

INTRODUCTION

For a period of sixteen months, from late November, 1975 to the end of March, 1977, I had the great fortune to travel with His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda as his personal servant.

Although the initial period of my tenure was to be only two or three days, by the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa I immediately recognized the unique opportunity in my being able to personally associate with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Thus, on the first night, I purchased a blank notebook in which to keep a diary of my experience. I was thinking that ten or twenty years hence I would be able to read those notes and relish the brief time spent in his association. When my position in his entourage was more firmly fixed, I continued to update the diary on a daily basis.

At the same time, I was very aware that Prabhupāda's words—especially his conversations on the daily morning walks and with his visitors—were being recorded on tape. I considered these to be another kind of diary.

This book, then, represents an expanded form of my personal written diary coupled with snippets and segments of the electronically recorded one. Added to this are selections of His Divine Grace's correspondence.

This is one small attempt to bring to the attention of the world the greatness of Śrīla Prabhupāda, his person and his message. I have attempted to present an accurate and detailed historical record of the activities and pastimes of

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Śrīla Prabhupāda—Śrīla Prabhupāda *as he is*—during the latter part of his stay with us. It is then, a partial biography.

This should not be taken as the personal memoirs of a former servant, although certainly I have expressed some of the feelings and emotions I experienced at the time. Nor is it a retrospective analysis. It is a simple, factual account of times, places, and events, which I, as his personal servant, was in a unique position to observe.

My purpose in presenting this material is two-fold. Firstly, I wanted to glorify Śrīla Prabhupāda in whatever small and humble way I could. Such a brilliant figure has rarely been seen on the stage of human life, and I was keen that, before we are robbed by passing time of the clear memory and appreciation of his pure and transcendental nature, this material be made as widely available as possible. Secondly, I wanted to give the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, in particular, the opportunity to associate with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the same intimate and daily way that I did. All scriptures emphatically declare the incalculable benefit of association with a saintly person, yet that opportunity is normally only available to a limited few. However, through the printed word, it can be expanded unlimitedly.

I readily admit to my limitations in making this presentation. I am neither a writer nor a devotee. The only qualification I can claim is to say that I was there. Somehow or other Kṛṣṇa gave me sufficient presence of mind to record the events, and thus, with whatever little humility I possess, I now present this material for the pleasure and edification of all devotees of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the future followers of His Divine Grace, historians, scholars, and the public at large.

The Bhaktivedanta Archives is gradually making the complete versions of all of Prabhupāda's conversations, letters, and lectures available in both tape and book form. That being the case, one might question the need for the inclusion of extracts from these sources here. The answer is simple: within these pages the reader will find the circum-

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stances surrounding particular events, and thus the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda will take on fresh and deeper relevance.

One may also question the inclusion of names and incidents that may be less than flattering to the individuals concerned. To this I should state my reasoning in doing so. 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. Great profit can be derived from understanding how Śrīla Prabhupāda dealt with difficult situations, how he corrected problems, and how he settled disputes between his spiritual children. For us, this was all part of the process of growing up in our spiritual lives, and to whatever degree we accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda's advice, and sometimes chastisement, to that extent or more, we profited in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We can take these incidents in the same spirit that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself did; he didn't condemn 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.

I pray for the blessings of all the devotees and followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda and hope my humble attempt will serve to increase their appreciation and understanding of the personality and teachings of His Divine Grace.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda himself noted as we traveled on the overnight train from Allahabad to Calcutta in January, 1977, "History will mark this period, how the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement changed the world." He left a great legacy to the world, and this is one very small attempt to make it known.

Again, referring to the books written by himself, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if a person reads "one verse, one line, one word," his life will be changed.

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I am confident that the same effect will be had by reading books written about him. And that is the purpose of Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance: to change our lives from the dull and mundane to the transcendental realm of spiritual enlightenment and unlimited happiness, where all difficulties and contradictions are automatically resolved in the light of their common relationship to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes, and the center of all existence.

Hari-śauri dāsa