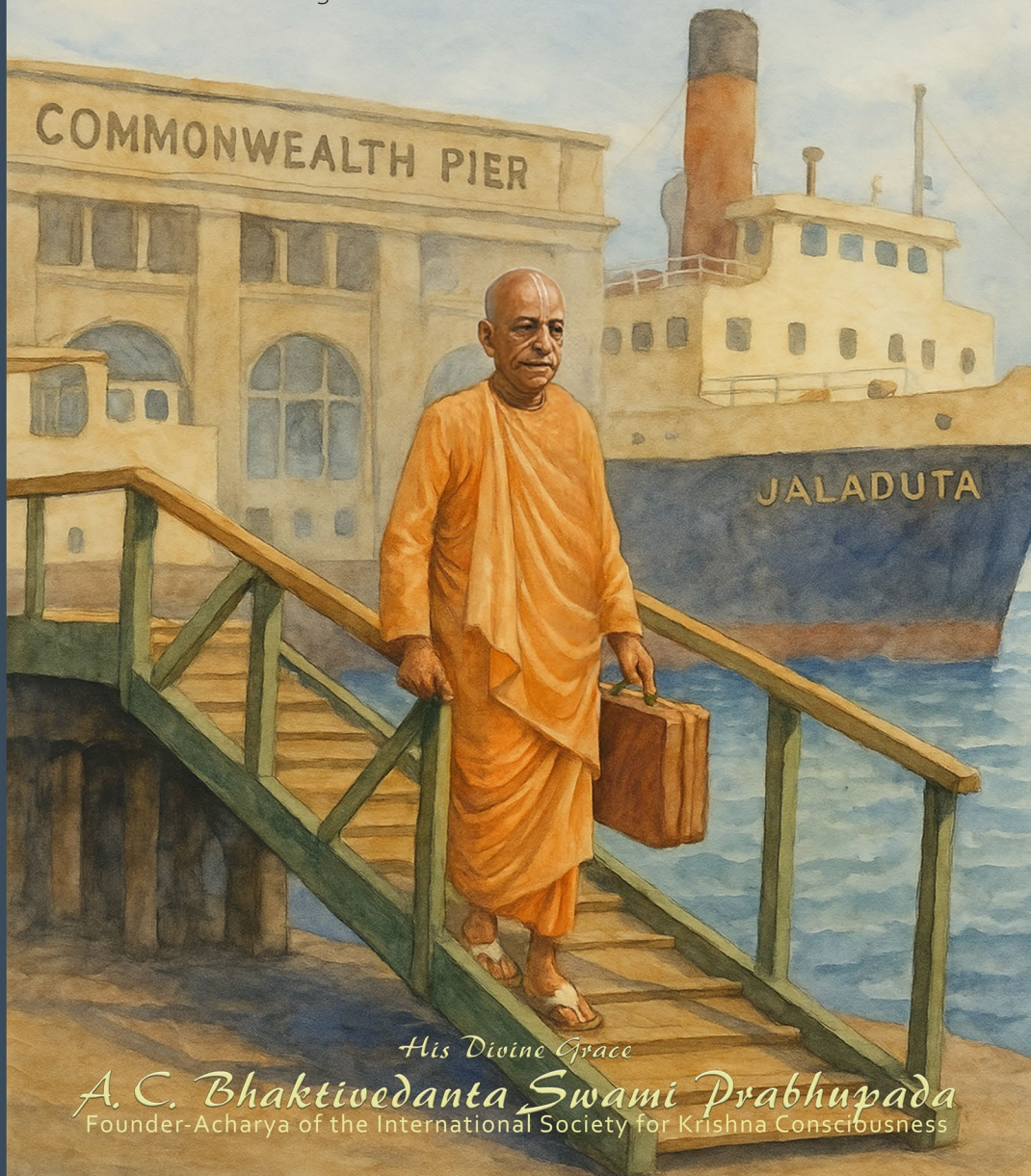


# Markine bhagavata-dharma

Preaching Krishna Consciousness in America



*His Divine Grace*

*A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*  
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Adaptation & Commentary

*Bhakti Gauravani Goswami*



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# *bhagavata-dharma*

Preaching Krishna Consciousness in America

A Bengali prayer by

His Divine Grace

**A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Adapted into English verse

and presented with commentary by

**Bhakti Gauravani Goswami**



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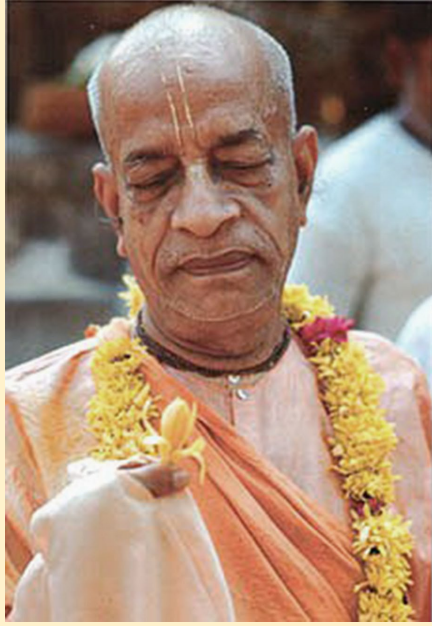
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Dedicated  
to my eternal spiritual master



His Divine Grace  
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda  
on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his arrival in America.

May his shining example of  
unreserved dependence on the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa  
guide us on our journey back to Godhead.

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## Introduction

*Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma* is the second poem composed by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Bengali upon his arrival in America. Its main theme is a pondering of the prospects of his mission to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the New World. The first poem, *Prayer unto the Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa*, written during the last days of his journey across the Atlantic Ocean, primarily glorifies his spiritual master, who was spreading the glories of the Lord throughout the world. In it, Prabhupāda humbly begs the Lord to empower him to fulfill the order of his *guru*. In the final verses, he laments his separation from the Lord and expresses the heartfelt desire to attain His personal association again.

Both prayers, found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Jaladuta Diary*, are deeply personal expressions of devotion, not originally composed with the intention of being published for a wider audience. However, when his disciples later requested permission to share them, he did not object. He wrote: "Yes, publish the Bengali poem which I am sending herewith. He then provided his own English translation, which can be found in Appendix I of this book.

*Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma* is both a prayer and a poem that can be sung—either in the original Bengali or in a poetic English adaptation, which I am presenting here. The word *mārkine* is the Bengali rendering of "America," and *bhāgavata-dharma* refers to—according to Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations in various places—"Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *saṅkīrtana* movement," "the activities of the devotees," "Kṛṣṇa consciousness," or simply "*bhakti*, devotional service."

In 1976, Jayasacinandana Dāsa, one of Prabhupāda's disciples serving in the BBT's Sanskrit and Bengali department, translated this poem into English. When Prabhupāda received the translation,

## *Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma*

he wrote back: "My dear Jayasacinandana, thank you very much for your nice translation of *Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma*. It is well appreciated. I think it can be included in the front of the new printing of the songbook, and it can be sung in *kīrtana* like the other songs of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura."

This letter also confirms that Prabhupāda did not mind that this poem was made public. Following in the footsteps of his predecessor *ācāryas*, he demonstrates through his example how to pray with a mood of utter humility and unconditional surrender.

*Vandanam*, or offering prayers, is one of the nine processes of devotional service and can be combined with *kīrtanam*, or singing. *Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma* is one such poem that can be sung in *kīrtana*, like so many other compositions by our previous *ācāryas*. Generally, people write poems, offer prayers, and sing songs in their own language, which is why Śrīla Prabhupāda composed his poem in Bengali. Those who speak the language are undoubtedly fortunate, as they can effortlessly understand what they are singing. For others, the next best option is to memorize the English translation and, while singing in Bengali, reflect on its meaning. However, experience shows that this is easier said than done.

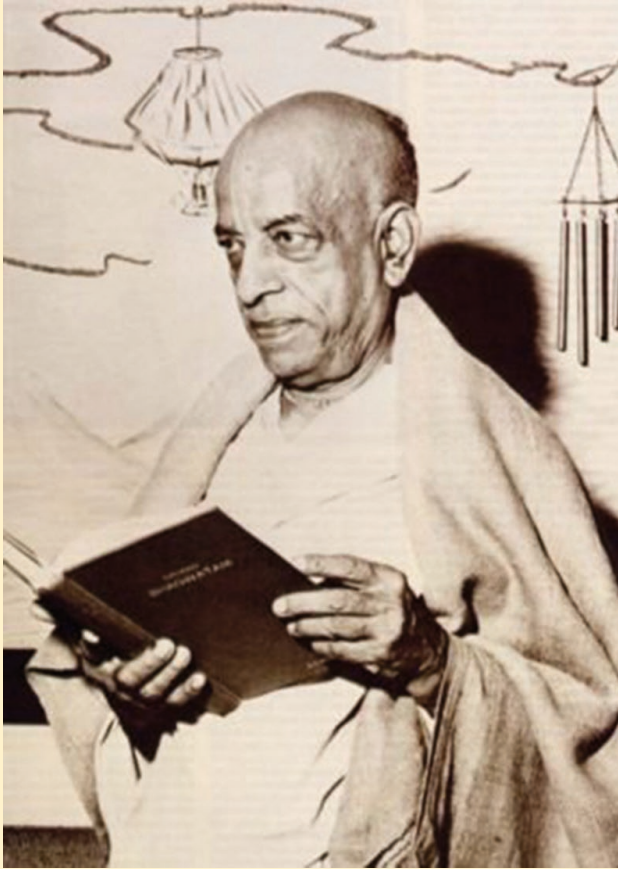
During the time of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, more than 150 years ago, the devotees in Odisha voiced their frustration that they could not understand the meaning of his songs because they did not speak Bengali. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura proposed translating his songs into the local language as a solution. He also encouraged them to use their traditional instruments for accompaniment.

Considering the universal appeal of music, I have taken the initiative to adapt *Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma* into an English song titled *Make Me Dance*, accompanied by a contemporary musical arrangement. This approach may appeal to those who do not speak Bengali and feel more comfortable singing in their own language, while also offering the benefit of understanding what they are singing.

## Introduction

Unlike most contemporary pop songs, Vaiṣṇava songs carry profound messages meant to connect us to the spiritual dimension of life. If this presentation helps deepen even one soul's understanding of spiritual truths, I will consider my effort successful.

Bhakti Gauravani Goswami  
Advaita Ācārya's Appearance Day  
4 February 2025



Śrīla Prabhupāda, shortly after his arrival in America, photographed by a reporter for the *Butler Eagle* in Pennsylvania, September 1965. He holds the first volume of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the revealed scripture that presents *bhāgavata-kathā*—words of and about Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

As he states in Verses 8 and 9 of his poem, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the Lord's incarnation, and if a person repeatedly receives its message with a submissive attitude, the heart will be cleansed of all inauspicious things and the soul will be released from material bondage.

# *Make Me Dance*

based on Śrīla Prabhupāda's prayer  
*Mārkine bhāgavata-dharma*





1

Great mercy, O Krishna, You bestow upon me,  
a wretched soul now lying in Your hands.  
Yet why You have brought me here, I cannot see,  
to a terrible place in foreign lands.



2

Some purpose must You have, this I surmise,  
why else bring me here to illusion's domain,  
where the people are trapped under darkened skies,  
where passion and ignorance dictate and reign.



3

Absorbed in the joys of fleeting delight,  
no taste for Vāsudeva's *kathā*.  
How they will be able to understand,  
I cannot perceive it so far.



4

But there is hope within my heart:  
Your causeless and mercy-laden glance.  
Everything is possible by Your mystic art:  
Even the dumb and lame can sing and dance.



O Lord, I am like a puppet in Your hands.  
If You have brought me here to dance,  
then make me dance, O Lord, make me dance,  
make me dance under Your merciful glance.



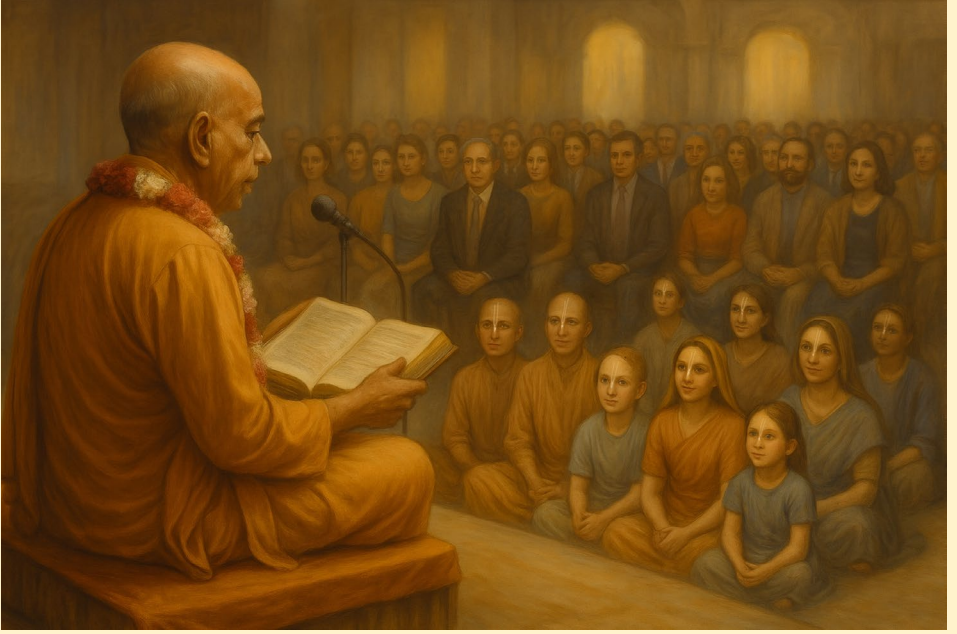
5

How will these people savor *bhakti's* sweet flow?  
I'm praying for Your mercy, boundless and deep.  
Only by Your grace can their taste for it grow.  
Let me awaken them from fathomless sleep.



6-7

Under illusion's spell all beings reside;  
by Your will alone can they be released.  
I pray for their redemption, let illusion subside.  
Then only will they understand and be freed.



8

*Bhāgavata-kathā* is Your sound incarnation;  
submissive hearing will lead to understanding pure,  
cleansing the heart by spiritual vibration,  
a pleasing treatment and most effective cure.



(SB 1.2.17)

The well-wishing friend in everyone's heart helps the devotee eager to hear His *kathā*, and cleanses all desires for material pleasure, bestowing His mercy beyond any measure.



(SB 1.2.18)

By serving the *bhagavata* person and scripture  
all troubles of the heart are almost destroyed,  
and loving service to the Lord in blissful rapture  
becomes an irrevocable fact unalloyed.



(SB 1.2.19)

When *bhakti* irrevocable blooms in the heart,  
lust, greed, and hankering quickly depart.  
Established in pure goodness, joy finally found,  
the devotee enjoys happiness unbound.



(SB 1.2.20)

When unalloyed goodness rules the mind,  
enlivened by devotional service refined,  
scientific knowledge of the Lord is gained,  
and from bondage the soul is finally unchained.



(SB 1.2.21)

Thus the knot in the heart is pierced,  
all misgivings are cut to pieces.

The chain of *karma* ends,  
when one sees the self as master.

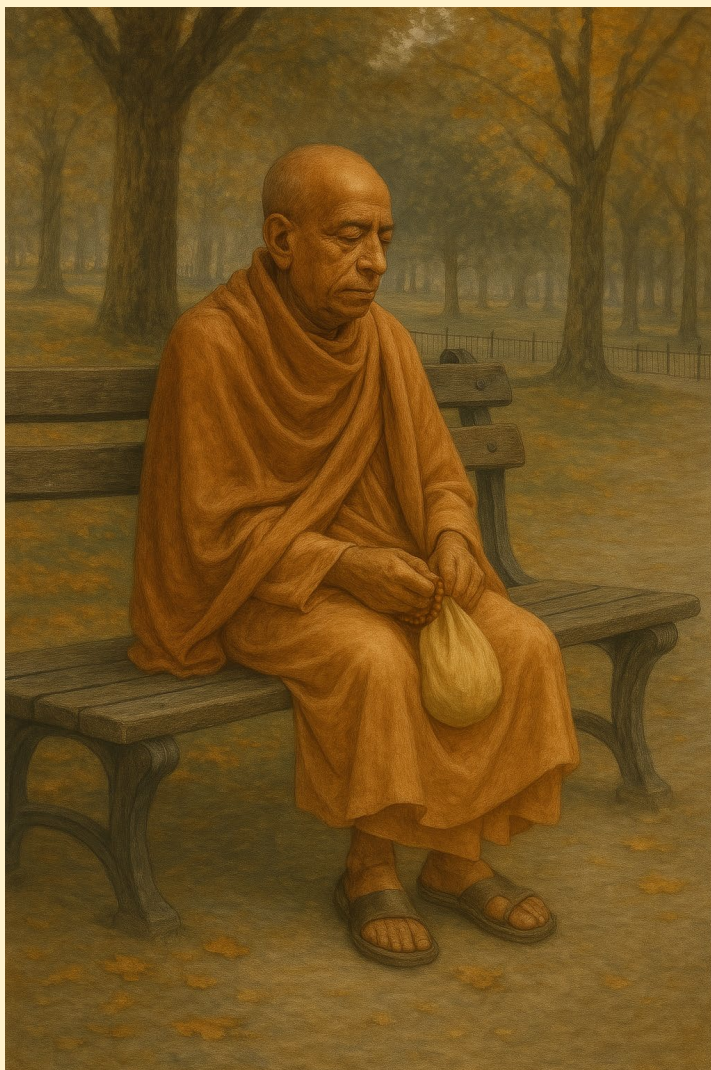


O Lord, I am like a puppet in Your hands.  
If You have brought me here to dance,  
then make me dance, O Lord, make me dance,  
make me dance under Your merciful glance.



10

Whoever hears Your message attentively,  
from passion and nescience will be free.  
Evil desires in their heart will disappear,  
that soul will become Your servant dear.



11

How can I convince them of Your words divine?  
I'm fallen, unfortunate, and unqualified.  
Your blessings I implore, I seek Your guiding hand,  
grant me strength, so their hearts will understand.



12-13

O Lord, You brought me here, Your glory to profess;  
in Your hands, my fate rests, be it failure or success.  
Master of the world, through me Your words will flow;  
shape my speech for their hearts Your wisdom to bestow.



14

By Your mercy alone my words will become pure,  
then touching their hearts all sorrow they'll cure.

Your message transcendental and sublime  
will free from all worry, bring bliss anytime.



15

Devotion I don't have, nor knowledge can I claim,  
but strong faith I have in Krishna's holy name.

The title "Bhaktivedanta" was given to me by devotee friends;  
to fulfill the true meaning of "Bhaktivedanta" now on You depends.



O Lord, I am like a puppet in Your hands.  
If You have brought me here to dance,  
then make me dance, O Lord, make me dance,  
make me dance under Your merciful glance.

## Verse 1

বড়-কুপা কৈলে কৃষ্ণ অধমের প্রতি  
কি লাগিয়ানিলে হেথা কর এবে গতি (১)

*bara-kṛpā kaile kṛṣṇa adhamera prati  
ki lāgi ānile hethā kara ebe gati*

*bara-kṛpā*—great mercy; *kaile*—showed; *kṛṣṇa*—O Lord Kṛṣṇa; *adhamera prati*—to this fallen soul; *ki lāgi*—for what reason; *ānile*—You have brought me; *hethā*—here; *kara*—please show; *ebe*—now; *gati*—Your purpose.

**My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are so kind upon this useless soul, but I do not know why You have brought me here. Now You can do whatever You like with me.**

### Commentary

Śrīla Prabhupāda composed this prayer on September 18, 1965, one day after his arrival in America. Following the order of his spiritual master to preach *bhāgavata-dharma* to the English-speaking world, he had undertaken an arduous journey across the Atlantic and finally arrived at his destination. One would expect him to be elated and eager to begin his preaching mission at last. However, his mood was grave and somber.

On the day of their arrival, the captain of the ship had taken him to the nearby downtown area of Boston, an important metropolis in the United States, situated not far from Harvard University, one of the oldest and most prestigious educational institutions in the world. But Prabhupāda's first impression of his new preaching field was not at all promising. Although America was considered to be the most advanced country on Earth, as far as technological

## Verse 1

progress and material facilities were concerned, all the glamor of modern city life, with its fancy cars and massive buildings, did not impress him as something wonderful and admirable. Quite the contrary. Not only was he missing the simple village life of Vṛndāvana, as he had expressed in his diary while still at sea, but he also saw immediately through the glamorous veil of Western civilization.

Boston's atmosphere was surcharged with a relentless spirit of enjoyment, unlike the serene atmosphere of Vṛndāvana that he had left behind. In this mood, he expresses a paradoxical doubt: "My dear Lord, why have You brought me here?" He felt that America did not look at all like a place where the people would be open to receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus, the first verse sets the tone of the entire poem—a mixture of appreciation, doubt, and self-surrender.

One might wonder why Śrīla Prabhupāda would ask, "Why have You brought me here?" After all, he had not been washed ashore by accident. He had planned to preach in the West for a long time; he had overcome many obstacles and undergone a great deal of trouble before finally being able to embark on this adventure. He had struggled to get a passport, a visa, and a passage on a steamer, and he had prepared 200 sets of books to be shipped. The journey had taken over a month, and along the way, he had suffered seasickness and two heart attacks. Finally, he had arrived. But instead of being overjoyed and eager to begin his mission, his first contact with the New World had caused consternation and uncertainty.

Kṛṣṇa had been very kind to him and had saved him from a third heart attack, which would have meant certain death, as he notes in his diary. Naturally, Prabhupāda felt very grateful and recognized the great mercy bestowed upon him: *boro-kṛpā*. At the same time, seeing the stark reality of a population immersed in blunt materialism, he was wondering what he could accomplish under

## *Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

such adverse circumstances. But as a completely surrendered soul, he concludes his first verse by putting himself into the hands of the Lord: “Now You can do whatever You like with me.”

Satsvarupa Dāsa Goswami, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s first disciples, who would join him one year later, in 1966, in New York City, comments on this poem as follows:

These are the thoughts of one who was coming, physically and spiritually, from the holiest abode of Kṛṣṇa consciousness into the hellishness of twentieth-century materialism—from Vṛndāvana to Boston. He could immediately see the death, suffering, and illusion, the human beings reduced to animal life—as materialists could never see them. Yet he did not turn away in loathing. He had come to save these people, but now he felt very weak and lowly, unable to do anything on his own. He stood in the American city, a city rich with billions, populated with millions, and determined to stay the way it was. He was but an ‘insignificant beggar’ with no money, an old man who had barely survived two heart attacks at sea, who spoke a different language, and who was dressed strangely—yet he had come to tell people to give up meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling, and to worship Kṛṣṇa, who to them was an unknown Hindu god. What would he be able to accomplish?

Some years later, Prabhupāda wrote about his feelings upon arriving in America to Hanuman Prasad Poddar, who was the head of Gita Press, a prominent publishing house in India that specialized in religious literature and had printed his set of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s First Canto:

Someway or other, I reached Boston on 17th September, 1965. I was thinking, while on board the ship *Jaladuta*, ‘Why Krishna has brought me to this country?’ I knew that Western people are too much addicted to so many forbidden things

## Verse 1

according to our Vedic conception of life. So out of sentiment I wrote a long poetry addressing Lord Krishna as to what was His purpose in bringing me to this country.”

But, as will become clear from the following verses, Prabhupāda had full confidence that Kṛṣṇa did indeed have His purpose in bringing him to Kali’s main stronghold on Earth—the United States of America.

## Verse 2

আছে কিছু কার্য তব এই অনুমানে  
নহে ক্যানো আনিবেন এই উগ্র-স্থানে (২)

*āche kichu kārya tava ei anumāne  
nahe kena ānibena ei ugra-sthāne*

*āche*—there is; *kichu*—some; *kārya*—work; *tava*—Your; *ei*—this; *anumāne*—by guessing; *nahe*—if not; *kena*—why; *ānibena*—You have brought; *ei*—in this; *ugra-sthāne*—terrible place.

**But I guess You have some business here; otherwise, why would You bring me to this terrible place?**

### Commentary

Whatever Kṛṣṇa does has a purpose, and when His arrangements affect a devotee’s life—either positively or negatively—a fully surrendered soul knows that there must be a good reason and therefore places himself with confidence in the Lord’s hands. He knows that even adverse circumstances occur for a reason, either because they are deserved or because there is a long-term purpose that may not be evident at the time.

As Prabhupāda pointed out in a lecture given in 1975:

Lord Kṛṣṇa said to King Yudhiṣṭhira, ‘My devotee is not deterred by any adverse conditions of life; he always remains firm and steady. Therefore, I give Myself to him, and I favor him so that he can achieve the highest success of life.’ The mercy bestowed upon the tried devotee by the Supreme Personality is described as *brahma*, which indicates that the greatness of that mercy can be compared only to the all-pervasive greatness. *Brahma* means unlimitedly great and

## Verse 2

unlimitedly expanding. That mercy is also described as *paramam* (supreme), for it has no comparison within this material world, and it is also called *sūkṣmam*, very fine. Not only is the Lord's mercy upon the tried devotee great and unlimitedly expansive, but it is of the finest quality of transcendental love between the devotee and the Lord.

This same mood, Prabhupāda expresses in his prayer. He is fully confident that Kṛṣṇa has a plan, and he is ready to cooperate with that plan, even though the conditions appear to be anything but favorable.

Although Boston, a typical American city, was materially far superior to any Indian city, with its impressive skyline and luxury homes, Prabhupāda saw it as a terrible place, *ugra-sthāne*. He was not blinded by the external glamor of the American way of life but saw it for what it was: an exhibition of the illusory energy, fooling people into believing they were living a life full of pleasure—the American dream.

Prabhupāda's spiritual vision pierced through the veil of that illusion and saw the reality: these conditioned souls, unaware of their real life, were actually living a nightmare. The reason for seeing this seemingly wonderful dream as something terrifying and unpleasant is explained in the next verse.

## Verse 3

রজস তমো গুণে এরা সবাই আচ্ছন্ন  
বাসুদেব-কথা রুচি নহে সে প্রসন্ন (৩)

*rajas tamo guṇe erā sabāi ācchanna  
vāsudeva-kathā ruci nahe se prasanna*

*rajaḥ*—the mode of passion; *tamaḥ*—the mode of ignorance; *guṇe*—by the modes; *erā*—their; *sabāi*—all of them; *ācchanna*—covered; *vāsudeva-kathā*—topics about Lord Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva; *ruci*—taste; *nahe*—not; *se*—they; *prasanna*—are happy or jubilant.

**Most of the population here is covered by the material modes of ignorance and passion. Absorbed in material life, they think themselves very happy and satisfied, and therefore they have no taste for the transcendental message of Vāsudeva. I do not know how they will be able to understand it.**

### Commentary

When *rajas* and *tamas* are prominent, people are impelled by passion and covered by ignorance, and thus have no spiritual understanding whatsoever. Nor do they have any inclination to acquire spiritual knowledge. They are simply not interested. Dominated by these lower modes of nature, their consciousness becomes absorbed in materialism, and their only goal in life is to accumulate objects for sense gratification and to enjoy them to their utmost capacity.

A self-realized soul like Śrīla Prabhupāda can immediately discern where people are at by observing their behavior and the environment they have created.

### Verse 3

A brief look at the inhabitants of Boston—their busy shopping streets, towering skyscrapers, and oversized cars—tells Prabhupāda that convincing such people of the need to become Kṛṣṇa conscious would be extremely difficult.

As Queen Kuntī points out in her prayers (SB 1.8.26): *edhamāna-madaḥ pumān naivārhaty abhidhātum vai*—“Persons who are on the path of material progress, trying to improve themselves with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education, and bodily beauty, cannot approach the Lord with sincere feeling.” In the purport to this verse, Prabhupāda explains that the advancement of material civilization leads to pride and a kind of intoxication by material possessions. Consequently, people are incapable of approaching the Lord with sincere feeling because of a sense of great material satisfaction.

Seeing this situation, Prabhupāda addresses the Lord in his prayer and expresses his concern: “They have no taste for the transcendental message of Vāsudeva. I do not know how they will be able to understand it.”

Taste determines our actions. We do things because we like them, and we avoid things because we don’t like them, often regardless of whether those things are beneficial or not. Therefore, as Rṣabhadeva tells his sons (SB 5.5.4): *nūnaṁ pramattaḥ kurute vikarma yad indriya-pṛītaya āprṇoti*—“When a person considers sense gratification the aim of life, he certainly becomes mad after materialistic living and engages in all kinds of sinful activity.” People don’t hesitate to act sinfully if such actions provide the sweet taste of sense pleasure. In such a society, a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness faces an almost impossible task.

As Prabhupāda remarked in a lecture given in 1974 in Bombay:

When I went to America, I went by ship. So, it stopped at the Commonwealth Pier in Boston. So, I was thinking that if I say ‘No illicit sex, no meat-eating, and no intoxication, and no gambling,’ these people will immediately say, ‘Please go

## *Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

home.' " (laughter) Yes. That is the position. These are their daily affairs. These are their daily affairs in Western countries. And if you want to make them stop these things, they will think that 'This man is a lunatic.'"

One year later, on March 2, 1975, the Appearance Day of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Prabhupāda again spoke about his first impression of America:

So, when I was seventy years old I decided, 'Now I must do and execute the order of my Guru Mahārāja. And thus this movement was started in 1965 from New York. And I was not very much hopeful because it is very difficult task, just opposite the European and Western culture. When I first came, I had no money. So, I got a free passage through some Indian steam navigation company. So, I came by ship. When I was on the ship at Boston port, Commonwealth port, I was thinking that 'I have come here. I do not know what is the purpose because how the people will accept this movement? They are differently educated, and as soon as I will say, 'So, my dear sir, you have to give up meat-eating and illicit sex and no intoxication and gambling,' they will say, 'Please go home.' (laughter) Because that was the experience of one of my Godbrothers. He went to London, and he had the opportunity to talk with one big man, the Marquis of Zetland. Marquis of Zetland was formerly the governor of Bengal. At that time I was a student. He was a Scotsman, and I was a student of the Scottish Churches' College. So he came to see our college, and he was standing in front of me in the second-year class. So, he was a very nice, good gentleman. He proposed to my Godbrother, 'Whether you can make me a *brāhmaṇa*?' So, my Godbrother proposed, 'Yes, we can make anyone *brāhmaṇa* provided you follow this principle: no illicit sex, no intoxication, no meat-eating, no gambling.' That Lord

### Verse 3

Zetland immediately replied, 'Impossible.' (laughter) So I was thinking that 'I will propose something which is impossible. Anyway, let me try.'

And Prabhupāda tried—not among highly educated people like the lords and ladies of England, but among the most unlikely candidates: America's hippies, who were advertising free sex and drugs. Therefore, although Prabhupāda expresses in this verse the doubt, "I do not know how they will be able to understand it," he also had firm faith that by Kṛṣṇa's causeless mercy anything was possible, and that the word "impossible" would remain a word in a fool's dictionary.

During an interview in 1976 in Toronto, he was asked about his first impressions of North American society when he arrived and whether he felt it was ripe for Kṛṣṇa consciousness at that time. Prabhupāda answered:

No. I was not very much hopeful. That I wrote in one poetry, that 'Kṛṣṇa, why You have brought me in this country? What can I do? How I shall convince them, how they will understand the philosophy? But because You have brought me here, must be there is some purpose. So, all right. You make me dance as You like.' That poetry I wrote in Boston, Commonwealth Pier, on the sea. I came by ship. So, I wrote that poetry, that I do not know what for I have come here, why Kṛṣṇa has brought me here. As soon as I shall say that there is no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no drinking, and no gambling, they'll say, 'You go home. Don't talk.' I knew this. Still, I attempted. But these boys kindly accepted. I never made any compromise. I said, 'These are the first conditions to become Kṛṣṇa conscious: no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no intoxication, no gambling. Are you agreed?' They said, 'Yes.? Then come. If I would have made compromise, 'Yes, whatever you like you can do...' No, I never did. Ask them. I never did.

*Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

Some of them left, that 'It is too difficult. The primary necessities of life are denied here.' (chuckles) But these boys, they have accepted, and therefore it is improving. They are young men, they have got all the desires for material enjoyment, but they have sacrificed everything."

A pure devotee's confidence in Lord Caitanya's inconceivable mercy and power by which even the seemingly impossible can be accomplished is expressed in the next verse.

Verse 4

## Verse 4

তবে যদি তব কৃপা হয় অহৈতুকী  
সকল-ই সম্ভব হয় তুমি সে কৌতুকী (৪)

*tabe yadi tava kṛpā haya ahaitukī  
sakal-i sambhava haya tumi se kautukī*

*tabe*—then; *yadi*—if; *tava*—Your; *kṛpā*—mercy; *haya*—is shown; *ahaitukī*—causeless; *sakala-i*—all of them; *sambhava haya*—it is possible; *tumi*—You; *se*—that; *kautukī*—fond of amusements.

**But I know Your causeless mercy can make everything possible because You are the most expert mystic.**

### Commentary

Kṛṣṇa is known as Yogeśvara, the controller of all mystic power. His powers, which appear even in material nature, are inconceivable—or mystical—because by mundane calculation they contradict logic and common sense.

During a morning walk in 1975, Prabhupāda explained this to some of his disciples:

Every living creature has some mystic power. A lemon tree, for example, has the mystic power to produce tons of citric acid, lemon juice. This is *acintya-śakti*, inconceivable power. The cow, eating grass, producing milk—this is inconceivable power. Can you produce milk from the grass? But how the cow is producing? Hmm? Answer this. You eat grass and produce milk. Give your wife grass and let her produce milk.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes in the beginning of Chapter 8 of the *Ādi-līlā* of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: "By remembering the lotus

feet of the Pañca-tattva, a dumb man can become a poet, a lame man can cross mountains, and a blind man can see the stars in the sky.” Considering that Kṛṣṇa possesses inconceivable potencies, Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses in this verse the hope that Kṛṣṇa can empower him to do things that appear miraculous, even “impossible”. Śyāmasundara writes in the Introduction to Mukunda Goswami’s book *Miracle on 2nd Avenue*:

To please our wonderful Spiritual Master we went out, you and I and our godbrothers and godsisters, and spent our furious young energies spreading Krishna’s name all over the world. You transferred to the rest of us the Swami’s mood that nothing was impossible; everything was Krishna’s magic, and so it was.

Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami comments on Prabhupāda’s prayer in an article as follows:

But while feeling his own weakness, he directly spoke his heart to God. He was alone, with no friend, but God was his friend. And what did he wish of his friend? ‘I wish that You may deliver them. I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them.’ And in this intimate poem he also revealed the method he would use. He had full confidence in the power of the transcendental vibration of God’s holy name. As expressed in the verses he quoted from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the message of Godhead itself would clean away desire for material enjoyment and awaken loving service unto Kṛṣṇa as an irrevocable fact. It was complete faith in this process that he expressed, even while forced to feel the powerful influence of ignorance and passion that dominated everything around him in the American city. He was tiny, but God was the greatest, and God was Kṛṣṇa, his dearest friend.

Therefore, although no one in Boston or New York had the slightest suspicion of it, and although he himself did not

#### Verse 4

assume it, he had entered as a powerful enemy of illusion. Kṛṣṇa's empowered emissary had entered the shore of America in the form of a poor mendicant from India, and no one yet knew what it all meant. As for Śrīla Prabhupāda's understanding of the event, he expressed it in his poem: 'Somehow or other, O Lord, You have brought me here to speak about You. Now, my Lord, it is up to You to make me a success or failure, as You like.'

Still, the task seems overwhelmingly difficult, and therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to wonder how he could possibly convince Westerners, accustomed to so many bad habits, of the necessity to change their lifestyle and develop pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

## Verse 5

কি ভাবে বুঝালে তারা বুঝে সেই রস  
এত কৃপা কর প্রভু করি নিজ-বশ (৫)

*ki bhāve bujhāle tārā bujhe sei rasa  
eta kṛpā kara prabhu kari nija-vaśa*

*ki bhāve*—in what manner; *bujhāle*—causing to understand; *tārā*—them; *bujhe*—comprehending; *sei rasa*—the mellows of devotional service; *eta*—such as this; *kṛpā*—mercy; *kara*—please display; *prabhu*—O Lord; *kari*—I am making; *nija-vaśa*—under Your controlling power.

**How will they understand the mellows of devotional service? O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy so that I will be able to convince them about Your message.**

### Commentary

After expressing confidence in Kṛṣṇa's mystic power, by which even the seemingly impossible can become possible, Śrīla Prabhupāda again expresses doubt about the capacity of people completely absorbed in tasting material pleasures to understand anything about the higher taste of spiritual life. This indicates that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not only about philosophical understanding or acquiring knowledge, but ultimately about experiencing a taste that is different from any taste available in the material world.

In this connection, it should be noted that the term "Kṛṣṇa consciousness," which Prabhupāda deliberately used when creating his international society, is his translation of Rūpa Gosvāmī's phrase *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ*. Here, in the fifth verse of his poem, Prabhupāda translates *sei rasa* as "the mellows of devotional

## Verse 5

service,” which is equivalent to *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa*—Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His mission is to make his followers realize *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa*, to guide them to the experience of the exquisite taste that arises from serving Kṛṣṇa, and by which all mundane tastes become insignificant.

Taste is the driving force of all activities because it produces pleasure—the *raison d’être* of existence: *ānanda-mayo ’bhyāsāt*. The entire process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness consists of transforming the pursuit of trivial happiness into the pursuit of higher, spiritual happiness. This is an essential aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but it is not “a cheap thing,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda often pointed out. Therefore, he voices here a deep concern: How can this task be accomplished in an atmosphere of blatant hedonism?

People would challenge why the taste derived from devotional service is better than the taste derived from sense enjoyment. The Romans coined the maxim *de gustibus non disputandum est*—“In matters of taste, there can be no disputes”—a notion adopted by the young generation in America and expressed as: “If it feels good, do it!”

Anticipating this difficulty, Śrīla Prabhupāda simply prays for the Lord’s mercy so that he may be able to convince even grossly materialistic people of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s transcendental message of love of God.

## Verse 6

তোমার ইচ্ছায় সব হয় মায়া-বশ  
তোমার ইচ্ছায় নাশ মায়ার পরশ (৬)

*tomāra icchāya saba haya māyā-vaśa*  
*tomāra icchāya nāśa māyāra paraśa*

*tomāra icchāya*—according to Your desire; *saba*—everyone; *haya*—is; *māyā-vaśa*—controlled by illusion; *tomāra icchāya*—according to Your desire; *nāśa*—destruction; *māyāra paraśa*—the touch of illusion.

**All living entities have come under the control of the illusory energy by Your will, and therefore, if You like, by Your will they can also be released from the clutches of illusion.**

### Commentary

One might wrongly conclude that it is due to Kṛṣṇa’s will that we are suffering under the grip of illusion. Since everything is under Kṛṣṇa’s control and not even a blade of grass moves without His will, one may think that it is Kṛṣṇa who is responsible for our bondage in the material world.

This is, of course, not the case. As Kṛṣṇa Himself says in Text 61 of Chapter 18 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, He is seated in everyone’s heart as the Supersoul and directs the individual souls on their journey through the material world. But “directing” does not mean “dictating”; the Supersoul does not interfere with the small independence of the individual soul. In the purport to this *Bhagavad-gītā* verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that when a living entity enters a new body—having left behind his old and useless one—he forgets everything connected to his previous body. Then

## Verse 6

the Supersoul, who accompanies the living entity, reminds him. The Lord acts as a witness to all of the soul's activities—past, present, and future—and gives directions according to what the living entity deserves and desires.

The living entity is never completely independent and, therefore, unless the soul is surrendered to the Supreme Soul and acts according to His direction, the individual is forced to act under the direction of the external energy, *māyā*. In the verse mentioned above from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the word *māyayā* is translated as “under the spell of the material energy.” However, *Māyā*, or *Durgā*, is herself not independent. She acts like a shadow, moving according to the will of the Supreme Lord, as described in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.44): *chāyeva yasya bhuvanāni bibharti durgā icchānurūpam api yasya ca ceṣṭate sā*. Her task is like that of a correctional officer who is entrusted with supervising, caring for, and chastising the inmates of a prison. The material world is compared to a prison, and just as in a society only those citizens who turn their backs on the state are imprisoned, only those souls who turn their backs on the Lord are placed within *Durgā*'s fortress.

Consequently, the living entities are not put under the control of the illusory energy because of the whims of a sadistic, vengeful God, but because of their own actions. At the same time, because *Durgā* moves according to the will of the Supreme, it can be said, as Śrīla Prabhupāda does in this verse, that their fate depends on the will of the Lord. And because He is the supreme controller, *Māyā* will release a prisoner if ordered by the Lord. But this does not happen automatically or whimsically; it depends first and foremost on the attitude and actions of the individual soul. As soon as the soul surrenders, Kṛṣṇa will arrange its release, as He promises in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.14):

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā  
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te*

“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.”

Kṛṣṇa has given each soul free will, and therefore the *jīva* can choose to remain in the material world or to endeavor to escape it. When Kṛṣṇa, as the Supersoul in the heart, sees that a *jīva* desires to break free from the cycle of birth and death, He arranges circumstances that will foster that soul’s progress toward liberation. He puts the living entity in contact with His devotee, who teaches the seeker the process of surrender in devotional service. When Kṛṣṇa is pleased by the soul’s attitude of surrender, He orders Māyā to lift the veil of illusion, open the prison doors and release the soul. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda says in this verse: *tomāra icchāya*—according to Your will.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura uses the same expression—*tomāra icchāya*—in the song *Tumi Sarveśvareśvara* from his songbook *Śaraṇāgati*. There he says, *tomāra icchāya viśve srjana saṁhāra* (“According to Your will, creation and destruction take place in the universe”), *tomāra icchāya āchi nirbhara koriyā* (“I have become solely dependent on Your will”), and *bhaktivinoda ati dīna akiñcana tomāra icchāya tā’r jīvana maraṇa* (“Bhaktivinoda is most poor, and his pride has been leveled. Now in accordance with Your will he lives and dies”).

This is the sentiment of a fully surrendered soul: to submit voluntarily to the will of the Lord and to depend without reservation on His causeless mercy.

Verse 7

## Verse 7

তব ইচ্ছা হয় যদি তাদের উদ্ধার  
বুঝিবে নিশ্চৈ তবে কথা সে তোমার (৭)

*tava icchā haya yadi tādera uddhāra*  
*bujhibe niścaya-i tabe kathā se tomāra*

*tava icchā*—Your desire; *haya*—is; *yadi*—if; *tādera*—their; *uddhāra*—deliverance; *bujhibe*—they will comprehend; *niścaya-i*—definitely; *tabe*—then; *kathā*—message; *se*—that; *tomāra*—Your.

**I wish that You may deliver them. Therefore, if You so desire their deliverance, then only will they be able to understand Your message.**

### Commentary

The desire of the Lord is vital. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda prays again: *tava icchā*—Your desire. Without the Lord’s sanction, His goodwill, nothing can be accomplished. At the same time, the goodwill of a devotee is equally essential. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura therefore says in his prayer to the spiritual master: *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo*—“By the mercy of the spiritual master, one obtains the mercy of the Lord.”

Actually, it is very difficult to obtain the Lord’s mercy directly, without the via medium of His most confidential servants. However, it should be noted that a pure devotee never demands anything from the Lord. He will always formulate his request in such a way that the Lord’s desire is acknowledged as paramount.

Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes his own desire subservient to the desire of the Lord: “If You so desire their deliverance, then only will they be able to understand Your message.” In other words, he may present the message very expertly, but without being backed up by the will of the Lord, no one would understand.

We had a similar experience in 1977, when Śrīla Prabhupāda was very ill and we asked his permission to offer prayers to Kṛṣṇa for his recovery. At first, he was reluctant, but finally he relented, with the caveat that we include “if You so desire.” Our prayer was: “Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, if You so desire, please cure Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

The general understanding is that a devotee does not ask the Lord for anything, especially for his own benefit. Śrīla Prabhupāda often said that a devotee never approaches the Lord as if He were an order-supplier: “Please give me this, please give me that.”

At the same time, it is also true that the Lord is eager to fulfill the desires of His pure devotee, because a pure devotee has no selfish desires and is not concerned about his own deliverance. Out of compassion, he is even prepared to preach under hellish conditions.

Devotees are naturally the well-wishers of all living entities (*suhṛdah sarva-dehinām*), and Kṛṣṇa is always ready to fulfill the desires of such selfless servants who do not want anything for themselves but are only concerned for the well-being of the suffering conditioned souls.

This mood was exemplified by Prahlāda Mahārāja, who refused to accept a benediction for his personal benefit but asked the Lord to excuse his demoniac father Hiranyakaśipu for his sinful activities.

Another important consideration is that the ability to understand the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness or to acquire spiritual knowledge does not depend solely on our own effort. Here also, the goodwill of the Lord is essential. We may engage in study and become erudite scholars, but that is not sufficient to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

The real qualification is that a person begins to serve the Lord with love and devotion and thus gains His favor. Then, as Kṛṣṇa promises in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10), He will enlighten the sincere practitioner from within the heart: *dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te*—“I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” The next verses explain this process in detail.

Verse 8

## Verse 8

ভাগবতের কথা সে তব অবতার  
ধীর হৈয়া শুনে যদি কানে বার বার (৮)

*bhāgavatera kathā se tava avatāra  
dhīra haiyā śune yadi kāne bāra bāra*

*bhāgavatera kathā*—the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; *se*—that; *tava avatāra*—Your incarnation; *dhīra haiyā*—becoming grave; *śune*—by hearing; *yadi*—if; *kāne*—by aural reception; *bāra bāra*—again and again.

**The words of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are Your incarnation, and if a sober person repeatedly receives it with submissive aural reception, then he will be able to understand Your message.**

### Commentary

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes here the message conveyed by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as an *avatāra* of the Lord: *bhāgavatera kathā se tava avatāra*.

Sūta Gosvāmī tells the sages of Naimiśāraṇya (SB 1.3.40):

This scripture named *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate good of all people, and it is all-successful, all-blissful and all-perfect.

In the purport to this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates:

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declared that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless sound representation of all Vedic knowledge and history. Therein are selected histories of great

## *Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

devotees who are in direct contact with the Personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the literary incarnation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and is therefore nondifferent from Him. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be worshiped as respectfully as we worship the Lord. Thereby we can derive the ultimate blessings of the Lord through its careful and patient study. As God is all light, all bliss and all perfection, so also is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We can have all the transcendental light of the Supreme Brahman, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, from the recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, provided it is received through the medium of the transparent spiritual master. Lord Caitanya's private secretary, Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, advised all intending visitors who came to see the Lord at Purī to study the *Bhāgavatam* under the person *Bhāgavatam*. The person *Bhāgavatam* is the self-realized bona fide spiritual master, and through him only can one understand the lessons of the *Bhāgavatam* in order to receive the desired result. One can derive from the study of the *Bhāgavatam* all benefits that are possible to be derived from the personal presence of the Lord. It carries with it all the transcendental blessings of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa that we can expect from His personal contact.

As it is clear from this purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda had firm faith in the transformative potency of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. He often said that the purpose of opening temples and preaching centers was primarily to give people a chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa. This hearing, especially when done with eagerness and a submissive attitude, is the first step on the path of perfection. The process of spiritual transformation is explained in the Second Chapter of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in five verses. Śrīla Prabhupāda incorporates these verses now into his poem.

Verse 9 (SB 1.2.17-21)

शृण्वतां स्वकथाः कृष्णः पुण्यश्रवणकीर्तनः ।  
हृद्यन्तःस्थो ह्यभद्राणि विधुनोति सुहृत्सताम् ॥ १७ ॥

नष्टप्रायेष्वभद्रेषु नित्यं भागवतसेवया ।  
भगवत्युत्तमश्लोके भक्तिर्भवति नैष्ठिकी ॥ १८ ॥

तदा रजस्तमोभावाः कामलोभादयश्च ये ।  
चेत एतैरनाविद्धं स्थितं सत्त्वे प्रसीदति ॥ १९ ॥

एवं प्रसन्नमनसो भगवद्भक्तियोगतः ।  
भगवत्तत्त्वविज्ञानं मुक्तसङ्गस्य जायते ॥ २० ॥

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।  
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि दृष्ट एवात्मनीश्वरे ॥ २१ ॥

*śṛṅvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ  
puṅya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ  
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇi  
vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

*naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu  
nityam bhāgavata-sevayā  
bhagavaty uttama-śloke  
bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*

*tadā rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ  
kāma-lobhādayaś ca ye  
ceta etair anāviddham  
sthitam sattve prasīdati*

*evam prasanna-manaso  
bhagavad-bhakti-yogataḥ  
bhagavat-tattva-vijñānam  
mukta-saṅgasya jāyate*

*Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

*bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiś  
chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ  
kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi  
dṛṣṭa evātmanīśvare*

*śṛṇvatām*—those who have developed the urge to hear the message of; *sva-kathāḥ*—His own words; *Kṛṣṇaḥ*—the Personality of Godhead; *punya*—virtues; *śravaṇa*—hearing; *kīrtanaḥ*—chanting; *hṛdi antaḥ sthaḥ*—within one's heart; *hi*—certainly; *abhadrāṇi*—desire to enjoy matter; *vidhunoti*—cleanses; *suhṛt*—benefactor; *satām*—of the truthful; *naṣṭa*—destroyed; *prāyeṣu*—almost to nil; *abhadreṣu*—all that is inauspicious; *nityam*—regularly; *bhāgavata*—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or the pure devotee; *sevyā*—by serving; *bhagavati*—unto the Personality of Godhead; *uttama*—transcendental; *śloke*—prayers; *bhaktiḥ*—loving service; *bhavati*—comes into being; *naiṣṭhikī*—irrevocable; *tadā*—at that time; *rajaḥ*—in the mode of passion; *tamaḥ*—the mode of ignorance; *bhāvāḥ*—the situation; *kāma*—lust and desire; *lobha*—hankering; *ādayaḥ*—others; *ca*—and; *ye*—whatever they are; *cetaḥ*—the mind; *etaiḥ*—by these; *anāvīdham*—without being affected; *sthitam*—being fixed; *sattve*—in the mode of goodness; *prasīdati*—thus becomes fully satisfied; *evam*—thus; *prasanna*—enlivened; *manasaḥ*—of the mind; *bhagavat-bhakti*—the devotional service of the Lord; *yogataḥ*—by contact of; *bhagavat*—regarding the Personality of Godhead; *tattva*—knowledge; *vijñānam*—scientific; *mukta*—liberated; *saṅgasya*—of the association; *jāyate*—becomes effective; *bhidyate*—pierced; *hṛdaya*—heart; *granthiḥ*—knots; *chidyante*—cut to pieces; *sarva*—all; *saṁśayāḥ*—misgivings; *kṣīyante*—terminated; *ca*—and; *asya*—his; *karmāṇi*—chain of fruitive actions; *dṛṣṭe*—having seen; *eva*—certainly; *ātmani*—unto the self; *īśvare*—the dominating factor.

[It is said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:]

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramātmā [Supersoul] in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted. By regular attendance in classes on the *Bhāgavatam* and by rendering of service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact. As soon as irrevocable loving service is established in the heart, the effects of nature's modes of passion and ignorance, such as lust, desire and hankering, disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness, and he becomes completely happy. Thus established in the mode of unalloyed goodness, the man whose mind has been enlivened by contact with devotional service to the Lord gains positive scientific knowledge of the Personality of Godhead in the stage of liberation from all material association. Thus the knot in the heart is pierced, and all misgivings are cut to pieces. The chain of fruitive actions is terminated when one sees the Self as master.

#### Commentary

These five verses are among the most important in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* because they describe, in a nutshell and step by step, the process of becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes these verses many times in his books, especially the first one, which describes how purification of the heart takes place by hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, hearing the message of Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva.

The first and foremost requirement is to become eager to hear and chant about Kṛṣṇa: *śṛṇvatām*. This word refers to a person who has developed the urge to hear about the Lord. In a previous verse

*Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

(SB 1.1.13), the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya told Sūta Gosvāmī that they were eager to learn about the Personality of Godhead, and that by this process, both speaker and hearer are uplifted.

In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda says:

The conditions for hearing the transcendental message of the Absolute Truth are set forth herein. The first condition is that the audience must be very sincere and eager to hear. And the speaker must be in the line of disciplic succession from the recognized *ācārya*. The transcendental message of the Absolute is not understandable by those who are materially absorbed. Under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, one becomes gradually purified. Therefore, one must be in the chain of disciplic succession and learn the spiritual art of submissive hearing.

In the next verse of his prayer, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the effect of hearing about Kṛṣṇa.

Verse 10

## Verse 10

রজস তমো হতে তবে পাইবে নিস্তার  
হৃদয়ের অভদ্র সতে ঘুচিবে তাহার (১০)

*rajas tamo ha' te tabe pāibe nistāra*  
*hṛdayera abhadra sate ghucibe tāhāra*

*rajaḥ*—the mode of passion; *tamaḥ*—the mode of ignorance; *ha'te*—from; *tabe*—then; *pāibe*—will attain; *nistāra*—deliverance; *hṛdayera*—of the heart; *abhadra*—inauspicious; *saba*—all; *ghucibe*—will be removed; *tāhāra*—their.

**He will become liberated from the influence of the modes of ignorance and passion, and thus all inauspicious things accumulated in the core of the heart will disappear.**

### Commentary

The miraculous effect of hearing about the Lord is described here. When the transcendental sound of Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities, and pastimes enters the ear and descends into the heart, the influence of passion and ignorance subsides, and the heart becomes cleansed of all material contamination.

The word *abhadra*, translated here as "inauspicious," also appears in the first of the five previously quoted verses, where Śrīla Prabhupāda translates it as "the desire to enjoy matter." The inclination to enjoy material things is considered inauspicious because, as long as such desire dominates the heart, one continues to receive material bodies, one after another, simply to fulfill those desires. Therefore, Rṣabhadeva warns his sons that as long as the heart is impure, consciousness remains unclear, and as long as one

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is absorbed in material activities, he must accept a material body, which—although temporary—is a source of suffering.

The only aim of human life should be emancipation from the clutches of *māyā* and all material activities, because as long as one remains in the material world, one must undergo the miseries of repeated birth, death, old age, and disease. Ṛṣabhadeva tells his sons that, in his opinion, to act in such a way as to prolong one's journey through material existence is a sign that one is not very intelligent.

During his first visit to Boston, Prabhupāda witnessed exactly that: a population absorbed in material activities, overcome by the modes of passion and ignorance, and completely oblivious to any kind of spiritual aspiration. He knew that the only remedy was to expose the heart to the purifying potency of transcendental sound, but how to get such materialistic people interested in hearing?

That was the crux of the matter, and therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda again turned to the Lord, expressing his anxious desire to accomplish his mission and, to this end, praying for the benediction to be empowered.

Verse 11

## Verse 11

কি ক'রে বুঝাব কথা বড় সেই চাহি  
ক্ষুদ্র আমি দীন হীন কোনো শক্তি নাই (১১)

*ki ka' re bujhāba kathā vara sei cāhi  
kṣudra āmi dīna hīna kono śakti nāhi*

*ki ka' re*—by doing what; *bujhāba*—I will make them understand; *kathā*—Your message; *vara*—benediction; *sei*—that; *cāhi*—I crave; *kṣudra*—tiny; *āmi*—I; *dīna hīna*—fallen and insignificant; *kono śakti*—any power; *nāhi*—there is not.

**How will I make them understand this message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? I am very unfortunate, unqualified and the most fallen. Therefore, I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them, for I am powerless to do so on my own.**

### Commentary

Humility is the natural characteristic of a pure devotee. In this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda is again pondering how to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness in such a way that even people absorbed in material life will be able to understand. He sees that the task is daunting and the chance for success very slim. On several occasions, during conversations, he recalled how he felt at the time:

I was thinking, 'What shall I do here? I have come here. As soon as I shall impose these four principles they will say, 'Go home.' But I took that risk. I never said anything palatable. I spoke against their activities: 'You don't do this, don't do this.'

Despite such apparent doubts, Prabhupāda was confident that by Kṛṣṇa's mercy and empowerment, even the impossible was

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possible, as he had declared in Verse 4: “Your causeless mercy can make everything possible because You are the most expert mystic.”

Any ability or power a living entity may have is due to the mercy and empowerment of the Lord alone. This truth is very nicely expressed by Arjuna in Chapter 15 of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, where he remembers Kṛṣṇa after the Lord had left this world. Arjuna recognizes that now that the Lord has departed, his astounding power, which had astonished even the demigods, is no longer with him.

In the purport to this verse (SB 1.15.5), Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates:

If endowment of powers and withdrawal of powers by the Lord are possible even for a great devotee like Arjuna, or even the demigods in heaven, then what to speak of the ordinary living beings who are but figs compared to such great souls. The lesson is, therefore, that no one should be puffed up for his powers borrowed from the Lord. The sane man should rather feel obliged to the Lord for such benefactions and must utilize such power for the service of the Lord. Such power can be withdrawn at any time by the Lord, so the best use of such power and opulence is to engage them in the service of the Lord.

Of course, just as power can be withdrawn at any time by the Lord, it can also be bestowed at any time. Consequently, Śrīla Prabhupāda is seeking the Lord’s benediction. He presents himself as *kṣudra* (tiny), *dīna* (fallen), *hīna* (wretched), and *śakti nāhi* (powerless), thus following the example of other great personalities like the author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, who describes himself as *dīna-hīna kṛṣṇadāsa*—the most fallen and wretched Kṛṣṇadāsa. Or Sanātana Gosvāmī, who presented himself before Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as *nīca jāti, nīca-saṅgī, patita adhama*—“born of a low family, associated with low

men, fallen, and the lowest of mankind.” Genuine humility before the Lord is very powerful.

When Dabira Khāsa and Sākara Mallika, who later became Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, approached the Lord with all humility, the Lord accepted them and said: “Now please abandon your humility, for My heart is breaking to see you so humble.”

In other words, when the Lord sees the humble attitude of His devotee, He becomes very much inclined to offer all help.

A perfect example is Prahāda Mahārāja. When Nṛsimhadeva was extremely angry after having killed Hiranyakaśipu, Brahmā requested Prahāda to approach the Lord and pacify Him. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said:

When Lord Nṛsimhadeva saw the small boy Prahāda Mahārāja prostrated at the soles of His lotus feet, He became most ecstatic in affection toward His devotee. Raising Prahāda, the Lord placed His lotus hand upon the boy’s head because His hand is always ready to create fearlessness in all of His devotees.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out in an earlier chapter: “The highest quality of the Supreme Lord is that He is *bhakta-vatsala*; in other words, He is always extremely pleased with His devotees.” (SB 7.2.7–8)

And when the Lord is pleased, He is naturally inclined to offer any help or support a devotee may need to render devotional service.

## Verse 12

অথচ এনেছো প্রভু কথা বলিবারে  
যে তোমার ইচ্ছা প্রভু কর এই বারে (১২)

*athaca enecha prabhu kathā balibāre*  
*ye tomāra icchā prabhu kara ei bāre*

*athaca*—nevertheless; *enecha*—You have brought; *prabhu*—O Lord; *kathā*—message; *balibāre*—to speak; *ye*—which; *tomāra icchā*—Your will; *prabhu*—O Lord; *kara*—do; *ei-bāre*—now.

**Somehow or other, O Lord, You have brought me here to speak about You. Now, my Lord, it is up to You to make me a success or failure as You like.**

### Commentary

A devotee sees himself as an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda understood himself as Kṛṣṇa’s mouthpiece to the English-speaking world. He had come to the West on the order of his spiritual master, the Lord’s representative. In that sense, it was Lord Caitanya who had ordered him—through his spiritual master—to spread the *saṅkīrtana* movement outside of India. The Lord had brought him here, and now it was up to the all-powerful Lord to make suitable arrangements for his preaching to become successful. He would try his best, but the result was up to Kṛṣṇa.

Later, he would give the same advice to his disciples who, in the early days, followed his example and embarked on veritable adventures to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to new frontiers. One shining example is Śivānanda Prabhu, who joined Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1967 in Montreal and, from there, went all by himself to Europe in the summer of 1968. Without any money and without knowing the

language, he came first to Amsterdam, but then decided to go to Berlin and established a preaching center there.

Śivānanda recalls:

Sometimes I would sit down and have *kīrtana* on Ku'damm, Berlin's famous shopping street. In Montreal, Haṁsadūta Prabhū had given me a begging bowl and some cards 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.

Being all by himself, Śivānanda was at times doubtful whether he would be able to attract people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so he wrote to his spiritual master expressing his anxiety. Knowing from experience how daunting such a task was, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to him:

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.

As Prabhupāda had predicted, gradually some young people began to show interest and joined the temple—and the rest is history.

## Verse 13

অখিল জগত-গুরু! বচন সে আমার  
অলঙ্কৃত করিবার ক্ষমতা তোমার (১৩)

*akhila jagata-guru! vacana se āmāra  
alaṅkṛta karibāra kṣamatā tomāra*

*akhila jagata-guru*—O spiritual master of the entire universe; *vacana*—words; *se*—that; *āmāra*—my; *alaṅkṛta*—decorated; *karibāra*—to make; *kṣamatā*—the ability; *tomāra*—Your.

**O spiritual master of all the worlds! I can simply repeat Your message, so if You like You can make my power of speaking suitable for their understanding.**

### Commentary

The qualification of a bona fide preacher is to present Kṛṣṇa's message as it is, without alteration. This does not mean, however, that he has to repeat it like a parrot. He should assimilate the meaning and then express it in his own words, suitable for the understanding of his audience. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.4.1):

One must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time one must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.

To one of his disciples who was preaching to college students, he wrote:

The universities are very important because in these places there are men who can appreciate our philosophy. So, when you speak in the classroom, just quote from any of my books and then try and explain the meaning in your own words, and the students will appreciate it very much.

In a lecture in 1969, he said:

We are following the old principles. We do not say something new. [We repeat] the old saying, as Kṛṣṇa said five thousand years ago: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*—'Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.' (Bg. 18.66) So, nothing new. We are simply repeating. Our Hare Kṛṣṇa—is it also repetition? Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. What is that English saying? 'Putting the old wine in the new bottle,' or what is that? [laughs] So it is old wine. Simply putting it in new bottles. That's all.

As Kṛṣṇa also says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15): *sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca*—"I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness." Here Śrīla Prabhupāda prays to the Lord for the ability to formulate his words in such a way that even Westerners who had no prior experience of Vaiṣṇava philosophy would be able to understand his message.

## Verse 14

তব কৃপা হ'লে মোর কথা শুদ্ধ হবে  
শুনিয়া সবার শোক দুঃখ যে ঘুচিবে

*tava kṛpā ha' le mora kathā śuddha habe*  
*śuniyā sabāra śoka duḥkha ye ghucibe*

*tava kṛpā*—Your mercy; *ha' le*—upon showing; *mora kathā*—my speech; *śuddha habe*—will become pure; *śuniyā*—hearing; *sabāra*—of everyone; *śoka-duḥkha*—lamentation and misery; *ye*—which; *ghucibe*—will be removed.

**Only by Your causeless mercy will my words become pure. I am sure that when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts they will certainly feel englanded and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life.**

### Commentary

*Sarve sukhino bhavantu*—a devotee wants to see everyone happy. Seeing others unhappy causes him pain. Prahlāda Mahārāja expresses this sentiment in his prayer to Nṛsimhadeva (*SB* 7.9.43) where he says: “I am simply lamenting for them and devising various plans to deliver them from the clutches of *māyā*.”

This is a devotee's mission. And how to achieve this? He knows by experience that it is only possible by purifying one's existence. Therefore, he tries to give Kṛṣṇa—in the form of transcendental sound—to everyone he meets.

And when he is successful, he knows that it is due to the causeless mercy of the Lord. A devotee does not take credit for his accomplishments in devotional service. He recognizes that

whatever advancement he may make, or whatever success he might have, is due to the mercy of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa.

Nevertheless, endeavor and competence must be there, too. A devotee does not lean back and expect Kṛṣṇa to do all the work. But endeavor alone, even with competence, is not enough. Without the ingredient of mercy, all efforts will be futile and end in failure.

On the other hand, a devotee is certain that the transcendental message has immense power and can uplift anyone who receives it with an open heart. *Evaṁ prasanna-manaso*—the heart becomes enlivened—and at the end, *mukta-saṅgasya jāyate*—one becomes liberated from all material association, which is the cause of all unhappiness.

This process is scientific and universally applicable. A method is considered scientific when facts can be established through testing and experimentation. Experience has shown that anyone who applies the process carefully, step by step, will surely attain the desired result.

## Verse 15

আনিয়াছে যদি প্রভু আমারে নাচাতে  
নাচাও নাচাও প্রভু নাচাও সে-মতে  
কাষ্ঠের পুত্তলি যথা নাচাও সে-মতে (১৫)

*āniyācha yadi prabhu āmāre nācāte  
nācāo nācāo prabhu nācāo se-mate  
kāṣṭhera puttali yathā nācāo se-mate*

*āniyācha*—You have brought; *yadi*—if; *prabhu*—O Lord; *āmāre*—to me; *nācāte*—cause to dance; *nācāo*—make me dance; *nācāo*—make me dance; *prabhu*—O Lord; *nācāo*—make me dance; *se-mate*—in that manner; *kāṣṭhera puttali*—a wooden puppet; *yathā*—just as; *nācāo*—make me dance; *se-mate*—in that manner.

**O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands. So, if You have brought me here to dance, then make me dance, make me dance, O Lord, make me dance as You like.**

### Commentary

In this beautiful prayer, Prabhupāda uses the simile of a marionette to express his unconditional surrender to the will of the Lord. A marionette, or puppet, moves according to the way a puppeteer pulls the strings attached to it. A puppet on a string never moves on its own but simply responds to the will of the puppeteer. Similarly, a pure devotee responds without hesitation to the desire of the Supreme Lord. He does not act independently.

As Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja says in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 5.142): *ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhṛtya / yāre yaiche nācāya, se taiche kare nṛtya*. “Lord Kṛṣṇa alone is the supreme controller, and all others are His servants. They dance as He makes them do so.”

That is the natural position of the living entity, who is Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant. When a living entity rejects this position, they fall under the control of *māyā*, Kṛṣṇa's external energy, and is then forced by the laws of nature to dance to her tune.

In the first edition of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, there is an illustration showing the personified three modes of material nature controlling two human beings, just as puppeteers control dolls. This illustration refers to several verses in the Seventh Chapter, where Kṛṣṇa explains that all living beings are under the control of these modes, and that no one can overcome their influence unless they surrender unto Him. Kṛṣṇa, as the supremely independent *īśvara*, is not controlled by the modes. He is their controller.

Kṛṣṇa is *svarāṭ*, absolutely independent, whereas we are always dependent, either on Him or on His material energy. It is our choice. Śrīla Prabhupāda shows us in this verse that the best use of our tiny free will is to choose to come under the direct control of the Supreme Lord, rather than being controlled by Him indirectly through the agency of His external energy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda came to America on the order of higher authority and is ready to be an instrument in the hands of the Lord, just as Arjuna was on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. He will move as the puppeteer desires.

## Verse 16

ভক্তি নাই বেদ নাই নামে খুব দর  
"ভক্তিবৈদান্ত" নাম এবে সার্থক কর (১৬)

*bhakti nāi veda nāi nāme khuba dara*  
*"bhaktivedānta" nāma ebe sārthaka kara*

*bhakti nāi*—no devotion; *veda nāi*—no knowledge; *nāme*—by the title; *khuba*—very much; *dara*—faith; *bhaktivedānta nāma*—the name Bhaktivedānta; *ebe*—now; *sārthaka kara*—please fulfill it.

**I have no devotion, nor do I have any knowledge, but I have strong faith in the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. I have been designated as Bhaktivedānta, and now, if You like, You can fulfill the real purport of Bhaktivedānta.**

*(Signed)*

The most unfortunate, insignificant beggar  
A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami,  
on board the ship Jaladuta, Commonwealth Pier,  
Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.  
dated 18th of September, 1965

### Commentary

With this, Śrīla Prabhupāda's prayer comes to an end. Remarkably, his final thought expresses unwavering faith in the power of the holy name. In many of the preceding verses, he had voiced doubts and concerns, and even in this concluding verse, he acknowledges his shortcomings — "I possess neither devotion nor knowledge." Yet he confesses to possessing one valuable quality, which he hopes will outweigh all other deficiencies: his firm faith in Kṛṣṇa's holy name. And Kṛṣṇa heard his prayer. As soon as Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced

the public chanting of the holy name — first in Tompkins Square Park in New York and later in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco — Kṛṣṇa consciousness took root in America and began to spread like wildfire. His strong faith in the name of Kṛṣṇa, as he says in this verse, combined with his firm faith in the words of his spiritual master to preach in the English language, were the formula for success. Nevertheless, in the mood of a humble Vaiṣṇava, he signs his prayer as “the most unfortunate, insignificant beggar.”

While he was serving in his spiritual master’s mission, his peers awarded him the title *Bhaktivedanta*. On Rādhārāṇī’s Appearance Day in 1968, Prabhupāda explained the meaning of this title to his disciples:

In India the Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs* are known as Vedāntīs. Therefore, my society, Vaiṣṇava society, has particularly given me this title, *Bhaktivedanta*. *Vedānta* means *bhakti*. It is a challenge to the Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs*. This particular title was given after due consideration that my humble self should be awarded this title. It is a new title amongst the Vaiṣṇava society. So, the Māyāvādī philosophers, they are sometimes surprised that, ‘How Swamijī is Vedāntī and at the same time *bhakti*?’ But actually, they do not know that *Vedānta* means *bhakti*.

Compelled by the natural humility of a pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes himself in this verse as *bhakti nāi veda nāi*, devoid of devotion and knowledge, and he prays to Kṛṣṇa to enable him to fulfill the meaning of his title, *Bhaktivedanta*.

As history has shown, he fulfilled the meaning of *Bhaktivedanta* beyond anyone’s expectations, including his own. Within the short period of a decade, he wrote numerous *Bhaktivedanta* purports, his unique way of assimilating the previous *ācāryas’* commentaries on *śāstra* and expressing them in his own words, just suitable for his Western audience.

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During his final months in Vṛndāvana, shortly before leaving this world, he said:

Whatever I have wanted to say, I have said in my books. If I live, I will say something more. If you want to know me, read my books.”

## 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.

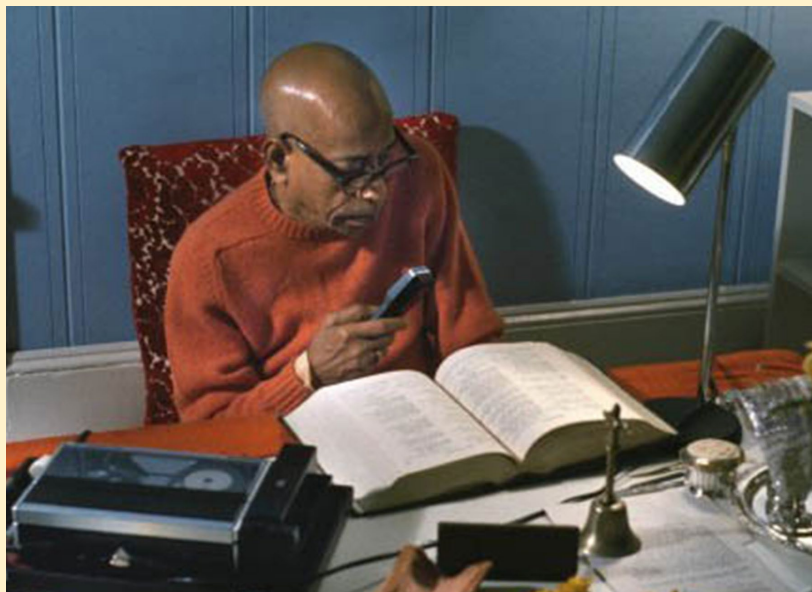
At their first meeting, in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had requested Abhay Charan to broadcast Vedic knowledge through the English language. Thus, in the years that followed, his disciple wrote an English commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and in 1944, without assistance, started a fortnightly magazine, *Back to Godhead*.

Recognizing his philosophical learning and devotion, the Gauḍiyā 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

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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.

## The Founder-Ācārya

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 Düsseldorf, 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 Īśopaniṣad* 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

## *Mārkiṇe bhāgavata-dharma*

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, 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](http://www.spiritualsoundspace.com).

In 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 150 color illustrations and an analytical commentary for each song. The recordings of these timeless reflective poems are reimagined within a modern soundscape, preserving their essence while designed to resonate with a global audience.

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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