

excerpts from Chapter One of Hari Sauri's Transcendental Diary, Volume 5

## Aligarh

October 9th, 1976

In the early morning we set off in two cars supplied by our hosts on the one-hour drive to Aligarh. Śrīla Prabhupāda has been invited by Mr. Surendra Kumar Saigal to hold programs at his house, "Saket," on Marris Road, for the next two days. Surendra Kumar owns the Tiger Lock company, and his home is in one of the wealthier areas of Aligarh. He and his wife have great affection and admiration for Śrīla Prabhupāda, and they are very respectful to the devotees. Mrs. Saigal worships a thirty-six-inch white marble Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa in her home, so Prabhupāda is encouraging them as much as possible. He is grateful for their hospitality and encouraging them to help him spread the Kṛṣṇa con-sciousness movement to the wealthier sections of society.

About twenty-five devotees from Hansadūta and Yaśodānandana Swamis' bus parties and the Krishna-Balaram Mandir SKP, along with a sizable gathering of Surendra Kumar's relatives and friends, gave a warm reception to His Divine Grace on his arrival at the Saigals' large colonial-style residence. Śrīla Prabhupāda motored along the sweeping driveway amidst the exuberant chanting of the devotees. Emerging, he was draped in flower garlands and led into the large, inner lounge room. As Śrīla Prabhupāda sat comfortably on an armchair, Surendra Kumar and his wife stepped forward to bathe his feet with rose water and milk, then offer him *ārati* as their relatives sang the traditional Hindu *ārati* song.

These formalities completed, Śrīla Prabhupāda sat back for the next hour, relaxed and smiling broadly at his hosts, dispensing warmth and light in the form of complimentary remarks and sound philosophy: "I am very glad to see you again. So this *saṅkīrtana* is all glorious. That is the blessings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam* [*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1]. This is His blessing: simply by *saṅkīrtana* in this age, it is confirmed in the Vedic literature, in Vedānta-sūtra, *śabdād anāvṛtti*. *Anāvṛtti*, liberation. Our present position is bondage. We may foolishly declare independence, but actually we are bound up by the laws of nature. Those who are fools, *vimudhātmā*,

under false prestige, such person thinks that he is independent. No. This misunderstanding has to be cleaned. That is the aim of life. Therefore Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommends that if you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, then the first installment of benefit is *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. Because misunderstanding means within the heart. If the heart is clear, consciousness is clear, then there is no misunderstanding. So this consciousness has to be cleansed. And that is the first installment of the result of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

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Finishing his talk, Prabhupāda asked for questions.

Mr. Saigal's son asked what the Prime Minister's view of the movement was.

Śrīla Prabhupāda told him that as far as he was aware, Mrs. Gandhi liked it. “But she is also not independent,” he added. “Recently one of my students met the Home Minister. He said, ‘Yes, this movement should be spread all over the world.’ They are appreciating. But there are different parties, different circumstances.” Prabhupāda saw some hopeful signs. “Our four items—no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no intoxication, no gambling—so I think they are taking some steps on this ground. They are trying to stop cow-killing, and they are going to take steps for intoxication.”

Mr. Saigal confirmed this and observed that this would build up the character of the nation.

Prabhupāda agreed and gave the spiritual perspective: “We are already intoxicated in material existence, and if more intoxication is there then . . . So this civilization, this education is simply misleading. Simply misleading. There is no enlightenment of this question, ‘What I am?’ No. No answer.”

There was a lot of laughter when Mr. Saigal introduced his eldest grandson as the one who brought Kṛṣṇa consciousness to his house. The boy's father was the first in the family to become a life member of ISKCON.

“Oh, very intelligent,” Prabhupāda said.

Dr. Sukla grinned and said, “His name is Subodh, which means . . .”

Prabhupāda laughed. “. . . Very intelligent!” And he extended the humor, linking it up with his lecture. “I was talking of *a-bodh*. Yes, *abodha-jāto*.”

Dr. Sukla loved the play on words. “Yes, *abodha-jāto*. He is already *subodha*!”

Amidst the joviality of the Saigal family, Prabhupāda, while sharing their laughter, kept his focus on the sober side of things. “He is *subodha*. One who is *abodha*, he is *parābhava*, defeated. And one who is *subodha*, he is victory. So human life is meant for becoming *subhodha*, not *abodha*. But they are keeping *abodha*. This is difficulty. Everyone is *abodha*.”

Prabhupāda asked the boy if he knew what was God.

The young fellow, shy and embarrassed at suddenly becoming the center of everyone’s attention, replied that he wanted to know.

Like a wise grandfather, Śrīla Prabhupāda gently told the boy that unless he knew what it was he was looking for, then he would be cheated. “Suppose you go to purchase something, ‘Give me gold,’ and if he gives you iron, then what you’ll do? You do not know what is God, gold. You must know first of all what is God. Then you ask. If you do not know, then you’ll be cheated. That is going on.”

The boy’s father chimed in, “Mahārāja, but there must be somebody to say that ‘this is gold and this is iron.’ ”

“Yes,” Prabhupāda agreed. “That means requires a superior education. Yes. The father, mother should be responsible.”

The younger Saigal could think of no one better than Śrīla Prabhupāda to impart that knowledge. “So who can be greater than your Divine Grace?”

But Prabhupāda smilingly put the responsibility back on him. “No, no. The father . . . The first thing is that why do you send your sons to the school? It is duty that he should know. So if the father is a rascal, then how the son can be *subodha*?” Everyone laughed at his play on words, and Prabhupāda went on, quoting from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “Therefore the *śāstra* says that unless you can train your son to overcome this process of birth, death, old age, you don’t become a father; you remain a rascal. Don’t beget children. This is contraception. *Pitā na sa syāj jananī na sā syāt na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum* [SB 5.5.18]. The real problem is *mṛtyu*. But they have taken it that ‘It is

ordinary.’ But nobody wants to die. The education is *na jāyate na mriyate vā kadācit na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. There is no inquiry that ‘If I’m not born, why I am born in this body?’ This is question—*athāto brahma-jijñāsā*. ‘If I am not subjected to death, then why I am dying?’ This question does not arise at all. Therefore nobody is *subodha*; everyone is *abodha*. The problem is there, but he does not inquire.”

Surendra’s daughter asked Prabhupāda whether he thought Indian philosophy and religion should be taught in schools. In the schools run by missionaries they used to have scripture class, she said, so why not do the same now, but teach “our own religion instead of someone else’s”?

Prabhupāda immediately corrected her misconception. He told her that to know that we change bodies from a child to a youth to an old man, as it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, is not the teaching of a particular religion; it is a fact. He condemned the understanding that the *Gītā* is simply some particular religious viewpoint and said it applied to everyone—Hindus, Muslims, Christians *et al.* “It is science,” he stated. “Religion is a kind of faith. That they describe. But religion is also not a blind faith. Religion means the order of God. That is religion. *Dharmam tu sāksād bhagavat-praṇītam* [SB 6.3.19]. Just like law means the order of the state. Similarly, religion means the order of God. If you have no conception of God, if you do not know what is God, what is order, then where is religion? It is all bogus.”

Her brother told Prabhupāda that the point she was trying to make was that most parents are not aware of what to teach their children.

Prabhupāda agreed with that and offered a remedy. “Yes. Therefore I’m starting that gurukula in Vṛndāvana. So you come, take the ideas, and make your children . . . Whatever mistake is done is done. Now why the mistake should continue? Rectify it.”

The younger Saigal told him that the problem was that the secular policy of the government prevented any kind of religious instruction in schools.

Prabhupāda responded with a square-on repudiation. “Then kick out secularism. Science, it is science. When a child becomes a boy, there is no question of secularism. It is science. It is fact. Can you by secularism stop a child growing to become a boy? When I was explaining in South Africa these things, one Arya-samaji friend, he

criticized me that ‘Why you are bringing Hindu ideas?’ So I said, ‘Is it Hindu ideas? A child grows to become a boy. It is Hindu idea? Why you are so fool you’re calling Hindu idea?’ Because it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, they take it ‘Hindu idea.’ This is nonsense.”

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The reception broke up and everyone dispersed to do their respective duties in preparation for the evening’s event. Prabhupāda is occupying the same room that he had stayed in last March—to the right of the front veranda as one enters the house—and we servants are at the veranda’s opposite end.

Surendra Saigal came in to Prabhupāda’s room to find out what he wanted for breakfast. Prabhupāda mentioned apples and milk. Since Mr. Saigal had made some suggestions to Śrīla Prabhupāda for helping with his health, I asked him if he could get some *ghrita-kumari*, aloe vera. Arjuna and Tamopahā prabhhus suggested it last week as a good remedy for high blood pressure and for cleaning the arteries. Mr. Saigal happily informed us that he had it growing in his garden. His wife takes it regularly, stuffed in *chapatis* or *parathas*, and finds it quite efficacious for relieving pains in her knees. Mr. Saigal though, suggested that garlic was the best for relieving high blood pressure.

Prabhupāda wrinkled his nose and grimaced slightly. “Garlic.”

Mr. Saigal smiled at his reaction. “Garlic. You don’t want it,” and they laughed together.

“Garlic, onions, prohibited,” Prabhupāda told him.

So it was settled that his wife would cook aloe vera *chapatis* for breakfast. Prabhupāda asked Gaurasundara prabhu if he knew of it, and he confirmed they had it in Hawaii. He added that it can be used externally for skin diseases, burns, and cuts.

As Mr. Saigal left the room to prepare for breakfast, Prabhupāda concluded, “Body is simply troublesome.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda also called for Pālikā. She is staying with some other women in a room at the back of the house. Prabhupāda told her that since Mrs. Saigal was eager to cook for him he would allow her, but that Pālikā should supervise her closely. Generally when he is traveling he doesn’t like to accept foodstuffs from others, because his digestive

system is so delicate. But Indian culture is such that if you don't accept this hospitality, it is considered a snub, so Prabhupāda wants Pālikā there to ensure that everything is prepared in such a way that he can eat without discomfort. Pālikā had actually asked Akṣayānanda Swami to write to the Saigals about ten days ago with a request that a small kitchen be made available for her use, equipped with a double gas burner, *shil* and *batta* (grinding stone), urad, mung and tuar dahls, good *atta* (flour), basmati rice, and pure cow's ghee and milk, and they have complied. It was stressed that all ingredients be of the finest quality and that buffalo products be strictly prohibited because these are dangerous for Prabhupāda's health. As an added measure, Mahakṣa prabhu, an English devotee stationed in Vṛndāvana, was sent ahead with the list to make sure that the Saigals understood what was required.

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Just before giving Śrīla Prabhupāda his evening massage, I began to feel a little weak. I went into Prabhupāda's room and His Divine Grace took rest. I climbed up by his side on the bed and began to gently massage his legs. Inexplicably, my temperature suddenly began to soar, and within two or three minutes I became so feeble and incapacitated that I could not continue. I had to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda if I could stop and bring in Akṣaya prabhu, who was sitting outside the door on guard duty, to finish.

Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed and I brought him in. Since Akṣaya had never massaged Śrīla Prabhupāda before, I stayed by his side to instruct him how to do it. Akṣaya was willing, but as soon as he clasped Prabhupāda's lotus feet and began pressing his soles, Prabhupāda exclaimed to me, "Oh, his hands are wet."

I asked Akṣaya and he agreed that it was so. He was nervous and his palms were sweaty. So that was it. I had to send him back out to resume his guard duty—an opportunity lost for him, a dilemma for me, and an inconvenience for Śrīla Prabhupāda. I couldn't think what to do. It was nearly 11 o'clock and there were no other devotees around. Then Prabhupāda told me, "Why not bring Gaurasundara? He also used to massage me before." Gaurasundara was Prabhupāda's personal servant

in 1967. He was asleep, and I wasn't sure how he would react, since he hasn't been intimately connected with ISKCON for many years. But as soon as I woke him up, he readily agreed, and within a minute or two he was back in his old position at Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. Sick as I was, I went back in with him, not because I thought he might need some help or instruction, but because I didn't want to miss the nectar of his reunion with Prabhupāda.

As Gaurasundara rendered the massage, Prabhupāda happily reminisced about the early days when Gaura-sundara and his wife, Govinda dāsī, used to serve him as his servant and secretary. Govinda dāsī was cooking and transcribing his tapes, Gaurasundara was giving him his massages, and they were both painting and drawing for his books. Prabhupāda happily and appreciatively remembered the drawings that were used in the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*. They both began to laugh as he recalled how Govinda dāsī had also wanted to massage him and how she had cried when he refused because he was a *sannyāsī*.

Prabhupāda never forgets someone who has rendered service to him, and he is always eager to re-engage them, no matter what they may have done since. Gaura-sundara himself seems a polite, quietly-spoken fellow, clean shaven with short hair, and he appears to me a little brighter in his countenance than when we saw him in Hawaii in May. This is no doubt due to his regularly chanting sixteen rounds again; devotional service restores the brightness to the spirit soul.

It was a blissful twenty-minute exchange, and then Prabhupāda sent us back to our room to retire for the night while he resumed his most important work of the day—his translation and commentating on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

**October 10th, 1976**

Śrīla Prabhupāda had a doctor called for me, but he came when the fever was down and I was feeling fairly normal. His diagnosis was the flu, but after he left I again became very ill. Śrīla Prabhupāda called me in and asked what the doctor prescribed for. When I told him the flu, he shook his head with dissatisfaction. "It is malaria," he said, and actually this turned out to be the case. He told me to take

Chloroquinine, which I did, and I rested the whole day. Gaurasundara prabhu has taken over all my duties, virtually acting as full-time servant. So quite unexpectedly, by Kṛṣṇa's and Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy, he is being fully engaged in Prabhupāda's personal service once again.

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Mrs. Saigal has been cooking expertly for Śrīla Prabhupāda and he called her into his room in the late evening to thank her. After her first day's efforts he had complimented her and said she had cooked so nicely he had eaten enough for three days in one. He especially liked the *neem begun*, a traditional Bengali eggplant dish she had made. In response to Śrīla Prabhupāda's request Mrs. Saigal also made a jar full of *chudi (sevian)* savoury noodles which he has been keeping on his desk and occasionally dipping into. Now on the eve of his departure he thanked her and smilingly told her that she had looked after him just like a daughter. Mrs. Saigal was highly gratified that she had pleased His Divine Grace by her humble efforts.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda also had a few last words with Dr. Sukla, who, since Prabhupāda's request to him in March, has been translating *Nectar of Instruction* into Hindi. Prabhupāda asked him to head up the Hindi translation work for the BBT. He asked Dr. Sukla how much the university was paying him.

"Two thousand rupees a month," Dr. Sukla replied.

"So I will pay you three thousand," Śrīla Prabhupāda told him with a broad but serious grin.

Dr. Sukla was flattered by Śrīla Prabhupāda's confidence in him but he reluctantly declined his offer because of his ongoing commitments at the university.