

Free Write Journal #35

An Update of Our Reading of *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*:

Prabhupada had been given land in charity at Ramana-reti, Vrndavana, for building a temple. Mr. and Mrs. S. placed two pieces of paper before the Deity of Radharani. One piece of paper said “Yes,” and the other said, “No.” When a devotee of ISKCON opened the one that said, “Yes.” Mrs. S. confirmed that this meant Radharani had sanctioned the giving of the land to ISKCON, and a deed was made up. But later Mr. S. wrote to Prabhupada that he wanted to take back the front portion of the land and use it for a petrol pump station and other commercial venues. This made Prabhupada very upset.

I was Prabhupada’s servant at this time, and he called me in to dictate a letter. First he told me to get a copy of the *Krsna Book* and read the story of King Nrga.

The story begins when Krsna’s relatives at Dvaraka discover a large lizard trapped in the bottom of a big empty well. They tell Krsna about it and He goes to the place, reaches down and touches the lizard. Immediately the lizard turns into a beautiful demigod. This was King Nrga. Although Krsna knew everything about King Nrga, He asked the demigod to please tell how he had been put into the species of lizard life. Nrga bowed down to Krsna and introduced himself as the son of King Iksvaku. He said he was sure that the Lord was aware of his history and how he had

been very charitably disposed and had given innumerable cows in charity to *brahmanas*. Once he gave thousands of beautiful cows to two different *brahmanas*.

Unfortunately, one of the cows that the king had given in charity to the first brahmana chanced to enter back among Nrga's cows. Not knowing this, he again gave it in charity to the second *brahmana*. As the cow was being taken away by the second *brahmana*, its former master claimed it as his own. Thus there was arguing and fighting between the two *brahmanas*, and they came before Nrga and charged that he had taken back a cow that had previously been given in charity. To give something to someone and then take it back is considered a great sin, especially when dealing with a *brahmana*. With great humility the king offered each of the *brahmanas* 100,000 cows in exchange for the one that was causing the fight between them. Both *brahmanas* insisted that the cow was theirs and it could not be taken back under any condition. They left the place in anger. After this incident, when the time came for the king to give up his body, he was taken before Yamaraja, the superintendent of death, who asked him whether he first wanted to enjoy the results of his pious activities or suffer the results of his impious activities. The king chose to hear first his impious activities.

As I read this narrative to Srila Prabhupada, I wondered why he had asked me to do it. In the back of my mind I thought that he was exposing me for having taken a pair of socks that had been donated to him by one of his disciples. Prabhupada had many socks, and this was an inexpensive pair which I didn't think he would use. Since I had no socks, I took this pair and was using it. But at first I thought that

Prabhupada was telling the story of King Nrga to expose my offense. But when the reading was over, Prabhupada had me dictate a letter to Mr. S. He said it was not right for Mr. S. to demand back the front portion of the land. It would ruin the entrance to the temple. He pointed out that it was a sin to take back charity that had been given to a *brahmana*. He said that he was including the story of King Nrga, who took back a cow he had given in charity, and now he had to be punished by this. I realized Prabhupada was not thinking of my taking his socks but was addressing a larger situation. Eventually Mr. S. relented and gave up his demand to take back the front portion of the land.

Letter from Muktavandhya

I received a letter from Muktavandhya with two questions. First he asked me what I thought of women being given authorization to initiate disciples. He said he thought there were women who were qualified to do it. He said that he would not hesitate to recommend disciples to take initiation from Mother Kaulini. He said he sometimes expressed his opinion in conversations but asked me what I thought about that. I wrote to him and said I agreed Mother Kaulini was qualified to be an initiating spiritual master. But I told him there was heavy opposition from the devotees in India against F.D.G. (female *diksa-gurus*). The anti-woman propaganda was so strong that I dropped out of the controversy and didn't want to be involved. But I told Muktavandhya if he wanted to express his opinion in conversations, I had

no objections.

He also asked me what was the situation of devotees who served in ISKCON for a long time but never received initiation. I told him their spiritual situation was incomplete. They were acting as closet *rtvik* adherents, indirectly claiming that Prabhupada was their only guru. I said there are qualified initiating gurus in ISKCON, and these persons should listen to the different gurus and develop faith in one and take initiation.

Recommending Disciples for Initiation by Radhanath Swami

Someone wrote to me and asked that I recommend a devotee for second initiation by Radhanath Swami. But this person has not taken the *bhakti-sastri* exam, which is required by candidates for second initiation, so I was reluctant to give him a recommendation until he passed that exam. I am reluctant to go to Radhanath Maharaja and ask this favor of him. I have done it several times and he has complied out of his affection for me. Just recently I recommended a woman for first initiation, and he agreed to accept her. She went to the Govardhana Eco-Village in India and received initiation from him, along with only four other devotees. She asked him, “How can I serve you?” He replied, “By making Satsvarupa Maharaja happy.” It is an ideal relationship I have with Radhanath Swami, but I don’t want to take advantage of it and keep asking him to accept disciples.

The *Tulasi* Song

Every morning in ISKCON temples, devotees sing a song to Tulasi-devi and water her. Prabhupada was aware of the song we sang, and he did not object to it. But some of the devotees in the Gaudiya Math objected to us singing it and said it was too intimate and confidential. The song goes, “My desire is that you will also grant me residence in the pleasure groves of Sri Vrndavana *dhama*. Thus within my vision I will always behold the beautiful pastimes of Radha and Krsna.” The verse after that reads as follows: “I beg you to make me a follower of the cowherd damsels of Vraja. Please give me the privilege of devotional service and make me your own maidservant.” These verses are certainly confidential, but Prabhupada allowed us to sing them in Sanskrit and to recite the English afterwards. We do not “jump over” or become *sahajjiyas* who take things cheaply by singing these lines. We become close to Tulasi and worship her with reverence. The lines express a yearning for a position once one is purified of material desires. We express our faith in the power of worshiping Tulasi-devi and recognize her as not just an ordinary plant, but an intimate of Krsna and Radha, and a bestower of great blessings.

One year, during a pilgrimage in Vrndavana, I made a prayer to Vrndadevi in Kamyavana. This Deity is famous for awarding the desires of those who approach her with specific requests. But one should be careful about what he is asking for, lest he pray for material benediction. I sent two of my disciples to Kamyavana with my request written down on a piece of paper. They went and placed it before her. I

requested Vrndadevi to bless me with the inspiration to begin a major new writing project. The day after my request, I was brainstorming with a disciple when I received what I took as an inspiration—to write a series of books titled *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*.” The idea is that I would begin with the opening verses of the First Canto and then briefly paraphrase Prabhupada’s purport. After that I broke into free writing, which was my joy. So it was both a straight scriptural book but a free write book. I continued it for four volumes. So that was my experience of praying to Vrndadevi in Kamyavana.

How Do I Feel About My Present Immobility and the Fact That Years Ago I Loved Taking Long Walks in Rural Areas?

I very much miss my ability to walk. It is the best exercise, and it brings you out into nature and the fresh air—and in the spring and summer, entering amidst the flora and fauna of the countryside. I try to be tolerant and accept my lot.

Unfortunately, I think it has an adverse effect on my health and longevity. I lead such a sedentary life, staying in my chair all day, that I think it is the cause of my uncontrollably gaining in weight. I used to weigh 185 pounds, but now I weigh 190 despite doing daily morning exercises indoors. I take it as part of old age and do not lament. I am grateful that I can still write, chant, receive *darsana* of Radha-Govinda and associate with the devotees. A doctor told me that considering my immobility, I was fortunate that I was happy in taking part in out-loud readings with the devotees

at mealtimes, reading on my own, writing, chanting and receiving *darsana*. The doctor put it in a positive light, that in the absence of being able to walk, I was lucky to be happy with the activities I could do while seated. And I am fortunate that I don't feel any pain when I am in my chair.

Random Looks at the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*

“Certainly that heart is steel-framed which, in spite of one's chanting the holy names of the Lord with concentration, does not change when ecstasy takes place, tears fill the eyes and the hairs stand on end.” (S.B. 2.3.24)

In the purport to this verse, Prabhupada states that the ecstatic symptoms do not take place because one is chanting with offenses to the holy name. We should be very careful about avoiding the ten kinds of offenses at the feet of the holy name. If we have not been careful, then “the reaction of feelings of separation will not be visible by tears in the eyes and standing of hairs on end.” For me, this means I am chanting with offenses because I do not experience tears or standing of hair on end. I have to live with this low position of my *japa* and *kirtana* and just go on patiently (yet urgently) chanting as best I can early in the morning. This verse truly humiliates me, as I see that I do not chant with ecstasy. Prabhupada says these symptoms of ecstasy are “the preliminary symptoms of the *bhava* stage, which occurs before one

reaches the perfectional stage of *prema*, love of Godhead.” Chanting with *bhava* is an advanced stage, and I must honestly admit I have not achieved it.

“At the end of every four *yugas*, the great saintly persons, upon seeing that the eternal occupational duties of mankind have been misused, reestablish the principles of religion. (S.B. 8.14.4)

We are now in the most degraded of the four *yugas*. We have passed through only 5,000 years of Kali-yuga, which lasts 432,000 years. The decline of *sanatana dharma* is at present very prominent. The duty of saintly persons is to try and take up seriously the cause of *sanatana dharma* and to try to establish it for the benefit of the entire human society. The Krsna Consciousness Movement has been started according to this principle. The members of ISKCON are teaching that the eternal occupational duty of the human being is to serve Krsna. In the age of Kali this is done predominantly by the congregational chanting of the holy names.

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Garuda’s Talk

My Godbrother Garuda (Professor Graham M. Schweig, Ph.D.) sent me a poster of a talk he’s giving at his university in Virginia. He has picked a brilliant topic: “Spiritual But Not Religious—Healthy Trend or Crisis of Faith?” The flyer

states that “Spiritual but not religious’ is a growing trend, even a movement. It promotes the de-institutionalization of religion and a kind of spiritual individualization.” In his talk, he will illuminate the nature of this trend and show the advantages and disadvantages of both the spiritual and religious positions. He will draw from the ancient teachings of yoga. I wrote him back and asked if, in a nondenominational university, he will be able to tilt his talk toward religion. But Prabhupada pointed out the deficiency of the word “religion.” He defined it as a kind of faith and said that one could change his faith, whereas *sanatana dharma* is eternal. Prabhupada preferred to use the word “science” rather than “religion” to define Krsna consciousness. He also said, “Religion without philosophy is sentiment or fanaticism, and philosophy without religion is dry mental speculation.” In his secular university, Garuda doesn’t have much room to outright preach Krsna consciousness. But since he’s drawing from the ancient teachings of yoga, he can definitely lean toward theism. Prabhupada (and his own spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati) used to say that if he could make one pure devotee, he would consider his whole mission a success. Similarly, if Garuda, teaching within the restraints of the academic university, can attract one student to the science of Krsna and to become a pure devotee, his whole talk and his whole career will be successful.

We Are Not the Controllers

A devotee wrote to me that he has long been struggling with his tendency to want to control the outcome of events. He says this has caused him much stress and difficulties in relations with other people. But recently he has been able to curb this tendency and depend on Krsna for results, and this is bringing him peace. He admits his attempts are still imperfect, but he is determined to go on trying. I wrote him back commending him on his efforts. We are certainly not the controllers, says Prabhupada and the Vedas. We have a minute amount of free will, but if we misuse it, we come down under the control of the material nature. From that position, if we try to control, we will fail and be frustrated. We are actually all eternal servants of Krsna. That is our constitutional position. We should realize this in our daily life and not attempt to control other people or events.

A Random Peek at the Index to *Krsna Book*

Nanda Maharaja and Gargamuni

(p. 71)

“Gargamuni then informed Nanda Maharaja, ‘As far as the other boy is concerned, this child has taken different bodily complexions in different *yugas* [millennia]. First of all He assumed the color white, then He assumed the color red, then the color yellow, and now He has assumed the color black. Besides

that, He was formerly the son of Vasudeva; therefore His name should be Vasudeva as well as Krsna. Some people will call Him Krsna, and some will call Him Vasudeva. But one thing you must know: This son has had many, many other names and activities due to His different pastimes.”

Gargamuni performed the name-giving ceremony of Krsna in private, in a cowshed, so that Kamsa would not get information about it. Here he tells the different colors of Krsna in His appearances in different *yugas*, and a few of the names He has taken. Gargamuni says one of the colors Krsna takes is yellow, although now He has appeared in a blackish form. The yellow form refers to Lord Caitanya, the “disguised incarnation” who appears in Kali-yuga and inaugurates the chanting of the holy names. This quote, coupled with the verse from the Eleventh Canto, establishes that Lord Caitanya is Krsna Himself. In the Eleventh Canto the sage proclaims that people in the age of Kali who are intelligent will worship the Lord, who is always chanting the names of Krsna:

“He is not blackish, but He is Krsna Himself.”

“Not blackish” means golden, Gauranga. He is always chanting the names of Krsna.

Free Write

Bhagavad-gita

“Wherever there is Krsna, the Master of all Mystics, and

wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power and morality. That is My opinion.” (*Bg.* 18.78)

This is the last verse in the *Bhagavad-gita*. The *Gita* was narrated by King Dhrtarastra’s secretary Sanjaya. The *Gita* begins by an inquiry by King Dhrtarastra. He is hopeful for the victory of his sons. But after describing the scene on the battlefield, Sanjaya told the king that victory was certain for Arjuna because Krsna was there. The last instruction of the *Gita* is the last word in all morality and religion: surrender to Krsna.

Japa

Japa is said to be not as potent as congregational chanting in *kirtana* because by chanting in *kirtana* one benefits many people, whereas in *japa* only the *japa* performer is benefited. Yet Srila Prabhupada has written, “Of all the instructions of the spiritual master, the order to chant sixteen rounds is most essential.” Chanting the holy name (in *kirtana* or *japa*) cleanses the heart and brings transcendental realization of Krsna. It is the only sacrifice recommended in Kali-yuga. Lord Caitanya, in His *Siksastakam*, tells *how* to chant: “Thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street, more tolerant than the tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respects to others without expecting respect for oneself, one can chant the Holy Name constantly.”

Fasting

Fasting means many things to many persons. The minimum fasting Prabhupada prescribed for ISKCON was fasting on Ekadasi from beans and grains. Some devotees do more extensive fasting. On Ekadasi they observe no drinking of water (*nirjala*) and staying up all night, singing *bhajan*s and reading. In the *sastra* there's evidence of renunciants who took great vows of fasting. King Ambarisa fasted with a *nirjala* vow for one entire year. Prabhupada did not emphasize extreme fasting, because it would interfere with a devotee's ability to do active service. Especially in the beginning, when the boys would take lunch with Prabhupada in his apartment, he used to advocate, "Eat more! Eat more!" That may have been an encouragement for his neophyte disciples. He discouraged voracious eating and didn't like disciples to become fat. In ISKCON most of the temples observe fasting on the appearance day of Visnu-tattva *avataras*. This is done by Ekadasi fasting.

Christmas Tree

In the beginning years of ISKCON, Christmas trees were taboo. But nowadays in the West, many devotees keep little Christmas trees in their home, decorate their front door with a pine wreath, exchange gifts among family and friends, make visits to their parents or relatives, and indirectly observe a "*vyasa-puja*" recognition that

Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ, whom Prabhupada had all respect for.

Yoga

In his lectures on the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*, Prabhupada reads the verses and discusses the meanings. He says yoga cannot be done in a society. The *Gita* states that one should go alone and practice yoga in a solitary place. One should sit erect with the eyes half-closed, looking at the tip of the nose. Prabhupada didn't teach the yoga *asanas*. During his lifetime, hardly any of his disciples practiced yoga *asanas* or were into *hatha* yoga. Prabhupada's conclusion while lecturing on the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita* was that it was not possible to do the yoga that Krsna teaches in the *Gita* in the present day. He recommends instead *bhakti-yoga*, performed in the *sanga* (association) of fellow devotees. ISKCON, however, has evolved to the point where many devotees are certified yoga teachers and have their own students whom they teach *hatha-yoga*. But the more advanced devotees inject *bhakti-yoga* into their *hatha-yoga* lessons. They get the students to chant Hare Krsna and teach them about Krsna consciousness, eating vegetarian food offered to Krsna, even chanting *japa*. When the yoga class taught by devotees incorporates *bhakti-yoga*, it is useful. But just going through what Prabhupada called "gymnastics" is not useful.

Letters from Srila Prabhupada

London

14th August 1971

Boston

My Dear Satsvarupa,

Please accept my blessings. Enclosed please find tape no. 14; S.B. 4th canto, 11th chapter continued. This is the third tape sent from London. Also please find one poetry enclosed for publication.

I have just now received your presentation of slippers as an offering for Vyasa-puja day. They are certainly very attractive. Thank you very much for them and offer my thanks and blessings to all the nice boys and girls there in Boston.

There is a story about one man, a cook, who bought a nice new pair of shoes. But all morning long he was in the kitchen cooking, and so he couldn't wear his shoes. Similarly, all afternoon he was cooking. So what did he do? At night, when he went to sleep he wore the shoes. So these shoes are so nice, but I don't know when I shall be able to wear them. So when taking rest at night I shall wear them.

Hoping this will meet you all in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

This is a classic letter. No chastisements, no management, no philosophical instructions—just a very warm and charming exchange from Prabhupada to his boys and girls in Boston. We had presented him with a pair of slippers. But he tells us a story about a cook who was always in the kitchen and couldn't wear his nice new pair of shoes. Prabhupada writes, "So these shoes are so nice, but I don't know when I will be able to wear them. So when taking rest at night, I shall wear them." This is an exchange of pure affection and playfulness. When I read it to the devotees at Boston, everyone was charmed and pleased. I do not think that Prabhupada actually wore our slippers while taking rest. But in a kind of jest, he says that is what he will do.

London

22nd August 1971

Boston

My Dear Satsvarupa,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated 19th August, 1971 and have noted the contents. So far the "tracts" or booklets are concerned, that is a nice idea. Jayadvaita has already asked about this and I have agreed. But these small works may be done on our own press. Dai Nippon should be given the big jobs. Otherwise it will be too costly.

So far the marriage proposed for 29th August, I have no objection provided they are firmly in agreement never to separate and are willing to sign such a statement. This was done recently by Rupanuga Prabhu and you can get

the wording from him.

Please offer my blessings to the others there. Hoping this will meet you all in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

P.S. Enclosed please find poetry for possible publication. I don't think there is need for immediate meeting of all GBC members in New York.

Prabhupada approves the idea of small booklets written by him. They are good to hand out to people on *sankirtana*. They give a brief taste of Krsna consciousness and can be easily read and digested. *Krsna, the Reservoir of Pleasure* was a good example of a booklet that was published by the Press. It was a lecture by Srila Prabhupada.

I proposed a marriage of two devotees. Prabhupada gives his approval provided the couple sign a statement that they will never separate. This shows that Prabhupada was still approving marriages but wanted firm commitment that the couple would never separate. Prabhupada said he was a rare exception as a *sannyasi*, to get his disciples married. It started in San Francisco in 1967 when so many new devotees came to him as girlfriends and boyfriends. He didn't approve of couples living together as boyfriends and girlfriends, but his solution was not to artificially make them renounce but rather to marry them in a Vedic ceremony, which he often personally presided over.

Restaurants

ISKCON operates many Govinda's restaurants around the world. They are difficult to manage, but determined devotees, who are expert in cooking and management, come forward and take the burden. It is excellent preaching. People get to eat delicious vegetarian *prasadam* and hear *krsna-kirtana*, either in the restaurant or outdoors at Ratha-yatra. Srila Prabhupada was very fond of the restaurants. He said ghee produced on the farms could be brought to the restaurant and used in cooking or sold to the customers. By eating food cooked in ghee, meat-eaters would be inclined to give up their meat because ghee is rich in proteins. Eating in this way, they get intense animal protein without killing the animal. It helps them to give up the "blood lust." *Prasadam* purifies a person and softens his heart so that he may hear about spiritual topics and chant the holy names.

There is a social side to Govinda's restaurants. They provide an alternative to nondevotee restaurants, which Prabhupada put in the category of going to cinemas (something he forbid but some devotees had a tendency to do). Govinda's is an excellent way to stop the forbidden activities.

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Devotees from the West, coming to India, often became ill. They came down with malaria, dysentery, jaundice, digestive disorders and other diseases.

Prabhupada said that the devotees got dysentery by eating voraciously and not serving actively. But the illnesses were so widespread, especially during a highly-populated festival at a *dham* in India, that the illnesses could not all be due to misbehavior. Many devotees considered their immediate catching of illness when they arrived in India as a reaction to their sins and a purification. Devotees living fulltime in India—and also visitors—found it particularly difficult to keep good health during the monsoon season. The sewers merged with the water system and water-borne diseases were spread around. Mosquitoes were more prevalent during the rainy season and spread malaria. Those devotees who stuck to the dust of Vrndavana even through the rainy season, as well as the hot season and the cold season, were considered great souls and very faithful to the *dhama*, not abandoning it for anything. They had their service in the *dhama*, service to Prabhupada’s mission, and they could not and did not want to leave.

Letter Exchange

I received an email from a person with a Russian or Ukranian name. He asked me to give him some advice:

“I came to the Society of Devotees about three years ago. All these three years I struggle with coarse lust, which constantly takes on me to the top. I try to follow, but so far I have not been able to achieve following of the fourth

governing principle.

“I assume that some devotees may have similar problems, but I am afraid to talk to anyone about this topic.

“Half a year ago Krsna seem to have turned off lust in me, and I followed this principle for several months in a row. But then everything came back. I constantly blame myself for this vice and can't understand what to do with it. I will be grateful to you for any advice.”

By the implied frequency of his indulging in lust, I guessed he was referring to self-abuse or masturbation. I wrote him a letter and stated that masturbation was a very deliberate act. It didn't happen by chance. There are three psychological states before committing an act: thinking, feeling and willing. He should be strict with himself and honest to Krsna consciousness and not allow himself to reach the willing stage. I advised him to stay away from any preliminary attraction. I asked him whether it made him happy to indulge in this, as obviously it didn't. I told him that repeated indulgence would ruin his spiritual life. He should chant Hare Krsna and associate with devotees. Masturbation has been called “the lonely passion.” He should not isolate himself and commit this deliberate vice. I know other devotees who have this problem and they can't seem to stop, even when they reveal it to me and I give them advice how to stop. He says he has been indulging in lust for three straight years, ever since he came to the Movement, or maybe before. He is being willfully disobedient to the process of regulated Krishna consciousness, and no good

will come from it. Maybe since he confessed it to me and I gave him some preliminary advice, he will get some strength to quit his habit.

COPD

I have been going to see the pulmonologist for about two years, and she never specifically diagnosed my condition. I was glad, therefore, and even proud when I discovered a pamphlet, “Living with COPD.” The pamphlet showed pictures of people riding bicycles, playing shuffleboard, and being active in other ways to show that COPD can be managed. The pamphlet defined the acronym COPD as “Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.” I was satisfied to know what my actual condition was. There are various symptoms of COPD, but I suffer mainly from shortness of breath. I can only move by pushing my four-wheeled walker, but I can’t do it for more than four or five minutes before I run out of breath and have to take a rest. I do other exercises which also are restricted by COPD. My major health issue is weak legs and lack of balance, which makes me unable to walk. I am mobile only by using the four-wheeled walker or holding onto another person’s hands. So weak legs and COPD are my main problems aside from ailments due to old age. I take it that I am receiving Krsna’s mercy to me in this way. Prabhupada wrote me a letter that a devotee doesn’t suffer from karmic reaction. Once initiated, so long as he follows the rules and regulations, he is free from karma. If he faces adverse conditions, he should know that it is just a token reaction from his past sins, and that Krsna is

dealing with him personally and he should go on with his devotional service unimpeded.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and *yukta-vairagya*

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was the first Vaisnava to accept material things in the service of Krsna. He used the printing press, rode in cars and built temples. Our Prabhupada expanded on Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's *yukta-vairagya*. He printed books by the thousands and commissioned his disciples to distribute them in public places. He also constructed temples in India, especially in Vrndavana, Bombay, and Mayapur. He saw himself as directly following the order and example of his spiritual master. Our Srila Prabhupada said that if he advertised that he was going to give a lecture under a tree, no one would come. He had to construct beautiful temples where the people could come in awe and be comfortable to enjoy the *kirtana*, lecture and *prasadam* distribution. One year in the 1980s I went to Mayapur to observe Karttika season. I did it purposely to avoid going to Vrndavana and associating with Narayana Maharaja because he was becoming so controversial in ISKCON. In fact, his speaking that year at Karttika led the GBC to ban ISKCON devotees from going to see him. I was relieved to be apart from the pressure and the controversy.

I asked Bhakti-Charu Swami if he knew a person who could act as a guide for *parikrama* for me and my disciples in Mayapur. He volunteered himself and took

charge of the *parikrama*. When he announced how it would be performed, one point he made was that the devotees should not walk barefoot but should wear shoes. He said devotees practice enough austerities, and by walking barefoot their feet would be injured. I was very pleased by this decision. I went on one *parikrama* visit to Bhaktivinode Thakura's house and it was nice, especially hearing from Bhakti-Charu Swami. But after that one visit, I came down with daily chronic migraines. (This was the period when I suffered from frequent debilitating migraines.) So I stayed back from the *parikramas*, and Bhakti-Charu Swami led my disciples' and his disciples' tour through the various holy places in Navadvipa. After the *parikrama* was over and Bhakti-Charu Swami left Mayapur, I commenced a series of lectures while staying in Sridam Mayapur. All of my disciples attended, I was able to do it, and it was a very satisfying recompense to my not being able to walk on *parikrama*.

Tarksya and Trinidad

Tarksya was a temple president in Trinidad in the 1980s, and he ruled the devotees and conducted things in the style of a gang leader. He emphasized money-collecting. He used to travel to New York and buy many items for the devotees to sell. He used to pick out women's dresses, fashion items like women's artificial ponytails, and many roller skates. He mercilessly sent the *brahmacaris* and women out to approach women and try to sell them dresses. All day long these celibate monks approached women to convince them to buy feminine attire. It was questionable how he spent the money.

I was the GBC of Trinidad and felt personally bullied by Tarksya. He discriminated against the Hindu devotees and favored the black devotees, of which he was one. The Hindu devotees complained to me, but there was nothing I could do. As the GBC in Trinidad I was a figurehead, but Tarksya held the actual leadership and management of the devotees.

Eventually, Tarksya disassociated himself from the devotees. He took an overdose of cocaine and died. The devotees held a commemorative *kirtana* in his honor. It is to the credit of the corps of those devotees that they survived the Tarksya era and are still serving in Trinidad, feeling greatly relieved that the “gang-leader mentality” is gone. Even though this is old history, the scars remain. By being sincere, the devotees remain in their service, and I am proud of them.

During the Tarksya era, I was the zonal guru of the whole Caribbean, Gitanagari, Ireland, Canada and other places. The main complaint against the zonal gurus was that they overrode the authority of the temple presidents and gave their own instructions to be followed by the temple devotees. But in my case, I was bullied by very heavy temple presidents. My disciples did not feel protected, and I remained a figurehead. I attempted to cooperate with my Godbrothers (the temple presidents) but that was abused, as they held tight control over the lives of my disciples, who did not feel protected.