadutta to develop the Schloss into a showcase of simple living and high thinking: "This should be exemplary, that our community lives in this way and saves time for spiritual advancement. This example should be shown to the whole world. Is it possible?"

To Hansadutta's positive reply, he said:

The devotees do not do any industry. They do not kill cows. They do not go to the cinema. They do not have illicit sex. They don't drink. No problems. Simply they are eating very nicely and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Show this example at least in this fool's paradise. They think it is paradise, and the paradise is lost every ten or fifteen years by bombing. Germany bombs France, and France bombs... This is their paradise. So let them understand, 'You are all fools. Yours is a fool's paradise. This is life, what we are doing.' Teach them so that the fools will understand what is life.

Mādhavānanda, who had come from England to see Śrīla Prabhupāda,

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mentioned that in Great Britain and America more and more people supported birth control to curb overpopulation. Prabhupāda exposed the real motive: “No, it is not overpopulation. They don’t want to take care of children. This is their problem. It is not a question of overpopulation. They want to remain free and enjoy life, that’s all. No responsibility.

After breakfast, Hansadutta took Prabhupāda on a tour of the castle. The four-story building with over fifty rooms was filled to capacity during Prabhupāda’s visit and resembled a beehive early in the morning and at night. But now the place was quiet because most devotees had left for *sankīrtana*.

MAÑIMANJARĪ DĀSĪ: I came up the kitchen stairs just as Śrīla Prabhupāda and Hansadutta came down. I didn’t notice them until I almost bumped into them. When I suddenly saw Prabhupāda I dove to the floor and offered obeisances. I heard Prabhupāda chuckle and say, “Jaya!” When I got back to my feet he had already gone into the kitchen.

ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI: I was tired from all the work and excitement, and I had to take a nap after breakfast. We translators stayed in a large room and worked at low desks. So I lay down behind my desk and was just about to fall asleep when the door opened and I heard Prabhupāda’s voice. The first thing that came to my mind was his words on his arrival: We should always be busy and not waste time sleeping all day.

And here I was, sleeping like a lazy, irresponsible fool. I felt really bad. I thought maybe Prabhupāda wouldn’t notice me, because I was behind the desk. But then I chastised myself: “Come on, you can’t fool Śrīla Prabhupāda.” So I sat up and saw that Prabhupāda looked amused. I felt relieved. Undoubtedly he knew I felt bad, but when he smiled I also smiled, and everything was all right.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: «We had just received the galley proofs of *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. I was proofreading them when Prabhupāda and Hansadutta entered. Hansadutta introduced us and explained how we did translating, editing, and proofreading. Then

Prabhupāda asked me what I was working on. “*The Teachings of Lord Caitanya*,” I replied. I showed him the proofs. “Read,” he said. I was a little surprised because Prabhupāda didn’t understand German. While I was reading for a minute or so, Prabhupāda listened with a huge smile. Knowing that a book was ready for publication was his greatest satisfaction. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had ordered him to distribute Lord Caitanya’s message in English, but Śrīla Prabhupāda took his instruction even further. Through his disciples, he wanted to publish and distribute his books in all the major languages of the world.

SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI: I had a high fever and a big boil on my leg. The day after our arrival I was massaging Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he noticed that my hands were very hot. When I told him I had a fever, he asked me to stop the massage and get someone else. So I recruited a young *brahmacārī* who was standing just outside the door.

ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI: When Satsvarūpa Mahārāja asked, “Is there someone who can massage Śrīla Prabhupāda?” I said, “Śivānanda knows how to do it.” I tried to find Śivānanda, but he had just left for town. Mahārāja concluded, “Then you will have to massage Prabhupāda. He has sent me to take a rest because I have a fever.”

I had never massaged anyone. And I was really afraid to touch Prabhupāda. When I went into his room, I was red-faced, sweating, and shaky. Prabhupāda looked at me, a heap of misery, and said in a deep voice, “Just do your service.” He sat on a mat in his *gamchā* with a bottle of mustard oil next to him. He told me to begin by moving my hands up his back. In response to my timid squeezes, he demanded, “Push harder!” I pushed with my whole weight, and Prabhupāda seemed as immovable as a mountain. After a while, he looked at me and asked, “What is your service?”

“I’m trying to translate your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

“What are you translating?” he asked.

“*Kṛṣṇa Book*,” I said.

“Oh!” Prabhupāda said. He seemed pleased and asked, “How many

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pages a day?” I immediately told him my best score: “Twenty pages, Śrīla Prabhupāda, on good days.” Prabhupāda moved his head in satisfaction.

Then he showed me how to massage his arms, chest, and head. After some time, he stopped and looked at me, “You know, a devotee should be four things: a good disciple, a good master, a water carrier, and a good cook.” I thought I understood why one should be a good disciple, a good master, and a good cook, but why a water carrier? Later, I learned that in Indian villages, when water is needed, people go to fetch it. In this way they serve others. Similarly, devotees are meant to serve others.

It seemed that the massage lasted for a long time, and all the while my thoughts focused on one desire: Would Prabhupāda allow me to massage his lotus feet? It is a privilege to touch the feet of a pure devotee because from them all blessings can be obtained. As if knowing my desire, Prabhupāda put his feet on my lap. I massaged them with the greatest care but with full enthusiasm.

While I massaged his hands Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me to crack his knuckles. When I pulled the joints and they made a loud cracking sound, he simply smiled. Because his fingers were so delicate I was afraid, but he liked having them pulled a little forcefully. Then he indicated that the massage had come to an end. I offered *daṇḍavats* and left the room.

I was elated and grateful that Prabhupāda had allowed me to come close to him. I was so happy that, for the rest of the day, I went into the forest and just chanted the holy name.

In the afternoon, a German lady visited Śrīla Prabhupāda and entered into a philosophical discussion with him. She began by explaining that in material life people have many duties and responsibilities, but that after death she wanted to attain peace—“to be situated in a peaceful condition.”

Prabhupāda immediately took up her point: “After death?” When she confirmed this, he asked, “So everyone will get that peace?”

“Yes,” she replied, “everyone will attain it.”

Prabhupāda extended the question further: “The cats and dogs? Everyone? The same?”

She hesitated and clarified her position. “No, human beings are

different. Man has something spiritual within himself, whereas animals live only by instinct.”

“So what is that difference?” Prabhupāda asked. He pointed out that both humans and animals eat, sleep, mate, and defend themselves. “If the platform of activities is the same, why is there a difference?”

The lady responded that humans act with intelligence, while animals act by instinct. But Prabhupāda remained unconvinced: “But the activity is the same—eating. Where is the difference?”

She tried again, arguing that man had developed from a primitive state into an advanced civilization, whereas animals had remained primitive. “That shows,” she said, “that man has intelligence.”

Prabhupāda questioned this conclusion. “Because he can build a nice building, therefore he has intelligence?”

“Yes,” she answered.

“But the result is the same,” he replied. “You construct with intelligence, the animal acts by instinct, but the sleeping comfort is the same.” Then he added pointedly, “Such a nice building—and someone throws a bomb on it. The dogs do not do that. So who is advanced—the dog or the man?”

The lady admitted, “Yes, man misuses his intelligence. He creates things that are later destroyed.”

“So is that very good intelligence?” Prabhupāda asked.

She conceded that it was not.

“Then what is the use of getting better intelligence than the dog?” he pressed.

Now she shifted her argument. “Man has received his intelligence from God, but he misuses it.”

Prabhupāda immediately asked, “Has God given intelligence for this bad work?”

“No,” she replied. “That is the fault of mankind.”

“Therefore,” Prabhupāda concluded, “misuse of intelligence will cause suffering. Now suppose a tiger kills an animal, and a man kills thousands of animals daily in the slaughterhouse—is he not sinful?”

She acknowledged that this reflected evil in human nature.

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“Then the conclusion is,” Prabhupāda said, “that the so-called intelligent man is simply misusing his intelligence. And when he misuses it, he is less than the cats and dogs. Then how will he be in peace after death?”

Despite this, she maintained her conviction: “Every man will get this peace—even the bad men.”

Prabhupāda looked at her in surprise. “Bad men also will get peace?”

“Yes,” she insisted.

He rejected the idea, remarking that such thinking was nonsense.

At this point, another lady entered the discussion and raised a question: “Then where does the bad man go after death?”

“He will become a dog,” Prabhupāda replied.

“That would mean there is a hell,” she objected, “but I do not believe in hell.”

“He may not believe,” Prabhupāda said, “but hell is there.” He then referred to the Vedic teaching that those in goodness rise to higher planets, those in passion remain on the earthly level, and those in ignorance descend to lower, hellish worlds.

“Where are these hellish worlds?” she asked.

“They are different planets,” Prabhupāda replied.

“How do we know this?” she continued.

“From the books,” he answered simply.

The discussion then turned to Christianity. One of the ladies argued, “Jesus came to save men, not to destroy them—even sinners.”

“Yes,” Prabhupāda replied, “but only if they follow his instructions. Jesus can save them if they obey him.”

She then cited Jesus’ teaching: “We should love our neighbor and not harm others.”

“But Jesus also said that the sinful will go to hell,” Prabhupāda pointed out. “Is it not?”

She admitted that such teachings exist, but still tried to reconcile them with her earlier claim. Prabhupāda therefore asked again, “Then why do you say that everyone will get peace?”

At this point she began to question the reliability of the Biblical

accounts. “We cannot really know what Jesus said,” she argued. “Over time, things become distorted.”

Prabhupāda immediately challenged her: “Then why do you quote Jesus? If you do not believe in him, why do you give evidence from him?”

She tried to explain that one must distinguish between what is true and what is not, that modern thinking rejects miracles and mythological elements.

Prabhupāda dismissed this approach. “Then there is no truth. It is all hodgepodge.”

She admitted that people tend to accept only what they like.

“Yes,” Prabhupāda repeated, “hodgepodge.”

Finally, when she insisted that truth must be extracted from what is unreliable, Prabhupāda concluded firmly, “This is nonsense. From untruth, how can there be truth?”

MAÑIMANJARĪ DĀSĪ: The next morning, while we were taking breakfast, Hansadutta came to the *prasādam* room and told us that Prabhupāda had asked about the devotees’ menu on *saṅkīrtana*. When told that we bought rolls and bread from the bakeries, he became concerned. He instructed Hansadutta to tell us that under no circumstances should we eat grains prepared by non-devotees. Rather, the temple should bake bread or make *capātīs* that the devotees could take with them.

We didn’t think about using yeast to raise the dough. Our first attempts at baking bread were unsuccessful. Because Germans can’t live without their daily ration of fresh-baked, crunchy bread, Śrīla Prabhupāda was consulted about our using yeast. When he heard that yeast is the dried form of a single-celled fungus, he said it was all right, but that we shouldn’t offer the bread to the Deities.

NIKUÑJAVĀSINĪ DĀSĪ: I was helping to make *purīs* and *capātīs* while Prabhupāda was at Schloss Rettershof. Himavatī and Kauśalyā were cooking for him. One day, they brought him *capātīs* that hadn’t puffed. He chastised them: “You are my older disciples, and you don’t even know how to make a *chapati* puff up? That means there is no qualification. How

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can you bring this to your spiritual master?” And he wouldn’t eat them».

Each morning, after Prabhupāda’s breakfast and nap, Hansadutta escorted him to a small room that had been converted into a recording studio. It was connected to the adjacent room by a sliding window, where Uthāla had installed a mixing console and a pair of two-track Revox tape recorders.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: Prabhupāda had readily agreed to Hansadutta’s request to spend half an hour each morning in the studio singing his favorite *vaiṣṇava* songs. He played a Laxmi Flute harmonium made in Agra; Hansadutta accompanied him on *mṛdaṅga*, and Himavatī, Cakravartī, Purujit, and I played *karatālas*. Later I added to each track the harmonic drone of a tanpura.

After each session, Prabhupāda entered the control room and heard the recording. He closed his eyes and sat silently, listening in deep meditation. Harernāmānanda came in a few times and took photographs. Two close-ups of Śrīla Prabhupāda listening to the recordings were later used as the cover photos on the double album, *Kṛṣṇa Meditation*.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: Prabhupāda selected the songs himself. He had a small Vaiṣṇava songbook written in Bengali, and Akrūra turned the pages at his sign—a nod. Before each recording, Prabhupāda spent a few minutes on the harmonium warming up and creating the particular mood for the song he was about to sing.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: There was no comparison to usual recording sessions. Prabhupāda was not at all concerned with rehearsing to ensure a technically perfect result. Neither did he care whether extraneous sounds made it onto the tape, such as clearing his throat or his voice cracking. He would simply begin singing, and whatever sound spontaneously came out—that was it.

During one song Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped suddenly. He turned to Hansadutta and asked, “You do not know how to play *mṛdaṅga*?” With a movement of his hand, he indicated to his flustered disciple that he

wanted the drum, and then he showed him how he wanted him to play it. He played the classic combination of the beats that he had taught everyone in the beginning: *ta ti, ri-ti-ri-ti ta, ka-ti-ta, ka-ti-ta, ge, dhin dha, dhin ta, ge-ta*. “Like that,” he said, and handed the drum back.

This incident taught me a lesson. Hansadutta had not played wrong, technically speaking; he was an expert musician and played the *mrdaṅga* better than any of us. But when he played in his own way, Prabhupāda didn’t like it. He made it clear that he preferred the standard accompaniment, even though it was simple, instead of intricate “drum fireworks” which might distract from the actual song.

In the afternoon of the third day of Prabhupāda’s visit, he held a press conference in the castle’s reception room. Prabhupāda sat on “the German *vyāsāsana*,” a simple wooden dais painted white and with no backrest. It was built to have his picture on it. Nobody had imagined that he would actually sit on it one day. Therefore, it was hardly wide enough to accommodate him.

NIKUNJAVĀSINĪ DĀSĪ: When I heard that Prabhupāda would hold a press conference and that we were invited, I went downstairs early. Only two or three reporters were in the room. In one corner stood Prabhupāda’s seat, and in front of it were rows of chairs. Feeling kind of shy I just sat on the floor in the opposite corner and waited, and as the devotees came in, they began occupying the chairs. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the room. When he saw his disciples sitting on chairs, he indicated that they should sit on the floor, even though most of the chairs were empty because only a few more reporters had come. It was clear to me after this that a disciple should always take a humble position in front of his spiritual master and never sit on the same level. Naturally, I felt good that I was already on the floor and had acted in a way pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In the evening, Prabhupāda lectured again on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. This time he chose text 13 of the second chapter: *dehino ’smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā*. As he started to explain the meaning, a child

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began to cry. Śrīla Prabhupāda chuckled. Generally, he became annoyed when interrupted while he was giving class. When the devotees saw their spiritual master take the disturbance in stride, they were relieved and also laughed. Prabhupāda used the child's crying to make a point:

So on one side, profit; on one side, loss. On one side, you get a child; and on the other side, you cannot hear. This is the material world. As soon as you get some profit here, on another side there is loss. As soon as you want to construct a big skyscraper, on another side there is digging earth.

Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out the foolishness of modern man, who engages in “digging and piling,” never questioning the usefulness of his endeavor. Man never considers that he will soon have to leave his body against his will, and he shows no interest in the message of the *Bhagavad-gītā* that you are not this body, but the proprietor within. Then he explained that the word “occupier” is actually more appropriate than the word “proprietor:

If you rent a house, the proprietor is a different man. The tenant is the occupier; no proprietorship. So I am the spirit soul. I am not the proprietor. I am simply an occupier. The rascal materialists do not know that the proprietor is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that He is giving me a particular apartment according to my capacity for paying rent. This is my position; otherwise, why doesn't everyone get a first-class body—a king's body or rich man's body? One child is born and immediately he is a rich man. So there is no arrangement? And another child born at the same moment is a very poor man. Why? Because if I am able to pay more rent, I transfer to another, very luxurious apartment. Or if I cannot pay the present rent, then I have to move to another, less expensive apartment.

Then Prabhupāda described how the environment affects our consciousness:

A poor man living in a poor cottage or very unclean apartment, his mentality is one way. Another respectable gentleman living in a very nice house, his mentality is different. So according to the circumstances, the mental changes are there, but both men are human beings. Similarly, there are so many apartments, or different types of bodies: 8,400,000 types of

Prabhupāda at Schloss Rettershof

bodies. The occupier, the living being or the soul, is of the same quality, but according to the apartment or body he has occupied, he has developed a certain consciousness and mentality.

He reminded his young audience that their birth in a developed country such as Germany was a testimony of past pious activities and offered them a great opportunity for self-realization:

If you have done nicely to occupy a first-class apartment, then nature will give you a nice body. Therefore I say repeatedly that you Western boys and girls, you are given a very good chance by nature. Once upon a time, the European people were dominating all over the world, because they are very intelligent. They have got good resources, good, nice body, beautiful body. Everything is very good. But don't spoil it; use it for understanding further good.

He said that misidentification with one's land of birth should not let us forget that God is the creator and therefore the actual proprietor of everything:

Why am I falsely identifying myself with the land? 'I am German because I am born in this land of Germany.' That is also false. No land is Germany or France or England. Land is land. You have falsely named it: 'This is Germany.' What is this Germany? Say two or three hundred years ago, there was no Germany. The land was created by God. So it is God's property. Where is the difficulty to understand? You did not create anything, not even your own body. That proprietor is also Kṛṣṇa. Because as soon as Kṛṣṇa asks you, 'Please vacate,' you must vacate immediately. Can you remain in this body? The proprietor asks you to vacate. So you have to vacate. Or the proprietor does not repair it. Then you voluntarily vacate: 'This is not useful anymore.'

Returning to the Sanskrit verse Śrīla Prabhupāda illustrated another meaning, namely, the imperceptible nature of the bodily changes and how the soul, as an observer, is always the same:

So it is to be understood that I existed in the past in a different body. As I existed, say seventy years before in a different body, I was jumping as a boy. Now I cannot jump; now I have to use the cane. This is a different body.

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If the same body still existed, then I could jump like a boy. I remember that I jumped. But now it is not possible. I have to take the help of three men.

He laughed, and the devotees joined in. He was in a jolly mood, pleased to see many young faces. He hoped that they would take Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously before their bodies dwindled with old age and the great opportunity to achieve perfection within this life was lost.

On the next day's morning walk, Śrīla Prabhupāda further described transmigration: "Transmigration means, the first body you lose; you enter a second body, a third body, fourth. So your childhood body is not existing. Therefore you are in a youthful body or an adult's body."

When he asked for possible objections, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja argued that a materialist doesn't see how this applies to taking another body. "We can't perceive how the change from one body to another takes place. We can perceive that we have changed from children to old men, but we cannot perceive what will happen after death. So who knows.

Śrīla Prabhupāda addressed the objection. He talked about dreams: "Some tiger is coming. You are crying, 'Save me! Save me!' It is an illusion—this body is also an illusion—but you are affected. That means you are experiencing. And when in a dream you see your beloved, there is no such thing, but still, there is discharge. Why? How you can say that you are not perceiving. It is perceiving. What is the answer?"

When none of his disciples gave answers, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that the materialists tend to discard these subtle experiences as illusory, whereas they accept gross, tangible phenomena as real. "You are perceiving every night that you leave this body. You accept another body and do something else, which you see. If that is an illusion, then this world you see before you is also an illusion because in the daytime you forget the night's activities, and at night you forget the day's activities. So this is also an illusion. You are thinking: I am American, I am Indian, German. What is that? By one kick of nature you are out: Become a cat or dog! This is also an illusion. What is not illusion?"

Prabhupāda stated the only sensible conclusion: "Therefore the question is, Where is my real life? That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When one understands, 'This is illusion, and that is also illusion, so where is my actual

life?’—that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Hansadutta began to talk about the experiences mediums appear to have with the dead, but Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped him and refocused his attention on the point. “They may think like that,” he said, “but this is a practical thing. Try to understand that in the daytime you are illusioned by this gross body, and at night you are illusioned by the subtle body. So both of them are illusory. Therefore, if you are intelligent, your inquiry should be, What is my real life? That is intelligence.”

Mādhavānanda said that transmigration would eventually stop as a result of such inquiry, and Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborated: “Yes. A devotee’s understanding is that ‘I am the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. So let me surrender to Kṛṣṇa as He wants and serve Him.’ This is life. As soon as he is on this platform, then he is out of illusion. And if he is perfect, then just after giving up this body, he goes to Kṛṣṇa. This is the process. If he does not fall from this transcendental service of Kṛṣṇa, then immediately after death he is transferred, just as we are transferred from this gross body to the subtle body. Similarly, after death, a devotee is transferred immediately to where Kṛṣṇa is. Then he actually plays with Kṛṣṇa, dances with Kṛṣṇa, and talks with Kṛṣṇa.”

Mādhavānanda raised another point: “Śrīla Prabhupāda, once you said that to stop transmigration one has to become completely disgusted with the material world.”

When Prabhupāda confirmed this, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja asked, “What about Lord Caitanya’s prayer that ‘I don’t mind coming back again and again?’”

“That is a devotee’s sincerity,” Prabhupāda clarified, “that he does not go to Kṛṣṇa for some material profit. In any condition, he is Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is his humbleness. An actual devotee does not want it, but it happens; otherwise, how is it that Kṛṣṇa says *janma karma ca me divyam*? It will take place automatically. But he is not very concerned that ‘I must go to Kṛṣṇa and be saved from these material miseries.’ A devotee never says like that. He wants that ‘Never mind miseries. Let me chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.’ That is his position.”

Satsvarūpa Mahārāja added that for the devotee, the perfection is to be

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absorbed in preaching to others, not thinking, ‘I want to go and play with Kṛṣṇa.’ Prabhupāda agreed and explained unconditional devotional service: “A devotee does not bargain with Kṛṣṇa: ‘Kṛṣṇa will give me this benefit; therefore I want to become a pure devotee.’ That is a merchant: ‘You pay me this price; I will deliver this clothing.’ That is not devotion. *Asliṣya vā pāda-ratām pinaṣtu mām marma-hatām karotu vā*: In any condition I am your slave. Whatever You like, you can do with me. That is the sign. Not that ‘If it is favorable to my idea, then I accept You.’ That is not devotion. *Anyābhilāṣita śunyaṁ*: no desire. Only ‘Please accept me as Your eternal servant again.’ Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sings, *mārobhi rākobhi jo icchā tohārā*: ‘Now, if You like, You can kill me. If You like, You can keep me. Whatever You like, I am prepared.’ *Mārobhi rākobhi jo icchā tohārā*. That is surrender.

Meeting Professor Dürckheim

That afternoon Śrīla Prabhupāda received Professor Karlfried Graf Dürckheim, a well-known author, who had studied Zen Buddhism in Japan after World War II and now headed a following of people interested in Zen in the Black Forest in Southern Germany. Even Catholic bishops sometimes visited him to discuss esoteric subjects.

PRTHU DĀSA: In my school days, I had read several of Dürckheim’s books, and it was me who sent him a letter and invited him. When I called him a week later to follow up, he showed a lot of interest.

On the morning of June 19, I met him at the Frankfurt train station and drove him to Schloss Rettershof. When we passed through the villages, Dürckheim saw the posters we had put up to advertise Prabhupāda’s visit. Hansadutta had had the “brilliant idea” to borrow a famous Nazi slogan used to announce Hitler’s visits. The posters said in huge letters: DER FÜHRER KOMMT [“The leader comes”], and in smaller print: “der Hare Kṛṣṇa Bewegung” [of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement]. When I saw the layout in his office, I had implored Hansadutta not to hang these posters, they were a great insult. But he had simply laughed at me and said, “Come on, the Germans *like* this sort of thing.”

As we passed, I saw that on numerous posters Prabhupāda's face had been disfigured with little Hitler-like mustaches. When Dürckheim noticed the posters, he expressed disbelief. "Is this your *guru*?" I felt a cold sweat break out. "Yes," I muttered.

"Are you serious?" he asked.

"Yes," I repeated. "But these posters were not my idea. I fought against them, but it was not in my power to prevent them."

"You people don't know what you are doing," he said, shaking his head. "You really don't know what you are doing. I am almost thinking of going back, but now that I am already here, let us go on."

It was clear he was upset and disappointed by our immaturity. But when he met Śrīla Prabhupāda he quickly appreciated and respected him, and they developed a cordial relationship.

The meeting began around five o'clock. Fortunately, Graf Dürckheim spoke fluent English. He briefly explained his background and how he was trying to help people discover their real self. Prabhupāda got right to the point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He mentioned the three aspects of the Absolute Truth—Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān—and said that we devotees cultivate our relationship with the third aspect, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Then he asked his guest which aspect he cultivated.

The professor said, "You can't help but cultivate all three in the long run," and Prabhupāda agreed. All three were one; only one's angle of vision differed. He gave the example of a mountain seen from far away (as a hazy cloud), midway (something green), and nearby (an elevation with animals and houses). Prabhupāda said most people see the Absolute Truth impersonally, without variegatedness.

Dürckheim said that Zen Buddhists had that conception, but Prabhupāda pointed out a distinction between impersonalism and voidism. Buddhists strive to stop all realization and become zero or void, he said.

At this point, the professor presented his understanding of *nirvana*: "Well, zero from the point of view of the alter ego, but this zero is everything from the outside. From the point of view of the natural ego, it's zero, but once you touch it, it's the plenitude—everything. But it's beyond

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something and everything, as far as I understand it.”

“Yes, it is beyond,” Prabhupāda said. “That ‘beyond’ is realized, as I explained to you, from different angles of vision: impersonal, without any variety; localized Supersoul; and the Supreme Being. As you are sitting and I am sitting and we are talking, so the Absolute Truth is a person, the Supreme Person, and we approach Him, talk with Him, sit with Him, and play with Him. That is Kṛṣṇa realization.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then analyzed why most philosophers are impersonalists and negate material varieties. He gave the example of a diseased man who feels pain while eating, sleeping, and evacuating and therefore wants to nullify all activities. When told that in good health he will again eat, sleep, and evacuate, he thinks it will be as painful as in his diseased condition. He doesn’t know that healthy life is different.

“Some philosophers are trying to negate this diseased condition only,” Prabhupāda said, “without any realization of healthy life. So I think Buddha’s philosophy is negation of this diseased condition of life, pain and pleasure. Am I right or wrong?”

Dürckheim agreed but added that illness or dying could also serve as a threshold to a different reality. When Dürckheim used the term “dead person,” Prabhupāda could understand that his visitor lacked understanding of the difference between matter and spirit.

“Just like this microphone is made of iron,” he said, pointing to the microphone on his desk. “It is iron. When it is working, responding, at that time it is also iron. And when it is out of order, it is also iron. Similarly, this body is working on account of the living force within. When the living force is out, the body is called dead. But actually, it is dead always. The living force is the important thing. That is keeping the body alive. Actually, alive or dead, the body is dead matter. But the living force is the active principle. That is the beginning instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā*.”

Professor Dürckheim was intrigued. One of his main concerns was to transmit a similar truth to his followers, but he had achieved only limited success. Now he had an opportunity to get expert advice from an experienced *guru*. Philosophical conviction was one thing, realization, something else.

“How do you teach your disciples to become aware of this force that is not matter?” he asked.

“It is a very simple thing,” Prabhupāda replied. “Just like one body is moving, and another body is not moving. There is an active principle that makes the body move, and when it is absent, the body is not moving. Now, the question will be, What is that active principle? Let him distinguish the difference between a dead body and a living body. If a student is unaware of it, he can at least see that on account of the active principle, the body is changing, the body is moving, and in the absence of the active principle, the body neither changes nor moves. Just like in our childhood, we used to think that in the gramophone box there is a man, and he is speaking from the box. This is a childish suggestion only, but similarly, anyone can think that within this body something is making the body move. It is not very big philosophy.

Dürckheim readily agreed, but he was looking for a clue on how to make a seeker feel the reality of spiritual truth, not just understand it with his rational mind. He said, “I realize that on the inner way, it becomes more and more important to feel deeper and deeper realities. That’s why, in my little work, I make a distinction between the body you have and the body you are. Usually, if you go to a doctor, he sees only the body you have. He tackles it like a machine. If somebody with stooped shoulders comes, he says, ‘Well, you must do exercises.’ If somebody with shoulders like that comes to me, I say, ‘The body you have shows that you have no confidence. So get an attitude of confidence.’ So he gets to know the body he is, not only the body he has, which doesn’t at all touch on wisdom.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda avoided getting drawn in by the professor’s jargon. He simply repeated the first lesson of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: that the real self is the active principle within the body. Then he elaborated: “When one is self-realized, then he is jolly. *Prasannātmā*: he is never morose; he is jolly. *Na śocati na kāṅkṣati*: he has no lamentation, no hankering. *Samah sarveṣu bhūteṣu*: he is equal to everyone—man, animal, and everything. And *mad-bhaktim labhate parām*: then devotional life begins. So, without self-realization, there is no question of devotional life. Just like these boys, my students, they are trained up how to be always in devotional service.

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One who is engaged in devotional service is supposed to be already self-realized because he has understood what he is. Yes. And then he sticks to devotional service; otherwise, he cannot. If one thinks, ‘I am this body,’ then he cannot be engaged in devotional service, or he cannot stick. If he knows, ‘I am part and parcel of God, so my duty is to serve God,’ this is self-realization. And then he engages himself in devotional service.”

Dürckheim repeated his concern that this knowledge was based only on rational understanding instead of experience. Śrīla Prabhupāda disagreed and asked Satsvarūpa Mahārāja to read text 26 of the Fourteenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: “One who engages in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.”

Referring to his disciples in the room, Prabhupāda said, “They are always engaged in devotional service. So unless there is some realization, how they can engage their time in this way?

Then he gave another example to show how the devotees have both theoretical knowledge and realization. “Why should you kill animals? Why should you give trouble to others? This is self-realization: ‘Here is another self; the same active principle is working there. Just the body is different. Why shall I kill him?’ So they have realized it. *Samah sarveṣu bhūteṣu*: equal vision toward all living entities. The self, the active principle, is working in the fish, in the insect, in the tree, in the plant, within the animals, within the birds, and within me. That active principle is the soul, and the soul is migrating from one body to another, as you are migrating from babyhood to childhood, childhood to boyhood, boyhood to youth. This is self-realization. So the soul is the same. The body is different. The body is material, and the soul is spiritual. When one comes to this understanding, that is self-realization.”

Dürckheim still seemed preoccupied with finding out how to teach and monitor spiritual advancement. He continued, “On the way, there should be progress, inner progress. How to realize that there is progress? I would say one thing is very important. There are three sufferings in the world of mankind: fear of annihilation, despair if you are

taken by something absurd, and loneliness.” He went on to explain how, in his opinion, a person makes progress if he realizes a greater meaning amid the calamities. “I always see with my disciples,” he said, “as soon as they learn to go through some kind of death, they awaken on a new level. They realize there is a different principle at work from that which they usually see in their natural mind.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda put the idea immediately into a Kṛṣṇa conscious framework: “So that different principle for a devotee is already realized. Because a devotee never thinks ‘I am this body.’ He thinks, *aḥam brahmāsmi*: ‘I am spirit soul.’ Everyone in this world is concerned with this body, dead or alive. When it is alive, they dress it very nicely—nicely groomed, nicely everything on account of this body—and when dead, they erect a statue, a tomb. That’s all. But they are missing the active principle.”

Dürckheim told Śrīla Prabhupāda about his experience during World War I, when he fought for four years on the front lines and saw many people next to him die. He said that in these situations he realized something that had nothing to do with death, and this realization marked the beginning of his inner way. Prabhupāda acknowledged that this was indeed self-realization, and he explained that one of the symptoms of a self-realized soul was fearlessness in all circumstances.

The professor returned to his question about self-realization as a sequence of inner experiences, especially painful ones, and gave the example of people who experienced the war and the nights of bombing and suddenly realized the temporary nature of bodily existence.

Prabhupāda wryly interjected, “That we can experience every night. At night I forget this body, and in the daytime, I forget the dream body, but I am existing. Therefore I am not this body.”

Dürckheim then asked a question about the meaning of time and eternity. Prabhupāda explained that time is eternal, but that we perceive past, present, and future according to our temporary material existence in a certain type of body. His guest agreed. “Exactly!” he said. “It is concerned with this body and with this ego, with regard to which there is a before and an after, up and down, and if you take away this ego—what is there? What’s left?”

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“That is pure ego,” Prabhupāda said.

Dürckheim responded, “But without this body, you wouldn’t become conscious of what is beyond the body.”

“I am always conscious,” Prabhupāda pointed out. “Now our consciousness is impure on account of contact with this temporary body. So when you come to pure consciousness, that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Professor Dürckheim still did not understand. “But the pure consciousness, as an experience, has to have a background which is not pure consciousness; otherwise, it could become...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted him. “No. Pure consciousness is actually what you are. Just like water. Water is pure. When it comes from the sky, it is crystal-clear water. But as soon as it touches the ground it becomes muddy. Similarly, we spirit souls are pure. As soon as we come in contact with matter, material existence, we become impure.” Prabhupāda then gave an unusual example to illustrate the meaning of pure consciousness. “Just like sometimes the artists manufacture some naked statue. In France, I saw—naked. They take it that this naked statue is pure art, not dressed. Similarly, when you come to the nakedness of spirit soul, without the designation of this body—I am American, I am German, I am this, I am that—that is purity.”

Dürckheim reasoned like a Zen Buddhist. “But the meaning of the impure is to be the background of the consciousness of the pure, without experiencing the suffering in the impure.

“The consciousness is covered by impurity just like your health is covered by disease,” Prabhupāda explained. “And the symptom is fever. But that is a covering. That is not your healthy state. Similarly, when I think that I am American, or I am German, that is impurity. And when I think that I am neither German nor American nor this, nor that, but that I am part and parcel of God, that is pure consciousness.”

Dürckheim remained doubtful. He argued: “But to get there, to feel that one is neither this nor that, one must have suffered by first having thought that one is this or that.” Prabhupāda shook his head. He pointed out that suffering on account of the material body was in itself a kind of dream caused by ignorance. He repeated that our real task is to get free

from all designations and realize our actual identity as sons of God and serve Him. Again the professor said that for him there was a gulf of difference between believing something and actually feeling or experiencing it. For him, the question of how to prepare a disciple to feel the truth was still unanswered. Śrīla Prabhupāda told him that the answer was simple. He gave the example of a child who has not seen his father but who believes that he has a father because otherwise, he would not exist. Quoting a verse from the *Bhagavad-gītā* Prabhupāda explained that Kṛṣṇa is the seed-giving father of all living entities, and material nature is the mother who provides the bodies. Consequently, all sons are spiritually equal, but because they identify with their bodies, they are in difficulty. The only solution was self-realization: “I am not this body.”

The professor still insisted on the need for experience, not just theoretical knowledge. And Prabhupāda made it clear that everyone already had the experience because everyone changed his body many times within one lifespan. Everyone knew that he once had a child’s body, but that his body was now different. Only on account of foolishness, this insight was clouded.

He pointed out that the best way to gain experience was to receive higher knowledge: “The more you are highly elevated in knowledge, your experience is perfect.”

“I would like to say it’s the other way around,” Dürckheim said. “The more you advance in experience, the more you have higher knowledge.”

“But experience may be slow,” Prabhupāda countered. “Higher knowledge you can get immediately. Kṛṣṇa says that you are not this body. So instead of my experience for years and years that I am not this body, we take the knowledge from Kṛṣṇa, the Perfect, and my experience is now received.”

When Dürckheim nodded in agreement this time, Prabhupāda went on to explain the Vedic process of receiving knowledge from a spiritual master in disciplic succession and distributing the knowledge unchanged. He reminded the professor that our power of understanding is very minute, but that we can experience things beyond our grasp by hearing a description from a proper source. “We have to receive knowledge from the

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Perfect, not through the ascending process, experiencing failure, experiencing failure, experiencing failure, not like that. That will take a long time. But if you actually want to be perfect, just approach the Perfect, take knowledge from Him, and you become perfect.

Graf Dürckheim had no objection, and the matter was settled. Eager to discuss more topics, he described to Śrīla Prabhupāda the condition of Western civilization. People were showing signs of rebellion against their so-called leaders in science and technology, who reduced them to mere objects and ignored their real needs as persons. Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed with his analysis and pointed out that the same observation had already been made five thousand years ago in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.5.31): *na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇum*. Materialistic people do not know that the aim of life is God-realization, because they falsely think they can achieve happiness by enjoying the external features of material nature. And owing to their leaders' blindness, the whole society is misguided. The solution was Kṛṣṇa consciousness because it treated the root cause of the disease—forgetfulness of God. Dürckheim agreed and noted that separation from the innermost reality is unique to the human being; animals did not suffer from such a disease.

The mention of animals prompted Prabhupāda to bring to his guest's attention the degraded condition of a society that indulged in the unnecessary slaughter of animals for food. He explained that wars and abortion were karmic consequences of cruelty to animals, and he reminded his guest that no religion allowed unnecessary animal slaughter.

In response, Dürckheim asked about plants. Didn't they also suffer when taken for food? Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that they had sensations, but he said that a devotee takes the fruits of a plant and avoids cutting the plant itself unless absolutely necessary, as in the case of vegetables. Even that was the law of nature: one living being eats another living being. But then he made it clear that a devotee's main concern is whether or not his food has been accepted by Kṛṣṇa and has become *prasādam*.

"We don't advocate vegetarianism or non-vegetarianism," Prabhupāda said. "We advocate: 'Eat Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*, the remnants of foodstuff

offered to Kṛṣṇa.’ This is our philosophy. And apart from this philosophy, just because one living entity is food for another living entity, it does not mean that I shall eat my children also. There is discretion. Human beings should offer fruits, vegetables, milk to God, Kṛṣṇa, as prescribed in the *śāstra*, and then take. That is human civilization. Not that for the satisfaction of the tongue we have to maintain a big, big slaughterhouse and eat animals. No, that is not human civilization. The main business of human society is to understand God, and as soon as we understand God, we understand that every living entity is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. Then how we can eat? Because Kṛṣṇa eats, Kṛṣṇa allows, then we eat. So the responsibility is Kṛṣṇa’s. That is our philosophy.

The conversation had been going on for almost two hours, but Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t feel tired; rather, he was enlivened. Preaching was his life and soul, and he appreciated having a thoughtful listener with meaningful questions. While he showed Professor Dürckheim copies of his books in different languages, a devotee brought in more visitors: three professors of theology and philosophy from Frankfurt University and an Indian man who headed the Society for Yoga and Integral Philosophical Studies in Germany. Prabhupāda welcomed them warmly, and after they had made themselves comfortable, he asked a devotee to give each guest some *prasādam*.

He then informed them about his conversation with Professor Dürckheim, how they had discussed the goal of life, and he told them that there could be only one goal: to understand God. Prabhupāda said that all his writings were focused on this one goal of life: Kṛṣṇa.

When he paused, Dürckheim raised a concern, shared by the other professors. It was the same topic he had tried to clarify all evening. “May I come back to my question about the relationship between belief and experience, because this is a great question for us today, especially in religious circles?” One of the theologians confirmed that this was a fact.

Encouraged, Dürckheim formulated his observations more concretely than before. He described a crisis of faith that many priests had undergone and their longing for a tangible spiritual experience, not mere formalism

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and traditional belief. One professor remarked that a religious renewal was underway, and that priests and monks were looking for a new source and a new beginning in their hearts.

Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't dismiss their concern as speculative or sentimental, but he said that no one could avoid believing. The question was who to believe. "If the person I believe is perfect, then my belief is perfect. And if I believe a person who is not trustworthy, then there is no meaning to that belief. Therefore we have to find out the person or the statement which we are to believe."

Professor Dürckheim pointed out that belief or understanding depended on the mind, whereas he was referring to another, deeper level. "You see, there is a natural way to look at God, which is lost as soon as people go through the rational mind. And then there is no other way out but to have a personally initiated experience. We talk about initiation when people are capable of going through a certain death to discover another level. The great wisdom that you are talking about, I am sure it also touches people on two levels. There is the ordinary man, and he might believe, but there is a deeper level, where things start to change you, to transform you in deeper experiences.

Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't get involved in an esoteric discussion. He had Satsvarūpa Mahārāja read Text 13 of the Second Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, then said, "This is the basic principle of knowledge: 'I am not this body. I am the active principle within this body.' Then further knowledge can be understood."

At this point, Dürckheim voiced a common doubt among Christian thinkers: "It seems to me that there is a difference between Eastern wisdom and Christian thinking in that in the Eastern way, we have to get rid of our body, be liberated from our body, whereas Christian thinkers feel we have to realize the spirit within the body."

In response, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that all our suffering was due to being imprisoned in the material body, and therefore our aim should be to become free from it. One theologian objected. He found this view too negative and felt we should accept our human existence even though it is imperfect. When Prabhupāda repeated that we should strive for

perfection, the man challenged: “As human beings or spirits?” He added that he was seeing only human beings; therefore, the problem was how to become perfect—as human beings. When Prabhupāda asked him what he liked so much about the imperfect human body, the professor said the body is an instrument to communicate with other people. Prabhupāda pointed out that the birds and beasts also communicate, and that the purpose of human life is to inquire about the Absolute Truth.

Dürckheim tried to reconcile the differences. He said that there are three types of bodily consciousness: one concerned with health, one with beauty, and the third with the Absolute Truth. All three went together. Śrīla Prabhupāda welcomed his analysis but also noted that the bodily appreciation of beauty, or anything related to the body, was false because we are not actually the body. Quoting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.10) he said we should not waste our time with the body like birds or beasts but use it for inquiring about the Absolute.

The theologian disagreed. “Think of the smiling of a child,” he said. “It’s the first communication with man. Is it a waste of our energy if we try to do good to others, if we smile and be kind?”

“But you cannot do good to others, because you do not know what is good,” Prabhupāda argued. “You are thinking of good in terms of your body, but the body is false. It is not you. It is false in the sense that you are accepting this body as your self. But you are not that. Therefore this conception of goodness is also false.” A moment of silence ensued.

“But I live my identity *with* the body,” the professor reasoned. In an effort to clarify the man’s misunderstanding, Prabhupāda gave the example of a person being different from his apartment. But his guest thought the example was inappropriate because an apartment remained unchanged after one left it, whereas the body did not. Prabhupāda responded that it was a question of hours and years only; after a certain time, the apartment would also be destroyed. He repeated that the soul is different from the body, but the theologian insisted that an intimate connection, a kind of oneness, existed between body and soul.

Then the yoga teacher joined the discussion. He noted that it made a difference whether one thought “I am spirit, and I have a body,” or “I am

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the body, and I possess a soul.”

Prabhupāda appreciated his comment: “Yes, yes! That is his mistake: to think that he is the body and possesses a soul. But no, he is the soul and is covered by a body.” Then he compared a coat covering the body to the body covering the soul.

Dürckheim changed the subject. He asked, “How to realize the ultimate truth, and what do you mean by realizing the eternal truth?”

Before Prabhupāda could answer, one of the theology professors presented his understanding: “In the Bible, it says that our whole life should be dedicated to knowing the Father.”

Dürckheim said to Prabhupāda, “That is exactly what you say, that real life, eternal life, means nothing but to recognize the Father in the son.”

When asked about the method to realize the Absolute Truth, Prabhupāda replied, “The simplest method is to associate with the Father, or the Absolute Truth.” He explained the absolute nature of God and the spiritual world, and that therefore by chanting the holy name of God one could associate with God. Dürckheim suggested that he was referring to the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, but Prabhupāda corrected him: “Holy name of God. If you don’t like to chant Kṛṣṇa, you chant in your own way. Chant the name of God. If you know the name of God, chant it. If you do not know, then take it from me.”

The devotees chuckled. There was no escaping Prabhupāda’s logic. He explained that God has millions of names, and therefore it is sometimes said that He has no name because one could not say, “This one name is God’s only name.” When he mentioned that Jesus also prayed, “Hallowed be Thy name,” a theologian objected that Jesus didn’t specify a particular name, because actually, God had no name.

Prabhupāda looked at him with surprise and said, “How can He have no name? It says, ‘Hallowed be Thy name.’ He has a name.”

The visitor argued that there was no name in the Bible, but Prabhupāda said, “Jesus might not have mentioned, or you have not noted, but when he says, ‘Hallowed be Thy name,’ there must be the name. Therefore I said, ‘If you don’t know the name, you take it from us.’ That is intelligence.”

Then one of the guests asked Śrīla Prabhupāda to describe the process

of chanting. Prabhupāda explained that the first step was to hear. For that reason, he was writing so many books—to give people a chance to hear. Only after hearing properly was it possible to chant, then remember, worship the Deity, pray, and so on. One theologian said that prayer was important in Christianity, and Prabhupāda acknowledged that it was a form of *bhakti*. But he noted that people did not like to follow a standard method; everyone formed his own opinion and therefore the result was dissension, a symptom of Kali-yuga. Society needed a class of qualified men who understood the Absolute Truth and could teach the rest of the population.

The discussion then focused on the qualifications needed to pursue the process of self-realization, and Prabhupāda had Satsvarūpa Mahārāja read the brahminical qualities from the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He said it made no difference whether one followed the *Bhagavad-gītā* or Jesus Christ, but the problem was that people did not follow either. One professor objected that these were only material qualifications, but Prabhupāda cut him off: “First of all acquire these material qualifications. Then talk of spiritual. Just like in the university—if someone wants to study law, he must first graduate from a lower college.”

The atmosphere had become tense, so Dürckheim struck a positive note. He complimented Śrīla Prabhupāda by saying that in his opinion the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness would be much appreciated by the youth in the West, who were more concerned with realizing their real selves than with dedicating their lives to economic development. But the theology professor, dissatisfied with Prabhupāda’s explanation of how to attain self-realization, asked whether it was necessarily a gradual process and an impossibility to become illuminated at once by God’s grace.

“Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, that will do,” Prabhupāda said. Then he added, “Not that you chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. You have got your name of God. You chant that.” But the man remained unsure that a particular name was actually a name of God.

“Why you are doubtful?” Prabhupāda asked. “There is the name. If you do not know, take it from us.” He chuckled.

The professor admitted, “I’m not convinced that it is the right name.”

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“That is your misfortune,” Prabhupāda said, and the devotees couldn’t hold back their laughter. “That is your misfortune. How can I help? You do not know the name. If somebody is informing you, ‘Here is the name,’ you still will not take. That is your misfortune. What can be done? An unfortunate man cannot be helped.”

The man explained his reasons. He had been in Africa and seen people chant names in a similar fashion, and he felt that it was difficult to know the right thing. Prabhupāda gave him a clue: judge by the result. His guest acknowledged that this would indeed be a valid criterion for him. One of his colleagues noted that he had seldom seen so many happy faces as when observing the devotees. Prabhupāda told them that once a priest approached him during a flight from Los Angeles to Hawaii and asked, “How is it that your disciples look so bright?” Prabhupāda gave more examples of how people had appreciated Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and how his disciples, though still young, had sacrificed their comfortable lives and given up everything in search of God.

“Unless it is something sublime, how are they accepting it?” he asked. Concluding his presentation, he appealed to his visitors: “So I think you are all learned gentlemen. You should give us support and cooperate with this movement. It is a very nice movement. That is my request to you.”

Satsvarūpa Mahārāja felt that it was the right moment to end the conversation because it was already late. “May we take your leave, Śrīla Prabhupāda?” he suggested.

Prabhupāda waved his hand in disapproval. “No. You sit down. I can talk all night.” The devotees laughed in appreciation. “Because it is Kṛṣṇa’s talk: *satatam kīrtayanto mām*. Why stop? *Satatam*. Go on. Continuously.”

When one guest asked how he could support the movement, Prabhupāda replied, “That is simple. You chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That’s all.”

Hansadutta explained that anyone could become a life member. The yoga teacher said that he could remove prejudices by speaking on behalf of the devotees. Prabhupāda appreciated all their suggestions; whatever a person wanted to offer was welcome and would be for his ultimate spiritual benefit.

With the atmosphere now relaxed, Śrīla Prabhupāda enjoyed showing his visitors his dictaphone and explaining how he wrote his books at night. In 1973 alone, he said, four million copies were sold worldwide. His guests were amazed to see books in Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, Hindi, French, and Italian. Prabhupāda talked about the need for self-sufficient farm communities, Kṛṣṇa conscious education, and the ISKCON Food Relief program in India. While Hansadutta played a tape of the morning's recording, "The Prayers to the Six Gosvāmīs," the yoga teacher asked about yoga exercises while chanting the names of God.

"Yes," Prabhupāda said, "but we are exercising by dancing."

Soon after, everyone left, and Prabhupāda retired to his bedroom for a short rest. Within a few hours, he would again sit at his desk and continue to preach by dictating his Bhaktivedanta purports.

PRTHU DĀSA: During the walk the next morning Śrīla Prabhupāda followed up on the topic of chanting the name of God.

When Graf Dürckheim presented the Christian concept that the word "God" is the name of God and that nothing more is needed, Prabhupāda shook his head and said, "This is not a very sensible argument." But Professor Dürckheim didn't feel offended. In fact, at the end of their conversation the night before he had bowed down to Śrīla Prabhupāda and said, "Please accept me as your younger brother."

When I brought him to the train station later that morning, he told me, "I am very impressed. This is the first time I have met a man like this. He is through." By this, he meant that Śrīla Prabhupāda had already "gone to the other side" and reached the perfectional stage of life.

One evening, as Prabhupāda continued his lectures on the Second Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he discussed Text 14. He explained that while birth, death, old age, and disease are common to all, distress and happiness vary according to the body. He described death as the moment when pain is so severe and unbearable that you are forced to leave your body even though you don't want to. Then he spoke about an acquaintance in Allahabad who was only fifty years old when he was on his deathbed. The man had

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desperately implored the doctor to let him live for four more years so he could execute his unfinished plans.

“What can the doctor do?” Prabhupāda asked. “That is not possible, sir. You must get out!”

To the devotees’ amusement, he then described the misery a child experiences when he has to go to school. “At least I was like that,” Prabhupāda said and laughed. “I never wanted to go to school. And my father was very kind. He said, ‘So why are you not going to school?’ I would say, ‘I will go tomorrow.’ He would say, ‘All right.’ But my mother was very careful. Perhaps, if my mother would not have been a little strict, I would not have gotten any education. My father was very lenient. So she used to force me. One man would take me to school. Actually, children do not want to go to school; they want to play. Against their will, they have to go to school. So, you study life. From the beginning of this body, within the womb of the mother, it is simply troublesome. Against my will, so many distresses are there. Then as you grow, the distresses grow and grow.”

He described how miseries disturb us constantly, and he said that a sane man’s duty is to stop accepting a material body. “Now realize that you are changing your condition of distress and happiness, being forced to accept some kind of gross and subtle body. That is the cause of your pains and pleasures. And if you get out of this gross and subtle body and remain in your original, spiritual body, then you are free from these pains and pleasures.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: When Prabhupāda asked for questions, I raised my hand. I really wanted to know how to give up material desires once and for all and how not to accept another body. And here was the perfect opportunity to learn from a person free of all material desires. So, in a tight and nervous voice, I asked, “Śrīla Prabhupāda, how does one develop his desire to get out of this body?”

His response was immediate and clear:

Simply think of how to push on this movement. Have that desire and no other desire. *Anyābhilāṣita-śūnyam*: no material desire. *Śūnyam*: make zero all material desires. Simply desire, “How shall I push on? How shall I

Prabhupāda at Schloss Rettershof

serve Kṛṣṇa? How shall I decorate this” Therefore we have given so many engagements—to divert the desire. Desires cannot be stopped. That is not possible. Foolish persons say become desireless. That is not possible. Desireless means I am dead. No. Purify desire. Purify desire. You have the desire to drive a motorcar. Just drive a motorcar for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The devotees burst out laughing because I was the temple driver. It is unlikely that Prabhupāda had been told that this was my service, so it amused us that he mentioned driving as a way to please Kṛṣṇa and overcome material desires. I felt rewarded for my sincere inquiry by Prabhupāda’s thorough answer.

The next morning, Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to the topic of transmigration. He left no doubt how important it was to him that his disciples understood the philosophy. While walking gaily toward Fischbach, he tested them the way a professor examines his pupils.

“Explain how transmigration takes place,” he asked, with his cane in hand, his head held high.

Mādhavānanda spoke first. He quoted from the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *dehino ’smin yathā debe...*

Śrīla Prabhupāda dismissed his attempt. “That is a *śloka*. You explain how it takes place.”

Next Satsvarūpa Mahārāja answered. He explained step by step how the soul obtains a body according to his desires and takes another body according to his previous actions. But it wasn’t what Prabhupāda wanted to hear.

“That’s all right,” he said, “but how do you transmigrate?”

“According to the mental condition at the time of leaving this body,” Hansadutta said.

Prabhupāda was still unsatisfied. “But what is the process?”

Satsvarūpa Mahārāja gave it another try. “The subtle body carries the soul.”

“Yes!,” Prabhupāda exclaimed. “That is the main point. The subtle body carries the soul.”

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Then he repeated some examples he'd used several days before: "Just like in a dream, we are carried by the subtle body and placed in different conditions. But as long as this body is capable of working, then when my dream is over I come back to this body. And death means that because this body is useless, I go to another body instead of coming back to this body. That is transmigration. Just like when you vacate an apartment, then you do not come back to that apartment but you enter another apartment. Is it clear?" He paused. His disciples had time to reflect on what he had said.

"Anybody can understand," he continued. "I am coming and going, but when it is a question of vacating, I go out of the apartment and never come back again. I will enter another apartment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then said he deplored the pitiable condition of modern civilization because even Nobel Prize-winning scientists and philosophers were unable to understand such a simple concept as the transmigration of the soul.

Satsvarūpa Mahārāja brought up a common argument. "I won't mind transmigration if I become a cat or a dog because I will forget completely. So it doesn't matter. I won't even suffer."

Prabhupāda challenged, "But if I say, 'I will turn you immediately into a dog,' will you agree to become one?"

"No," Satsvarūpa Mahārāja admitted.

"This is a childish, foolish proposal," Prabhupāda concluded. "If I say, 'I will turn you immediately into this grass and you will stay here for one hundred years,' will you agree to stand like that for one hundred years?" After a silence, he shook his head and said, "Hare Kṛṣṇa. In the Western countries actually there is no philosophy."

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: Every morning, Prabhupāda used to walk from Schloss Rettershof down the hill to the village Fischbach. One morning he hardly spoke; rather, he softly chanted *japa*. We followed his example. Entering the village and passing a butcher shop Prabhupāda asked for the translation of some signs in the window. Upon hearing about the meat, he gravely walked on.

Although we anticipated an animated discussion on meat-eating, we

were instead exposed to another side of our spiritual master. It reminded me that we are his servants, not that he is ours. Still, being with Śrīla Prabhupāda, we naturally began to see things through his eyes. When he looked with sadness at the butcher shop, we also felt sad, but we knew our sadness was not as deep as his.

Meeting Father Emmanuel

On June 21, Father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Greek Orthodox monk, visited Śrīla Prabhupāda. He explained that in his Benedictine monastery, both Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox rites were observed. He had been chanting on a rosary for many years, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me!”, a Greek Orthodox rite.

It pleased Śrīla Prabhupāda that a Christian monk was chanting. He told his guest that the original Greek version of the word “Christ”—Christos—is a broken version of the Sanskrit word “Kṛṣṇa”, which is also pronounced “Kṛṣṭa” and means “the all-attractive person who draws everyone near,” or God.

Prabhupāda said, “Therefore, God’s name is Kṛṣṭa. So when Christ says, ‘My Father, the Lord, hallowed be Thy name,’ that name is Kṛṣṭa or Kṛṣṇa. What do you think?”

Father Emmanuel said that the name of God had been revealed by Jesus and that God could be called Christ.

When Prabhupāda mentioned that in the opinion of one of the theology professors he had spoken to a few nights earlier God has no name, Father Emmanuel put forward the common Christian understanding: “We have a name for God. We say ‘Father.’”

Prabhupāda shook his head and said, “‘God’ is the general name, but still He has got a particular name, and that name is Kṛṣṇa. That is accepted by Jesus: ‘Jesus, the Christ’ or ‘Jesus, the son of Christ, or Kṛṣṇa.’ He identified himself as the son of God. Therefore, the name of God is Kṛṣṭa or Kṛṣṇa or Christo. It doesn’t matter.”

Prabhupāda then emphasized that the important thing is to chant God’s name, any genuine name, and thus pray to Him: “Kindly transfer me from the service of the material energy to the service of the spiritual

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energy.” That was the meaning of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, he said. God being absolute, His name is non-different from Him. Therefore chanting His name means associating with Him. By associating with God, the devotee becomes godly and eventually qualifies to live with God in loving service in His spiritual realm.

At this point, Father Emmanuel voiced a resentment often felt by Christians. “You know that we Christians are also preaching love of God, and we seek to fulfill the love of God and serve God with all our heart and soul. Why then do you send your disciples to the Christian countries to preach love of God when the gospel of Jesus Christ is also preaching love of God?”

Prabhupāda excused himself for having to be blunt; he told the priest that Christians were not obeying the orders of God. When he asked him whether or not he agreed, Father Emmanuel at first said yes, but then he demanded an explanation of which laws they were disobeying.

Prabhupāda mentioned the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.” He pointed out that many innocent animals are killed in slaughterhouses. Father Emmanuel again agreed at first, but then he presented arguments in defense of his Christian brethren. He questioned how important a concern animal killing really was. In reply, Prabhupāda gave the analogy that because of one little mistake in a calculation a result must be faulty. Next, the monk argued that the commandment referred only to the killing of humans. Śrīla Prabhupāda reasoned that this meant Jesus was not intelligent enough to use the proper word, “murder.” He insisted that there is no need to interpret the word “kill”. This prompted Father Emmanuel to ask the same question Professor Dürckheim had asked: “Don’t you kill the plants you eat?”

When Prabhupāda asked whether vegetable killing and animal killing were the same, his guest answered, “It’s not the same. But human killing and animal killing are also not the same.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda took up the challenge with ease and gave the same answer he’d given to Dürckheim and the student at Uppsala University: “We are not killing. Our *vaiṣṇava* philosophy is that we do not kill even vegetables. Because Kṛṣṇa says *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*, ‘Give Me

this foodstuff,’ we offer the foodstuff to Kṛṣṇa, and then we take it. Therefore, if for killing this flower or leaf there is a sin, that is Kṛṣṇa’s sin, not my sin.” He further explained that Kṛṣṇa is supremely powerful and cannot be touched by sin, just as the sun isn’t contaminated by shining on a filthy place and purifying it.

But Prabhupāda wasn’t interested in winning a debate. He hoped that some influential men would comprehend the immense benefit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If they agreed to cooperate, his mission would be a success. He, therefore, wanted to put his guest at ease, and he struck a conciliatory note. “I have not come to teach you but to request you. Your Christian religion prohibits meat-eating and encourages chanting of the name of the Lord, so you kindly do it, that’s all. We are also chanting. Christ or Kṛṣṇa, the same thing. So let us join together and chant. If you have any objection to chanting Kṛṣṇa, you chant Christ or Christo.

When Father Emmanuel said he had no objection, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued, “I think those who are Christian priests should cooperate with this movement, chant the name of Christ or Christo, and stop animal killing. This is according to the Bible. This is not according to my philosophy but their Christian philosophy. Simply let them do it and see how the situation becomes nice.”

Father Emmanuel assured Śrīla Prabhupāda that he agreed completely, but added that he knew it was difficult to find an open ear in the established Church circles. He thanked Prabhupāda and bowed before him.

The next morning Father Emmanuel joined Śrīla Prabhupāda on his walk. Prabhupāda again urged him to propagate the chanting of God’s name in Germany. And he explained why devotees stressed refraining from killing animals:

You at least introduce in your country: ‘Chant Christ’s name and stop animal killing. This is from the Bible. It is not that I am asking. The Bible says, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and it glorifies the name of God. ‘Thou shalt not kill’, that is the beginning of religious life. The animal killers cannot understand God. It is not possible. There is a statement in the

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Bhāgavatam, vinā paśuḡhnāt: ‘Who can remain aloof from the chanting of the holy name of God unless he is an animal killer?’ Yes, animal killers cannot understand God or God’s name. That’s not possible.

After the morning walk, Father Emmanuel had breakfast and was taken to the train station in Frankfurt to return to his monastery in Bavaria. He acknowledged to the devotees that he was impressed by Prabhupāda’s sincerity and fervor in presenting the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He also appreciated his suggestions but admitted that it was highly unlikely, as he had mentioned, that the Church would be willing to consider any of them, what to speak of putting them into practice.

HANSADUTTA DĀSA: While we were walking through the fields the next morning, we suddenly heard a helicopter over our heads. Prabhupada looked up, and one of the devotees commented, “That’s a helicopter.” Prabhupada said, “Yes, I know,” and he began to laugh. “Syamasundara once took me by helicopter from Heathrow Airport, but I had to pay.”

Then he told a story to illustrate that although he was taken by helicopter by-passing all the London traffic, which was very nice, in the end he himself had to pay for that.

The story is about a *guru* and his disciple. The *guru* had entrusted all his money to the disciple, and the disciple organized all these nice programs and made all necessary arrangements for him. Each place they go, the arrangements are first-class, the food is excellent, and each time the *guru* is very pleased and praises the disciple, “Oh, you have done such a wonderful service.” And the disciple responds, “It’s all your mercy.” When they finally complete the tour and the *guru* wants to access the money, he had entrusted to the disciple, the disciple said, “I used it to arrange all these programs. I told you, it was all your mercy.” And Prabhupada burst into this enormous belly-laughter.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: For several of Prabhupāda’s public engagements we rented a hall in a hotel in Bad Homburg, and as usual we accompanied him with a resounding *kīrtana*. Not many people came, so there were almost as many devotees present as guests.

KṚṢṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: Śrīla Prabhupāda preached in his usual, determined, dignified way. Despite meager attendance and a noticeable mood of mild hostility against him and his followers, he lectured with all his energy, as though every cell and muscle of his transcendental body were focused on delivering the transcendental message. As on other occasions, I was struck by Prabhupāda's timeless character. His face seemed to exhibit ages of seasoned wisdom. To the casual observer, he may have looked unhappy or even angry, but I knew he was beyond displaying superficial moods. He was beyond that because he had an urgent and beneficial message for people. Prabhupāda would simply deliver his message with full vigor.

CAKRAVARTĪ DĀSA: When Prabhupāda asked for questions, one guest said that he felt it was a contradiction that Prabhupāda preached renunciation, simple living, and detachment from worldly things, but that he sat on a throne. So Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us to remove the *vyāsāsana* and provide a simple white cushion the next time he lectured there. He explained that if people get annoyed by such external things, it is better to remove the cause of the annoyance.

BHAKTIVAIBHAVA SWAMI: "Referring to the sparse attendance, Śrīla Prabhupāda told us we should mainly distribute *prasādam* in Germany so that people become purified and enabled to understand the philosophy.

ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI: My father had come all the way from Hamburg to meet Prabhupāda and see for himself what his two sons had gotten into. When the time came for questions, he stood up and asked: "How can you expect to benefit people by transplanting a foreign culture like the Indian culture to a country like Germany? We are Germans. We need the occidental culture. It's just as if you were to take a crocodile from the Nile and put it into the river Elbe. It will die miserably." Prabhupāda looked at him and simply said, "No. You can become Kṛṣṇa conscious in tie and suit.

My father probably expected a more sophisticated and philosophical answer, but Prabhupāda's point was simple. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not

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limited by cultural considerations, because it is universal and absolute. Anyone can become Kṛṣṇa conscious in his own culture.

The next day my father talked to several devotees about Prabhupāda's answer. He came to the conclusion that it might be worthwhile to investigate Kṛṣṇa consciousness in more detail. Although the answer in itself didn't give him a lot of information, it led to my father experiencing a transformation. It made a lasting impression on him.

Another public engagement took place in K nigstein. The lecture had been advertised under the title "Life After Death." Prabhupāda described how we gradually develop different bodies and different types of consciousness. Our natural tendency to improve our situation and even go to better planets is flawed by the four universal principles of material life: birth, death, old age, and disease. He said that perfection is to develop God-consciousness and go beyond the material world to the spiritual sky.

At the present moment we are in dress consciousness. "I am a German dress, I am an Englishman dress, I am an Indian dress, I am a male dress, I am a female dress. This is called conditioned life. So in this conditioned life, we are accepting one type of body, and we are dying. Dying means giving up our present body and being transferred to another body by the laws of material nature. It is not under our control. You cannot say, 'After giving up this German body, I shall again accept another German body.' That is not in your hands, sir. It is under the laws of nature.

About one hundred people had come to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda. All had paid the entrance fee of 5 DM. The devotees had charged a fee to ensure that only serious persons would come, and the crowd consisted mainly of doctors, lawyers, and other established people.

Prabhupāda continued:

Therefore, if we are actually intelligent, we should try for being awakened, or placed in our original body, the spiritual body. That will stop this constant change of body. So the simple process, as we are preaching in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is to try to understand Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa or Christ, the same thing. Then you get your original spiritual body. Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be awakened simply by chanting the *mahā-mantra*

Prabhupāda at Schloss Rettershof

Hare Kṛṣṇa, the holy name of God. Not only Hare Kṛṣṇa. You can also chant the holy name of Christ. Christ is the same as Kṛṣṇa. So do it. There is no expenditure, but the profit is very, very great. Keep yourself aloof from the four kinds of sinful life and keep always in touch with Kṛṣṇa, or God. Then you go back home, back to Godhead.

After a week in Germany, Śrīla Prabhupāda prepared to continue his preaching tour. He gave his last instructions to Hansadutta. He liked Schloss Rettershof and suggested that the devotees buy the castle and the surrounding land. An important part of his mission was to establish self-sufficient farm communities and show the world how to depend on the land and cows while cultivating spiritual life.

On the evening of June 23, 1974, a group of devotees accompanied Prabhupāda to the Frankfurt airport and saw him off to his next destination, Australia. Five years had passed since his first visit, and they would have liked him to stay longer. They consoled themselves with the thought that he would surely come back the next summer. No one could foresee that this was Śrīla Prabhupāda's last visit to Germany.

CHAPTER 16



“Mit fünf Mark sind Sie dabei!”

By the middle of the summer of 1974, book distribution in Germany reached unprecedented heights. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s visit fueled the already fiery preaching spirit of his disciples, and books and records went out each week by the thousands.

In a GBC report to his spiritual master, Hansadutta included a blow-up of a photograph of Śrīla Prabhupāda that he wanted to use on the front cover of the double album recorded at Schloss Rettershof. Prabhupāda, remembering his visit, encouraged Hansadutta to preach vigorously:

The photo you have sent is a nice picture. I am getting it framed. So in Germany, when I was there, I was very, very hopeful. There is good scope for preaching Krishna consciousness. The people there are very intelligent. They are prepared to accept the real truth. Germany was always famous for its intelligent population. You are also appropriately fit to push on this cult in Germany. It will be a great success. Get the German people to take this movement seriously. Utilize the money you are collecting there for printing more and more books in German language, and profusely distribute our books in German language.

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Hansadutta also asked Prabhupāda for more instructions about establishing a farm community, but Prabhupāda told him just to follow the example of the already successful rural projects:

Regarding the farm, the exhibition is there in New Vrindaban. Kīrtanānanda Maharaja has organized very nicely. The same principle you can follow and organize it in Germany. Let the people be happy with self-sufficient food grown in the field, with milk products. When I was in Frankfurt round our place, I was so happy to see the farms and the cows. Unfortunately, they will kill the cows. So if we organize a farm without killing any cows, that will be a great example in that country. Instead of killing cows, if we let them live, we can get so many nutritious foodstuffs filled with vitamins. I have seen in New Vrindaban how happily our devotees are living there with free air, fresh vegetables, and ample milk. Simple living in cottages. What you want more? We should not neglect the upkeep of the body, and we should save time to chant Hare Krishna. This mission should be propagated. Save time and chant Hare Krishna.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, aware that Hansadutta collected huge amounts of money, warned him not to act whimsically, as one GBC had done by getting involved in a questionable business:

Now you publish in German language all our books and distribute. Krishna will help you in every respect. The BBT collection should be spent 50% for publishing and 50% for construction of temples. At the present moment the Mayapur-Vrindaban projects are going on, so as soon as there is an excess of money it should be utilized here. Not a single farthing should be invested in any business enterprise. Formally it was so done without any sanction. So be careful.

Prabhupāda also told Hansadutta not to overemphasize the distribution of records. Now, with the release of *Kṛṣṇa Meditation*, seven LPs were being distributed in Germany, but only five books:

Regarding record albums, it is something sentimental. They will purchase and hear for some time and throw it and purchase another. A book

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purchased will remain, and once even one line is read, that will benefit the reader.

Regarding the printing, it does not matter where you print our German books. Never mind the cost whether it is a little more or less. Wherever it is convenient. We are not after profit. The important thing is good printing and binding so that the people will be impressed. A book sold rather than a record will be a solid sale.

But it proved difficult for Hansadutta to cut back record distribution. A major part of the collection came from these sales.

During the annual Māyāpur festival in March, however, he had come up with a scheme to multiply the income beyond all expectations. Śrīla Prabhupāda had told the managers of the Māyāpur temple that no one within a ten-mile radius should go hungry. Thus, ISKCON Food Relief was born, and the devotees were now feeding many thousands of people each month. Hansadutta had asked pictures taken of the devotees holding Indian children. And back in Schloss Rettershof, he designed an ad for the German *Back to Godhead*. People were asked to contribute five or ten marks, which would feed fifty or a hundred people. Later, the devotees developed the slogan, “*Mit fünf Mark sind Sie dabei!*” or “With five marks, you’re part of it.”

Hansadutta eventually sent \$ 20,000 to construct the food distribution pavilion in Māyāpur, but that was only a drop in the bucket compared to the total collection. Hansadutta had other plans besides printing books and purchasing the Schloss. He planned to buy a remote farm and develop a self-sufficient community based on the *varṇāśrama* system. He feared a world war and economic chaos in the near future and wanted to be prepared. When Prabhupāda sensed that Hansadutta was diverting too much attention to this direction he cautioned him:

Yes, we must invest our money in books and land, but there will be no collapse as you have anticipated. Everything will be adjusted by the grace of Krishna. From my own experience I have seen when first-class rice was selling at 8 np. per kg, and now that is being sold at Rs. 8. That means it is 64 times higher, but still people are eating, and the man who lives in care of the footpath he is also eating. So the man in care of the footpath, and

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the man on the 30th floor of the skyscraper, they are living, and still the inflation is going on. Man-made laws cannot work any rupture in Krishna's plan. Better let us remain now under Krishna's shelter fully dependent, and we shall remain unaffected by all the man-made difficulties.

Farm opening is not very essential, but if you can do it conveniently, then do it. The varnasrama system is for convenience sake in the material world. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. Acceptance of varnasrama means a little easy progress to spiritual life, otherwise it has no importance to us. For example, all my European and American disciples have no varnasrama position, but spiritually, because they have followed the rules and regulations and also my instructions, their advancement spiritually is being appreciated by everyone. Always remember that varnasrama life is a good program for material life, and it helps one in spiritual life, but spiritual life is not dependent upon it».

RAVAṆĀRĪ DĀSA: I was born in Acre, a city north of Haifa on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in 1947. The city had been part of Palestine since 1922 but was taken over by Israeli troops in 1948. Already earlier, there had been strife between the Palestinian and Jewish population, and my parents decided to leave Acre and move to neighboring Lebanon.

In 1967, after graduating from High School, some of my friends wanted to go to Egypt for studying, but I said, "No, I want to go to Europe, there may be something for me."

So I went by train to England where I stayed for one year, after having received a scholarship for studying English. But then I decided to go back to Beirut. Soon after my arrival, I joined the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and after some time became commander of the Third Line Defense. Since we were stationed in a quiet area, we never got involved in any direct fighting.

In 1971, I thought about going back to Europe, and when I heard about an offer to fly to East Berlin with Aeroflot for only 300 dollars, I took the opportunity. From there I managed to go to West Berlin and later to West Germany where I settled in Nürnberg and applied for asylum. After a year or so I got married to a German girl and had a daughter.

“Mit fünf Mark sind Sie dabei!”

One day, in the spring of 1973, while sitting in a teahouse, I saw a German BTG, “Zurück zur Gottheit”, lying on one of the tables. I looked through it, and there was an article by Hansadutta who said, “We know God, we know His phone number.” I had never heard this before, that somebody claimed to know God, what to speak of His phone number. My interest was awakened, so I took the magazine home. I wanted to read every word and find out what was God’s phone number. At least, I thought, this writer must know something I don’t know. On the last page was a list of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in German, and I decided to order all of them. And within a week I received *Īśopaniṣad, Jenseits von Zeit und Raum (Easy Journey)* and *Die Quelle aller Freude (The Reservoir of all Pleasure)*. Although I had learned basic German by that time, I found it very hard to understand the philosophy. But I was persistent and sat all day with the *Īśopaniṣad* studying every word. Slowly I began to understand what Prabhupāda was saying, and I felt that everything he said was true. That was my impression, that “Everything that he says here is true.” At the end of the book, there was an article about ISKCON and its activities, and it said that anybody is welcome to join. I was very excited to read this, that anybody, no matter what their background or faith was, could join. Thus I decided to join this group.

In the summer I drove to Berlin and then to Hamburg to get to know the devotees better. They treated me nicely, and when I returned to Nürnberg I explained everything to my wife and proposed to join the temple. She was open to the idea and shortly afterward we went to Berlin, where we became devotees. My wife did not know anything about Kṛṣṇa consciousness but she liked everything about it and fit in very quickly.

In April 1974, I was initiated by mail and received the name Rāvaṇārī Dāsa, and my wife was initiated by Prabhupāda during his visit in June as Svakīya Devī Dāsī.

DĪNAŚARAṆA DĀSĪ: When I was 8 years old, I accompanied my father to the Sahara desert. He was an architect and worked on some projects in North Africa. Because my father was busy most of the time, I spent many hours alone, and thus I had a lot of time to think. At one point, the

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thought came to my mind: "If there is God, I want to know who He is, what He looks like, where He lives and what He does. People talk about God, and if He really exists, I want to know all these things." In the desert, there is not much water, but where we were staying there was a little pond, and I thought to myself, "I will drink from this water, and if God exists, I will not get sick". For some reason, I had this challenging mood. So, I drank from the pond and I didn't get sick. I took it as a sign from the Lord.

Many years later, while living with my family in Morocco, I went through an emotionally difficult time which prompted me to think again about the purpose of life. I wrote a letter to my mother saying that I would leave home and search for the Absolute Truth. In a magazine, I had read an article that explained that spiritual wisdom is found in India. Thus I went to India, and for two years I walked by foot all over India in search of the truth. Somehow or other, during all this time, I never encountered any danger which is remarkable considering that for a young woman to travel all alone is not at all advisable.

In Sri Lanka, I entered a Buddhist monastery. I arrived there in the middle of the night, and at first, I was told that women were not admitted, but because it was so late at night I was allowed to stay under the condition that I should leave early in the morning. However, in the morning I was told that the head Lama wanted to see me. He asked me what I was doing, and when I told him that I was searching for the truth, he offered me that he could show me the truth, but that I would have to follow his instructions. Besides the main building, there was a smaller one in the park which had been used in the past for nuns. I was allowed to stay in one of the small rooms, and the instruction was to meditate for 18 hours a day. I wasn't allowed to read, to speak or to work, only meditate. The meditation consisted in observing my thoughts while breathing in and out. After some time, I thought, "Either I will go mad or I will become enlightened." Consequently, after a week or so, I just left the place without telling anybody and continued my journey throughout India. I visited many holy places, but without proper guidance, I did not find what I was looking for. Therefore, I decided at one point that it was time to go back to Germany. But before leaving India I felt that I should take a kind of souvenir with

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me, something to remind me of my visit. Because I did not want to take anything heavy, I ripped off the first page of a calendar that was hanging in my room. Later, back in Germany, I hung that picture on the wall of my bedroom.

After my arrival, I went to Berlin and began an intensive study of *yoga*, exercising for about 12 hours a day, so much so that I later opened my own *yoga* school. One day, after sitting down for meditation, I felt restless and could not focus my mind. I tried to force myself, with eyes shut, but this did not work either. Suddenly I felt as if the sun was illuminating the whole room. I opened my eyes and saw that I was sitting right in front of the picture that I had brought from India. It was the picture that was shining as if sunrays were emanating from it. I looked at it and wondered, “This is such a beautiful painting, but why did the artist paint the small boy with blue skin, a golden crown, and a flute in his hand?” Whenever I spoke to somebody about my journey to India and my searching for the truth, I always said that I had not found anything, that I had come back with empty hands. The only thing I had brought back was a page from an Indian calendar, and it happened to be Kṛṣṇa who somehow or other had sneaked Himself into my backpack and accompanied me back to Germany.

In early 1974, a friend invited me to accompany her to the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Berlin. While listening to the Sunday Feast lecture, everything became clear to me. I felt that I finally had the answers to all the questions that I had been asking since I was 8 years old.

HANSADUTTA DĀSA: Karandhara had left his post as BBT Trustee in early 1974 which created a vacancy on the trust. One day, Prabhupāda called for me and he said, “I want to appoint you as a BBT Trustee.” I understood right away that this was a very confidential service, more confidential than any other service because it had to do with the publication and distribution of his books. It was legally separate from ISKCON, and Prabhupāda was personally part of that Trust. I was really astonished that he would ask me. I said, “But Prabhupāda, you have so many disciples who have an M. A., a B. A or even a Ph. D., they are educated, but I have not finished even High School. Why me?” He replied: “Because you, without being asked,

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published and distributed my books. You understood the importance of my books.” He was referring to my spontaneous initiative to print and distribute *Easy Journey to Other Planets* in 1967 in Montreal. Then he added, “The devotees may fail, the temples may fail, but my books will live forever.

Hansadutta used to consult Śrīla Prabhupāda about all his moves. But his recent streak of success, plus Prabhupāda’s expressions of unreserved satisfaction with him, seemed to make him overconfident. He now made a series of dubious moves on his own. Later, when Prabhupāda received letters from several concerned devotees, he chastised his disciple:

Why did you close Edinburgh without asking me? Don’t do anything whimsically without consulting me.

I made the GBC to give me relief, but if you do like this, then where is relief? It is anxiety for me. This is the difficulty: as soon as one gets power, he becomes whimsical and spoils everything.

I am not in favor of closing even a small temple. It is not a plaything to close a temple or to start a temple. When we open a temple, we are inviting Krishna. So you can’t say to Krishna, “Go away.” You have no feeling what are the ideals of a temple.

It is a great offense. Before opening a temple, it must be considered a hundred times, and after opening, it cannot be closed. It must be maintained.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote this letter on September 12, 1974. Two weeks later he received a report from Hansadutta, written before he had received Prabhupāda’s letter, giving the reasons for his actions. Prabhupāda replied immediately:

Regarding the closing of the temples, no temple can be closed for any reason. You have done a great mistake. I am sending you a copy of a letter I have written in this connection. We have to consider very carefully before opening a center, and once opened, it cannot be closed. It is disastrous. What you have done is not at all allowed. I am very disappointed that you have done this. Even you did not consult me. Why?

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Now you want to purchase a farm, but can you manage? Why are you closing all the temples and then opening a farm? Do you have sufficient men to maintain a farm? Why are you purchasing a farm?

Three days later Śrīla Prabhupāda received two apologetic letters from Hansadutta. He then instructed his disciple what to do:

Regarding Edinburgh temple, yes it should be re-opened. Worship in the temple means to personally call Krishna, and He personally comes, therefore the arrangement must be there for the temple worship to go on nicely before opening any temple. In Vrindaban there are many dilapidated, important temples started by the Gosvamis, but still they are not closed. They are becoming debtor and debtor, and the temple building is practically falling down, but still the Deity worship is going on somehow or other. This is the principle.

In Germany you have to follow the same principle. Once opened it cannot be closed. Somehow or other you have to manage to continue the temple worship. That is the devotional cult. If they are closed and it is impossible to re-open, then what can be done? If there is no Deity, then it doesn't matter. If possible, re-open the Hamburg temple and transfer the Deity again and worship. A center without a Deity can be closed, but to close a center with a Deity is a great offense. The Deity is not an idol; it is Krishna. We cannot say to Krishna personally, “Now go away.”

But no matter how disappointed Prabhupāda was, he didn't forget Hansadutta's valuable service and thanked him for his efforts.

I am glad to hear about the Gita sales and the publishing of the new books. Therefore I have appointed you as BBT Trustee: to publish the German editions of our books as much as possible. I quite appreciate that one main center may remain there and from there the preaching may go on, but no attempt may be made to open a new center without being confident that it will go on. Strictly this principle should be followed.

The book sales are very encouraging, increasing, increasing. It is very good news. Thank you, I want this. Record selling is temporary. Even George Harrison's record sales do not continue for a long time. But, a book sold becomes a permanent matter for enjoyment. We read the scriptures again and again, and it is still fresh. When there is time, I go on reading my own books.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda praised Hansadutta for expressing feelings of unworthiness and surrender in his letter. And he told him he could remain pure and always protected by Kṛṣṇa if he maintained this attitude. He advised him: “Always follow my instructions and my example. This should be your life and soul».

But another issue had raised the concern of many of Hansadutta’s godbrothers. Especially in Germany, but also in England, Hansadutta had a band of followers who regarded him as almost equal to Prabhupāda. Many accepted him as their sole link to Prabhupāda. Whenever they came into his presence, and again when they left, they offered obeisances to him, a sign of respect generally reserved for the spiritual master. They did his bidding without question. Once, at Schloss Rettershof, Hansadutta walked around for days with dark sunglasses just to test the loyalty of the devotees. His confidants reported anyone who questioned his behavior. When Śrīla Prabhupāda received several letters of complaint, he asked Hansadutta to lower his profile:

I have heard that there is some worship of yourself by the other devotees. Of course, it is proper to offer obeisances to a Vaisnava, but not in the presence of the spiritual master. After the departure of the spiritual master, it will come to that stage, but now wait.

After again being corrected, Hansadutta wrote Prabhupāda another letter at the beginning of October. He acknowledged that whatever success he had achieved was due to his serving Prabhupāda’s lotus feet, and he promised to go on working to the best of his ability. He had just returned from the Frankfurt Book Fair, where the devotees had presented Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books for the first time.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: Just in time for the book fair we printed *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, the first volume of *Kṛṣṇa book*, and *Leben kommt von Leben* (Life Comes From Life). Thus at our booth, we had three hardbound books and four paperbacks.

Leben kommt von Leben was special for me, because at the beginning of 1974 when I had first heard the tapes of Prabhupāda’s conversations with the devotee-scientist Svarūpa Dāmodara about the origin of life, I

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approached Hansadutta and requested him to ask Prabhupāda whether we could publish those talks in a book entitled *Life Comes From Life*. Germans are generally scientifically minded, and we felt that such a publication would greatly help the preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda kindly agreed to have his morning walk conversations turned into a book:

Yes, by all means you may print my morning walks speaking about “Life comes from Life” into a small book; this argument should be spread, as any intelligent man will be convinced that our discussion is thoroughly scientific and exposes the so called materialistic scientists as rascals. So go on printing and distributing as many books as possible; this is your real work and your personal success.

When Prabhupāda received copies of the new books and the *Kṛṣṇa Meditation* LP, he expressed to Hansadutta his unreserved enthusiasm:

I am in due receipt of your letter dated October 11, 1974, and also the new German books KRISHNA, TLC, and LIFE COMES FROM LIFE, and also the record Krishna Meditation. I thank you very much. It is all very nice. May Krishna bless you with more and more publishing work. I am always thinking of your Frankfurt Schloss center. The songs which I have recorded there I have heard today on the record, and they are very nice, especially the “Prayers to the Six Goswamis.” It has come out very successful on the whole. I hope the German people will like the Bengali tunes. What is the report of how they are selling?

Whenever you call me for coming there, I shall come. Never quit the Frankfurt palace. It is very nicely situated, in an open place. The landlord is a good gentleman, so keep good relations with him and his wife.

The report that the newly published books are all selling like mad is very, very encouraging. Now publish more books. Make more translations. You have not yet published Bhagavatam and also Krishna Book, Second Part. Is this translated or not? And what about “Leben kommt von Leben?” Are they also selling? I have never studied science, but I am challenging them. They may take me as crazy, but I am not crazy. I am right.

One year later, while Prabhupāda was visiting Hawaii, accompanied by Hansadutta as his secretary, he referred to this book during a lecture.

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Suppose a dead child is born. It will not grow. It will not change. So this is very simple thing, that on this living being the matter grows, not from matter living being comes in. So we have written a small pamphlet, and in German language it is already published. People are very gladly accepting, reading this book. What is the name you have given?

Hansadutta: Life Comes From Life.

Prabhupāda: No, German name?

Hansadutta: Leben kommt von Leben.

Prabhupāda: So, *na satyam teṣu vidyate*. The demonic people, they do not have the truth. Only on false theory, the Darwin's theory... We have commented upon Darwin's theory also in our book, Scientific Basis of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. Dr. Svarūpa Dāmodara Brahmācārī, he has written a small booklet. He has criticized Darwin very strongly, that he is a speculator. A speculator cannot give you truth. That is not possible.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: To speed up the book production, in 1973 we had added more translators. Nikhilānanda began work on *Kṛṣṇa Book* and Vaidyanātha on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *The Hare Kṛṣṇa Cookbook*. They also prepared articles for the magazine.

Thus, by late autumn 1974, ten or eleven books were in the final stages of production. When Hansadutta reported to his spiritual master that he had just sent more titles to the printer, Prabhupāda was as amazed as he was pleased.

What six books have you given to the printer? This further publication of books means that you go further to Krishna six steps more. Your news of more publishing after seeing the newly published books is very happy news for me. Thank you. Overflood Europe with German books. I think that the German people are the heart of Europe, and your march will be followed by Bhagavan dasa in French language.

So you have a portion of Caitanya-caritamṛta almost translated, achah! Thank you. You are pukha BBT Trustee.

On receiving the German *Hare Kṛṣṇa Cookbook*, Prabhupāda commented:

Das Hare Krishna Kochbuch is very nicely printed, especially the picture of Krishna and His friends eating. It is very glorious. We wish to join His party, but it requires great tapasya. For many, many lives these boys

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performed tapasya to join His party and eating with Him. I see that you are charging the equivalent of Dollars 4,00. Yes, they must pay.

So concentrate on publishing books as far as possible, and sell, and spend the money accordingly. On the whole, I am very much pleased with your publishing extensively in the German language. It has given me great pleasure.

For Hansadutta, the world seemed to be in order again. Prabhupāda was pleased, more and more books were being published, money was pouring in, and the lucrative Christmas season was just around the corner. Soon he would have enough funds to turn his plans for a *varṇāśrama* community into a reality.

It was in the first week of December that Hansadutta booked a flight to Los Angeles where he would meet with the BBT trustees in North America. As far as book production and distribution were concerned, he was already the undisputed champion in ISKCON. Now he planned to take some of the best German distributors to the US to train the devotees there. His men had become experts over the last year. Every weekend they held classes in which the best techniques were vividly demonstrated by the top distributors. The slogan about feeding children in India—“With five marks, you’re part of it!”—had produced especially smashing results. In fact, too smashing..

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The Raid

On December 15, 1974, a Sunday morning like any other, some seventy devotees were eating breakfast at Schloss Rettershof. Between spoonfuls of hot *halavā* and sweet yogurt, stories of the latest *saṅkīrtana* adventures made the rounds.

Most of the book distributors had arrived the night before after another successful week of distribution. And after unloading their vans and taking showers, they had joined a tumultuous *kīrtana* in the castle's main hall and enjoyed many hours of ecstatic chanting and dancing. The next day they would launch into the last week of book distribution and fundraising before Christmas, usually the week with the biggest results of the year.

But at eight o'clock that next morning, a well-dressed man in a dark coat knocked on the front door. He was the state prosecutor, Mr. Schomberg, and he was not alone. Accompanied by eighty policemen, he entered the Schloss and presented a search warrant. For the next few hours, the police checked everyone's identification and searched the building. For many months Schomberg had gathered apparently incriminating evidence of

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fraud and other illegal activities. An increasing number of citizens, doubtful that their donations were being sent to India to feed the hungry, had been going to the police.

Around noon the devotees were taken to the police headquarters in Frankfurt for interrogation. The officers took their pictures and fingerprints, and a judge accepted the prosecutor's demand to freeze the Society's bank accounts.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Bombay when he received the news of the raid by telegram almost a week later. He was informed that bad publicity, not only in Germany but also all over the world, was marring the public image of his movement. Prabhupāda asked Brahmānanda Swami to fly to Frankfurt and get him a detailed report.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: Some of the devotees thought the raid was a direct backlash to the publication of *Leben kommt von Leben*, because I had left Prabhupāda's outspoken criticism of modern scientists unedited — on purpose. The idea was to raise awareness, to apply a kind of shock therapy. When Brahmānanda Swami heard of this, he told me that to publish such statements was not a wise decision and that Prabhupāda did not approve of it. He recalled a similar situation in the early days of BTG. They had published an article criticizing Ramakrishna, and Prabhupāda had written to Brahmānanda who was in charge of the magazine's editorial content:

So far as "Heroine Govinda Dasi" is concerned, if she has stated directly Ram Krishna as nonsense and rascal, that should not be indulged in. We cannot attack anyone directly in writing. There is a proverb in Sanskrit that you can speak something one thousand times, but don't give it in writing. Similarly, we may use some strong words against all this nonsense, but if we write it in black and white, that will not be good. So instead of naming these rascals directly, you change the word to "mental speculators".

As became clear several years later, during the court hearings, the accusations against ISKCON reflected the public's irritation with ISKCON's fundraising methods, especially in connection to the food

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relief program in India.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda received a letter from the Stockholm temple president describing the questionable methods used by the Swedish devotees, who had also been trained by Hansadutta, he replied on January 6, 1975:

Regarding dishonest means being used, I have never advised or taught anyone like that. That is not my idea. This record distribution has caused havoc. It should be stopped immediately. I have also asked Hansadutta to stop it. Book distribution is our real business. If we give them a record, they simply hear some magical sound and take it for sense gratification, but if they receive one of our books and read even one page, they get eternally benefitted.

To Brahmānanda Swami, he wrote:

“Hansadutta was giving stress to selling records using all tricks, by any means. The incident in Germany has caused havoc all over the world. It is hampering our reputation everywhere. I do not want this record distribution to continue. So, stop this record distribution immediately everywhere. And stress book distribution more and more.”

As devotees worldwide became aware of the disastrous consequences of dubious fundraising methods, an internal debate flared up: did the ends really justify the means? Rūpānuga, one of the GBC secretaries for North America, who defended a straightforward approach, turned to Prabhupāda for guidance and received the following instructions:

Regarding the controversy about book distribution techniques, you are right. Our occupation must be honest. Everyone should adore our members as honest. If we do something which is deteriorating to the popular sentiment of the public in favor of our movement, that is not good. Somehow or other, we should not become unpopular in the public eye. These dishonest methods must be stopped. It is hampering our reputation all over the world.

Money collected for feeding people in India should be collected under the name ISKCON Food Relief. Not any other name. And every farthing of

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that money must be sent to India, or better yet, buy food grains there and ship them here and we will distribute.

Prabhupāda had also asked Bhagavān Dāsa to visit Schloss Rettershof. On receiving his report, Prabhupāda expressed his disappointment as follows:

I am very much depressed by the recent incidences in Germany. It is now evident that some of our top men are very much ambitious, and there have been so many falldowns. In his last letter, Hansadutta said as follows: “I am exhausted, my brain is exhausted, I do not know what to do, so you can just tell me what I should do and I shall do that. I cannot understand your mind or actions; I do not know what your Divine Grace wants, or what you want from me. So, at this moment I am just going to sit and chant till I hear from you because everything till now has come out wrong, so please just instruct me what to do. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news again. Please forgive me, I am so helpless and spiritually weak. Please save me. What more can I say, please save me. In India, you said, ‘Every rumor contains a grain of truth.’ So the police, the karmis, the newspapers must also bear a grain of truth. I feel discouraged now. All my godbrothers and your Divine Grace are dissatisfied with me, so I have lost my enthusiasm».

Prabhupāda asked Hansadutta to join him soon in Hawaii. He would try to rectify his disciple and encourage him to be more careful and go on with his duties. This was not the first time one of his leaders had stumbled. But he never rejected any of them. He had always done everything to save the person. Prabhupāda kept the doors open and welcomed whoever repented his mistakes and willingly resumed the fight against *māyā*.

ŚUBHĀNGĪ DEVĪ DĀSĪ: I was born in Germany in 1948 on Three Kings’ Day. My father, an expressionist artist, was religiously inclined and used to study the Bible every day. He showed me the importance of faith and taught me how to pray, and therefore I consider him my first *guru*. Being an artist by profession, he frequently took me to the countryside, to the cow pastures and cornfields, where he sketched wonderful sceneries of

nature or depicted subjects from the Bible with Jesus and his disciples.

After High School, I absolved a year of voluntary social service at the University Hospital in Geneva, Switzerland. Together with a friend, who was also a temporary nurse, we spent some of our free time with the old and often lonely patients, talking about God to enliven them a bit.

In 1973, I met some followers of Guru Maharaj Ji and got involved in their so-called meditation that was to make us believe that we—being in possession of all the elements, the light, the ocean and divine amrita—were Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord. But then our Guru ‘Bhagavān’, at the age of 17, married his secretary, and that was the end of it for me.

Around the same time, I met Proshun, a young Bengali who had come from Calcutta to Hamburg to study and who would later become initiated as Sarvabhāvana Dāsa. He explained to me that it was impossible for anybody to become Bhagavān. He helped me to detach myself from Western thinking and its materialistic lifestyle, and he also showed me how to adopt an Ayurvedic healthy and regulated life.

In 1974, we got married. While continuing our studies at Hamburg University we began to practice *yoga*, got into vegetarian cooking, and tried meditation at home. One day we happened to see the cover page of a newspaper with the warning title: “Hare Kṛṣṇas pressure even old widows to part with their last coins. Beware!” Consequently, when a Hare Kṛṣṇa monk approached us sometime later on the street and tried to sell us a book, we gave the excuse, ‘We are students, we don’t have any money.’ Then we accelerated quickly our gait to get away from him, but one of the Hare Kṛṣṇa ladies came running after us and frantically tried to give us a magazine. She said, “You have to read this, it will change your life!” When we told her, “We have no money, we are students!”, she gave us the magazine, *Zurück zur Gottheit*, for free. Startled we gave her a small donation. Sometime later, my husband met the devotees again and bought a book about Lord Caitanya in English.

We were both Christians and wanted to dedicate our lives to God. We began to read the book daily and were impressed by the Vedic philosophy and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s clear explanations. Gradually, we began to implement the teachings in our lives. We gave up bad association, avoided

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accumulating unnecessary things, even took a vow to remain silent on Sundays, and changed our diet to complete vegetarian. We had regular meetings, cooked together and discussed God and life with Kishor from Kolkata, Kishor, with whom my husband had come per ship to Germany. Kishor later became Bhakti Charu Swami.

At the end of 1974, we moved to Berlin and joined the temple. My main services were to transcribe the German translation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and to help Dīnaśaraṇa Mataji with the sewing of the Deity outfits for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana.

In early 1975 we moved to Schloss Rettershof, the ISKCON Center near Frankfurt. That summer we were initiated and had a Vedic marriage ceremony. In October of that year, I gave birth to our son, Abhimanyu.

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The Aftermath

The media had a feast reporting on monks accused of fraud, kidnapping, and illegal weapons possession. For weeks and months after the raid, major newspapers and magazines and the national television stations featured stories on the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. They were generally depicted as criminals cheating housewives and sending immense sums of cash to their guru in America.

Three years would pass before the trial, in which all criminal charges would be dropped and the devotees only fined for violating the collection laws. But the propaganda, fueled by disgruntled parents and church leaders, aimed at stripping the Kṛṣṇa monks of their apparently harmless and peaceful veneer and painting a dark picture of destructive criminals.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: We felt isolated. *Harināma* in Frankfurt could be dangerous. The public's reaction was icy, if not openly hostile, and the police regularly arrested us and told us to stop the disturbance and go home. Chanting in the streets without permission violated the law.

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EKĀ DĀSA: I lived at the Berlin center. At 4:30 one morning, three shots rang out and smashed the storefront's right window. I ran to the temple room, where Jayagoura lay on the floor—alive. The bullets had missed him by inches because at that very moment he had bowed down before the Pañca-tattva.

News of the attempted shooting in Berlin reached Hansadutta and Śrīla Prabhupāda in Honolulu. Hansadutta proposed a plan to counteract the propaganda and persecution, and Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed it in a letter to all temple presidents:

Recently in Germany the government, police and church have started heavy prosecution against our movement by arrests, investigation and blocking our money in the bank. By unfair and slanderous newspaper and television propaganda, they have ruined our reputation and turned the general public against our movement. We cannot sit idle. Even killing of our devotees has been attempted in Berlin by shooting. Hansadutta Prabhu has formulated a plan for protesting at all German embassies all over the world. This plan has my sanction. He will be contacting you in this connection. Please cooperate with him fully.

Brahmānanda Swami reached Schloss Rettershof on January 5, 1975. The devotees needed the encouragement and association of one of Prabhupāda's leaders. Book distribution somehow continued, but the collection went down considerably. To convince someone to give a donation became a major struggle.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: To counteract the propaganda Pṛthu and I toured Germany to get the support of respected persons. We visited Graf Dürckheim, Father Jungclaussen, and other people interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness who were in positions to help. But the tour produced meager results. Although most expressed sympathy, they hesitated to stand up for us in public.

* * *

In early March, Prabhupāda expressed his desire that as many devotees as possible from all over the world come to India for the annual Māyāpur-

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Vṛndāvana festival and attend the opening of the Krishna-Balaram Mandir on April 20.

For the German devotees, to go on pilgrimage and visit the holy places of Lord Caitanya's and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes provided just the medicine they needed to lift their spirits.

JANMĀNALĀYA DĀSA: After the festival, I stayed on as a *pūjārī* at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. I had been studying art in Vienna before joining the devotees, but after moving into the temple I had stopped painting. Now I felt the desire to take it up again, but I didn't know how to begin after so many years without practice.

One morning, in 1976, I described my background to Śrīla Prabhupāda and my desire to engage my talent in Kṛṣṇa's service. I showed him a drawing of him I had made. He was pleased and even signed it. His instruction to me was simple: "Just go on painting." Glad to have his approval I began painting portraits of Prabhupāda while also doing my service as a *pūjārī*.

Later I went to Māyāpur, where one of my duties was to guard Prabhupāda's quarters during his visits. One morning, I was sitting on the veranda not far from his door in front of an empty room in which the ceiling fan was going. Someone apparently had left the room and forgotten to switch off the fan. Śrīla Prabhupāda, chanting *japa*, came out of his room and walked up the veranda, turned around, and approached the spot where I was sitting. When he noticed the swirling fan he stopped and asked me, "Why is this ventilator going?" I sheepishly said, "I don't know. Somebody must have left it on."

"Then why didn't you switch it off?" he asked.

When I gave the silly excuse that I had forgotten about it, Prabhupāda remarked, "You are good for nothing. Simply wasting Kṛṣṇa's energy!" I lowered my head and tears welled up in my eyes.

Prabhupāda's obvious displeasure with me made me feel like drowning myself in the Ganges. So I went to the temple president and told him what had happened. I asked him what I should do now, whether I should get my bags and leave or what? But he seemed not to give the incident much

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importance and encouraged me to continue my service. So I sat down again at Śrīla Prabhupāda's door.

After a few minutes, Prabhupāda called me into his room and asked me to fetch the water jug from his bedroom and fill the *lotā* on his desk. As I set down the jug and replaced its small clay cover, Prabhupāda put his hand on mine and moved his head in an apologetic way, as if he wanted to say, "What can I do? It is my duty to correct you." I immediately felt like embracing him. The very incident that had caused me so much grief miraculously turned into the most wonderful experience. Prabhupāda radiated the warmth and love of a true father and well-wisher.

There were lots of insects in Māyāpur, especially brown, cockroach-like, winged bugs. Each evening, thousands of them swirled around the lamps in the temple room, and in the morning, they all lay dead on the floor. It was my service to sweep the temple room and dispose of the insects. There was a bucketful of them. In one of his lectures, Prabhupāda referred to the insects by comparing our situation in this world to theirs. Just as they were attracted by the glaring lamplight only to die by the next morning, so we were attracted by the dazzling material energy only to meet with death.

SARVABHĀVANA DĀSA: A friend of mine (who later became Bhakti Chāru Swami) and I went from Calcutta to Hamburg in 1970. There we met the devotees for the first time and accepted an invitation to the Sunday feast. Unfortunately, our visit to the Bartelsstrasse temple turned out to be quite unpleasant. We got into an argument with Kṛṣṇadāsa, who made derogatory remarks about Indians coming to the West. After leaving the temple we didn't want to have anything more to do with the devotees. Our idea of a devotee was an introspective sage living in the mountains. Occasionally I saw devotees chanting in front of Dammtor, but I never approached them.

I married a German girl, who later became initiated as Śubhāṅgī Dāsī, and in 1974 my wife and I moved to Berlin. There on the street, we met Śāntimātī Dāsī, who gave me a German *Back to Godhead* magazine. On the front and back covers were photos of Schloss Rettershof and devotees

engaged in various activities. Later, I met Indira Dāsī, who gave me *Lord Caitanya in Five Features*—an excerpt from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in English—and an illustrated pamphlet explaining how to make chanting beads. I bought the book mainly because it contained Bengali verses, but once I began reading it, what really touched me were Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports.

My wife and I practiced *yoga*; we spent an hour every morning doing *āsanas*. But after reading about *bhakti-yoga* and chanting, I suggested we try that. So we chanted for some time while standing on our heads, and we felt that the chanting had a special effect on our consciousness. We continued this practice and even bought wooden beads in a toyshop to string into *japa-mālās*.

After reading *Lord Caitanya in Five Features*, I began visiting the temple in Berlin. A painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on a lotus flower especially attracted me. During *ārati* I looked at the painting again and again, and I felt as if Kṛṣṇa were pulling me.

I also used to visit a tea house in the same building, and one evening I was sitting there sipping tea and munching biscuits when someone put on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Kṛṣṇa Meditation* album. I liked classical music—especially church music and operas—but when I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda singing, I felt he sang with genuine devotional feelings, unlike classical singers, who usually displayed only sentiments in their interpretations.

When a doctor advised my pregnant wife to have an abortion I thought, “What a demonic society. I don’t want to be part of it anymore.” I seriously contemplated what I had to offer my child once he was born. What were my plans for the future? It became clear that I had to make a decision. For the next few days, I thought deeply about what to do, and when the pictures of the devotees I’d seen in the magazine flashed through my mind’s eye, I knew: That’s what I want to do.

By the end of March 1975, I called Schloss Rettershof. Ātmavidyā answered the phone, and I said, “I want to come and join.” He replied, “You will have to wait. There is nobody here. All the devotees have gone to India for a festival.” I was a little disappointed, but I resigned myself and waited. A week later I called again. I was eager to act on my decision. But I

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was again told I should wait because the devotees hadn't returned yet. I thought, "That's ridiculous. I want to become a member right away." So my wife and I packed our bags and took trains to Frankfurt and K nigstein. The next evening we moved into the temple."

A  ARATHA D  A: After the M   pur festival, Hansadutta asked me to remain in India for another week and buy paraphernalia for the marble Deities he had taken from Paris in the summer of 1972. He wanted to install Them as soon as possible. I was surprised. Whenever Hansadutta had asked Prabhup  da for permission to install Them—in a letter sent from Heidelberg in 1973 and during Prabhup  da's visit to Schloss Rettershof in 1974—he had been told to wait.

In M   pur, Hansadutta decided to take matters into his own hands. He said to me, "I am just going to install Them now; otherwise, it will never happen."

When I returned to Germany at the beginning of May the preparations for the installation were in full swing. On Sunday, May 11, 1975, Hansadutta performed the installation ceremony in the simple style common in ISKCON in those days, and he gave the Deities Their names:   r     r   R  dh  -Madana-mohana. He told me he would write to   r  la Prabhup  da about the installation».

To install R  dh  -K    na Deities without   r  la Prabhup  da's sanction was undoubtedly presumptuous, and Hansadutta pondered how to break the news to his spiritual master. Only eight months earlier   r  la Prabhup  da had chastised him for closing a temple without permission. Now he was again risking   r  la Prabhup  da's anger.

Hansadutta thought the best course of action might be to simply obtain   r  la Prabhup  da's permission without telling him that the Deities were already installed. Thus on May 15, Hansadutta wrote again a letter to Prabhup  da asking his permission. Only ten days later he received the short, unmistakable answer: "There is no need of establishing a Deity for the time being. Simply make a nice preaching center."

This baffled Hansadutta. Why did   r  la Prabhup  da react negatively to

installing these Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in Germany? Didn't he trust him? In London and Paris, he had not only sanctioned installations of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities but also conducted personally the ceremonies. In a few weeks, he would install another set of large Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the new farm in France. Prabhupāda had always spoken about Germany as one of the most important countries in Europe, if not *the* most important one. Were these merely words of encouragement? After years of pushing hard to establish Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Hansadutta had found a prestigious place, a majestic castle, and Prabhupāda had liked it. Wasn't it obvious that having only small brass Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the altar of such a large building was almost out of proportion?

Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply didn't seem to chasten Hansadutta. And once Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana were installed, it became evident that They were rather small—only about twelve inches high—a far cry from the almost life-sized *mūrtis* worshiped in many other ISKCON temples. Hansadutta wasn't satisfied.

AṢṬARATHA DĀSA: A couple of months after the installation Hansadutta sent Sucandra, Alanātha, and I to Jaipur. He told us to buy the biggest Deities we could find. We went from one *mūrti-wala* to the next until we found what we were looking for. Kṛṣṇa measured almost two meters high; He was taller than me. It took twelve men to lift Him and put Him in a wooden box. A few months later the Deities arrived in Germany. But Hansadutta eventually shipped Them to California, where he later installed and worshiped Them.».

In the middle of September Hansadutta made another attempt to get Prabhupāda's permission to install Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities at Schloss Rettershof. He expected the newly purchased Deities to arrive soon from Jaipur, and he thought that if Prabhupāda sanctioned Their installation, the earlier installation of Rādhā-Madana-mohana could be “officially” included. But Prabhupāda didn't approve of Hansadutta's plan:

Regarding the Frankfurt temple and the Deity program, unless we have got our own building, this proposal of installing Deity should be

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postponed. Do not install the large Deities, unless we have got our own building.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: The police raid and the subsequent freezing of our bank accounts brought book publishing to a halt. Śaṁinandana went out preaching, Vaidyanātha transferred to the Copenhagen temple, and Nikhilānanda, being still underage, was again taken into custody by his mother. I continued the translation work alone.

I had begun to translate the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and in the process, it occurred to me to compare the new edition with the old Delhi *Bhāgavatam* that Prabhupāda had published in 1964 and brought with him when he came to the West. To my surprise, I discovered changes I deemed unnecessary, including sentences and paragraphs that had been eliminated. I informed Hansadutta who, besides being the GBC, was also the BBT Trustee for German books, and asked him to explain the situation to Prabhupāda and request his permission to use the original *Bhāgavatam* for my translation work. The reply was short and clear: “If you like to use the original manuscript, then, if it is possible, you can use it.” A year later, Śrīla Prabhupāda extended this permission to all translators. In a letter dated September 18, 1976, he instructed Rameśvara, the Trustee in charge of the American BBT: “In general, if any translator of my books requires the original manuscripts for his work, he should be supplied them by you.”

This is an important instruction because it shows that Prabhupāda did not consider the original manuscripts only drafts, as some devotees have suggested, and the edited and published books as the only authorized versions. In fact, the edited and published books are not supposed to differ much from the manuscripts because Prabhupāda’s guidelines for editing were very restrictive, as evident from a letter to Rūpānuga in 1970: “Our editing is to correct grammatical and spelling errors only, without interpolation of style or philosophy».

I was also in contact with a retired German professor of linguistics living in Los Angeles, Dr. Wolf-Rottkay, who had become a friend of Svarūpa Dāmodara’s. On several occasions, he had met Śrīla Prabhupāda and offered to help with the German translations. Thus on Prabhupāda’s request, we were sending him manuscripts for revision.

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In the course of our correspondence, Dr. Wolf suggested that I come to California. The recently opened BBT offices there offered excellent facilities for book production, and at the same time, we would be able to work together closely and be more efficient.

The prospect of traveling to ISKCON's Western World Headquarters and leaving the depressing atmosphere of Schloss Rettershof was tempting. But I doubted Hansadutta would agree. So I wrote directly to Prabhupāda for advice.

In the same letter, I asked him to clear up two questions I had about statements in the third chapter of the *Madhya-līlā*. In the purport to text 98 I had read, "...*prasādam* is never polluted even if it is touched by the mouth of a *caṇḍāla*. Indeed, it retains its spiritual value. Therefore by eating or touching such *mahā-prasādam*, a *brāhmaṇa* is not degraded. There is no question of being polluted by touching the remnants of such food." I was confused. Why then did we throw out the *prasādam* that guests left on their plates? It was surely an offense, and maybe it was better that the devotees took those remnants.

My other question concerned text 70 of the same chapter. In his purport, Prabhupāda writes, "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not encourage *sannyāsīs* to eat very palatable dishes, for the whole *vaiṣṇava* cult is *vairāgya-vidyā*, as renounced as possible. Caitanya Mahāprabhu also advised Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī not to eat very palatable dishes, wear very nice garments, or talk on mundane subjects. These things are all prohibited for those in the renounced order. A devotee does not accept anything to eat that is not first offered to Kṛṣṇa. All the rich foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa are given to the *grhasthas*, the householders." I wondered why, then, in our temples, it was common practice to offer visiting *sannyāsīs* huge plates of rich *mahā-prasādaam*.

On August 4, 1975, Prabhupāda replied:

Regarding your going to Los Angeles, if Dr. Wolf suggests that you come, you should do it. At least you can come as tourist, so there should be no difficulty. So you should consult with Dr. Wolf.

Regarding your questions, you may not be so advanced that you will take the karmi remnants as prasadam. The karmis should not be given so much

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that there is waste. You can give them a little, and then, if they like, you can give them more. This system should be introduced everywhere. I have seen myself that so much prasadam is being left. This is not good.

Regarding the attitude for taking prasadam, if you think it is something palatable, so let me take more and more, then that is sense gratification. But still it is prasadam, so it will act. Prasadam is transcendental, but one should not take too much. Sannyasis may take the maha-prasadam, but not to overeat. Caitanya Mahaprabhu was taking, but on principle he was avoiding.

On September 9, Aśoka-kumāra and I arrived in Los Angeles. Aśoka-kumāra came along to transcribe and compose the translations, but unfortunately, he could not use the BBT typesetting equipment immediately. Special fonts for German, with diacritic marks for the Sanskrit transliteration, had to be ordered, and that took a couple of months.

Dr. Wolf, a friendly gentleman in his late sixties, was glad to have us there. He was fluent in six languages, and he was eager to help us to bring the translation of Prabhupāda's books up to a more academically acceptable level. But his involvement turned out to be a double-edged sword. He had many valuable suggestions to improve the style, but his vision was flawed by mundane considerations. He found many of Prabhupāda's original English expressions objectionable and wanted to change them in the German edition. For example, he felt it was simply unacceptable to compare Kṛṣṇa's legs to elephant trunks.

In the weeks that followed, we had several heated discussions, and when Dr. Wolf saw that I was not prepared to change Prabhupāda's words just because a description didn't fit his conception, he began to question Prabhupāda's position. Having fled Nazi Germany, he felt that our vision of Prabhupāda's authority was dangerously similar to the inflated image of Hitler in the 1930s.

Finally, he stopped coming. But he sent me a letter explaining his stand on the way our books should be presented, and he mailed a copy to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who replied to him as follows:

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I beg to acknowledge receipt of a copy of a letter sent to Sriman Vedavyas dated January 14, 1976.

Mundane books are written by imperfect persons. Everyone has his own theory, which means he is imperfect. The Srimad-Bhagavatam says if there is a real presentation of spiritual understanding, then, even if it is presented in broken language, it is accepted by high, saintly persons, because it glorifies the Supreme Person. On the other hand, if literature is highly metaphorically, composed if it does not glorify the Lord, it is compared to a place inhabited by the crows.

Actually, if some literature doesn't carry any real knowledge, what is the use of ornamental language? We are not interested in presenting ornamental language.

In India the system is that people go to see the Jagannatha Deity. The Deity is not very beautiful from the artistic point of view, but still people attend by the thousands. That sentiment is required. Similarly with our kirtana we are only using drums and karatalas but people come to the point of ecstasy.

It is not the ornamentation, it is the ecstasy. This ecstasy is awakened by sravanam kirtanam by devotees. I hope this makes everything clear.

At the end of September 1975, Alanātha Dāsa, one of the top German book distributors who had taken charge of the Stockholm temple, complained to Prabhupāda about Hansadutta's eccentricities, which had confused the devotees in Sweden.

Prabhupāda took the matter very seriously. He had created the GBC to relieve him from management, and he expected their behavior to be exemplary. The GBC was supposed to inspire the devotees in a concerted effort to fulfill the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Dissension, fueled by personal ambition, was a great danger. Prabhupāda's reply to Alanātha on November 10 was unusually candid:

I know that Hansadutta is very expert in selling books, but books are not only for selling but also for reading. Now has the GBC become more than Guru Mahārāja? As if GBC is simply meant for looking after pounds, shilling, pence. The GBC does not look after spiritual life, that is the

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defect. All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty.

A year before, devotees had complained about Hansadutta's behavior, and now he was again the subject of controversy. In an earlier letter written to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Hansadutta had sounded depressed and had deprecated himself as useless and guilty of many mistakes. To lift his spirits, Prabhupāda had assured him that he didn't think he had acted wrongly, and he reminded his disciple that we living entities are limited and actually unworthy to serve the Unlimited; it was only Kṛṣṇa's kindness that He accepted our insignificant service.

In the same letter, Hansadutta had also again expressed his desire to take *sannyāsa*, but Prabhupāda had not encouraged him:

Regarding your wanting to leave your family and take *sannyāsa*, what is your family? You live aside from your wife, and you have no children, so you are already *sannyāsa*. Anyway, we can consider later on. First we have to push this movement. That is most important thing. Grihastha or *sannyāsa*, it doesn't matter. First we have to know the science of Krishna consciousness. Caitanya Mahāprabhu never said that everyone had to take *sannyāsa*. We should just be after becoming the pure servant of Krishna.

Now, at the end of November 1975, Hansadutta flew to Delhi to become Prabhupāda's secretary for the month of December. It was a welcome break for him from the past tension-filled weeks and months. The quarrels with his godbrothers had left a bad taste in his mouth. He felt himself the victim of unfounded rumors. Again he approached Śrīla Prabhupāda for *sannyāsa*.

RAMBHORŪ DĀSĪ: When Himavatī heard about Hansadutta's intentions she almost had a fit. She immediately made arrangements to fly to India and asked me to accompany her. In Vṛndāvana, Hansadutta tried to get her to agree to his taking *sannyāsa*, but she didn't want to hear of it. Every day she went to see Prabhupāda to discuss it with him. He would tell her, "Hansadutta cannot take *sannyāsa* unless you agree." And she would say, "I don't agree that we are ready for *sannyāsa*. I certainly don't think that we are advanced enough, but if you give him *sannyāsa* I will accept that."

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But Prabhupāda would insist, “No, no, you have to agree.” For days and days they went on like this, and finally, Prabhupāda just dropped the subject».

HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: When Prabhupāda saw how adamantly opposed Himavatī was to her husband’s taking *sannyāsa*, he didn’t encourage Hansadutta to do so. Hansadutta was confused about what to do and wanted Prabhupāda to decide his fate, but Prabhupāda didn’t want to interfere and so refused to give him a direct instruction. He left it up to Hansadutta to make the decision. And it seemed that it would be just a matter of time before he decided to do it.

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The Exodus of Devotees

Village to village preaching had been one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s favorite programs ever since he had begun his mission. He had written to Kṛṣṇadāsa as early as 1969, “When you distribute BTG in German, by going from village to village, at that time you will make my mission successful.” During a tour of India in 1971 Prabhupāda noted with pleasure the overwhelmingly positive response to his Western “dancing white elephants.” When Upendra reported a similar reception by the rural people in Fiji, Prabhupāda wrote to him:

We have recently been preaching and holding sankirtana in some small villages and the result is very good. The simple villagers are very much attracted by this sankirtana process, and they join with us very nicely and listen attentively. So I am glad that you are also preaching in the outlands. That is very nice. Lord Caitanya wanted that His movement should be spread everywhere, to every village and city, and now by your kind cooperation His holy desire is being fulfilled.

After returning from India in the summer of 1971, Hansadutta launched a similar program in Germany in 1972; Prabhaviṣṇu did the same in

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England in 1973, and Tamāla Krishna Goswami and Viṣṇujana Swami in America in 1974. Śrīla Prabhupāda was so pleased with the success of the traveling *saṅkīrtana* buses that he often endorsed this type of preaching as more practical and efficient than establishing temples. In August 1973 he had advised Jagadīśa:

“Hansadutta in Germany, instead of increasing the temples and Deity worship, has increased the sankirtana parties. He is running on 8 new buses and distributing large quantities of literature; this is more important.

During Prabhupāda’s stay in Bombay in November 1975, Mahāmsa Swami visited him and informed him about the preaching in Hyderabad. When Prabhupāda heard how enthusiastically the people in the villages responded to *saṅkīrtana* and *prasādam*, he became very enlivened and told Mahāmsa, “Just see how quickly there will be a response. Therefore I was insisting, ‘Go village to village, town to town.’ It was Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s prediction: *pr̥thivīte āche yata nāgarādi grāma*. So it will never be foiled. Let us now begin village to village!».

A wealthy Hyderabad businessman had donated land not far from the city, and Hansadutta, along with Mahāmsa Swami, became the persons responsible for establishing a farm and introducing Kṛṣṇa consciousness by *kīrtana* and mass *prasādam* distribution in the surrounding villages. Hansadutta was still the GBC for Northern Europe, but it was expected that he’d also spend time in India, give financial support to the Hyderabad project, and send men to help develop it.

During his month as Prabhupāda’s secretary, Hansadutta felt enlivened by Prabhupāda’s enthusiasm for village preaching. It kindled his own desire to become involved. He saw village-to-village preaching as a great opportunity to become spiritually refreshed and as a way to get a break from the abrasive struggles in Germany. When Hansadutta approached Prabhupāda and offered to organize such a program in India, Prabhupāda welcomed his proposal.

HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: Śrīla Prabhupāda gave Hansadutta permission to buy a bus and start a traveling *saṅkīrtana* party in India. He suggested that they

carry Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi in a box, and wherever they stop, take Their Lordships out, sit under a tree, and hold *kīrtana*. Prabhupāda assured him that many people would come. Afterward, *prasādam* could be distributed, and a discourse given. “Do it immediately!” Prabhupāda told him enthusiastically. In mid-December, Yaśomatīnandana Dāsa invited Prabhupāda for a small lecture tour around the city of Ahmedabad. Several village programs had been arranged, and Prabhupāda was very enlivened. He stressed the importance of preaching in the villages. He told Hansadutta, Harikeśa, and me that even before coming to the West he had a desire to preach from village to village in India, but he had been unable to do it. Now he was getting the opportunity to fulfill his desire.

Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged Hansadutta to take up this type of program and declared that he would travel with his group. It was such an exciting concept, and Prabhupāda was so enthusiastic, the fact that such a program would be almost physically impossible for him wasn’t even mentioned. For Prabhupāda, preaching meant that there was no consideration other than spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whatever the cost».

On his last day as Prabhupāda’s secretary, Hansadutta approached his spiritual master to go over with him the plans for implementing the village preaching in India. Hansadutta was so excited about his future engagement that he had already looked into prices for vehicles and equipment. However, when he mentioned to Prabhupāda his plan to bring some of his men from Germany to take part in the traveling *saṅkīrtana* party, Prabhupāda cautioned him.

HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: Although Prabhupāda liked the idea, he didn’t want Hansadutta to abandon his duties in Germany altogether. He told him that despite the enormous difficulties there, the efforts for the long-term establishment of Kṛṣṇa consciousness had to be maintained. Hansadutta had been instrumental in the development of the German *yātrā*, and Prabhupāda didn’t want to see him leave lest everything collapse. But he also had no objection at all to Hansadutta’s preaching in India—at least for the time being while the difficulties persisted.

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Back in Germany, it wasn't difficult for Hansadutta to find volunteers for the bus program. For a good number of devotees, the prospect of exchanging the sullen atmosphere of their hostile homeland for the sunny skies of Bharata-varṣa was an opportunity they didn't want to miss.

By the end of January Hansadutta had purchased four Mercedes buses, each capable of carrying forty-five passengers. Then he began equipping them for their new task. He planned to take two buses to India in time for the annual Māyāpur festival. The other two were for a similar village-to-village preaching program in Germany. Two weeks later, with the buses ready to depart, Hansadutta informed Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was already in Māyāpur.

HARI-ŚAURIDĀSA: With his letter, Hansadutta enclosed a flier advertising the new traveling *sankīrtana* program. The flier was intended to persuade devotees to join. It had a picture of the four buses across the top and a few catchy phrases explaining the gist of the program.

PRABHUPADA'S WORLD SANKIRTANA PARTY

Entangled in temple life?
Burned out on Sankirtana?
Then this new program is for you.
Simply chanting and dancing
and distributing Krishna prasadam

To further entice the devotees, the flyer mentioned that Prabhupāda had promised to travel with the party. An attractive description of the recent tour of Gujarat was also given.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was very happy to see the eagerness and enthusiasm with which Hansadutta had applied himself to establishing the village preaching. In his reply, he confirmed his intention to take part. "Yes, with great pleasure I will accompany, and we shall go village to village. I have seen the pictures, and the buses look very nice."

SARVABHĀVANA DĀSA: After I received initiation in the summer of 1975, I had a strong desire to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda in person. I had read his

books and was convinced of the philosophy, but he said things like, “You will be able to see Kṛṣṇa face to face and attain His lotus feet in one lifetime,” which weren’t clear to me. I wondered how it was possible. I felt I had to see Śrīla Prabhupāda in person—to have living proof—to become convinced that he actually meant what he said. So when I heard about the bus program I didn’t think twice. It was a golden opportunity to go to India and meet my spiritual master.

After we arrived there in the early spring of 1976, I went to Vṛndāvana. Prabhupāda was expected to come to the Krishna-Balaram Mandir on the last day of March. I was full of eagerness to meet him and ask him my questions.

We assembled in front of the temple to greet him. A ruby-colored Ambassador stopped at the gate, and one of the temple leaders rushed to open the door. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda stepped out of the car. As soon as I saw him, all my questions were answered. I just fell flat on the ground to offer him prostrated obeisances. Something overcame me—a spontaneous, overwhelming feeling of complete security. I realized that I was in the presence of a person far beyond anyone I had met so far in my life. Here was a saintly person whose every word was backed up by realization. It was as if all that I had read in his books now came alive. I felt fully satisfied and happy.

Later I was invited to see Prabhupāda in his house, and when he heard that I had received a formal education he said, “Oh, you should go to Bengal and translate my books.” I replied, “But Śrīla Prabhupāda, my Bengali is bad, because I studied in English Medium schools in Calcutta, and I always avoided Bengali.” “Oh, that is not good,” he said. “So you should study *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. In this way, you will learn Bengali nicely. My Guru Mahārāja used to say that the entire world will learn Bengali to read *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.” And that’s how I learned Bengali again.

Regarding translating, Prabhupāda gave me some wonderful instructions that I naturally treasure very much and try to follow as much as I can. He told me there are two ways of translating. One is literal, and the other is called *bhavārtha*, which means to capture the spirit.

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Devotional scriptures are very deep spiritual and devotional writings that convey the spiritual, devotional mood of the authors who are all *ācāryas*. Prabhupāda said, "I personally prefer *bhavārtha*, to translate the spirit and mood of their writings rather than the literal translation. I want you to read the original Bengali or Sanskrit or Hindi, understand it, formulate it in your own words and write it."

Once in Vṛndāvana, when Satsvarūpa Mahārāja was there, Prabhupāda told him, "You should edit *Renunciation Through Wisdom*, it is a very important book." And it truly is an incredible book — it's a gradual unfolding of the philosophy and purport of *Bhagavad-gītā* in which Prabhupāda excelled himself. The original writing in Bengali is very scholarly. In English, I think, Prabhupāda tried to write in a simple manner, but his Bengali writing is a very scholarly and erudite presentation. To translate this work was quite challenging and every single day Prabhupāda asked me to read the English translation to him while he read the original Bengali. He liked my work and that made me very happy, very blissful.

Prabhupāda also talked to me about opening a restaurant, because I am a cook. He said that in the West, restaurants were an effective means to propagate our philosophy. He was proud of the Govinda's restaurants that served first-class *prasādam*. He wanted the devotees to preach to the people who were regular customers.

RAMBHORŪ DĀSĪ: During the 1976 Māyāpur festival, Hansadutta's dream finally became a reality: Hansadutta Dāsa became Hansadutta Swami. Himavatī, still in Vṛndāvana, flipped. For days, her moods shifted from frenzy to depression. As soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived at the Krishna-Balaram Mandir, she demanded to see him. "Since my husband has taken *sannyāsa*, I hate everyone and everything in this material world," she declared. Prabhupāda looked at her and simply said, "Oh, you are making very much advancement."

After Himavatī came to grips with the new reality, she went around Vṛndāvana to ask different widows how to act when the husband takes *sannyāsa*. Told that it was customary to worship his shoes or other such

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objects, she got the idea to worship Hansadutta in the form of a deity. At Loi Bazar, she purchased brass Gaura-Nitāi Deities and gave Gaura to the *mūrti-wala* to have the deity slimmed down to look more like Hansadutta. Afterward, she dressed him in *sannyāsa* clothes, put a *daṇḍa* in his hand, and placed him on her little altar—without Nitāi, of course—and began worshipping him.

This all happened while Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Bombay. When he came back, Himavatī wanted to show him how she now faithfully worshiped her husband in separation. She brought the deity to Prabhupāda, and she probably thought that he would figure it out—that this was an image of Hansadutta. But when Prabhupāda saw the deity he exclaimed, “Oh no! You cannot dress Gaura-Nitāi like *sannyāsīs*. We worship Them like princes.” She didn’t have the heart to tell him that this was supposed to be Hansadutta. But she realized that her idea was bogus and gave it up.

During the GBC meetings in Māyāpur Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested some members change their zones. As a result, more than half of the GBCs got new assignments. Hansadutta requested his godbrothers to relieve him of his responsibilities in Europe so that he would be free to preach in India, and they readily accepted his proposal. Jayatīrtha, until then GBC for California, became responsible for Germany, the British Isles, Ireland, Scandinavia, and the East Bloc.

When Jayatīrtha arrived in Germany he was shocked to see the devotee population reduced to almost half. Those who had not joined Hansadutta’s buses but had remained at Schloss Rettershof were disheartened. The circumstances had been difficult enough after the raid, but the recent exodus of many godbrothers and godsisters undermined the morale. It was at an all-time low.

HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: While we were in Honolulu, in May 1976, Prabhupāda received Jayatīrtha’s first GBC report from his new zone. His assessment of the situation in Germany was gloomy. The devotees were

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struggling and discouraged, there being only fifty-five left in the country. The German media and government had a campaign going to discredit ISKCON. The government was still presenting its case against ISKCON and had asked us to pay another \$250,000 on top of the \$300,000 already confiscated. Moreover, he said, the situation had been made worse by Hansadutta's mismanagement.

He thought our image could be improved in two ways. First, all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books should be translated into German and widely distributed to universities and colleges. Culling reviews from respected professors would establish ISKCON as genuine. Second, one new temple per year should be opened and solidly developed, with regular programs of *sāṅkīrtana*, Sunday feasts, and festivals. As the number of devotees grew, a center could be opened in each major city, giving us a steady presence and enabling us to attract solid supporters.

Finally, Jayatīrtha reported that a new BBT traveling party, under Alanātha Dāsa, would tour Scandinavia, Germany, and Austria, distributing books and holding festivals. This would clear the large stock of books that he said were "sitting in the basement of the Schloss gathering dust," and allow the printing of new German books.

Prabhupāda was happy to receive the news. He had been very concerned about the problems in Germany, and he felt that Jayatīrtha's plans were positive and well thought out. He told Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa and me that Jayatīrtha was the best manager in our society. In his reply, he urged Jayatīrtha on with personal praise and some practical advice:

It is very encouraging to hear the reports of increased sankirtana. Go on like this more and more. Concerning the situation in Germany: So you are the right man to train them up. It is Kṛṣṇa's desire that Hansadutta is replaced by you. I have certified that you are our first-class temple manager. A little change is invigorating, so try to serve me to the best of your capacity.

Prabhupāda told Jayatīrtha they should print his books in Germany and then present the bill to the bank that is holding our money. By printing locally they could regain lost prestige:

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It will be good publicity, and at the same time, we will have books. Whether the money was collected illegally or legally, the money is being spent in Germany. It is not going outside, so why is it being held up illegally? Let it be spent in Germany. That is our money; there is no dispute. It is not the aim of our Society to mislead the public; you can show them our aims. Maybe some workers have done like that, but we are trying to enlighten the whole world and the people of Germany with good literature.

He said we should convince them that our movement is for producing men and women of the best character. “If some individuals have done wrong, it shouldn’t jeopardize our entire community. People accustomed to all nasty habits have joined us and are leading pure, happy lives.”

After he had dictated his reply and Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa had gone off to type it, I asked Śrīla Prabhupāda how we distinguish Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement from our mismanagement. The bad situation in Germany certainly seemed to me to have been exacerbated by mistakes and foolishness on the part of some of the devotees there. I asked him if Kṛṣṇa arranges for things to go wrong when we mismanage matters. Does Kṛṣṇa punish us to teach us a lesson?

Śrīla Prabhupāda told me that Kṛṣṇa has a plan, but if we fail to cooperate with Him, then things go wrong. “Kṛṣṇa does not punish His devotees,” he said. “The problems are caused by the demons, not by Kṛṣṇa. But if we mismanage, then the demons gain opportunities to wreak havoc with our mission.” Then he smiled and added, “But they cannot disturb for long.”

On receiving Prabhupāda’s letter, Jayatīrtha and the devotees at Schloss Rettershof felt encouraged to increase their efforts and take up the challenge to rebuild the *yātrā*. But an unexpected event soon dampened their regained enthusiasm. In the first week of June, Hansadutta Swami returned from India with a few men. He planned to get three more buses, new equipment, and take more men back to his preaching programs in India.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: I had accompanied Jayatīrtha from Los Angeles to Māyāpur, and from Māyāpur to Germany. Shortly after our

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return to Germany, I was put in charge of the Schloss. Pṛthu went to Munich to open a temple. We felt that living in the castle was impractical, both in terms of preaching and our public image, and that the future was to return to the cities and open centers. Pṛthu volunteered to be the first to take the plunge.

It had already been two years since all the city temples, except for a small center in Berlin, had been closed. Initially, many people visited Schloss Rettershof out of curiosity, but as time went on, especially after the raid, fewer and fewer visitors came. Most devotees were discouraged, and we felt it was time for a drastic change. We wanted to quit Schloss Rettershof and open several city temples instead. But for that, we needed Prabhupāda's sanction.

Prabhupāda visited England in July, and Jayatīrtha advised Pṛthu and me to go and present our case to him. Maybe by hearing our personal testimonies Prabhupāda would accept our proposal.

We arrived at Bhaktivedanta Manor on July 23, and the next morning we were invited into Prabhupāda's room. He sat behind his desk, and although he looked a bit exhausted, his demeanor was as noble as ever.

As soon as I rose from offering obeisances Prabhupāda asked me what book I was translating now. I informed him that I had reached the end of the first volume of the Third Canto and was now working on the first volume of the *Madhya-līlā*—and that we had twelve books ready for production. Prabhupāda moved his head in acknowledgment and asked, "Which books are selling the most?" There could be no doubt what his emphasis was. Although concerned about the situation in Germany, he was convinced that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would ultimately succeed if book production and distribution continued.

Then Hari-śauri came in with a bar of soap. He had been told that Prabhupāda liked this brand, and he was wondering whether it was approved or not. Prabhupāda dismissed his question with a smile. "Soap is soap," he said, and we couldn't help but laugh. When Hari-śauri pointed out that the label mentioned menthol and camphor as some of the ingredients, Prabhupāda chuckled and said, "You can advertise in so many ways. It is a combination of oil and soda. That's all."

Harikeśa Swami also entered the room. Back in India, he had made a batch of toothpaste according to Prabhupāda's direction from ground mustard seeds, salt, calcium carbonate, glycerin, oil of wintergreen, menthol, camphor, and thymol, and he wondered whether he needed to prepare more. Prabhupāda told him that he had still enough toothpaste and that it worked wonders. Amid bursts of our laughter, he said, "All my teeth are giving notice that 'I am not working,' but on account of this toothpaste they are obliged to. It is very good. I could give you so many formulas, but I do not wish to divert your attention too much. Our main business is the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—through books."

After Harikeśa Swami and Hari-śauri had left the room, Jayatīrtha gave Śrīla Prabhupāda a brief report on the latest developments in Germany. Regarding book orders from professors and libraries, there was no positive review from either because of the appearance of the books. We wanted Prabhupāda's approval to change the design and make the books more compact and distinguished-looking. We also wanted to add photographs of historical places such as Kurukṣetra to make the books look more authentic. Prabhupāda had no objection. When we showed him a dummy, he liked it and said, "You can print like this."

The next topic was thornier. Jayatīrtha pointed out that for the last two years there had been no city temple because maintaining the Schloss required all the resources and men. But recently Pṛthu went to Munich and had immediate results. Each week, more than fifty guests were coming to the Sunday feast, and the devotees were enlivened to again have so much opportunity to preach.

Jayatīrtha explained that nobody came to Schloss Rettershof. It was out in the country and could only be reached by car. The nearest large city, Frankfurt, was the seat of our enemies. He proposed we close the Schloss and open temples in major cities.

"I think the Schloss must be kept," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "just to maintain what we have got." Jayatīrtha gave it another try. "But nobody appreciates this place; in fact, they criticize us." Prabhupāda was unimpressed. "To my mind, I do not wish to close it," he said, "but if you

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all decide...” Leaving the sentence unfinished, he looked at us gravely, and we were silent. There was no question of going against Prabhupāda’s desire.

“It is a nice place,” he continued, “and once open, you cannot close. Suppose a child is born deaf and dumb, does it mean that it should be killed? It is useless, but that does not mean I kill it. So even though the Schloss is not giving us any good response, because it is open, you cannot close it. Whimsically, we cannot open and close. Before opening, we can consider a hundred times. But after opening, you cannot close.”

“Jayatīrtha made one last effort. ‘The problem, in this case, is that things were not well considered before it was opened.’”

“But it is open,” Prabhupāda replied. His words sounded like the final verdict in a courtroom. Jayatīrtha gave Pṛthu and me an apologetic look. He had tried, but Prabhupāda did not want to hear of closing the temple.

After a few moments of silence, Prabhupāda gave some more reasons. “There is an English proverb,” he said. “A rolling stone gathers no moss.” So don’t be a rolling stone. That is one of the habits of the Europeans—to become rolling stones—to always change things very quickly. That is not good. After all, we have to live in a place. So that’s a nice place. Nobody is coming, but we are there. We have our temple, *kīrtana*, *prasādam*. If somebody comes, it is all right. If not, what can be done? It is not that we open a temple because others will come. We also require a place to live.

All had been said. With a “Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda!” we offered our obeisances and left the room. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire was supreme. He was in touch with the Supersoul, and we had the faith that his flawless vision would serve our best interest.

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VIBHĪṢAṆA DĀSA: One morning, after Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken in a lecture about the beauty of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I asked him, “If Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so wonderful, why don’t more people join?” He replied, “Kṛṣṇa consciousness is nice, but material life is like a dark well. If you are in darkness, covered by ignorance, it’s difficult to appreciate something beyond your realm of experience.”

RAMBHORŪ DĀSĪ: Every morning, Prabhupāda would take his walk along the same route from Bhaktivedanta Manor through the fields and back to Letchmore Heath. One day, one of the German devotees, Āma Dāsa, who was a bit eccentric, wearing turbans and using oversized beads, was walking neck to neck with Prabhupāda to get his attention, but Prabhupāda ignored him. Then Āma addressed him directly, saying, “I am Āma, I am Āma.” But Prabhupāda didn’t even look at him. A few minutes later, the boy said again, “I am Āma, I am Āma.” Prabhupāda didn’t respond. Then Āma tried for a third time, practically getting in front of Prabhupāda: “I am Āma, I am Āma.” This time Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped, and the whole group stopped, and he looked at the boy and sternly said, “Āma Dāsa!” At that moment, Āma Dāsa seemed to get some realization and offered his obeisances to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

One afternoon, Prabhupāda gave *darśana* in his room. He sat beneath the huge stained-glass window, and you could see the grounds of the Manor outside. Suddenly he motioned with his hand to indicate all the bushes in the distance and said how Kṛṣṇa is an incredible artist because He designs all these colorful flowers and it all looks so beautiful. Then he added, “Actually, all these plants and flowers are doomed. They are all imprisoned in this material existence. It looks artistic, but it is a condition of suffering.

During the *darśana*, one devotee came in and offered his obeisances with his beads draped around his neck and they touched the floor. Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at him and asked, “Where is your bead bag?” “It’s in the wash,” the boy explained. “Go to my closet and get a bead bag,” Prabhupāda said. “You should never have your beads like this.”

* * *

Back at Schloss Rettershof, Hansadutta Swami’s men were making their final arrangements. Hansadutta Swami had already flown back to India, and his men planned to start the six-week overland journey at the beginning of August. Most of them thought they were leaving Germany for good. Not long ago, they had given their every breath to building the *yātrā*, and now they seemed like strangers in their homeland. They didn’t seem to mind burning all bridges behind them.

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HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: From London, Śrīla Prabhupāda went to New Māyāpur in France. After a few days, he received a complaint from Jayatīrtha that Hansadutta Swami's men were causing a good deal of trouble in Germany. The devotees at Schloss Rettershof accused them of behaving like gangsters by stripping the temple of vehicles, equipment, men, and money. Hansadutta Swami himself was said to have taken at least 100,000 DM with him.

Prabhupāda agreed to a proposal put forward by Jayatīrtha, Bhagavān, and Harikeśa Swami that Hansadutta's men come to France to see him, and he would resolve the issue. But when they arrived, Prabhupāda decided that his two GBC men, Bhagavān and Jayatīrtha, should try to create a solution without his direct involvement. Together with Harikeśa Mahārāja, they met with the men and decided that they should not take the vans. So the vehicles were parked, and the keys were handed over.

In the middle of the night, though, Hansadutta Swami's men took the vans and left telling no one. They concluded Prabhupāda had been used as a ploy to draw them to New Māyāpur and prevent them from leaving for India.

Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged that it was natural that these men thought they had been tricked. He said it was the GBC's job to handle such situations with more expertise.

But he praised Jayatīrtha for his restraint in not allowing himself to be drawn into a fight over the issue and for being willing to work constructively with the remaining facilities and men.

Yet although Jayatīrtha appeared committed to doing the needful, deep down he wasn't at all enthusiastic about reconstructing Germany. It would require tremendous effort and selfless dedication, and hardship was not to his taste. He felt comfortable in England, partly because of the language, and he also liked Amsterdam. So he suggested to Bhagavān that he trade Germany for Holland. Bhagavān wasn't interested.

NIKUṢJAVĀSINĪ DĀSĪ: During his visit to New Māyāpur, Prabhupāda presided over the installation of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. He seemed fatigued. Balarāma and Śrīla Prabhupāda were about the same size, and while

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bathing Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda put his left hand on Balarāma's shoulder. Leaning over, he poured yogurt from a conch shell over Kṛṣṇa. To me it was as though three friends were standing together and that we were allowed to watch them.

That evening, Prabhupāda took a short walk around New Māyāpur, and then sat down under a tree and gave a brief talk. When he asked for questions, one devotee said, "In the *Guru-vandana* it says that the spiritual master is our *guru* life after life. So if we don't make it back to Godhead in this lifetime, does it mean that you will come back to save us?" Prabhupāda pounded the little table in front of him with his fist and said sternly, "You make it in this lifetime. Don't make me come back!"

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A New Beginning

In February 1976, in Māyāpur, Śrīla Prabhupāda had awarded Harikeśa Dāsa *sannyāsa* and sent him to America. On his way, Harikeśa Swami had stopped in London, where he met Hansadutta, still the GBC for Northern and Eastern Europe. Hansadutta told him about a preaching program in Hungary—one he had no time to be at because he had to fly to India and attend the GBC meetings. So Harikeśa Mahārāja took his place and teamed up with Alanātha to go to Budapest.

HARIKEŚA DĀSA (Swami from 1976 to 1998): We mainly chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and distributed *prasādam*, because in a Communist country lecturing was problematic. To begin with, I needed a translator, and it was hard for the translator to find the right words for many of our unfamiliar philosophical terms. Besides that, it was risky to speak about God in an officially atheistic country. But chanting and feasting had a tremendous impact. Prabhupāda’s reply to my report enlivened and enlightened me:

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I have marked how they are attracted to our kirtana and prasadam there in Hungary. If they consider our philosophy too revolutionary, there is no necessity to print books immediately. First, the heart must be cleansed by chanting Hare Krishna and taking Krishna prasadam. To take birth in such place is due to impious past, so it is not easy for them to immediately accept our philosophy. Just give them chanting and prasadam. You must be very tactful to preach in such places. If you like you can print one record there as you have suggested.

If the young people become very serious, if you find it is detrimental to have them wear dhoti and shave head, that is not necessary. Simply introduce the chanting and prasadam distribution and gradually they will be elevated to being Vaisnava. A Vaisnava is aloof from all material conditions of life, so even under such circumstances, a Vaisnava will not feel inconvenienced.

Prabhupāda's letter indicated that he wanted me to continue these programs, and thus I decided to go to Germany to have a base for preaching in the East.

When I arrived at Schloss Rettershof in April, I found out that the GBC had just changed. Previously, I had dealt with Hansadutta; now, Jayatīrtha was in charge. I wasn't sure who to ask to get what I needed. First, I needed a van. So I went to the treasurer's office, and there was Sucandra, who wasn't at all enthusiastic to spend money on a newly arrived *sannyāsi's* preaching program.

But after an hour's discussion, I convinced him that the van would eventually be an asset for the temple, and I assured him that I would take care of it. I got a Mercedes, which I customized with a sink, a sleeping place, and everything else needed to travel and preach.

In the meantime, I helped the temple by giving classes and preaching to the devotees individually. There was a lot of tension in the air, the temple was in bad shape, and the devotees were depressed. Sucandra was sitting in his office with his head in his hands, wondering how to handle the situation, and he asked me what to do. I said, "It seems to me that this temple is in *māyā*. Best that you and I just go out preaching." So a couple of times we went to Hungary, East Germany, and Poland.

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BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: We devised a scheme to smuggle books into East Germany: two identical vans would enter the German Democratic Republic—one on a transit visa for West Berlin, and the other on a regular entry visa for the country. The van heading for West Berlin would be allowed only on the transit highway, so it would not be inspected. But the other van going into the GDR would be searched. We'd fill the transiting van with books and leave the other van empty. On the highway, the vans would meet at a rest stop and we'd transfer all the books to the empty van.

The only problem was that the rest stops were tightly patrolled by the East German police, so whenever we saw a police car approaching, one of us got himself ready to urinate in that direction. As good-mannered men, the police naturally turned their heads as they drove by. We transferred the books as quickly as possible. It always worked.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: Once, I drove a van full of books from West Berlin to East Berlin—not through one of the checkpoints but by leaving West Berlin on transit to West Germany and then going back to East Berlin by a roundabout way.

I took the transit highway to Hannover for a few kilometers and then I took a turnoff and got on the road to Poland—completely forbidden. From there I knew of an off-ramp leading to East Berlin. But just as I took the exit, a police car appeared and stopped me.

I pulled out my American passport and put on an innocent face. I said, "I think I'm lost. I want to go to Hannover, but I guess this is the wrong way?" Seeing that I was a foreigner, the police officer became helpful and told me how to get back to the main road. I thanked him and took the road to West Germany.

Five kilometers later, I saw a service road, and Kṛṣṇa inspired me to take it. There were no police on that road, and I soon arrived in East Berlin. I went straight to a devotee's house on the outskirts of town and unloaded the books. The books were in Polish, and the devotees from Poland eventually came by train, filled up suitcases with books, and returned to their country.

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HARIKEŚA DĀSA: In Leipzig, East Germany, lived a nice boy initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda—Haladhara Dāsa Adhikārī—and we wanted to supply him with books. Taponidhi and Gaura-kīśora drove the van with the books, and I drove the empty one. At the border, the officer became suspicious because there was nothing in my van. I just had a little personal bag. But after I explained that I was staying just one night, he let me through.

As I entered the parking lot where the other van was waiting, a police car drove in behind me. We decided we had better get out of the vans and eat some apples. We sat down at a picnic table and acted like tourists, but the police continued to observe us and probably suspected that something was going on. Finally, they left, and we jumped up and transferred the books. Then I drove off with all the books.

About two minutes later I saw the police on the roadside waving me down! I thought, “Oh, no, I’m going to get caught with all these books, and I am an entry!” So I just kept my face forward and pretended not to see them. I jammed my foot on the gas pedal and tore down the road as fast as the van would go.

They immediately ran to their car to pursue me, but at that moment Kṛṣṇa sent the heaviest rain I have ever seen in my life—it was like buckets of water pouring from the sky. It was mid-July, and the road was so hot that the rain became steam, and you practically couldn’t see anything anymore. I was driving in this blinding mist as fast as I could, and the police somehow got lost. I took the next exit and then the back roads all the way to Leipzig.

It was dark by the time I arrived at Haladhara’s house, around ten o’clock. But I was so revved up that I picked up a box of books, which normally it took two people to carry, ran to Haladhara’s window, and threw it in. Haladhara wasn’t aware how heavy the box was, and when it hit him in the chest, he fell backward—boom!—and the books fell out all over the place. But I kept bringing the boxes as fast as I could because the van was parked under a streetlight and anybody could see what I was doing. After I dumped all the books, I told him, “See you tomorrow.”

Then I drove to a campground. I was completely wiped out. I finally

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went to sleep around midnight. At five-thirty the next morning, I heard a bang! bang! bang!’ on my window. I thought, “Now they have me.” Someone was shouting, “Herr Campagnola!” And I thought, “Oh, no, they even know my name!” But it was only the manager. He said, “Telephone call.” I staggered out of the van, went to the phone, and it was Sucandra on the line, who informed me that he’d received a call from America saying I should immediately go to London and become Śrīla Prabhupāda’s secretary again.

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HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: After visiting England and France in the summer of 1976, Prabhupāda returned to India. Soon it became more and more apparent that Jayatīrtha wasn’t as committed to Germany as he had appeared. He spent most of his time at Bhaktivedanta Manor, and his visits to Schloss Rettershof were sporadic and brief. Prabhupāda was concerned. He therefore thought that maybe Hansadutta should return to Germany and take care of the situation for which, after all, he was responsible in the first place».

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: Word about Hansadutta’s possible return reached us at the beginning of September. The prospect of his coming back made everyone shudder. Jayatīrtha called a meeting, and the devotees decided he should write a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda, signed by all, saying that Hansadutta’s return would be disastrous. The matter was taken so seriously that Pṛthu and I were asked to take the next flight to India and hand the letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda personally, so that if clarification was needed, we’d be right there to answer any questions.

PṚTHU DĀSA: We reached Vṛndāvana around noon. After quickly showering and putting on clean clothes, we went to Prabhupāda’s house. Harikeśa Swami opened the door. He couldn’t believe we had come all the way to India just to deliver a letter. He informed us that Prabhupāda was taking his massage and shouldn’t be disturbed. So we left the letter with him.

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HARIKEŚA DĀSA: I read the letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda after lunch. Jayatīrtha described the chaos that Hansadutta and his men had caused, and he went so far as to compare Hansadutta to the plague. Prabhupāda raised his eyebrows. “The plague?” he asked. Shocked, he repeated the words over and over— “Like the plague” —and agreed that under the circumstances, Hansadutta should not return to Germany.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: The next morning we accompanied Śrīla Prabhupāda on his walk. It was the first time I’d come to India right after the rainy season, and Vṛndāvana appeared much different from what it had looked like in late spring. A light veil of mist shrouded the fields, and the air was humid and fragrant. The wind blew massive white clouds across the deep-blue sky.

Wrapped in a gray woolen chadar, Prabhupāda chanted softly on his beads as we left the Krishna-Balaram Mandir. To be with him in this setting gave me a faint glimpse of what it meant to be in Vaikuṇṭha, an atmosphere free of anxiety. As we strolled through the fresh morning air, all problems and fears vanished.

PRṬHU DĀSA: We made our way down the dirt road near the *goshala*, and I walked right behind Śrīla Prabhupāda. Suddenly he turned around and put his cane on my chest. “So, you are satisfied?” he asked. Taken by surprise, I smiled and said, “Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, very satisfied.” Then he asked, “When are you going back to Germany?” I told him we planned to return in a couple of days. “Oh, no!” he said, and his eyes opened wide. “Just enjoy the spiritual atmosphere. Stay at least three weeks.” We gladly complied. After all, it was a direct order from our spiritual master».

While Harikeśa Swami was serving Prabhupāda as his secretary in Vṛndāvana, he received letters from Sucandra, Dvārakeśa, and Prabhujaka that described the latest preaching developments in Eastern Europe. In the early summer, they had accompanied him on his tours to East Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Hungary and had promised to keep him informed. On reading of his godbrothers’ wonderful exploits, Harikeśa

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Swami felt sure that Prabhupāda would enjoy hearing how the preaching in the East was going. When Prabhupāda learned how enthusiastically people behind the Iron Curtain were responding to *kīrtana* and *prasādam*, he wrote the preachers letters to encourage them:

I have noted your letter of August 23, 1976, addressed to Harikesa Swami and have noted the contents with pleasure. Please continue your program of preaching in Eastern Europe, for this program is very pleasing to me. You should be supplied all funds for this program by the local GBC men there in Europe. This program is very important.

Since 1971, devotees had been visiting the East Bloc only sporadically. Nobody had dedicated all his energy to implanting Kṛṣṇa consciousness there. But in only three months, Harikeśa Swami had probably done more than anyone else had accomplished in five years. Now he was Prabhupāda's secretary, typing his letters, and Prabhupāda was satisfied with his service—that's why he had agreed to have him come back in July—but to Prabhupāda's mind, Harikeśa was rotting behind the typewriter. He was an energetic, enthusiastic preacher, who could be much better engaged spearheading the preaching in East Europe. Anybody could type.

Another consideration was the precarious situation in Germany. Jayatīrtha was reluctant to take on the work, and Hansadutta was unwelcome. The situation called for decisive action. If Harikeśa Mahārāja preached in the East, the natural choice for his base was Schloss Rettershof, and his presence would be helpful. Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested that he go to Poland, where the response had been especially positive. He was so eager to develop the East program he gave Harikeśa Swami a loan of \$1,000 for his immediate expenses.

But on arriving in Delhi Harikeśa Mahārāja caught malaria and could not fly to Europe. His mind began to waver, and he wrote Prabhupāda a letter expressing doubts about his new assignment. The language barrier in the East European countries was a major obstacle; maybe he should preach in America after all. Prabhupāda's reply was unequivocal:

I sent you especially for preaching in that quarter; therefore I gave you money; otherwise in U.S.A. what is need of money. You have experience in that area, therefore I gave money. So I request you not to go to U.S.A.,

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even if it is a little difficult to preach in that quarter. I have written to Guru Dāsa and Sucandra to join you—combine together and preach. In U.S.A. there are many preachers, but here no preachers. Otherwise, if you must preach in English, then you may preach in England.

Prabhupāda made it clear what he wanted, and Harikeśa Swami resigned himself without further hesitation to his will. He teamed up with Sucandra, and in October they went to Yugoslavia. The people's response was tremendous; they went wild over *kīrtana* and *prasādam*.

Prabhupāda became very enlivened when he received Harikeśa Swami's report. He replied:

I am very pleased to learn of our success in Yugoslavia. When there is a little hope of success in these countries, it encourages me 100 times more than in other places. If they take up this Krishna Consciousness, they'll take it very seriously. This is the perfection of Communist ideology. Everything belongs to God. No private proprietorship.

They have gone on the radio, that means they have purified the whole atmosphere. That is the way to introduce; the transcendental sound vibration will act. Utilize this approach. Gradually try to convince them that this movement is the perfection of Communism.

Go on singing Krishna kirtana. That is our program. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu used to go out chanting. He never spoke philosophy in public, only among higher circles. The chanting is very effective. Along with *tampura* and *mrdanga* played very rhythmically, let them chant. Perform this musical demonstration and sell books as far as possible, and feasting. Then everything will be successful. It is good that they do not like these bogus yogis and they like Hare Krishna mantra. Give them the chance to chant the Hare Krishna maha-mantra somehow or other, then very soon good results will be visible.

Jayatīrtha was glad to have a *sannyāsī* at the Schloss, and he encouraged Harikeśa Swami to help manage. Unsure whether to commit himself and maybe neglect to preach, Harikeśa Swami consulted Śrīla Prabhupāda, who simply said: "Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated 24/11/76. Yes, I approve of your helping to rectify the

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situation in Germany. Hoping this will meet you in good health.”

Harikeśa Mahārāja applied himself to the task without delay. The legal situation needed immediate attention. Two weeks later, he was on his way to the Hyderabad farm, where Hansadutta Swami was meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda. He needed Hansadutta’s signatures on legal documents for the court case.

HARI-ŚAURI DĀSA: In the early morning of December 10, Prabhupāda called in Mahāmsa Swami, along with Hansadutta Swami and Harikeśa Mahārāja, who had arrived the night before from Germany. The evening before, the devotees had arranged a *pāṇḍal* program and *prasādam* distribution, but the program was lethargic and the food substandard. Prabhupāda was visibly displeased and stressed to his leaders the importance of proper organization, without which everything was doomed to failure.

“Tomorrow I want to see at least five hundred men,” he told them. “I came here to see that, not to sit down in a room peacefully. Give them nice palatable foodstuff. Make very, very nice *prasādam*. Whatever money is required, I shall pay. Simply theory will not help. Make such *prasādam* that people will be mad after it. I made this movement successful simply by the Sunday love feast. They did not come to hear Hare Kṛṣṇa. They came for the love feast. From the very beginning, when I was at 26 Second Avenue, every Sunday I was giving nice foodstuff, at least for two hundred men. Daily more than fifteen, twenty came. I was cooking myself. That is the beginning of my movement.”

When Mahāmsa Swami, feeling responsible for last night’s disaster, admitted that the *prasādam* had not been nice, Prabhupāda interrupted him: “Not nice? It is not eatable even by the dogs! But you are less than the dogs if you prepare such a thing. I was surprised. You allowed a sweeper to cook. I was surprised. We have distribution of *prasādam*, not dog’s food! Palatable foodstuff means, even if someone has no appetite, he’ll eat. That is food. Not that even if someone has got appetite, he’ll forget. That is not food. *Rādhikāra pakka anna vividha byanjana/ parama ānande kṛṣṇa koreṇa bhojana*. Rādhikā, with Her friends, they are cooking, and they

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cook so nicely that—*parama ānande kṛṣṇa koreṇa bhajana*—with great pleasure Kṛṣṇa is eating. And that we have to distribute. Not dog’s food.

Changing the subject, Prabhupāda began to speak to Harikeśa Swami about Germany. Harikeśa Swami explained that, according to the German judicial system, the court case required some fourteen lawyers, one for each defendant, and he presented his plan for defeating the prosecution and recovering the impounded money. Although public opinion was still decidedly unfavorable, he was confident that we would come out all right in the end.

Harikeśa Swami’s idea was to stop all the bad press by sending men to distribute leaflets in any country where there is a German embassy. The leaflet would make comparisons between the persecution of the Jews and ourselves, and people would be asked to protest to the German ambassador of their country. In this way, he hoped to raise some political reaction as well. When the Allies gave back the country to the Germans, they had a clause written into the German constitution that guarantees freedom from religious persecution, so Harikeśa Mahārāja intended to call on that as well. Prabhupāda was visibly pleased with his enthusiasm.

After the morning walk, we returned to the temple room to celebrate Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s disappearance day. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a wonderful talk about the first four verses of his Vyāsa-pūjā offering from 1936: “Adore, adore ye all...” As he spoke, he explained that the whole process of spiritual life and being saved from a material life of repeated birth and death depended on pleasing the guru.

To illustrate his point, he told us how he had sent Harikeśa Swami away from him to preach in Eastern Europe. He wanted that preaching to be done, and he saw that Harikeśa was the right man. And his disciple immediately went, although at the time he thought he was being punished. “However, it was not punishment,” Prabhupāda said. “I wanted that program, and now we can see a glimmer of success. So this is required, to give up our self-interest for the pleasure of the spiritual master.”

The night before, Hansadutta had come to see Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he’d suggested that Harikeśa Mahārāja be made GBC for Germany. He really didn’t care to go back there anymore, and at the same time, he was

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actually impressed with Harikeśa Swami. A year before, we had spent one month together on Prabhupāda's personal party, and during that period Hansadutta had gained great respect for Harikeśa's intelligence and his dedication to serving Prabhupāda. So he made a strong recommendation, and Prabhupāda immediately accepted it».

HARIKEŚA DĀSA: During the morning walk Prabhupāda asked questions about Germany. All of a sudden he said, "Now you should be GBC for Eastern Europe." I was completely flabbergasted. Then Hansadutta added, "And for Germany." Śrīla Prabhupāda nodded and said, "Yes, and Germany also. And BBT trustee." I was stunned. I couldn't believe all this was happening.

After the lecture, I went to Prabhupāda's room and said, "I can't understand all of this, but by your mercy, something is happening. So I will try my best to do the service as you like." Then I added, "And I promise not to spend any money." But Prabhupāda corrected me: "No, spend. But do not waste."

When I returned to Germany, I went to see Jayatīrtha. I told him, "I'm really sorry. I had nothing to do with this. It just happened to me. But here is a letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda to you and Bhagavān."

I am very satisfied with the work Harikesa Swami is doing there in Germany and Eastern Europe, therefore in order to encourage him and give him facility to rectify the situation in Germany, I have appointed him as acting GBC/BBT until the Mayapur meeting. You GBC men should please help him in his efforts to win the case there as this case will decide the future of our movement there in Europe.

After reading the letter, Jayatīrtha stammered, "But ... but ... this is fantastic! I don't want to be GBC for Germany. This is very nice." So the next day he left for London."

I was mainly concerned with two things: the court case and *saṅkīrtana*. I was overwhelmed by the case. We had a copy of the official accusation, and I spent a lot of time with lawyers, coming up with a strategy. But it turned out that we didn't have to appear in court until a year later.

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Book distribution had been increasing and increasing—mainly by the inspiration of Maṇidhara and Rohinī-sūta. A few weeks earlier, Jayatīrtha had informed Prabhupāda about their feats in book distribution, and Prabhupāda had sent them an encouraging letter:

I have received a letter from Jayatīrtha saying that you have distributed in one week 522 and 521 big books, respectively. This is very wonderful. I thank you so much. Ye yatha mam prapadyante tams tathaiva bhajamy aham. Krishna becomes more and more pleased by seeing the increment of book distribution. Devotional service is absolute, but Krishna is especially pleased to see someone preaching His glories.

In the following months, book distribution increased dramatically. By the time of the Māyāpur festival in 1977, Germany was number one in the world. We were at the top for BBT remittances and at the top for books distributed. Naturally, Prabhupāda was very pleased, and he said, “Everybody was thinking that Germany is finished, but Kṛṣṇa said, ‘No! Let it increase!’”

After the Māyāpur festival, book distribution just went through the roof. Pṛthu became one of the best *saṅkīrtana* leaders we had ever had. He inspired everyone. The devotees went berserk under his leadership. We wiped out the entire world. There was nobody even coming close.

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A Flood of Books

A great task lay ahead: reviving book production. For more than two years, no new titles had been published. Although under Jayatīrtha, arrangements were made to improve the appearance and quality of the books, the plans for new books never fructified.

BHAKTI GAURAVANI GOSWAMI: As soon as I became involved in temple management, my translation work ground to a halt. I was not too much concerned, because we had enough material to publish more than a dozen books. So there seemed to be no rush. But now, with the court case only a year away and Prabhupāda's health deteriorating, printing as many new books as possible became top priority.

I informed Harikeśa Mahārāja about our attempt to work in Los Angeles. Working in Germany was impractical. We had no production facilities, and depending on outsiders, as we had done before, was cumbersome. Nobody had the special fonts to meet our needs, and the Sanskrit diacritics had to be put in by hand with a ruler. To set up our own

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operation would take time, and time was short. So we contacted the BBT in Los Angeles and learned that the fonts we'd ordered were ready.

At the beginning of 1977 Harernāmānanda Dāsa, Taponidhi Dāsa, Śilpakāriṇī Devī Dāsī, Revatī Devī Dāsī, and I went to Los Angeles. We were determined to focus on producing as many titles as possible.

Revatī transcribed, Śilpakāriṇī and Taponidhi took turns working shifts on the Redactron composing machine, Harernāmānanda translated the general index and alphabetized it, and I coordinated everything while also learning layout from Yamarāja Dāsa and designing the covers in consultation with Navadvīpa Dāsa and devotees in the art department.

The devotees at the North American BBT were going out of their way to help us, except for Rādhāvallabha, the production manager. He wasn't happy to have us intrude on his domain and upset the routine. We mostly depended on him to authorize someone's helping us. When Harikeśa Swami made a short visit to L.A. in April, I explained the situation to him, and he informed Śrīla Prabhupāda. Soon afterward Rādhāvallabha received a letter:

As you probably know, our society is facing a very serious court case in Germany. It is understood that if we have difficulty in this court case, we may not get a further chance to print our German books. Whatever German books you have lying with you ready for printing should be immediately printed. This work should be given priority as our society's well-being there depends upon it."

From that point on it was as if the floodgates had opened. Rādhāvallabha gave us all facility, and thus we managed to send a set of films to Germany every three or four weeks. As soon as the first new title came off the press—the German edition of *The Nectar of Devotion*—we sent a copy to Vṛndāvana. Ten days later we received a letter from Prabhupāda's secretary, Tamāla Krishna Mahārāja:

I have been instructed by His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda to reply your letter dated July 14, 1977, sent along with the German translation of *The Nectar of Devotion*.

When His Divine Grace was handed "Der Nektar der Hingabe", he immediately held it to his head and offered obeisances. Then Śrīla

Prabhupāda's lotus eyes moved over the cover and throughout the book just like a bee attracted to honey.

After looking through the book, Śrīla Prabhupāda declared, "This is a very important translation, and it is very nicely made. I am very, very glad to see this. People will immediately purchase it. Such a nice presentation. It is more than first-class. It is undoubtedly better than the English publications. The pictures in the middle are more attractive than putting them at the front. Jaya Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati—it is his blessings. Oh, he was so anxious to print books. It is his life and soul. He would say, 'I have the desire to print some books. I wish to sell the marble. If you get some money, use it to print books.' Everything is very nicely done. My heartfelt thanks to all the devotees of German BBT. And just see, they have given such a nice picture of me, just like a submissive Vaisnava."

To please the Supreme Lord is certainly the perfection of life, but higher than that is to please the Supreme Lord's pure devotee. This you have all done by this first, most important translation of *The Nectar of Devotion*. My obeisances at all of your feet for such outstanding work. Hoping this meets you all well, floating in the ocean of transcendental book printing and distribution.

As soon as Harikeśa Mahārāja began acting as the GBC and BBT trustee for Northern and Eastern Europe, he organized the translation of Prabhupāda's books into the major East European languages. This fulfilled a desire Prabhupāda had expressed to Hansadutta as early as 1973.

During the Māyāpur festival in February 1977, Harikeśa Swami gave Prabhupāda a detailed zonal report, focused mainly on book production and distribution. Books were the basis, and if the basis was sound, everything else would come automatically, in due course of time.

Harikeśa Swami informed Prabhupāda that he had just printed ten thousand books in Hungarian: *The Perfection of Yoga* and *Beyond Birth and Death* in one volume. Recently, the Russian edition of *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, combined with Prabhupāda's talk with Professor Kotovsky, had come off the press. The Polish *Easy Journey* was at the printer, and *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* was being translated into Yugoslavian.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was all smiles. "If there is a scarcity of money, you ask me," he told Harikeśa Mahārāja. "I shall pay you. You can repay me later.

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For printing, there should not be any delay for money. Whatever money you require, I shall arrange.”

Harikeśa Mahārāja assured him that there was actually no scarcity, and added modestly, “By just always printing more books, I’m trying to follow your principle of not keeping a bank account.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed and said, “Yes, yes. That is very nice. I simply ask them, ‘Print books.’ Whatever money I have in the bank, let me spend.’ I am always asking. Instead of keeping in the bank, keep books in stock. That principle let us follow. As soon as there is money, convert it into books.”

When Harikeśa Swami mentioned the court case scheduled for November, Prabhupāda told him, “In the meantime, you overflowed with books.”

Harikeśa laughed in agreement and said, “Yes, an amazing thing is happening now when we distribute books. It used to be that people would say, ‘Oh, this is Hare Kṛṣṇa? I want nothing to do with it.’ Now they say, ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa? Hmm. Let me see what is in this book.’”

Prabhupāda smiled and said, “If there is substance, they will take it. They’re intelligent persons. Yes. Simply by propaganda, you cannot fool them. I know the German nation. They’re intelligent».

Harikeśa Swami then told Prabhupāda about an amazing experience the devotees were having in Austria. Until recently, whenever they had attempted to distribute books they would be arrested, fined, and asked to leave the country. Now Cakravartī and his wife were going to the bookstores, and the response was overwhelming. A week before, they’d sold 1,200 DM worth of books in only six hours.

“It is all Kṛṣṇa’s grace,” Prabhupāda said. “Let us try our best sincerely, and Kṛṣṇa will help us. *Teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam*; otherwise, how is it happening? In foreign countries—a system of philosophy which is foreign to them—how are they purchasing? In India, if they purchase one *Bhāgavatam*, it has got meaning. But in Germany—purchasing *Bhāgavatam*—it is only Kṛṣṇa’s grace.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda had expressed his desire to award a certificate each year at Māyāpur to those devotees who had excelled in a specific category of

devotional service during the year. When Brahmānanda Swami presented Prabhupāda a draft of the certificate's text, Harikeśa Swami remarked, "Rohiṇī-sūta Prabhu, who's probably going to win in the category of book distribution, never wants to come to this festival, because he never wants to stop distributing your books, not even for a day."

Prabhupāda looked pleasantly surprised and said, "Oh, then his certificate should be sent, at least. It should be so attractive that he will want to keep it. The devotees should be encouraged. *Utsāhā*, enthusiasm, is the first item in *bhakti*. This boy did not come here because he is so *utsāhā*. So he should be encouraged.

"The whole basis of the devotional service is *utsāhā*. Just like unless there was *utsāhā*, how could a man of seventy years old, without any hope, go from Vṛndāvana to such a distant place as New York? The only platform was *utsāhā*. So *utsāhā* is so important. Therefore, the devotees should be encouraged."

* * *

Soon after the German BBT devotees left for Los Angeles, Harikeśa Swami began making plans to bring them back as soon as possible. He wanted to set up a multilingual book production unit at Schloss Rettershof. He was working on producing books not only in German but also in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, and Arabic. The most practical arrangement was to get equipment and train a dedicated crew to handle the different languages efficiently.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda received Harikeśa Swami's BBT report, with a detailed description of the progress being made translating, producing, printing, and distributing his books, he felt as though a long-cherished dream were coming true. Tamāla Krishna Mahārāja informed Harikeśa Swami about Prabhupāda's animated response:

His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada has received your ecstatic BBT trustee report dated July 13th, 1977, and has instructed me to reply to you.

I could not get very far, only the first two paragraphs, before Srila Prabhupada stopped me by saying, "All the blessings of Bhaktisiddhanta

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Sarasvati Maharaja upon you. You are the most important grandson of Bhaktisiddhanta. Go on doing like this.”

When His Divine Grace began to hear the huge quantity of books which you are in the midst of printing, covering thirteen languages, he said, “This is tremendous. Do it very nicely. And scholarly. That will attract more attention. Now the preaching in Germany will be complete. When the court case comes up, present all of these books and say to the judge: “First read all these books and then present your judgment.”

Srila Prabhupada wanted to know which Gita is being translated into all of the East European languages, the abridged or the detailed one?

His Divine Grace completely agreed with you that the printing is super first-class in Germany. Bending the book *Der Nektar der Hingabe* backwards, Srila Prabhupada said, “Yes, it is a fact. This is the special advantage of this binding, it is so nice. Dai Nippon and America cannot do this.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased to know that you were soon moving the German BBT back to Germany to handle thirteen different languages. He said, “Very good. And the devotees are very enthusiastic. They are first-class devotees in Germany. So sincere. The German nation is wonderful. I have seen it. I have got very much appreciation for the German ability. In my business days, the German chemical firms were all first-class. All of the best drugs in the medical market came from Germany. And now they are excelling in book distribution. Just see this financial report. There is no scarcity of money.”

His Divine Grace concluded his ecstatic appreciation of your efforts by saying, “He is surpassing all BBTs. I want to go to Germany immediately, but I am physically unfit. I like that place, the Schloss. It is a very nice place. Thank you very much.

HARIKEŚA DĀSA: The summer of 1977 was probably one of the busiest periods of my life. I moved constantly from one thing to the next: going to East Europe, working on the court case, giving classes, holding programs, dealing with the printer, and getting the *saṅkīrtana* together. I spent every weekend in the Schloss with the *saṅkīrtana* devotees and reorganized the groups. There were so many conflicts between individuals that most of them couldn’t stay together for more than a week. But the books were going out like hotcakes».

On August 26, Prabhupāda left Vṛndāvana for his final preaching tour. Despite his serious illness, he wanted to see his disciples in the West one last time. After a short stay in London, he planned to fly on to New York and then show the devotees at the Gītā-nāgari Farm in Pennsylvania how to live from agriculture and cow protection. As he had told Tamal Krishna Mahārāja two weeks earlier: “If I am able to travel again, then I shall visit the farms and make them perfect. On these farms we can demonstrate the full varnasrama system. If these farms become successful then the whole world will be enveloped by Krishna consciousness.”

As soon as Prabhupāda arrived in England, the news spread like wildfire, and devotees from all over Europe made their way to Bhaktivedanta Manor, where Prabhupāda rested for a few days before continuing his journey.

In a letter dated September 10, 1977, his secretary informed Hansadutta Swami who was preaching in Ceylon:

Srila Prabhupada arrived here in London on the 27th of August. The ride was very difficult taking 18 hours due to a six hour delay caused by that strike in the London airport. However His Divine Grace tolerated the ride and arrived alright. Srila Prabhupada was so much pleased to be in the West with his Western disciples and He felt very much enlivened to see them and the wonderful way they are conducting Krishna consciousness here. He also very much enjoys staying at the Manor which He says is His best house in the world. The atmosphere is very peaceful and restive, and Srila Prabhupada is not at all bothered by any anxiety, as is always the case when he is in India.

BHAKTIVAIBHAVA SWAMI: In June, Sucandra and I had driven through East Germany to Poland. For our preaching work in the East, we always used Ladas manufactured in the Soviet Union, which were among the most common cars in the Eastern Bloc at the time. That’s why a Lada didn’t attract curious glances or police checks, unlike a Volkswagen or Mercedes, which would immediately have stood out as “capitalist.” At the beginning of July, we sent a report to Śrīla Prabhupāda, which Tamal Krishna Mahārāja answered:

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Vrndavana, July 12, 1977

From: Tamal Krishna Goswami

c/o ISKCON Schloss Rettershof (Frankfurt)

My dear Suchandra and Avinas Candra Prabhus,

Please accept my humble obeisances. I have been instructed by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupāda to thank you for your letter dated 6th July, 1977 reporting your activities in Communist Poland.

Srila Prabhupāda was very engladdened to receive such a encouraging report. When His Divine Grace heard how you were able to get the books into Poland, He said, “Everything is being done by the special mercy of Krishna. The border guards have become enchanted. *Krishna-kirtana ganana*.” Prabhupāda was very pleased to hear how the local people in Poland are actually becoming affected by Krishna consciousness, so much so that they are chanting, taking prasadam and studying our books. Prabhupāda said, “Then our preaching there is successful. It will not go in vain. Gradually they will be purified. They will be devotees. They will form our party.” When His Divine Grace heard how difficult it is to get sugar and fruits and vegetables, He said, “That I have personally experienced when I was in Moscow. It is a punishment to the atheist class of men.”

This preaching which you are doing is the greatest service to Srila Prabhupāda. Many years ago Prabhupāda used to speak of how He wanted to see a belt of Krishna consciousness wrapped around the world. The only missing link at that time were the Communist countries. But now by the sincere efforts of such wonderful devotees like yourselves, this link has been fitted into place and the belt is complete. Prabhupāda is always eager to gain reports from the preaching there, so you can write again when you have some more success. His Divine Grace said that if Harikesa Maharaja thinks fit he can initiate the most sincere of the people who are joining us in Poland.

Hoping this meets you well.

Your servant,

Tamal Krishna Goswami

Secretary to Srila Prabhupāda

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: After Poland, I traveled with Ghanashyama on a preaching tour through various communist countries in the Balkans, including Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Ghanashyama, an African-

American who specialized in distributing Prabhupāda's books to libraries and universities, had received a letter from Tamal Krishna Mahārāja in June, in which he wrote:

His Divine Grace was extremely enthused to receive your glorious report. He also appreciated the humorous style of your writing and commented about it. Srila Prabhupāda stated, "My books are the real Communism. I am working for the whole human society. My philosophy is to unite the human society on the basis of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, and that is actually happening all over the world. Why a black man is working for me and a white man? How much potency our Ghanasyama has! Practically he is preaching in the jungle. They do not even know his language and still persons are giving standard orders. He is so empowered. I never expected Standing orders from these Communist countries. Now I can understand that they have lost all sense. But still there is hope—this Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

We were in Budapest when I called Harikeśa Swami to report on our preaching activities. He simply said: "Prabhupāda has just arrived in London. It may be the last opportunity to see him. Come immediately." And so we drove straight from Budapest to London by car, a very long journey, because in those days devotees usually didn't fly.

We had been given watermelons in Budapest for the trip. When we arrived in London, we hadn't eaten any of them, as we had been too stressed during the drive. So I gave the watermelons to Prabhupāda's cook. Although Prabhupāda was hardly eating anything anymore, they still regularly brought him a plate with various easily digestible foods. When the watermelons were taken into Prabhupāda's room, I sat by the door. When the plate came back out, I saw that Prabhupāda had eaten only a little bit— of the watermelon.

When we saw him for the first time there, devotees were carrying him down the stairs on an armchair that had been converted into a palanquin. We were all shocked to see Prabhupāda so emaciated. Because bright light disturbed him, he always wore sunglasses, and his hands and feet were swollen, as can also be seen in the picture. Many of us cried upon seeing him in this condition.

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At the temple door, they took off his shoes. I took them and hid them under my kurta so I could put them back on him when he left the temple.

In the temple room, Prabhupāda no longer sat on the *vyāsāsana* but remained seated on the palanquin. Tamal Krishna sat at his side and watched him the entire time. Every now and then he held a *loṭa* to Prabhupāda's mouth when he needed to spit.

GAṄGĀDHARA DĀSA: Somehow I was fortunate enough, probably thanks to my physical stature, to be selected as one of the carriers to take Prabhupāda from his quarters to the temple room. He looked frail. He had put himself under our care, and we were responsible for his well-being. While carrying Prabhupāda down the stairs it was so intense that I constantly prayed to Kṛṣṇa to prevent any mishap.

Every morning we put the palanquin down before the altar, so Prabhupāda could see Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda. As the sun rays shone through the stained-glass roof and bathed the altar in multicolored light, Prabhupāda sat there in complete silence, his eyes fixed on the beautiful forms of the Deities.

Although the temple room was packed with devotees, the only sound to be heard was the chirping of birds outside. Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence created a spiritual mood that affected all of us and imbued us with similar feelings of devotion. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy that he allowed us to witness him at such intimate moments and have a glimpse of what it is like to be fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: The atmosphere was, as it always was, whenever Prabhupāda was present, incredibly intense, but now it had a special intensity because it was more than clear that Prabhupāda was making his last appearance for us in the West. And what struck me was his having darshan of Rādhā-Gokulānanda—no words spoken but simply his presence before the Deities. One had a clear sense that he is now simply reciprocating with the Deities, and They are telling him, “Yes, it's that time.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda wore dark glasses to protect his eyes from glaring light, and his body was shockingly emaciated. On seeing his physical condition, I thought, “He is leaving us.” It was only out of his infinite kindness and love that Prabhupāda sacrificed all comfort to come and see his disciples and followers once more, to give us his last *darśana* and shower his blessings on us before departing.

After being brought before the Deities and imbibing Their presence with intent looks, Prabhupāda was carried to the opposite end of the room. There he remained on the palanquin chair to receive *guru-pūjā*. While the *kīrtana* went on, Prabhupāda looked around the room, very slightly nodding his head to the rhythm, tears gliding down his cheeks. His mood now was entirely different from what it was before. He no longer acted as the fighting warrior—teaching and training his foot soldiers by being stern and corrective. Rather, he allowed waves of ecstasy to overflow and drown everyone in his presence. Now there seemed to be no need for words. Prabhupāda had already given us complete instructions. Now he would simply secure those instructions in our hearts with his pure, uncritical love for us as Kṛṣṇa’s parts and parcels. Prabhupāda gave us the feeling that he was already situated in Goloka Vṛndāvana. And seeing our potential ability to gain that same perfection, he was overlooking our countless faults and inviting us to join him soon in the spiritual world. Those days were filled with the pain of knowing that Śrīla Prabhupāda was leaving us even though we still needed him as much as ever.

MAṆIDHARA DĀSA: When I arrived at Bhaktivedanta Manor, what struck me was the absolute silence. I knew that something was different from the usual visits of Śrīla Prabhupāda. When Harikeśa Mahārāja saw me, he immediately took me to Prabhupāda’s room.

After we entered and offered obeisances, Harikeśa Swami said, “This is Maṇidhara, one of the best book distributors in Germany.” But Prabhupāda didn’t respond. He sat in a chair, his hands folded, absorbed in deep thought. When I saw him I knew he was already far beyond this world.

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Tamāla Krishna Mahārāja, his secretary, brought in the mail. There was a large envelope from Los Angeles that contained photos of the recent Ratha-yātrā festival. As Prabhupāda looked at the pictures, he said, “I always wanted to have a cart like this.”

The package also contained the latest BBT publication, a softbound Spanish translation of *The Nectar of Devotion*. As soon as Prabhupāda saw the book, his eyes lit up. He touched it to his forehead to offer obeisances, and after inspecting the book, he took it on his lap and looked around the room with deep satisfaction. It reminded me of Nanda Mahārāja proudly holding Kṛṣṇa on his lap.

BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: Tamal Krishna Mahārāja had arranged it so that the German Saṅkīrtana devotees, who had all driven to London in their white VW buses, were allowed to enter Prabhupāda’s room. The room was kept darkened because Prabhupāda could not tolerate bright light.

MAṆIDHARA DĀSA: The next day Prabhupāda asked to see all the German devotees. When we went to his room, we all offered *daṇḍavats*, and the mood was a bit like, “Here we are, Śrīla Prabhupāda, the elite of all the *saṅkīrtana* devotees in the world!” Then Prabhupāda asked us, “What is the most important philosophical understanding?” We didn’t expect that. We had expected him to ask about the book distribution results or to hear *saṅkīrtana* stories.

PRTHU DĀSA: After a few moments of uncomfortable silence, Hāraka and I said, *yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa*. Prabhupāda asked us, “What does it mean, *‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa*?” I ventured, “*Deśa* means ‘land,’ so it means ‘the land of Kṛṣṇa.’” He corrected me. “No, it means instruction. It is the instruction of Kṛṣṇa. And what is that instruction?” Again Hāraka and I replied as if we shared one mouth: *sarva dharmān paritjaya*. “Yes,” Prabhupāda said, “that is our business”.

GAṄGĀDHARA DĀSA: Prabhupāda acknowledged the answer to his original question as all right, but it wasn't really what he wanted to hear. When he saw after a while that no one had a clue, he said, "*Aham brahmāsmi*. We should understand that we are not this body. This should be fully realized." We all sat there dumbfounded. That was all? We had heard that hundreds of times. We expected Prabhupāda to speak about *saṅkīrtana*, but he simply made this point."

MAṆIDHARA DĀSA: Outside Śrīla Prabhupāda's quarters we all wondered what had just happened. In those days, we book distributors didn't spend much time reading or studying the philosophy. Our main concern was to do big, to get results. By this little incident, Prabhupāda gave us a final, important lesson, something he had said repeatedly: "These books are not only for selling but also for reading."

KRṢṢA-KṢETRA SWAMI: Ghanaśyāma, who later became Bhakti-tīrtha Swami, was invited to Prabhupāda's room to give a report on the BBT Library Party. As his assistant, I was allowed to accompany him. Ghanaśyāma had already been recognized and appreciated by Śrīla Prabhupāda for his outstanding success in placing standing orders of Prabhupāda's books in American libraries. Now Prabhupāda wanted to hear how his books were selling in Europe, and particularly Eastern Europe, where we had just come from.

Prabhupāda had taken his dark glasses off. He was sitting in a chair, and Upendra, his servant, was gently massaging his legs. Ghanaśyāma spoke about the social conditions in East Germany—people could be seen standing in long lines to get the necessities of life. When Prabhupāda heard this he was overwhelmed by compassion. Tears came to his eyes. He said that because of the officially atheistic position of the government, material nature would withhold the necessities more and more. "They will not get even milk, butter, and sugar," he told us sadly. I was moved by his deep concern not only for the spiritual welfare of the conditioned souls but their material well-being as well.

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BHAKTI-BHŪṢAṆA SWAMI: On September 7, it was Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā celebration. He was again seated on the palanquin in front of the *vyāsāsana*, and Tamal Krishna Mahārāja recounted Prabhupāda's entire life story, from his childhood in Calcutta to his journey to America. From time to time Prabhupāda interrupted him to correct or add something.

Then Prabhupāda wanted to see the Deities in London. A car was arranged to take him, and all the Sāṅkīrtana buses from Germany followed behind Prabhupāda's car. Prabhupāda's vehicle had its headlights on high beam, so we set ours the same way. We drove in a convoy, and sometimes Prabhupāda would cross on green, then the light would suddenly turn red, but we continued driving behind him anyway.

In this way we arrived at the temple in Bury Place. We entered right behind Prabhupāda, and after we had offered obeisances, Yamunā opened the curtains, and "Govindam" was played.

As Prabhupāda sat silently before Rādhā-Londonīśvara, I sat next to him and saw how tears filled his eyes. Some of us felt that we had never seen the Deities so beautiful, as the last exchange between Them and Śrīla Prabhupāda took place.

KṚṢṆA-KṢETRA SWAMI: One morning, Prabhupāda went to London to have *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Londonīśvara. This would be a special event to witness because many devotees felt these Deities were his favorites and he would probably be seeing Them for the last time. So we piled into cars and went ahead of Śrīla Prabhupāda, to be at the Bury Place temple when he arrived. He was brought before Their Lordships on his palanquin. He sat there silently. After a few moments, he took off his dark glasses. Streams of tears were flowing from his eyes.

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Londonīśvara looked particularly pleased to see Their pure devotee. They were smiling at him and revealing increased effulgence and beauty. It was only a few silent minutes that Śrīla Prabhupāda sat there, while a few of us stood toward the back of the room and witnessed a transcendental exchange we could not begin to fathom.

After some days Prabhupāda's health worsened and he expressed the desire

to return to India. He had planned to visit the Gītā-nāgarī farm in Pennsylvania, and show the devotees how to live off the land. “I want to introduce *varṇāśrama*,” he said, but now he felt that the time of his departure was drawing near. “If I survive this time,” he said, “We shall do Vṛndāvana *parikrama*. You can carry me on a palanquin.”

At Heathrow Airport, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s plane to Bombay was delayed. Sitting in a wheelchair, he listened through earphones to *kīrtanas* until he was finally allowed to board the aircraft.

HARIKEŚA DĀSA: The Yugoslavian *Īśopaniṣad* had been translated by a theosophist in Zagreb. It was finally finished at the end of September. So I had Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra sit down in front of the guy with the English edition, and he translated his Yugoslavian version back into English. Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra listened to it all and corrected the whole book so that it would be a proper presentation of the philosophy.

We had only one week to get this book out in time to take it to India along with all the German books. We drove the manuscript and the translator directly from Zagreb to the Schloss, and then I immediately took it to Mrs. Becker, a woman in Frankfurt who had an IBM composing machine and who used to typeset our pocketbooks.

I told her, “I don’t care what it costs, I don’t care what you have to do, you have to finish this book and do nothing else because I have to give it to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is going to leave his body.” So she started to type, and in a matter of days, I had the typeset material.

Next came the layout. I stayed up all night, for almost twenty-four hours, and then, in a completely groggy state, took the waxing machine and some razor blades and went with the translator to Mrs. Becker.

The translator read the book and told me the corrections, and I had her typeset them. Then I waxed them and put them in. By ten o’clock the next morning we were finally finished. I gave all the material to Gaura-kīśora, and he drove off like a madman and gave it to the printer in Bielefeld.

Earlier, I had met with the printer’s big cheeses, and I’d told them, “The author of all these books that you print for ISKCON is about to pass away.

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I want to bring him this book before he leaves his body. Therefore, you have to print it in one day. I am going to give you the layout at two o'clock in the afternoon, and by four-thirty in the morning, I want that book."

They agreed and they did it. They used a huge machine that printed 128 pages at once, 64 on each side. At five o'clock in the morning, they gave Gaura-kīśora two hand-bound copies, and he drove them back to the Schloss just as I was about to finish packing my bags.

The German Second Canto was also ready, except for the covers. I had only proofs of the jackets, which I cut to size on our own cutter and put on the books. I also made a dummy of the first part of the Third Canto, because it wasn't printed yet. Then I took all these books and left for India. It was perfect timing. Everything worked out fine».

BHAKTI-CHĀRU SWAMI: During his final days, Prabhupāda stayed in his living room. His bedroom was actually further inside the house, but because he was sick and that room was colder and had less light, he stayed in the front room. He didn't go out anymore, because he was very, very weak. He was bedridden all the time and hardly eating anything. Once in a while, I would request him to take some juice. That's about all he was taking—a little fruit juice, milk diluted with water, or some lemonade with melted rock candy.

It was early October when Harikeśa Swami arrived in Vṇḍāvana. He brought thirteen or fourteen books to give to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and in those days that was really a lot. Prabhupāda's English books were coming out one at a time, and everybody would get all excited whenever a new book came off the press. Prabhupāda himself would immediately open the book and appreciate everything about it—the paintings, the binding, the paper—and for days he would show the new volume to guests.

When Harikeśa Swami entered Prabhupāda's room, Prabhupāda was propped up a little with some pillows. He could not sit up. Actually, he could not even turn from one side to the other without assistance.

Harikeśa Mahārāja began to show him the books. Initially, he showed him the paintings and explained something about each book, but eventually, because there were so many, he just presented one after another,

saying what title it was and in which language. Śrīla Prabhupāda was so pleased.

He turned to us and said, “He was rotting here, typewriting. I said, ‘You go.’ He thought that I was degrading him. No.” He looked at Harikeśa Mahārāja and said, “Now you understand?”

“Yes, I understand, Śrīla Prabhupāda,” Harikeśa said in a choked voice. Prabhupāda stated that his own spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and all the previous *ācāryas* would be so pleased with Harikeśa Swami, and when Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke on that note, Harikeśa Mahārāja began to cry. But Śrīla Prabhupāda kept on speaking, and as he spoke, Harikeśa cried even more.

It was such a heart-rending sight. Prabhupāda placed his hand on Harikeśa Swami’s head and affectionately rubbed his head as Harikeśa Mahārāja sobbed. This moving scene is very vivid in my mind because at that time I recognized how dear Harikeśa Swami was to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is not only a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he is a very intimate associate of Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And he can give Kṛṣṇa. When I saw the wonderful loving exchange between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Harikeśa Mahārāja, I could understand that all we have to do is serve Śrīla Prabhupāda with all sincerity. When we do that, we will surely advance, and Kṛṣṇa will use us to do wonderful things.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not exist had it not been for the dedicated efforts of my dear godbrother Vaidyanātha. The force behind Project Unity in Germany, he assumed the task of collecting the reminiscences of most of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples who contributed to this volume. For more than a year, he visited them, met them at reunions or festivals, contacted them by letter, phone, or e-mail, and thus gathered interviews, memoirs, photographs, and answers to my questions that came up in the course of writing.

He also lined up an editor, Tattvavit, to whom go my heartfelt thanks for making the text easy to read. (Tattvavit, who is an American, traveled in Europe during the summer of 1972 and visited the Heidelberg Hare Kṛṣṇa center then, shortly after it opened. That was the first time he chanted with devotees and heard a talk on Kṛṣṇa consciousness—a talk Śivānanda gave.)

Śivānanda, the pioneer of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Germany, laid the foundation for the second and third chapters with his extensive memories of the early days, and he visited the Bhaktivedanta Archives to select photographs of Prabhupāda's visits in 1969 and 1974.

Govinda Mādhava, who is with the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust in Northern Europe, provided valuable archive material on ISKCON's history in Germany from 1969 to 1977.

Govindamohinī Devī Dāsī, who has her art studio in Jalón (Spain), made the beautiful pencil drawing of Śrīla Prabhupāda for the dedication page.

I am especially grateful to my wife, Rasāmṛta Dāsī, and our children, who for many months patiently tolerated my absences from home; I spent the hours reserved for them at the computer. Without their support, I would not have completed this book within the given time frame.

I also want to thank His Holiness Lokanātha Swami, his disciple Saṅkīrtana Dāsa, and the other devotees at the Centennial House for giving me all facilities during my stay in Delhi to get the book ready for the printer.

Finally, I would like to thank all my godbrothers and godsisters who contributed their memories and photographs and who encouraged me along the way. What would I have accomplished without you?

Vedavyas Das
Jalón, Spain
October 1995

THE FOUNDER-ĀCĀRYA



His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, was born Abhay Charan De in 1896 in Calcutta, India, into a Vaiṣṇava family. From the very beginning of his childhood, he was educated in a devotional way of life and learned how to see

everything in relation to the Supreme Lord.

He first met his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in 1922, and eleven years later became his initiated disciple and received his new name, Abhay Charanaravinda.

At their first meeting, in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had requested Abhay Charan to broadcast Vedic knowledge through the English language. Thus, in the years that followed, his disciple wrote an English commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and in 1944, without assistance, started a fortnightly magazine, *Back to Godhead*.

Recognizing his philosophical learning and devotion, the Gauḍiṃyā Vaiṣṇava Society honored him in 1947 with the title "Bhaktivedanta." In 1950, at the age of fifty-four, A. C. Bhaktivedanta retired from married life and four years later adopted the *vānaprastha* (retired) order to devote more time to his studies and writing. He traveled to the holy city of Vṛndāvana, where he lived in very humble circumstances in the historic medieval temple of Radha-Damodara. There he engaged for several years in deep study and writing. He accepted the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*) and the title "Swami" in 1959. At Radha-Damodara, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami began work on his life's masterpiece: a multivolume translation and commentary on the 18,000-verse, 12-canto *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*).

After publishing the First Canto in three volumes, he came to the

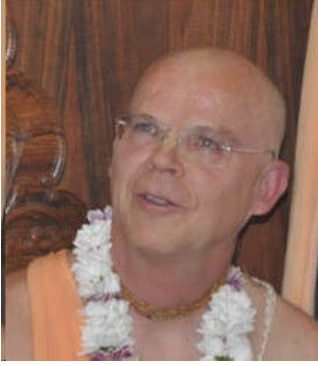
United States, in 1965, to fulfill the mission of his spiritual master. After almost a year of great difficulty he established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in July of 1966 in New York. Under his careful guidance, the Society grew within a decade to a worldwide confederation of almost one hundred ashrams, schools, temples, institutes and farm communities.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also inspired the construction of a large international center at Mayapur in West Bengal, India, which is also the site “The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium”. A similar project is the magnificent Krishna-Balaram Temple and International Guest House in Vṛndāvana, India. These are centers where Westerners can live to gain firsthand experience of Vedic culture.

Prabhupāda’s most significant contribution, however, is his books. Highly respected by the academic community for their authoritativeness, depth and clarity, they are used as standard textbooks in numerous universities. His writings have been translated into over eighty languages. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, established in 1972 to publish the works of His Divine Grace, has thus become the world’s largest publisher of books in the field of Indian religion and philosophy.

In the last ten years of his life (1967–1977), in spite of his advanced age, Prabhupāda circled the globe twelve times on lecture tours that took him to six continents. In spite of such a vigorous schedule, he continued to write prolifically. The writings of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda constitute a veritable library of Vedic philosophy, religion, literature and culture.

THE AUTHOR



Bhakti Gauravani Goswami, born in Germany, in 1951, first encountered devotees in Hamburg in the summer of 1971 while fulfilling his mandatory military service. After reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation and commentary on the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* and receiving guidance from devotees at ISKCON's Hamburg temple, he became a vegetarian, shaved his head, and lived a devotional life to the extent circumstances allowed while still in the army. To help him focus, devotees encouraged him to translate the Second Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* into German. Shortly after his discharge, he traveled to Paris in July 1972 to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda, who accepted him as a disciple and gave him the spiritual name Vedavyas Das.

For the next eight years, Vedavyas translated his spiritual master's books into German and managed the German branch of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT), the publisher of Prabhupāda's works.

In 1981, Vedavyas moved to Spain and assisted in the administration of the Spanish temples. In 1982, he met his future wife, Rasāmṛta devī dāsī, with whom he would raise four children.

In 1985, he established the European office of the Spanish BBT and organized the translation and production of Prabhupāda's books in Spanish.

In 1996, for Śrīla Prabhupāda's centennial celebration, Vedavyas published *Śrīla Prabhupāda and His Disciples in Germany*, a book that recounts Prabhupāda's visits to Germany and other temples in Europe, the history of ISKCON Germany from 1969 to 1977, and memories from Prabhupāda's disciples. In honor of his spiritual master's 125th anniversary, a revised and expanded edition was published in 2021.

In 2007, he and his wife entered the *vānaprastha* (retired) order of life.

Seven years later, on the auspicious day of Gaura Pūrṇimā, in Māyāpura, Vedavyas Das accepted *sannyāsa* (the renounced order of life) and has since been known as Bhakti Gauravani Goswami.

In 2020, he published *Sacred Song Symphony*, a compilation of 108 Bengali and Sanskrit songs and prayers by Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and other *mahājanas*, accompanied by commentaries. He also recorded all the songs and made them available on his website: www.spiritualsoundspace.com.

In early 2025, he presented *Introspection—Life in the Shadow of Time*, a collection featuring 18 of those songs, adapted into English poetry. Available in both print and e-book formats, this work includes 160 color illustrations and an analytical commentary for each song. The recordings of these timeless reflective songs are reimagined within a modern soundscape, preserving their essence while designed to resonate with a global audience.

Later in 2025, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s arrival in America, Bhakti Gauravani Goswami published *Mārkinē bhāgavata-dharma*, a Bengali poem composed by Prabhupāda after visiting Boston on his first day in the US. This work, complete with commentaries and color illustrations for the verses is available in English, German and Spanish.

Currently, Bhakti Gauravani Goswami continues his work in translation, writing, and recording, while traveling and preaching across Europe, South America, and India..

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- *The Silent Companion* – a song that explores the soul’s destiny

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This space is dedicated to offering nourishment for the soul through sound, words, and images.



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