

*excerpts from Chapter Two of Hari Sauri's Transcendental Diary, Volume 4*

## Chapter Two

### Bombay

August 13, 1976

Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't impressed with Iran Air. The service was poor and the facility shoddy. He was even less impressed with Karachi airport, where we had a forty minute stop over. Although we were not allowed off the airplane, no one objected when Prabhupāda and I walked through the open door to stand for a few minutes at the top of the mobile stairway. Scanning the dilapidated airfield heavily guarded by soldiers, Śrīla Prabhupāda shook his head. "Everything is so low class. This place has no importance; there is not one other foreign airline here. They wanted their independence from India, but what have they gained?"

With the two-hour time difference, it was 7:00 p.m. when we landed in Bombay. As we walked across the tarmac from the plane to the terminal building we heard devotees cheering and saw them waving from the roof top. Śrīla Prabhupāda held his hand up to greet them causing them to cheer even louder.

Inside, we were met by Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, Girirāja and our lawyer, Mr. Asnani, who in 1973 was instrumental in settling the purchase of Hare Krishna Land. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa asked Śrīla Prabhupāda and I to sit to one side while they went with our passports to the immigration counter. Harikeśa Mahārāja stayed to bring the luggage. Within a couple of minutes we were given clearance and allowed to proceed without any problem.

A host of jubilant devotees chanted "Jaya Prabhupāda! Jaya Prabhupāda!" as we entered the car to make the short trip to the temple. As Kartikeya Mahadevia drove, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa eagerly informed Śrīla

Prabhupāda of the progress he was making in book printing. He said the translation work was going quickly with the help of Nirañjana dāsa, who Prabhupāda saw in England. 45,000 copies of the first Hindi Back to Godhead were almost sold out, and he was planning a second print run of 30,000. A new issue is currently in production, also with a first run of 30,000. "People can't believe it," Gopāla said. "Even Hitsharan Sharma couldn't believe that we distributed 45,000 Hindi magazines in two months."

"We are distributing millions in English," Prabhupāda reminded him.

Gopāla said that because he has cultivated a favorable relationship with the Joint Chief Controller of Imports and Exports, he now has government permission to import five lakhs worth of books to fulfill the library orders. He can also import paper, which will increase the quality of the books.

Prabhupāda was pleased with the news, but didn't get into a heavy discussion. He told Gopāla and Girirāja that Iran had been very pleasant in the nights and mornings and inquired what the temperature was here. They told him it was 90°F and Prabhupāda nodded agreeably. Prabhupāda also wanted to know if there was a lift installed in his new quarters, but Gopāla had to inform him that his new rooms would not be ready until December or January. Being aware that Śrīla Prabhupāda had difficulty climbing stairs he suggested he might like to move into a ground-floor apartment presently being used as the construction office. Prabhupāda's response was negative. He said the place was too small.

Gopāla also had snippets of information from Vṛndāvana, where he said the traffic was so busy in front of our temple that the government had assigned two police officers to control it. And in Delhi, he said, the daughter-in-law of the Maharani of Jaipur was regularly attending our temple.

Prabhupāda asked whether Hyderabad would be ready for the opening next week, and Gopāla assured him it would.

## Hare Krishna Land Juhu Beach

Pālikā prabhu was waiting amongst a small crowd of devotees at the entrance to his apartment building. Śrīla Prabhupāda was happy, but surprised, to see her. "Oh, you are here."

She was surprised at his surprise, telling him that she had come to cook for him.

They both looked at me inquisitively: she because she thought Śrīla Prabhupāda had personally called her to India, and he because he had not been informed that she was rejoining the party.

Thinking Prabhupāda may not agree to having money spent for his personal needs, I had taken a gamble that he would approve. Now, with some trepidation, I explained my actions in sending for her, motivated by my desire that he get good prasādam everyday. Then I waited for his response.

"Hmm. Anyway, now there will be no difficulty," he said with a gentle smile, filling me with relief.

Prabhupāda had great difficulty getting up the steep steps to his flat on the third floor. He is still very weak from his illness in London, but the stay in Iran has cleared up his cough.

Once inside his sitting room Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted guru-pūjā, allowing the leaders to bathe his feet. They then happily sprinkled the caraṇāmṛta on everyone's heads and passed the transcendental nectar around, to be drunk by the eager devotees.

Prabhupāda scanned the crowded room, spotting Mr. Asnani, who had made it back from the airport after helping to clear our luggage through customs. Śrīla Prabhupāda thanked him warmly for taking so much trouble and told everyone appreciatively, "He is the cause of this site. Unless he would not help, it was practically lost. I know that. Two, three hours how we finished that sales agreement."

Mr. Asnani reported happily that the customs officers did not open any of our bags.

Prabhupāda smiled. He said seriously, "We are always traveling, they should give us some concession. Every time we get checked. Actually, the government should have given us the best facilities because I am distributing India's culture all over the world."

As the devotees cheered he added, "Unfortunately, I am not receiving encouragement from the leaders and the authorities. This is India's glory, history will say. All people are responding all over the world. Money, men, strength—everything—they are supplying. But we are not getting very good encouragement from India. Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission is that every Indian should become guru and preach the instruction of Kṛṣṇa. And people are hankering after receiving this instruction. Unfortunately, the so-called swamis, yogis, or even politicians, they are not presenting Bhagavad-gītā as it is. Anyway, so long I live I shall go on struggling like this. That's all."

Once again the whole room erupted in appreciation. "Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda! All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!"

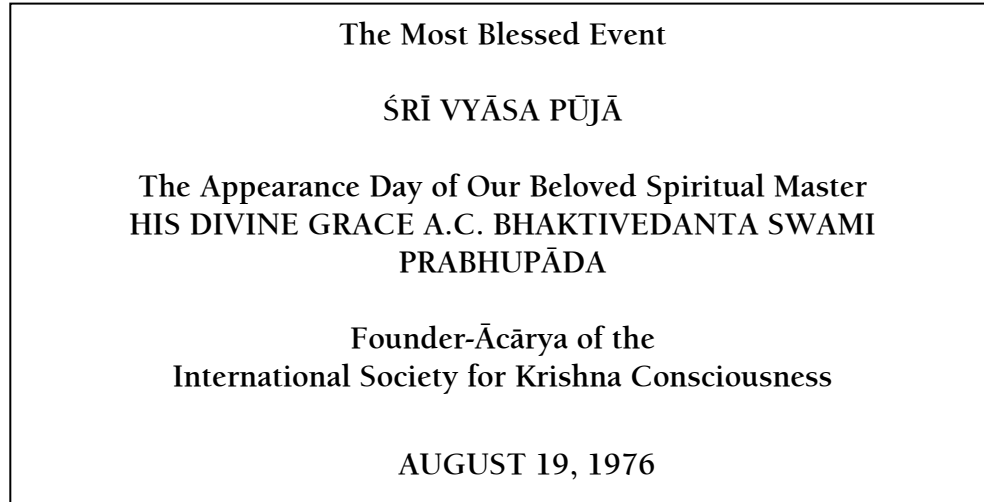
Prabhupāda noticed Nitāi dāsa in the crowd and greeted him with a smile and a few words of encouragement.

Settling back on his āsana to relax after his journey, he addressed his adoring audience. "Jaya. Take prasādam and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, that's all. And we have now nice buildings. Live there peacefully, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Bas. This is my success. If I see that you are living very nicely, chanting very nicely, then all my labor is successful."

A plate of prasādam was offered to him, and after taking a small sweet, he had the rest distributed to the crowd.

His Divine Grace relaxed, picking up a new book lying on his desk. Gopāla Kṛṣṇa explained that Rṣabhadeva dāsa, the president of our Los Angeles-based Spiritual Sky incense company, had brought it. The publication, 215 pages thick and measuring 7" x 8.5", had a deep blue cover and a full color picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the front and back covers. The front one was a full face view of His Divine Grace sitting on the Los Angeles vyāsāsana, playing the gong. The back photo was a beautiful shot of him sitting on the elaborate silver vyāsāsana in Modinagar last March.

The title of the book read:



Śrīla Prabhupāda leafed through it with interest as the devotees looked on. Then, placing it back on his desk, he tipped his head, signalling the end of his reception. The devotees dispersed and Harikeśa Mahārāja and I went about unpacking and setting up his desk paraphernalia.

After everyone left Prabhupāda took a little prasādam from Pālikā. Inspecting his plate he asked her about one of the preparations. Pālikā told him it was a sweet made by one of the girls here.

"Not everyone should make," Prabhupāda told her. "She is initiated?"

Pālikā confirmed that the girl was, but assured him that she would be making all his prasādam herself. She had had no time today because she had only just arrived.

By this time it was 10:00 p.m. I had to leave the sitting room to put something in Prabhupāda's bedroom. When I returned a few minutes later, Prabhupāda was stretched out on his back across his āsana, his head against one bolster and his feet over the other, carefully reading his new

Vyāsa-pūjā book. Leafing through it page-by-page, he glanced over at me and gave a little exclamation of humble delight and surprise. "Oh, they have put such intimate offerings."

With a bright smile of satisfaction he continued to look through the entire book, announcing aloud the name of each center as he came to it, and reading to himself some of the individual and temple homages.