

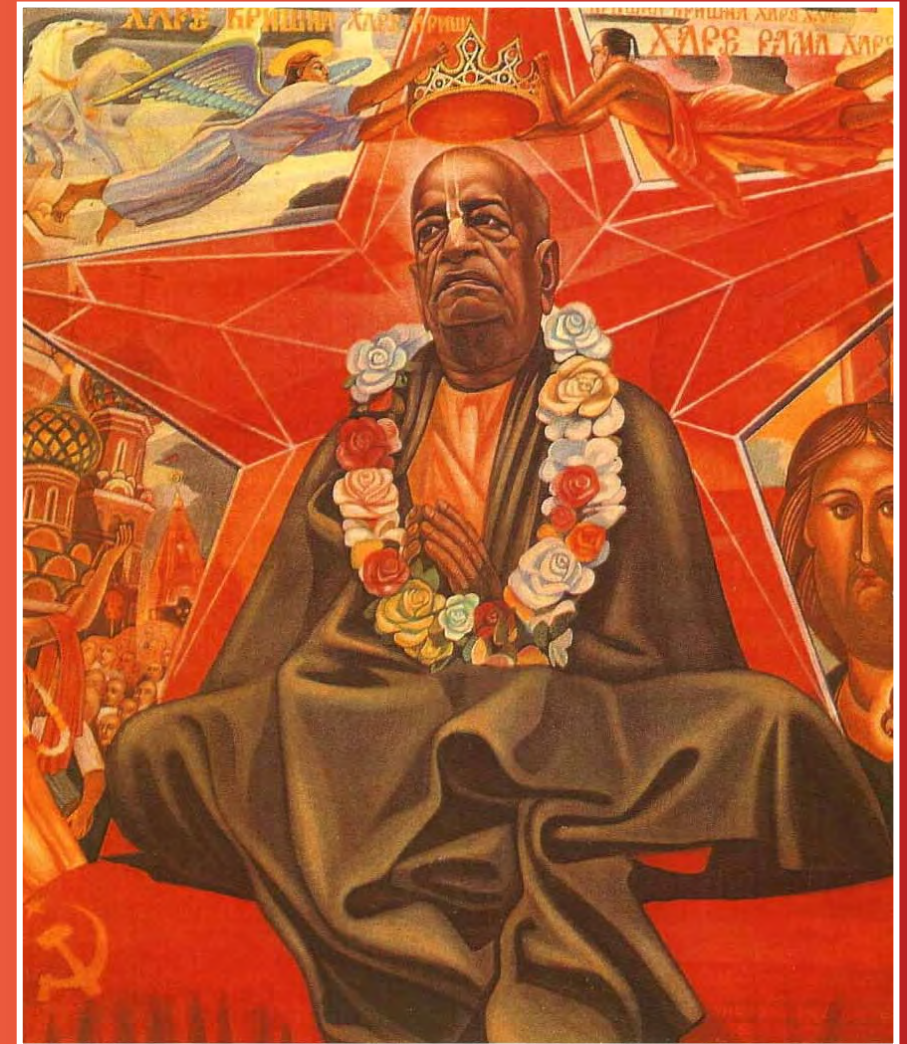


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MURALI MOHAN MAHARAJ HARE KRISHNA, PAST AND PRESENT

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# HARE KRISHNA, PAST AND PRESENT



**MURALI MOHAN MAHARAJ**

**(Mamu Thakur das)**

# **HARE KRISHNA PAST AND PRESENT**

(4th edition)



Sankirtana Corporation  
Moscow-Minsk-Chelyabinsk

2019

UDK 294.2  
BBK 86.33 84P6-4  
M91

**Murali Mohan Maharaj (Mamu Thakur das)**

HARE KRISHNA PAST AND PRESENT (4th edition). — 428 p. 19 ill.

**From the Author**

*When I decided to publish my memoirs, one of my acquaintances told me: “Is not it too early? Your enemies are still alive”. I replied to him: “I have no enemies”. But, after giving it some thought, I added: “This is my life, and the script of it is already written. I can’t change or edit it, even if the whole world becomes my enemy!”*

*“Hare Krishna past and present” is one of the books in the series of publications that we started with Academician V. Lisovsky. Later on, the philosopher Elmar Sokolov and S. Nekrasov, expert in cultural studies, joined us.*

*In the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of these series, the following individuals took part: Senior Research Officer of the Moscow Philosophy Institute T. Lubimova and one of the founders of Zhirinovski Party, Ahmed Khaliyev. Dialogue with Ahmed Khaliyev will conclude the first part of the book. The second part is dedicated to my preaching in Belarus.*

ISBN 978-5-89325-078-7

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# CHRONICLES OF MAMU THAKUR

*Interest to the history of the Hare Krishna Movement in the former USSR is growing. It is natural, because the present grows from the past, and the future grows from the present. The new generation of Krishna devotees is interested not only in the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness given in the books of acharyas. They also want to know the history of the society of the devotees, namely who distributed these books, who preached a philosophy of Krishna Consciousness, risking, at times, their own life, who they are obliged to, so to speak.*

“Who discovered America?”

In this article, published in the USA, I wrote: “Everyone knows that Columbus discovered America, and Shрила Prabhupada discovered Krishna Consciousness for Americans. Nobody would dispute this fact! He is a founder-acharya of the ISKCON”.

But how it was in Russia and other parts of the former USSR? Many, including myself, did not meet Prabhupada in person. They did not read his books (first Bhagavad-Gita in Russian appeared in the USSR, somewhere between the end of 1984 — the beginning of 1985). Where the devotees came from? Their appearance is miraculous, and we are interested to know how this “miracle” has happened.

After Harikesha Swami’s banishment from the country at the beginning of 1980, practically no one of the western devotees, up until the 90s, arrived. Who was preaching Krishna Consciousness? Who first published and distributed Shрила Prabhupada’s books with a great deal of life-threatening risk? Who we are indebted to? The Hare Krishna Movement in the USSR was considered as an ideological diversion, subversive activity, and was punishable as high treason, paricide.

By offering our obeisances onto Shрила Prabhupada’s *murti* we glorify the founder-acharya. This is *Vaishnava* ethics. But who put the head-corner stone in our own “not-made-by-hands temple”?

The history of Hare Krishna of the USSR is quite original. As the eye-witnesses and partakers of that history are still alive, it won’t be easy to hush up the facts. It won’t be easy to maintain a good relationship with those who claim their part in the said history either. Thus, in order to remain objective, or rather for a show, contemporary ISKCON leaders began a survey among devotees:

— How you became acquainted with Hare Krishna?

I was asked this question as well.

When I returned from just another preaching tour, as soon as I stepped over the doorstep, the telephone rang. I picked up the handset:

- Hello, Shri Kishor Kishori Temple is here...
- Is this Prataparudra?
- No, my name is Murali Mohan...
- My name is Paramananda Puri das, I am a disciple of Bhaktivigyana Maharaja. My guru, Bhaktivigyana, wants to write the history of the beginnings of ISKCON of the USSR. I gather materials for that. You were at the cradle of this Movement, would you be so kind to tell something about yourself, and about how you got acquainted with Hare Krishna...

The young man made a good impression on me, and I, not willing to be entreated any longer, agreed:

- Okay, where do we start?
- Well, probably from the time when you first learned about Krishna Consciousness.

After a little hesitation and gathering my thoughts together I started:

- Looks like I was interested in philosophical questions of death and life from the early childhood. What is the point of doing anything if everything will end at death? In my mature age, I got acquainted with various methods of spiritual realization and started to look for a mantra for meditation. At that time I was residing at Leningrad where I was a chairman of the Leningrad Board of the artists of books, posters, and graphic arts. Upon the invitation by one of my friends who was practicing yoga, I traveled to Riga where in one of the art studios I've heard about Hare Krishna. There I learned where local krishnaites are gathering. When I met with one of them I learned general information about Krishna Consciousness, became interested in this philosophy, and began to chant Hare Krishna mantra and to follow regulative principles. By that time I was already a convinced vegetarian and seriously was thinking how to radically change my life. Providence was benevolent to me. When Ananta Tirtha Maharaja (also known as Ananta Shanti) arrived in Riga, local devotees arranged a meeting for us. Maharaj made a very good impression on me. After meeting him I started to chant Hare Krishna steadily, and, after few months, when Harikeshwa Swami visited Riga, I attended the program. This became a life event for me. There were a kirtan and lecture at the

program. All of a sudden, KGB and police officers stormed in, and we all were arrested. We were held until late at night. After we were released, I decided, once and for all, to devote my life to the preaching of the philosophy and principles of Krishna Consciousness. I decided to make it a mission of the rest of my life. And after that everything went like clockwork.

I won't repeat myself as I described my life experiment in the book "Historical novel on behalf of myself" The book contains 3 parts. The first part is named "My fight". In that book, I describe how I got acquainted with Krishna Consciousness and, how, as an external student, passing quickly all the way from the neophyte to the leader of the movement and preaching in the USSR. The second part of "My fight" is called "Hunt for rhino". It generally describes events and obstacles related to the preaching in the USA. Third part named "Become guru!" is dedicated to association and meeting with Narayana Maharaj. The book also contains plenty of facts, documents (photos, notes, diaries, and testimonies). There are also several various true stories, some of them are quite risqué, sometimes amusing, sometimes those stories are real tragedies written by tears and blood of their personages. When that book is published, devotees will learn about the history of their movement inseparably linked with the evolution of the author himself, as well as about the shady side of those who currently "run the show".

I already started to publish selected chapters of that book on some of my websites.

**Your ever well-wisher,  
Murali Mohan das.**



# Part I

## MOSCOW

### (Fragment from “My fight”)

---

## CHAPTER 1

*Moscow...  
So much of this sound  
For Russian hearts merged!  
So much of it echoed!*

A. Pushkin “Eugene Onegin”

My first meeting with Moscow krishnaites occurred approximately in the fall of 1980. The same year I started to preach Krishna consciousness. Making my first shy steps on that path, I started to preach to my acquaintances. In Moscow, usually, I used to stay with my friend Anatoly Kokorin, son of the well-known at that time artist and Corresponding Member of the Academy of Arts. Anatoly lived on Malaya Gruzinskaya Street, in the building that served also as Moscow City Committee of the graphic artists. At that time I used to be a head of the similar committee in Peter\*, and due to my position, often visited my colleagues in Moscow.

There used to live a few more famous people in that building, including Vysotsky, and others, "heroes of our times". I had a good relationship with some of them, with others I had just passing acquaintance. Once I learned about Krishna consciousness, trying to show off, I tried to preach to them. Frankly, these attempts were not always successful, but that did not discourage me at all.

I was interested in Russian history, philosophy, and ancient art and became friends with Anatoly as we both were interested in ancient Russian painting... I had a small collection of Russian icons, and he was quite well-known collector of the same. He used to be a restorer of paintings and icons and introduced

---

\* Peter — short name of St. Petersburg, or as it was named during Soviet times, Leningrad

me to this work. Thus, during several years we met, exchanged experience and icons. Gradually these meetings developed into a close friendship. When he learned that I became a "krishnait", he was extremely surprised.

- Why Krishna, and not Christ? — He asked me.
- Because Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and I am created in his image. I am a soul. He is a Super Soul, I am His inalienable particle. I am not a part of this or that religion, society or nation, I am Krishna's particle, part of the Supreme Spirit!
- You are cosmopolitan, you are denying true Russian culture
- Not at the least... I don't deny anything, but quite opposite, I accept everything on the basis of pure consciousness. This body has many identifications: "Russian", "Hindu" or "Christian", but actually I am a soul. All names and identifications pertain to the material body but don't touch upon our spiritual nature. You and I are eternal souls. That is to say, the soul represents our true ego, true "I" which is a particle of the Supreme "I", God. Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita: "I am seated in everyone's heart". This means that He is situated in the heart of the Christian and atheist, in the heart of demigod and animal.

This response somewhat puzzled my friend, but he decided not to dispute.

- Too complicated, — he dismissed, and later, was simply listening to me and, giving me "an eye", was just shaking his head: "Phew... Is that so..."

Striking changes were occurring before my eyes, literally within a few months. Although, as it was before, we talked about ancient Russian paintings at our meetings, more and more often we also talked about philosophy and religion. Comparing Russian icons with ancient Indian miniature paintings with Radha and Krishna images, I was pointing out similarities between both arts, as well between Christianity and Vedic philosophy. In Anatoly's home library, among the books of Russian iconography, there were few books with images of ancient temples of India. And on one cabinet there was a standing small wooden sculpture of an unknown Indian deity. Later I found out that it was Shri Rama, one of Krishna's incarnations. Anatoly's father used to live in India for some time, and brought this souvenir to his son; since then, unrecognized Lord invisibly protected Kokorin family.

(excerpt from our discussions):

- Christianity came from India, — I insisted, — See how much of the sameness we have. The history of Russia was re-written so many times; and if

we accept that once upon a time there was one human civilization on this planet, it is logical to conclude that we have same roots with what we call now India. A commonality in languages, words of a Sanskrit origin in Russian, names of regions, rivers... Don't be in a hurry to cut the branch you're sitting on...

The history of true Russian culture and religion is rooted in the scriptures of ancient Aryans. Babylon, ancient Egypt, Greece, and later Roman Emporium are remnants of the same ancient culture existed on this planet. The history of this civilization is described in Puranas and epic poem Mahabharata. Bhagavad-Gita is the part of Mahabharata, told by Krishna Himself and represents the essence of Vedic knowledge.

In "The Science of Self Realization", Shrila Prabhupada, in his discussion with Pastor Emmanuel, proves the existence of the same roots in the names Krishna and Christ. He points out that name "Christ" is a Greek interpretation of "Krishna". "Christ" takes origin from the Greek "Kristos" which means "Anointed". And at the same time, the Sanskrit word "Krishta" means "Attractiveness". In India, Krishna is often called "Krishta". From this, we can conclude that when Jesus addressed to God: "Our Father and Lord, let your name be holy..." He meant Krishna.

I almost convinced Anatoly to accept the theory quite popular at that time in the West: that when Jesus named Himself as Christ, He pointed out the name of His Father in Heaven, and by chanting this name everyone can gain salvation. Name of Lord and His form are non-different from Lord Himself. There is no duality in Absolute, so the Name and Person are the same. That's why it is said in the Bible: "When two or three of you are for the sake of My Name, I am with you!" One who calls the Name of God will be rescued!" The Name of Lord is as powerful as Lord Himself.

Frankly, Anatoly was shocked by what he had heard from me, and, not being able to hold himself, asked me: "Do you believe in God at all?" If I'd say "Yes" to him it would be as I said nothing. So I replied evasively: "THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IS AN OBVIOUS FACT, that doesn't require proof".

## **DEVOTEES**

On the next day, after our conversation, I met Maharaja. I called him and he set up a meeting at the Moscow subway station "Kievskaya". Our meeting was a secret, I figured that I have to be very careful. Caution is a sister of valor!

Maharaja was not alone, he was accompanied by a girl whose name was Satya. She kept herself somewhat distant from him. However, even with naked eye, one could notice that they had more than friendly relationship. From the sub-

way, we walked to the apartment which, according to Maharaja, was serving as an ashram for *brahmacharis*. The owner of that apartment looked like a young boy, his name was Sadananda das. The other devotee, a bit older than Sadananda was there. His name was Sanatan-Kumar das. Soon after we arrived few more devotees came by. It was getting quite lively there. First, I was shown the altar room. Without a reminder, I figured that I have to offer obeisances to the altar, although nobody except me was doing it. After that, I was invited to *brahmachari* room. Its walls were covered by white lime and the lotus flowers were painted on it. "Probably there is an artist among the devotees", — I thought to myself.

There was no furniture or chairs in a *brahmachari* room. So one could sit on the floor only. I looked around, not knowing exactly what I am looking for, and after finding some sort of rug sat on it and leaned against the wall. While I was looking around the premises another devotee by the name Ravi das (I met him before in Peter) arrived. In haste, Ravi das prepared *prasad*: rice with hot seasoning made with carrots, raisin, and spices. It was always kind of striking that *prasad* was always either extremely hot or overly sweet. Sugar was added generously, hot pepper was added by tablespoons, and butter was added in the same quantity as rice. I was already a vegetarian for a few years, got used to quite simple and invariable food. It was different from what the devotees cooked. So, for some time I was somewhat choosy, looked closely to some meals, some of it ate, and refused from some other.

When *prasad* was finally cooked, it was first offered to Maharaja. He took it as a matter of course. After he honored *prasad*, the leftovers were offered to the gathered according to the rank and age. I was not missed and offered some of the *prasad*. It was clear that there was a certain order and it was followed by everyone (it couldn't be called etiquette though). What was quite noticeable: there were two words often appearing in a conversation: "devotees" and "demons". Who was called "devotees" and who was called "demons" was unclear to me at that time, but separation line, between these two, was drawn red in the minds of the neophytes. One time I had a philosophical discussion, almost an argument, with Sanat-Kumar. I insisted that demons also can be devotees of Krishna. My opponent was angry and flatly exclaimed: "Impossible!" His the only argument was that this can NEVER be possible! That did not calm me down. I still was insisting in my point of view by bringing the example of Prahlada Maharaja who was born in demon's family but was a great *bhakta*. Hiranyakashipu himself, his father also was not an ordinary person; he came from Vaikuntha, where he served personally as a gate-keeper for Lord Narayana. To resolve our dispute, Sanat-Kumar sent me to Maharaja. Maharaja was head of all devotees

and the highest authority. It was only he, who knew the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness.

I spend all day in the ashram, but at night went to Anatoly's place. I was leaving ashram somewhat sad and disappointed as I couldn't stay overnight. It would be interesting to see what is the order in an ashram? How does their day start? How devotees chant the *mantra* and do service to the altar?

Next day I was invited to the program that was taking place in the apartment somewhere on Leninskiy Prospect. It was Saturday, weekend day. Some devotees decided to stay with Sadananda, others with Maharaja leading them, went to Leninskiy. I was given the address and was told that it would be better for me to be where Maharaja is. It was my first meeting of Moscow Hare Krishna devotees; before that, I was not at any program, thus could not possibly know where is better.

## LENINSKIY PROSPECT

Following seniors' advice, I went to Leninskiy Prospect. There was a pretty decent audience at this program, as I could judge, intelligent, educated people, scientists or something of that nature. I was leading a mundane life so I fit in pretty well.

As usual, Maharaja was late. Not willing to waste my time, I quickly adjusted myself to the environment, found some interlocutor and started to preach to him:

- I am not this material body; I am the soul that is eternally connected with Krishna as His inseparable parcel. Since name "Krishna" is non-different from Krishna Himself, you can easily restore your relationship with him by chanting: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Once acquired Krishna consciousness by chanting Holy Name, at the time of death, you will go back to Krishna thus escaping a repeated cycle of birth and death. So the best choice is — not to be born again! Like a man is changing his clothes, the soul is changing or migrates from one material body to another, constantly. Soul incarnated in a human body is given a chance to attain liberation from the circle of birth and death.
- You speak so well, as someone who is already liberated...

I assumed this compliment as addressed to me, nodded and replied:

- Yes, and don't get surprised. I am not this material body, I am the soul; I repeat this statement several times a day.

My interlocutor seemed to be with the good sense of humor and we both laughed.

- I'll try to follow your example and begin to chant Hare Krishna. Let's see what the outcome will be. Yes, I will start from this. Not a bad idea: I am not this material body... I'll try to preach as well...
- This knowledge is passed through the chain of disciplic succession from the time immemorial. For contemporary people of the West, it was presented by A.C. Swami Prabhupada. He is *acharya* in that chain of disciplic succession.....

I was interrupted at this moment by someone. The young man in a suit and white shirt with the tie and quite a prominent nose said with the didactic tone of voice: "Parampara, my friend, that's how it is called, the disciplic succession. I noticed big ambitions in this young man and said: "Yes. Krishna is the original spiritual master and all others are His followers, disciples, or disciples of His disciples".

I thought this was an important point. Prabhupada often mentioned that he delivered the "message", he did not invent anything, and he passed only what he has learned from his predecessors. That was the very point that I wanted to emphasize. Absolute Truth is a source of everything, and this Truth is passed along the chain of disciplic succession. I can't pass on something that did not exist before me. And, although I might be accepted as a *guru*, actually I remain an eternal disciple of the Absolute Truth. This is truth and essence of life: To pass on what one heard from *acharya* as adequately as possible. Absolute Truth is inconceivably great, and I, however, am inconceivably small. Thus it would be at least impudent to take responsibility and state that I grasp the Truth. However, it is an essence of the process of spiritual realization: to accept and then pass on the knowledge.

The name of the young man in a suit was Vishvamitra that is "friend of the whole world".

When Maharaja arrived, all the guests become noticeably lively. Satya, who was always by his side, took a guitar and started to sing. She had a pleasant voice, and her singing was absolutely suitable for the spirit of the program. She kept chanting Hare Krishna mantra over and over again. Everyone was listening with great attention and repeated after her, assiduously clapping hands in a count "one-two-three". Maharaja himself (he was called here Anatoliy Fedorovich) skillfully played on karatalas, deriving beautiful, pleasing sounds, and hearts were filled with inexplicable joy.

While the kirtan was performed in a living room, the prasadam was cooked in the kitchen. Pleasant fragrance of spices mixed with the fragrance of incents



was tickling nostrils and provoked the imagination. After the kirtan, Maharaja gave a short lecture, and guests were offered prasadam. The atmosphere at the program warmed up noticeably. All guests started to freely converse with each other like old friends.

The program ended far after midnight. Guests were satisfied, and were reluctantly leaving the place — all-attractive Krishna did not let them go. When everyone left, I approached Ravi (by the time we've been pretty friendly to each other), and presented him slides of my paintings. One of them portrayed Shrila Prabhupada, Krishna, and Arjuna on the chariot. Ravi took slides and showed them to Maharaja. Maharaja reviewed them, carefully and for a long time, and then concluded: "Paintings are bona fide". And after a short pause, he turned to me and added: "By the way, I will call Guru tomorrow. If you want, I can recommend you for initiation. Remain in Moscow for few more days until things are cleared."

Frankly, I did not think, did not know whether I need this initiation or not. As far as I was informed, they gave the first initiation in *harinama* (chanting Hare Krishna mantra), then the second initiation was given in *gayatri*. This second initiation was called brahminical. One, who received it, became twice-born. At that time, there were only a few such twice-born brahmanas in the USSR: Maharaja himself, Ravi, Vrindavan, Maheshvara and some devotees from Baltic republics who I was able to get acquainted with.



Hesitant a bit, just out of courtesy, I accepted an offer and stayed in Moscow to find out about the result of the telephone conversation between Maharaja and Guru.

During that time I participated in public programs and street harinamas. All this was new and unusual to me, and, although I did not experience great enthusiasm, but out of realization of the fact "that I am not a material body, but eternal, full of bliss and knowledge soul", I overcame doubts and led by the higher power, humbly followed my fate. I never suffered from timidity, but sometimes could be influenced by passing mood and get weak. But in this case, I became bold, almost up to being impudent and acted in contrary to anything. Not even thinking about consequences I could challenge anybody. I was always following high ideals. And for a spiritual achievement, I could sacrifice myself, my life for the common good. In nowadays it is inconceivable for others, as people became shallow. I am writing this without counting on their support. Devoting myself to service to Krishna, preaching and spreading Hare Krishna — to me it was a matter of honor. Someone may think that this is just a method of one's self-affirmation. NOT AT ALL! It is an honorable activity for an intelligent man, real humanitarian and patriot. I was raised like this.

## **SCIENTIST'S CLUB**

With the shaved heads, devotees were chanting Hare Krishna, handed out printed, and sometimes hand-written notes with maha-mantra and invitation to the programs with the address and telephone number.

These first attempts to preaching weren't too skillful, but were overly defiant and extravagant. Devotees themselves were neophytes and quite often were arguing with each other for petty reasons. However, the presence of Maharaja was beneficial and pacifying for them, or at least forced them to be more mature. For the majority of them, Maharaja was an indisputable authority. The programs led by him were pretty good. Many great, quite intelligent people were participating in them. Probably they were the best at the time, those who are called "cream of society".

I was invited, one time to the Scientists Club. One can imagine that such institutions as this Club were attended by quite respectable, dignified people, sometimes "show-offish". One could enter only with the special ticket. When I arrived at the scheduled time, I did not know how to behave. Should I buy a ticket, or shouldn't, or maybe there is a way to enter for free?

I was standing shillyshally outside, and waiting for the organizers of the event. First, those with the drum arrived. They attempted to enter as a big "Gipsy band", for free. When they succeeded, they started a kirtan in a lobby. The administra-

tion of the Club, almost kicking them, forced them out. But with the admirable persistence, they were taking entrance doors by storm. Maharaja did not participate in this personally, but was encouraging others: "Go! Go!!" Perhaps he wanted to cultivate the spirit of renunciation in devotees. But, looking from outside, those actions were absurd. They were causing rejection and criticism from people. Finally, one of the administration ordered very strictly: "Don't allow those with the drum in! Or we call militia (Soviet law enforcement agency)!" "Oh, that's what we need right now — to be arrested for 15 days!" — I was thinking. The crisis was brewing, and so I decided to escape before it, but couldn't. I was pulled in, against my will. "It's okay, it's okay, we'll get in!" — Maharaja insisted. And we really got in. When lobby was left by all the public, and everyone went to the auditorium, Maharaja and I went to the auditorium as well. There was some kind of foreign movie with the crime, drama and love scenes. The truth was, I was done with cinematography, movies, etc. long before Krishna Consciousness, and was not interested in that movie. I had enough opportunities in my previous, karmic life to attend elite programs in Cinema Club, Theatrical Society centers, and various elite parties. I was already deeply disgusted by all these things and considered it as a waste of time, thus I really did not feel good about being there again. Just out of solidarity with devotees and out of respect to Maharaja sitting next to me and staring at the screen with a great deal of interest, I was still there. "Perhaps, they want me to learn how to control



my senses in such an extravagant situation", — I was thinking this way and thus, was able to stay till the end of the movie.

It comes to my memory that we did other things as well: we walked on the streets singing, descended to a subway, where we were, very often, kicked out from by militia. All this reminded me of the period of decadence and futurism in Russia before the Great October Revolution. On one hand, it was very romantic, exciting, on the other hand, it was not making too much of a sense. It was all kind of superficial and did not have a solid understanding of true spiritual culture. However, for some participants it was normal, okay so to speak. Anarchy is a mother of the Order! Going back to the history I thought that it was not coincident that anarchism was so popular in Russia. Such "Krishna Consciousness" would fit them perfectly. But my understanding of Krishna Consciousness was different: true, wise and non-compromising. Such a magnificent ideal! I thought one would easily give one's life for it.

There passed a couple of days in waiting for the telephone call from the guru. And finally, I was informed that it was not possible to reach the guru over the phone and that Maharaja has been arrested. Details were not disclosed to me. And frankly, I was not interested in details. Thus, my first attempt to become an initiated devotee was unsuccessful. "Time hasn't come yet", - I thought, feeling somewhat disappointed. It happens often in life, once we become attached to the thought, idea, thing or person, the problems pop up immediately... Oh, well, "no" means "no", needs not to be justified!

Honestly speaking, back in the times, it was easy to become an initiated devotee, the simplest thing to get. I've seen those "disciples" who were initiated, and what kind of devotees they represented. It was good enough to silently agree and one could be easily entered into the waiting list of those who desired to become initiated and to start spiritual life. If I would be more persistent and patient, I could get spiritual name and beads from guru back in Riga. Many, who returned to Moscow after Riga, while were available back there, were initiated. But something was not connecting in regards to myself, although I was not upset. Maharaja, my only well-wisher was arrested. What's next? I did not know.

## **PERIOD OF REPRESSION**

After Maharaja left sannyasa by breaking the woe for celibacy, he was imprisoned, and it could be for a long time. There were many, sometimes incredible, rumors around him. But I had no time to participate in gossiping. By that time, in Moscow, I had already new connections, in addition to those devotees I mentioned before. I was preaching at different places, apartments and did not stay anywhere for a long time. For some time I stayed in Maharaja's apartment. Satya, his wife, was visiting him in jail regularly by traveling to Smolensk and relayed

my obeisances onto him. In Moscow, she accompanied me in my preaching quite often. Together we walked along the streets and distributed books. She was a very attractive woman, very captivating for men. And many, not being able to resist, bought books from her. Besides that, she was a good singer and I used to take her to the programs.

Back in that time, the life of Moscow intellectuals was quite private, in apartments or art studios. It was fashionable (or how it is said in nowadays, "cool") to set up some kind of private parties or events. However, KGB agents were arranging such events or parties as well. Sometimes, hosts of those events were non-permanent employees of the invisible battle-front so to speak, sometimes some of the attendees. In one of such places, on Thursdays, we shared programs with Alexander Men, who was murdered by mistake. Krishna Consciousness was prohibited back in the days, and, as any forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge, was incredibly sweet and desirable. Thus, it was a great pleasure to get acquainted, or simply to see live krishnait. And if that krishnait is able to speak, sing or tell about Krishna beautifully, even better. Then there would be even more people coming to see him.

Eduard, the owner of the apartment where some of above-mentioned events took place, was a photographer. Once upon a time, there were dissidents gathering at his place. He told me that Academician Sakharov himself was holding his meetings at this apartment. By the way, going a bit ahead, later, I was able, through Eduard, meet Saharov in person.

So, Eduard's guests were quite a decent kind of public: scientists, artistic intellectuals, and those who were interested in Oriental philosophy, yoga, and religion. I was known as "Misha from Leningrad, artist". This name is quite common. There were countless artists with the name Misha in Leningrad. For safety reasons I never gave too much of information about myself. Nobody knew my address, where I am staying, or my spiritual name. I appeared and disappeared suddenly, and whoever wanted to meet me, learned about my programs on the same day, about an hour before the starting time, or they met me right on the program. At that time there were many people willing to meet me in person. Eduard suggested to create a schedule in order to inform everyone in advance, however, having some experience in underground work, I never agreed for this kind of suggestions. I usually replied evasively: "We will meet if Krishna is willing!" I was modest enough for self-advertisement. Besides, back in these days, this kind of pleasure might cost one's life. In Krishna Consciousness, I've learned how to value my life, because it did not belong to me anymore. My life was for Krishna.

In Eduard's apartment, on Thursdays, I used to cook *prasad*, sang Hare Krishna and distributed books that I bound by myself. It was one of many places in Mos-

cow where I was preaching. The other place was an apartment owned by one devotee who later received spiritual name Shrivatsa. He lived alone, and what I remember about his place that there were lots of cockroaches there. He fought them, poisoned, but with no success. He used to lead hippies like life and knew many other hippies. I've learned from him that Ravi das also was a hippie, and his last name was Michurin. Another devotee, from Lithuania, also was a hippie and later became known as Sanaka das. Much later he became one of the leaders of the ISKCON in Russia. Before that, he used to be a regular in-patient in one of those "Durdoms" (or so-called Crazy Homes, psychiatric clinics). Back in the Soviet times, it was not a shame to be locked in "Durdom". It was considered as a kind of stylish, evidence of independent personality and mind. Many dissidents went through concentration camps and psychiatric clinics. In nowadays some individuals willfully go through "Durdom" to hide from various responsibilities...

Later on, when the movement was already widespread, and Hare Krishna was legalized, many of those people, who have been there, but did not actually do much for Krishna, just out living their karma, were glorified and praised as pure devotees. In Armenia, they made a *murti* of one of such "heroes" and worshiped it the same way as to Shрила Prabhupada, until ISKCON vetoed it. On the wave of "perestroika" and flourishing Krishna Consciousness, there appeared many impostors, as a foam, who did nothing for Krishna but gained recognition as great devotees. They deliberately idolized useless individuals, just to become glorious themselves. This fact is more pertaining to the history of Hare Krishna movement, than to its philosophy, and we want to talk about philosophy in the context of above-written facts.

I remember two other devotees, almost boys, Vladimir and Akif. I met them while conducting programs. Akif was highly educated guy. I must say, to these present days, he is preaching with a great deal of success. His spiritual name is Ayurvata das. Back in the days, they did not want to recommend him for initiation because of some unreasonable suspicions, and I suggested to him, as he knew English, to take initiative, and write to the guru himself. Akif, or Ayurvata das, was from Baku. He was a post-graduate student in Moscow. For some time we were living together, and he helped me to distribute books and arrange programs. Later, he founded Center of Krishna Consciousness in Baku and attracted many followers (of Krishna Consciousness) by preaching, as well as by translating books and publishing his own books.

I had one more apartment. The owner's name was Nadezhda Nikolayevna, same Nadezhda who lived in Minsk and later moved to Moscow. Yagya devi dasi's (Nadezhda Nikolayevna) apartment was quite a lively place. There were many devotees who gathered or lived there. Her apartment became one of the



preaching centers that I have many fond memories about. There could be written the whole novel about Yagya, as well as about other devotees. But here we will limit ourselves with some information. Yagya used to live not too far from Izmailovsky Park, in which we conducted programs during summertime, in the open air. There was quite a big crowd gathering there, and we used to sing Hare Krishna freely, from the top of our lungs. After the *kirtan*, I was giving a class on Bhagavad-Gita, and at the end, we all used to take *prasad*. These programs used to be at a very good level. My preaching was always energetic and inspiring. At some point I was actively calling everyone to distribute books, considering this type of devotional service to the mission of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Shрила Prabhupada as the most important. Under the conditions, when it was difficult to socialize and preach, and not everyone could preach, book distribution was the most effective way. Yagya helped me a lot. Since we often see female names among the names of other devotees, it would be right to say those female devotees made as much contribution to spreading Krishna Consciousness in the former URSS as male devotees, if not more than them. When glorifying devotees, one shouldn't discriminate by the gender. *Jiva* is transcendental to all definitions. While in devotional service to Krishna, every living being is in the natural position of the eternal servant of God, in the original transcendental form *sat-chit-ananda*.

## **BOOK DISTRIBUTION**

I was the first who published and distributed Shрила Prabhupada's books. I did it not because I was a great distributor or salesperson, but to set an example and inspire others. Actually, books are created to read them. Prabhupada used to tell his disciples: "I wrote my books for you so you would not only distribute them but read as well". Anyhow, back in the days, I was a very strong book distributor. And was regularly reporting about it to Kirtiraja. Here is one of those reports for the years 1985-86:

"Distributed: about 2000 Bhagavad-Gita, over 3000 small books, such as "Beyond Time and Space" (First Russian version of Prabhupada's book "Easy Journey to Other Planets"), "Book of Indian way of thinking", etc., and tens of thousands fliers with Hare Krishna Mahamantra, published under factious Society of Knowledge"

By using postal services I was able to reach, to a certain extent, Composers' Union (R. Pauls, P. Petrov, R. Shchedrin and others), Writers' Union and other creative organizations. I met in person and had a conversation with many outstanding representatives of science, arts, and literature. For example, I visited Academician A. Sakharov and presented to him "Beyond Time and Space". I met twice with quite productive writer Yeremei Eudovich Parnov, who was writing

fiction about Hinduism. I gave him "Beyond Time and Space" as well, but he refused to take Bhagavad-Gita. I was quite friendly with V. Sementsov (sanskritologist), who published, in 1985, his own translation of Bhagavad-Gita, and after that, suddenly left his body. I spoke on the telephone with Ilya Glazunov (famous Russian artist). He acquired Bhagavad-Gita some other way, not from me. I informed, over the mail, A. Pugacheva, famous pop singer, about Hare Krishna Mahamantra. I was Djuna Davitashvili's guest and sold to her Bhagavad-Gita. Djuna is a famous healer. I was a guest at Galina S. Shatalova's house. Shatalova is a prominent dietologist and propagates vegetarianism. I sang Hare Krishna for her (and she liked it very much), and presented to her Bhagavad-Gita and other Shrila Prabhupada books.

## **ALANKAR**

His name was Sasha. Young, just a boy, very intelligent, agreeable, simple; he would do anything whatever he was told to do without drama. We met at Yagya's apartment and became finally close while at the programs in Izmailovsky Park. I visited his home, was preaching to his mother and grandmother. His mother was worried about her son and always asked me to take care of him as of my own son. And I did take care of him as if he was my son. He became a very good devotee.

His FIRST IMPORTANT ERRAND — I sent him to Gorky to give Bhagavad Gita to Academician Sakharov. I warned him: "It's very risky, but don't you be afraid of nothing. Be patient and intelligent. If getting arrested, don't argue, just tell them that you've asked for a favor, and put all the blame on me. Even if they arrest you, they will try to frighten you, will keep for a day or two and then release. You won't be imprisoned, there is no ground for it. They will try to brainwash you and will release..."

Sasha was arrested right by the entrance to the building. He was not able to give Bhagavad-Gita to Sakharov. Perhaps it was not meant to be.

Later, Sasha and I went to Novosibirsk, and right before the "perestroika" began, we went to Ulyanovsk, where our "Sankirtana" was invited to participate in the International Festival of Folklore.

In Moscow, Sasha was taking part in harinamas and book distribution. One day we were distributing books, and after that, we found ourselves at Djuna Davitashvili's residence.

## **DJUNA**

I remember it was Shrila Prabhupada's Day of Appearance. We were distributing books and preaching to people on the streets. The idea to find Djuna and

visit her appeared spontaneously. Neither I, nor Sasha knew how to find her. The only information we had was that Djuna lives somewhere on Arbat\*. We started to search, checking almost every gateway or door, asking passer-by strangers: "Sorry for the inconvenience, could you please tell us where Djuna lives?" We passed few street blocks and finally got lucky. On Vakhtangov Street, someone, who was passing by showed us: "Right there, in that building, ask the yard-keeper". We entered the building, rang the bell of one apartment, then another, and finally found her apartment. We were ringing the bell, but for a quite a while the door remained closed. At last, we've heard that somebody is walking towards the door, and the figure of typical mobster appeared at the doorstep: "Can I help you?" I halted for a moment, out of surprise.

— Sorry to bother, but we were given this address. Is Djuna Davitashvili available?

The "mobster" cast an evaluating glance at us and asked: "Do you have some business with her? "

— We have books for her.

Our response was off-standard and caused off-standard solution of the problem. The "mobster" disappeared behind the closed door and then appeared back again shortly: "Come in!" And he showed at the door with the strong and quite hairy hand. We entered. He locked the door and said: "Follow me". The apartment was big and of an unusual layout, so without a guide, one could easily get lost in it. I followed the "mobster". Sasha followed me. As we passed dark hallway we got to the kitchen. Here, by the table with the cigarette in her mouth and drunk, Djuna was sitting. "What can I help you with? What do you prefer, tea, coffee, or....? "

— "No, thank you, we won't take much of your time. We don't drink coffee, and we don't smoke cigarettes. We have a book for you."

I pulled Bhagavad Gita from the bag and put it on the table in front of Djuna. She put her cigarette away, took Gita in her hands and started to look at the pictures with great interest. After turning over a few pages in Bhagavad Gita, Djuna put it aside and said: "My mother taught me the art of worshiping gods. I have my own gods and angels that protect us. In our family, it is passed from generation to generation" Then, pointing out to the "mobster" standing by the door, like she suddenly remembered, said: "This is my brother". And she mentioned his name.

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\* Arbat — famous and historical street in Downtown Moscow.

- "Nice to meet you. My name is Mamu Thakur, and this is Sasha. We worship Shri Krishna, Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who is worshiped by demigods and feared of by demons"
- "Yeah, yeah... evil forces... Some think that I am a witch..."

But here is my information:

Davitashvili, Eugenia Yuvashevna (Djuna)

Born July 22, 1949 in Kuban, Krasnodar region.

Citizen of Russian Federation.

Education.....

#### Footnote:

The rest of her information I found later, from various reference sources. According to the reporters and news agencies, she, "after completing medical education, continued at Columbia Medical University of Shri Lanka (Ceylon at the time). Occupation: President of the International Academy of Alternative Sciences. Other activity: President of the International Association of the Assyrians of Russia, "LAROS".

According to the same sources, Djuna started to work at the age of 13, in the collective farm (kolhoz) at Krasnodar region (or the Kuban).

From 1980 she lives and works in Moscow. In 1990 she established the International Academy of Alternative Sciences. According to newspaper "Izvestia" (09/22/1995), at different times, she had the following patients or who were cured by her magic: General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, John Paul II (Pope), artist Ilya Glazunov, actors Julietta Mazina, Robert De Niro, Marcello Mastroianni, movie directors Andrey Tarkovskiy and Federico Fellini.

In June 1994 Davitashvili was elected as vice-chancellor of the open international university at Colombo (Shri Lanka) for 5 years.

In September, 1995, Djuna, upon invitation by the member of the 5<sup>th</sup> State Duma\*, Andrey Volkov, lead the group of candidates for the members of the 6<sup>th</sup> State Duma who represented the Party for the Protection of Retirees and Veterans, Party for the extermination of the crime, legitimacy and order, Party for protection of healthcare, education, science and culture, Party for the protection of youth,

The block of the above-mentioned parties did not get even one chair in 6<sup>th</sup> Duma, as they had less than one percent of votes. In January 1995 Djuna became

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\* Duma — Russian Parliament

a member of the Board of the movement "Reforms — new course". The head of that movement was Speaker of the 1<sup>st</sup> Federal Senate, Vladimir Shumeiko.

After she (Djuna) told about herself, her family, her activities and showed her paintings (the gallery of her paintings was occupying few rooms in the apartment), we returned back to the kitchen, then took the stairs to the patio inside the building. There Djuna had her own studio where she had several magazines with her poetry.

— "Oh, you are also a poet?"

— "Yes".

After that, she took us to her checkroom that took probably one-third of her huge apartment. She was showing and sorting her gowns, coats, fur coats and suits. We patiently followed Djuna pretending that we are very interested in this. At that time Djuna did not have all the recognition that she gained during the time of "Perestroika". But her fame was phenomenal.

— You have an enviable life! — I told her. — You have many, and various talents and qualities, you are so popular, and you helped so many people... But who will help you?

— God! — Djuna replied

After the tour through her apartment, we returned to the kitchen again and sang Hare Krishna mantra. At the end, Djuna asked: "How much I owe you for Bhagavad Gita?" Sasha said: "30 rubles". Djuna called her brother and he brought money. She gave us 50 rubles. When I reached my pocket to give her change, she stopped me: "No need, this is for Krishna!"

— May the hand of the giver get not empty! — I said and accepted money.

What this saying really means? Everyone has their own understanding. Some take it personally thinking of themselves as benefactors and expect a reward in return. Some think: "Lord is merciful! He is the source of the whole world. His hand never becomes empty!" And what are thoughts of Krishna's devotee? He thinks: "Krishna is unique and amazingly beautiful!"

## **CITY ASSOCIATION OF PLAYWRIGHTS**

One time I was invited to the Moscow Association of Play-writers to perform a program. I promised them to show a documentary film "Rathayatra in Los Angeles. It was an amateur documentary. It was quite big gathering, everyone was interested to see the movie. But it did not happened as the equipment

got broken. To avoid complete disappointment, instead of the documentary, I started kirtan. I simply chanted Hare Krishna, played mridanga and danced. Many of attendees, watching what I do, joined in dancing and singing. Pasha German and Sanatana dhama, a devotee from Kaunas (Lithuania) were with me at this program. Surprised, they said:

- Who would think that mere chanting of Hare Krishna could attract these people so much?

Back in the days, it was not a common opinion among devotees, as it is now, that the only way to attract people is to tell stories/tales about Astrology and Ayurveda. Now they say: "Everyone is interested in their health". That's not true. People are interested in Krishna, but as they deal with hypocrites and neophytes, they think differently. Krishna Consciousness Movement, started by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, is based on Holy Name chanting. Indeed, the holy name "Krishna" has the power to attract people, not tricky words. Pure, inoffensive chanting of Hare Krishna mantra makes a fascinating impression on everybody. I witnessed it, how people take it in their hearts, when I chant Hare Krishna, preach sankirtana and take part in sankirtana myself.

After the kirtan, I gave a short lecture and offered books to the public. Books were selling like hot cakes. Some bought few copies in consideration of their friends and family members. One of the play-writers invited me to his house, and there we had another program. He invited his friend to simply listen to me and take part in kirtan. At the end of kirtan, I gave another short lecture and distributed some *prasada*. In such a way I was performing in clubs, private houses, recreational centers, schools, day care centers, and even in mental institutions. The effect of these events was outstanding. I saw happy faces of those who participated actively in these events, and it was the highest reward for me.

## **GALINA SHATALOVA**

Candidate of Medical Sciences, Academician Galina Shatalova was known as a dietitian. She was one of the first scientists who scientifically proved the harm of meat eating, and her own life was an example. When I met her, she was over 70 years old, but still was enviably active and lively. She saved life and youth for her numerous patients. Shatalova was traveling all over the country propagating vegetarianism, not only as a healthy lifestyle but also as a path to spiritual excellence. She was lecturing in orthodox Christian monasteries and churches. I remember her lecture in Nevskaya Lavra, how she was preaching to carnivore priests:

- Jesus Christ commanded to us: THY SHALL NOT KILL!!!



Galina Sergeevna was the very selfless woman. I was at her house a few times and sang Hare Krishna mantra with her. She sang Holy Names with great pleasure and clapped her hands along. Her secretary and family members also participated in kirtan.

Later, diving in my memory, I was thinking with sadness: "Where, where did you go my golden days? Where did these people go? Where did simple life and high thinking go? That simple life and high thinking Shrila Prabhupada taught his followers..."

## **YEREMEY (JEREMIAH) PARNOV**

After publishing the book "Brahmans, Gods, and others", he wrote and publish another one, "Third eye of Shiva". I always wanted to meet him, and it happened. I was preaching to one artist who lived in the same building with Yere-mey Parnov. By this time he was showered by fame and already stopped reading books written by others. He was fantasizing in his books and was enjoying his own scribbles. When I met him I offered him Bhagavad-Gita. Yere-mey took it, opened, viewed and arrogantly rejected. I offered to him "Beyond Time and Space" ("Easy Journey to Other Planets"). Yere-mey immediately, with obvious disdain, put it on a shelf with other books. Then I pulled karatals and started to chant Hare Krishna. Out of courtesy, he listened to my chanting for a little while. After that, I offered him a few pieces of prasada. All of a sudden, after he honored/ate prasada, he changed his mind and accepted Bhagavad-Gita. Looks like listening to Hare Krishna mantra and prasada awakened pure Krishna Consciousness in his heart.

## **ELENA KAMBUROVA**

I was introduced to Elena Kamburova by Nadezhda Nikolayevna from Minsk. I had about ten paintings based on stories from Vedic literature (particularly from Bhagavad Gita). I called Lena (short name from Elena) and offered to set up a small exhibition at her place. She agreed. Art, paintings, in particular, is a mighty tool of preaching Krishna Consciousness. Paintings portraying Krishna are literally windows to the spiritual world. So, I set up the exhibition of my paintings at her apartment and started kirtan. After I sang Hare Krishna mantra few times I stopped, just to let her conceive what was happening.

- So, what do you think? — I asked
- Not bad. And what does it mean, "Hare Krishna?"
- It is Maha-mantra, great song of the liberation of the mind. A soul is covered by illusory energy, and in order to purify the soul, Vedic scriptures

recommend chanting of Holy names of Lord: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna... The name of God is as powerful as God Himself.

Then I gave a short lecture and treated her to prasad.

## **IZMAILOVSKY PARK**

We were performing programs at Izmailovsky Park regularly. We were gathering at Yagya's apartment that served at the time as a center of Krishna Consciousness, and from there we were heading to the Park. Here we went deep into the woods and sang from the top of our lungs, and with all our hearts... Many devotees, knowing where we get together used to join us, without invitation. After the kirtan, we used to choose some clearing in the woods, where I gave a class of Bhagavad-Gita. Then we honored prasad. There were too often militia raids at the devotees' apartments and places, but it never happened at Yagya's place, only because we performed *sankirtana-yagya* at Izmailovsky Park. This park was under Lord's protection. All those, who maintained the connection with us, and participated in harinama-sankirtana, were never persecuted.

## **SEVA (VSEVOLOD) SEMENTSOV**

Vsevolod Sementsov was well-known Sanskrit scholar and orientalist. I was introduced to him by Satya. He had the whole collection of Shrila Prabhupada books. When persecution on Hare Krishna increased, he, fearing that these illegal (at the time) books can be found, if the search in his place is warranted, decided to get rid of them. Satya brought me to him as a potential buyer. I bought all of the books, as a wholesale, so devotees could translate them in Russian. Shrimad Bhagavatam, Chaitanya Charitamrita, and other books were acquired by Sementsov by pure accident. One of the Krishna devotees brought them to him just for safe keeping. Now Seva decided to sell it back to devotees. Evidently, he was an intelligent person, and when I met him, we became friends. I started to visit him from time to time. Together we used to perform kirtans. I cooked prasad for him and his family. Everyone was happy.

It was 1984. He was finishing his work on the translation of Bhagavad-Gita with Ramanuja's purports.

I asked him: "What's a point in this work? Prabhupada already translated Bhagavad-Gita". I tried to convince Sementsov that his labor is useless, moreover is harmful to the society. Bhagavad-Gita is sacred scripture, spoken by Lord Krishna Himself. It's not common literature and must be translated by pure devotees only. But Sementsov, perhaps, had a so-called "social order" and couldn't refuse this work.

- Don't do it, please! It might bring you bad luck. If you persist, Krishna will interfere in, and it will turn out badly for you. Bhagavad-Gita As It Is, is already here. If you wish, you can translate it into Russian (at the time there was no Russian version of Bhagavad-Gita yet).

Anyhow, his book was set to be published, and come into the light sometime soon.

It was one of my regular appearances in Moscow, and, as usual, I decided to visit him. I went to his place without calling him and luckily found him home.

- You showed up just in time. I am home just for a short time to pick up some things. And then I go back to the hospital where I was for a while. You just caught me literally by the door...

I convinced Seva to stay a bit longer. I cooked prasad, sang Hare Krishna and we sat by the table to eat.

- I saw your fliers of "Knowledge Society": "Mantra", and the other one, from "Oriental Literature Publishers", answers to the questions of readers. This is where you, guys missed the target. Such a publishing company doesn't exist. This is falsification, as well as flier from "Knowledge Society". That Society could not possibly publish this kind of flier.

Yes, he was right. There was strict censorship on any published word, and fliers were secretly published by Hare Krishna followers, but the rest of the accusations...

- Well, what do you disagree with? Yes, Krishna Consciousness is persecuted, but its ideas are very humane
- It's all CIA machinations
- Okay, but where do you see falsification, in what? Where do you see wrong in these writings and publishings?
- There is no Oriental Literature Publishers. It does not exist. You lie to people.
- Excuse me, but where do you see cheating? You assume that you have an exclusive right to publish spiritual literature while having no connection whatsoever to it, just covering yourself with titles and "scientific" achievements. But we don't have any rights to do the same? The Academy of Science, by publishing your translation of Bhagavad-Gita, actually infringes upon Lord Krishna's "copyright". This book is spoken by Lord Krishna for His devotees. How can you deliver this knowledge to people, if you are not authorized by Lord and His sanctified representa-

tive, GURU? Is not it a lie, falsification? You mislead readers by consciously turning them away from Krishna. Actually, the word "falsification" is wrong. What you are doing is really act of sabotage. If the government were religious, as it used to be in old times, you would be punished. Giving a false interpretation of Bhagavad-Gita... Who gave you permission to do so?

This time I was quite hard on him. Seva's face started to blush. He listened to me, and at the end, actually, apologized for being in temper, and accusing us in falsification. It was our last conversation with him. Soon after that the Sementsov's version of Bhagavad-Gita was published and appeared in the bookstores. I decided to congratulate the author and called him. His wife picked up the phone

- May I speak to Vsevolod Sergeevich?
- Who is asking? He's not here...
- When he's going to be available?
- Vsevolod Sergeevich died...

His wife, crying, hung up. I reached the number again to express my condolences, but then changed my mind and before she picked up, I hung up...

So many people are misled by so-called scientists. Because of them, people suffer, as they don't have access to true knowledge. Shrila Prabhupada said that if we don't preach to scientists they will delude the whole world. Prabhupada said: "We have to kill ignorance with logic, arguments, and facts ". It was a very revolutionary statement from acharya and was shocking to many at the time. However, to kill ignorance is not the same as to kill a man or his soul, but actually, it cures him and saves from inevitable spiritual death.

We are not against philosophers and scientists, we are against their pseudo-philosophy and pseudo-science, which merely intensify people's suffering by taking their minds to a false path. See, in order to create gas chamber one needs intelligence, and to create a nuclear bomb, one needs intelligence as well... But what's the use of that? If one has intelligence but doesn't follow any rules and regulations (eats meat, consumes intoxication, etc.), his intelligence causes even more suffering, as this person is ruled by the mode of ignorance — that is a full and final explanation. People are ignorant. And when they become the rulers, pilots of the society, it causes big troubles. As they give a wrong understanding to the society by stimulating their interest in intemperance and sense gratification, these so-called leaders push people towards the abyss. The human being is supposed to be compassionate, and that means to learn the Truth as it is and present it to others adequately, "as it is".

## PASHA (PAVEL) GERMAN

Few words about one of my acquaintances. His name was Pasha German. He was a play-director and used to work for some time at Theater on Taganka. I knew him before I got acquainted with Hare Krishna. Of course, when it happened, I considered it as my duty: to enlighten all my friends and acquaintances. At that time Pasha was going through so-called creative crisis. He was writing some dark prose, trying to fill spiritual emptiness. But he couldn't. Nothing worked.

Pasha lived alone in a beautiful big apartment on Plekhanov Street, now Kazanskaya Street, in St. Petersburg. When I couldn't find a place where to stay, I stayed at his place, cooked prasada and supported him morally and spiritually. When we were only two of us, we used to chant *japa* for hours, as well as sang kirtans. He used to have somewhat extrasensory skills, was artistic and had a great voice. Pasha was literally enthralled by singing Hare Krishna mantra. Later we set up a Hare Krishna center at his place. We started to invite other devotees and began regular programs. Many people used to gather at Pasha's place. The living room with high ceilings served as a temple. There used to be unforgettable, ecstatic kirtans. However, some of the devotees led by Ananta Acharya overtook this initiative while I was absent, traveling all over the country for preaching. It was quite a shabby act: use my friends for their own materialistic interests, under the pretense of Hare Krishna. Ananta Acharya, we will call him now Aleksey, at the end left Krishna Consciousness. He did not work and simply led the life of a hippie. Lived on others' mercy, pretending to be a devotee. From time to time he used to steal from devotees, and there were often accusations towards him. It was stealing based on the thought that everything belongs to Krishna, thus anyone can take whatever from someone's pocket! It was a common thought among some of the so-called devotees. Speculating and deceiving on trusting and sincere people who were truly striving towards the spiritual life, such individuals caused irreparable damage, both moral and spiritual, to Hare Krishna movement. They were more dangerous Maya representatives than open atheists and demons. Impersonating devotees, they always carried bags with beads and kanthimalas on their neck. Actually, they did not follow principles of Krishna Consciousness and were frivolous with regulations. They did not chant Hare Krishna mantra properly, and discredited devotional service to Krishna by their behavior.

In the beginning, when Pasha first learned about Krishna Consciousness from me, he simply blossomed. Using his authority and connections, he started to preach, quite successfully. His acquaintances weren't poor people, and enthusiastically purchased books, helped any way they could and propagated chanting of Hare Krishna mantra themselves. It was Pasha who arranged for me meeting at City Association of Play-Writers, that meeting I described before. Meetings,

programs like the one at Play-Writers had no precedence and used to happen very rarely. Of course, they couldn't go unnoticed by "omnipresent eye" of KGB. That's why, immediately after my lecture at the said Association, the KGB agents sat on my tail, so to speak.

It is a known fact that when one knows nothing about danger, one doesn't fear it. Strangely enough, it does happen that adversity passes over such a "brave" individual.

I was distributing books at the program but did not have enough for everyone. One of the attendees, who wanted to buy Bhagavad-Gita, asked me to meet him the next day so I could bring him the book. We met, and he took Bhagavad-Gita from me. But after I parted with him, I felt some kind of alarming worry. On my way, from time to time, I started to stop and look around. There was a lot of people on the street, and it was confusing. I descended to the subway, took the train, not knowing where it goes, then switched to other trains a couple of times. Then I left the subway, and on Gorky Street took a walk, then took trolley bus, got off in a couple of stops, turned onto narrow side streets. The feeling that I am "on the hook" did not leave me, although there was no clear indication of that. I decided to check it out, went to the little front yard, entered the very first entrance to one of the buildings and went on the second floor and from there looked through the window. The yard was clear, but in less than a minute the man showed up. He was breathing heavily, like after the run. There was a second man who ran from another side of the yard. It was clear that they were looking for somebody. Who else if not me? In a couple of minutes there appeared a third man. The building had several entrances, so they looked puzzled, not knowing for sure where I went. I decided to sit out until they leave, but they started to check all the entrances, one after another, and finally, they got to the entrance where I was hiding. So it was impossible to remain unnoticed. I did not want to create an awkward situation, so I exited my "shelter" and went straight toward one of them. The agent turned away and lighted a cigarette. When I was passing him, I've heard his voice, he muttered: "Boy, go straight and slowly, don't play, otherwise, you'll be in trouble". I don't know whether he wanted to alert me, or the opposite — to frighten me, but his advice somewhat encouraged me. I realized that I behave ridiculously and clearly attract unhealthy interest.

My thought was: "I have to pull myself together". I calmed myself down and continued to walk as if nothing happened. Thus, using my will-power, time after time I developed the necessary skills required for a professional agent, spy if you will who does his work at the enemy's rear. And who is the enemy? Clearly, it is the *maya*, illusion. This material world is a kingdom of illusion. When we start preaching Krishna Consciousness, we automatically are out of favor with

*maya*. *Maya* starts to chase down such a “saboteur” who sabotages the material world, tries to catch the preacher and imprison him.

Out of the thought that I am at Krishna's service, and as His representative has to be perfect in everything, I gained self-control and proudly passed other two agents as if nothing happened.

The day was almost at its end. I agreed to meet Pasha at Yagya's place. It did not matter if I wanted it or not, but I had to return to her apartment. Her apartment was under KGB surveillance, but they did not bother her, because whatever was happening there was under their control. With the information they had, they could neutralize anybody.

I knew that once I show up at Yagya's place, the mice trap will be slammed. The thing was, in order to arrest me they had to catch me. Seemingly, they made all the necessary preparations. Now they had to get approval from their superiors. While they were doing all this, I was able to escape. All of this happened, like the rest of other events, in a mysterious way. I took the subway, got off at the Perovskaya station, and those three agents were following me. I went to the building, but before entering turned away and walked on a narrow trail, and stopped before getting to the entrance door where Yagya lived. The agent who spoke with me last time seemed to sympathize me, but he was not alone. It was usual that this kind of operation was managed by few agents or even the whole group of them. As I stopped at the entrance door and waited for him to come closer and asked him looking straight in his eyes: "What's next? Have we arrived?" He said: "Don't fuss around".

- That is easy to say... Maybe you are robbers, and want to take my money?
- Do you have a lot of money?

I was not sure whether he was joking or serious. Then he continued: "Do what I say. Go to the store, buy groceries. When you exit the building....." "And he gave me the exact time." He is either instigator or truly wants to help me to get out of this situation" — I thought. I realized that perhaps at that time he will be alone without partners (shift change or else). But it was risky to trust these people...

As usual, Yagya's place was crowded. There were devotees and strangers who just came from the streets. Pasha was waiting for me. Now there was no reason to be in a hurry. My fate was determined by a higher power. Yagya, knowing that I eat only prasada that I cook, allowed me to get the stove. I am a pretty good cook, so devotees at the big programs asked me often to cook. After I cooked rice and *sabji*, I offered it to Krishna. Then, with all attendees, I performed evening kirtan and gave a class of Bhagavad Gita. After prasada, I was ready to leave. I was hoping that it would be easier to disappear in the middle of a big crowd

leaving apartment. So, I waited till the dark time changed my dress and left with Pasha.

I let Pasha ahead of me, not explaining him anything so he would not be frightened, but was pushing him, and hurrying him, implying that we are late for the train. I had knitted hat that was quite noticeable and looked funny, so I took it off my head and put it into my bag, just in case. We left the building.

There were two ways to get to subway: through backyards by turning left, or over the street by turning right. We noticed a car with turned off lights, standing in the bushes. As soon as we left the building, few people jumped out of the car and quickly, almost running, headed toward us, trying to cut our way. There was nowhere to retreat. Two of those people were cutting our way back approaching from behind. The front lights of the car went on. "What is it?" — Pasha asked with great surprise. "Don't look back, keep walking, and faster otherwise we are going to be late for the train." — I told him. I myself, instead of turning to the left, as I did usually, turned to the right and commanded: "Pasha, turn right it's a quicker way". And we swiftly walked straight towards agents, meeting them head-on. Out of unexpectedness, they have been struck dumb. They did not expect that, assuming that we are going to run from them. Pasha had a beautiful and big beard. When they looked at him, one of the KGB agents said: "No, it's not him. False alarm. That one was without a beard". Pasha looked like purebred Jew. "No, this one clearly not ours" — they said with disappointment. They were looking at him and did not pay any attention to me.

It's hard to believe, but it's a fact. When we want to serve Krishna, even *maya*, material energy helps us. As a confirming thought, I recalled the verse from Bhagavad-Gita (7.14): **"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."**

We were already sitting in the express train going from Moscow to Leningrad (St. Petersburg). I was able to relax somewhat and explained to Pasha the incident with KGB. "We were about to be arrested, Pasha", - I told him. - Did you realized that?" "No", — he replied. "That's good that you did not. With you, even KGB can't get me". And we laughed whole-heartedly.

Upon my return to Leningrad, I spent there few days binding books that were already printed. And then I took a big load of them and went to Minsk. Sometimes the gripsack with books was so heavy that its handles were braking, unable to hold this weight. I had to rap my bags with belts or ropes. I couldn't walk with these bags. When I lifted them, I had to stop after few steps to gain the strength to continue. I placed my bags on the ground, then lifted them again, then had to stop again after few steps. Thus how I moved slowly through the series of short trips. The hardest part was to get into the train wagon. My knees



were shaking when I was doing that, my legs were weakening, but I couldn't show any signs of weakness, or that my baggage was too heavy. I was afraid to attract the attention of law enforcement agents. They could perform a search right at the spot and could imprison me without any court order, just because. Book publishing at that time was just an honorable activity, quite risky. It was not a business to gain any profit, thus not too many people did this. I did it out of my understanding of personal duty, not for money. I was ready to give money to people so they would read these books and chant Hare Krishna. By nature, I was a philanthropist and the man of principles, Krishna's devotee. I did my best to spread His teachings by all means available to me. I was always supportive of any new ways to do the same. So you can imagine how I felt when later there were some people who turned book publishing into business, exploitation of others. And they tried to use my enthusiasm and selflessness for that matter. When I was dragging bags with books all over the Soviet Union, I had nobody to rely on. Many devotees were afraid of that, knowing possible consequences. Only those who were not well familiar with Hare Krishna yet, and were not afraid, as well as those who did not associate with such fearful devotees, were helping me. Out of such individuals, I was able to build a team that trusted me, and I could rely upon them.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **SCHOLAR, POLITICS AND KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS**

**(STORY PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK, BY RUSSIAN NEWS-PAPERS, "NOVY MERIDIAN" AND "ECHO PLANETY")**

It's not that there was no cultural and spiritual life in the former Soviet Union during the period of political stagnation. An aspiration for higher spiritual ideals is in the nature of the soul. Although the soul's activity might be hidden as the sun on a cloudy day, the presence of consciousness proves that it exists, it's there. Covered by gross material body and subtle mind, the soul is invisible, but consciousness confirms that the soul is present in the body. Similarly, the cultural and spiritual life of the society at the said period was hidden, underground, due to multiple limitations and restrictions. But it did exist. Nobody was bragging about being inquisitive and spiritual as many were fearing persecution from the totalitarian communist regime. As in nature, due to natural selection, only the strongest survive, similarly only the best entered spiritual life. People secretly gathered in private apartments, secretly read forbidden literature, secretly distributed it and secretly, from their families, followed their spiritual masters.

The most forbidden, and thus the sweetest fruit on the tree of knowledge, at that time, was Krishna Consciousness. Not too many people knew about it. Only those who were interested in yoga, meditation, extrasensory individuals, dissidents. Dissidents were the friendliest to "krishnaitis", because "krishnaitis", as dissidents were the most persecuted ones. According to official sources, Krishna Consciousness was among the most conservative, extremist mystical teachings from the West. Therefore, KGB, aiming to protect Soviet youth from the influence of the alien ideology, declared spiritual masters and preachers of Krishna Consciousness as CIA agents. It sounds funny now, but it was not then when the most pious people, who refused any form of violence, who peacefully chanted Holy names, were declared as public enemies, similar to the tradition that was kept since Stalin times.

Krishna Consciousness movement in the Soviet Union appeared almost at the same time with the movement of the dissidents. Dissidents or dissenters are those who do not agree with the official political beliefs. To some extent, we were also dissidents. We do not share the wrong beliefs of the majority who practice materialism. We do not agree with Darwin theory who stated that life appeared from the dead matter and then evolved.

According to our belief, life comes from life. Life is a soul in the body. The soul is eternal, and so is the life. Consciousness is evidence of the soul's presence in the body. Matter doesn't possess consciousness, it is dead. Thus, it cannot evolve. The living being is evolved by migrating from lower forms of life to more developed ones. The living being manipulates dead matter and creates a semblance of life. Ignorant people think that matter is alive. But it is an illusion. An intelligent person can easily understand the difference between matter and spirit, but not who are ignorant. When the soul leaves a body, consciousness immediately leaves it too. It's an obvious fact. Material body minus consciousness is a corpse that is to be buried or burned. There is no evolution in the material world — it's all *maya*. *Maya* in Sanskrit means "what does not exist", an illusion. Naturally, by opposing Marxism-Leninism philosophy that rejects Supreme Spiritual Beginning, Krishna, and Krishna Consciousness movement gained multiple enemies. Now, of course, it all makes no sense, as there is no more the Soviet Union, no more Marxism-Leninism, and "militant" atheism. Marx died, Lenin died, and Shri Krishna and His teachings are still alive.

It is necessary to mention that dissidents were quite intelligent people. There were, among them, politicians, writers, artists, and scientists — "cream of the society". Among them was Andrey Sakharov (1921-1989), one of the most famous Soviet scientists. He became an academician (member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR) at the age of 32. Paradoxical as it sounds, Sakharov got his academic status for the studies in the field of nuclear physics, the creation of nuclear bomb, and he became Nobel Laureate for his fight for peace and human rights. Very controversial individual, interesting figure. He was awarded three times with Hero of the Socialistic Work (highest civil award) for his work in developing a weapon of mass destruction, and for his pacifist speeches against nuclear tests and for disarmament, he was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize in 1975. In 1980, when he refused to reject his awards and beliefs, Sakharov was exiled to Gorky (now Nizhniy Novgorod).

When I learned, from my friends, about the amazing and awkward life of the Academician, I secretly started to meditate on the idea to make him the follower of Krishna Consciousness. I deeply believed that this man could do a lot for his contemporaries, as he had well-deserved authority among them. Constantly thinking about it, I started to look for the opportunity to meet him in person so I could preach to him. And Krishna gave me such an opportunity.

In 1985-87 I was preaching in Moscow; during the summer I used to gather public at Izmailovsky Park, and during the cold season I preached at the private apartments. As it was mentioned before, the spiritual and intellectual life of the society was not openly active, it was going underground. One time I was invited to the place where Academician Sakharov also used to lecture. The owner of

that place, Eduard, was a photographer. On Thursdays, he used to gather pretty decent audience out of those who were interested in religion and philosophy. It happened, that sometimes I used to share these Thursday with the famous Christian priest Alexander Men. Those who attended his preaching used to be my parishioners as well. Feeling somewhat jealous towards the representative of the different "department" Men avoided meeting me in person. There are no major differences in serving God, however, materialistic consciousness and following view on spiritual life often create difficulty in mutual understanding between representatives of different religions. Men was preaching New Testament given by Son of God, and I was teaching Bhagavad Gita given by God Himself. Jesus said to his followers: "Love my Heavenly Father". And Heavenly Father Himself, Krishna, says in Bhagavad Gita: "Love Me!" As you can see, there is no difference. If your wife says: "Love my husband", and you, yourself say: "Love me", then there is no difference.

At that period of time, Sakharov used to reside at Gorky City. When I became friends with the owner of the said place (Eduard), I was able to get Sakharov's address. First I decided to start communication with him through the mail, but soon I realized that it's useless. His mail was checked (by KGB), and those who used to write him were checked upon as well. Thus I decided to inspire one of my acquaintances to go to Gorky and hand over a copy of Bhagavad-Gita and my best wishes personally. But that idea did not work well either. My "messenger" went there and was arrested by militia officers right by the Sakharov apartment. They kept him for 24 hours in the precinct, and after threatening him they let him go and advised to drop the hope to see Sakharov to the rest of his life. And that was it. I had no other choice but to wait. But the waiting was not too long. At the end of 1986, the Academician was rehabilitated and was allowed to return to Moscow. On December 23, at 7:30 in the morning Sakharov got off the train at the Yaroslavski railway station in Moscow.

He stayed on Chkalov Prospect, not too far from Kursk railway station, in a big gray building with an entrance through the patio. It looked like I was one of the first visitors.

I remember the weather was bad on that day. It was freezing rain, as we say in Russia, on that day the good man wouldn't let even his dog out. But as they say, there is nothing better than bad weather. It was "thaw" time, time of big political changes. Taught by years of underground activity I was quite sensitive towards situations and people and was very careful. Without unnecessary agitation, without notifying anybody and, as always, relying on Krishna I went to visit Sakharov alone. I had an over-a- shoulder bag with books of "self-publishing". Bhagavad-Gita As It Is, and Beyond Time and Space were with me. The worst that could happen, I guess, he wouldn't want to talk to me. Who am I for

him? Nobody. I found the apartment and rang the bell. Silence. I rang again. And then again. Nothing. The only peephole on the door was staring at me like a Cyclops. I waited a bit and was about to leave when I heard something behind the door, and then I heard the lock snapping and the door opened. Sakharov was standing at the doorstep. It was not easy to recognize in him the fighter for human rights and freedoms, triumphant. It looked like he was in need of supporting himself. I recalled photographs of him made a decade ago and realized that all these years weren't easy for him.

I did not know how to introduce myself. First I greeted him, and then: "My name is Mikhail. I have a message for you from Krishna". "From who?" — with a big surprise, Sakharov asked. "From God, Krishna" — I repeated, being very serious. As strange as it is, it did not excite Sakharov at all. "You got the wrong address, young man, I don't know any Krishna" — he replied. Then, in a hurry, I pulled out of my bag Bhagavad-Gita As It Is: "Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead, told this teaching 5000 years ago to his devotee, great warrior, Arjuna. It was passed down the chain of disciplic succession, and with great honor, I am giving it to you today". Sakharov took the book with some kind of distrust and doubt in his hands. The historical act of handing over Krishna's message took place.

About a minute or two, like a little boy, Sakharov was looking at the pictures in the book, and then returned the book to me.

— I am not interested in that

Out of suddenness, I did not know what to say. What?! Scientist who considers himself as a humanitarian, who was fighting for a happy life for everyone, and he is not interested in Bhagavad-Gita? In Gita itself, it is said that Gita is for "pious kings, for rulers. It is about time for the fighter of people's happiness to start studying Bhagavad-Gita. How can an intelligent man be not interested in Bhagavad-Gita? I couldn't put it all together in my head. Lev Tolstoy was quoting Bhagavad-Gita. Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "I owed a magnificent day to the Bhagavad-Gita. It was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us". I started to recall what I heard... Einstein was reading Gita. Millions of years ago, God of Sun, Vivasvan accepted Bhagavad-Gita from Krishna Himself, as perfect knowledge, and then handed this knowledge over his son, Ikshwaku. Ikshwaku handed it over Manu, the forefather of the humans. It is a historical fact! Bhagavad Gita is recognized by all world authorities. I attempted to glorify Bhagavad Gita; it is known for about 3.5 millions of years in human

society. And it still did not lose its transcendental freshness and its unfading glory as a source of ultimate knowledge.

5000 years ago Gita was spoken by Krishna. It happened at Kurukshetra battle-field at certain historical circumstances, and the great sage Vyasadeva wrote it down in a way as it is presented to contemporary readers. Bhagavad Gita is a scripture of Aryans, the best of twice-born. It's a quintessence of the Vedic scriptures, the most significant religious and philosophical book. I was talking excitedly.

At this moment the smell of fried meat came out of the opened door, and a female voice said with discontent: "Andrey, where are you..." Not saying "hi" or "good bye", Andrey Dmitrievich turned and closed the door. The lock snapped again. I heard shuffling sound of the Academician's slippers walking away... The meeting was over.

- That's unfortunate! — I thought: The door that I was "forcing in" for few years got locked right in front of my nose. I was standing with Bhagavad Gita in my hands trying to figure out what to do next. Suddenly I noticed the mailbox that was hanged to the right from the door. I decided: "Beyond Time and Space" will fit in it. I will put it there, and will send Bhagavad Gita by mail". And I did it exactly that way. I put small "Beyond Time and Space" in the mailbox, and later, from Leningrad, I sent Bhagavad Gita by mail with the enclosed letter:

**Dear Andrey Dmitrievich!**

**After many attempts to meet you so we could start to work together for the liberation of all living beings, rotting in the material bondage, and after I finally met you, frankly I was somewhat disappointed. However, I did not lose hope...**

**Then I described the basics of the philosophy and practice of Krishna Consciousness, emphasizing on congregational chanting of sacred names: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. I pointed out to regulative principles that are followed by the devotees of Krishna: no meat eating, no intoxications, no illicit sex, no gambling.**

*One year has passed since then, and we finally got together. I was distributing books at the meeting, where Sakharov was to hold a speech. After his speech, I squeezed myself through the crowd to get closer to him. Without going through unnecessary details: We finally had a conversation which was partially recorded on the tape. Below is a transcript of that recording:*



**Academician Sakharov:** I apologize for our first unsuccessful meeting. Actually, at that time I was in some kind of shock (the following exile and return to Moscow), and was unable to react on your visit properly. I am not religious, although I always respect representatives of pure faith. If God exists, the religious activity representing God's laws exists as well.

**M.T.das:** That is true. It is said in Shrimad Bhagavatam (1.3.28): *krishnas tu bhagavan svayam...* Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the Father of all religions. Religion represents God's laws. It was given by God Himself, and any deviation from the principles of the religion makes one an atheist, godless man. *Dharmam tu sakshad bhagavat-pranitam* (Sh.B. 6.3.19)

**Academician Sakharov:** I am not a theologian, but I believe that the scientist has to be, to some extent, religious. By saying this I don't mean to flatter you.

**M.T.das:** It's a fact. Your opinion matches Vedic point of view. In Vedic times it was exactly as you said: scientists were theologians. They knew God's laws and taught others of them. In nowadays scientists incline to impersonate God. For example, they discover some law of nature, that existed, before and will exist after, and then they give their name to this law. Newton's law of action and reaction always existed in nature, before Newton discovered it. But when it was discovered, people gave it scientist's name, and by this, they violated Creator's copyright/intellectual property rights, if you will. In modern science, physics,

mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, etc. there exist many laws under various names, but these laws of nature actually represent one law of nature, the Law of God, who created the nature itself.

**Academician Sakharov:** Yes, but that's the ethics of the modern society. Scientists are part of this society. They conduct an experiment, and if it was successful, they patent it and give it their name. Scientists study the world so they could explain it to the public.

**M.T.das:** The world was created as well as explained by the Creator Himself. When Brahma created the material world, he gave laws to the people, in the form of Vedas, so they could live peacefully and return back home, to God, after the death. So, what's the use of the scientists? They speculate on the facts, gain undeserved authority from the credulous public, and that authority, in fact, belongs to God. According to Vedic principles, the real scientist is the one who looks at the world through the eyes of *shastras* (scriptures). Since our experiments, as well as our intellectual abilities, are imperfect, limited, it is much better to use the perfect knowledge received from God.

**Academician Sakharov:** This is quite an archaic view of modern science.

**M.T.das.:** Yes, but this is a correct view. In fact, nothing changes. If one creates a mechanical dog or starts to bark like a dog, nothing has changed. Of course, everyone will be impressed, will stop to see this "miracle". But there is a real dog, existing in this world, and nobody is surprised or impressed by it. God created all living beings, various forms and types of life, but nobody is amazed. Everyone is glorifying the creator of the space ship or satellite, but nobody glorifies God, who created innumerable universes and planets. Shri Ra Prabhupada, our spiritual master suggested: "Let's give the Nobel Prize to God!" But the Nobel Prize Committee declined...

**Academician Sakharov:** That's funny. If I would not have a sense of humor, I would feel offended by you. I left the science and now I am trying to look within myself. I use my authority, fight for humanization of the scientific experiments in order to help people to avoid the consequences of the scientific mistakes, delusions, if you will.

**M.T.das:** And what is the result of your struggle?

**Academician Sakharov:** As of now, there is no results, but I am hopeful...

**M.T.das:** The hope dies last... I am afraid it will survive you.

**Academician Sakharov:** What do you suggest?

**M.T.das:** I suggest to acknowledge God's proprietary rights. *Bhoktaram yagya tapasam sarva-loka-maheshvaram suhridam sarva-bhutanam gyatva mam shantim ricchati* (Bh.G. 5.29). And instead of arguing about the truth, we must accept already existing Absolute Truth which is eternal, unchanging, universal and



not-for-sale... Nobody should make money or built political reputation on it. The Truth does exist, whether we like it or not. It is not born out of arguments. It exists, and we must accept it as it is. This will put an end to the fruitless fight for "priorities" and for someone else's property. If everything belongs to God, then we must accept only what is given to a man as his fair share. Without acknowledging God's proprietary rights, there will never be peace in the society. There will be always somebody who wants to take God's place. The throne is never empty. If it is empty, then somebody immediately tries to take the authority using politics, or science. There is a constant struggle and competition because everyone wants to take place that truly belongs to God.

**Academician Sakharov:** What you're saying is very interesting, but how it is supposed to be brought into reality? I guess you and your followers believe in miracles.

**M.T.das:** Not at all. I believe in Krishna. I believe in his words: "...there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread".

**Academician Sakharov:** And what is, in your opinion, the knowledge, the Truth?

**M.T.das:** According to Vedic scriptures, the knowledge is what relieves a man from sufferings. It is not just a bulk of information. You know this and that, but at the same time, you suffer from your mind and body, from other living beings, and from forces of nature. This is a manifestation of ignorance. One, who knows one's own spiritual nature, doesn't mourn and desires nothing... It is beautifully described in Bhagavad Gita: *brahma-bhuta prasanaatma na shochati na kankshati...* and then *bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate vasudevah sarvam iti sa mahatma su-durlabhah*. "Mahatma" means great soul.

**Academician Sakharov:** I always thought that I know something, but never considered myself as great. My sufferings were always with me. It seemed to me that I suffer from the mistakes of others, not from my own mistakes...

**M.T.das:** Knowledge means knowing true self as different from the material body. Knowledge means realizing one's eternal relationship with God, Krishna, thus true knowledge is Krishna consciousness. To some extent we all are dissidents. Dissident is someone who disobeys government and its laws. Considering that we all are in God's kingdom, but disobey His laws, we are dissidents. If we act against the Supreme Will, we become dissidents. Isn't that so?

**Academician Sakharov:** So, according to you, the atheistic society is the society of dissidents.

**M.T.das:** Precisely. Absolutely true. Krishna Consciousness is a universal medicine for the whole of humanity: capitalists, socialists, etc. Krishna Consciousness cures of the disease called "materialism", and everyone is having this disease as

they mistakenly identify themselves with this material body, and believe that the fullest satisfaction of their desires is the true goal of life.

**Academician Sakharov:** I am not sure if I completely understand you.

**M.T.das:** When all "dissidents" will accept Krishna Consciousness, there will be long-awaited peace in the whole world. What is not to understand? We call out to all "dissidents" to change the consciousness. *Aham brahmasmi* — I am the soul. The only fight that is promising is the fight for Krishna Consciousness! This means that all other ideas that hold the soul in the consciousness "I am the material body" are false. There is no much sense in capitalism or communism, as both leave on in the delusion: I am this material body, and everything around me is mine. I am not Christian, I am not Hindu, I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am not white, or black or Russian, or American, or nationalist, or communist... Do you understand this?

## "WE SHALL BUILD OUR OWN, NEW WORLD!"

**Academician Sakharov:** And who am I, from your point of view?

**M.T.das:** According to the great moralist of ancient times, Chanakya Pandit, politics is the last shelter for rascals. An educated man who lacks good qualities and God's Consciousness is more dangerous than a cobra decorated with diamonds. Cobra is always dangerous, but when decorated with diamonds, it is more dangerous, because fools are attracted by the brilliance of the diamonds and deliberately "climb to her mouth".

By continuing our conversation in such a way, I was at risk to upset the Academician and cause the wrath of all revolutionary democrats surrounding us. But the spirit of "glasnost and perestroika" was really provoking me. I wanted to change the consciousness of these people right here and right now. Will there be another good chance for Russia?

5000 years ago there was only one state on Earth, under one government and flag. One ruler ruled the whole land surrounded by all the seas. His name was Maharaja Parikshit. He was a grandson of the Emperor Yudhishtira, and a grand nephew of Arjuna, the great devotee of Krishna. This story was reflected in Mahabharata, which Bhagavad-Gita is a part of.

I was secretly hoping that Sakharov has read Bhagavad-Gita, or at least glanced through it, just to have some notion of the philosophy. The basis of any activity and any "perestroika" is one or another philosophy. Alas, it was clear from our conversation that Academician was not interested in knowing all this. He was so absorbed in the political activity that he lost all his inquisitiveness about everything else.

After my digression to the past times, I concluded: At that time (Vedic times) people had only one language, only one scripture, and only one law, God's Law. God's Law is perfect, if followed, thus there is no need to change anything, no need for "perestroika". It is good for now, was good in the past, and will be good in the future. It is as perfect as God Himself. In history, this period of time is named Vedic, and the civilization was called Aryan civilization. Aryans are not some kind of ethnic entity. They are people whose life goal was the realization of Absolute Truth, Supreme Personality of Godhead, — Krishna. Ancient Aryans followed principles of *varnashrama-dharma*, the social system that asserts God as a center of life, and the meaning of life is an equal opportunity for everyone in becoming God conscious. Until people accept Absolute Truth, there will always be a fight between them for the superiority, and the seat that seems to be unoccupied. Everyone will try to see their point of view as a cure-all, their own "theory" about good and evil, everyone will try to find contradictions in each other, and quarrel for no reason.

**What is varnashrama-dharma?** I tried to explain it to the Academician and make it clear to everyone who is fighting for social and political changes in society. I was moved by the ideals of humanitarianism and justice, not by my own ambitions. Later, I was widely propagating *varnashrama* by giving speeches and lectures before newly formed administration and local governments of Ural, and Siberia. At that time I was appointed to represent the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, as a vice-president of the regions from Volga-Ural-Siberia to the Far East. I was giving speeches in Chelyabinsk at the conference of the heads of various committees, at the City Hall of Sverdlovsk, in Omsk, Kemerovo, and other cities. Sometimes I occupied radio waves, television time for hours, published my articles in local newspapers. In Minsk, I was invited to participate in Belarus Christian-Democratic Party convention. In Dushanbe, I was holding speech before People's Front. At the time the Krishna Consciousness movement was on the rise along with "perestroika". Using this lucky chance, I published as an independent issue, "The Manifest of Varnashrama", and under the stamp "for internal use only. Per request from Sankirtana Party" I was distributing it through the subscription. About 50000 copies went relatively quickly. Although, after that the governing body of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness sent me to India, and after that to America, to preach among Russian immigrants. Thus, my propagation of Varnashrama was ended...

But I remember that time as golden, and below the reader will find an article about it. VARNASHRAMA is a manifest of the truly civilized society, the society based on the principles of the spiritual life.

In Bhagavad-Gita Krishna says: "**According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me...**"

And what are these divisions or classes of people created by Krishna? Here they are:

**1) intellectuals**

**2) administrators/rulers**

**3) tradesmen, businessmen, the producers of agricultural products (farmers)**

**4) laborers**

Intellectuals are those who know what Absolute Truth is, and are called Brahmans. They are under the influence of the mode (*guna*) of goodness, *sattva-guna*

The class of the administrators, or warriors and rulers, who are capable to rule the society is under the influence of the *guna* of passion, *raja-guna*, and they are called *Kshatriyas*

Those who are involved in agricultural production, commerce and business are under the mixed influence of the *gunas* of passion and ignorance, *raja-* and *tama-guna*. These are *Vaishyas*.

And finally, the class of laborers includes those who are under the influence of *guna* of ignorance, *tama-guna* and find a pleasure in physical labor and in serving others. In Sanskrit laborer is called Shudra.

Note that belonging to one or another group of people is determined by a various combination of the *gunas* of the material nature, as well as karma. It was not determined by birth, as it became later in the system of castes of medieval India. Every human has head, arms, legs, and stomach, similarly, the body of any society has the same structure. All parts of the body serve the stomach, which accepts the food and distributes it in the form of various energies to each part of the body. Following this analogy, all above named classes of people has to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who, like a stomach distributes energy, thus supporting all living beings.

*All members of the society have to be engaged in the service to God. As this kind of activity is considered fully spiritual, it is able to bring full satisfaction to the soul, our true "I"*

This spiritual activity will make every member of the united family of God happy, both materially and spiritually. With this kind of alliance and harmony, no one would even think about revolution. Nobody will waste time and energy on temporary, and thus illusory, things, as everyone realizes the importance of the

human form of life as life for spiritual perfection and for achieving liberation from the circle of birth and death. A soul is eternal, and life is eternal too. Why should eternal living being (soul) die and be born again, getting the material body, then changing it as clothing? The eternal soul requires eternal, spiritual body.

The beginning of Kali-yuga brought degradation of the system of the varnashrama. It started with the degeneration of the *varna* of *brahmanas* who became too proud of their knowledge and forgot that every living being is an eternal servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Modern scientists are in a way similar to the Brahmins, with the only difference between them: Brahmins were religious and pious. Under the influence of inferior modes of the material nature (gunas of passion and ignorance), the knowledge of the “modern priests” has lost its value. By losing their asceticism, veracity, and other qualities that are inherent to them, they lost their brahminical *tejas* (power), and their authority among inferior classes of the society. They started to compete with Kshatriyas for the power and objects of sense gratification and were defeated. Thus the society was beheaded. When Kshatriyas, whose lust is insatiable like the horse without a bridle, took over all the power, they set off in all serious sins, and usurped their citizens, instead of protecting them. And revolutions came as a result of this. Monarchy was abolished, and bourgeoisie took the power. As the representatives of the latter are under the influence of gunas of passion and ignorance they, due to their natural greediness, they toughened the exploitation of the Shudras, the class of laborers. As a result of this merciless exploitation and despotism, the proletarian revolution came about. And the Democrats came to power and ransacked everything. Shudras, being under the mode of the guna of ignorance, are prone to all existing sins in human society (meat eating, illicit sex, use of intoxicants, gambling). As a result of the bad ruling, lack of truly spiritually advanced and virtuous individuals, Brahmins, who would teach people principles of Vedic culture, everyone is unfortunate. The society of people, who lost their spiritual intelligence, like a headless horseman, rushes at full speed on the brink. Like a ship without a rudder and sails, it wonders in the ocean of miseries, unable to reach the shore. The struggle for existence in the waves of material energy exhausts the soul. And the soul, by the spiritual nature, is destined for happiness. Krishna Consciousness Movement is called to develop all necessary qualities of Brahmins in the followers. And those who consider themselves as followers, thoroughly follow four regulative principles:

- **no meat eating**
- **no intoxication**
- **no illicit sex**

— no gambling, and

chant Holy Names: **Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**

It is necessary for the normal life of the society, that part of its members possess qualities of *vaishnava brahmanas* who realized Absolute Truth.

We live in the kingdom of God. Everything is wonderfully designed here. It is the knowledge we need to have in order to use all of it. There is heaven, hell, and there is an eternal abode of light. It makes no sense to create or built "our own new world. Why imitate God, why compete the Creator? Everything is beautifully designed. We just need to know where all of this is located, and to prepare ourselves for a better life...

"We shall build our own, new world. Who was nothing, will become everything"... Nobody can become everything while being big "nothing". This is a philosophy of atheists who encroach upon God's property, attempting to take His place, rejecting His very existence. This idea is utopian. Something can't be born from nothing. There is an eternal living being, there is eternal God who maintains and supports the existence of everyone by supplying everything necessary for life. This kind of relationship is based on eternal love.

Capitalists say: "We own everything". Socialists insist that everything belongs to people. Some say: "Everything is the property of the government, and I am the government". Actually, everything belongs to one God. And by admitting this fact, humanity can get rid of the false claims of possessing anything in this world. Everything belongs to God, and everyone in the material world receives according to their labor, according to their pious, or impious activity, karma; good for good, evil for evil. The only way society can reach peace and prosperity is to establish a spiritual understanding of equality, brotherhood, and freedom.

The living being is an inalienable part of God. Everyone is equal in God, all are brothers and free! But the part can never be the whole, similarly, the living being cannot become God. The living being has His qualities, but not His potency, power. It is said in Ishopanishad: "Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should, therefore, accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong".

Neither capitalists nor communists, when receiving some material welfare, don't know how to distribute them. God is the father of all living beings. He equally treats every one of them. God doesn't allow to deprive one living being of necessary good in the favor of other living beings or kill anybody without His Supreme Sanction. The rulers of the society must accept laws set by God, and

consult brahmanas, those who know these laws. In the times of Vedic culture, brahmanas served as advisers in the government.

When materialists come to the power, they don't know how to distribute material welfare. Socialists want to distribute everything equally. But is it fair? If I am an elephant and have a big stomach, I need 40 kilograms of the food, but they give me few grains like for the bird. Or I am the bird, but receive as an elephant. It is always like that: some are missing what they need, and some get more than they need. It is utopian to consider equality in the material world. But there is equality in the spiritual world. Everyone has an equal right to become Krishna conscious and return back home, to Him where there is **spiritual communism**. Since there is nothing material there, everyone is happy there simply serving Krishna with love. "From each according to ability, to each according to his needs". This is a principle of spiritual life.

Without going in depth, and summarizing the above thoughts, we shall conclude that all forms of materialism must be denounced by governments and sentenced to "capital punishment". The problem of inequality can be solved only by bringing people to the spiritual understanding of life: living being is soul, not the material body. Freedom, equality, and brotherhood are principles of spiritual existence. It is impossible to achieve this in the material world. Same way, as it is impossible to quench the thirst from the pond that exists only in mirage: there is no water there, although it is obvious that the real water exists somewhere... The material world is just a reflection of the spiritual world. It looks real because it reflects the Ultimate Reality, Krishna. According to Shrimad Bhagavatam, one's any efforts are useless, unless they lead to such true realization. By the mercy of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, everyone can realize their spiritual identity with Krishna, and their eternal relationship with Him by simply chanting His names: **Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**

**Academician:** How it can be related to modern reality? Perhaps, at the times of Aryans it was possible, but now, as you said yourself, people have degraded. How to deliver this not so simple philosophy to them?

**M.T.das:** This is a good question. There natural leaders in the society, such as mom and dad, a teacher in the school, and presidents or rulers in the governments. If our leaders will accept Krishna Consciousness, then others will follow them. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Golden Avatar of Krishna, showed the example Himself by starting *Sankirtana* movement that is congregational chanting of **Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**

Although our discussion is about God, this is not a new religion per se. This is *sanatana-dharma* that is an eternal activity of the eternal soul in rendering

service to eternal God. However you name Him, He is still the same God. Since He is limitless in his manifestations, He has infinitely many names. If you don't know His name, accept the one Vedic scriptures point out to.

**Academician:** I am not a theologian to grasp that... According to you, before I would be able to understand, I should be reborn several times.

**M.T.das:** No need to do that. Because we already have talked about it... The idea is very simple. Name "Krishna" is none-different from Krishna Himself. One is able to restore the relationship with God by simply chanting Hare Krishna maha-mantra. In the ether, we similarly establish a connection between ourselves and other sources of sounds.

**Academician:** Well, this is something new for me, and it adds nothing to what I've said already... Do you want me to chant Hare Krishna with you?

**M.T.das:** Yes. And why not? Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita, that whatever great person follows, and whatever standards, or norms of behavior he sets, everyone will follow his example.

**Academician:** I am sorry, but I am fighting for human rights, for the right to be happy by living in accordance with the laws of this world.

**M.T.das:** One doesn't contradict another. The eternal activity of the soul in serving God never stops. We either serve God directly, or we serve His energy. By serving people you serve God as well, although, to say the truth, you don't realize it. When your consciousness is purified from the materialistic perception of this life, our service to Him takes conscious form. But even now you will benefit from chanting Hare Krishna. Krishna Consciousness is a joyful process. We simply dance, and chant Hare Krishna, and sometimes honor *prasad*.

**Academician:** If everyone chants Hare Krishna and dance, who is going to work?

**M.T.das:** Those who won't do that.

People surrounded us, listening to our dialogue, and commenting from time to time. Unfortunately, we have to skip their comments here. When I said that those who won't chant Hare Krishna will have to work hard, the wave of indignation went through the crowd. My words affected them as a nuclear bomb explosion, and impure desires of the gathered, like a mushroom cloud have arisen from within their hearts. To avoid the spread of "materialistic radiation" I explained without hesitation.

"Nobody works in the spiritual world, — I said. — Everyone enjoys there: every word is a song, every step is a dance. There are no plants and factories there. The trees of wishes grow there and they fulfill every desire. If one has a desire to



work by the sweat of one's brow, it is fulfilled... you fall into the material world. Krishna treats all living beings equally, but those who are friends with Him, as He says in Bhagavad-Gita: "He is in Me, and I am his friend too". Krishna takes care of every human being according to one's devotion to Him. If someone wants to be independent of Krishna, Krishna grants this to him too, that's how one falls into the material world. Feel free to work hard now... Here, in the material world, the law of karma starts to work, and everyone receives according to their work. When one falls into this world, the material nature "yokes" one in for many years and lives of hard labor until one gets tired. When one gets tired of such life, one beseeches: "Krishna, please liberate, save the soul of a sinful slave of the material world!" And Krishna comes to the rescue and releases one from the slavery of one's own foolish desires. Krishna sends His devotee as a spiritual master, who dispels the darkness of ignorance with the torch of knowledge. As one becomes more enlightened, the attraction to Krishna grows in one's heart. And out of this attraction there grows love to Krishna. When love to Krishna fills one's heart completely, one becomes liberated again. One simply returns back home, back to Godhead. Actually, ignorance is the cause of our slavery of this world, and transcendental knowledge is the cause of liberation.

What I am doing? I simply preach to people and give them a knowledge of the basic principles of the devotional service in Krishna consciousness (*bhakti-yoga*). If somebody takes it seriously, and sincerely, I initiate him, and he receives Krishna's blessings.

That's it! For such a man there is no more material life. He returns in God's Kingdom, which is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge. And what one is doing there? One loves Krishna as a friend, as one's son, or one's lover... being in ecstatic love, one chants Hare Krishna, dances, and honors some prasad.

**A voice from the crowd:** What is *prasad*?

**M.T.das.:** The word "prasad" means God's mercy.

**A voice from the crowd:** Then why do you say "some prasad"? There needed lots of prasad.

**M.T.das:** The devotee receives unlimited God's mercy, lots of prasad, but he leaves for himself just a little, and generously gives it to others, who are in need. *Prasad* means a vegetarian meal, offered to Krishna with love and devotion.

The topic of our discussion had reached the end. Of course, those who had questions continued conversation, but this is a different story. I thanked Academician for the time he kindly spent with me, and we have parted our ways. Later, in memory of our meetings, I wrote the article named "Requiem for Monarchy".

# CHAPTER 3

## REPORT FROM RED SQUARE (1987)

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Shortly after the Mathias Rust's landing at Red Square, the heart of the capital, we performed the very first in the history of Krishna Consciousness of the USSR kirtan. We started by the Mausoleum of V.I. Lenin.

To carry out this action, I arrived in Moscow with the devotees of Sankirtana Corporation. It is true that real affair does not like too much of talking. For this reason, I informed nobody about my plans. Even not all those who were with me knew about it. This action was quite risky, nobody wanted to be arrested and spend time in jail. If I notify others about it, who knows maybe nobody is brave enough to join. On the other hand, I did not inform anybody because I did not want unnecessary agitation around it, and definitely did not want attention



from the all-seeing eye of the KGB. So, from the Yagya d.d.'s flat, which served as our base, we took *karatals*, flags, *mridanga*, and went straight to the Red Square, the most crowded place in Moscow, the holy of holies, so to speak. Red Square is the place for major celebrations, parades, and executions for the Great State of Russia. And especially after Mathias Rust's landing the surveillance of the Square was exceptionally strengthened, to avoid any disturbances. From Kuibyshev Street, we briskly walked towards Spassky Gates and Spassky Tower of Kremlin. We turned away towards Mausoleum, and there, about 20 meters away from the sepulcher of the leader of the world proletariat, we unfurled our banners with Pancha-Tattva and Hare Krishna maha-mantra. I ordered Kamalamala: "If they are going to jump on us and arrest us, stay away, videotape everything as is, from the beginning to the end. This is going to be a historical event. And we are going to be the first!" Kamalamala took the importance of our action seriously, and as a result, we got not a bad documentary film, which was presented, in 1989, to the whole world, at the Mayapur festival. So, by preaching here we were preaching to the whole world.

Immediately, after we started a kirtan, people, attracted by the sound of mridanga and karatals, rushed towards us from all over the Square. Shortly, responding to the big crowd, the group of militiamen has arrived. They surrounded us, while forcing out the crowd, and not knowing what to do with us. While they were in such a puzzled state of mind and held talks with their superiors, I started my preaching.



Krishna is all-attractive Personality of Godhead. He and His name are non-different from each other. Thus, those who chant holy names: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare receive Lord's mercy, achieve liberation and acquire Love!" Those who came to have "darshan" with Ilyich (Lenin), all those who waited since last night to get in the Mausoleum, became witnesses and participants of this historical event. It looked like they forgot why they even came to the Square.

I always tried to find a new, original way to preach Krishna Consciousness in this country of restless souls. And that's why I often provoked "scandalous" situations, similar to what happened on Red Square, always appearing in the reports from Sankirtana Bulletin.

When approval from "higher-ups" was finally received, myrmidons of the law took us to the nearest militia precinct. There they started to interrogate us: "Who are you? What is the purpose of your show?" But soon after they realized that we are peaceful citizens, loyal to the current regime, and we don't have any political agenda, they released us. We did not want or plan to "dethrone" anybody, thus DIA (Department of Internal Affairs) allowed us to take a picture on Red Square, the first photograph in the history of Krishna Consciousness movement in the former USSR. After that we continued our kirtan, going through the streets attached to Red Square. This memorable event was reflected in the various publications including Sankirtana Bulletin.

## **KIRTAN ON ARBAT**

Later, Arbat became a place for the regular kirtans and harinamas. The right to do so we earned and protected by great austerity and sometimes by sacrificing the life of some devotees. It was not like manna falling from Heaven. This right was earned the hard way. Shrila Prabhupada taught that devotees are not fearful at all. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself showed an example of how to uphold one's principles or beliefs. When servants of Kazi Chand broke *mridangas* and broke up *harinama*, He organized and led the action of the civil disobedience. He gathered thousands of His followers for *harinama* with *mridangas*, *karatalas*, and with torches in their hand they went to the Kazi's palace. If the problem cannot be solved peacefully, it has to be solved with force. Question: "Where the devotees of Krishna find their power?" Answer: "In their faith in Holy Name of the Lord and teachings of the acharya, spiritual master."

Those who joined the Krishna Consciousness movement then, later, gave up on themselves and surrendered what was achieved by the predecessors. Men of little faith! One can only grieve over so-called devotees, who, formally being the leaders of ISKCON, consider themselves disciples of Shrila Prabhupada. They have squandered easily the legacy of their Spiritual Father and did not

make any real effort to augment it. What then happened in Russia is a result of my austerity, the fruits of which I devoted to this movement.

So then the first *harinama* on Arbat was facing militiamen. One of their precincts was nearby, partially hidden. When we were passing by chanting Holy Names, many people were following us. Militiamen were even afraid to approach us. They also were following us until we were really close to their precinct. Then they stopped us and started to pull us, one by one and push us towards the entrance to the precinct. It looked quite comical. But it was important for us to stick together. While devotees stick together, nothing bad can happen to them. They are protected. But once they get disconnected from each other, not materially, but spiritually, then maya takes over them and drags them through the gullies of the material life. That's what maya does to devotees, tries to dis-unite them. Maya comes to naïve individuals in the image of a beautiful lady, money, fame, or status in the society... Then it drags the conditioned soul in the clap-nets under the guise of business, or something else, thus immersing and confusing the soul in this life's cunning tricks.

## **REGISTRATION OF THE FIRST KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS SOCIETY AS A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION IN MOSCOW**

Attempts to register our organization as religious started since the times of Ananta Shanti. Later this was continued by Krishna-kumar and some other devotees. But the real registration occurred after our performance at the cafe "Parnassus" and my preaching to Lisovsky, who I was acquainted with long before I joined Krishna Consciousness movement. At that time, as I mentioned in the second edition of "Hare Krishna, Past and Present", Vladimir Lisovsky was studying so-called unofficial organization. When we declared themselves as unofficial Sankirtana Association, we fell into the field of his interest. As a sociologist, he was interested in aspects of social psychology, and, possibly, in the interaction of the individuals in the conditions of modern life.

With Lisovsky we did not have just abstract conversations. It was a practical work on changing society. In his laboratory he held scientific experiments, studied and tested various social groups. He wanted to present his work as a project of changing the political structure of the society. It was not just fruitless discussions about good and evil, which so-called philosophers are so enamored with. He was asking me concrete questions:

- Can the government rely on the followers of Krishna Consciousness, considering their moral, intellectual, psychological and physical abilities?



- We know you are vegetarians, and it is important for us to know also, is it injurious to human's health?
- Could your meditation and repetition of Hare Krishna mantra preclude a normal mental activity? It's great to live without intoxicants, but we live in complicated conditions, and sometimes taking intoxication is necessary to release tension, stress.
- If sexual activity is limited (sex only for the conception of offspring), couldn't it create a revolutionary situation in the country, cause aggression and wars? According to Malthus theory, wars are inevitable, if the growth of population is not restricted...

Lisovsky and I discussed very often those and other topics that were of real-life issues. I always represented Krishna Consciousness, Vedic varnashrama, as a social system, that is alternative to the modern social structure.

*Later I published Sankirtana Manifesto of Harikesha Swami, and through my connections, began distributing it in ministries, government agencies, and departments, among politicians.*

It requires intellectual work with people who rule the country, or are authoritative figures for the public, in order to implement the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness, and realize the ideals of spiritually wholesome society. It is simple for everyone to become a religious fanatic, but not everyone can truly realize

Krishna. "Out of many thousands of men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth" (Bh.G. 7.3)

Back to Lisovsky. He offered to me, as a leader of the movement, to take part in his studies. He gave me 100 printed blank test reports and asked that devotees fill it. When I told devotees led by Vasudama, they refused to support me in this. Frankly, I was not too upset, knowing that their level of devotion was rather mediocre. Many of such kind of people joined the Movement with the mercantile agenda in their mind. Later, those who were hippies still were hippies, and those who were drug addicts returned to their old habits. They were members of the Movement for some time, but as soon as conflicts and discords appeared within Krishna society, they left.

*Four types of people accept Krishna Consciousness: those who are needy; those who are suffering; those who have an inquiring mind; and those who are in possession of true knowledge.*

Many of those who joined, after they acquired some level of material wealth, or got rid of the disease, by one way or another, or simply by following the diet, left Krishna Consciousness. Of course, there is no loss, they benefited from that too. But if we talk about the spiritual movement in whole, only those who possess the knowledge, remain in it till the end. That's why Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita, although all these four types of people are lofty souls, wise men, who are in full Krishna Consciousness are the best. Shрила Prabhupada always emphasized that. "I wrote books for you, — he used to say to his disciples, — not only for them to be distributed, but also for regular reading". That is the process of bhakti-yoga: *shravanam, kirtanam...* Hearing about Supreme Personality of Godhead, and preaching His glory and His Holy Name is *yuga-dharma*.

I invited a few of my Sankirtana devotees, instructed them, and we filled these tests. Later, it became clear that the result of this testing was simply phenomenal. By all measures, physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual, devotees of Krishna were the best. Followers of HARE KRISHNA, the incarnation of demigods themselves, possess spirituality that alone allows everyone to achieve liberation from the circle of birth and death.

The results of the said testing were simply unique. Later, I realized that this just can't exist in a material world. Probably I have overdone it. Makes no sense to hide it now. These tests were filled by one hand, with different handwriting, but under my guidance. Like Pygmalion, I created some work and myself fell in love with it. That was my ideal, and I had no doubts that I will reach it for sure. Please, everyone who wishes, follow me. The Supreme Abode of Krishna is illuminated neither by the Sun nor by the Moon. Those who reach it will never return to this

perishable world full of suffering. Krishna promises to His devotees: "My devotee never perishes!" KRISHNA NEVER DISAPPOINTS THE SOUL SURRENDERED ONTO HIM!

After the test work was done, submitted, and the computer processed the results, Lisovsky invited me to review them. Employees of his laboratory laid out the documentation and report of that scientific experiment in front of me. Both Lisovsky and I sincerely felt happy about the great future of Krishna Consciousness in this country

- Among all religions, you are the best!
- Thank you! I thought so too.

The issue of registration of Krishna Consciousness was raised at the regular meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow, along with issues of politics and economics in the agenda. Top-level sociologists, political scientists, scholars of religion, psychologists, and philosophers were invited to it. Lisovsky was telling me afterward: "The fight for you, guys, was quite fierce. I am an atheist myself, but I have never seen in my life such ferocious atheists who have gathered there. Everyone was against Krishna Consciousness, just because they have decided once and for all: THERE IS NO GOD! For all of them there it was just an axiom. Those who believed that God is good, and if there is no God, He has to be invented, said: "We have our own religion, Orthodoxy, why do we need Hindu religion? We have enough of what we have already. If they want to pray, let them go to the church". Everyone was voting for Christ while being Antichrists themselves. It was strange. I've always disgusted hypocrisy... What I like about your movement, and yourself, in particular, is your straightforwardness and honesty of your preaching. Honesty, that's exactly why I like you.

I waited until everyone spoke on the subject, and presented the report of our well-done job. Actually, I used the best form of testing, from the most advanced Western science. It has to be noted, to the great shame that social studies, psychology, political sciences, etc. are still in so to speak, in the cradle, comparing to the West (my son is now in America for an advanced degree).

When they heard my report about the work done, nobody could say anything — bureaucrats judge by the paper report. And facts laid out on the paper are stubborn things. My arguments were convincing, and our work and your speeches at the seminars with philosophers, scientists, figures of arts did not go unnoticed. I am happy for you, guys! You, and I, Mamu, stood up for Krishna!" I describe this story very close to stenographic records, and Lisovsky himself, who later became the co-author of my book "Hare Krishna yesterday, and today", signed them. Thus, the facts presented in this book can be used as a source



for the monograph on the history of Hare Krishna movement in the former Soviet Union.

## KIRTANS

Sankirtana-yagya is a recommended process of sacrifice. Krishna created demigods and human society and gave them YAGYA (sacrifice). He said: "By performing it (yagya) you will attain happiness. It will grant everything you need for life". I performed harinamas, sankirtanas daily. That was the secret of success. I sang harinamas, not only in Moscow, but in many other cities of the USSR: Leningrad, Riga, Kharkov, Tbilisi, towns of Volga region, regions of Ural, and the Far East. The most memorable harinama occurred on Red Square. We started at Vasiliy Blazhenniy (Vasiliy The Blessed) cathedral, went down the Gorky Street, and finished at Bolshoy Theater. Back in the days, there was an especially big gathering of people on Tverskoy Boulevard (by the Pushkin monument). There were rallies constantly held by the fighters for human rights, and we were always there. Thousands of people used to gather there to hear the chanting of Holy Names. One time we sang the Holy Name of Krishna under the rain. It was a complete downpour, but people did not leave, everyone was singing along with us. People were willing to follow Krishna devotees to the end of the world. Inspired by this support we held kirtans regularly at the most crowded places of the capital.



The first kirtan at Gorky Park was absolutely unforgettable. Devotees who followed me were insanely happy, their faces were shining. It can be noticed on the pictures taken at that time.

Later, when gurus and sannyasis from overseas began to arrive, the first festival of Rathayatra was held at the Gorky Park. Gradually, harinamas were turned into theatrical shows, and Rathayatra festivals became a common social event, thus they lost their original attractiveness.

## **GORKY PARK (1990)**

Here, in 1990, the first Rathayatra in Moscow went off. This event deserves special attention. I'll try to preserve the spirit of it, as much as possible, by describing the most memorable and bright moments of this event.

There was a stage built at the center of the park, specifically for the performance of the Sankirtana group. Kirtiraja started the Rathayatra with the opening address. His speech was not of substance, but he held it with the look of triumphant. Vishnu das was translating, to the best of his abilities. After that Indradyumna, Niranjana Swami and few other Swamis who arrived to take part in the festival (all GBC representatives for the Soviet Union), started the *kirtana*...

Of course, there was a great effort in an attempt to organize, and keep in order the big, unruly crowd.

The chariot was big, and Jagannatha deities looked wonderful.

I started to direct the parade but was dismissed and given the broom. I started to sweep the road before the Lord in pure ecstasy.

There was the sea of flowers, festive and shining faces of the devotees, flags, banners with Hare Krishna mantra. Colored saris, dhoti, *tilaks*... Every devotee at that times tried to look as Vaishnava, as much as possible. Karmic clothing and hairdos were not welcomed. At least externally, everyone tried to look like Krishna devotees.

It was Sunday, and there were plenty of people in the Park. The huge crowd was following chariots. Everyone wanted to participate; people were pulling ropes with a great deal of enthusiasm and devotion.

There was also summer (open) stage with the tent above that was used by various amateur groups to perform. Sankirtana-lila and Vakuvakha with Vilasini were among groups participating in that concert.

His Holiness Mukunda Goswami gave a lecture about Jayananda, the first constructor of the chariots and organizer of the first Rathayatra festival in San Francisco. Then prasad was served. All those who saw Jagannatha on the chariot on that day, without a doubt received His blessings. And there is no doubt that by

remembering Lord at the moment of death they will attain liberation and will reach Vishnuloka.

Of course, there were some incidents on that overall wonderful day. There were many ex-servicemen that returned from Afghanistan. Being quite drunk, some of them started to bully devotees. But they were pacified by the festive and truly spiritual atmosphere of the event. Some of these discharges started to chant Hare Krishna, dance, and actively participated in kirtan.

The festival was recorded on videotape. Years after I watched this film in America at the devotees' apartment. All those who took part in the festival will remember that day forever.

## **MEETING WITH ZHIRINOVSKY AT HEADQUARTERS OF THE SANKIRTANA PARTY**

There were two attempts to register a political party. One was made in Yekaterinburg, and another — in Moscow. Both groups were acting under my guidance, although independently from each other. For them, I worked out the program and charter for the party. I ordered them to publish "The Varnashrama Manifesto" of Harikesh Swami and told them to distribute it. The distribution of it was not chaotic, or to anybody. It was directed at military officers, employees of local administration, ministries, agencies, as well as representatives and leaders of various political parties, who I was acquainted with and maintained the connection. Also, it was distributed among intellectuals.

Bhakta Igor, who later was initiated by Indraduymna Swami and became Shrinivasa Pandit, was my representative in Moscow. My representative in Yekaterinburg was young political scientist Slava. Slava had his own followers and was acting independently from Moscow but under my supervision. In addition to that, I was inspiring some businessmen, who were quite successfully laundering their money through other banks, to open our own international Sankirtana Bank. So, it was quite serious business going on, and when ISKCON leaders learned about it they became very agitated. And they had a serious reason for it. First of all, they feared that because of such activity ISKCON will be banned in the country, and will be considered an illegal organization. Second of all, if everything goes all right: the party is registered, the bank is opened, then Mamu Thakur and his Sankirtana will assimilate whole ISKCON, and so-called guru and GBC will be under him. These fears weren't groundless. The majority of ISKCON in Russia were devotees who were brought to Krishna Consciousness and later were recommended for initiation by various gurus by me. They were strongly attached to me and believed my every word. My authority at that time could rival the authority of the founder-acharya.

In Moscow, at that time (and there were about 20 offices of Sankirtana in other cities) I was renting an apartment on Grishin Street. At that time I was living there with other few devotees. We were conducting programs, distributed books. I also drew pictures and paintings. When GBC learned my address it began to send some sort of provocateurs and spies. One time the disciple of His Holiness Mukunda Goswami came in and introduced himself as a political scientist. He said he wants to become a member of my party. At that time Mukunda Goswami was head of the ministry of external, and cultural affairs at GBC. What does that mean? It means espionage, planting their own people for undermining from inside, discredit the authorities, and self-aggrandizement.

By that time everyone in ISKCON became a minister. If there are ministries, there should be ministers. Gradually, the society of Krishna devotees turned into the society of organization men, bureaucrats, and seemed like they even forgot their original purpose. Those who couldn't attain the chair of a minister began to fight with those who received those chairs and positions by a lucky chance or blindness of fortune. The fight between leaders and ordinary members of ISKCON has begun.

While they were fighting with each other, I met Zhirinovsky. I got acquainted with his people at the Belarus Christian-Democratic Party convention. And now I got a chance to meet him in person. Bhakta Sergey drove me in his Honda to Zhirinovsky's headquarters. We liked each other from the beginning. He was looking for like-minded people, allies, and was glad to meet any new person. I took this opportunity to present him Bhagavad-Gita. He accepted it with ostentatious reverence.

— You might have seen these books before. Your potential voters are distributing them at every corner, so let's be friends...

Considering that he was a busy man, Zhirinovsky paid enough time and attention to me, and using it, I told him quite extensively about basic principles of Krishna Consciousness. Our second meeting for more of a formal nature. Some of Zhirinovsky's people joined our movement, and, perhaps, informed him about potential connections between Krishna devotees from here and abroad. Zhirinovsky inquired about the finances of the society, about building a temple in Moscow. At the end of our second meeting we shook hands, made some photographs that were lost throughout the time, but one photocopy was saved and can serve as evidence (see below).

My services for ISKCON were highly regarded multiple times at GBC sessions. In order to convert Sankirtana people to members of ISKCON, they appointed me as a regional representative of Volga, Ural, Siberia, and the Far East region. GBS resolution of 1991 was officially proposing to change my position of the



General Manager of Sankirtana Association to the position of just member of ISCKON. Sankirtana was my brainchild. By becoming a member of ISCKON I would deliberately obey GBC and give up all my achievements and positions elsewhere. I did not want any confrontation as I cherished kind feelings for Shri-la Prabhupada, the founder of ISCKON. Using this purely spiritual sentiment of mine, as well as playing with sentiments of my followers, gurus of ISCKON took over and acquired not only devotees' hearts, but Sankirtana's property as well. That included few restaurants (in Leningrad, Minsk, Yekaterinburg, and Chelyabinsk), few businesses and buildings that I bought for establishing temples. I was a generous preacher, and considered, not without reason that there will be enough followers for my lifetime, and that meant if the soul is caught, everything in the pockets becomes a property as well. I personally was not interested in souls who belong to Krishna anyway, nor was I interested in money that is a manifestation of His energy. I was interested in the process itself, in devotional service that helps to develop the love for Krishna.

*Love is the only thing needed!!! Taking it as basic instruction, one has nothing else to invent. True religion means love for Krishna which lies in the nature of the soul*

So, I did not object or confront, and deliberately handed over ISKCON all the people and properties. However, my authority was still strong, among my followers. I was still remaining their leader. Thus, ISKCON leaders decided to send me to India for one year. It was a political trick, smart decision. While I was absent Sankirtana was re-organized completely. And what was the result? Those who tried to discredit me, have themselves become victims of evil tongues, lost respect and faith of their own disciples and thus found themselves discredited.

## **SANKIRTANA CORPORATION**

So, I officially obeyed the GBC resolution, resigned from the position of the chief manager of Sankirtana Association, and became the regional representative of ISKCON from the Volga to the Ural to Siberia and the Far East. However, I always supported all of the devotees, even those who were independent of ISKCON. And as such, they were the majority. As householders, they were conducting businesses to support themselves and their families, tried to maintain a relationship with the official religious institutions. Naturally, the majority of people will never be able to break relationships with their family, business, to completely change their life and "status quo" in the society. Some of them were scientists, others were laborers, businessmen, students, etc. They had to follow the regulations in the society that was the necessity for them. But, according to teachings of Lord Krishna and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, it is not required or mandatory to leave one's family, house, work and stay in ashram or temple. Not required. One can develop one's Krishna Consciousness in any status, simply by chanting Holy Names of the Lord and being engaged in pure devotional service. Since this kind of service is on the spiritual platform, naturally it is independent from one's circumstances of the material, mundane life. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu never preached varnashrama. He preached *sanatana-dharma*. One can easily perform sankirtana-yagya in any circumstances — by the mercy of Lord Chaitanya Who freely and unconditionally gives out love to anyone who chants Holy Names of the Lord: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna. I was led by this principle in my preaching, and had no intention to create any kind of organization outside of ISKCON. I was preaching in already existing social institutions, trying to engage in devotional service all those who for one reason or another couldn't become the member of ISKCON. Krishna Consciousness is not a common religion, it is a spiritual movement. It remains alive as long as the preaching of the mission of the Lord is conducted. The spiritual potency of the movement is supported exclusively by acharyas, liberated individuals, not by professional clergy. So-called gurus who live at the expense of the society of the devotees are like Putana and feed their disciples with poisoned milk.

So, I was preaching and created some organizations that were similar to existing institutions, and was adding name Sankirtana that would remind people to work only for Krishna, in the spirit of glorification of the Lord. For example, while preaching to artists, I created Sankirtana Art, for businessmen — Sankirtana Business, while preaching to agricultural workers — Sankirtana Land. Within a short period of time, while there was an ongoing mess in the country caused by "perestroika", I registered few dozens of various organizations bearing the name Sankirtana. So, collaborating with each other, devotees were able to support themselves and their families, and at the same time participate in the Sankirtana mission of Shri Chaitanya, on the job, so to speak. Artists were painting Krishna and His pastimes, as it was presented by Gita and Shrimad Bhagavatam; businessmen were buying those paintings thus supporting artists. The scholars of the Sankirtana Institute of Bhaktivedanta propagated the ideals of Krishna Consciousness to other scientists, politicians were engaged in politics. Since the Communist Party was disbanded, I was preaching to its former organization men, giving them the opportunity to utilize their skills in the fight with materialists who were officially representing the ideology of the state. I was exceptionally successful in that field. It would require another whole book to describe my achievements, but since it is not within the purpose of this book, I just decided to mention it briefly.

Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita: "Anything you do, do it as an offering to Me". Thus, any activity or duty performed as a sacrifice for Vishnu will facilitate one's liberation. Krishna Consciousness is a missing link that connects one with Krishna. Actually, any activity or work intended to satisfy the Lord, glorifying His name, form and wonderful pastimes is considered as yagya, and, to some extent, as sankirtana. It is beneficial for everyone, if, for example, the businessman is taking part in charity, donating part of his profits to build a temple or to missionary activity. Krishna says: "I am the talent of the man, I am an intelligence of the wise, the strength of the powerful who is free from lust and desires". Thus, the conclusion is: everything has to be utilized to satisfy Krishna only. The living being is an eternal servant of Krishna, and this desire to serve, as an inseparable quality of the soul can be satisfied perfectly in anyone's daily life, without consideration of one's status in this material life, according to *varnashrama*.

I had an exceptional authority and respect among my followers. They loved me, and I paid them back equally. I performed lectures, harinamas, programs right in their offices. All employees, right at the scheduled time used to stop working and gathered at the conference hall, like for a political or organizational meeting, and I sang with these people Hare Krishna, read Bhagavad-Gita and distributed prasada. At that time nobody knew gurus and sannyasis who arrived in the

USSR from overseas, so they did not make any impression on anybody. When I showed up with one of them, everyone was shouting: Mamu Thakur, *ki jaya!!!*

In order to remove me, Kirtiraja began the campaign against Sankirtana. It was not a difficult task. We live in a world full of greedy and envious beings, thus it was not a problem to find assistance. First, for that matter, he recruited Vasudama, then engaged Chaitanya Chandra (the talented devotee who was not engaged in any activity at the time). The campaign against Mamu Thakur was well organized.

One day I was taking a flight to Sverdlovsk. Suddenly, while on the plane, I began to feel faint, within half an hour I got a sharp headache without any apparent reason. When the plane landed, I was not even able to move my feet. I never had robust health. I was very rational in my life. Never postponed anything for tomorrow if it could be done today. Tomorrow is not up to us, as it might never show up for some of us. I felt that it was my end, and beseeched Nrisimha. By the mercy of the Lord, I was able to get to the devotees and fell completely sick. I was in very bad shape and did not want anybody to see me like that. I sat down and, applying titanic efforts, began to chant *japa*.

Navanari came by. She was a famous extrasensory individual, and a clairvoyant: "Somebody envies you, practices witchcraft on you. It is not a sickness, it is bedevilment".

I saw the dream the same night. I saw Kirtiraja Prabhu, who sent me Nrisimha *kavacha* some time ago. I dreamed that he is choking me with it. I woke up with the burning desire to tear it off of me. But instead of that, I began to pray with the passion to Lord Nrisimha. Even if this *kavacha* is not good, I wore it in front of Nrisimha deity, and read the appropriate mantra so it will protect in any case. In such state of mind, I passionately prayed to Nrisimha. Immediately the plan what to do next appeared in my mind. In the morning, barely overcoming dizziness and heartache I went to the airport, and almost immediately got the airfare to Dushanbe (Tajikistan), although I did not know flights' schedule, and was acting completely spontaneously. I had many well-wishers in Dushanbe.. It is very important in such a critical moment of life to have one's well-wishers beside oneself. A heart is a very fragile device. The heart needs love which can't be found among envious persons.

Yamunajivana and I had a house in Dushanbe, which was registered to one of the local female devotees. It served as an ashram. By the time there were few *brahmacharis* living there, and few individuals were regular visitors. They were gathering on weekends, and Yamunajivana was conducting lectures and programs. My appearance there was, as usual, unexpected but, as always, welcomed. Barely moving, I reached the bed and fell on it. Few days I was going through high fever, chills and overall weakness. But being in a peaceful environ-



ment, and because of the devotees took care of me I got up back on my feet pretty soon. Yamunajivana was helping me: heating up water and helping to take a bath; he was cooking prasada, offered me fresh vegetables, fruits, made a decoction from some herbs. So, gradually I came back to life, so to speak. It has to be noted that, in addition to my ascetic way of life, I was missing fresh vegetables and fruits in my meal. And what fruits I could find during my preaching in the areas of Ural and Siberia, regions of permafrost?. At that time there was a deficit of fresh fruits and vegetables. Sometimes even potatoes could be hardly found, and finding rice was kind of holiday. My gums were constantly bleeding: it was either paradontosis or scurvy... As my health was not strong, I remained alive only by the mercy of Lord Krishna, who gave me strength whenever I was preaching His Holy Name. As soon as I began kirtan my voice was getting sound, my mind becomes clear, and body — strong. When I was feeling the lively reaction from the public, it was adding confidence in me, and at the end of the program I was almost flying. It was a real transformation of the energies: the material body was spiritualized.

From Dushanbe, I returned to Moscow.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE STORY OF "ILLEGAL" BOOK PUBLISHING

Question: What does that mean: legal or illegal? When publishing and distribution Prabhupada's book was punishable by imprisonment, it was legal. Now, when publishing and distribution of the same books started to produce big profits, such activity outside of BBT became illegal. I was the first one who published and distributed Shрила Prabhupada's books. I was doing it, like everything else, with my own money. I did not have any selfish interest in it. My only interest was to let people read these books so they would learn about Krishna and devotional service. Thus, I wanted to develop this as far as possible. Let's say, if BBT can't handle it, I am ready to help them, but if BBT has commercial agenda and wants to control everything and everyone by hampering such distribution, I will destroy their plans. I will publish books by myself and distribute books for free or for half of the BBT price. What is wrong with that? True, they will lose profits and their monopoly, market, and power over people. On the other hand, more people will have a chance to learn about Krishna Consciousness. If our interests conflict, oh, well, I am not a moralist, I am Krishna's devotee, and if Krishna gives me a chance to do devotional service, I won't miss it, won't drop whatever my hand is able to grasp, so to speak. That's how I was thinking. The rest was evolving naturally. I did not make any extra effort, Krishna has His own plans. But who knows His plans? Kirtiraja? Members of GBC?

As I mentioned before, Kirtiraja extremely disliked my Sankirtana. Sankirtana was like a bone in his throat, totally against his hegemonic ambitions. Although he forgot to consider that his plans are not necessarily in accordance with Krishna's plans. He simply got caught by playing with circumstances and words and did not notice his losses. Officially, ISCKON was quite weak in the country, and Sankirtana Association was quite successful without any outside help. Actually, the Krishna Consciousness was established in the USSR without international help, just by the efforts of local devotees. So-called gurus were sort of invaders. When they officially arrived in the country in the '90s, there were already devotees and centers of Krishna Consciousness, innocently pure in intentions, without any urge for profits, a power to manipulate people's consciousness. These devotees were naturally spiritual. So they were treated like beggars: there was some kind of "free stuff" thrown at them, and after that, the invoice was presented. It is a custom in America. First, you get something "for free", and then they send you a bill. If you can't pay it off, then you are offered a credit or loan. And after that you work for "generous uncle" all your life, paying for your reck-

lessness. The whole life in America, as well as in the rest of the material world is living in debt... They own nothing here, but they put up the sign "ISKCON". ISKCON is Prabhupada's body, money is its blood, and GBC is supposedly brain of the society. But when the soul leaves the body, blood and brain become useless. When Krishna Consciousness leaves the society along with acharya, the society becomes useless. Corps has to be burnt or buried, in other words, *samadhi* has to be performed.

*Ideologists of ISKCON created a myth about themselves. There is NO ISKCON in reality! Myth, that is planted in the minds of the devotees, who consider themselves members of the non-existent organization, at the expense of ideal of Sankirtana Movement of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Recently, after visiting Holy Dhama Mayapur I noticed that International Society for Krishna Consciousness is nothing more than Indian International Society; there are less and less other people; representatives of other ethnic or racial groups become a minority, and they don't have the authority and considered more like black sheep. More and more often the lectures in ISKCON temples are conducted in Hindi, as the majority doesn't understand English, or simply ignore Western people. More and more often Rathayatra festivals are called festivals of Indian culture. ISKCON is losing its power due to many groups and currents inside the movement itself. Now, in order to attract more followers, more so-called scientific information, mundane knowledge is used in preaching that is replacing studies of Bhagavad-Gita and Shrimad Bhagavatam. Devotional service, which is the essence of the Vedic philosophy is replaced by Ayurveda and horoscopes.*

*One time I asked one of the officials: "Why followers of Krishna Consciousness are not allowed to have classes at schools, while there are electives conducted by Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Judaists, and Buddhists?" He replied: "Because they have no unity. They cannot come to an agreement among themselves. They have no unified doctrine that would clearly represent Krishna Consciousness. I was at the conference where there was a discussion about reorganizing religious studies in schools and other educational institutions. There were krishnaites as well, and they were declined only because they have no unity". That was an opinion of the official representative of the authorities.*

*When we submitted a petition in Yekaterinburg to register our organization and to get land to build a temple, we were told: "Krishnaites have compromised themselves by their behavior. We gave them premises for the temple (daycare center), as well as land before. They had restaurant Sankirtana. But they compromised themselves, thus they lost everything. If you want the land for the temple, you have to pay money, and then you can build your temples,*

*as other confessions do, Christians for example." That's how things turned out, and that's what officials think about ISKCON's activity. Even well-wishers and supporters of Hare Krishna are unable to change this, because of serious disagreement among the followers of Krishna Consciousness. NO UNITY in leadership, and in points of view.*

Back to the subject. So, the new religious institution has been created, and that institution wanted to monopolize everything: missionary activity, money, power, absolute privilege to represent Krishna. Some people were saying that ISKCON is Shrila Prabhupada's body thus manipulating others by his authority and his services to mankind. There were also people who insisted that ISKCON is nothing less but the incarnation of Krishna Himself. I personally heard such statement at Gopala Krishna Goswami's lecture, when he was in Tashkent. All this smacked of cheap propaganda and sectarianism. When spiritual movement, which is maintained by *acharyas*, becomes a religion, preachers on the staff and so-called *guru*, it, like Putana feeds their followers with poisonous milk. In regards to this, I will quote Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's article later.

Fueling intrigues and adjusting devotees against me, Kirtiraja achieved certain success. BBT, without a reason, refused to give me books for distribution. Why? Sannyasa, the leader of the BBT branch in the USSR, my friend in the recent past, said: "Mamu Thakur if we give you books, you'll become rich and will fall". Now, these words sound like a requiem for Sannyasa Prabhu himself, as he already gave up devotional service.

At that time my book distribution was so massive that nobody could compete with me, and feeling envious towards me, everyone was counting money that could be earned by such distribution. Although I owed nothing to anybody, and even more over, was engaged in some philanthropic activity in Krishna Consciousness. Out of envy, they thought: "Oh, this money. It belongs to Krishna. Only I know how to manage money better. He must give this money to me".

One time, in Sweden, when they gathered to criticize Mamu Thakur, Vishnupada asked them:

- Is he violating principles?
- No. He is very ascetic, and he chants 64 rounds of mantra, instead of 16.
- What does he do wrong?
- Oh, no. He is perfect and his projects are always successful. His preaching is very successful, as well as book distribution. He opened multiple vegetarian restaurants and recruited thousands of devotees.
- Maybe he owes money to BBT?
- No. He gave his own money to develop book printing.

— Then, excuse me, what's a problem? Why are you complaining about him?

It was a deathly silence there. Because there is not even one defect or stain in Mamu Thakur's devotional service. And Vishnupada concluded: "You all are very envious!"

Preaching and book distribution is the best activity for devotees. There were not enough books at that time. There was BBT warehouse in Sverdlovsk, and Vaishnavi devi dasi was managing it, being BBT representative. She was supporting me and was acting independently, sometimes against the orders and instruction from the GBC. ISKCON and BBT are two organizations financially and administratively independent from each other. They were supposed to collaborate with each other in preaching Krishna Consciousness. But somehow, at some point, BBT overtook leadership, and being in possession of money began to control ISKCON's activity in the USSR. In order to destroy their ambitions, I began to inspire Ural businessmen to publish books independently from BBT. Once upon time, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati ordered Shрила Prabhupada: "If you have money, print books!" This kind of service is most welcomed in the mission of Shri Chaitanya. Building temples, monasteries, and living at the expense of the parishioners, selling various religious paraphernalia, praying along with fanatics — all this is far from the idea of Krishna Consciousness. It is not the best activity — to live at the expense of the society, and pretending in devotional service. Thus, instead of printing nonsense and wasting Krishna's money to the left and to the right, I convinced those who had money, and who I preached to, to print Prabhupada's books.

I told them: "It will be beneficial for you and others. Money, when it is engaged in service to Lord Narayana, is Lakshmi, goddess of fortune. Krishna will be very pleased by you. And when Krishna is pleased, your life is a success. You will return back home, to Krishna". And they believed me; most fallen individuals, profligates, meat eaters and drug addicts were giving up bad habits and becoming exemplary individuals. As they were occupying serious positions in the society and businesses, they began to chant Hare Krishna themselves and preach to their subordinates, employees. They organized their businesses in the interests of Krishna Consciousness. What can be better? People rendered service to Krishna by their bodies, mind, speech, and money. So, following my advice, businessmen printed 100 000 "Krishna's cuisine", Harikesh Swami's pamphlet for the beginners in devotional service. 100000 copies of Bhagavad-Gita were ordered for printing. Although the success in spiritual life is followed by success in material life, nobody wanted to make profits out of "divine business". We decided to hand over the BBT all printed books upon their first demand as a gift. In addition to that, we decided to donate to Sannyasa das few wagons of

paper, but he declined, out of pride. Our desire to collaborate and help was not well received by the officials of the BBT, and I decided to get by without them. It was the beginning of a serious conflict. It all began first in Sverdlovsk. Representatives of ISKCON, of course in the name of devotional service, using gangster methods attempted to overtake restaurant Sankirtana which was opened with the money of above-mentioned businessmen. The serious fight has begun. Our opponents also sharpened their pens. Letters with complaints about Mamu Thakur literally flew, one after another. Then Harikesha Swami Maharaja wrote to me quite a stern letter: "Illegal printing of BBT books causes serious concerns of international GBC. I don't understand, why do you do that? If you continue that way I will reject you as my disciple". There was a little post scriptum in that letter. Harikesha wrote that Sannyasa das is his representative, so even if we have some disagreements and personal problems with each other, we must suppress them, in favor of our main endeavors. At the same time, Harikesha Swami asked to explain myself, and write to him, if I think that Sannyasa is wrong, and about his wrongdoings.

Actually, I was waiting for this chance to explain my position. I had no other chance to begin a dialogue with my guru, but to provoke some conflict, disturbance. Guru was always surrounded by a retinue. There was always a crowd of spongers around him. They diligently guarded him against his own disciples. Naturally, while the preaching and recruitment of new followers are so massive, there is no space and time for the individual. The relationship between a guru and his disciple becomes formal, bureaucratic. I had not even one darshan with my guru in ten years. I wanted to see him, ask questions, but I did not speak English...

When guru wrote in the letter that he can reject me, I couldn't get myself together for a long time. I was thinking about it and couldn't correlate: if the relationship between guru and disciple is eternal, how he can reject me? That was quite a philosophical dilemma. There was one more, purely ethical aspect: how guru who I dedicated my life to, can doubt our relationship? When they tortured me in prison, forcing me to refuse guru and Krishna, I refused to even think about breaking vows that I gave before the deity of Krishna. Guru is representative of Krishna. He is flawless. He is as good as Krishna Himself. I felt like a lump stuck in my throat and I can't swallow it. Perhaps I was too sentimental and did not understand the real meaning of the word "guru", and who is a true guru. I thought that he is my eternal spiritual father. I was taught that way. And I made my choice. How it is possible that guru rejects me? Of course, there are various problems in every family... Anything can happen. But I was thinking that nobody knows disciple's heart better than guru, and did not allow myself to accept the thought that I can be in such a situation. I did not know what to do and

how to behave and had nobody to ask about it. It was against my whole consciousness: the idea of the guru rejecting me... Then what sense the spiritual life makes if our relationship is like a material relationship, temporary and false. This thought was torturous. If he would tell me that I am a fool, rascal or something like that, I would accept it as his mercy. If he would beat me, I would be simply happy, because I probably deserve greater punishment. Even if he would kill me or order me to jump into a fire it would be easier to accept. It is always better to give up a life that seems to be completely useless. But I never expected that my guru might reject me. I tried to find a philosophical explanation to it and only ten years after found the answer. But let's not rush ahead...

Holding back my bitterness, I replied in a strictly diplomatic manner. I said that I simply was preaching and after all, I am not responsible for those who showed an excess of zeal. In any case, all the activity will benefit everyone. If there still are claims, let the court solve all the disputes. Let Maharaja give me the authority to represent BBT in court, and I will draw perpetrators to justice. Of course, I knew that nobody will appoint me for that, and in the end, everything will be solved by itself, the same way as always. I knew that all BBT's activity in the USSR was illegal and shady. At the end of my letter, in regards to Sannyasa das, I wrote that it is unethical to criticize him, even if there is a reason for it. I offered guru my humble apologies for the disturbance which was caused by me, although that was not my intention, to cause any trouble.

Sanaka das translated my letter into English, and perhaps in a more moderate manner than the original. In a couple of days, I received the reply via fax. The problem was solved, so to speak. Book printing was suspended, and all the guilt was put on the people who had no direct connection with all this. One of them died, the other one got into an accident and became mentally incapable. Whatever was done, was done, and no one will be any wiser, and no one will know the difference, and no traces will be left behind... But the thought of the possibility that guru might abandon me, gave me no rest.

When I arrived in Leningrad I showed the letter from Harikesha Maharaja to Prabhavishnu Swami at the very first program that was conducted at Lensovet Club-house. After reading it Prabhavishnu Swami didn't say a word, so it was easy to guess that there will be a discussion at the nearest meeting of the GBC about my occupied position, and perhaps about my membership in ISCKON. This problem was quite serious, and all the members of the international GBC overseeing USSR arrived at that meeting. I knew that there is no peace between them, and there was an invisible struggle between various gurus. Some gurus were intriguing against other gurus and were setting on fight disciples of different gurus between each other. Many times I was participating in those meetings where devotees were judged by others and even excluded from the orga-

nization, just to set warning example for others. And now I will be the issue on the agenda of the GBC conference.

My enemies and those who envied me were rejoicing. First there is now a chance to occupy future vacancy, second there is a chance to say anything they wanted to say to me without fearing my sharp words or look; third, they can use this opportunity to give vent to their bile and at the same time to demonstrate their dedication to ISKCON. I have to say, that there were also devotees who came to support me and sympathize. As for me... I couldn't care less.

## **ISHTAGOSHTHI**

Prabhupada's wish was that devotees would gather together to discuss Krishna Consciousness philosophy and hear to *krishna-katha* at *ishtagoshthi*. But gradually, these *ishtagoshthi* turned into meetings for administrative purposes and to judge violations and violators. Sometimes these meetings lasted for days, and there was a written resolution of such meeting. It was thrown usually in the garbage can, as nobody intended to follow these resolutions. All those who really weren't of any substance tried to show their significance at these meetings.

## **GBC ANNUAL MEETING OF 1992**

On that year the GBC meeting was held in Moscow, simultaneously with the meeting of the leaders of the national ISKCON. It was somewhere on the eve of the collapse of the USSR. Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, and other republics acquired their independence and bowled out of the socialist commonwealth. So the plans of ISKCON to unite everyone in one All-Union for more effective management fell through. Plans to centralize and further strengthen ISKCON in this part of the world clearly weren't included in Krishna's plans.

## **LORD'S WAYS ARE INSCRUTABLE!**

Devotees from all over the country arrived at the meeting. GBC and leaders of ISKCON were conducting their meetings simultaneously. The meeting was conducted through a few sessions. Kurma, Lev and I were interrogated, first separately, then together. Krishna Murari das, Niranjana Swami's disciple, was interpreting and was doing it quite well. Mukunda Goswami was taking down minutes of the meeting. Sometimes he was asking questions, trying to clarify and confirm. I personally was observing it as some kind of show. I tried to understand the mindset of the members of GBC, listened to their comments, tried to foresee what's next. Kurma took all that very much to his heart, and had to leave the meeting next meeting, and went home with painful heartache. Lev was quite optimistic, same as me, with one significant difference: for him, it was



the first and the last meeting of such kind. He was taking association with “holy” gurus as Krishna’s mercy. I also was taking it as mercy with the essential difference: it was my life, and for him, it was just a part of his sense gratification. He joined this movement for some time, but in the end, he gave up on devotional service, and returned to his karmic activity, as he lost the faith in triumph of justice. But we’ll talk about it later...

Kirtiraja was conducting the meeting in his usual manner: he was starting for afar, and it was hard to figure out where he will end up in his speech. He was talking about whatever was crossing his mind, any nonsense, escalating the situation and provoking conflict. It is hard for one to remain cool, but it is even harder to be oneself. He tried to maneuver, putting a good face on things. He was holding speeches for hours and hours. Like a vampire, he was sucking out blood and energy from the audience. He started on a merry note but finished on a sad one. Raising clouds of verbal dust he unexpectedly pounced on the next victim. Even after the final resolution was accepted by the meeting, in the end, he did everything opposite to it. Then the question is: Why to set up a meeting and discuss the issue for days if at the last moment when the resolution is accepted, to do everything opposed to it? In presence of Deities, he urged us to say the truth and nothing but the truth, but he lied in the most indecent way himself. Demanding from others to follow standards, he, himself, followed none of them, including punctuality, purity and adequate behavior. He was setting certain regulations but never followed himself. It was causing a disturbance in the minds of the devotees. He was not a bad politician: divide and rule. But in practical life, he was always unsuccessful. He never kept word. Was saying one thing, and doing another. He had a tendency to listen to himself only and to shut up others, did not tolerate objections and constantly was remaining in some kind of ambivalence. His airy nature was creating instability when it was coming down to practical matters. He was quite sensitive and seemed to be intelligent. He was not vindictive, with the sense of humor, but when he tried to do his best, the outcome, as usual, was bad. His nature of Aquarius was in conflict with mine, that’s why we could never work together. I had to tolerate him, as well as, perhaps, he had to tolerate me.

## **ACCUSATION**

I was charged on two counts:

- 1) Illegal printing of Shrila Prabhupada’s books;
- 2) Breach of the GBC resolution in regards to Sankirtana Association’s attempt to create a political party and the bank.

On the first count I gave the following explanation:

I was simply preaching, and those who I preached to, out of the best intention, took initiative and began to print books with their own money. This, as a fact, is not a crime, because they are ready for negotiations and to hand over the whole edition to BBT. Moreover, the regional leadership, Prabhavishnu Swami personally was aware of what is happening. Maharaja knew about it. Gopala Krishna Goswami, who was planning to accept Lev as his disciple, also knew about it. Actually, books were printed with the silent approval of Gopala Krishna and Prabhavishnu Swami.

In regards to the second count, which by the way was not conflicting with interests of ISKCON, I said that Sankirtana Association is a business organization. And ISKCON (in the USSR), actually, emerged from its operations. I tried to convince the leadership that I am their friend. But nobody was listening to me. I also said that as for Sankirtana Party that I registered, the founders and leaders of it are not members of ISKCON, thus they are not obligated to coordinate their activity with GBC. According to the previous resolution, I resigned from the position of CEO, and as a member of ISKCON, I lost the privilege of the deciding vote in Sankirtana Association. Now they are responsible for themselves.

Of course, my explanations made absolutely no impression on GBC. Gopala Krishna Goswami Maharaja said: "The problem is just that they listen to you, and do whatever you tell them to do. Officially, you have no relation to them, but actually, you are remaining their leader and the responsibility is on you. You must promise that you will never act independently from the orders of the authorities of ISKCON again, and will stop printing Shрила Prabhupada's books as it's BBT's business".

— Do you promise? — Gopala Krishna Goswami insisted

— I am not a moralist, and if Krishna gives me a chance, I will be printing books, — I replied evasively.

The implications were that BBT has nothing to do with it. I preach and spread Krishna Consciousness, and I don't do business. Preaching is my only business. If BBT doesn't satisfy people's demand for transcendental literature, I will take initiative in my hands.

At this point, GBC retired for a final decision. I went to the altar room where the meeting of ISKCON was held. In my absence, they presented me as the enemy of ISKCON, the society of pure devotees of Lord Krishna.

Nobody knew what to do with me. When I showed up in that altar room, San'yasa das took the stand and went on... First, he called me vampire sucking out Shрила Prabhupada's blood. He stated that BBT is the creation of Shрила Prabhupada, and nobody has a right to print his books, except BBT.

Since the times when power in the country has changed, and book printing and distribution has become a business matter, everyone became grand book distributors. Sannyasa himself became like a saint with the special kind of blessings. He forgot that in the recent past it was I who inspired him for printing transcendental literature. And not only I inspired him, but also gave him money for that, as gratis. Later, trying to prevent possible reproach from me, he attempted to return the "debt". Before my meeting with Harikesha Swami in Mayapur, he returned some amount of money through Vadinatha, thinking that this makes us even. But he will never be able to return his real debt: he became a devotee because of my mercy. He forgot that during communist times I was visiting him, preaching to him, how we both were binding first Bhagavad-Gitas which I was transporting then all over the Soviet Union. And there was nobody but me who supported him in this risky activity.

During Sannyasa's speech, one of the devotees, Guru das from Australia couldn't tolerate it anymore, stood up and said: "Sannyasa, in our society for Krishna Consciousness we are not to criticize devotees. Especially if they are actual leaders of the Movement. It is not a meeting of karmis, it is a meeting of the devotees, so keep it in mind!" But, Sannyasa already took the bit in his teeth and couldn't stop. He continued like religious inquisitor: "Mamu Thakur wants to destroy ISKCON..." And so on and so forth. I had nothing left to do but smile. Let's see what Krishna wants. I remained silent and did not argue.

After some time I was invited upstairs. GBC has made a decision. I knocked on the door and entered. I offered obeisances to all Maharajas as it should be. There were: Indradyumna Swami, Niranjana Swami, Govinda Swami (aka Ayodhyapati), Prabhavishnu Swami, Gopala Krishna Goswami, Mukunda Goswami, and Kirtiraja Prabhu. If I forgot somebody, I apologize for not listing them here. Kirtiraja's face was red out of tension. It was clear, as far as one can judge, that this is his last GBC meeting. Harikesha Maharaja stopped giving him money, and perhaps, his "causeless mercy" along with it. As usual, Kirtiraja started his speech from afar and ended up like this: "International GBC expresses great dissatisfaction with the illegal printing of BBT books. The responsibility for it lies first on Prabhavishnu Swami as the regional leader of Ural, Volga, Siberia and the Far East and the member of GBC. Mamu Thakur, using his inclination towards himself, abused his trust. So it would be better if Mamu Thakur would take all responsibility upon himself" I realized that they are looking for a scapegoat. Who to blame in order to remain innocent? Actually, I was ready to accept all the blame nobly, as a gentleman. I felt very thankful towards Prabhavishnu Maharaja for his friendly and sometimes fatherly attitude towards me. But before I opened my mouth to say my avowal of guilt, Prabhavishnu Swami, like he was asking me for a favor, began to speak with the faltering voice:

— Mamu Thakur, you do realize that I trusted you very much...

As I said, I already opened my mouth to plead guilty, but after Prabhavishnu Swami's words I said, unexpectedly for everyone and myself, the following:

— Yes, I plead guilty and will resign from the regional representative position... under one condition.

It took everyone's breath away.

— What is your condition? — inadvertently blurted Gopala Krishna Goswami.

— I am resigning from the position of the vice-president with the promotion to a higher level.

And the wrangle has begun.

— Who you want to be? — asked Gopala Krishna Goswami.

I was holding a pause. Culmination point has yet to come.

— Do you want to be the president of the Moscow yatra? — Gopala Krishna Goswami couldn't hold himself again.

There was always some kind of problems and misunderstanding in Moscow, and perhaps some of the GBC members were thinking of making me a leader here, knowing my rebellion ways...

— No. I want to be a member and representative of GBC in RUSSIA — having said that, I looked searchingly by circling the silent look at the quiet and surprised GBC members. Prabhavishnu Swami came to his senses first. After spending quite a bit of time together, we had a pretty good understanding of each other characters. It's very different how it goes between devotees. Krishna Himself directs their actions. Knowing that my case is over, one way or another, I decided, in the end, to bully somewhat, more of a childish obstinacy and caprice than from the serious intention to become a member of GBC.

— Okay! We'll think about it — said Prabhavishnu Maharaja.

After this, members of GBC have retired for further debates between each other,

## **FINALE**

As the decision was already made by a Higher Echelon, everyone was waiting for it to be announced. According to Krishna's plan, it had to happen in the last act, when all "i's" are dotted, and all "t's" are crossed.

And the due time has come. Overturning the desk he was sitting at, Kirtiraja stood up again. After making, as usual, a long preamble he said: "Investigating the case of illegal printing of BBT books in Ural, where Mamu Thakur was responsible representative, empowered by GBC to represent interests of ISKCON, the committee (then he listed all the names) has reached the following decision: to recognize Mamu Thakur guilty and to hold him responsible for the abuses taking place. GBC encourages him to leave the position of the vice-president of the regions of Volga, Ural, Siberia and the Far East. Considering outstanding service of Mamu Thakur das to ISKCON and Shрила Prabhupada, GBC recommends Mamu Thakur for the trip to Mayapur-dhama and stay there for one year to worship Deities, to study of scriptures and association with the guru, Harikesha Swami Maharaja"

The resolution was drawn up by not a worldly talent. Without infringing upon my dignity, without belittling my past services, and at the same time without a compromise, it met all the requirements of the Vaishnava etiquette, common sense, and higher transcendental logic. I felt truly happy, and with a sincere appreciation and love to all Krishna representatives, I said: "Jaya! All glories to Shрила Prabhupada and eternal Sankirtana movement of Shри Chaitanya Mahaprabhu!"

Hearing such an elevated approval of the GBC resolution, all members of the committee broke into a happy smile — a load off their minds. The unpleasant procedure, when devotees make a voluntary decision about another devotee, because of their higher position, has resolved amicably, to the mutual satisfaction of everyone. Everyone was happy. Members of GBC began to congratulate me like I successfully passed the test for high school diploma. In the meantime, downstairs, where leaders of the Moscow ISKCON have gathered, they still had heated debates.

I entered the auditorium and quietly sat at the first available chair. I already left all stresses behind. GBC resolution was already announced, but nobody here knew about it yet. All the devotees were extremely agitated. But I did not rush events, and bore my cross inwardly, without revealing the fact that God's judgment is already done, and the criminal is discharged... Here, at this show, I was not an actor, I was a spectator. It was interesting to observe: what are they going to say? Friends and enemies have gathered here. Let's see who my true friends are here. Let's see who will reveal his true colors.

First, Krishna-kumar das, who always represented the official point of view, took the stand. He was Kiritiraja's right arm. He spoke his incriminatory speech: "For many years, steadily, Mamu Thakur was ruining ISKCON created by Shрила Prabhupada. ISKCON is Shрила Prabhupada's body. We all are Shрила Prabhupada's flesh and blood. And we will not tolerate acts of sabotage!" After him, as on the

paved way, Vasudama said: "I know Mamu Thakur for many years. All this time he used Krishna Consciousness simply to glorify himself. He never wanted to accept any authority except himself. His ego is so big that it overshadows all his good qualities..." Then he started to recall some little facts, how I looked at him, what I thought of him, what I said... Ananta Shanti said about him once: "He is a born sneak. That's his nature. Judas Iscariot".

After him, another devotee took the stand, then second, third... Their speeches were more reserved as they tried to be unbiased, free from personal, self-interest motives in their judgment. The situation there was just ridiculous. Actually, these people really did not have any self-interest in me, they just couldn't hold themselves, and out of envy, they talked nonsense. Just out of bad habit, due to bad upbringing and lack of good association. They saw nothing but violence and injustice in their lives. And now, when they have met a true treasure on their life path, they couldn't appreciate it. I felt sorry for them. Oh, SANKTA SIMPLICITA! — Oh, holy simplicity!

In the end, Maitreya stood up, and as a conclusion, said: "Mamu Thakur Prabhu brought all of you to Krishna Consciousness, and after some time you all will be ashamed of what you've said here. Krishna Consciousness is not a cheap thing. Although everyone can seize the opportunity in it..."

## EPILOGUE

While I was staying in Holy Dhama of Shri Mayapur, there happened many unexpected events at the Russian ISKCON temple on Begovaya Street. Due to the fact that few devotees got sick with encephalitis, the authorities placed the temple in quarantine. Gangsters robbed Krishna-kumar when he decided to sell his car. As a result of intrigues, there began a struggle between the disciples of different gurus. Ural mafia threatened to kill Chaitanya Chandra. All devotees were in great discomposure. When they arrived at Gaura-purnima, they all wanted to do something for me, as they felt guilty due to *vaishnava-aparadha* (offense) committed by them. I never participated in any intrigues, and as usual, found myself in a better position.

But the greatest upheavals took place later. When I was already in America, Harikesha left his position of the guru and member of GBC. His fall shook the Soviet ISKCON to the ground. Kamalamala and Sannyasa, started a campaign for him, trying to defend Harikesha. They fanned the big hype around it, and presented an ultimatum to international GBC: on behalf of all Harikesha Swami dedicated followers they declared that if their guru is not justified and restored in his rights, they will commit self-immolation on Red Square. I was laughing while observing all this farce. I thought: "Fools. When, oh when will the fire flare up and burn all those who envy me?". I waited but never got. Of course, the fire

would burn the gross material body to ashes, but it doesn't affect the subtle body. Thus, it wouldn't be a great use of it. Greediness, envy, and lust cover the soul, and one needs a higher transcendental process for true purification. Only the sankirtana would be able to purify their existence. But that's exactly what was missing, the sankirtana — the fire of transcendental knowledge that is able to burn all the sins to ashes... So, they were just bluffing.

And when it did not work out too well, they gnawed each other. Those who were my enemies almost eliminated each other. Sannyasa and Kamalamala who were Vasudama's friends, and were literally deified by him (according to his words, he even used to send them money when they were in prison), now almost put Vasudama behind the bars. It did not work out either, due to the lack of *corpus delicti*. And when Harikesha resigned, Krishna-kumar couldn't survive this stress and ended up in a madhouse. So, every one of them got what they deserved.

Many simply abandoned devotional service, like rats that leave the sinking ship; it was a great panic all over. Under the influence of inexorable time, the coalition fell apart. And when, ten years later, I returned to Moscow, I found none of my enemies there. Justice has triumphed: Harikesha who questioned the status and the authority of guru, fell victim to the lust; Sannyasa had the same result due to his cupidity; Kamalamala and Vasudama, because of intrigues, fell victims to their craftiness, and Krishna-kumar — to his stupidity. Last time I met Kirtiraja at Narayana Maharaja festival at Florida, and he suggested me to write memoirs about preaching during Soviet times: in response, I've sent him a screenplay about Shрила Prabhupada's arrival to the USSR.

## Part II

# SANKIRTANA-FILM

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In 2001 I returned to Russia. Russian ISCKON rejected me. I took formal initiation at Vedanta Samiti (Narayana Maharaja), but, as always, remained Sankirtana devotee. So, I decided to start over again. 18 years passed from the time I registered the first enterprise by the name Sankirtana in Leningrad. Later, together with other devotees, we established the whole corporation (several vegetarian restaurants in different cities, few businesses such as Sankirtana-art, Sankirtana-invest, Sankirtana-land, Sankirtana-business, Sankirtana-film, and even food store "Sankirtana" which was later overtaken by non-devotees, and many other organizations). In 2005 I was able to revive some of the organizations, including Sankirtana-film which was initially registered in Dushanbe (Tajikistan).





When USSR fell apart, we re-registered it in Moscow. By that time, Subuddhi Rai, the director, and head of the Sankirtana-film created few of his own animation movies and wrote the screenplay about Shrila Prabhupada's arrival to the USSR. Subuddhi Rai showed this screenplay to Bhakti Charu Swami. Bhakti Charu Swami approved it, but when it came to financing the movie, there was no reply.

One can't cook prasad by letting off fireworks... Thus, our project is still unfulfilled. We live in Kali-yuga so good intentions can be judged only according to the practical actions. Word can convince for some time, but the final proof comes from the action.

Before I present the above-mentioned screenplay to the readers' attention, I want to say a few words about its author. I met Subuddhi Rai in Dushanbe. He participated in all our programs and later registered Sankirtana-film.

*Sankirtana-film was established in 1991 as the result of united efforts of animation studio Tajik-film and the Association of Young Cinematographers of Tajikistan (AYCT). The main activity of Sankirtana-film was: engaging young cinematographers in new ways to produce movies, such as three-dimensional graphics in TV commercials, animation movies and videos, other special effects. At that time, practically all TV commercials in Dushanbe, Hujand, and some in Tashkent were produced by the people of our Sankirtana-film. In 1996, at the festival in Mayapur (Calcutta), Sankirtana-film was offered to take part in joint production of the serial "The Source of Eternal Joy" for the Museum of the Glory of India in Delhi. There were created four episodes: False Mother; Serpent Kaliya, Highest Might, and Journey to Maha Vishnu. In 1998, the studio moves to Moscow, where, in collaboration with broadcasting company Goloka, creates animated miniatures for the series of the television show From the Depth of Ages (From Times Immemorial). In 2001, in collaboration with the broadcasting company Gauranga, they produced a documentary about the arrival of the preacher from India, A.C. Bhaktivedanta, to the USSR. The name of this documentary is "Formula of Peace". In 2002, in Finland they started the project of three-dimensional animation movie "Lord of dreams", but it remains frozen, due to the lack of finances.*

*In 2003, Sankirtana-film restored its activity in Moscow. They made the 5 minutes movie "Penguin Day" combining three-dimensional animation graphics and live actors. The studio continues collaboration with such studios as Gala-film, Andreyevski Flag and Arsi-film. Presently, in collaboration with those studios, they are working on three-dimensional movies "Narada" and "K Krakatuk".*

Subuddhi Rai, with the money that he has earned himself, built the temple. For some time, he stayed in Sweden, where he worked for BBT translating Shrila Prabhupada's books into the Tajik language.

# SCREENPLAY

## PART ONE

### Scene 1

**Outdoor (exposure).** Panoramic view of the approach to Moscow. A sound of aircraft engines. Background Music.

**SUBTITLE: 1971**

**Silver Boeing slowly lowers in the blue, nearly cloudless sky. Big red letters on the side of aircraft: Air India. This shot slowly transforms into the image of ...Scene 2**

**Interior.** Close-up. Customs booths in the airport. Music fades. Voices of the passengers, Noises of the airport customs...

Flying Eagle Garuda who carries Hindu god Vishnu on his back. The camera zooms out, and we see that this is a picture in a book.

**Interior.** Medium distance. Noises of an airport.

Customs officer in the uniform examines the book that has inscription embossed in gold on its cover: "Bhagavad-Gita". Judging by his expression, the fairy pictures in the book seemed strange to him, and he was staring at them with a barely concealed interest in silence.

**Interior.** Close-up. Young American, Shyamasundara stands in front of the militiaman, and patiently waits, peacefully looking at the officer, although sometimes anxiety creeps in his eyes: would he be allowed to take this unusual book. He tries not to fuss and is ready to accept any decision.

**Interior.** Medium distance. Militiaman closed the book and put it back in the young American's bag. He looked one more time through the content of the bag, turned to Shyamasundara, waived the hand and said: "You may go!" Shyamasundara quickly grabs his belongings and rushes towards glass exit doors.

### Scene 3

**Outdoor (exposure).** General view. Hotel "National", an old building built in tsarist times. Street noises. Morning. The old taxi Volga stops by the steps of the

Hotel National. Swamiji, courted by two young disciples got out of the taxi. Disciples, Shyamasundara and Aravinda carried luggage. Swamiji tapped his cane on the cobbles and said: The streets are pretty clean, and not too many cars... He seemed to be pleased with this beginning. Then he nodded to his disciples and they all entered the hotel.

#### **Scene 4**

**Interior.** Medium distance. Hotel room. Everyone is busy.

Swamiji seats on the bed. Shyamasundara and Aravinda unpack things, pull toiletries. Clothes, washed after the long trip are drying right in the room. Everyone was looking refreshed after the bath, disciples wrapped themselves in light towels. Swamiji was thinking over something. Then he called Aravinda: "It would be better to cook the meal by ourselves. There must be a kitchen somewhere. Aravinda, please go and find out"

Aravinda nodded and wearing the shirt on the go, exited the room. Shyamasundara also was waiting for the orders.

**Interior.** Close-up. Swamiji took his beads, looked at Shyamasundara and said: "Shyamasundara, can you arrange my meeting with professor Kotovsky today?"

**Interior.** Medium distance. Noises: footsteps, phone number dialing.

Shyamasundara, realizing the importance of Swamiji's request, quickly dried his hands with the towel, pulled the notebook from the bag, and started to dial the phone number, looking into the notebook after each dialed number. Swamiji went to the window and started to chant a mantra while looking through the window. Shyamasundara perked up, as apparently the other end of the line answered.

#### **Scene 5**

**Interior.** Close-up. Professor's office. Daytime.

Professor's good-natured face looked somewhat concerned. He spoke somewhat incoherently into the phone: "Yes... Of course, I remember, of course... So he is in Moscow already? Arrived as a tourist? I don't understand why they did not invite Swamiji officially. We always welcome Soviet-Indian friendship, it will be my pleasure to meet and have a conversation... But not today. I am busy today, and it will raise some eyebrows if I arrange the unofficial meeting during the business day!" — He nervously laughed, and blankly looked at the door, and then started to look through his turn-over desk calendar. You know, tomorrow we have a non-working day, and there will be nobody in the institute, so we can conveniently meet and have the conversation... I am glad, very much... Goodbye"

Professor Kotovsky hung up the phone and breathed hard. He was taken aback by such turn of events...

### **Scene 6**

**Outdoor.** General. The front yard of the Institute of Oriental Studies. Street noise. Music. Swamiji and his two disciples enter the yard through the tracery ark. All three are dressed in orange robes and orange cloaks. They graciously looked around, passed around flower-bed and got to the fountain in the middle of the yard. The gold-like reflection of the sun in the waters of the fountain...

### **Scene 7**

**Interior.** Medium distance. Professor's office. Morning. Professor Kotovsky is observing the arrival of the guests through the window of his office. He looks concerned.

KOTOVSKY: Lord! That is the whole delegation there!

### **Scene 8**

**Interior.** Medium distance. Professor's office.

Professor Kotovsky politely invited guests in his office. He is very tactful.

KOTOVSKY: Welcome, Swamiji.

Swamiji gracefully put his palms together, greeting the professor.

GURU: Thank you, professor Kotovsky. I am very glad to meet you.

KOTOVSKY: Have a seat, please.

**Interior.** Close-up.

Swamiji observes the professors office with noticeable pleasure. There were a lot of souvenirs on the shelves, beautiful statuettes of Hindu deities.

GURU (smiling): You have a beautiful office, like in a temple. Now I see the true reason for our meeting!

**Interior.** Close-up

Statuette of Lord Krishna with flute in the hands stands on one of the shelves

**Interior.** Close-up.

KOTOVSKY: Yes, I love India (nodding his head as he somewhat agrees to non-coincidental nature of the meeting). You know, my father, famous commander in the Civil War, used to do yoga, dousing with cold water, liked simple people of all countries...

**Interior.** Middle distance with the drawing near the interlocutors.

They are sitting in low chairs... Swamiji continues the conversation.

GURU: Just yesterday I've read in "Moscow News" that Russia is willing to draw on foreign experience in its development...

At this moment something clicked in the room. Small pause fastened in the room. Professor Kotovsky looked from a guest on a small tape recorder in Shyamasundara's hands but did not say anything. Swamiji continued.

GURU: Your president declared it.

KOTOVSKY: Yes, this is true.

GURU: I think, Vedic concept of the society could be quite useful in your plans of building a new society. How about to impart these ideas to your scholars, scientists, and finally put this knowledge to use?

KOTOVSKY: In our country, we have a great deal of interest in ancient cultures and knowledge.

GURU: Nice to hear.

KOTOVSKY: You probably would be pleased to know that we published few Puranas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. These books were sold out practically within a week and became a bibliographical rarity, so as of now you won't be able to find them in stores.

GURU (perplexedly): There should be published more!

KOTOVSKY: The world thinks we have problems, such as paper. But our industry is developing rapidly, thanks to the fact that our people are freed from the exploiters and get all the benefits of their labor by themselves. The late Vedic concept includes the division into casts, Swamiji, but our scholars believe that it is wrong, and there was no such division originally. It was added later...

**Interior.** Close-up.

Shrila Prabhupada's face expressed a barely noticeable disagreement with this professor's argument.

GURU: Bhagavad-Gita was told 5000 years ago, and the Lord Himself explained in it exactly the same system of four ways of life or structures. How can it be an addition?

**Interior.** Middle distance with the drawing near the interlocutors.

GURU: Four classes of the society are described even in the more ancient scriptures — in the Puranas. Just as a human body has legs, abdomen, arms, and head, the society has workers, traders, managers and intellectuals. It's that simple. And important. Otherwise, the body will not function properly. Vedic term *varnashrama* means the cooperation of these classes. Overall service becomes a collaboration. And everyone acts in that spirit.

KOTOVSKY (smiling): This cooperation is in the spirit of Christian morality, and people no longer believe in it. Have you read Lenin works?

GURU (shrugged): Probably not. But such a division into classes exists even under socialism. You cannot deny that. You have intellectuals, managers, traders, and workers. Even if you cancel private property — all the same: people are not

equal, and each of them will act according to their nature. You can't undo this. You see, the body cannot eat by arms and think by the legs...

KOTOVSKY (trying to remain philosophical and unmoved): I highly appreciate the poetic depth of the Vedas, Swamiji. But in reality, it's just nice words. And we produce real tractors for ordinary laborers. Socialism allows unlocking the greater potential of the plain worker...

**Interior.** Close-up.

Aravinda, deep in thoughts, was watching the conversation between Swamiji and professor Kotovsky. But then he decided to come to the aid of his guru and broke into the conversation.

ARAVINDA: I am sorry, professor, but the teaching that Swamiji had brought to the West is not just words — it does wonders. What do you think we would have become if he hadn't come? Actually, he saved us from ignorance, drugs, and self-destruction. I can confirm it by the example of my own life, professor. Understanding the laws of society gives everyone the opportunity to find the place in it, and benefit others. We serve the general whole, thus we are satisfied as arms, legs and head are satisfied when the stomach is fed.

**Interior.** Close-up.

Swamiji's face expresses satisfaction for his disciple.

Guru: You see, professor, this young man realizes that feet cannot be quite happy if separated from the stomach.

**Interior.** Middle distance.

KOTOVSKY (with some kind of academicism, and smiling): A philosopher said once to another philosopher: You are, of course, my friend, but the truth is dearer to me. By the way, who is financing your preaching?

Swamiji, not abashed at all, pointed by his cane to the statuette of Krishna with flute.

GURU: Krishna, as he is a Supreme Governor and the cause of all causes. *Sarva karana karanam.*

KOTOVSKY: A remarkable knowledge of Sanskrit (with praise). (And saying jokingly): Don't think that I am implying on CIA asking you about your sponsors... Well, I think that neither you have turned me in your religion, nor I have turned you into mine! But I am very pleased to meet you, Swamiji. How do you like our city?

GURU: Moscow is no better and no worse than other cities. But I would like to meet people, not just buildings.

KOTOVSKY: When do you leave Moscow?

GURU (reservedly): Probably tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. I was hoping that you would help me to organize lectures and meetings with intellectuals.

Professor Kotovsky shrugged and wordlessly expressed unwillingness to be a part of it.

### Scene 9

**Outdoor.** Monument to Karl Marx. Evening. Street noise.

Swamiji, very pensive, is walking down the street. His disciples, Aravinda and Shyamasundara are trying every way to take their guru off his mood and divert from sad thoughts.

ARAVINDA: Swamiji, what do I cook tonight? Shyamasundara brought nothing.

GURU (surprised): Nothing at all?

SHYAMASUNDARA: I couldn't find any fruits in the store, but I bought two kilograms of Korean rice.

GURU: You can cook sweet rice, at least we will not die from hunger (jokingly). - Cook lots of rice, Aravinda.

SHYAMASUNDARA: Swamiji, I was approached by a man on the street and he started to talk something about him wanting to go and live under capitalism.

GURU: And what did you say?

SHYAMASUNDARA: I said I am not interested in politics, and under socialism, one can engage oneself in self-realization. That man immediately lost interest in me.

GURU (seriously): Perhaps it was a provocateur... Look, how many churches are in Moscow. It tells that Russian people are spiritual by nature. But now they replaced their spirituality with worshipping Marx and Lenin (pointing out to the flowers laying at the Karl Marx monument)... But I think it's not for a long time... In about twenty years it will be over...

### Scene 10

**Outdoor.** Red Square. Early morning. The sound of *kirtan* in the background.

At these early hours, Red Square was almost free of people. Swamiji is slowly walking down the cobblestone square, reading mantra with his beads, and looking at the tall red brick towers of Kremlin. He stopped by the Vasily Blazhenny Cathedral with a permanent militia post by the door, and as if answering his own thoughts, Swamiji shakes his head.

### Scene 11

**Outdoor.** General view. One of the streets by the hotel. Morning. City noise...

Shyamasundara, dressed in orange robes of the monk is walking down the street with the shopping bag. Two young people, standing by the arch into the courtyard, as if they were waiting for somebody. The dark-haired man, looking like Indian, pushed his partner by his elbow and silently pointed his finger at

the young American. The second young man, Russian looked closely at Shyamasundara, and when Shyamasundara was passing them, he drew Shyamasundara's attention:

ANATOLY: Mister, may I stop you for a second?

Shyamasundara stopped in front of them, indicating by his overall appearance, that he is ready to move on at any moment.

ANATOLY: Sorry, do you have dollars to sell?

**Outdoor.** Close-up

Shyamasundara looked closely at both young men and shook his head.

SHYAMASUNDARA: No.

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

ANATOLY (blond guy with the busy face): What about jeans? American jeans? We can buy all of what you have.

SHYAMASUNDARA (trying to get rid of the strangers and is about to leave): Don't you see, I am not a businessman.

PRAKASH (suddenly breaking into the conversation): Aren't you from America? I had seen people like you there. I am from India. My name is Prakash. And this is my friend Anatoly. We are students from the University's Faculty of Oriental Studies. We just want to make some money.

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

Shyamasundara, with unconcealed curiosity, looked at them.

SHYAMASUNDARA: I am studying philosophy as well. Guys, I think you'd be interested to talk to my guru. He is Swamiji.

**Outdoor.** Back to previous medium distance plan.

Anatoly and Prakash looked at each other. Anatoly was in some doubt. They began to talk among themselves in Russian.

ANATOLY: He invites us to the hotel room? They won't let us in

PRAKASH: They will... with him. We are visitors after all.

ANATOLY: Although... And no need to pay the porter. - Let's go!

**Outdoor.** General.

Patting Anatoly on the shoulder as a sign of approval, Shyamasundara leads them to the hotel. It seems like Shyamasundara was even happier than them.

## Scene 12

**Interior.** Medium distance. Hotel room.

Swamiji sits on the bed with tucked under the side pillows and chants mantra on his beads. It seemed that he was asleep. So, young men got quiet as they entered the room. But Shyamasundara comforted them with the gesture, as he



saw that the lips of the traveling preacher are repeating a mantra. A moment later Swamiji opened his eyes and smiled at them.

GURU: Oh, we have guests, Shyamasundara... (calling the other disciple): Aravinda! Prepare something to eat. Have a seat, please!

Young men sat on chairs looking a bit dismayed in Swamiji's presence.

**Interior.** Close-up. Shyamasundara introduces guests.

SHYAMASUNDARA: Swamiji, I literally just met these guys. Prakash is from India.

**Interior.** Close-up.

GURU (looking at Prakash): From what city?

**Interior.** Close-up.

PRAKASH (with the pride): I am from Delhi. My father works at the Indian trade representative office in Moscow

**Interior.** Close-up.

GURU (looking at the second guy): Good. And you, Anatoly?

**Interior.** Medium distance. Anatoly, with the desire to impress, with dignity but still jokingly replies:

ANATOLY: And I am right from the heart of the Soviet Union. From Moscow.

GURU (smilingly): Very good. Well, where is your Lenin?

Anatoly, a bit confused, looked at Prakash. Prakash remained silent.

ANATOLY (with the surprise): What do you mean, where? In Mausoleum, of course.

GURU: It is his body in Mausoleum, and where is Lenin himself? (leaning on the pillow, Swamiji was smiling).

ANATOLY (admittedly): I don't know.

Seeing indescribable bewilderment on Anatoly's face, Swamiji and his disciples laughed.

**Interior.** General plan. The noise of moving chairs, the clatter of dishes.

Swamiji nodded at Aravinda, who was standing by the door, and Aravinda placed a small table in the middle of the room. Aravinda poured sweet rice in a variegated ware, whatever could be found in the hotel, and placed in front of each person. Glass, flat plate, or small vase for the flowers. Swamiji took sweet rice in a shining steel vessel that looked like a cup.

**Interior.** Close-up.

GURU (to Anatoly): Food is not only for the body but for the soul as well.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

Prakash expressed traditional Indian reverence to prasada, and once again, Anatoly got surprised.

Prakash (in Russian, to his friend): It's okay to eat.

Anatoly lifted a glass and took a cautious sip. At this moment the expression on his face changed as he appreciated the taste of the content of the glass. He made another sip with greater enthusiasm.

ANATOLY: Good (saying in English, and drank the whole glass in one gulp).

SHYAMASANDURA, ARAVINDA (together, cheerfully): Oh-ho-ho!!!!.

GURU: Eat please, we have plenty of sweet rice. Aravinda! (calling disciple and pointing at Anatoly's empty glass)

Aravinda with noticeable pleasure filled Anatoly's glass from the pan full of sweet rice.

**Interior.** Close-up with back up to medium distance.

Shrila Prabhupada's eyes sparkled with fire. But he wasn't rushing. Seeing that Anatoly's face is getting happier, and therefore he's ready to accept, he began to speak.

GURU: In the material world everyone is suffering, because we lost the connection with Absolute Truth. So, help is a must to restore this spiritual connection.

Anatoly leaned towards to better understand these wise words.

GURU: When the disciple is ready, the guru comes. The master gives the disciple the knowledge of who he is and the best way to restore his connection with the Whole, Absolute Truth. Guru reveals to him the truth: that the living being is immortal and is already full of this knowledge and bliss. He will tell to the disciple the method of how to attain the original position of the living being by following the path described in ancient scriptures... Shyamasundara, where is your Bhagavad Gita?

**Interior.** Medium distance. From Anatoly's back, Shyamasundara hands out the book to Anatoly, and he begins to look through it.

**Interior.** General plan.

Swamiji speaks calmly but firmly.

GURU: I want to ask you to help me to deliver this knowledge to those who are interested in it here, in the Soviet Union.

**Interior.** General plan.

Anatoly pensively leafs through the book. He looked at Shrila Prabhupada.

ANATOLY: I am not sure if I can do it... But I would like to be your disciple. I realized it as soon as I came here (smiling sheepishly).

**Interior.** Medium plan.

Swamiji leaned back on pillows and nodded his head as he approves it.

GURU: Shyamasundara can you leave your book with Anatoly?

SHYAMASUNDARA: Sure... please (making gesture towards Anatoly).

GURU: Good. Study Gita, and we will try to send you more books through the Indian embassy. Is it possible, Prakash?

Prakash nodded his head in agreement. Swamiji smiled.

GURU: You can do it. Simply be in spiritual connection with me through these books as I am with my master who handed over this knowledge to me. And act like a guru...

**Interior.** General plan.

ANATOLY (looking at Prabhupada with surprise): Guru?

**Interior.** General plan.

GURU: Exactly. Anyone who spreads the knowledge must be considered guru. Anyone who spreads the knowledge must be considered guru. Guru is the one who serves everybody.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

GURU (a bit pensively): From this moment on you are a liberated soul, Atma Moksha.

It seemed that Shyamasundara and Aravinda were not too surprised of what was going on.

ARAVINDA (jokingly): So, the liberated soul, do you want me to show you how to cook sweet rice?

ANATOLY: Can we eat something else except rice?

Aravinda and Shyamasundara laughed.

ARAVINDA: Sure you can. Pineapples, mango, bananas, coconuts... If you find them at the store...

This time Anatoly and Prakash join the laughter.

**Interior.** General plan. The sound of the kirtan in the far background.

Swamiji looks very pleased. He felt as his trip to Moscow was not fruitless.

## PART TWO

### Scene 13

**Outdoor.** General plan. View from the window of the bus. The sound of the bus engine, somewhere in the background soft sound of the radio music.

**CAPTION: 1979.**

A yellow stripe of the autumn forest is flashing outside of the window of the old long-distance bus. The sky is covered with broken clouds through which, here and there, still warm rays of the sun peeped out.

**Outdoor.** Medium distance. Inside the bus.

Two young men are dosing on the back seat. According to their unnaturally flashing uniforms and whole bunches of pins and icons on their chests, one can say they just have been demobilized from the armed forces. Their duffel bags were behind their heads. Boots are carelessly removed and thrown to the side. Bare feet of ex-servicemen looked very much at home, in contrast with their flashy uniforms. Their faces, even while asleep are expressing serene happiness and great optimistic hopes for future civilian life.

#### **Scene 14**

**Outdoor.** The general plan going to medium distance, and then back to general plan. Little train station. Noises of the farm field.

The bus departed, leaving two ex-soldiers on the road. One of them was impatiently looking at his friend who was taking too long to tackle his duffel bag.

VLADIMIR: Well, are you done yet?

ALEXEI (cheerfully, still dealing with the backpack stripes): What's the rush, Vova?! You are home already! There is our fields, and houses behind them... Hello, motherland!

VLADIMIR: What's the rush, what's the rush... Lyoshka, have you already decided what's next — back to the farm, or school?

ALEXEI: Well, the first week we must party and relax. It's well deserved!

Alexei pulled friend by the hand, but Vladimir chased away and followed him at a fast pace. They walked through the field and their figures were diminishing as they walked...

#### **Scene 15**

**Outdoor.** Medium distance. Field by the village. A noise of children playing outside.

Children from the village are playing by the edge of the field bordering private vegetable gardens and houses. They noticed the soldiers walking through the field, and got quiet. Suddenly, one of the boys jumped out on the spot and rushed to the nearest house, yelling while on the run.

COUNTRY BOY: Grandma Nina! Grandma Nina!

#### **Scene 16**

**Interior.** Medium distance. A kitchen at Vladimir's house. The clatter of dishes.

An elderly woman works around the big oven. Hearing yelling, she turned around. The boy burst into the room.

COUNTRY BOY: Grandma Nina! Volodya came from the army! There the walk on the field (pointing to the window)

Bending down, the woman looks out to the field through the window.

**Outdoor.** General plan. The view of the field through the window.

Soldiers have already approached the outskirts of the village, their faces already are recognizable.

**Interior.** Close-up. Kitchen.

VLADIMIR'S MOTHER (peering through the window): And Alexei is coming with him.

### Scene 17

**Outdoor.** General plan. Small village side. Laugh of the children.

Nina, Vladimir's mother, ran out to the porch and announced loudly to those who were sitting on the bench by the fence:

VLADIMIR'S MOTHER: Boys are coming from the army! Vasiliy Stepanovich, let's meet and greet them!

The old man and few girls sitting on the bench couldn't help but stand up. The old man, when two soldiers were almost by the house, yelled at the girls:

OLD MAN VASILYI: Well, shoo! Let them greet mother first!

After standing for a short time in front of each other, Vladimir and his mother hugged each other. The woman did not know whether to cheer up or to cry. She trembled and clung to the son.

VLADIMIR (joking affectionately): Well, you do as you meet war hero.

Vladimir then hugs the old man. Old man overtly praised him:

OLD MAN VASILYI: Paid your duty of motherland! Good for you! And now — relax, you earned it!

Vladimir's mother hugged Alexei as well. Girls were running around with curiosity, raising noise and laughter. Faces of the soldiers flushed out of happiness with the touch of tiredness after the long trip.

### Scene 18

**Interior.** General plan. Living room in Vladimir's house. The noise of the feast, music.

Feast over the long table in Vladimir's house. Fellow villagers are celebrating the two friends' return from the army. The accordion is played, few people are dancing dashing country dance, pounding feet on the floor. Few peasant women are sitting next to the accordion player and singing a mischievous song. Glasses (with alcohol) are emptied quickly.

## Scene 19

**Interior.** Close-up — to medium distance. Kitchen in Vladimir's house. Noises of the feast.

Nikolai, Vladimir's elder brother brought empty bottles, gathered from the table, to the kitchen. Pulling Nina's sleeve, he asks her in doubt:

NIKOLAI: Ma, how many bottles to take? Three or may be five, at once?

Nina did not respond immediately. She wiped out the sweat from her face and noted reasonably:

VLADIMIR'S MOTHER: Even if you take ten bottles, they will drink them all! Take three.

Nikolai nodded his head in agreement and took three bottles to the living room.

## Scene 20

**Interior.** Medium distance.

Alexei already adopted home environment. He goes around the table, accepting congratulations of his friends, relatives, and acquaintances. At some point, he came close to Vladimir. They looked at each other cheerfully and kissed each other three times, according to Russian tradition.

**Interior.** Close-up

ALEXEI (rejoicing): Well, Vova, your Zinka was waiting for you, wasn't she? She is happy, I suppose?

**Interior.** Medium.

VLADIMIR: Yeah, she couldn't be happier! Here she comes again, can't leave me alone for a minute (pointing out to Zina)... — Zinka, let me talk to my friend...

Zina, Vladimir's girlfriend, pulling him by the hand:

ZINA (persistently): I want to dance! Let's go, let's go, let's go....

ALEXEI (defending his friend): Zin, we have some business to take care of, come on now... — Vova, let's go outside.

**Interior.** Close-up.

Two friends exchanged glances with each other. Some understanding flashed between them.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

VLADIMIR: Business is business. Zinka, you've got to wait...

Zina (with hurt): Come on, you...

And she ran to the circle of dancers.

ALEXEI (nodding toward the door): So, shall we go?

Vladimir and Alexei went out of the house.

## Scene 21

**Outdoor.** Medium distance. Pond by Vladimir's house. Night. Crickets.

Alexei handed cigarette and a small box to Vladimir.

АЛЕКСЕЙ: Hammer yourself...

Vladimir shakes tobacco out of cigarette to his palm. Then he mixes it with the content of the small box, then straightens cigarette paper in a special manner and fills it with the mixture of tobacco and pot. Then he folds up the end of the cigarette so the mix wouldn't spill out.

VLADIMIR: Light up.

Alexei lit the match and held it by Vladimir's face. Vladimir puffed a couple of times, inhaled and after the pause released a thick stream of smoke from his mouth. The match continued to burn, illuminating the faces of two friends. Suddenly both of them looked at once towards dark bushes.

VLADIMIR: There is someone there. Put the light down.

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

Alexei extinguished the match and peered into the darkness.

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

ALEXEI: Who is there? Huh? Silence. Can it just seem?

VLADIMIR: Getting high...

ALEXEI (with the grin): Oh, got a hit? I see...

VLADIMIR (handing cigarette to the friend): Here, take a puff. Don't inhale deep, though, it's burning a bit.

ALEXEI (taking cigarette with pot and nodding): Ughumm...

Vladimir closed his eyes and sat on the log of wood by the water with the arms crossed on his chest. Alexei was inhaling sweet smoke greedily. Then he also closed his eyes as if his head was spinning.

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

Suddenly, barely audible sobs came out of the darkness. Vladimir awoke and began to look around.

VLADIMIR: What the hell?

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

Vladimir went to the sound and brought trembling Zina from behind a bush.

VLADIMIR: Zinka? Why are you crying?

ZINA (quietly): Vovka, why you and Lyoshka are smoking this? — Fools!

Vladimir paused. Then he drops sullenly, not looking into her eyes:

VLADIMIR: Now, the whole party is spoiled...

ZINA (screaming): It simply besots people!

VLADIMIR (curling his lips): Where did you get this nonsense? It's okay if taken moderately. Extends the capabilities of a human's mind. Such a feel... Well, you've never experienced that, have you?!

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

ZINA (blurting out): From this children are born monsters!

VLADIMIR (with even more twisted face): What?! You must be kidding me. Because of some herb?

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

ZINA (not giving up): Yes, Semyon told me. He is a medical school student...

VLADIMIR (with jealousy and indignantly): And why, all of a sudden, Semyon was personally telling you about it? Why are you even hanging out with him?

Zinka, not at all daunted, continued.

ZINA: He came from Moscow so different from what he was before!

VLADIMIR (angrily): Hell with your Semyon. No, just listen, Lyoshka, to what she said. Yeah, I guess, I see what's going on... Do you see how she praises him?

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

Alexei, standing nearby with narrow languishing eyes and a frozen smile on his face was watching the whole scene.

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

Vladimir side glances at the friend, and not being to hold it in:

VLADIMIR: What are you laughing at, fool? What's so funny?

ALEXEI (chuckling): You two have such squeaky voices, like in a cartoon (movie). Go on, go on!

VLADIMIR: Yeah, go on make fun of us. And you, Zinka, I am just letting you know, when Semyon arrives I'll kill him!

ZINA (sobbing): You're so mean. Why, Vovka?

Vladimir pulls out the unfinished cigarette from Alexei's hand and begins to greedily draw in the smoke. Then looks askance at Zina, demonstratively turns his back and continues to smoke pot.

## **Scene 22**

**Outdoor** (with the yard at Vladimir's house and outhouse on it). Steady camera. Morning. Sounds of village life.

Vladimir already gets used to the civil life. In the morning he promptly filled, using a pitchfork, the big feeding rack for livestock with hay. Then he chopped the wood. Then he comes out of the gate to get on the bicycle and go to work, but his mother, Nina, called him out through the window:

NINA: Take Borka (young pig)... I am telling you, boy! He squeaked all night!



Vladimir, upset, looked at the house.

VLADIMIR: Zinka is waiting for me at the bus stop, ma... Ughhh!  
He returns, drops bike by the porch and goes inside the barn.

### **Scene 23**

**Outdoor.** General plan. Country road. Noises of country life.

Meeting with Semyon happened unexpectedly to Vladimir. He was walking down the street carrying baby pig when he met two young men who looked that they came from the capital, Moscow, they did not look like local people. Vladimir was about to pass them by when one of the two young men called him:

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

SEMYON: Vovka, do you not recognize me? It's me, Senya, Semyon!

Vladimir greets him holding baby pig by another hand.

SEMYON (introducing): This is my friend from Moscow, Atma...

ANATOLY (interrupting Semyon): Tolik (makes a gesture to his friend as to not complicate the moment).

SEMYON: Yes. Anatoly, please meet Vovka, he is my friend from the (high) school.  
Anatoly and Vladimir shook hands.

**Outdoor.** Medium distance. Reverse point.

Anatoly looked at the baby pig.

VLADIMIR (pointing at the baby pig): See, he got sick, and my mother asked me to give him for meat.

Anatoly shook his head with regret. Then he addressed to the baby pig:

ANATOLY: So, you've got in trouble, my brother? The circle of samsara, that's what it is... Too bad you're taking him to a slaughterhouse, this animal can be useful in so many ways... (asking Vladimir). Put him down, please (then back to the baby pig). Here, eat this...

Vladimir puts the baby pig on the ground and observes as Anatoly feeds the animal with walnuts.

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (asking Semyon): Is he a veterinarian, or something?

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

Anatoly (gently and jokingly at the same time): Everyone has to be saved from ignorance. How else he can become human in the future?

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

Vladimir looked at Semyon, scratched his head and said:

VLADIMIR: Semyon, seems like your friend speaks in Russian, but for whatever reason, I don't understand a word... Who will become a nice man, this pig?

Semyon laughed and patted on Vladimir's shoulder.

SEMYON: Don't you worry. Anatoly meant to say that we shouldn't kill the pig. Pig, human, animals, and birds — all living beings want to be happy. Look how pig's eyes are glistened because of the walnuts...

ВЛАДИМИР: Well, I would love to have walnuts myself... But what's the use of this pig?

SEMYON: In nature, everything is in harmony. You, Vova, come see me, Anatoly and I will stay here for a while. Let's talk more. Do you remember where I live?

**Outdoor.** General plan.

After saying goodbye to the friends, Vladimir took the baby pig in his hands and carried off a long look toward the two friends leaving him. Then, deep in thoughts, stroked the pig, turned and walked back home.

## Scene 24

**Outdoor.** Medium distance. Pond by Vladimir's house. Daylight time.

Vladimir and Alexei are sitting on the log and filling the "cigarette (with pot).

ALEXEI: Trust me, they are on drugs. And the must be on it for a long time.

VLADIMIR: Zinka told me Semyon doesn't smoke.

ALEXEI (with confidence): If they don't smoke, then they are on the needle or something. And out of this anybody can see pigs as humans!

Alexei carelessly laughed and handed over the cigarette to Vladimir.

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

Vladimir frowned and stopped friend's hand.

VLADIMIR: Lyoha, what is it? Are you high already?

**Outdoor.** Medium distance.

Alexei became serious. He silently lighted up a cigarette, inhaled, and said, without looking at the friend:

ALEXEI: High... I feel so much power in me that I can disperse all the clouds in the sky. If I want to...

**Outdoor.** General plan. Rain. The sound of falling raindrops.

Alexei couldn't finish his speech, as the sound of thunder crashed. Guys stopped doing what they did and began to watch the surface of the water in the pond started to ripple from falling raindrops.

**Outdoor.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (smilingly): Lyoha, well... slow down, or you will smash everything here!

## Scene 25

**Indoor.** Medium distance. Room in Semyon's apartment. Daylight time.

Anatoly meets and greets Vladimir and Alexei at the door. His appearance somewhat puzzles two friends — the villagers are not used to the view of a man walking around, even his own, house, wrapped in some kind of towel. Another "towel" was covering Anatoly's shoulders, and there was some kind of rosary or beads hanging down from his neck to the chest. There was also a sign on his forehead: letter "V" made by some yellow paint. Anatoly smiled at two friends and invited them inside.

VLADIMIR (a bit hesitant): Is it a right time to see you? Are you feeling okay? Or maybe you are about to take a bath?

ANATOLIY: No, it's okay. All yogis in India look like this. Come on, guys come in, please.

Vladimir and Alexei entered the room and again were confused and puzzled, no less as when the door has opened. There was no furniture in the room. And mattresses for whatever reason were nailed to the wall. Windows were covered by yellow curtains. There were pictures showing mysterious images on the wall. There was only one sort of a dresser and there was on a thin smoking stick in front of it.

**Interior.** Close-up.

ALEXEI: Anatoliy, are you really an Indian? You speak Russian so well.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

Anatoliy silently smiled.

VLADIMIR (pointing out to the walls): And why these mattresses are on the wall? It's probably inconvenient to sleep like that.

ANATOLIY: This is to protect our backs so they wouldn't freeze while we are leaning back. It's not India here, is it? And we sleep on the floor.

Guests were thoroughly "inspecting" all details of the room.

VLADIMIR (pointing at the dresser): What's in this?

ANATOLIY (with simplicity): God.

**Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse shooting (filming).

Complete silence in the room. Anatoliy's response caused the same effect as if one started to see through the walls or invisible creatures. The glance of Vladimir and Alexei involuntarily made similar trajectory — first to Anatoliy, then through the air to the dresser and to each other.

**Interior.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (with unconcealed skepticism and lowered voice): You're joking, right?

ALEXEI: He's just playing. Treats us like kids.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

Anatoliy approached the altar and gracefully opened little doors. Inside, there was a big, quite beautiful painting of a smiling young man with tossed up arms.

ANATOLIY: Yogis usually meditate. This is a center of our meditation.

Anatoliy mumbled something to himself and then clapped his hands three times.

ALEXEI (pensively scratching his head): Wait a minute, wait a minute. Who are you? And Senya? I don't understand... Got rid of the furniture... Sect!

ANATOLIY: Rather a science of God. To understand — is to learn. To feel is to test VLADIMIR (it looked like the peaceful tone of Anatoliy's voice pacified him too): True. So, tell us, maybe we will be able to understand.

ANATOLIY (with the smile): Hold on. First, let's have some meal first. How do you feel about it?

ALEXEI: Let me run to the store for the beer. Real quick!

ANATOLIY (stopping him): We have everything we need. Have a seat, please. I'll be right back

Anatoliy gathered fruits from the altar and left the room.

ALEXEI: I told you! Now they're going to start!

Vladimir warily looked at the friend but remained silent.

**Interior.** Close-up.

Alexei, continuing to develop this thought and looking straight at Vladimir:

ALEXEI: Maybe they get their kick off from mushrooms? — for a moment he made an expression of crossed-eyed on his face. Did you see his eyes, Vovka? They are simply in trance all the time. And so is the one on the painting in the dresser! Crazy!

**Interior.** Close-up. Reverse point (of filming).

Vladimir shrugged, turned away and began to look at the pictures on the walls.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

Semyon walks in the room with dishes, utensils and little bucket with something steaming. He greeted both friends.

SEMYON: Vovka, Lyoha, hi! How are you doing here?

Vladimir and Alexei surrounded Semyon while looking at his unknown to them clothes — cape..

ALEXEI (jokingly): Hey, Semyon! I see you became an Indian too.

VLADIMIR: Listen, Senya, what if a girl comes to you? Would you dress her in this too?

SEMYON: When you come to Moscow you will see everything yourselves. Yogi-ni-girls dress up very nicely to attract the attention of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Women find common ground with Him more easily!

**Interior.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (pointing out to the image on the altar): You mean him? What's his name?

**Interior.** Medium distance.

ANATOLIY (returned back to the room with the dishes in his hands): Whatever name you like more. Call him Jesus, Allah, Jehovah, Buddha or Krishna, His essence remains the same. He is the One and the Only for everyone, like the Sun. It shines for all equally.

Semyon laid mats along the wall, set up the dishes.

SEMYON: Make yourself comfortable. Eat more. It is important for meditation.

ALEXEI (winks at Anatoliy): What's in there?

АНАТОЛИЙ: Ecologically clean products. Food can as obscure the mind as purify it.

ALEXEI: Interesting! Cleans the clean, pollutes the dirty. I wouldn't guess myself! Anatoliy and Semyon smiles at Alexei's astuteness.

**Interior.** General plan.

Anatoliy was serving food. Everyone got a beautifully arranged composition of rice, dal, chapatti, fruits, and drink. After *maha prasadam govinde* was pronounced, making the whole spiritual vibe more significant, everyone began to feast. From time to time, either Semyon or Anatoliy were getting up and bringing additional food. Vladimir and Anatoliy were eating with the great appetite. And the benevolent atmosphere in the room prompted that they are doing something good and important.

**Interior.** Medium distance.

After the feast was finished, Semyon and Anatoliy took all the dishes from the room. They began nice bhajan. Vladimir and Anatoliy peacefully fell asleep, leaning on the mattresses on the wall. But the hosts continued bhajan as usual. Anatoliy and Semyon were singing out loudly: *jiva jago, jiva jago gourachandra bole*.

Semyon tried to play karatals stronger to bring sleeping friends to life, but the music absolutely had no interference with peaceful guests' snuffling after the heavy lunch. Besides, Anatoliy — Ananta Shanti did not show any displeasure. And Semyon gave up on waking up his former classmates.

## Scene 26

**99. Outdoor.** Medium distance. An intersection of the streets in the village. Sounds of the country.

Alexei walks along fences around country houses, with hands in his pockets and whistling something to himself. At the crossroads, he meets Vladimir who was walking arm in arm with Zina. After they shook hands, Vladimir asked:

VLADIMIR: Where are you going, Lyoha?

Lyosha (shrugging): Just taking a walk. Wanted to see the movie, but there is no show time today.

**100. Outdoor.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (nodding at the side): Want to go to visit Semyon?

**101. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

ALEXEI (laughingly): So, you also were going to them. Well, let's go, get some philosophy!

The three of them continued walking to Semyon's house.

## Scene 27

**102. Interior.** Medium. Room in Semyon's house.

Ananta Shanti met them at the door, as before, with folded hands in front of him. He was glad of their coming.

VLADIMIR (handing him a paper bag): Here, brought you something, cause you are feeding us, and feeding us, and your money is not coming from magic, they are paper money, like for everyone else. Here, few potatoes and greens from the garden

Ananta Shanti gratefully accepted the package.

**103. Interior.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI (smilingly): Generosity is the quality of the demigods, as Bhagavad Gita says. Hare Krishna!

## Scene 28

**104. Interior.** Medium distance. Room in Semyon's house. A sound of kirtan.

This time happy faces of Vladimir and Alexei were shining. Ananta Shanti was leading kirtan and two friends, along with Sadananda (Semyon) and Zina were enthusiastically singing along. The only difference between hosts and guests were papers with mantra written on it in front of the guests.

## Scene 29

**105. Outdoor.** General plan. Bus stop by the village. Sounds of the country.

Vladimir on the bicycle was accompanying Ananta Shanti and Sadananda to the bus. They stopped at the station and began talking while waiting for the bus.

**106. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

SADANANDA (encouraging, smilingly): Why you look so lost, Vovka? Chant mantra, it has power!

VLADIMIR (a bit upset): Well, I tried. Can't do more than five minutes, the tongue begins to falter. I start to forget words... And then... My brother came from work yesterday, all drunk and cussing, what yoga can be practiced amidst that? I told him, like, get yourself together, and read some books...

SADANANDA (with sympathy): And what did he say?

**107. Outdoor.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (paused, and then confessed): And he blames me for bringing the whole luggage of the weed from the army. Like saying: look at yourself first. But I am not so addicted to it anymore! Just sometimes, occasionally.

**108. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

Ananta Shanti and Sadananda looked at each other, and, probably, at heart had philosophical ironic remarks about their new friend.

**109. Outdoor.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI: For a word to have a power of persuasion, one has to believe and follow it oneself. If adults smoke, drink, and commit adultery, but still teach their children that it's bad, — who's going to believe them? Therefore the best persuasion is to follow oneself, showing an example.

**110. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

VLADIMIR (still somewhat doubtful): Of course. But it's difficult to live estranged. It's going to be boring. And you are leaving too...

SADANANDA: You can come to Moscow, can't you? Take Lyoha with you, he is a kind of groovy guy. He likes kirtans, I saw it in his eyes. And your Zinka — she is a blessed soul, pure like a blank piece of paper.

Vladimir, staring beyond the horizon, was thinking about something. Ananta Shanti was writing something on a piece of paper.

VLADIMIR (half-jokingly): Maybe really we should give up everything, join you and become a hermit?

ANANTA-SHANTI (handing the note to Vladimir): Here is the address and telephone number in Moscow. Whether you arrive alone, or two, or three of you, we'll accommodate all of you, don't worry!

**111. Outdoor.** Close-up.

Vladimir took the note and read the address.

VLADIMIR (shrugging his shoulders): Okay. We'll see...

**112. Outdoor.** General plan. A sound of arriving bus. Sounds of talking passengers.

Ananta Shanti and Sadananda, along with other passengers, hurried to the bus. They waved at Vladimir and disappeared in the bus. Vladimir stood alone and looked at the road while leaning on the bicycle until bus disappeared from the sight and the dust after him was completely blown away.

## PART THREE

### Scene 30

**113. Outdoor.** Medium distance. A side street. Day time. The noise of the big city.

Here, in Moscow, Vladimir and Alexei lost a bit of their self-confidence while trying to appear as they are from "around the corner". Pulling the sleeve of a passing man, Alexei was about to ask him something, but the man quickly pulled his hand and hastily disappeared around the corner, without looking back. Alexei looked at the man with annoyance. Next, the friends faced an exotically dressed couple. The young man was wearing the latest fashion by then: wide bell-bottomed pants and a colored shirt. The girl was wearing a mini skirt. Both were wearing dark sunglasses and shoes with an unusually high platform.

VLADIMIR (finally deciding to ask): Guys, where is Kolkhoznaya Square? How to get there?

GIRL (outraged): Do we look like an information center for you?! Listen to them, Rodik!

VLADIMIR (smilingly): I was just asking.

GIRL (muttering with displeasure): Lots of you walk around like that!

YOUNG MAN (keeping serious face): Calm down, Liza! People are standing on Kolkhoznaya Square and ask where this Square is. This is our country like topographic insanity.

VLADIMIR (sincerely glad): That's good, brother! So, we arrived. And where is building number 2?

GIRL (snarling at him): Did not we tell you the information center is around the corner!

**114. Outdoor.** Medium distance. Returning to the scene.

Alexei approached, as he is about to teach urbanites some "lesson".

ALEXEI: You, urban horse, is it so difficult to answer the question?



Vladimir stopped Alexei by the hand. Young "fashionista" laughed nervously, trying to impress visitors by so-called "big city" superiority.

YOUNG MAN: Hey, break, break, country boys! You better go cut hay and milk cows. Otherwise, I'll show you a couple of tricks, you wouldn't ask for more. So you better cool off, I am warning you right now before it gets too late.

GIRL (indignantly): What are you going to do, half-literate fool!

Vladimir begins to pull off Alexei from the impending fight, while the girl was pulling off her young mate who, by the way, did not resist much. When they left, Vladimir took his breath and pointed out to the building on the other side of the road.

VLADIMIR: I think this is the one. Let's go!

### **Scene 31**

**115. Interior.** Medium distance. Hallway in ashram-apartment in Moscow. Day-time.

The girl with the serious face opened the door to the apartment and invited friends in. The girl was in a long dress, covering her entire figure, with long sleeves. Without asking any questions she humbly folded her palms in front of each friend as in prayer, nodded her head and, after letting them into the room, closed the door behind them.

**116. Interior.** Medium distance. Room in ashram-apartment.

Vladimir and Alexei found themselves attending the lecture. Along with them, there were five more individuals — three young men and two young women. The way they were dressed and looked suggested that they considered themselves "golden youth", hippie, although, of kinda home-bred, Soviet type of "golden youth". Two young men were with long hair and wearing jeans. The third one was with the beard. Young women decorated themselves with multiple bracelets and ribbons. The devotee who lectured, by the name Vrindavan, was wearing kurta and dhoti, both of orange color, and he had a short haircut. He greeted Vladimir and Alexei by nodding his head, and pointed to the available seats, and continued his lecture:

VRINDAVAN: So, Swamiji left his room in the temple in India, and in 1965 arrived in New York, and began to carry out his programs in the area populated by poor musicians, artists, hippies. The crisis of the Western world, its values seemed to lead the whole world to collapse. People no longer believed the government, youth — in adults, an army — in generals, students — in teachers. And in this chaos in minds, Swamiji arrived with his message of peace and love. "Chant Hare Krishna and the Earth will become the land of prosperity" — he was telling people.

**117. Interior.** Close-up.

VRINDAVAN (speaking very enthusiastically): He told them what it means to live in love and harmony with people and oneself. It means to see the spiritual nature of all living beings, and, that is seeing their original relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead as His servant. The position of the servant doesn't take away freedom and will from the living being. Krishna gives this opportunity to everyone — volunteer to serve Him and be protected or voluntarily suffer from all the hardships of karma — causal relationship between our actions and reactions. The opportunity to serve The Supreme Personality out of love, without asking anything in exchange, without a desire to acquire some material or mystical benefits, without even asking for liberation from suffering from the claws of the material nature. And Swamiji, himself is an example of such service and love. He does whatever it takes to spread the Holy Name of God throughout the world. A few years ago he visited Moscow as well. Today, the rout of his preaching tours take place around the globe, although he is of quite an old age. He literally picked up people from the bottom of the society and made true gentlemen out of them by revealing to each of them the path of spiritual realization, the path of loving devotional service to theta Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**118. Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse casting.

ONE OF THE GUESTS (raised his hand and, after getting permission, asked): I would like to know if Prahbu...Pra-bhu-pa-da plans to come to the Soviet Union again? Maybe you have some information about this?

**119. Interior.** Close-up.

VRINDAVAN (smiling mysteriously): You know, we so hope that Swamiji will visit us again sometime soon. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust publishing house was officially invited to participate in an international book fair in Moscow!

**120. Interior.** Medium distance.

People in the room perked up. Some of the girls clapped. Extraordinary excitement touched the hearts of the visitors, among whom, by happy coincidence, were Vladimir and Alexei.

**121. Interior.** Medium distance. Camera reverses on the lecturer.

VRINDAVAN (waited until the buzz dies down): Swamiji himself always told his disciples: "If you want to satisfy your guru, and hence the Supreme Personality of Godhead as well, always chant Hare Krishna mantra". Let's take a meditation session. Everyone will be given rosary, and we will chant Holy Names written on this poster behind my back, on each bead. Sadananda, come in, please!

**122. Interior.** Medium distance.

Sadananda, came out of the other room, carrying few long rosaries with flashy beads. He handed them over to each of the guests, patted the heads of his former classmates — Vladimir and Alexei. First, the soft humming could be heard in the room. Then it turned into a clear repetition of the mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

**123. Interior.** Panoramic view.

The view of faces of the young men and women sitting in the circle and carefully chanting the mantra. Some of them smile, others, on the contrary, were extremely serious. Some are chanting mantra with closed eyes, others were doing the same with the open eyes. And the atmosphere of the mystery of what is happening in the room hung on during the whole time of the chanting.

**124. Interior.** Medium distance.

Vrindavan is the first one to finish chanting of his round. He stood up from the mat and hung the bag with a rosary on the hook nailed on the wall, specifically for this purpose.

VRINDAVAN: Dear guests, let's finish our rounds and welcome to the feast of love where we honor sanctified food. Swamiji ki, jaya!

**125. Interior.** Medium distance. Sounds coming from the dining room.

Guests began to leave the room, one after another. Alexei also finished his round and vigorously got up from his mat. After hanging his rosary where other rosaries were hanging down, he turned to Vladimir. Vladimir was sitting with crossed legs. He continued chanting mantra with closed eyes. Alexei hesitatingly looked through the door to the dining room, and then returned to his friend. Vladimir continued chanting. Alexei sat down near him as if he decided to wait for the friend until he finishes his chanting.

Sadananda returns to the room. He smiles watching honest efforts of Vladimir to chant the mantra. Alexei expressed confusion on his face, and then by gesture showed a great desire to eat something. Sadananda approached Vladimir and placed his hand on Vladimir's shoulder.

**126. Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse point.

VLADIMIR (raised his head and looked at Sadananda): I better continue chanting the mantra. And you and Lyoha go, don't wait for me.

SADANANDA (looking favorably at the old school friend): You know, prasadam is Krishna Himself and must be honored as much as Hare Krishna mantra and guru. If you miss it, you might not get the desired grace, which is not good. Everything should be balanced — mantra, prasadam, and sleep.

VLADIMIR (shrugging his shoulders): I thought it would be better... Well, I am sorry, I am coming right now.

SADANANDA (encouraging Vladimir): No problem. Once you join and stay in the ashram you will learn all of that.

Vladimir stood up ready to go.

ALEXEI (to Sadananda): Senya, who was giving the lecture today?

SADANANDA: Vrindavan. He is already advanced bhakti-yogi.

ALEXEI: Yeah... It was good. It was like I was listening to you or Tolik that is Ananta Shanti again. It was good...

Friends followed by Sadananda went to the dining room.

## Scene 32

**127. Interior.** Panoramic view. Panoramic view. The camera moves from general view to a medium distance view of the pavilion of the International Book Exhibition. Daytime. Sounds of the crowd.

Book exhibition was held at VDNH, one of the most beautiful architectural ensembles of Moscow. The flow of people was passing in front of large stands with exhibited colorful production of Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. People were showing interest in books were looking at the pictures, asking questions, talking to the representatives of the BBT. There were, among those representatives, two men — tall and slim man with blond hair and the man with dark hair with eyeglasses who looked like he is from India. They talked among themselves in English. Ananta Shanti translated all the questions and inquiries directed to them. The interest in books was huge and it caused admiration and pride in both foreigners.

**128. Interior.** Medium distance. By the table with promotional/advertising handouts. Vladimir and Alexei emerged from the crowd of exhibition visitors and waved their hands toward Ananta Shanti. Seeing them, Ananta Shanti said something to the Indian man who was standing by his side. The Indian man nodded his head, and then Ananta Shanti called both friends.

ANANTA SHANTI: Volodya, Lyosha, come closer, please!

**129. Interior.** Medium to close-up.

Two friends squeezed through the crowd to the table. Ananta Shanti took them to the Indian man and the other foreigner.

ANANTA SHANTI: Please meet Gopal Krishna Prabhu, the director of Bombay office of the BBT, and Bhavananda Swami from France (and then presented in English) — And these are Vladimir and Alexei, our best *prasada-yogis*.

Gopal Krishna and Bhavananda Swami smiled, appreciating a joke.

ANANTA SHANTI: They live in an ashram and steadily practice bhakti-yoga for already six months.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (nodding his head): Very good!

GOPAL KRISHNA (with the friendly smile): Eat more. Soon you will need lots of strength to carry all these books around!

Ananta Shanti translated his speech into Russian.

**130. Interior.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR: Ananta Shanti, and is A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada arriving for the exhibition?

**131. Interior.** Medium distance.

GOPAL KRISHNA (looking at the friends over his glasses): You want him to come? You really want it?

After the translation of the question, the faces of Alexei and Vladimir expressed the full spectrum of their desire to meet Prabhupada.

GOPAL KRISHNA (answering to the expression of their faces): Than we have to prepare the society for his arrival: We have to distribute these books in all major libraries of Moscow and Leningrad so people can read them and also, perhaps, they would want to meet the author. They have to understand the subject of the potential meeting, not just come to see the Indian Swami who will demonstrate his mystical magic tricks. We must prepare the soil in which Swamiji could plant the good seeds of love and devotion to God.

BOTH FRIENDS: We are ready.

ANANTA SHANTI (translating into English): They are ready.

GOPAL KRISHNA (smiling and looking at Bhavananda Swami): Well, then let's start with libraries. We need information: what library and what quantity is ready to buy the books for the very low price.

**132. Interior.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI (adding): Approach directors of the libraries and tell them that you represent international publishing company. You can get the addresses of the libraries can be found in information centers.

**133. Interior.** Close-up

ALEXEI (in English): Okay.

**134. Interior.** Medium distance.

Foreigners smilingly nodded their heads. When Vladimir and Alexei left, Gopal Krishna told to Bhavananda Swami and Ananta Shanti.

GOPAL KRISHNA: They seem to be good guys.

### **Scene 34.**

**135. Interior.** Panoramic view from the table to the display.

At this very moment, Bhavananda Swami's attention was distracted from the conversation; the young woman was making various gestures, trying to call him

closer for the conversation. He looked back, making sure that he is the one who is called, and finally went to the display with books, where the girl was standing. The young lady seemed to be a bit agitated.

YOUNG WOMAN (in English, knocking her finger against the glass on the glass covering books on the display): I look for this book for such a long time. I really need this book, do you understand me? You can't imagine how much... I dream about this book!

**136. Interior.** Close-up.

Bhavananda Swami was a bit confused. He looked around and asked her with lowered voice:

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: So, you know Bhagavad-Gita?

**137. Interior.** Close-up. Casting from the reverse point.

YOUNG WOMAN (looking at Bhavananda Swami with the surprise): Of course! Can you sell it to me? I will give you 20 rubles.

**138. Interior.** Medium distance

Bhavananda Swami felt some awkwardness of this conversation. Something was bothering him, so he was looking around at times and answered at random.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: Okay, fine. But it doesn't worth 20 rubles

YOUNG WOMAN (insistently): How much then? Okay, tell me your price.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (counting something in his mind): Somewhere around... around.... three rubles and fifty kopeks.

**139. Interior.** Close-up.

Girl's face brightened.

YOUNG WOMAN (smilingly): And you will sell it to me for that amount? I give you money right now!

**140. Interior.** Medium distance.

Bhavananda Swami made a gesture, stopping her attempt to pull money out of the wallet.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: No, don't do this. I'll give you the book, but not now. We are not allowed to sell books at the exhibition. I'll give you another copy of the book, but it's in my hotel room.

YOUNG WOMAN: Okay. I will come to your hotel this evening. Which hotel are you staying at?

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: Hotel Rossiya. Please, write down the phone: two-zero-five-four-zero-seventy four.

The girl pulled the pencil and notebook out of the purse. She kept talking while she was writing down the phone number:

YOUNG WOMAN: Oh, thank you so much. I am so grateful! I will definitely come by to pick up the book. And then we can go to the Bolshoi Theater. Have you been there yet?

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: No I haven't. And I don't really go to theaters. I have no time.

YOUNG WOMAN: Then let's go to a conservatoire, maybe?

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: Well, I don't frequent conservatoire either...

YOUNG WOMAN (wondering): And what do you do in your spare time? Just sitting home?

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (spreading his arms at a loss, smilingly): Come by tomorrow, in the evening, and I will bring the book outside. (He bowed down to her and left)

### **Scene 34**

**141. Outdoor.** Panoramic view. Hotel Rossiya, located on river-front of Moskva River, near Kremlin towers. Evening. Street sounds

**142. Outdoor.** Medium distance. Bench at the garden by the Hotel Russia.

All the participant of the book exhibition are sitting on the bench: Gopal Krishna, Bhavananda Swami, and Ananta Shanti.

GOPAL KRISHNA: It is very good that everything is centralized. So, it's easier to come to an agreement with one boss that with dozens of them. But, on the other hand, if this the only boss refuses to by books, then it's not so good.

ANANTA SHANTI: Libraries don't have money. But they propose to exchange our books with Soviet books.

**143. Outdoor.** Close-up.

GOPAL KRISHNA (with a puzzled face): And what are we going to do with these Soviet books written in Russian?

**144. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (jokingly): We will study socialism!

Gopal Krishna smiled while shaking his head.

ANANTA SHANTI: We can turn it in as a mackle-paper, thus we'll get some money back.

GOPAL KRISHNA: We can discuss this issue tonight, with Shрила Prabhupada, over the phone.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI: Of course. Ananta Shanti, maybe we should start publishing books in Russian? What do you think? There are not too many people

who know English, and we could give this knowledge to the great masses of people if we spread it in Russian.

**145. Outdoor.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI (lost in thought for a moment, and then responding with the smile): My English is really bad. We need someone who is fluent in English. As of now, we have no such people among our devotees.

**146. Outdoor.** Medium.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (as thinking out loud): I spoke with the young woman earlier today. Her English is not bad at all. She could be engaged in translation work.

GOPAL KRISHNA (nodding his head, approving the idea about the young woman): We can publish these books in our headquarters in Bombay.

ANANTA SHANTI: And from what book we could start this? I like very much the Nectar of Devotion.

GOPAL KRISHNA: Let's start with something more comprehensive for the beginners: Ishopanishad. It is of a pocket size, and it would be easy to transport it. We can also include some of Shrila Prabhupada's small introductory works. We can name it like Book of Indian thoughts, just to avoid criticism from atheistic "upper sets"

**147. Outdoor.** Close-up.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (agreeably): True. I think Shrila Prabhupada will like it. Oh, and by the way, Ananta Shanti, maybe you could hand over Bhagavad Gita to this girl? It seems to me she is quite educated and she has a nice attitude towards us.

**148. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

ANANTA SHANTI (nodding his head in consent): Very well, Maharaja, I will hand over the book to her, and will propose to help us with translation. Although, I am not sure if she can do it.

GOPAL KRISHNA: We have to start doing something. People will come later.

### **Scene 35**

**149. Interior.** Medium distance. Room in the hotel Rossiya. Night time.

Gopal Krishna talks on the phone while sitting on the chair by the telephone stand. Bhavananda Swami sits on the bed and listening to the conversation.

GOPAL KRISHNA: Yes, Swamiji, the exhibition went good, we did not expect that our display will attract so many visitors. We were informed by the organizers, that we were one of the most popular parts at this exhibition, and they are planning to hand to us the certificate of appreciation... No, no, Maharaja, it's only due to your mercy. Yes, we attempted to offer our books to the libraries,



but they don't have money to buy them... What? Yes, Swamiji, I understood. We should give them books for free.

**150. Interior.** Close-up.

BHAVANANDA SWAMI (raising hands and cheerfully exclaiming): Jaya Prabhu-pada

**151. Interior.** Medium distance.

GOPAL KRISHNA: Ananta Shanti and other devotees help us and are very much enthusiastic in their devotional service. Every day we see many new faces among devotees. Everyone is asking when are you planning to visit Russia again? (Listens to Prabhupada's answer, then smiles): Very well, I will tell them that you never left Moscow. Hare Krishna!

### **Scene 36**

**152. Interior.** Panoramic view. Ashram-apartment in Moscow. Daytime. Industrial noises.

There are some noticeable changes in the altar room of the Moscow ashram. Now, there is a printing press positioned on a wooden pedestal in the middle of the room. Everywhere were piles of paper; there were already printed books placed on the tables by the window, ready for binding. Almost all the devotees, including Vladimir and Alexei, were occupied with book publishing. Tall Brahmananda, with a somewhat stern face, was standing by the printing press. He was engaged in printing itself. The girl by the name Krishna-lila, who first opened the door to the ashram for Vladimir and Alexei during their first visit, was cutting sheets of paper. Alexei and Vladimir were binding already printed pages, trimming edges of the paper. Prema devi, the one who bought Bhagavad-Gita from Bhavananda Swami and Ananta Shanti, was sitting at the table at the corner of the room. She was translating from the English. Vrindavan was walking around, checking the quality of everyone's work, proofreading and finding errors and deficiencies.

**153. Interior.** Medium distance.

Vrindavan is reviewing translation, and one could notice: he is not very happy with the content. VRINDAVAN: Couldn't you translate the word "reservoir" better, more beautifully? Just check how it sounds in Russian: "Krishna — reservoir of joy".

PREMA DEVI (turned off from work, and looked at Vrindavan questioningly, trying to keep it soft and kind): I looked in the dictionary, and there the word "reservoir" is translated as "well". And Krishna cannot be "well", so I left it as in English version, "reservoir".

VRINDAVAN (not satisfied with her explanation): Reservoir is too technical. Not everyone understands this word.

Prema-devi (defensively): And Ananta Shanti did not tell me anything about it. So, I will translate however he tells or wants me to translate.

**154. Interior.** Close-up.

BRAHMANANDA (being silent during the conversation, looked at Vrindavan with the leniency of the giant, smiled and trying to calm down him): Vrindavan, my dear friend, Krishna is everywhere: in the reservoir, and in the well. He is so omnipresent! Let's instead finish today's twenty copies before 3pm, and go for distribution right after *prasadam*.

**155. Interior.** Medium distance.

VRINDAVAN (looking at the devotees with guilt and folding humbly his palms): Dear devotees, please forgive me if I offended anyone with word or action. I just want it to be done perfectly.

PREMA DEVI (sarcastically, in a girly manner): Well, then you choose a proper word-synonym for me, and I will gladly insert it in the translation.

VRINDAVAN (pensively stared at the ceiling, and then laughed): Can't think of anything for now. Have to think harder!

**156. Interior.** Medium distance. Sounds/noise of the working printing press.

Brahmananda prints page after the page, then Krishna lila picks them up, and from her pages are taken by Alexei, Vladimir, and Vrindavan who came to give a hand (for binding). The pile of freshly printed books is slowly but surely growing.

### **Scene 37**

**157. Outdoor.** Medium distance. Street near Moscow University. Daytime.

Vladimir is standing by the column near the entrance to the subway station, and peering into the crowd. In his hand, he holds the book "Book of Indian thought". Sometimes he's approached by people. He lets them to look through the book and explains what this book is about. If there is no interest shown by people, then he sometimes shows the book to those who pass by, and says few words.

VLADIMIR: Are you interested in Oriental philosophy? Very useful information about the human's potential.

At this moment he noticed that some young man is standing nearby and stares at him. Vladimir waited for a little while. Then he leaned on the column and started to read the book himself, glancing at the stranger, from time to time. The stranger continued to observe Vladimir. Then Vladimir closed the book and asked the stranger:

VLADIMIR: So, what do you want?

**158. Outdoor.** Medium distance. The camera is reversed to the stranger.

A stranger approached Vladimir and silently took the book from Vladimir's hand. He begins to look through the book.

VLADIMIR: One ruble fifty kopecks. Not expensive at all.

STRANGER: Do you have different books?

VLADIMIR: No, but, it will be, possibly soon. In the meantime, you can take this book.

**159. Outdoor.** Medium distance from Vladimir's back.

Stranger silently reached his pocket and pulled one ruble and some change. He handed over money to Vladimir, and then suddenly:

STRANGER: Would you like to participate in an experiment?

VLADIMIR (with surprise): Me? Why? Am I so different?

STRANGER (pensively): I don't know. That's what I want to find out. You chant mantra regularly, right?

VLADIMIR (nodding his head): Well, yes.

**160. Outdoor.** Close-up.

STRANGER: I work in a research laboratory. We study human's psychology. I would like to observe and study you (eyed at Vladimir from head to foot with strictly scientific interest). Please come to the second, research building, of the University. Ask for me, senior researcher of the sub-faculty of the psychology, Stepanov Yuri Ivanovich.

**161. Outdoor.** Medium distance from the position of the stranger.

Vladimir reservedly looked at the stranger.

VLADIMIR (warning): I might come with the group of people.

STRANGER: Even better.

Stranger disappeared in the crowd. Vladimir looked at him, as he was walking away, then opened his bag hanging on his side, placed money in the pocket inside the bag, and pulled another copy of the "Book of Indian thought".

VLADIMIR: Interested in Oriental philosophy? There is a knowledge here that was previously hidden from modern people!

Two young men approached him and began to turn over the pages of the book with great interest.

### **Scene 38**

**162. Interior.** Panoramic view. Ashram-apartment. Evening.

After the sankirtana (book distribution), the ashram is filled by the devotees cheerfully chanting Hare Krishna. Brahmananda and Vrindavan dance in front of the altar, Sadananda was playing on a small drum which served as a substitute

for mridanga. Ananta Shanti was playing on karatals. Vladimir, Alexei, Krishna-lila, and Prema-devi were singing, raising their arms up high. There were about fifteen people in the ashram. After the hard working day, the devotees had a special feeling of happiness of serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**163. Interior.** Medium distance. Hallway in the ashram.

After the evening service and prayers, everyone was leaving. Ananta Shanti was leaving together with Prema-devi when Vrindavan stopped them.

VRINDAVAN: Ananta Shanti, I just wanted to confirm: what time we have to be at the program in the University? You know, those botanists who invited Vladimir?

ANANTA SHANTI: Saturday, at twelve... By the way, Vrindavan, do your neighbors, Rodion and Lisa, still complain about you making noise and singing, and not letting them sleep?

**164. Interior.** Medium distance. Shooting from the reverse point.

VRINDAVAN (spreading his arms): Of course, they threatened to call militia. But we sing in an undertone, and we don't use any instruments, only clap our hands. And now they don't like the smell of our food.

ANANTA SHANTI (suggesting): Well, treat them to prasadam.

VRINDAVAN (shaking his head): Recently Alexei got almost into a fight with them, but then he went to them to apologize. We tried to invite them so we could share prasad with them — hopeless case. They refuse to eat prasad. They say they will never stop eating flesh and blood. It's like their minds are completely jammed up by the meat eating... him, as well as his wife.... Very proud people, you know, typical Moskovits, Moscow rednecks.

**165. Interior.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI (smiling): Prema and I are Moskovits too. So what? It all depends on our conception of this material world. We have to find a way to approach this couple. We have to explain to them, somehow, that vegetarianism helps to withdraw excessive aggression, and just is good for health. Well, we will think of what to do with them later. We have to hurry: Prema-devi is running late for her practice on skating rink.

**166. Interior.** Medium distance.

VRINDAVAN (talking faster): Ananta Shanti, one more thing. I found, in the Dal's Dictionary the synonym of the word "reservoir". It is "spring". And it sounds pleasant for the ears: Krishna — The Spring of Eternal Joy that's how we should translate the name of the book?

ANANTA SHANTI (pensively nodded his head in agreement): Yes this sounds better. Let's finish this lot of books as is, and change the name in the next lot.

VRINDAVAN (with a beaming smile): Jaya Prabhupada! No wonder he chose you to be the first, Ananta Shanti!

ANANTA SHANTI (dismissing): Listen to you! Let's go, Prema. Well, Hare Krishna to all!

VRINDAVAN (folding his hands): Hare Krishna!

### Scene 39

**167. Interior.** Steady camera. Panoramic view with drawing closer. Spacious indoor skating rink. Sounds of workouts.

Figure skaters are working out on the rink. Among them we see Prema-devi. She is dressed in tight sports apparel. She is confident, she makes complicated, fine figures and elegant landing on the ice after the jumps with spinning. After each of her series of figures she skillfully pauses.

### Scene 40

**168. Interior.** Medium distance. Laboratory in the University. Daytime.

This laboratory is a quite serious division of science. There are various devices to study cerebrum and spinal cord reflexes. There are also special test benches for experiments. In the midst of all this equipment, there is a small isle, where discussions are held. At the moment there are few young scientists who came to meet representatives of the new spiritual movement.

Ananta Shanti, along with Vladimir, Alexei and Vrindavan is standing in front of the scientists and is trying to explain, in a simplified way, the essence of the philosophy of the Vedas.

ANANTA SHANTI: A person, as a result of his material activities, accumulates baggage of positive and negative actions. This "baggage" we call *karma*. *Karma* is divided into three categories: the one that has already occurred, and its outcome is visible, the one that occurs every day, and every hour, and the one that has not occurred yet, and currently is in its infancy, so to speak. Every minute we commit various actions, which create new karma. *Bhakti-yoga* gives the method that does not create karma. On the contrary, the importance of karma in our lives begins to decrease, until it finally disappears altogether. This method is very simple: chanting of Hare Krishna maha-mantra. It's crucially important to understand: it's not a matter of faith or self-hypnosis. This vibration is of un-earthly origin, thus it really can work amazing things.

**169. Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse point.

Young scientists exchanged skeptical glances with each other. One of them, Stepanov (he actually invited krishnaites to the lab) said.

STEPANOV: Miracles are not our specialty. But it is in our power to measure the effects of meditation on the body. Would you agree to be the subject of the study? We will put sensors on you, and you will do what you usually do in your ritual activities

**170. Interior.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI (smilingly): Very good. Let's experiment. You want to do it on me? Or maybe Vrindavan would do better? Go ahead, Vrindavan!

**171. Interior.** Medium distance.

STEPANOV (agreeing): I think, it doesn't make difference, who is going to chant.

ANANTA SHANTI: Probably so. There is no difference between our ways of chanting. But... if you have a tape-recorder, I have tape our guru's records of chanting mantra.

Scientists expressed great interest. One of them pointed to the big soviet tape-recorder.

SCIENTIST: Will this one work?

ANANTA SHANTI: Yes, this will work.

Ananta Shanti placed the tape in the tape recorder and pressed the "play" button. Everyone in the room was able to hear slow, well measured Shрила Prabhupada's voice. He was chanting:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

STEPANOV (after some listening, looking at others in the room): Just can't wait to see how it affects the human being. Let's start, shall we?

**172. Interior.** Medium distance.

Vrindavan was seated on the chair, and two people started to place sensors on his head and back. Others were standing nearby and were observing. Recorders on the devices began to draw various diagrams. It was quiet in the room, and only Vrindavan's voice was heard. He was chanting mantra on his beads.

ANANTA SHANTI (after a while, asking Stepanov with lowered voice): So, what's the result?

STEPANOV (with arms crossed on his chest, nodding his head with the surprise): Not too much of a relaxation. I would say, on the contrary, the activity is more like when watching a thrilling adventure movie, or reading great deep love poems. It has to be studied more thoroughly and for a longer period of time. I think the results will be really interesting!

**173. Interior.** Close-up.

ANANTA SHANTI (smiling victoriously): We present our programs in various establishments. I put on tape with our guru chanting maha-mantra before we start the program. For about 5-7 minutes. The atmosphere in the auditorium changes completely. People become more serious and graceful.

**174. Interior.** Close-up.

STEPANOV (pensively): What causes this kind of reaction? That is the question.

## Scene 41

**175. Outdoor.** Medium distance. By Vladimir's house in the village. Daytime. Zina is reading the letter from Vladimir to his mother. They are sitting on the porch.

ZINA (reading letter): We distribute many books and pamphlets. Sometimes I do it faster than Lyoshka. Sometimes he does it faster. He always tries to compete with me. You know him, Zinka.

VLADIMIR'S MOTHER (nodding her head as if she recalls boys' childhood): Oh, yes, they always tried to compete with each other!

ZINA (continuing the reading of the letter): Tell mother to eat more potatoes, carrots, greens. Tell her to leave chicken alone as they too want to live happily in this life and let them just walk in the yard and peck grains peacefully under the sun.

VLADIMIR'S MOTHER (with the surprise): There he goes again. What am I going to do with all the animals? Last time he was here he wanted to release the whole cattle. He said, "Let them be free!" I was fighting with him. I was about to use the oven fork to calm him down! He ran out of the house.

ZINA (after pausing): Yeah, but he is somehow right.

VLADIMIR'S MOTHER: I always tried to understand him, just like you. But we can't change everything overnight! People would say, "There they are, crazy family, released all animals. They released, and we will take them. "No way, they will have them all!!!

ZINA (continuing reading): Intelligent people around the world already realized that they are in deadlock, and the only hope for them is to change their consciousness from selfish to devotional, loving.

The old woman and young woman involuntarily sighed together.

## Scene 42

**176. Interior.** Steady camera. Hallways of the KGB (National Security Committee). Sounds of a big administrative building.

Professor Kotovsky was walking up the big central stairs of the big state institution. His face was expressing anxiety and resignation. He is walking down the hallway, reading signs on the doors. Finally, he stopped at one of them and timidly knocked on the door. Upon hearing the response he opened the door and entered the office.

**177. Interior.** Medium distance. Office of the KGB investigator.

Middle-aged officer of the famous Soviet security service got up, greeted professor and invited him to sit on the chair on the opposite side of his desk.

OFFICER: So, you are professor Kotovsky.

KOTOVSKY: Pleased to meet you... I can hardly imagine the purpose of your invitation to your office, so, may I ask, what can I do for you?

Officer silently opened the door of his desk, took out a medium thick book and put it in front of the professor.

OFFICER: Could you explain to me, my dear professor, what is it?

**178. Interior.** Close-up.

Professor Kotovsky put his eyeglasses on, pulled the book and opened it. The sweat stood out on his forehead. Professor looked like he turned into stone.

**179. Interior.** Close-up. Reverse point.

The title of the book was "Spiritual communism. The conversation between Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and Moscow professor Grigori Kotovsky."

**180. Interior.** Medium distance.

The officer was waiting for an answer. Professor looked like he was caught on some crime. However, he found some strength within himself and said:

PROFESSOR: You see, I work in the Institute of Oriental Studies, I study Hinduism, and Krishna Consciousness Movement is within Hinduism. We had met, quite some time ago, and I agreed to meet them, although was not too enthusiastic about it. Please, understand that I am telling you as it is. But this man arrived in our country to meet me. I, as a gentleman, couldn't refuse to meet him.

OFFICER (writing something in his notebook): I readily believe you. I've read your conversation with the representative of this movement, and it's clear to me that you are on different sides of the fence.

PROFESSOR (sighed with relief): I met many different people here, and in India, but it was my first time with the representative of the religion, who is the founder of the new movement, believe me!

OFFICER (stopped writing): But among other topics in your conversation there were such topics as economy and development strategy in the USSR. Looks like they are interested in some mundane issues, in addition to meditation. What do you think, professor? According to our sources, they are financed by some investors from Chicago.

**181. Interior.** Close-up.

PROFESSOR: Yes. By the way, I asked him about it, but he cleverly departed from the straight answer by referring to the Lord's mercy.

**182. Interior.** Medium distance.

OFFICER (smiling): If our people would get this kind of "mercy" we would already establish communism in our country. Do you agree?

Professor nodded his head with his smile.



OFFICER (concluding): Looks like they have plenty of money. However, they use it to harm society. As it is said, "Sleep of reason produces monsters."

PROFESSOR (smiling indulgently): Do you think they are dangerous for us?

**183. Interior.** Close-up.

Officer paused. Then he said while looking through the window.

OFFICER: Not more than any other religion... Opium for the public.

## PART FOUR

### Scene 43

**184. Outdoor.** Panoramic view with drawing closer towards the window view. Red Square. Daytime. Music.

Red Square, Mausoleum and Spassky Tower — symbols of Great Motherland and supreme governmental authority. Here, in Kremlin, which was always highly guarded, important decisions were made, and the political strategy of the USSR was directed from here as well.

### Scene 44

**185. Interior.** General view with drawing closer. The office of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU (Communist party of the Soviet Union).

Here, in the office, all "VIPs" of the state, civil and military, are present. Yuri Andropov the Chief of the KGB was delivering his report. Leonid Brezhnev, the head of the state, was chairing the meeting.

YURI ANDROPOV: According to our source, in the last three years, this religious group, which has infiltrated into our country from the West, became very influential in society. It's not only unemployed, or lazy people are involved. There are many other people involved in it: scientists, musicians, artists, sportsmen, and even military officers, and soldiers.

**186. Continuity of shots/pictures.** They replace each other as an illustration of Andropov's speech.

First, we see Stepanov's laboratory, and all young scientists chant mantra on beads, as they accepted the power of the mantra.

Then we see the exhibition of works of Mamu-Thakur, avant-garde artist. He presents these big paintings, made in modern style. We can see the image of Swamiji with the view of Kremlin in the background, and the image of Lord Chaitanya leading kirtan on the streets of Moscow.

Then we see Prema-devi performing at international figure skating competition. After she receives her winner's medal, she folds her hands in Indian manner and bows down to show her appreciation to Then we see military people in their uniform who sing and dance, being part of the kirtan in Moscow ashram.

**187. Interior.** Medium distance.

YURI ANDROPOV (continuing): So far the number of active members of this group grew up to a 100. They have their centers in Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Kiev, Tallinn, Tashkent, and some other smaller towns. The underground literature is being published, and there are semi-illegal gatherings in various places. They work with various groups of people: students, intellectuals, artists, laborers, and of course some unemployed, hippie like individuals.

Members of the Political Bureau were outraged by this information. The facts revealed were unexpected and disturbing. War Minister was sitting with his head down in shame.

One of the "old school" communists hopelessly concluded: "OLD SCHOOL" COMMUNIST: Wow, the entirely underground organization, and this is happening on the fiftieth year of Soviet Power! We should be ashamed, comrades!

**188. Interior.** Close-up.

Leonid Brezhnev pensively tapping his fingers on the table. Then he asks Andropov sternly:

LEONID BREZHNEV: And how did you let this happen, comrade Andropov? How did this bourgeois infection get into our society?

**189. Interior.** Medium distance.

Yuri Andropov accepted criticism with dignity, and then firmly announced:

YURI ANDROPOV: Lists of all participants are in our hands. The delivery channels of the literature and communication with foreign countries are monitored. We are waiting for your instructions, Leonid Ilyich.

**190. Interior.** Medium distance. Camera Reversed.

Brezhnev nodded his head in appreciation of KGB's efficiency.

LEONID BREZHNEV: Then make sure we don't hear about them in the USSR again.

YURI ANDROPOV (with a very serious face): Yes, Leonid Ilyich.

## **Scene 45**

**191. Outdoor.** Medium distance. Street by the building where the Moscow ashram is located. Night.

Few cars have stopped at once by the entrance to the building number 2. KGB agents came out of these cars and went to the entrance doors.

**192. Interior.** Medium distance. Stairway.

Rodion, the neighbor, was walking agents up on stairs to the apartment-ashram. He pointed out to the door and said with a grin on his face:

RODION: Here. Here these parasites reside. I warned them before they are getting themselves in trouble with all this! They gather all kinds of riffraff over here... One of the agents knocked on the door. No response.

**193. Interior.** Medium distance. The camera moves from the bottom to the upper end of the stairs...

Lisa, Rodion's wife was standing upstairs watching what was happening.

LISA: Knock harder, they are probably asleep. They usually go to bed early, like chicken.

**194. Interior.** Medium distance. A door to the ashram.

Agent knocked harder and loud. Somebody dragging his feet approached the door from the other side and asked: "Who is this?"

Agent, by the gesture, ordered Rodion to respond.

RODION: It's me, Rodion Manukin, your neighbor.

The door has opened and sleepy Vrindavan's head appeared from the door.

VRINDAVAN: Oh, Rodion, come in, please. We are always glad to see you.

At this moment few agents stormed through the door into the apartment, knocking Vrindavan off his feet.

## **Scene 46**

**195. Interior.** Panoramic view. Apartment-ashram. Night. Noises of the search. The apartment was in turmoil. Agents turned up all cupboards, closets, cabinets, pulled out their contents. The floor was littered by scraps of paper. Agents were putting discovered books and items related to religious activity in one pile. Brahmananda, Alexei, Vladimir, Sadananda, Vrindavan, and few more devotees were standing with their arms behind their backs and with the faces to the wall. Two agents were unceremoniously dismantling printing press. Brahmananda attempted to save printing press, but agents tied him up and took him out of the room. Other devotees, seeing this, haven't even tried to protest. One by one they were taken by agents out of the room outside of the building.

## **Scene 47**

**196. Interior.** Medium distance. Ananta Shanti's apartment. Night.

KGB agents are conducting a search in Ananta Shanti and Prema-devi's apartment. Ananta Shanti looked somewhat stifled.

SENIOR AGENT (to Ananta Shanti): You have to go with us. (looked at Prema-devi, and then, while pointing by his head to the big poster with her skating):

And you are Yelena Pivovarova, the figure skater? How did you get yourself into this?

Prema-devi remained silent.

ANANTA SHANTI (defending her): She has nothing to do with all this. She's just my wife.

SENIOR AGENT: We know that. We know it all: who, where what and how! You are going with us! Get whatever you need with you.

ANANTA SHANTI: She is pregnant! She is due any time soon, don't you see it?!

SENIOR AGENT (not paying any attention to Ananta Shanti words, and waiving at Prema-devi with the glove): You are going as well. Let's go!

### **Scene 48**

**197. Interior.** Medium distance. Laboratory in the university. Daytime. The noise of the search.

Agents are conducting the search in the laboratory. All young scientists were arrested. The looked very much perplexed. Agents were looking for incriminating evidence. The pile of books and chanting beads on the desk by the cabinet was growing. Then agents took everyone out.

### **Scene 49**

**198. Interior.** Medium distance. Kitchen in Vladimir's house in the village. Day time. Noises of the search.

Vladimir's mother, her grandson, and Vladimir's fiancée Nina are standing in front of KGB agents. After turning everything in the house upside down, one of them finally finds few letters with opened envelopes and brings them to their leader. The leader thoroughly reviews them and finds the letter with the final sentence "Hare Krishna!" He calls Nina and orders her, by gesture to get ready to leave with them.

### **Scene 50**

**199. Interior.** Panoramic view. The yard in the prison. Daytime

Big somber building surrounded by the fence made of barbed wire with the security towers at the corners. All those who were arrested last night are brought here.

**200. Interior.** Medium distance. Detention cell.

Alexei is sitting there together with other ten people. Here there were young pickpockets who played cards and loudly arguing with each other about the questionable situation in the game. Old criminals were laying down on the bunk, away from the bustle. Alexei was able to find common ground with some

of the criminals. They were sitting and listening to his stories. At the same time, another criminal was getting tattoo created by the ink and needle. At this moment the door has opened and the security guard called out:

SECURITY GUARD: Alexei Stupin! Out for interrogation!

Alexei stood up and went towards the door. One of the criminals threw at him:

INMATE: Well, Hare Krishna, Lyoha! Maybe they will let you go, bro!

ALEXEI (smiling while getting out of the cell): This is not so important.

## Scene 51

**201. Interior.** Panoramic view. Hallway in the prison. Noises of the prison.

Alexei was walked on iron, barred prison corridor. From the windows of the doors convicted criminals were looking at him — some with an interest, some with sadness, some with malice.

**202. Interior.** Medium distance. Interrogation office.

Old angry investigator Belopotapov sat by the desk in the interrogation office. Alexei tried to act naturally, and his behavior was irritating more and more the “minister of law”.

ALEXEI: Well, just think about it. If man evolved from apes, then from whom the ape, monkey evolved? From common ancestor of mammals, from which cow, dog, rabbit derived? What is the origin of those mammals? What are the links of their origin?

BELOPOTAPOV (banging the desk with the fist): That’s enough! Quit your jabber! I am not one of the retarded inmates among which you have already managed to gain popularity. You are brought here because you conducted anti-government propaganda, and you managed to establish even here some kind of underground organization! Three inmates tattooed “Hare Krishna” on their chest, back, and arms! Do you understand what it smells like?!

**203. Interior.** Close-up.

ALEXEI (smiling openly): Actually, according to the Constitution, we have freedom of religion...

**204. Interior.** Medium distance.

BELOPOTAPOV (interrupting Alexei in the mid-sentence): Shut up! Who you play your games with? I can put you to the solitary confinement for the rest of your life, you asshole! Are you insane? Do you not understand that people in our country want to live their live differently, without such freaks like yourself! Do you think, you and your people will manage to gain power by cheating? It is not going to happen! Only fools and ignorant believe people like you and your cronies. But I’ll beat it out of you. You are going to work silently for our Motherland at tree-cutting area. 18 hours a day. I promise you!!

ALEXEI (after a little pause, and peacefully): How can you say that?... After all, you never tried for yourself.

BELOPOTAPOV (losing his temper): Get up! Guards!

Guards ran into the room.

BELOPOTAPOV (pointing his finger at Alexei): Take him to the solitary confinement. Without heat! For the contempt of the authorities

Guards took Alexei out of the office.

## **Scene 52**

**205. Interior.** Panoramic view. Hallway in the prison. Noises.

When Alexei was placed in the punishment-cell, Vladimir was taken to the interrogation at the same time. Guards were taking Vladimir through the lower hallway to the same interrogation office. Friends did not know they were just a few meters away from each other.

**206. Interior.** Medium distance. Interrogation office.

BELOPOTAPOV (staring at Vladimir for some time, and then asking): So, staying silent, huh? No fun here, right?

VLADIMIR (nodding his head): Yeah, not too much fun.

BELOPOTAPOV (turning papers, and then concluding out loud): I see you are not a bad guy. I read reports about you. So, would you agree to help our investigation? It will be taken into consideration by the court. It might help you get off on probation.

**207. Interior.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (looking at the investigator with the surprise): Why I have to be in court? What am I guilty of?

**208. Interior.** Close-up.

BELOPOTAPOV (scowling while reading out-loud from the file): The suspect, Vladimir Semichatsky is charged with organization of secret anti-government structures, and involvement of the community in anti-constitutional activities, propaganda, and causing physical harm to people...

**209. Interior.** Medium distance.

VLADIMIR (raised eyebrows, and asked in confusion): When? How? Last time I fought was probably when I was in the army. Really...

BELOPOTAPOV (with the grin, pulling another paper and shaking it in front of Vladimir's face): Intentional infliction of harm to the body. This is the conclusion of the Institute of Nutrition. It says that so called vegetarianism is not enough for a normal life. And how it is possible to live without burgers? How?! By the way, your girl Zinka was also arrested because of you...

**210. Interior.** Close-up.

VLADIMIR (looking at the investigator with suspicion, and then says quietly): I never thought that I am causing harm to somebody, or to the state. Never had it in my head... The militia officers saw me so many times with the books. Well, they would drive me out of the spot, but that was it. And now these terrible things I am accused of... I haven't done any of that!

**211. Interior.** Medium distance.

BELOPOTAPOV: (leaning closer to Vladimir): I know what you mean, I totally understand. I would release you right away. Somehow I feel inside that I can trust you, that you are not a bad guy. Not at all.

VLADIMIR (again, looking at the investigator with suspicion): Thank you. If you would release Zinka, that would be better.

BELOPOTAPOV (paused thoughtfully): You know what? Go. I am releasing both of you. You and your girl.

VLADIMIR (in disbelief): Are you serious?

Belopotapov wrote something on the piece of paper and called security guards.

BELOPOTAPOV: Guards! Take him outside of the gates and let him go wherever he wants to go.

Vladimir stood up in amazement. Guards took him to the door.

BELOPOTAPOV: Remember, Vladimir, if anything happens again, I will get you from under the ground.

### **Scene 53**

**212. Interior.** Medium distance. Solitary confinement cell.

Alexei, attenuate and unshaved was standing by the wall in the cell and singing the morning prayer.

ALEXEI: Samsara davanala lidha loka/ Tranaya carunya gana ghanatv...

He was softly clapping in the rhythm of singing and performed a little dancing. Sometimes he coughed and had to interrupt singing. But then, after that, he continued, in order to warm himself up, jumping and dancing even more.

**213. Interior.** Camera zooms. Reverse point.

Little window built in the door to the cell has opened and man's eye appeared in it. A man was observing Alexei's actions.

### **Scene 54**

**214. Interior.** Medium distance. Investigator's office. Morning time.

Belopotapov is pacing, furiously beyond measure. Alexei is standing before him with his head bowed down, but apparently not broken in spirit.

BELOPOTAPOV: I put you in the cooler so you could come to your senses. And you began to dance again even there? You are just an idiot, do you know that? That's what western propaganda made of you! Yes, it did!

ALEXEI (quietly, but firmly, in syllables): I was praying.

**215. Interior.** Medium distance.

Belopotapov grabs Alexei by the collar of his shirt and pulls him.

BELOPOTAPOV: If you want to pray, go to church! And those prayers that you depict for us simply do not exist. Your so-called benefactors invented them just to fool people!

ALEXEI (half asleep from exhaustion, shaking his head): No, they are over five thousand years old. These are the most ancient prayers.

**216. Interior.** Medium distance.

Belopotapov pushed Alexei, sat wearily on his chair and lit a cigarette.

BELOPOTAPOV: I can't deal with you anymore. You don't get what I told you, do you?

## Scene 55

**217. Interior.** Medium distance. Medical office. Daytime.

Alexei was lying down on the couch. The psychotherapist was examining him, bending and unbending his knees. After that, he checked Alexei's arms' reflexes. Then he sat Alexei and moved his little hammer in front of Alexei's eyes. Starving and sick (he got sick in the punishment cell), Alexei was looking at the doctor with piercing eyes.

THERAPIST: Responses are inadequate. All signs of reactive psychosis. Why do your hands are shaking so much?

ALEXEI (gulping air and forcing himself to respond): I don't know. Maybe because of hunger.

THERAPIST: We'll cure you. We'll feed you. We'll put you back on your feet.

ALEXEI (bursts, screaming and shaking his fists): I don't eat what you cook, I can't! It's just garbage simply gathered and cooked for animals to eat. Do you understand?!

Psychotherapist stepped to the side out of fear and ordered the paramedics who were standing by the door.

THERAPIST: Give him an injection of haloperidol. Five...no, whole ten milliliters!

Paramedics rushed to Alexei.

THERAPIST (getting out of the office): Absolutely insane. Complete delirium. It's okay. We will cure him in a month.



## Scene 56

**218. Outdoor.** General view. Street in Moscow. Daytime. Street noises.

Vladimir walks on the street deeply in thoughts. He holds in his hands the bag he usually takes with him to the sankirtana.

**219. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

At this moment the black Volga stops by the curb. Somebody calls Vladimir through the car's window with the glass down.

BELOPOTAPOV (invisible): Vladimir, come here!

Vladimir looks through the car's window and sees the investigator sitting behind the steering wheel. Investigator nodded his head, inviting Vladimir in the car. Vladimir opened the door and sat next to Belopotapov.

**220. Outdoor.** Medium distance. Inside the car.

BELOPOTAPOV (extending his hand to Vladimir): Well, hello! How are you?

VLADIMIR (shrugging): I am doing okay.

Belopotapov briefly glanced at Vladimir's bag and, as if by the way, not looking at Vladimir, asked:

BELOPOTAPOV: And now, Vladimir, where do you get books from?

VLADIMIR (unskillfully pretending he did not understand): What books?

Belopotapov looked at Vladimir sternly.

BELOPOTAPOV: Don't try to fool me! I have my people's report about Vladimir Semichatsky, who I trusted as an honest man, went back to old business.

**221. Inside the car.** Close-up.

Vladimir remained silent.

BELOPOTAPOV: Okay, here is the deal: You tell me now who is printing them and where. You tell me now, and nobody will ever know about our conversation. Understood?

Vladimir looked at him and shook his head as a negative answer.

**222. Outdoor.** Close up. Reverse point.

BELOPOTAPOV (squinting): Haven't you understood me? I warned you, haven't I? You will quickly find yourself back on plank bed in the cell. Don't be a fool, Vladimir! It's worthless.

**223. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

Vladimir sadly smiled, as he understood investigator's plan.

VLADIMIR: I thought all this time — why is it just me? And others began to treat me cautiously, with suspicion. You almost made me a traitor...

BELOPOTAPOV (nervously interrupting his speech): Do not worry. We'll take them all, and nobody will figure out who brought us to them...

Vladimir remained silent.

**224. Outdoor.** Close-up.

Belopotapov hushed his voice and began to whisper confidingly into Vladimir's ear:

BELOPOTAPOV: Their entire organization is falling apart. Here, in our country, their ways are all blocked. Their main man who is considered the founder of the movement is already dead. You don't believe me? Yeah, indeed... how you all would know? Those who are still out of prison are hiding like rats in dark corners, don't even stick their noses out. Most of your friends are in jail or nut-houses... But we have the information what's going on with leaders abroad. The founder was poisoned allegedly. And now others divide movement's property. They say such terrible things are happening there...

**225. Outdoor.** Close-up.

Vladimir couldn't take it anymore. His face was contorted with pain.

VLADIMIR: Hell with you! Goddamn, rubbish cop! Go find other scapegoats... you know where!

**226. Outdoor.** Medium distance.

BELOPOTAPOV (with evil voice): That's it, you're done, Vladimir. I am taking you right now to the cooler!

**227. Outdoor.** General view. Street view.

Belopotapov hit the gas pedal and jerked off the car forward merging into the stream of other cars.

## Scene 57

**228. Interior.** General view. Solitary confinement cell.

Cold room. There is only one dim bulb on the ceiling which is barred by rusty bars. Vladimir sits in the corner hugging his knees and half-opened eyes. He quietly chants the mantra.

**229. Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse point.

Observation window built in the iron door slightly opens. Someone's eye was carefully watching what is happening in the cell.

## Scene 58

**230. Interior.** Medium distance. Large prison cell. Daytime.

Vladimir, lost much weight after the solitary lock-up, lies on the bed and stares at the ceiling. Other inmates are occupied with regular stuff — play cards, sleep, and talk to each other. One of the inmates stopped by Vladimir's bed and begins to change the dress.

**231. Interior.** Close-up.

When inmate took off the shirt, Vladimir's attention was caught by the tattoo on his upper arm: "Hare Krishna". Vladimir, without saying a word was watching his "neighbor".

**232. Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse point.

The inmate sat on the bed across Vladimir's bed and continued to fold his clothing. Vladimir turned on his bed and asked him, pointing out to the tattoo.

VLADIMIR: What is this?

**233. Interior.** General view.

INMATE (looking at his arm): Indian prayer. Do you like it? Ask Whistler, he will do this tattoo for you as well.

**234. Interior.** Medium distance.

VLADIMIR (smilingly): How do you know this prayer?

INMATE (frowning and muttering): Are you the cop? You're asking too many questions.

VLADIMIR (completely serious now): No, I am not a cop. Listen to you... I have been locked up for the same matter.

Vladimir turned to the wall and stopped talking to the inmate. The "neighbor" put his shirt on the bed, went to his bedside table and pulled something out of it. He approached Vladimir and asked him:

INMATE: Do you know what this is?

**235. Interior.** Close-up. Reverse point.

Vladimir took this thing from the inmate. It was real Vaishnava beads. Vladimir abruptly sat on his bed.

VLADIMIR: Who are you? I don't know you!

**236. Interior.** Medium distance.

INMATE (shaking his head): These are not mine. They belonged to Sachi.

Vladimir jumped on his feet, grabbed inmate's hand and said happily.

VLADIMIR: Do you know Sachi? Oh, brother, oh my...what is your name?

INMATE (shaking Vladimir's hand): My name is Garik. I really liked this prayer from the very first time I've heard it. What you've got?

VLADIMIR (chuckling): Five years.

Garik grabbed his head and said with moderate disappointment:

GARIK: Vai-vai-vai what bastards...don't let people pray!

VLADIMIR (shrugging): Kali-yuga.

GARIK (angrily): Bitches! But you'll be fine with us. There is also one pastor here, arrested for the same reason, preaching. Though he's Catholic, is it okay with you?

VLADIMIR (smilingly): He is a devotee too!

GARIK (gladly): That's why I respect you. I also don't care who you are: Judaist, Orthodox Christian, Muslim, or Hinduist. God is one, right?

VLADIMIR: Of course He is the One!

**237. Interior.** Close-up.

GARIK (approached Vladimir and said in his ear): But don't tell everyone that you're krishnait. Too many informers. They will rat you in jail as they did to Sachi.

VLADIMIR (whispering): What happened, they increased a sentence for him?

Garik looked at Vladimir for a while but did not say anything. Garik realized that he doesn't know what happened to Sachi. Garik paused and then said while leaving Vladimir.

GARIK: I'll tell you later. Here, take it (giving Vladimir Sachi's beads).

**238. Interior.** Medium distance.

Vladimir sat on the bed and began to examine beads given to him by Garik.

GARIK (nodding at the beads): Sachi made them himself. From bread.

## Scene 59

**239. Outdoor.** General view. Prison yard. Daytime.

Vladimir and Garik walk in the prison yard. They are standing somewhat far from others, by the fence of barbed wire. Lowering his head, Vladimir listens to Garik's emotional story about his friend Alexei.

## Scene 60

**240. Interior.** General view. Prison cell. Evening.

Alexei (Sachi) is sitting on the mat at the corner of the cell and chanted mantra on his beads. A plate with prison food is in front of him. Alexei is very thin, with the dark circles around eyes, his cheeks sunken, sometimes he coughs. Self-made paper garland was hanging on his neck. He did not touch food at all. While reading the mantra on the beads, he was thinking about Ananta Shanti...

**241. Interior.** Medium distance. Hallway of the psychiatric clinic in jail. Daytime. ... how they met at the psychiatric clinic when Alexei was about to leave the clinic. He was standing at the hallway with his belongings when he saw Ananta Shanti carried on the medical cart with both hands and legs tied by thick straps. Ananta Shanti was totally out of his mind, was trying to pull out of the straps, screamed. Alexei ran up to him and attempted to calm him down.

ALEXEI (SACHI): Ananta Shanti, calm down it's me, Shachi. Do you recognize me?

Ananta Shanti looked at Alexei, and suddenly shouted in the hallway:

ANANTA SHANTI: All you bastards! Murderers! Fascists!

Orderly closed Ananta Shanti's mouth with his hand and quickly drove the cart down the hallway. Ananta Shanti's face was expressing pain and rage. He was crying out of helplessness because he knew what they did with Prema.

**242. Interior.** Medium distance. Prison cell. Morning.

Prema was in the women's maximum security prison. The prison doctor was standing in front of her. Prema tries to explain to the female doctor:

PREMA: You must provide to the nursing mothers half-an-hour to spend with their children, and several times a day. Why you do not let me see my daughter for three days in a row? Are you taunting me? Or do you want me to become crazy?

The doctor was silent for a little while, then walked towards the door, as if she was not sure whether to say it or not. The doctor looked at Prema again, and then said with muffled voice:

DOCTOR: Your child... She died. The girl was sickly, and prison is not a good place for such children...

Prema, dumbfounded, stared at the doctor who was standing by the door. Then Prema's whole body somehow became clenched. She folded her hands and began to whisper prayers softly.

**243. Interior.** Medium distance. Prison cell.

Shachi, frown, thinking about the fate of Ananta Shanti and Prema. These thoughts were heavy. His sickness also did its work in his weakened body. He looks tired, and chants mantra softly. Suddenly he bowed his head, stopped and powerlessly lowered his hand with beads. That's how he died in meditation pose.

## Scene 61

**244. Outdoor.** Close-up. Prison yard. Daytime.

Vladimir now knew all of this. His face is expressing pain, resentment and silent despair. He is totally suppressed by the story Garik just told him. Vladimir's eyes are filled with tears.

## Scene 62

**245. Interior.** Medium distance. Prison cell. Night.

Night emergency light on the ceiling of the cell. Vladimir got from the bed, carefully walked to the window, and looked around. All inmates were sleeping. A bit agitated, Vladimir began to tear shirt he brought with him into stripes, and weave them in a rope. There was nothing in him left in him of the man he was before prison. Looking around like a hunted animal, Vladimir quickly finished making a rope, then threw the free end through the bars on the window, and

tightly tied a loop. Then he stuck, quickly and firmly his head in the noose. Then he stopped for a moment to take a break and catch his breath. He closed his eyes.

**246. Interior.** Medium distance. Wall in the prison cell.

Suddenly the wall was lit very brightly. Out of gray bricks, there appeared a huge figure of Lord Chaitanya adorned with gold and beautiful clothes. His face was handsome and kind. He raised his hand and said:

LORD CHAITANYA: Don't do it. Trust me, all will be well.

Along with the words of Lord Chaitanya the whole room lit up even brighter and more wonderful. After this flash, the darkness took over again, and only the wall could be seen.

**247. Interior.** Medium distance. Prison cell.

Vladimir opened his eyes and stared into the darkness for a long time. Then, more pacified, he took off the rope from his neck, pulled it from the window bars and sat down on the floor. He somewhat relaxed, leaned his head against the wall, and stared into space. Then he smiled.

**248. Interior.** Medium distance. Reverse point.

The wall in prison cell suddenly began to "melt" and turned into a beautiful view of Moscow. Clearer and clearer, from the background of unpainted prison bricks, there appeared Red Square with its towers and Kremlin battlement.

### **Scene 63**

**249. Outdoor.** Panoramic view. Red Square. Daytime. Sounds of harinama.

A large group of devotees walks on Red Square. Harinama. Sounds of kirtan. Devotees walk on the stone pavement of Red Square with mridangas, karatals and flags, in bright Vaishnava clothes. They went the same way Swamiji walked several years ago. On the wall of one of the buildings there hangs a huge poster: PERESTROIKA.

*After Subuddhi Rai finished this script, I placed it (the English version) on several English-language websites thus promoting it. I offered to various devotees to take part in this project. But the project still remains as the project, unclaimed.*

# PART THREE

## My friend Shanti

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### CHAPTER 1

*Over many years of continuous preaching of Krishna Consciousness, I got no permanent residence nor the means of living, and I don't have friends. Due to my uncompromised, and sometimes harsh preaching, without maintaining delusion of good relations, and sentiments, those who I, until lately, considered friends, fled. Frankly, I have no regrets. Preaching of Krishna Consciousness substitutes all for me: mother, father, wife, and children. I live in the trains or airplanes, stay with my disciples and those who I preach to, and cherish the only hope that one day I will attract Krishna's attention. Preaching for me is a lifestyle, way of manifesting compassion and love for all living beings, as well as protection of my own personality.*



*This time, while visiting Moscow, I called Ananta Shanti. It turned out that he had broken his leg and is confined to his home. Abandoned by all, he was glad to receive a phone call from me.*

I said, "Well, invite me to you."

He replied, "Come over."

*The apartment looked messy, there were piles of various junk. Therefore, first of all, we put things in order. Vasudeva, my disciple, washed the kitchen floor, took out the garbage can, vacuumed carpets, and then went to the market for groceries. Then Vasudeva and I cooked prasada. In about an hour we had a mountain of food: khalava, sabji, dal, rice, rolls and something tasty to drink. The table was decorated with flowers and fruits. We offered all of this to Krishna, then conducted short kirtan and then honored prasada. Then Ananta Shanti and I had a conversation around the table. I was ready for that, and I pulled recorder, specifically prepared for this occasion and recorded our conversation on tape.*

**Ananta Shanti:** Valmiki died.

**Murali Mohan das:** Who is he?

**A.S.:** He lived in America and considered himself Prabhupada's disciple.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, I recall him somewhat. Did he see Shrila Prabhupada?

**A.S.:** No, Valmiki was initiated in absentia. He had never seen Prabhupada. He wanted to meet with him, he went to India. But Prabhupada died, and he just remained there...

**M.M.d.:** In Russia, have anybody met Prabhupada, except you?

**A.S.:** No.

**M.M.d.:** I was told there was some man from Baku which Prabhupada initiated with you. Is it true?

**A.S.:** No. It was then when there appeared people who, as it turned out, "were carrying a log with Lenin". And now there is the whole army of them on that picture (we laughed).

*Ananta Shanti was not devoid of humor and I appreciated it in him.*

**A.S.:** Prabhupada was walking on the street, and many people saw him, but nobody approached him... Anybody could approach, but nobody did, except me. People were looking at him with the smile, some of them turned their finger at their temple... Nobody approached him except me.

*Stuffing his face with prasadam, Ananta Shanti looked at me without hiding his sense of superiority.*



**A.S.:** There were a lot of people around Prabhupada. All of them came to him with various agendas. That's why there were so many problems later. Because of them... Suppose you have a friend, acquaintance, and he has a dog. Just because it is your friend's dog, you are not guaranteed from being bitten by it. Dogs bite. For all these years there were many tragedies, but it was not Prabhupada's fault. It was just because other people came to him with their own ideas and agendas. They created these tragedies, problems. For example, Prabhupada had his disciples, Shyamasundara as secretary, and Aravinda as his servant. They stood next to Prabhupada, but this doesn't mean they were together. This contrast felt strongly. I realized that, and I knew I am fortunate, and I rejoiced myself. I was a sober thinker, so I defined pretty accurately who is who... When Harikesha arrived, it was like mass psychosis. People thought that Heaven had opened, and God, or somebody from Him, said, "This is my son!" like in Gospel. Everybody was jumping out of joy. But one has to distinguish...

*It has to be noted that the relation between Ananta Shanti and Harikesha Swami was always quite complicated. Later it took the character of total war between Shanti, and disciples and followers of Harikesha Swami.*

**A.S.:** We had problems — we went to jail. Valmiki was able to escape it. But one can't run from oneself. It's one thing, people who he had to live within the *ashram*; these people could be of "not so high class", but one has to realize what's what. We shouldn't look where the crowd is going, we should see what is important for us and follow it. He (Valmiki) felt the alternative to his former lifeline.

**M.M.d:** And what is the alternative?

**A.S.:** Well, there came some drug addicts, people with completely different objectives. I watched one Prabhupada's disciple in Vrindavan smoked hashish, but it cannot be condemned. He was a merry fellow, a joker, lived his life and let others live their lives. The majority of people were at some point drug addicts... So, what's the conclusion?

*At this moment Ananta Shanti stumbled.*

**A.S.:** Of course it was sad when the news came that Valmiki has died. I often thought of him and thought that it would be necessary to meet; years have passed and so... He saved himself from prison but created such life for himself that was worse than prison.

**M.M.d:** Where and how did you meet Valmiki?

**A.S.:** At Stas Namin studio. Valmiki was just drunkard. He and Stas were just like that, drunkards. You know, booze and easy women, that was it, but here he saw a different life.

**M.M.d:** In what year was it?

**A.S.:** Probably, in 1978, or 77, at the Book Fair... Gopal Krishna arrived in 1976. He brought books for the libraries. Book Fair was the following year. Somebody told me it was in 1976, but I insisted on 1977, and then it turned out it was in 1976. Book Fair was every two years. In 1979 Kirtiraja arrived, one year after Harikesha's arrival.

**M.M.d:** And Harikesha?

**A.S.:** Can't recall, for now, I have to count...

**M.M.d:** What can you say about the registration of the Krishna Consciousness Society in the USSR? Did Shrila Prabhupada want it, or not? If yes, in what way?

**A.S.:** Prabhupada recommended to gather at homes, in private. He did not want to register the Society, because it was a special situation in the Soviet Union.

**M.M.d:** Was it at odds with what Harikesha was doing?

**A.S.:** Harikesha was adequate. Prabhupada wanted to expel him... Then Harikesha said, "I am leaving you". Prabhupada was angry with him, "No, you are not leaving, I am turning you out!" He said that "I am driving you out..." Harikesha came here as a wolf in sheep's clothing. In Russia, all failed because of him, we were jailed because of him. We learned about it later. From the first glance, I did not like him, I can feel people. I just wanted to help my friends with cooperation...

**M.M.d:** Well, but in all the will of God... Those who "got burned" and jailed, after all, they were praised as great devotees of Krishna. Perhaps, it was Krishna's plan?

**A.S.:** Hard to say, over time, everything was settled and fell into place. It is regrettable that the best years are gone. How it is to spend the best years in jail! We were quite intelligent and young. We were from the seventies. We were those who did not want "righteous communism", I mean a good one, Lenin style communism. We were in search of something spiritual. We weren't satisfied with what the system had to offer, the whole spectrum of what system was trying to offer.

*A shadow crossed Ananta Shanti's face. After a short pause, while he was thoroughly chewing the piece of prasad, he continued:*

**A.S.:** We must be able to distinguish what is authentic, and what is inauthentic. We must never confuse one with another... Well, recently there came Kurma-rupa das (tutor in *gurukula*). He couldn't understand the situation and fell out of favor with ISKCON authorities. So, in order to earn money for the trip to India, he paired with someone and was working palmistry, collecting palm prints of the devotees, Prabhupada's disciples, including some gurus. He has accumulated a

large amount of statistical data on the basis of which he concluded: Devotees are just plain people they did not fell from the sky. 90% of them make some spiritual progress, and 10%, including guru, degrade. He asked me to tell nobody about this study, but the situation has already changed...

*As if regretting, Shanti added:*

**A.S.:** When there is a frenzy, people suffer from this, and degrade. The spectrum of religions is very wide, as the stakes there are higher than life. From the beginning, one has to accept it as it is, without mixing what is true, and what is inauthentic. One must have unpolluted outlook. My conclusion is: I met Prabhupada, and could have no one else to know. It would have been better for me not to meet with this system at all. There were some books, there was some method, and that was it. The problem arose when I encountered the system. It would be best for all if Harikesha would never arrive.

There was a lack of information for people, and they began to get together in some groups. There was some circle of intellectuals. When they learned about a new person or received new information, they invited that new person so others would learn about all of that... And suppose someone came first time to such gathering, and after that, he invited that person to his circle of friends, at home. Thus there was some kind of chain reaction, that's how the information was spread. I delivered information the same way I learned it — spoke about the religious system (Prabhupada), spiritual movement, principles, method. There were few books, and people were making copies of them, became vegetarians, and began to chant the mantra. They accepted all this without fanaticism, as something new and necessary for themselves. Everyone felt free to realize how much importance and interest was there for themselves. They accepted everything. Why? Because I did not press them. I simply was talking about how it affected my life, as it actually was. And people wanted to try for themselves, wanted to join me. But when Harikesha arrived, all turned over. "Milk is a very nutritious product, but when touched by the snake's tongue, it becomes poisonous", — this is the conclusion. My personal observation: old devotees, when they made the wrong choice, some of them were imprisoned, and some of them lost their faith. There is some pain, and suffering in these facts. Speaking of myself: my grandfather was repressed by the authorities, my father went through the same repression. In this country, we all were marching under the system watch. Can't step neither to the left nor to the right...

## IRON HAND DRIVING MANKIND TO HAPPINESS.

**M.M.d:** Maybe some people have been imprisoned because they were criminals by karma?

**A.S.:** No, our people weren't criminals. Take, for example, Vishvamitra. He was in graduate school, good boy, member of Komsomol (youth communist organization). Sadananda also suffered. The quietest and most peaceful people have suffered.

**M.M.d:** So, what's the conclusion?

**A.S.:** Any work produces fruits, results; fruit remains. My fruit is sweet, others always complain. They complain...not because of their material life, it's just their state of mind. I say, "Weather is bad, it's raining, but it will be worse when there is no weather at all. If there is no weather, it means we have died (lay in a coffin), and if there is whether — it's all good, it means we are alive. I broke my leg and I am happy that my head is not injured." We must see things from a different perspective. For me, each moment of life is unique. Because I made the right bet a long time ago, and now I enjoy the fruits of my labor. Some people made the wrong choices, they wanted to gain some profit at the expense of others, they tried to walk over the heads of other people, and they lost. Turns out either material or spiritual benefit was not received. Armenians, for example, got some material benefits. They strive for it.

**M.M.d:** What about those who haven't got neither material nor spiritual benefit?

**A.S.:** Well, the infamous Sanatana-kumar was left with nothing. Like in fairy tale: the devil tempts us by the gold, and when people choose gold as the main thing, everything turns into ashes, coals, embers... That's how it worked with him... I had a need for spirituality, and I embraced it. Prabhupada intensified my natural inclination for it. He did not turn my life upside down, he just intensified... Some people came (to the movement) accidentally. They did not realize that this is different, this is not the place to do business. The vilest type of business is a business on children, elderly, disabled, and the business on religion. Satya, for example, hasn't achieved any success, neither material nor spiritual. For the sake of the material benefits she was ready for any low action, and now she has left at "square one".

*Satya lives in California, with her husband Dumrakesha and her daughter. A few years ago she called me while I was in New York, and informed me that she has her doctorate thesis in psychology. She was very distressed about Shanti, as he left sannyasa for her. She told me she did it deliberately, wanted to teach Shanti a lesson, as he had too much pride in him. But after Shanti fell victim of her charms, she sincerely repented and cried like a child. I sympathized with both*



*of them. That's the nature of a woman, one must know it. It is said in Shrimad Bhagavatam that women are merciless. They can kill their husband, brother, or father. Let's recall King Lear and other Shakespeare's tragedies. Each of them involved a woman. Chercher la femme, as French say. Woman's passions are insatiable, she is the very embodiment of maya. A woman can be curbed by Krishna only, Lord of Maya. No one can control woman, only true brahmana, or Krishna Himself. If a woman is not engaged in devotional service to Krishna, she will sow discord, discord, confusion, making a fool out of a man, or turning him into the animal by encouraging the basest tendencies in him.*

**A.S.:** Vishvamitra asked me to write some kind of memoirs about my meeting with Prabhupada. He said, "Try to recall it from your memory." I replied, "I don't have to recall. I remember it as if it happens with me right now." Shyamasundara arrived at 25th Anniversary (of ISKCON in the Soviet Union)... I noticed he doesn't remember anything about Prabhupada. He simply forgot about everything. He was Prabhupada's secretary, traveling with him all the time, and then left him for the sake of business. He acquired precious gems mine in Africa but failed — lost million dollars on nationalization. Then he got a gold business.

When he arrived, the only thing he was talking with me about was if I can help him organize business of gold and gems.

**M.M.d:** So, where is he now?

**A.S.:** He lives as a retiree, on the money he earned during his life. For him, it was not the main thing to be with Prabhupada. As we can see, all kinds of people were around Prabhupada, and different people had different agendas. Life is not all clear sailing in calm waters. I, for example, was... Now I am a veteran, I am at a certain age, grandfather already, and have a clear vision. One must not mix material life with the spiritual life. Shyamasundara, at least, did not do it. He did not do business on Prabhupada. He honestly left him, and Armenians made it a business. I noticed it from the very beginning; it was clear from the beginning, as they were major Harikesha's fanatics.

**M.M.d:** What's the conclusion?

**A.S.:** And the conclusion is: The more the person is materialistic in itself, the more he is fanatical. One is given several chances to live life righteously, in accordance with laws of existence. But people, sometimes, don't see it, don't hear it, don't notice it, and when given chance do something else, not what has to be done. Many could come to Prabhupada, learn about him, on the other hand not too many came because it's not that simple. When I saw Shyamasundara first time, I immediately rushed to him. He was about to disappear in the crowd entering the underground pass. Few more seconds and I wouldn't meet him ever. I rushed immediately. He was dressed in kurta and dhoti. He got sick in India, so he looked pale and weak. In India, they gave him sneakers in a wrong size, and they rubbed his feet to blisters, so at some point (because of that) he would gaze at you abstractedly. So this was the picture: he walks on the streets of Moscow in a white robe. Some people look at him smilingly, like he is a clown or crazy, and I was interested in him. I remember him as if I see him now...

Valmiki went, and it was unusual. People lived in *an ashram*, it was unusual. They were irrelevant there, that's why ISKCON began to experience problems back then already. At the time, Prabhupada couldn't control this international emporium, because of too many different people.

*I thought to myself: Prabhupada still controls this emporium, invisibly pilots, with transcendental insight, this ship, between materialistic reefs and shoals. But, not wanting to interrupt Shanti, I decided to remain silent, and he continued:*

**A.S.:** If Prabhupada came and invited me, now, to stay in the ashram, in Europe, in America, or in India, my immediate response would be no, it's not for me. It's one thing — studying books when we learn about various religious traditions, it enriches us, and it's another thing... Wrong people came... They created nothing

but problems. That's why I am alone, found myself, and now I don't pay attention to the accessories. In India I was getting dressed in the Indian way, I was dressed respectively in south-east Asia, and when I returned here, I immediately changed clothes. When food is separate from us it is food in itself, but when we eat it, assimilate it, it becomes part of us. I learned what Prabhupada gave me, and it became part of me. Now I don't need to change haircut, or clothes, especially considering the conditions in which I was "schooled" when we couldn't show openly... I was repeating mantra silently, to myself. It was natural meditation, and I had look, like I am deep in thoughts, look around... I knew already, in India, that as soon as I get to Russia, I will take off clothes, will take off Brahmin thread and everything else, because it's assimilated, digested food for me, which became an integral part of me.

*By the way, when I came to visit Ananta Shanti, he met us unshaven and looked unkempt, but by the time of our departure, although we stayed only one day, he shaved his head, and changed clothes, out of respect and decency.*

**A.S.:** 33 years passed since 1971 — age of Christ! There must be something born, isn't it? Those years flew like a flash. I am not discouraged, I understand that I must die, yet I enjoy life. Every moment is unique, it can't come back; so, if lived incorrectly, it can't be fixed...

*Having said that, Ananta Shanti sighed and looked at me searchingly. I asked him:*

**M.M.d.:** What do you mean by "correct" or "incorrect"?

**A.S.:** By their fruits, ye be judged. My actions, my choice brought me sweet, good fruit... Recently called my friend, Arcady, and he said that everything in his life is wrong, "My friends just came in, and they are not happy..." But it's just a state of mind. I took mine from Prabhupada. There was no such an abundance of books then, as it is now. Shyamasundara gave me his copy of Bhagavad-Gita, which was an incomplete edition published by McMillan. In that edition some verses were cut, commentaries were incomplete, but that book was more monumental for me than the new one. It was well-thumbed Shyamasundara's personal copy. I gave it to some Indian acquaintances to read, and they lost it somehow. Although, it would be confiscated anyway... I would like to find the same edition. There were magazines, photo with Prabhupada's autograph. Nobody, even Kirtiraja, had such unique photograph. This is not just vivid memories. It was for me like it all is happening now. I have this kind of perception. If I talk to a man, and then he is gone somewhere, departed, and I still see him. The person may be dead, but I know he's out there. I've never seen Prabhupada again after we first met. He seemed to be dead three days after we met, but I

feel like he is always with me. I sense that he and Valmiki still exist somewhere. I don't see them, but they are out there. It is not a matter of faith, it's my inner conviction. My first recollection of myself was when I was less than one year old. I remember I was laying down swaddled, all wrapped up... And then I had itching cheek but since my hands were wrapped, and there was no one to scratch... Then, when I learned to walk, I always looked at my feet in order not to crush any insect or frog. At the summer house, when I was little, neighbors' kids were walking together. I walk too, notice ant, or bug, and go around so I wouldn't crush it. And the kid who walks behind me also sees it, and intentionally crushes it. We were already individuals, although different... in such a tender age when we were just one year old. I remember myself as an individual I was before. It is not a matter of faith. Many people cling on religion out of fear of death. Death is the line that separates sacred space. Everything is sacred, we may not realize it no, on this side of the line, but what goes beyond that line, when departs, becomes sacred...

*Within just half-an-hour of our conversation, Shanti was changing subjects, jumping from one topic to another without completing the previous one. The only possible way to connect his thoughts in a more or less logical story was the understanding of his inner state, and, if one knows what all this is about. It has to be admitted that Shanti is a talented speaker and is able to hold a listener's attention by his speeches.*

**A.S.:** The fact that I met Prabhupada...it was natural for me; as they say, "Seek, and ye shall find". I had a desire, and, even in the USSR, in those circumstances, I got it. People, in America, did not want to see or pay attention... It all depends on our aspiration to be always in the center of the events.

**M.M.d.:** And where is that center? Where is that hub of the Universe?

**A.S.:** Always here and now. But people do not realize that

**M.M.d.:** Speaking of the hub of the Universe, everyone tends to consider themselves as this hub... But, according to Vaishnava philosophy, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna is that hub of the Universe. He is the only hub of the Universe and the center of all our activities, our realization, our service to Him, our vision, discussions, and disputes about what can create harmony in the society, Universe and in our own lives. As a matter of fact, if everyone considers themselves as the hub of the Universe or center of it, it creates chaos, conflicts which are so distinctive for Kali-yuga. All problems occur due to those who attempt to replace the real hub of the Universe with some persona, idea or even the lack of ideas at all. We do not preach some religion; we preach *bhagavata-dharma*, or selfless service to Krishna, The God of all gods, the Supreme



Personality of Godhead who supports all other living beings — *nityo nityanam chetanash chetananam...*

**A.S.:** In Riga, one Buddhist invited us, gave us a special room. He decorated it with flowers, burned incense there. And then that Buddhist added that he has a friend, artist from Leningrad. That friend heard of us and wants to meet us. Why? What for? He had an art exhibition and has only two hours to meet. Why again? So, it was you, Mamu Thakur. You arrived, we talked and you went back... Do you remember that Georgian man? What was his name?

**M.M.d.:** Visso.

**A.S.:** And where is he now? Moved to America, or what?

*Visso was that man from which I learned about Krishna Consciousness, and then later met Shanti at his home.*

**M.M.d.:** Lately he was living in America, in Detroit, with his wife and children. Now he is initiated in Chaitanya-Sarasvat matha.

**A.S.:** Whenever one has aspirations, one does right things in the right time. Shyamasundara and Aravinda were with Prabhupada. Aravinda had eyes of a martyr, like a dog that is ready for medical students to kill it. That's exactly the same was in his eyes, the suffering of a martyr. A year later, when they left, he left Prabhupada... Prabhupada said we are not this body. And to the Hindu who was with me, and wanted to marry a Russian woman, and Aravinda... He said to both, "Don't marry a Russian woman, she will grow fat. Choose the body that is not fat... Prabhupada says, "We are not this body", and Aravinda, he couldn't be careless of what Prabhupada said... "Do not marry a Russian woman, she will grow fat..."

*Shanti had a number of wonderful qualities. One of them was that he was able to present his vision of the most insignificant event, or ordinary facts in a very attractive or opposite, in a very negative form and to the level of grotesque.*

**A.S.:** Oriental man is either too fat or too skinny. When he seizes some money, he eats to his heart's content. It's hard to find a normal person in India. India is a transcendental country; everyone there is like the angels of God. Dirty, unsanitary conditions, the life there is a total contradiction to the philosophy. The only place where the philosophy of Buddha could appear: renunciation and non-violence. Because the people there are hungry for sex, in a perverted form, for which they even commit crimes. This is the South, passionate, hot... the country of violence. Everything is permeated with violence. And naturally, when one gets worn out with all this, one comes to the opposite conclusions. It is well reflected in Indian movies. People think their movies are funny and unrealis-

tic, but this is the essence of national character Indian movies reflect national character. I witnessed cop with a big mustache and with the angry face, like in their movies, was brutally beating up one man with a bamboo stick. The man writhed and cried. They can't tolerate pain, because they are very sensual. A grown man cried out of pain. It's a shame, even if it's very painful, yet he cries like a child, while policeman enjoys... With the face of a demonic character. And that is an everyday scene. Our unbridled fanatics come to Vrindavan and say, "Oh we went on parikrama". They didn't see neither any people, nor temples or ashrams. They walked on the field in circles, that's it... (same as an empty field somewhere in Urals, or suburbs of Moscow). They still walk in the circles, and their mind makes circles as well. And then they roll their eyes and groan as in, take, for example, Palestine. There is no green grass, seared soil and dust... Ahh, Christ was there. Everyone looks for something and finds external, absurd things. Ask some "krishnaitis", they will say they were here and there, "uh-oh" and all in vain. If they would be present when Prabhupada came, they would pass him by, for sure. But had they met Shyamasundara or the servant, Aravinda, they would bow down to them and kiss edges of their clothes. Ah, how transcendental!

*Shanti divided all Hare Krishnas in "ours" and "not ours", feeding in relation to his own feelings of love towards "ours". However, one shouldn't divide the devotees of Krishna based on bodily characteristics. Real Vaishnava belongs to a category that is transcendental, so the bodily, external approach in evaluating Vaishnava is an offense.*

**A.S.:** I met Mamu Thakur in Vrindavan. Went with him to Yamuna River. Small, dirty river... and these...began to guzzle water from it. So, then, naturally, many suffered from an upset stomach. They believed that this is transcendental, grace; push another by elbows to get grace for themselves (Ananta Shanti showed by gestures and facial expression how Russians "seize the grace"). Same type — Christians, Hare Krishnas; as Orthodox Christians slobber icons all over, so do they... There is no grace in Palestine or Vrindavan, only dust and dirt, there is no grace as we have here (green grass, plants). This is heavenly Jerusalem, heavenly Vrindavan — it is internal state of mind, not the ugly reality of the nature alien to us... But these people are stubborn as a mule, they don't understand. For them, all this dirt is transcendental (like they don't have enough of it at home). They don't have the right state of mind. They were 15 years in Vrindavan, walked on the fields, however they did not see people, sadhus, or ashrams. They travel there year after year, but nothing changes. Only more and more insults of holy dhama... In Mayapur too, there are such ferocious mosquitoes. We don't have mosquitos like this. Our mosquitoes don't bite you when you jump. But there,

whether you jump or not, it doesn't help. They eat you alive. Low place, Ganges is dirty, fast streamed, wide river; half-burned corpses float on the water.

*Such contempt and disgust for the holy dhama are offensive. However, to assume that by just buying a plane or train ticket there we find ourselves in Vrindavan is equally offensive. Because it brings holy dhama down to the level of materialistic consciousness. What can I say? Devotees' vision of Vrindavan is very different from the vision of karmis. The holy dhama hides from the eyes of non-devotees by its external unattractiveness. Only those who perform regular bhajana can attain true spiritual grace there. The description of Vrindavana and Mayapur made by the devotee is sharply different from that given by karmis. One can only wonder how the illusory energy of the Lord, veils eyes of the materialist. They see only dirt, while devotees see the kingdom of God. We live in the kingdom of Krishna, but not everyone realizes it. One, whose eyes are moisturized by the balm of true Love, sees Krishna in one's heart, but others don't see it. The world reveals itself differently to the people with different level of consciousness. Sinful man cannot enjoy the beauty and grandeur of Vrindavan. As Advaita Acharya said about Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, "Your heart is Vrindavan." But the heart of the materialist is his mind. After all, everyone is judging according to their nature. Both fool and wise man see others equal to themselves. Kanishtha sees others as fools; madhyama distinguishes, and uttama sees that all are engaged in devotional service. Uttama sees everyone as devotees, except himself. He doesn't see himself, he sees only Krishna, and he sees Vrindavan in his heart. The pure in heart shall see God...*

*I continued to tape everything Shanti said about Vrindavan, trying not to pay attention to his mindset.*

## **HOLY DHAMA DOESN'T REVEAL ITSELF TO EVERYONE!**

**A.S.:** ISKCON members took two movie ladies with them, so they would videotape their trip and promote on TV, Channel 1. They took them as a bribe in the form of traveling abroad. I did sports swimming, while ago. And there, in the Ganges River, the stream is very strong. People are drawn there every year. And these two women went to the river. They were told, "You can't show your naked body here". They went fairly far and some Hindu with a mustache and the knife attacked them. He wanted to rape them but found himself in the position of Buridan's ass. If it would be one woman, he would rape her for sure. And as there were two of them, as they told us, he couldn't decide which one to attack first. Taking advantage of his confusion, they ran away. That's the reality there.

People often are drawn there, fall into the river and drawn...or become the victim of a local bandit.

For me, our grass and trees are more beautiful, more transcendental than what I saw in India. To be born in India is bad karma.

**M.M.d.:** India is a country of ascetics. Holy *dhama* doesn't reveal itself to everyone. Sinful man, while on pilgrimage, comes to the holy place (dhama) and leaves his sins there, whereas saintly person purifies this place by his devotional service. Those who are engaged in devotional service at holy *dhama* are quickly progressing in their spiritual life. Others, who commit offenses, waste their time there. Prabhupada did not want his disciples to stay there for a long time. It was disturbing local residents. It is okay to come and stay for some time, meet *sadhu* to hear *krishna-katha* from him and then to return for preaching...

**A.S.:** Who needs that? Asceticism is a way of life of the local aborigines. When I was in northern India, unlike members of ISKCON, I lived in *sadhus'* ashrams, and fit in very well. One just has to follow rules and go to bed on time, and not making noise at night time. You are given food in the morning. No demands. Some perform hatha-yoga. Some chant mantras, some make a little altar and conduct *puja*. Many don't know English, but they don't need it. An ashram is a place where you can do something for your spiritual advancement. Many *sadhus* smoke hashish. Narcotics are officially banned there, but for the *sadhu*, it is considered as a part of their religion. And when there occurs Kumbhamela, this great festival, there gather many representatives from various small and big sects. Nobody knows how many types of tilaks exist. In Vrindavan, most often I saw on their foreheads tilaks different from those of ISKCON. ISKCON members do it more elegant, others do worse. There is a book there... there are many branches from Shri Chaitanya, and all of them consider themselves His followers. How many of them are like that? Nobody knows. Babaji at Radha-kunda have a different form of *tilaka*, but everyone is Chaitanya's follower. They come to Kumbhamela on decorated and painted trucks: there is the ashram leader, his forehead is painted in some special way. He sits in the truck and smokes hashish. It is considered an inseparable part of their religion. They smoke hashish like Christians burn labdanum in the church... You can live as you please, and you can grow spiritually. I liked their ashrams, they don't have many rules, demands. Nobody wakes you up in the morning, as it is in the ISKCON temples. Members of ISKCON don't like to wake up, they want to sleep. They are awakened by the whip-lash or by the alarm. They wake up, take a cold shower and mutter the mantra: bu...bu..., one can see they are doing it reluctantly, overcoming themselves. If they were told to stay in the bed as long as they wish, they would get up only for food. Hindu members of ISKCON do exactly so. That's why they are forced to get up, under the whip-lash, in winter, when it's cold... And in

sadhu ashram one can stand on one's head, nobody tells you anything. You'll be fed there, and you can live there and do what you want. I came to one of those ashrams, they gave me the whole room, right away. It was a bit hot in the room, so I went on the roof, and there were big gray monkeys...

Periodically, a rich man invites to dinner; sadhus come, fill themselves with prasad... It feels wonderful. One can learn about the country and people from within, when living at home, in an ashram, not like ISKCON members, from outside. They can travel every year there and won't be able to learn anything. I lived like that there and I am very happy. This is the religion: if you want, you can smoke hashish, and if you want... Nobody preaches anything. It's a paradise for those who want to be hippie-like, and for those who want to grow spiritually. I traveled from India to Pakistan...and to Europe. The whole world had opened to me. But then I felt like anything we do, we do it through what is unnecessary, not to bring in something foreign. In order to understand ourselves: this is not mine, and this is not me... we reject, and reject, and only then find ourselves. I had initiated in various Vishnu traditions, Ramanuja, shivaites... and then got satiated...

*"Spiritual life doesn't satiate, it is a material life that sets our teeth on edge" – I said, but Shanti, not listening to my remarks, continued:*

**A.S.:** I am a sincere man, and I found a similar kind of people. Very interesting people offered me to stay in their *ashrams*, but soon I realized that it's not mine; I can't take it for some time and then leave it. Thus I decided to come back. In that same India, there are no more spiritual people than in Russia. They are "exquisite merchandise" everywhere. I met many of them, and if I would want to...

*At this moment Shanti has stopped; while chewing prasad, the piece of food went "the wrong way", so to speak, and he began to cough, then after clearing his throat he continued:*

**A.S.:** I had a friend, American, he died...

**M.M.d.:** Is this the one I saw, the man with matted hair who lived in Vrindavan for 17 years?

**A.S.:** Yes, he walked around with bare feet, very nice man. In Hrishikesh we lived together in one ashram, but soon after they kicked him out. He was wondering somewhere, used to come late, climbing over the fence. One time he was climbing and felt... Then the leader of the ashram told him, "Go to bed for now, and tomorrow you must leave". I had to leave as well... I was traveling quietly and peacefully, like a sadhu, over whole Northern India. It is different in Southern India... Northern Indians don't like them. There, in the North, sadhus travel in the trains of 4th class for free, and in the buses for free. I was traveling, like sadhu,

for free. Express bus in Delhi, the price is lifted, and I used to get on it for free, like sadhu... The controller is passing by, "Ticket, ticket..."; and I go for free, like sadhu. There is a train in Bombay, first class, nice and neat, high class public sits there. I used to travel in that first class train as well. They check tickets, and I say, "Sadhu". They smile. In that sense it's great there, full bliss for someone with the most sincere motives, as well as for the scoundrel.

## NUCLEAR THREAT

The mentality of the average Soviet people by then was as follows: We can tolerate, just no war. We won the war (WW II), and everything depends on us. This was the mentality of the Soviet people, downtrodden, dispossessed, but proud of their mite. GBC, when organizing preaching in the USSR decided to play with these feelings. It was necessary at this point to awake somehow Soviet devotees, force them to act, as they were lazy. *Tama-guna* affected them, as well as the climate, religion, philosophy, lifestyle. If they wouldn't be given this canard of "thermonuclear war", they would be still laying down in their own excrements. Laziness, lack of will, overconfidence, and chauvinism — in other words, *tama-guna*. In order to move them, they needed a bit of *rajas* (*raja-guna*): a little bit of sex or war...

*That's why, returning to our conversation, I asked about the thermonuclear war threat, and Shanti, as usual, jumping from one thought to another began to tell:*

**A.S.:** Harikesha constantly phoned Premavati and persistently tried to persuade her to leave Moscow. In 1982 he just said that nuclear war will begin in October. And we need to escape to the countryside. He said, "After the war, hungry *karmi* will run, and you will remain, survive and will be with the food". Total absurd! How is it possible to survive nuclear war in rural areas? And that was a turning point. Normal, sober-minded people then backed away from Harikesha. And fanatics, rabid of various degrees, have followed. Probably Sanatana-kumar had a sincere impulse. They just got a new two bedroom apartment that would be worth \$100,000 now. Lookducharu said they got their money. The obeyed the order and received their money. If everything will vanish in the flames of nuclear war, why not to take advantage of it now? But as it turned out, after the fact, they were left with nothing.

**M.M.d.:** Except those were there other people who were pursuing their spiritual goals, wishing to obey their guru's order, for Krishna?

**A.S.:** Absurd thing... I saw it, people were eager to go somewhere, Caucasus, Central Asia. I told them, "Get your money together, we will make a quick trip to make sure where is the best place for you to relocate, whether it's the Caucasus

or Central Asia.” For that purpose, I’ve studied special literature, in order to determine the best places, in case they would want to find out. They didn’t listen to us, and then we went there separately from them (then when persecution started, we visited Northern Caucasus, and there were some people residing there already).

**M.M.d.:** My question was, whether there were some people who weren’t such pragmatists and simply wanted to leave for countryside just to follow their guru’s order. Guru is a representative of God, and to follow his orders is as good as if we follow God Himself. Were there those who had just pure spiritual interest? If we want to surrender onto Krishna, it must be done unselfishly. Were there any people, who, for the sake of spiritual perfection, decided to leave cities for the countryside?

**A.S.:** Every man is representative of God, and everything is a representation of Him. One simply has to see and hear it.

**M.M.d.:** In other words, were there people who were moved by spiritual motives?

*I insisted again and again, but Shanti seemingly did not hear me. Perhaps, he and I had a different understanding of words “spirit”, and “spiritual”...*

**A.S. (after pausing, in thoughts):** Spiritual means, first of all, sobriety. Sobriety must be present.

**M.M.d. (with a bit of sarcasm):** Okay. Were there such teetotalers?

**A.S.:** In recent years I observe, that Sanatana-kumar, for example, had purely pragmatic interest. Nothing spiritual has been left in him. When Harikeshha reigned, and I was out of favor, I remember I came to them, at Begovaya, saw Sanatana-kumar, and approached him. And he was looking around to make sure that nobody sees him with me and then started to back away from me, so we wouldn’t be caught together, and he wouldn’t have problems because of that. There was sincerity in the beginning, and then where did it all go? He became totally materialistic.

I and Satya hitchhiked and decided to stop by their place, as they found some spot in Northern Caucasus. While we were sitting in the log truck, the driver told us, “The area you are going to is the area where men become impotent, because there is the development of uranium ore. Surprisingly, we knew before, that it was a bad place to live, but they already moved there. Left their apartments in the cities and bought some little cabins. Then it was a police raid there, and we could be caught... We ran by hidden trails from there, left the place. Later they were exiled from that area. Mahamantra came from Riga. She left her apartment for her son, thus she was able to return later. And the rest of

them were left with nothing: lost their apartments and got nothing. They found themselves deceived.

**M.M.d.:** Perhaps it happened because they were pursuing material goals. Could it be so?

**A.S.:** They did not pursue any goals. They did as they were told to do, as they were commanded to do. They did not think for themselves. But I had a practical, honest approach. I never considered leaving my apartment. I just tried to help those who wanted to relocate to the countryside. I tried to find better places for them. But they didn't listen to me. So their life has become warped. Harikesha forced them to that. It was for his benefit to keep people under his control. But Prabhupada said nothing about these things. It was for the political gain. When one has family, property, it's his little emporium. And when one has nothing, one is sannyasi and can be sent anywhere so one can be easily manipulated.

## **SANNYASI IS FREE!**

**M.M.d.:** True sannyasi is always free because he depends fully on Krishna. He can't be manipulated. Because he is completely unattached, renounced, thus he is free.

**A.S.:** But for Harikesha it was that sannyasi depends on him, not on Krishna.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, the modern *sannyasa-ashram* binds man to the organization that granted *sannyasa* and gives that man a privileged position, but it doesn't bind one to Krishna.

**A.S.:** He wanted people to be attached to him, not to this world, not to anything else, but to him. He, himself went to the forest, found these rotten sticks (to make *danda*) He wanted to do this initiation at any cost. The ceremony was held at someone's apartment. I remember what he said after my initiation, "This is the most important event for the whole country".

Later, when I was traveling, Bharadvaja lost my *danda*. We were coming from Riga, and I was worried about books and films we were taking with us, so naturally, we forgot it (*danda*). I insisted that all these books and films should be kept safe, and they forgot about my *danda*. *Danda* is long and inconvenient, so many ISKCON sannyasis don't carry it with them. They have these *dandas* in every center they arrive at, that's how they "carry" their *dandas*. My *danda* was made from rotten sticks and the same was the end of it. That's not my nature. I did not need these formal things, I was interested in the knowledge. I had spiritual, cultural interest... I can't play second class roles. I can't be under anybody. That's why Harikesha and I couldn't get along. As of now, I started my own business, rehabilitation of drug addicts. I have my own knowhow...

**M.M.d.:** And how was Kirtiraja? How did he treat you? Was he your friend?



**A.S.:** He treated me well, he was always ready to help me. I had my ex-wife and son, and he said that the society has to help sannyasi's family. He even volunteered to marry my wife to take her and my son out of the country. He was ready to pay for my son's residency in *gurukula* in Vrindavan, or Mayapur. He even got the confirmation document, that he is not married in the consulate. He treated me very well.

**M.M.d.:** Tell the story about Paris and that French devotee, the girl.

**A.S.:** In order to have better conditions for preaching, first there was a meeting with her in 1971, and we got married in 1972. Her name was Mandakini. She was visiting me, but we had no children, so the marriage fell apart. Time went by and I got the family here.

**M.M.d.:** Is Mandakini a devotee now?

**A.S.:** No, she got some problems. Harikesha told her to divorce me, that she doesn't need that. She divorced me and then married another man. That marriage was unsuccessful. It was her friend, Jew, architect. French devotees told me about her: she was on the edge, thought about suicide. Consequences were heavy. Harikesha used to leave a desert behind himself, he was capable of making people miserable. There is one more story about the Palestinian man. He was Prabhupada's disciple. Harikesha led his daughter to marry someone. It was important for the father, his daughter's marriage. When this marriage broke up after a short time, there was a big scandal. Harikesha was very skilled, he used to arrange collective marriages. Giving blessings to many at once... then all of them broke up, and everyone fled away. It's his way, his art, his nature to make people miserable. After Harikesha, Dhira Krishna Swami arrived (he later joined Shridhara Swami). They established their center in Hungary. Since Harikesha had his center in Hungary as well, he ordered, and that center was reported to the authorities and they crushed them. Harikesha did not need the preaching of Krishna Consciousness, he needed to expand his influence. Everyone else was to be destroyed. The whole picture looks very unpleasant to the one who knows all the information. Harikesha disobeyed two of the Prabhupada's orders on the Soviet Union: 1) do not register the society officially, but gather at private places; 2) and in regards to that French wife which was sent by Prabhupada. It was a very wise decision. We agreed on everything with him in three days, it was very simple. And easy.

**M.M.d.:** What was easy? To come to an agreement with Prabhupada?

**A.S.:** Yes... Harikesha did not create the zone in this part of the world. He got everything ready from Hamsaduta. Hamsaduta used to arrive here. In fact, he was the brightest guru of ISKCON. I liked him very much. Harikesha was not fit to hold a candle to him. But there was really strong opposition to Krishna Consciousness in Germany, and in order to lower conflict, they decided to remove

Hamsaduta temporarily. And then they placed Harikesha there. Temporarily, and then the period of so-called “zone acharyas” began, and Harikesha began to claim himself as Prabhupada’s representative, and even equal to him, in his zone. And nobody could be around. As the “zone acharya”, Harikesha began to develop his own personality cult, although there was no any personality of him, plain zero, imaginary... After all, it attracted like-minded people, who signed up to adulate Harikesha. Armenians made good business on that. Rascals sang in unison with other rascals. That’s how the crisis in ISKCON began. When the opportunity arose, they sent large amounts of books in Russian. They collected a significant amount of money. If the money hadn’t been stolen it could be possible to acquire some property or build not one but a few temples. But money had been stolen by Armenians. When authorities opened floodgates for religious activity it was a religious vacuum in the country. Krishna Consciousness was the most exotic and most impressive philosophy. It could develop very strong. But since it fell in the hands of such rascals, who pursued material goals, everything fell apart soon, completely discredited.

**M.M.d.:** Who do you call “Armenians”?

**A.S.:** Kamalamala and Sannyasa. They took everything in their hands. When we were absent, they came out of nowhere and got very well along with Harikesha. After that, they began to plant Harikesha’s cult of personality and fix their little business. Not so long time ago I spoke with Sucharu’s wife. She remembered Yuriy A, who died three years ago. He was the most honest man, the only honest man among them. He was a treasurer. When he saw that everything is embezzled (he couldn’t control it), he said to them, straight up, “I can’t stop it, and I don’t want to serve as a cover or protective screen”. And he resigned. Others also saw it, and they wanted power, so they also got a piece of this “pie”. Sucharu’s wife remembers Yuriy Albul. He honestly objected, stood up against them. When we were released from imprisonment, I met for the first time Kamalamala and Sannyasa. They surprised me. They looked at me with hatred. They never saw me before. Usually, new person is looked at with interest, curiosity. They looked at me with hatred. Because I was a dangerous competitor for them. They did whatever they could to discredit me before Harikesha and to take my place. Golden opportunity (to develop the movement) was missed. “Strike the iron while it’s hot”. ISKCON, therefore, is doomed. Now the religious market is filled. I go sometimes to those little stores, such as “Path back to oneself”, other stores... There is a lot of various literature and a lot of announcements from various organizations and groups.

**M.M.d:** In your opinion, is it possible to fix these relationships and raise the reputation of Krishna Consciousness in nowadays?

**A.S.:** It is hard right now. Because there exists a lot of competing organizations of Krishna Consciousness in this country. Yegor Jagannath..., govindas, Hawaiian guru (Prabhupada's disciple), other groups... A new person would be confused, surprised, as all organizations claim themselves as representing Krishna, and how one can figure out who of them is real, true? On the other hand, the pluralism allows one to find something one's own. Right now there are six or more various branches.

**M.M.d.:** Do they preach the same philosophy and the same principles?

**A.S.:** Different ways... Different people represent it differently.

**M.M.d.:** Naturally, but what principles they preach? Same Hare Krishna mantra?

**A.S.:** If you get a book and practice Krishna Consciousness at home, in solitude... but if through the people, then people will add something from themselves, from their character traits.

**M.M.d.:** But this Krishna Consciousness movement assumes the participation of many.

**A.S.:** But it will never be of a mass scale. "In every town and every village" will never happen.

**M.M.d.:** Are you sure? Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said that in every town and village...

**A.S.:** In every town and village people have various religious organizations and hear something about God. In this sense, it has been always like that on Earth. It has been always.

**M.M.d.:** The meaning was that Holy name will be chanted everywhere.

**A.S.:** No, Hare Krishna... this will never happen. This is not realistic. One religion on Earth? Impossible. Unrealistic.

**M.M.d.:** Krishna Consciousness is not a RELIGION. It is a spiritual movement which is maintained by acharyas. Many acharyas and one movement.

**A.S.:** On a global scale it is very sparse.

**M.M.d.:** It's not about the global scale or planet Earth. We consider the Universe. The best place in our Universe is Bharata-varsha, the best place in Bharata-varsha is India, and the best place in India is Nadia, or Mayapur because Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu descended there. His incarnation is unique. He comes once in a Kalpa. As *maha-vadanyaya avatara*, He distributes love for Krishna without any conditions, to everyone, not limiting anyone outside of the religion, society, high class or outcasts. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu teaches that every living being is a soul, thus anyone can become Krishna conscious by simply listening and chanting His Holy Names: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. So, what do you say on that? If Krishna wants it to be widespread, we can't doubt the success of His

mission, — it is foolish, extremely unwise. As a matter of fact, this movement has spread already. One needs to see it. If we have proper vision, we can see it. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu liberated everyone during his time. But the others came. And now by His mercy, we can take part in His pastimes, and receive his grace through preaching. Even those who chant Holy Name in jest, accidentally, or unintentionally, attain liberation. That's what one, who has eyes sees. You are liberated, but you don't realize it yet, because your karma conditioned you by this body. When you leave your body in due time, you will attain liberation by God's mercy. The only exception is if you did not commit offenses of Krishna devotees and His Holy Name. Offensive chanting of the Holy Name doesn't bring result immediately. But in any case, the positive result will be...

**A.S.:** Every human is a person, and he, himself, finds what pleases his soul.

**M.M.d.:** Naturally. Krishna is the soul of all souls, and His movement can attract everyone. It is important to present it as it is, and it is attractive. Shri Chaitanya tree is one but it has many big and little branches, leaves and all this constitutes the crown of this tree which grows throughout the whole Universe. Main two trunks of that tree, as it is indicated in Chaitanya Charitamrita, are Nityananda and Advaita, but there are also many other. Those who are connected to this tree of bhakti, which has root in Goloka Vrindavana, attain love for Krishna. But those who lose this connection with it will wither. In his commentaries, Shрила Prabhupada writes that... all Hindu religious sects will gradually die out and there will be only ISKCON.

**A.S.:** I found what I wanted for myself, I took from Prabhupada all I could...

*I saw some sacred meaning in Shanti's words.*

**M.M.d.:** Krishna has many arms, and He can give everything. How much we can take by only two arms? And if he decided to take away everything how much we can hold to ourselves?

*Prabhupada could give love for Krishna to everyone. But why his disciples didn't attain it? Because they wanted something else: high position, money, fame...*

*In abundance, Prabhupada poured his mercy upon those, who were even briefly connected to him... and everyone was able to accept as much as it was allowed by their personal qualities. Whoever wanted money, got money; whoever wanted fame, became famous; those who wanted high position became members of GBC... Prabhupada has been offering truly spiritual association with him and those who wanted it they got it. There were many who were close to Prabhupada, stood next to them, but it doesn't mean they were associating with him. And what does it mean, to associate with Prabhupada? It means the teacher/*

*spiritual master eternally lives in his instructions, and the disciple eternally lives with the teacher by following his instructions.*

**M.M.d. (continuing):** Prabhupada is immense. Prabhupada is the direct representative of Shri Chaitanya movement and the philosophy which was given by Six Goswami of Vrindavan.

**A.S.:** Yes, but everyone has to make a choice for themselves.

**M.M.d.:** Naturally, because everyone is an individual, and their individuality is expressed in the unique relationship with Krishna, while they remain His eternal servants.

**A.S.:** The whole picture is mixed even in India itself...

**M.M.d.:** It's not about India. We're not talking about religion, like Hinduism, for example. Krishna Consciousness is not a religion, it is pure God Consciousness. It is in the soul's nature, and it is as eternal as the soul. It is a spiritual movement which helps to attain pure consciousness and to restore one's relationship with Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**A.S.:** But there is a catch though: It is either Indian religion with all Indian accessories, or it loses all Indian attributes and becomes purely intellectual and spiritual.

**M.M.d.:** Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught that every living being is a soul...it has nothing to do with religion for Russians or Indians...

**A.S.:** ...but simultaneously with Chaitanya, there was Vallabha-acharya whom his followers considered Krishna Himself as well.

**M.M.d.:** We declare Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu incarnation of Krishna on the basis of scriptures, not on the basis of the opinion of his followers.

**A.S.:** By the way, why Prabhupada went to America? To organize the temple of Vallabha-acharya? Members of ISKCON don't know this.

**M.M.d.:** Judging by the facts, Shrila Prabhupada began this Krishna Consciousness movement on the basis of Chaitanya teachings. Nowhere in his book, or from himself, we can find something different, contradicting.

**A.S.:** He came to America to build Vallabha-acharya temple, for Indians. His sponsor was that lady, ship-owner, who was one of the leaders in the Vallabha-acharya tradition. She wanted to build Vallabha-acharya temple for Indians in America...

**M.M.d.:** Prabhupada followed his guru who is the representative of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He was accomplishing his guru's mission. He did not preach anything different from Six Goswami, Bhaktivinoda Thakur, and Bhaktisiddhanta. And exactly due to this his mission was successful. Any deviation from the mission of one's guru becomes an insurmountable obstacle to the success in

one's spiritual life. And problems in modern ISKCON are a direct result of deviation from Prabhupada's line and instructions of previous acharyas. Prabhupada was instructed by his guru to preach Krishna Consciousness to people speaking in English and predicted his success. Bhaktisiddhanta said to him, "This will benefit you and those whom you will preach." Shrila Prabhupada's success is a success of his guru. I personally have experience of such missionary activity, and since the times of stagnation to this day, don't meet obstacles to its implementation. I grew up on Prabhupada's books, preached like him, and my preaching was always successful. This is the mystical power of *guru-varga*. Any deviation from it leads to collapse, the fall from the path of devotional service. Anyone who preaches in the mainstream of Shri Chaitanya's instructions, who began Sankirtana movement (congregational chanting of Lord Krishna's Holy Names) will face no obstacles on one's path and will acquire His mercy. This is practical and real. When you preached, no matter how well or poorly you did it, you were protected by the lotus feet of Shri Guru, *parampara* and Shrila Prabhupada personally. Deviation from it caused the fall, and all of your current problems, according to the facts...

*Shanti did not listen and continued with his own thoughts:*

**A.S.:** Since this mission failed, he did not want to just return to India empty-handed, he was ready to return with the arrival of the same vessel, the company guaranteed him free round-trip transportation...

**M.M.d.:** During our conversation, you constantly contradict yourself: first, taking Shrila Prabhupada as your guru, spiritual authority, then you reject and discredit him by your behavior and words ... Your position often changes.

**A.S.:** The guru must be in the heart and in the head ... they say: not knowing whether one is coming or going...

**M.M.d.:** If someone considers a guru as an ordinary person, it is the mindset of the inhabitants of hell. If someone believes that the "I" is a material body, then one can think that one's guru is identical to this idea ... but let's leave it alone for now. What is your personal relationship with Shrila Prabhupada? First, you accept his authority, then you discredit him.

**A.S.:** There is no discredit here — it's history. It is what it is...

**M.M.d.:** History is written by historians, but the attitude of the disciple to his guru is not relevant to history. It's on a transcendental platform...

**A.S.:** This is the story of Prabhupada. You should know it.

**M.M.d.:** History is written by historians, but disciples follow their guru, fulfilling his mission.

**A.S.:** Prabhupada went to America to organize temple worship for the Hindu followers of Vallabha Acharya. This story was written by devotees.

**M.M.d.:** Prabhupada told you that?

**A.S.:** Those whom he spoke to, told me. About this, he, himself, did not say anything to me, but the other disciples to whom he spoke, told me about it.

**M.M.d.:** In other words, you reject...

**A.S.:** No, I trust my brothers in God...

**M.M.d.:** But, if there is a spiritual teacher, you can appeal, refer to his authority.

**A.S.:** And who was my first spiritual master?

**M.M.d.:** And who?

**A.S.:** MY GRANDMOTHER...

**M.M.d.:** And she probably still is...

*I was ready to send Shanti to his grandmother, but refrained from it, which I regret now.*

**A.S.:** She was an example for me in spirituality and religiosity, life in general.

**M.M.d.:** So, what's the conclusion?

**A.S.:** There can be many gurus. This is said even in the books... you need to learn from everyone, even from animals...

**M.M.d.:** The truth is great — it is understandable, and the guru is also immensely great; he gives us instructions in many ways through the heart and through the shastra and outward manifestation ... At a higher level of development, a person can see and hear the guru constantly, without ever losing contact with him. But it is necessary to recognize that the truth is one, and the guru is one. How do you understand your relationship with him?

**A.S.:** My first and indisputable guru was my grandmother... And Prabhupada certainly, as nothing was happening, began this movement. Circumstances contributed to it, and there was a hippy movement, and he took advantage of it. One hippie who was in India was looking for a guru. He met Prabhupada, became interested and invited his friends, who also showed interest, and this, like a snowball, rolling down the hill, gradually began to grow.

**M.M.d.:** It was the will of the Supreme Personality, which is the cause of all causes.

**A.S.:** It's a true story of how it has begun.

**M.M.d.:** But this story has already been written, and we do not have another, alternative point of view. What you say can be questioned.

**A.S.:** We here know what was not from the direct participants, as a rule, but from the book of Satsvarupa Gosvami...

**M.M.d.:** But Satsvarupa was one of his first disciples, serving Prabhupada as his personal secretary.

**A.S.:** I talked with many participants of that story about this and even the description that concerns my meeting with him is not complete and not accurate. Many participants smiled and said that with this book it is the usual situation... Those events in which they were participants themselves or witnessed were also incomplete and not accurate.

**M.M.d.:** But the author of this book does not pretend to a scientific monographic study. If there is anything to say, you too can write your book; so it will be more honest.

**A.S.:** I don't want to.

**M.M.d.:** In that case, everyone will be forced to accept an already existing version of the events.

**A.S.:** If one strives for truth, like me, one will attain it.

**M.M.d.:** Write your story, how you see it, or according to your own version.

**A.S.:** By the way, I talked about this with Vishvamitra... I told them everything, they forgot it all. And now they ask me again to dictate this on a recorder. Then they will be able to publish all this.

**M.M.d.:** Maybe they just want to compare. Compare what you said before and what you say now. Maybe they want to prove you guilty of duplicity or falsification? What Prabhupada did is self-evident, and what we imagine has no confirmation... It makes no sense in giving someone an advance — first they'll write, and everyone will see them.

**A.S.:** They can verify nothing because they do not remember anything. Things go in at one ear and out at the other. And I cannot add anything new.

**M.M.d.:** Can I use our conversation that took place on August 6, 2004, as an argument, a historical fact?

**Shanti, hesitatingly:** "I have not said anything about that meeting yet... I have not yet been rehabilitated after the fracture ... I barely have enough energy for that."

*Shanti attempted to get away, but it was too late. The word is not a sparrow if it flies out you can't catch it. Probably, he already regretted of saying too much. Without losing a lead, I thanked Shanti, and we buried ourselves in our plates of prasadam.*

*But when I just began to eat, Shanti started to talk, and I switched on the recorder again.*



**A.S.:** Satsvarupa did not describe the story, he wanted to imagine it as a life story of a saint. Everything was supposed to look beautiful in it.

**M.M.d.:** His book is a book about Prabhupada. When we write a book about you, we will do the same. We'll portray you with the wings... *I laughed in order to ease tension.*

**A.S.:** They are and always have been there, so I am always in flight.

**M.M.d.:** As they say, "from the stove to the plank bed"...

**A.S.:** You can just throw dust in the eyes of others, or you can fly yourself. When one is in flight, he no longer depends on anyone, or on the gratitude of the crowd. He is happy — he is in flight.

**M.M.d.:** But it so happens that fate will exalt him high, and then throw into the abyss without difficulty.

**A.S.:** It depends on the sublimity of the person. Some soar, the others crawl...

**M.M.d.:** In the material world, we do not see that someone constantly soars or crawls. There is nothing permanent here, so it is not worthy.

**A.S.:** Soaring and creeping live in different dimensions.

**M.M.d.:** What can you add to what has already been said about Shрила Prabhupada?

**A.S.:** Prabhupada accepted everyone...

*On this, I turned off the recorder, and we continued to honor prasadam. Later I began to think about how to use the recorded material ethically, practically and philosophically, without prejudice to the interests of those who "fly" or those who "crawl."*

THE DOOR TO PRABHUPADA WAS ALWAYS OPEN. THROUGH IT, YOU COULD ENTER THE SPIRITUAL WORLD OF THE GOLOKA, AND MAY AGAIN FALL TO THE LEVEL OF THE ORDINARY KARMI. Prabhupada could give anyone love for Krishna (*krishna-prema*), but those who were close and considered themselves his disciples wanted something else, so everyone got what they wanted: position in society, or prestige (glory), or money... AND WHAT HAS ANANTA SHANTI RECEIVED?

## CHAPTER 2

*It is not easy to talk about devotees of Krishna - it is as difficult as talking about the Lord Himself. It is easier to count atoms in the universe than to describe the greatness of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His devotees. For an ordinary person, we make a horoscope, look at the lines of his palm, and learn all about his past, present, and future. Life of karma is plain to see; according to the law of karma, where the calculations are extremely accurate, but where the will of the Almighty is involved, it is impossible to calculate, express in astrological formulas or predict along the lines of the palm. Everything that is connected with the Personality of Godhead and His devotees is full of spiritual possibilities. Outside of duality (BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL), svarupa-shakti operates. The most contradictory opinions and points of view easily coexist there. The concepts of good and evil, if viewed from the absolute point of view, lose their meaning. In the Absolute, everything is absolute. For one who has attained the pure consciousness of Krishna and love of the Lord, everything becomes an absolute good. Therefore, it is necessary to refrain from criticizing the devotees; one must take everything related to them, like life itself. Sri Chaitanya rejected Haridas (Jr.), a close companion of the Lord, for, being a sannyasi, he looked with a passion at the woman. To teach the lesson to others, the Lord sacrificed his devotee. Only a great soul is capable of such a role of "sacrifice". Anyone who comes in contact with the Movement of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is worthy of the highest reward in this world — liberation, and love for Krishna. To understand this, we pray to the Lord to give us intelligence. Ananta Shanti das is a character from the prabhupada-lila, an uneasy fate fell on him. Read, reflect and analyze what you read, but do not rush into conclusions. As an ordinary person, Ananta Shanti represents the embodiment of holiness and vice at the same time, but as a character in transcendental history, one must think that he is beyond duality. Shanti is a person who is waiting for his time, the ultimate judge.*

### TIME HAS COME

When we preach, we go further, leaving either more and more new seekers of truth or scorched earth, on which nothing will grow.

For the first time, I heard about Krishna consciousness and Hare Krishna mantra from people who did not chant the mantra themselves and seem to be far from *bhakti*. However, having received from them some information that this exists,

since the spring of 1980, I began to search for the original source stubbornly. Natural curiosity and the desire for a higher ideal led me to Riga. Here in the apartment of an artist, I met with Maharaja. Everyone said that he personally met Shrila Prabhupada; he is a pure devotee of Krishna and receiving from him the HARE KRISHNA mantra is the same as drinking the nectar of immortality from the hands of the Lord Himself.

## MEETING

I arrived in Riga early in the morning. I called the apartment where Maharaja was staying. A sleepy voice answered me that “they are still asleep” (“they” are Maharaja and his servant).

“All right, I’ll call you later;” I said and waited patiently.

Somewhere, between 10 and 11 am I called again. The same voice answered: “Maharaja woke up and is now taking a bath.

— Great! I’ll be with you in half an hour.

— No, no! Do not rush, he will chant the mantra, and then...

I did not wait for the end of the sentence and hung up. In any case, I decided, I will go, they will not kick me out. On the way, I picked up Stepan, and an hour later we were standing at the door. I rang the doorbell, the young girl opened the door for us.

The name of the owner of the apartment was Visso, and his wife’s name was Anna.

“Please, sit in the altar room,” said Anna. “Maharaja will finish his bathing and will come out.”

We sat on the floor, cross-legged, and waited.

It was a large bright room; the image of Panchatattva, guru-parampara, pleasant smell of incense, and quiet music, recording of Hare Krishna mantra chanting. From the image, a young man in eyeglasses was staring at me.

“Maybe it’s their guru, I thought. — And who are those five?”

I read about Chaitanya from Radhakrishnan in Indian Philosophy, but I saw Panchatattva for the first time. While I was looking at the altar, Maharaja appeared unnoticed. He was in clean, light clothes, somewhat slow in motion, smiling and prepossessing for having a frank conversation; with him, there was a guy in jeans. Counting their beads, hidden in the bag, they chanted the Hare Krishna mantra in a low voice. I listened: the murmuring sounds of the Hare Krishna mantra caressed the ear and delighted the heart. I came for this! The transcendental sound of the name of the Lord arises in the heart of the pure devotee.

Since it is not different from the Lord Himself, His *darshan* can be received through hearing and in no other way. No one can preach Hare Krishna without being authorized by the Lord.

I asked a couple of non-essential questions, took *prasadam*, which Anna brought, then thanked the hosts and bid them goodbye. They have their own business, I have mine. Already on the road, sitting in the car, I began to share my impressions with my friend.

"Well, how is Maharaja to you?" I asked.

- He is good!
- Did you like him?
- Yes, did you see his wristwatch?
- No.
- Brand name!

For me, Shanti was a representative of God, and for Stepan — a black marketer with branded watches.

*Another time we met with Shanti when Sri Vishnupad arrived. It was in the House of Pioneers, where we were all arrested, which actually was expected. I was a contemplator in life, and it was interesting to see the show in which I myself participated. What happened then made a strong impression on me, but it took time to give a correct assessment. I looked at the reactions of those present, letting everything through the prism of my consciousness. I watched, looking from Maharaja to Vishnupada, then to Kirtiraja and in the reverse order, returning to Maharaja. Each of them, although sitting together, was on its own. And if not for this meeting, then, years later, what could I remember?*

When we visit the temple of the Lord and look at the Deity, bowing, praying and glorifying, the question arises: "Who do we bow to? Idol?" Shrila Prabhupada said: "I see Krishna, and they see the stone. What's the matter? Lack of vision." In this case, it's better to bow to the one who really sees God, really communicates with Him. Simply by empathizing with his state of mind, we will understand much more in a spiritual sense, than try to perceive the higher reality with our blind eyes. The spiritual world is wonderful, but in order to see it, special vision is needed, therefore, as I understand now, the *sadhu-sanga* is preferable to the years spent in solitude. Even an instant spent in the company of a pure devotee can fundamentally change a person's consciousness and his life.

I was an artist and looked at the world with a special, peering look as if trying to capture in my memory what is happening around and then to transfer what I saw to the canvas

## “EVERYONE STAY PUT!”

Some people entered in plain clothes, along with the militia (police). Shanti was taken away immediately. Vishnupada and Kirtiraja were taken away a little later. All the rest were held until late at night, listed and released.

Shanti's behavior in that extreme situation struck me most. The face of Vishnupad exposed his inner anxiety, nervousness. His face paled and the smile left his lips, but Shanti was a fine fellow. Shanti means calm, peaceful, unperturbed, like the ocean. The name that Prabhupada gave him corresponded to his nature. It was difficult to guess in him the movement of feelings; either they were suppressed with the help of the intellect, or, having come in contact with the eternal, transcendental plan, ceased to stir his mind. It seemed that he was indifferent to what was happening.

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

I don't know. According to the devotees, after some time, Harikesha Swami left for Sweden, and Shanti stayed in Moscow. If we talk about responsibility, then we must think that in that situation Shanti was left holding the baby. Harikesha was a foreigner, and nothing could be got out of him. The worst thing that could happen would prohibit his entry into the country. He did not risk anything, but Shanti remained; disenfranchised and defenseless before the law, he remained to disentangle the mess. Eventually, he was sentenced to five or six years of a psychiatric hospital and a prison. For a while, he became the hero of the day, but then he spent years of dislike, alienation, and disappointment, especially at an older age.

After what happened in Riga, I did not hurry back to St. Petersburg. To avoid trouble, I spent all summer in the Crimea, and in the fall I went to Moscow, where I again met Ananta Shanti. I called Devyatkin, and he helped me to meet him. The meeting took place in the subway station “Kirovskaya”. It was not far from Sadananda, whose apartment served as an *ashram*. Shanti came at the meeting with Satya, who was holding him at some distance. However, with the naked eye, it was evident that there was more than friendly relation between them.

“A sannyasi should not have close contact with women and deal with money,” I thought.

In Sadananda's apartment, I was introduced to several other devotees. They worshiped Shanti, for them, he was an undisputed authority. When I arrived, Ravidas cooked rice and *masala* with raisins and carrots. What caught my eye, an incredible amount of butter and spices was put in the food. Later, I read in the Bhagavad-Gita, that the food in *sattva-guna* should be sweet, tasty, oily

and pleasant to the heart. Shanti was served as a representative of God, he was served *prasadam* first, and devotees put more butter and more *khalava* in his plate...

All my impressions of that time were based on the perception of those who surrounded Shanti and those who directly communicated with him. I was not familiar with the Vaishnava etiquette and so I stayed at some distance, just looked closely. Everything I saw was somewhat unusual and strange.

## PROGRAM AT THE HOUSE OF SCIENTISTS

The first public program, where I was invited, was in the Moscow House of Scientists. Five people came to this program: Sanat-kumar with *mridanga* and huge *shikha* on his head, Sadananda, Bharadwaj and several other people whose names I don't remember. Bharadwaj stood out of all. He was dressed like an official at an official meeting, but despite his strong desire to look imposing, behind all this masquerade, it was impossible to hide a man who had just been released from prison and "seen the world" He was neither a human rights champion, nor a dedicated minister of worship. He looked like a crow in peacock feathers, but, truth be told, this did not detract from his merits. He was an initiated disciple, chanting the Hare Krishna mantra and being considered "the best of men." Later I heard many funny stories about him. Once, when law enforcement people came with a raid, he crawled under the bed. They took everyone, but did not check under the bed; another time, when there was another raid, he locked himself in the bathroom and waited sitting on the toilet, until everyone left. There was a story when at a meeting with Vishnupada, wishing to show his devotion, he rushed to do the *dandavat* right into a puddle and doused his guru with mud from head to foot. At that time he was a servant of Ananta Tirtha Maharaja. Like many other devotees, Bharadwaj did not have very good manners, although strived greatly to show his perfection of Krishna consciousness. In itself, it was very commendable, so it covered the lack of upbringing and lack of proper association. They all were sincere guys, though a bit ridiculous.

There was a big event in the House of Scientists — they showed a foreign action-packed film, with a steamy love affair. This was quite an event in the cultural life of the Soviet intelligentsia. Only elites had access to such films. When mixed with the crowd, devotees managed to enter the vestibule, they immediately started *kirtan*. The administration asked them to leave, but despite this, they continued to sing. I cannot say that it was a pleasant performance, but people somehow got interested. To all who showed interest, we gave out small scraps of paper with Hare Krishna mantra. Maharaja stood aside and cheered us up: "Go on, go on!" On this, my first public program in Krishna consciousness, I

was more of an observer than a participant. I was just curious to see what they were doing. I swept aside all the husks and tried not to miss all the positive things, which could be useful in my own preaching in the future. In the words of one philosopher, I believed that “only fools learn by their own experience.” I preferred to learn from the experience of others. Accepting all the positive and rejecting the negative, later I managed to avoid many mistakes made by my predecessors.

When the audience was seated in their seats, and the movie has started, Shanti and I entered and took vacant seats. So I sat through the whole movie, never taking my eyes off Shanti, who did not take his eyes off the screen. “What’s the point of this?” I thought. It seemed wild to me.

— Krishna consciousness and watching a *karmic* movie — what’s good about it?

After sitting for an hour and a half or two hours, in a stuffy room, when the film ended, and people poured out onto the street, the devotees began vigorously pulling out people, one after another, from the crowd and preaching. The preaching was rather unpretentious, impossible to describe by words, one must see it. Someone preached, and the rest sang *kirtan*. *Hari-nama-sankirtana*, though not even as harmonious as one would like, made a strong impression on people. Despite all imperfections, Krishna’s mercy was upon everyone who participated in it.

## **ANOTHER TIME...**

Another time I was invited to a home program, where quite decent people gathered. Here Shanti behaved according to the situation: very modestly, as a true gentleman. Satya played guitar and sang Hare Krishna, and he gently played along with the *karatalas*. The *kirtan* was pleasant; singing, as well as Shanti’s behavior this time, painted in my imagination a completely different picture. It was clear that he was natural, it was his world.

In recent years, I often thought about him, his fate. His nature, rich, contradictory, attracted me.

How amazing that in one man, the Lord has embodied so much perfection and vice at the same time. In Krishna, everything is beautiful and one who is engaged in the service of Him achieves one’s perfection. However, when he begins to imitate Krishna, acts as the enjoyer and master of the situation, then all his imperfections are suddenly revealed. This becomes blatant lawlessness, and barbarity, which causes irritation and anger in others, prevails. When once, I told Shanti about this, he got offended.

"I have wings, I'm always in flight." — He answered.

Another person would have tolerated, wouldn't pay attention, but Shanti is not like that. And yet, in spite of a bunch of his shortcomings, I love him because we heard the Hare Krishna mantra and learned about Krishna consciousness from him. And what about his ambitions? They are a form of protection from the pesky public.

*While Shanti was representing the idea of Krishna consciousness, as Prabhupada taught, he was irrefutable. One could only marvel at his nature, his manner of speaking, his voice, and even his outward appearance. He was beaming — he radiated light! I knew many who associated with him, spreading his radiance. One person met Shanti in a psychiatric hospital. When after many years I met this person in the Brooklyn temple of ISKCON, then hearing his voice, involuntarily remembered Shanti himself; the manner of speaking and the voice intonation of this man was a copy of Shanti. No wonder, Shanti's authority and influence on the development of Krishna consciousness were so great.*

## **SHANTI WAS GOOD!**

Only later I was able to see, how good he was; as they say: "You cannot see a person face to face, great is seen from a distance." I traveled extensively throughout the Soviet Union and at every step, I met people who first learned about Krishna consciousness from Shanti. I was amazed. What a great work was done by this man. In fact, no one completely understands this. The neophyte can say: "Here came Shrila Prabhupada, stayed for three days, and everything was spread by his grace." But this is not so. I have never seen Prabhupada, but I received his mercy through Shanti. If we ignore those who directly participated in the Prabhupada's mission and do not give them honor and praise, very soon we will ignore Prabhupada himself with the same success. Why not say that everything was spread by the grace of Bhaktisiddhanta, who inspired Prabhupada? Or better yet — not Bhaktisiddhanta, but Six Goswamis, whose books we read. They spread Krishna consciousness. After all, we all depend on Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who started the Sankirtana Movement. He is the Yuga-avatara of Krishna, the most merciful incarnation of Him — by His grace, we are here... He is Krishna Himself, the cause of all causes. Krishna has spread His own movement. There is no one but Krishna — who will dispute this! So, having accepted this point of view, we will have nothing to do but to give up devotional service altogether. In fact, the entire world is created by Krishna. Why should we know who Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, and other powerful demigods are? Why should we know about devotees, read Shrimad Bhagavatam? Why should we engage



in *bhakti*, devotional service, if there is only Krishna, and there is nothing but Krishna? So, deviating little by little from the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, we become impersonalists and we come to the fact that Krishna and the "I" are one. Let us enjoy the results of our pious activities while satisfying our lascivious desires. This conclusion easily comes to mind. But Bhaktisiddhanta, Bhaktivedanta, and other acharyas fought precisely such a mindset. This is not our philosophy. There is no place for *bhakti* there because there is neither the Supreme Personality of Godhead nor his servant, *bhakta* there. Where does love come from if there is no worthy object for it? This is what we see. In the Krishna consciousness society, where everyone talks about love, there is really no love, because there is no *bhakti*. There is no love, but there is envy, because of which we ignore the fact that Shanti and your humble servant have spread Krishna consciousness in this country. Bhakti means that there is Krishna and there is a devotee, *bhakta*. Without these two personalities, there can be no question of any devotional, loving service. IMPERSONALISM is what ISKCON currently suffers from. As the rust corrodes iron, so it destroys us from within in the disgusting form or alienation.

Meeting more and more new people, I asked: "Who preached to you?" And they invariably replied: "Anatoly from Moscow, he came to us with a girl (it was obviously Satya) He told us about Hare Krishna, showed slides, and the girl sang the mantra of Hare Krishna. We liked them very much, they are good guys!" Here it comes the dialectic of Krishna consciousness: without being authorized by Lord Krishna, no one can preach HARE KRISHNA. *Krishna shakti wine nara tara pravartana*.

When the program was over and everyone dispersed and departed wherever a break of six or seven years occurred. Shanti went to call Vishnupad and was arrested. We did not see each other again. A year and a half after that, I was initiated, I received beads and *kanthimala*, and so I became MAMU THAKUR DAS. The initiation ceremony was held in Leningrad at the apartment of Lyudmila and Vrindavan prabhu, who I should write about separately. This is the Russian continuity of spiritual masters — *parampara*. Being inspired by them, I began my preaching of Krishna consciousness even before I was officially initiated, and to everyone's surprise, stating the fact, my preaching has always been successful! How? Who will answer this simple question? We can speculate in one way or another, but judging by the fact, it is obvious that anyone who represents the interests of God and is under His protection, can do miracles! For this, no initiation is necessary. God gave — God took — without the mercy of Krishna no one can preach His Holy Name (Ch.Ch. Ant. 7.11).

## THE MOOR HAS DONE HIS DUTY, LET HIM GO

I saw, already back then that many devotees are engaged in intrigues against Shanti. When he abandoned his *sannyasa* and got married, they joyfully exclaimed with one voice: "Well, we knew it!" And when Shanti was put in a psychiatric hospital, they exhaled, with gloating delight: "He deserved it!" I saw that no one showed a single drop of compassion or sympathy to his misfortune. Well, devotees! They thought of themselves as transcendentalists, liberated personalities who realized themselves, but from my point of view, they remained ordinary materialists who joined the movement to pursue their own, rather low interests. I rejected them in my heart. Many of them, later, suffered the same fate, they also went to jail; as they say, do not wish the other one that you would not wish yourself. This ethical principle turned out to be right. In Krishna consciousness, it works irrefragably.

*To be fair, the times were tough and, perhaps trying to stabilize his position, Shanti married Satya. The wife could visit her husband, who was in prison and maintain his connection with the outside world and other devotees. Having, probably, such a motive, he under the pressure of circumstances violated the vow of celibacy. I'm not looking for an excuse. He himself gave an excuse and drew curses upon himself. Shrila Vishvanatha Chakravarti says that a person who took sannyasa, but then remarried, will have to eat his own vomit. Shanti himself compromised, and his name did not leave the lips of his ill-wishers. Many literally spit in his face, and I remember those incredible rumors and dirt with which thrown at "renegade". Everyone who wished for some position rose in their own eyes, writing off their own failures on the "scapegoat". This persecution was led by Kirtiraja, whom Shanti considered his friend. How it was, I will describe later. Vishnupad wrote a letter, from which I remember two lines: "He (Shanti) is a rascal, but he is very dear to me." Thus he wanted to mitigate the reactions that followed, reminding everyone: "Judge not, that ye may not be judged, for in what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and in what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you."*

At the end of the period, when he was acquitted, I was also amazed, by that contempt and open hatred towards this fallen devotee, the disciple of Shrila Prabhupada. When he tried to snarl, everyone began to look at him as if he were a madman. With a mournful grimace on their faces, they were saying: "Yes, he was injected with all these things in a psychiatric clinic, and now he is not all right with the psyche, what can you demand from the fool?" As much as bad things were said about him, I never heard so many bad things about any person in general, about the last sinner, not to mention the devotee of Krishna, as I

heard about Shanti. It would have been better for him to hang himself than to live with such a reputation. His example is a lesson for others!

After Shanti was released from prison, we met with him in Leningrad. It was somewhere in 1987-1988. Many devotee women (including Narataki and Divya-lila) invited Shanti to conduct lectures. Back then I had an ashram on Zina Portnova Street. And one day, Divya-lila called me and asked me to come to her in a frightened voice. "What happened?" I asked, "Ananta Shanti offends Vishnupada." She was an exemplary disciple of Vishnupad and to listen to something that would contradict her understanding of her guru, even if it was the truth or purely philosophical topic of the conversation, looked like blasphemy. Shanti considered Vishnupad as his brother in God as an equal, he considered Shrila Prabhupada his Guru. He was somewhat right, I guess. And it was probably up to him to accept or not to accept Vishnupada as a guru, but for the disciples of Vishnupada, the attitude Shanti towards their guru and their guru's brothers in God was always painful. They were very zealous and fanatically fought with everyone and even with those who were the gurus of other members of ISKCON. People were not trained in ethics and did not know how to behave with the guru and with their brothers in the God, how to build relationships between themselves and other members of society. It is one kind of relationship between brothers in God, but it is completely different between the disciple and the guru. To love someone doesn't mean to hate others. For neophytes, this is difficult to understand, so they often quarreled among themselves (the disciples of one guru with the disciples of another guru). Scandals, criticism, and rude speech were the norm of behavior. But the situation was no better, where in their place was flattery and duplicity. Clearly, this did not do anyone any good. So the unsettled relationship between Shanti and Vishnupad caused great clashes between the followers of Vishnupad and Shanti. The latter was doomed to alienation and expulsion from the society of devotees, in the creation of which he put a lot of effort himself. Understanding the situation exactly as I described it above, I managed to still calm Divya-lila. Through her, I invited Shanti to visit my ashram, and he agreed without hesitation.

## **SANKIRTANA ASHRAM**

As always, a lot of people gathered for the program in the *ashram*. Immediately after the *kirtana*, I introduced Shanti to the assembled and gave way to him in *vyasa-asana*. After taking it, he began by saying a little about his meeting with Shrila Prabhupada and then about different things. He spoke not badly, but not at all about what was expected. Starting with Prabhupada, he ended up with the Russian classics (Turgenev) from the school program and memories

of his childhood; not a word about Krishna, not a word about the Bhagavad-Gita or the Shrimad Bhagavatam, as we have it, according to the established tradition. Common phrases and examples from life, not directly related to the devotional service of Krishna, soon got boring, and I hinted to him, by pointing at the watches that it was time to round up his speech. But Shanti did not react; he already mounted his hobbyhorse, and he did not hear anyone except himself. Many outsiders came to the *ashram*, and I began to fear that the program might be spoiled — instead of Krishna consciousness, there will be a day of memories. By that time, I was already skilled in the philosophical aspects of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and the Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Movement. Noticing the inconsistency of his chatter, I gently interrupted him. I thanked Shanti for coming and agreeing to participate in our program and began *kirtan*, and in five minutes everyone forgot about him and the program went on as it was supposed to. In the end, *prasadam* was offered to the guests. I personally served Shanti, and he, being completely satisfied, did not touch those topics about the painful issues of his personal relations with Vishnupad. Personally, I have never heard anything shady from Shanti. In my presence, he was quite proper, loyal to the GBC, and to the spiritual masters of the ISKCON, whom he, later on, began to vilify without looking back. He was not fit to cooperate with anybody or be “under someone” (in his words), and the problem has developed by itself. He did not find himself in the new circumstances and, like a bear, awakened in the midst of its winter hibernation, began to move around, and spoil everything. His mentality and lectures were totally inconsistent with the standard adopted by ISKCON, and Kirtiraja began to pursue a subtle and rather skillful policy, trying to guard Shanti against devotees, and devotees against Shanti.

## INDIA

In 1989, the Russian followers of Hare Krishna, for the first time, visited India, making a pilgrimage to the holy *dhamas* (Mayapur, Vrindavana and other places).

When we were in Mayapur, Lokanatha Swami, who at that time was the head of the committee for the rights of Hare Krishna devotees in the USSR, mentioned Shanti in his lecture for the Russians. He said: “Prabhupada came to Moscow in 1971 and planted a seed of devotional service to Krishna. This seed was Ananta Shanti.” Everyone who attended ignored it, or pretended not to hear, because before going to India, Kirtiraja did a great “organizational work”, setting everyone up against Shanti. He intentionally did not invite him and did not get a visa for him so that Shanti wouldn’t do anything odd. Western devotees were perplexed: “Where is Shanti, why is he not among the pilgrims?” In that year there was a lot of noise, beautiful words, a lot of show-offs, meetings, and gifts, but

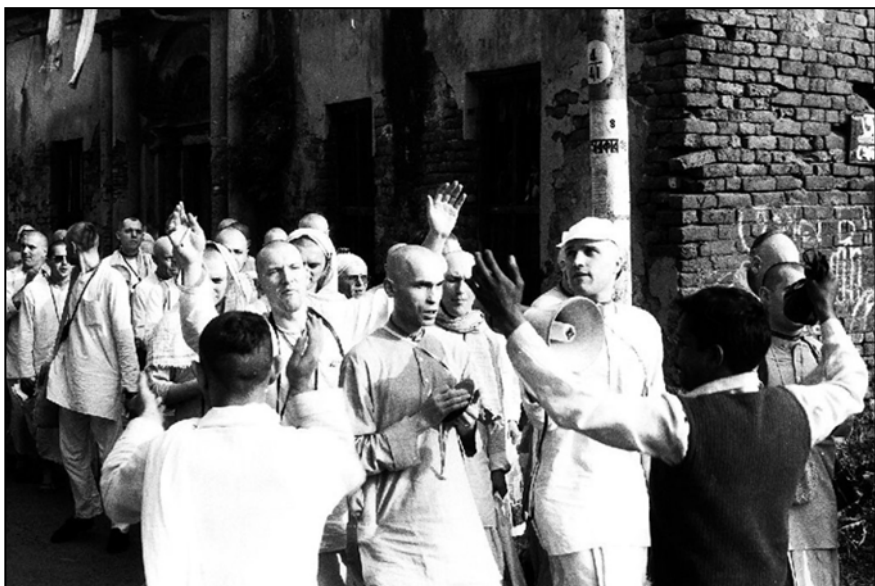
Shanti was forgotten — not a word about him as if he did not exist. Although, in Calcutta the video of his interview with Kirtiraja was shown, to which Kirtiraja gave his own commentaries. As some did not know Russian, and the other English, Kirtiraja presented everything upside down, pouring oil on the fire, he messed it all up. He did not invite Shanti, and he ruled the show himself. Shanti is the seed of Shrila Prabhupada. It sprouted and brought forth a harvest. The harvest was harvested, flour was made and the loaf was baked, then, holding hands, they organized round dance: we baked the ROUND LOAF, but the main hero of the occasion was not invited. In the end, PRABHUPADA planted the “seed of shanti”. He is an *acharya*, therefore everyone is indebted to Prabhupada. It is difficult to object to that. Although the army fights in the war, the victory belongs to the commander. The “seed of the shanti” fell between the millstones — on the one hand, it was extirpated by the official authorities of the USSR and the KGB, and on the other hand, psychological terror and total racketeering were organized by our own. It is incomprehensible: “Where, in what birth, happened that which became the cause of the great tribulation?” In search of an answer, I thought: “What a glorious life those devotees had, who have passed all the tests, through fire, water and did not break!” They are truly more humble than a blade of grass and more tolerant than the wood; they do not wait for honors to themselves and are always ready to show respect to everyone.

I always considered myself very indebted to Shanti and wanted to see him in glory. Even when he was labeled as a “demon”, and he became an opponent of ISKCON, I sought an excuse for him and defended his position. Thanks to his services to Prabhupada and his mission, does Shanti not have any credit for his service to Prabhupada and Prabhupada’s mission?! My thoughts suggested that perhaps what we call now Krishna consciousness, is not Krishna consciousness, but something else?

*In Vrindavan, Kirtiraja tried to create a yatra structure for RUSSIA. We spent several days at his house, working out an action plan and distributing roles and positions.*

In 1987, Kirtiraja wrote me a letter in which he unequivocally said that Shanti was not the person who should “undertake the establishment of the social structure of our Movement there.” I agreed with him, but Shanti did not even pretend to do it — a vain precaution. Shanti did not even think of holding any position in ISKCON. He was not going to take the place of “the patriarch of all Russia.” In my letter to Kirtiraja, I wrote about my attitude towards Shanti, and he did not like it. Although he politely responded to my letter, although, for my connection with Shanti, I was put on the list of disloyal.

In Vrindavana, I was recommended to the position of treasurer of the BBT. I refused to count the money. If I have money in my pocket, I do not need to count them. Let him count the money in whose pocket they are. After that, I was appointed as a curator for the distribution of books in the USSR. But, when we returned to Russia after the pilgrimage, behind the scenes, those same people who recommended me, they, also removed me from that position. Later, I was reappointed as the regional secretary from the Volga - the Urals - Siberia and the Far East regions. At that time, there was nothing there — so much of great honor to become a regional secretary of the nonexistent region!



When the organizational issues were settled, Kirtiraja spent the remainder of his time publicly discussing Shanti's personal life, his relationship with Satya, who by that time had already become the wife of Dumrakesha Prabhu. It was quite a scandalous story, and I'm talking about it only because the name of Satya is an important part of Shanti's own life. When Vishnupad sent Dumrakesha to take Satya to Sweden to work for BBT, Dumrakesha could not resist and fell victim to lust, as a result of which they had a daughter.

Shanti was in prison and if he remained a *sannyasi*, why should he have a wife? This served as an excuse for their divorce, and Satya was given for Dumrakesha. But nobody could have guessed that Dumrakesha, who was at that time engaged in the Russian program, would not be able to cope with his feelings. So

the scam with a fictitious marriage ended in a big scandal. Shanti accused Kirtiraja and Vishnupad of taking his wife. Satya in this story remained an “innocent lamb”. At the meetings in the holy dhama, Kirtiraja described her and her life in Sweden in such ways, that I will not retell on the pages of my book.

While all this was discussed, Dumrakesha came to the festival in Bombay, where we met. Then I appreciated the far-sighted policy of Kirtiraja, who, in order to avoid confrontation and grandiose scandals, did not invite Shanti. Vishnupad, on the pretext of illness, did not come this year to meet his “beloved disciples”, most of whom he had never seen in person.

1989 was a turning point in the minds of many Russian devotees. If before they accepted everything that Kirtiraja and Vishnupad did or said at face value, then later, witnessing their intrigues and mentality of ordinary *karmis*, the worm of doubt penetrated their heart and began to eat their core. As they say, the fish rots from the head. Problems began when Vishnupad became a zonal *acharya*. He was too weak for this position, and Shanti then said that there are no real *gurus* in ISKCON; they all fall. No one had any real information about what was going on in the West. Hearing about this was very painful for all of us. Kirtiraja said that after Shrila Prabhupada left our planet, the ISKCON leadership was overtaken by demons, and, according to him Shanti also became one of them. These claims found a lively response among Soviet devotees. Since Stalin’s times, citizens have been instilled with love for the Communist Party and government and dislike for the enemies of the fatherland. This consciousness was deeply rooted in the Soviet people of that time, so it immediately worked. Now everyone among devotees began to look at each other testily, is not his yesterday’s brother in God a hidden demon? In the USSR, it was easy to declare anyone an enemy of the people, a spy and an agent of the CIA. Similarly, by saying that demons entered our perfect society of Krishna consciousness, Kirtiraja began to make his policy of “divide and conquer.” It was setting people on one another. The disciples of one guru began to quarrel with the disciples of others. ISKCON experienced great internal problems. And the Russians, who were unified in their mass, not being aware of all intrigues, represented an unprecedented purity. I remember that the *sannyasis* and even the *gurus*, wishing to purify themselves, washed feet of the Russian devotees and drank the nectar of their lotus feet. The spirit that supported us in severe trials under the yoke of power, persecution, and repression was much higher than that in the West. Russian devotees of that time, even neophytes, were spiritually higher than the refined connoisseurs of the Vedas in ISKCON’s leadership.

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

*Gradually Shanti adopted that everyone hates him and, taking the bit in his mouth, started all the breaking bad. In the West, he still maintained his reputation due to the fact that he was considered a disciple of Shrila Prabhupada, but in Russia, he gained the fame of a man unreliable, devoid of devotion to Krishna, the peace-breaker.*

I remember at Sheremetyevo, when we were about to leave for India, Shanti sought understanding, sympathy. He bowed to the devotees and asked them to forgive him for accidentally or intentionally inflicting insults, but they rejected him. There was no forgiveness for him. Severity and alienation reigned in their hearts. The same Vasudama looked down on him. Being a snitch by nature, he forgot that he owes gratitude to such devotees as Shanti. Vasudama's wife more than once told us stories of her husband, juicy details of which do not honor even the last rascal. Her husband was an alcoholic, treated and recovered only by the grace of devotees, like Shanti. Now yesterday's alcoholic became president of the *yatra* but got a swelled head...

On the same day, with great contrition and vexation, Shanti told me: "Today they are driving me from ISKCON, and tomorrow they will be expelled." These prophetic words became a curse for ISKCON. Years later, after the fall of Vishnupad, enlightenment came — most of ISKCON remained outside of ISKCON. Who knows, perhaps for someone, it was a curse, and for others — a blessing.

After India, I no longer saw Shanti. How did he live? What were his interests? I was preoccupied with preaching in the regions of the Volga, the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East, and I simply did not have time for anything else. With incredible efforts and mercy of Krishna, *yatras*, one after another, soon began to appear everywhere. In many cities of Siberia, we conducted Radha yatras and Krishna Consciousness festivals.

## EXILE

The authority of Shanti was still big. Despite all the efforts to belittle him and throw mud at him, the result was the opposite. At that time, several meetings of the leaders of the Russian ISKCON were held jointly with GBC members. One meeting was about the exclusion from the members of ISKCON Shalagram and Ashutosha, the other — Shanti. I was an unwilling witness, as it was happening with Shalagram. I was able to save Ashutosha, vouching and taking him on bail. With these two I had different relationships. Shanti probably respected me, and Ashutosha rather was afraid of me. These two were incompatible. Shanti



remained the “seed” of Shrila Prabhupada, and Ashutosha — his “feces”. Having rejecting one of them, Krishna society has won, and by excluding the other has compromised itself. It’s not wise to throw everything in one pile. In fact, having no qualification to distinguish between the levels of devotees, we involuntarily commit the *vaishnava-aparadha*. To respect devotees, according to their level of spiritual realization, and not their official status in society or by the number of books distributed, is necessary. So, for example, Gaura Kishora dasa Babaji, who did not distribute any books, was a close companion of Lord Chaitanya. His relationship with Krishna is an undeniable fact. He is a great *mahajana*, and yesterday’s distributor of books is a conditioned soul. If a person wants to become a devotee, it is not a fact that he is really devoted. The devotion of the devotees is judged by their actions. There was one opinion about Ashutosha and a totally different opinion about Shanti.

Being an undisputed leader by nature, I participated in many meetings of leaders, nominees, who became such simply due to the majority of votes. You can make an elephant out of a fly, similarly, by slander and intrigues, at this meeting, it was an attempt to make a fly out of an elephant.

This time the meeting was dedicated to Shanti. The meeting was attended by Prabhavishnu Swami, whom I appreciated very much, Yamaraja das, Sannyasa das, Kamalamala das, Vasudama and one or two devotees who remained silent. As at the Komsomol or trade union meeting, Shanti’s behavior was discussed here. Usually, Shanti did not show anywhere, but this time he came, I think by a special invitation. Before the meeting began, in a preliminary conversation, Prabhavishnu Maharaja said that Shanti enjoys prestige in the International GBC and maintains the exchange of letters with them. He further mentioned that this puts the reputation and position of Harikesha Swami Maharaja, your guru, at great risk. Prabhavishnu Swami, in the presence of the disciples of Harikesha Maharaja, when he said the last sentence about Harikesha, added fuel to the fire. He was experienced in politics and unerringly calculated that disciples fanatically believing in their guru would wipe out anyone who dared to offend in word, deed or even in the thoughts of their guru. Politics, diplomacy is the game of *maya* in Prabhavishnu Swami’s hands. Thus some devotees of Hare Krishna stood up against others. The history of the St. Bartholomew’s night could be repeated. In Kali Yuga, religious wars, “crusades” and the Holy Inquisition are common things. But if we talk about Hare Krishna, then the Supreme forces are involved, Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

## LET'S SEE WHAT KRISHNA WANTS!

Of all the devotees at this meeting, Sannyasa took an unswerving but soft position. Kamalamala — rigid, straightforward, but more or less principled. Yamaraja is neither that nor that. I was more of an observer than a participant. I consider the observer's position to be the best of all. I had nothing and I did not lay claim to anything; here, on this planet, I left nothing to come back here again. I am a philosopher, so I'm not interested in the very fact but in the interpretation of it. I was looking for Krishna and I was constantly trying to understand Him. I did not care much about anything else. As much as possible, I always tried to avoid such meetings and discussions. I did not want to waste time on anything except for preaching.

Kamalamala took the stand first. He remembered everything Shanti had said unflattering about Harikeshha. Shanti gently retorted his arguments, trying to prove that everything he said was true, and the truth is above all else. But his softness aroused the spirit of resistance in Kamalamala and filled him with fomenting passion. Ready to toss Shanti, he began to pour various offensive epithets on him. And when Shanti ignored this in his usual manner, Sannyasa came to help Kamalamala. He went the other way. In a more diplomatic manner, he reproached Shanti for violating the *sannyasi* vow and that Shanti should not look for the guilty, trying to shield himself. When it came to Satya, Yamaraja joined the conversation. He was always partial to the weaker gender and therefore very painfully perceived the existing relationships between devotees, men, and women. The relationship between *prabhu* and *mataji* was Yamaraja's favorite topic. Standing in a pose, he began with moralizing about what *Vaishnava* etiquette is. Prabhavishnu Swami was indifferent, he only began to learn Russian and did not understand what the fuss was about. The scene caused a ghost of a smile on his face, as well as leniency towards the Russians. At the same time Vasudama, whom I lost sight of for some time, a little bit sympathized with Shanti.

When the turn came to me, I tried to reconcile everybody.

- If the soul is in the body of every living being (demon and righteous person), if Krishna Himself is, as Paramatma next to the living being, then are we really not able to see any merit in Shanti? If we tolerate ordinary *karmi* and love animals, is it really difficult for us to respect the senior, by age and position, *Vaishnava*, from whom most of us learned about Krishna consciousness? He received the *harinama* from Shрила Prabhupada and began preaching Krishna consciousness in the most severe times. He is a living incarnation of the Lord's mercy and a historical char-

acter from “Prabhupada-lilamrita” (I meant the book of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami)...

I spoke with my inherent pathos, but I could not develop this thought to the end. Devotees began to interrupt me, throwing lightning angry glances in my direction, and I stopped talking, deep down, lamenting about what is happening. I thought: “Who gave them the right to judge someone who is immeasurably higher?” But no one thought so, because the “heroes of the day” also sat in prison “for a just cause.” Now they imagined themselves eternally liberated souls who came from Vaikuntha to distribute the books of Shрила Prabhupada. It was the stupidity that the leaders of ISKCON (the same Harikeshā Swami) encouraged in them. These great publishers and distributors of Shрила Prabhupada’s books overshadowed even such Vaishnavas as Gaura Kishora dasa Babaji, who did not distribute a single book. Artificially, inflating the importance of BBT and belittling the personal merits and qualities of other devotees, Sannyasa, Kalamalama, and Yamaraja ruled the ball in ISKCON. Where are they now? At that time, these people simply did not have the usual ethics and common sense. Prabhavishnu Swami was, as always, calm and flawless, like a herring in a tomato sauce. He tactfully arranged everything and remained good in the situation created by him, and all the others were made of a fool. At the end of the meeting, they decided that Shanti was out of his mind, that a long stay in a psychiatric clinic and compulsory treatment had affected his psyche.

— You need to be lenient towards him!

After leaving this meeting, I felt like covered in spittle.

## VISHNUPAD’S VISIT

*In late 1988 the Hare Krishna society of Russia received the status of a religious organization. In 1990 GBC members of ISKCON and Vishnupad arrived in Moscow. 10 years of continuous asceticism and expectation, and here is the result. From all over the Soviet Union, devotees and friends of Hare Krishna have arrived. Big crowds. On Vishnupad’s programs, the halls were racked by his admirers. Indeed, there were many wonderful meetings, lectures, and programs. Shanti came to one of these programs. As always, he was late and went into the hall when the lecture was already on. Vishnupad spotted his appearance with some side vision and, interrupting the course of his thought, as was customary in an American television show, gave an announcement. “The fact that now we can freely assemble and talk about Krishna in many ways we owe to one person ...” After that, a pause followed and everyone turned to see who we owe but saw no one. Everyone was wait-*

ing for Vishnupad to say the name of the person to whom “we owe,” but instead he continued the interrupted lecture. So it remained a mystery: “To whom is everyone indebted?” Americans are masters of psychological tricks, illusions, and shows, know how to create excitement — from scratch, they make money from the air, Satya Sai Baba got nothing on them. But, as they say, a holy place is never empty. Bharadwaj and others like him took it personally. Those, who are purer in heart, have decided that this is Vishnupad himself. He is the favorite disciple of Prabhupada... But I was quite sure that this “man”, to whom everyone owed not only this meeting but also many other meetings, was Shanti. He is the only one who fearlessly preached and inspired others, being ahead of time.

## **VRINDAVAN, MAYAPUR, AND SHANTI**

In 1992-93, I was in India. In Vrindavana, I met Shanti. He was beyond recognition. Overgrown, long hair, a knot tied at the top, with a beard like a shovel, he looked like a local *sadhu*. When I arrived, he lived in an ashram with the guys from Chelyabinsk. They complained about him:

- He is up to here with his talking, vilifies everyone and everything — sacred *dhama* and its inhabitants.

*The guys were nice, with understanding, so they asked me to take him with me, or else — the holy dhama saw many things. Here Krishna daily used to kill demons in hundreds and thousands. The guys rented a hotel for me, and to avoid conflict I took Shanti with myself; so together in a single room we spent several days, after which I left for Delhi, and from there to Calcutta and Mayapur.*

At that time Shanti was very much in a bad state of mind. With a pain in his voice, he spoke of his fate, as in confession. I patiently listened to his story, something similar to mine. ISKCON's leadership invited Shanti to India, and when he arrived, they left him without a livelihood. He did not have money for a ticket back to Russia. He asked Gopal Krishna for a favor, but Gopal Krishna refused. The leadership of ISKCON, lured Shanti to India, so Shanti wouldn't muddy the water in Russia, then deprived him of their support and he was doomed to struggle for survival. Becoming a victim of political intrigue, quite common in the struggle against dissenters, he wandered for two years throughout India. He took one initiation from the Shivaites, the other in the Ramanuja Sampradaya, but found himself neither there nor here. He was so fed up with the holy land of India that from the spiritual place of pilgrimage stimulating the spiritual life, for him it turned into a place of hard labor. Finally, he was arrested as an illegal im-

migrant and put in a local prison, and with the help from the embassy, he was released. Thus, there was no trace left of Krishna consciousness in this man. The love for Krishna and the thirst for spiritual knowledge transformed into a thirst for sensual pleasures, and longing for Krishna — into nostalgia, longing for Russia. “If I had wings, I would fly ...” — these were his words. I was amazed at such changes, and later I was not surprised at anything.

At the same time, Gopala Krishna Goswami Maharaja was also present in Vrindavana. I was friendly with him. I decided to visit him, pay my respects and at the same time receive *darshan*. I invited Shanti as an interpreter. At first, he flatly refused, but after my persuasions, he agreed. I knew that Shanti had a good connection with Gopala Krishna. Gopala Krishna defended Shanti, wanting to help him.

When we went up to the second floor and knocked on the door, Gopala Krishna received us cordially, offered a seat at a small round table next to him. Shanti sat at a distance. While I looked around, the *maha-prasadam* from the Deities of the temple was brought in. The disciples of Gopal Krishna served their guru flawlessly. After we had a little *prasadam*, Gopala Krishna asked me to tell him everything I know and think about the recent Moscow incident without any concealment. Shri Rama, whom the GBC recommended for the position of the president of the Moscow Yatra, was beaten by an unknown people so badly that he was admitted to the hospital.

“Be frank with me. Tell me everything you know and think!” said Gopala Krishna insinuatingly.

“Maharaja, I do not have secrets from you.”

And without expecting a dirty trick, on a friendly note, I laid out everything I knew and thought about it. Shanti dutifully translated...

I guess that Gopala Krishna connected his personal plans with Ananta Shanti, considering him worthy to become the leader of ISKCON in Russia. He acted this way just to spite Kirtiraja (and, consequently, Harikesha Swami), and Shanti's not getting along with Harikesha Swami was helpful in this intrigue. Maharaja dreamed of becoming a GBC in Moscow, making a bet on Shanti, but the situation changed dramatically. Shanti compromised himself with his inadequate behavior.

“Shanti is stubborn, if he'd listened to me, he would have become a member of the GBC long time ago,” said Gopala Krishna. — Now, he defames ISKCON and preaches against it... What can I do?

In 1988, when Gopala Krishna came to Leningrad, at a meeting of devotees at Vasudama, he began to show photos from the BBT exhibition, which he held in Moscow in 1976. In the photo of Gopal Krishna and Shanti stood side by side (Shanti helped him). Gopala Krishna tried to represent Shanti in the best way

possible, but all who were present at this ignored his efforts. For them, Shanti was a fallen *sannyasi* and an enemy of Vishnupad. This once established reputation was difficult to change.

After Vrindavan, I lived in Mayapur for a year. There, on Gaura Purnima, we met again with Shanti. Many devotees from Russia arrived, and the appearance of Shanti met with fierce hatred there, except few other devotees and Abhimanyu (the American friend of Shanti and Adridharana, whom Shanti called by the karmic name Arcady). As a rule, I always gathered around myself all the unhappy and rejected people; by that time I myself had some difficulties. In India, I lived for about a year, not knowing the language, like a deaf-mute, like a hermit, like a vagabond, scrambling here and there for the sake of eating. When devotees from the USSR arrived, they collected little donations for me. With this money, I arranged a feast, treated Shanti with hot milk.

*Now, after many years, I recall all these events with ease, free from any obligations, free to say what I think and keep silent when I consider it necessary. I received this blessing and mercy of Krishna as part of His mission.*

## **SINCE THEN TEN YEARS PASSED**

*And here I am again in Moscow and again meet Shanti. Now he looks different, almost unrecognizable, lost his good looks. He got fat and his conversation reminded me of a conversation with ordinary karmis. He talks about money, how good it is for a person to have good family and children. Nonsense! Family and children can be in any form of life, but the fact that we are born as humans gives us the right to directly serve Krishna. Man is not accidentally created in the image and likeness of God.*

Incidentally, along with this Shanti told me about the rehabilitation of drug addicts and that if my friends had a little money for him, it would be good, he would create a center for the rehabilitation of drug addicts.

- When a person leaves a devotional service, he becomes an altruist or philanthropist. But speaking of mercy (I remembered the words of Bhaktisiddhanta), “the one who relieves conditioned souls from their vicious attachment to material energy is extremely merciful, and one who will rescue at least one soul from the imprisonment of the fortress of Maha maya is much more merciful than people, opening up innumerable hospitals. We didn’t come to this world to be engaged in building. Our goal is to bring the teachings of Shri Chaitanya deva to people. We will not stay in this world for too long. We will immerse ourselves in *hari-kirtan* and, having left the material body, we will get the highest award avail-

able in this world. The dust from the lotus feet of Shrila Rupa Goswami, who has fulfilled the innermost desire of Sri Chaitanya deva is the only goal of our lives.”

*All these exalted feelings and thoughts expressed in this Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta's appeal were alien to Ananta Shanti. Therefore, I did not even bother to ask what his method of curing drug addicts is. I was bored, and from then we stopped looking for meetings with each other. A goose is no playmate for a pig!*

But, in a year or two I went to Moscow again, and while there, called Maitreya. From him, I learned that Shanti fractured his leg and was looking for a meeting with me. I was not alone, my disciple was accompanying me on this trip. We had no place to stay. I called Shanti and asked him if my disciple and I can spend the night at his place. He was delighted. In his current situation, he suffered most from loneliness, so we did not have to beg for a sleepover; he immediately responded to my request and invited me to visit. Having found Podbelsky Street, I found the apartment where Shanti lived. Over the past twenty years, little has changed here. The front door to the entrance of the building was open, and we entered without hindrance and went up to the appropriate floor. We rang the doorbell; we had to wait for some time, but then a voice which seems to be coming from under the ground asked:

- Who is this?
- Hare Krishna! Friends

It took another couple of minutes before Shanti opened the door for us. He was checking who we are by looking through the peephole. I think he was really afraid.

Nevertheless, when the door opened, he bravely made a pun: “I broke my leg — immensely happy that my head survived!”

In this world, only the last fool, and one who has transcended the level of the mind (the true transcendentalist) can be happy; all others are somewhere between the two. Shanti is a special type; he cannot be called a fool, but neither can he be called a transcendentalist. Rather, you can call an ox who found a bunch of grass happy — such an illusion!

The first thing Shanti told me was how he broke his leg (the neck of the hip), how he was operated and how much money it cost (I never asked about his source of income). Then he told how Gayatri looked after him and how he quarreled with her. Throwing at him the keys to his apartment, she said before leaving: “You will remember Gayatri!”

## CHAPTER 3

*Back in the pre-perestroika period, Kirtiraja offered me an exchange of letters. For several years I was promptly responding to his letters, answering his questions and informing him about my activities. In order not to be unfounded to the above, I will quote a letter from Kirtiraja, in which he writes about Shanti.*

Dear Mamu Thakur Prabhu,

Please accept my most humble obeisances. All glory to His Divine Grace Shрила Prabhupada! All glories to our eternal Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya!

Thank you for your long letter, which I read with great ecstasy. This is a very detailed report and it was wonderful to read about your preaching activity in the country (Russia).

You mention at the beginning of your letter that you have deep respect for Ananta Shanti Prabhu and are very much indebted to him. I think that you are just one among many who have such an opinion, and it is, in fact, fair opinion. He has done a tremendous job in spreading the mission of Shрила Prabhupada and Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the Soviet Union. I know that They highly value his service and needless to say that our opinion should be the same. However, this does not mean that we should simply ignore the facts when Shanti does something wrong or inappropriate. Undoubtedly, we owe him reverence for the great service that he performed for Shрила Prabhupada, but this is not an excuse for him when he does wrong in word or deed.

It is very unfortunate that he had to endure such troubles in the last five years and, undoubtedly, the treatment he was receiving had some adverse effect on him. I think that we all understand this now. I believe that all of us should be very kind to him and encourage him to spend most of the time "catching up", and live a peaceful life in Krishna Consciousness. Of course, he needs to preach, but I think it would be a great mistake if we encouraged him to travel everywhere for preaching. I think that he should stay in Moscow, peacefully practice Krishna Consciousness and preach well the philosophy contained in the books of Shрила Prabhupada. I feel that it will be a big mistake if he takes upon himself to establish there the social structure of our Movement.

Before his imprisonment, there were constant disputes and a struggle between him and other devotees, especially in Moscow. It was not very good for him or for any of the other devotees there, and certainly for your spiritual master. And this, of course, did not help spread the mission of Krishna Consciousness. New people are not inspired by Krishna Consciousness and do not want to be a part



of our organization when they are exposed to such a struggle and quarrels in our "ideal society". In fact, they think that this is service for those who are genuinely interested in Krishna Consciousness. And this discourages not only the new people but also the senior devotees.

Shrila Prabhupada often said that no one can see a black spot on a black sheet. But on the white sheet, even a small black spot is very noticeable. So, our devotees are like white sheets. And if there is in us, even a small defect, it is very easy for people to notice it. It is said that "the spiritual master is judged by his disciples." So, if we act wrong, then people think that this is a shortcoming of Shrila Prabhupada or Shrila Harikesha Maharaja and the Movement. They do not try to understand that this is a shortcoming of a particular individual. We have vast experience of this in the West. If a former and now fallen devotee does some bad deed, then people see and say that this is a devotee of Hare Krishna who did so. They do not take into account that he left but see only that he had some connection with our Movement, which means that this must be a defect of our Society. So, we need to understand that we no longer represent ourselves, as it was in the past when we just became devotees, but each of us represents the entire tradition of the Gaudiya Vaishnava. And all that we do affects our Sampradaya, right up to Lord Krishna Himself. In this regard, we have a great responsibility.

I am writing a very detailed letter to Ananta Shanti and I will give copies of that letter to Sanaka Kumara to make them available to other devotees in the Soviet Union. I consider it very important that you all know and understand the facts about the various subjects that Ananta Shanti is talking about. I hope that this letter to him will be completed on time in order to send him along with the letter I write to you.

I was interested to read in your letter that you were present in Riga on the program with Shrila Harikesha Maharaja. It was a real program, and I know for sure that I will never forget it in my entire life. I look forward to the day when we will be able to conduct such programs openly, and Shrila Harikesha Maharaja and I will be able to visit them. Needless to say, this is really worth waiting for.

In your letter, you mentioned that once you bought a house and a little piece of land in Abkhazia and transferred responsibility for it to other devotees when you started traveling around the country. Who is there now, and do they use this land to grow the produce? This is wonderful and, undoubtedly, very important if those devotees who have such an inclination can work in the countryside to engage in agriculture and take care of cows. Of course, this is good only for those devotees who are prone to this by nature. For those who want to travel and preach, living in a village environment will be just a boring situation. Is not

it? This is one of the basic principles of Varnashrama Dharma. He or she should engage in the service of the Lord, according to their qualities and work. And for those who have the ability and the propensity to travel and preach, one should do this, as you do, and work to fulfill the prediction of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu that the chanting of the Hare Krishna Mantra will be heard in every city and every village in the world.

As I mentioned to you in my previous letter, the towns and villages in your country seem to be countless. There will be enough service for your whole life and for hundreds and maybe thousands of devotees. There are no boundaries of preaching that can be conducted in the USSR. I think this is one of the reasons why your country's authorities are so worried about the spread of Krishna Consciousness in there. They see (as far as the non-devotee can see) the power and influence of this philosophy of Krishna Consciousness and Movement, and they are worried. They see how this way of life affects and completely changes the lives of those who come into contact with it. They want their philosophy of Marxism-Leninism to do the same things. But this cannot be! It cannot so deeply affect the lives of people, because it is unnatural, it is not inherent in the position of a living being. Marxism-Leninism is an artificial imposition on a living being, like a body. The body is an artificial superimposition on the spiritual soul. It is quite natural that a person wants to serve someone, satisfy someone and have a love relationship with someone. And this true someone is Krishna.

Shrila Prabhupada often said that actually everyone is looking for Krishna, but most people do not know this. Devotees realize that they are looking for Krishna and that Krishna is the only person who can satisfy them. It is simply a matter of remembering that we are all pure spiritual souls, eternally beloved inseparable parts of the Supreme Soul, Krishna, and we will finally be happy, truly happy only when we restore our long-lost relationship with Him. This is the true path to happiness. If we can come to the understanding that we are all part and parcel of Krishna, then we automatically understand that there is no need to quarrel with others because of different philosophies of life, different economic systems, different religions, and different skin colors. All these things are based on the bodily concept of life and they are all false. If these false representations are the foundation of our existence, then everything that we do is doomed to failure and will only serve as the cause of suffering in this material world. ONLY through the practice of the Krishna Consciousness process, the world and everyone in it can become happy and peaceful.

In your letter, you also refer to an article that appeared in the newspaper Sovetskaya Belorussia, which referred to Krishna Consciousness and also mentioned your activities. Can you arrange for me to receive a copy of this article? It would be very good if you do it. Did you have any problems with the authorities, as

a result of this article? Shrila Prabhupada said in many cases that “every publication is a good publication.” Sometimes devotees brought bad news articles to Shrila Prabhupada and complained to him that journalists write about our Movement so badly. Then Shrila Prabhupada asked them to count how many times the words “Hare Krishna” appeared in the article. Devotees counted, told Shrila Prabhupada, and he was happy to hear how many times the author of the article repeated “Hare Krishna”. Shrila Prabhupada then said that this is a very good article.

As you said, the most important preaching is being performed in Leningrad and Moscow, and this is a fact. These are the most significant cities in the country and, of course, thousands and thousands of people arrive there from all over the country. This is definitely a good way to preach and distribute books without even leaving these two cities.

It was wonderful to see on the video your whole team of the production and distribution of Shrila Prabhupada’s books. It is great to know the number of books that, according to you, you distributed. This is our most important work. Shrila Prabhupada’s books speak for themselves. Indeed, if we can arrange for Shrila Prabhupada to preach there, through his books, this will be the greatest service we can do for Shrila Prabhupada, for your own spiritual master, for all our disciplic succession and for all the people in your country. We must continue with full determination the mission of producing and distributing Shrila Prabhupada’s books in increasing numbers. Shrila Prabhupada often said that we will come and go, but his books will remain. We see practically that we can preach to someone, and then part ways with them in different directions, and people very often forget what they heard from us. But if we can persuade a person to take Shrila Prabhupada’s books with him, he can at any time turn to Shrila Prabhupada and his instructions.

You mentioned that you show slides to people when you run your programs. Currently, my wife, Haritpuja dasi, finishes three sets of slides to send them all to you. One set is about Vrindavana, the other is about Mayapur, and the third is about Jagannatha Puri. There will be a full description of what seen on each slide, and a full story about the pastimes that took place in these places. We can send them to you sometime in May. I think that you will find them very useful for your preaching and they will inspire very much devotees, as well as non-devotees who would be able to see them.

Shrila Prabhupada always emphasized that the distribution of *prasadam* is our “secret weapon”. We all know from experience that a person who takes *prasadam* changes by the mercy of the Lord. I have personal experience with my own brother who is not a devotee. One day he came to a rock concert in New York. Near the concert hall, devotees distributed *prasadam* — sweets and sweet

lemon juice. While my brother was waiting for a concert, he ate 12 sweet balls and drank 10 cups of lemon juice. From the next day, he never ate meat again. I was completely amazed. And when I was at the Moscow book fair in 1979, where we distributed over 26,000 pieces of *prasadam*, Ananta Shanti went to various exhibition halls at VDNH and distributed the sweet balls that the devotees had prepared the previous evening. At one point he ran into our tent, saying that he was being pursued by two KGB men. Soon after Ananta Shanti, two people from the KGB came. They were very concerned that he was distributing this “food” to people, and they thought that he, perhaps, was trying to poison people. I talked to them and convinced them that it’s just Indian sweet balls. I offered them those sweet balls, and they both tried *prasadam*. After eating the sweet balls, they smiled and left without further concern. *Prasad*, of course, works wonders and softens even the stone hearts.

And again I say: it was wonderful to see how the devotees distributed Shрила Prabhupada’s books there, on the streets. Is there any danger for them in such an open distribution of books? They must be careful not to incur any unnecessary troubles. As I have told some of the devotees in our recent phone conversations, even in Western countries, there are some places where we cannot perform *sankirtana* in the streets or cannot distribute books on the streets. We cannot expect that we will have no restrictions on the part of the authorities, but we must work inside and outside these restrictions in a very reasonable and cautious way. It is clear that there will be limitations, but we need to act in such a way that we can continue our mission of spreading Krishna Consciousness and at the same time not exacerbate the situation of the devotees.

You mentioned criticism from some devotees about you and others who take to the streets to distribute books. Why did they criticize? What were the reasons for their criticism? This is the age of Kali, and this is the material world. The criticism here is infinite, even if there is no basis for criticism. But sometimes there are situations and problems that directly affect the devotees. I’m curious to know why they criticized. Please tell me about it.

As I said, this is Kali Yuga. People are not interested in true spiritual life. But there is a huge interest in pseudo-spiritual life. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for us to go out to people. If we wait for people to come to us, many of them will miss the opportunity to realize Krishna. So we should go to them. This is the aspiration and mission of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and, of course, Shрила Prabhupada, and your spiritual master also follows this desire. As disciples of Shрила Prabhupada or Shрила Harikesha Maharaja, we should all follow in their footsteps, developing the Sankirtana Movement. There is no doubt that the mercy of Shрила Prabhupada and all our disciplic succession, and the mercy of your Guru Maharaja will pour on your heads for the wonderful service that you

do. Please continue this great work, and your success will be guaranteed. There is no doubt about this.

Shrila Prabhupada once told us that one of his books, distributed in the Soviet Union, is worth thousands of his books, distributed elsewhere. This indicates the great importance of the distribution of Shrila Prabhupada's books in your country. There must be an endless supply of Shrila Prabhupada's books so that you can provide the whole country. You must flood the whole country with the mercy of Lord Krishna and Shrila Prabhupada. This should be the goal of your life. There must not be a single house in the whole Union that does not have at least one of Shrila Prabhupada's books. Although why only one book??? People need so many books in every home. Why not the complete collection of Shrila Prabhupada's books in every home???

I really like that you use postal service to spread Krishna consciousness. I have been doing this ever since I joined the Movement in 1970. This is a very effective and reliable way of preaching, especially there. Shrila Prabhupada himself often sent his books to various important people around the world. I guess you heard that during a visit to Moscow, one devotee sent the Russian "Gita" to Mrs. Gorbachev, and in Reykjavik, Mr. Gorbachev received a copy of the Russian "Gita". It would be very good if you could make sure that Gorbachev received a copy of the book "Krishna". In Vienna, I presented a copy of the Gita to Shevardnadze, and the Ryzhkov family received the Gita and Krishna in Delhi, as well as the Soviet Minister of Culture Zakharov and Hermitage director Suslov. Everyone was very happy to receive these books. These are just a few of the more than two and a half thousand Soviet participants of the USSR festival in India, where the devotees distributed there in total almost 3000 copies of the Russian books "Gita" No. and "Krishna." It was ecstatic!

About a year ago devotees met in Sweden with Alla Pugacheva. I arranged for them to give her a garland and Russian "Gita" on stage after the performance. They did so, and she raised her hands for photographers. Then I met her in Delhi and gave her the book "Krishna". She immediately remembered the meeting in Stockholm.

In your letter, you say that you met Andrei Sakharov. This is very good, and I think that you should meet with him again. I met his wife and her mother when they went to America, about ten years ago. Then, two years ago, I wrote to his wife and sent her "Gita" and a copy of my report on the persecution of devotees in the Soviet Union. She wrote a very friendly letter in response, expressing her high appreciation for the "Gita" and her compassion and sympathy in the Soviet devotees. I was surprised to read in your letter that you gave him "Easy Journey To Other Planets." I myself do not know Russian and can only rely on the opinions of those for whom Russian is the mother tongue, but they told me that the transla-

tion of this book is very bad. I think that you should try to meet with him again, as soon as possible and give him and her books "Gita" and "Krishna." I think it is very important that you preach to him well, since he is now the most important figure than ever, especially in the sense of a positive attitude of the Soviet authorities.

It was very inspiring to read in your letter about all the other "VIPs" with whom you met, gave them books, prasadam and preached to them. It's really beautiful. Shrila Prabhupada himself traveled the world and met "VIP" to preach to them and give them his books. As Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita: "Whatever a great man does, ordinary people follow him." These people are great people in the material world. Ordinary people revere them and listen to everything they do and say. If we can preach to these "great people" and convince them of the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness, and if they talk friendly about our philosophy and Movement, then it's really wonderful.

Just like in the case of George Harrison. Millions of people in the world began to chant Hare Krishna, simply because George Harrison did it. They did not care what it was, but since George Harrison does so, it means it's great, and they started too. And because someone else, not a devotee, expresses his approval of Krishna Consciousness, it has much more effect. This is an objective opinion of someone who is not a member of the Movement, and therefore people have more reason to believe and agree. It is very important to establish and maintain contact with these important people, at all different levels of society: government officials, professors, musicians, writers, etc. etc. Continue in the same spirit. It's really wonderful! Keep up the good work.

I think that you should try to meet with Yevgeny Evtushenko. 18 months ago I arranged for devotees to meet with him in New York at the opening of his play. They put a garland on him, presented the English "Gita", and he was very happy to receive it. And before that, one devotee who visited Moscow, arranged so that his very good friend Alan Ginsburg presented to Yevgeny Russian "Gita. They are very good friends with Alan Ginsburg, and Alan helped so much Shrila Prabhupada in the early days of our Movement in New York and San Francisco. Yevgeny is now very active in the Glasnost movement, and I think he can help us GREAT DEAL if we manage to "work" him up well. I think that he is one of the most important people with whom we can work. Please talk to other devotees and try to arrange something good. Maybe you can arrange a whole festive treat in the evening with prasadam in his house. I'm sure he would have liked it.

At the end of this letter to you, I will give you the names and addresses of some people whom I think you should get in touch with, and I will explain later how I know them and what I know about them. I think you should start communicating with them and preach to them. That would be really good, especially in some cases.

Prabhu, there is one Russian guy, Kirill Kokin, who currently resides in Vienna. He is from Leningrad himself and goes there from time to time. Have you met him? Do you know anything about him? He said that he recognized some of the devotees before leaving the Soviet Union and that he met with devotees when he came to Leningrad last year. Please, if you know anything about him, tell me so that I know if I can trust him.

I really hope that you will all be able to release the Russian book “Krishna” as soon as possible so that we can widely distribute it. Shrila Prabhupada once said that a copy of the book “Krishna” should be in every house in America. I think that Shrila Prabhupada would be extraordinarily pleased if we could put the Krishna book in every house in the Soviet Union. Since last year we started distributing Krishna books to Soviet people around the world, their reaction was amazing. They really liked it and, after receiving one copy, they usually rushed back to take another, for AT LEAST, one more copy or much more for their friends and relatives. They really liked it. It would be really great if we could publish and distribute it there. This book not only tells you that there IS a God, but she also names the names of His parents, His friends, it tells you what He loves to do, what He loves to eat, etc. It is, in fact, a wonderful book. It is easy to read, and Shrila Prabhupada most skillfully gave us higher knowledge and understanding in this book in a way that everyone can understand and appreciate.

It was nice to read in your letter that you also multiply and distribute cassettes with the singing of Shrila Prabhupada and Shrila Harikesha Maharaja. I hope that you also distribute recorded lectures, especially to devotees. It would be very good if you could arrange it so that I received copies of any records that you are making, especially those of very good quality.

The painting with Krishna and Arjuna, which I received from you, is very good, and it is hung on the wall in my office. Many devotees and non-devotees also see it, and they are really amazed when I tell them that it was painted by one of our Russian devotees, Mamu Thakur das. They are especially amazed when I tell them that he did this in addition to his travels around the country in order to preach and distribute books. It’s great to hear that you go out every day to distribute books and use every opportunity to distribute Shrila Prabhupada’s books. Again I say: MAINTAIN GOOD WORK! This is the best work that can be done, and it brings the best result to its performer and anyone who comes in contact with him.

In your letter, you mentioned that you spent one month in Perm prison. I hope that you will be very careful that this does not happen again.

Indeed, Queen Kunti prayed that she would be constantly in distress, because in this way she would always have to remember Lord Krishna and would never have had another option, except how to rely on Him. I’ve heard statements like

this from many devotees who were recently released from prison camps or “hospitals.” It is a fact of the material world and of our existence in it, that we have a tendency under the influence of Maya, to forget God, Krishna, when things are going well. But as soon as there are difficulties or a dangerous situation, even the most irreligious individuals say: “Oh God!” or “Lord, help me!” It is natural. And then, as soon as a dangerous or difficult situation passes, they immediately forget again. This is the influence of Maya, the illusion. This is something that we must overcome, the influence of illusions on us. This can only happen by the grace of the spiritual master and Krishna. We can receive Their mercy by strictly following Their instructions, always praying to Them for Their mercy and fully relying on Them. If this is our position, then our success in Krishna Consciousness is guaranteed and our destination at the end of life will be the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His eternal abode, Krishnaloka.

Somehow, these sufferings fall to some devotees’ lot in the Soviet Union.

Anyway, all this is part of the plan of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Shri Krishna. Shrila Prabhupada often said, “If Krishna likes you, He will give you everything, but if Krishna loves you, He will take everything from you.” It seems to me that Krishna must really love the devotees of the Soviet Union, and I know for sure that Lord Chaitanya and Shrila Prabhupada have a special plan for spreading Krishna Consciousness in your country. And all of you play the main role in establishing the foundation of our Movement there. And the most amazing thing about Krishna’s plan is that although He takes away, it seems, everything, from you, at the same time, He gives so much in return, more than we ever could imagine, especially that He gives us the taste of pure love for God. For a long, long time, Shrila Harikesha Maharaja and I were amazed and tried to understand how this steep situation got to all of you, sincere devotees. We simply could not imagine how this is included in the plan of the Supreme Lord. Then, when we started our “Committee for the Liberation of Soviet Hare Krishnas,” of which, I’m sure you know everything, we also began to understand a little bit how the persecution of our devotees in the USSR is part of the plan of the Lord. Talking with people in various parts of the world and telling them about the situation of our devotees in the USSR, we found that they were very sympathetic to the sufferings of the devotees, and they were strikingly interested in the philosophy and practice of Krishna Consciousness. I can say with all honesty that in the 18 years that I am a member of ISKCON, I have never met so many people who were immediately sincerely interested in Krishna Consciousness, while when I was telling them about the plight of our devotees in the Soviet Union.

Shrila Harikesha Maharaja began to understand that you, the devotees in the USSR, not only preach effectively and enthusiastically to people of your own



country but being in the USSR, you actually preach to people in all parts of the world; there were so many articles in newspapers, magazines etc., etc., etc., telling in details the sufferings of Soviet devotees and telling the readers in these publications very much about our philosophy of Krishna Consciousness, even such things as “we are not this body,” the blessing of chanting the Maha Mantra, about the history and position of our Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition and of Shрила Prabhupada. This is absolutely amazing!!! In fact, our Movement has, in the past and even in the present, rarely received so many such excellent advertisements as these articles about the devotees of Hare Krishna in the USSR. Throughout the world, the leaders of our Movement enthusiastically involve the devotees of their temples in the work of our campaign for help, in all respects, for the devotees of your country.

About three years ago, Shрила Harikesha Maharaja told me that, in his opinion, our “Russian Program” would serve to unite the ISKCON Society as much as even our “Mayapur Project” could not. I see how this becomes a reality. And, in fact, it’s amazing to be a witness of what is happening there.

I think that I should finish this letter so that this and some other letters will be ready tonight to go to Moscow. I hope that you will reply to me as soon as possible, giving me new information about your situation, and also about your preaching activity. I hope that this letter will reach you safely and, please, arrange for your reply to reach me safely as well. Please tell me as much as possible about your situation and how you are doing.

I look forward to hearing from you and praying for your well-being in the service of the mission of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Shрила Prabhupada, and Shрила Harikesha Maharaja. Hare Krishna, Prabhu.

I remain,  
Your servant  
Kirtiraja dasa

P.S. I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately, and I think that all devotees should wear “devotional clothes” during programs with kirtans and lectures. It’s not good if men wear jeans, trousers, it’s also not good for women. It is better if everyone can buy some white fabric, and women will sew kurtas and trousers (according to the sample I send you) for men, and good blouses and long skirts for women. Of course, it is best for men to wear a dhoti. I try to arrange on sending a large number of saris to women in the USSR. Then they can wear saris during programs. That would be great.

Also during the programs, women need to cover their heads, with a simple Russian headscarf, or with the tip of a sari, if they wear a sari. If devotees wear “devotional clothing” during the programs, this creates a more beautiful atmosphere

and elevates consciousness. Quite frankly, women should wear their hair harnessed back (not hanging freely) at all times, and they should keep their heads covered in the presence of men other than their husbands. This is the traditional Vedic standard, and Shrila Prabhupada was very strict about this.

I think that buying fabric will not be a big problem. You can buy even white sheets and make from them kurtas, trousers, and bags for beads. Brahmachari should wear saffron (I heard that you can buy saffron dye), and married men should wear white clothes. Married men should not wear saffron.

And also I thought that for those devotees who are well known to the authorities and especially well known outside the Soviet Union and do not experience any difficulties, due to their activity, it might be possible for them to wear white or saffron kurtas and pants on the streets. We do not want to attract unnecessary attention to our activities, but in some circumstances, it would be good. Of course, you should discuss this with each other and decide, but you actively meet with people and openly talk about Krishna Consciousness, especially in Moscow, and I think it would be much better if you would come to such meetings in the “clothes of devotees.” Of course, you can wear long underwear or ordinary trousers under your “devotional clothing” when it’s cold in the streets. All the devotees in other parts of the world do so, even in India, and especially in Vrindavana, because the winter is very cold there, but without snow. Please, discuss this with each other and decide.

(This is followed by a hand-written paragraph.)

Please check that books are not stored on the floor, as well as folded and not folded pages, if the hands were in the mouth, they need to be washed.

## **THE FALL OF VISHNUPAD**

One devotee once complained to me: “Shanti reviles Vishnupad ...” And I told him, “And you do not talk to him, do not listen to him. I do not communicate with him and have never heard anything like it from him.” After some time, this devotee asked me for a recommendation for initiation from Vishnupad. Becoming his disciple, he performed a lot of good service to Krishna. And I was very happy for him, but then some time passed and the irreparable happened: Vishnupad fell victim to maya. I remembered the words of Shanti. In fact, what happened was supposed to happen. Shanti was right. This was to be expected. For many Vishnupad disciples and for the organization as a whole, it was a collapse. Collapse not with Vishnupad, but with those who fanatically believed in him. Many left their “devotional service” and started all the serious sins. But this should not come as a surprise — to each his own! Deceivers have become deceived, and the righteous have prevailed.

Krishna says, "My devotee will never perish ..." In bewilderment, someone may doubt and ask: "Why did the devotee fall? Does Krishna deceive?" No, Krishna does not deceive; Krishna is always right! The lack of loyalty and faith is the reason that someone falls. The logic is simple and the fact is obvious! What about the guru? If a guru fell victim to maya, it means that he was never a guru before. We just accepted him as a guru. But it was our mistake. Prabhupada said: "A guru is a guru, he is as good as Krishna Himself. There are no bad gurus!" But if we see that he is bad, then he is not a guru. It is necessary to look at things through the eyes of the Vedic shastras and sadhu. In a conditioned state of life, no one can understand the true state of things without taking shelter of a true sadhu.

It is said in the Bhagavad-Gita (9.30):

*api chet su-duracaro bhajate mam ananya-bhak  
sadhur eva sa mantavyah samyag vyavasito hi sah*

**"Even if one commits the most abominable actions, but is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly, because he is properly situated."**

## **WHAT'S THE CONCLUSION?**

One who has dedicated himself to pure devotional service is always right. He is a righteous man. Pure devotional service is the path by which one can run with closed eyes.

Moreover, he who claims this (that he is a righteous man), even he becomes a righteous person and attains eternal peace.

"...Oh, son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My bhakta never perishes."

*kshipram bhavati dharmatma sasvach-chantim nigacchati  
kaunteya pratidjanihi na me bhaktah pranashyati (B.G. — 9.31)*

*It is not easy to talk about devotees of Krishna, as much as about Lord Krishna Himself. It is easier to count atoms in the Universe than to understand the actions of a pure devotee. For an ordinary person (karmi), you can compile a horoscope and so learn its past, present, and future -- it is known. According to their own karma, everyone gets his own. But where the Higher Will is implicated, they say: "The ways of God are inscrutable!" The region, the actions of svarupa-shakti, cannot be described or conveyed in words, express in astrological formulas or predict by the lines of the palm. Inextricably connected with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, this world is beyond the*

*concept of the duality of good and evil. One must abandon critical remarks about devotees and accept them, being indifferent to worldly rumors and gossip.*

Krishna is the supreme ruler of all rulers, the cause of all causes. One who is in Krishna consciousness is free. It is said in the Gita, that even in killing, a person in Krishna consciousness does not commit sin. Krishna is an autocrat. Understand and submit, considering yourself the humblest servant of Krishna. *Trinad api sunichena taror api sahishnuna, amanina manadena, kirtaniyah sada harih.* In this state of mind, chant the holy name constantly. Devote yourself to *shra-vanam kirtanam vishnu smaranam...* There is no other way.

HE WHO, BY READING THIS STORY, FULFILLS HIS FAITH TO GURU-SADHU-SHASTRA, WILL TRULY REALIZE THE ABOVE-THIS WORLD MEANING OF KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS AND WILL ENTER THE ATMOSPHERE BEYOND THE DUALITY OF GOOD AND EVIL.

## EPILOGUE

Before publishing the next issue of Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today, I called Shanti.

- Listen, I want to put on the Internet our conversation, which we recorded with you in 2004.
- Yes, but first send it to me, I will read it; I wonder what you wrote there.
- All right.

Honestly, I did not expect that Shanti would approve my piece of writing. And if I first published, and then put him before the fact, then there would be no problems.

However, what is done is done.

I sent the first part, our dialogue (to say more precisely, his soliloquy), and then the second part together with the cover letter of the following content:

All glory to Shri Shri Guru and Gauranga!

Dear Ananta Shanti, accept my obeisances.

I am sending you the text of our recorded conversation, which took place in 2004, almost without editing and abbreviations. I'm going to include it as a separate chapter of my future book. My words are in bold font, yours is everything else, except the author's remarks, in italics, and few paragraphs of the preamble. Please also find attached photos.

It would be nice if you, yourself, wrote something in return. I could use it somewhere without causing the detriment of your reputation. I reserve the right to comment. Hare Krishna!

Your well-wisher  
Murali Mohan das (Mamu Thakur)

Time passed. There was no answer. Shanti changed the address and, instead of the reply sent his new phone. I wrote a second letter and sent a continuation to our conversation.

All glory to Shri Shri Guru and Gauranga!

Dear Shanti, accept my obeisances.

I am sending you a continuation of our conversation, which will be included as a separate chapter in the book "A Historical Novel from the First Person," as well as some photos. If you are interested, check out [sankirtana-lila.ru](http://sankirtana-lila.ru), as well as [sankirtanacorporation.com](http://sankirtanacorporation.com) and other sites of the SANKIRTANA association ([sankirtana.narod.ru](http://sankirtana.narod.ru); [sankirtana.net](http://sankirtana.net) and etc.). I hope that you will consider it worthy of writing something yourself. Hare Krishna.

Your well-wisher.  
Murali Mohan das (Mamu Thakur)

Time passed, but the reply didn't follow again. I no longer counted on the reply. This time, when I was in Moscow, I called him.

— Hare Krishna! How are you?

It seems that Shanti did not expect a call from me. He paused a little, and having gathered his thoughts, he said:

-- I read your scribbling; you defame everybody; I do not permit you to print this and generally mention my name ... with the Hare Krishnas I do not want to have any business.

Then he followed with a soliloquy for half an hour. Shanti spewed curses and spoke of Krishna everything that for the devotee's ear would be like snake venom.

I tried to reason with him, but, alas ... I hung up just to interrupt him. After waiting a few minutes, I called again and resumed the conversation, in the hope to still get some positive information from him for my book (about Tuneyev, in particular).

- I do not want you to mention my name at all.
- Yes, but I'm not just writing about you only. There are facts that can be of historical significance in the compilation of a monograph on the development of Krishna consciousness in this country. You are a "grand person," but you're not alone! These are my memoirs. I write about events that are related to my service to Krishna and I mention you only in context; if you disagree with something, you can challenge and write a refutation, but do not shut me up. When you loosen your tongue and blaspheme, no one can stop you...

Hearing this, Shanti lost his temper. As a hail of a rumbling thunderstorm, curses were falling on my head, but I did not let him have it:

- If you want to be respected, learn to respect others.

Shanti was sentimental and never cared about the consequences of his actions. He did not know what to do or what not to do, what to say and what not to say. It never occurred to him that it was necessary to change something in his behavior and in his life. Therefore, guided by the highest ideal and the wishes of other devotees, I gave the cause a move. When we are dealing with rascals, it's not the time to be a gentleman.

Plato is dear to me, but the truth is dearer still. If a person leaves *sannyasa*, it is time for him to drown himself or commit suicide. It's better than living in humiliation.

People do not think that their real life is the result of their past actions. Everyone receives good for good and evil for evil. A reasonable person does not blame others of his failures but tries to improve, stop sinning. It is the sinful life that causes his misfortunes. A reasonable person receives knowledge from the Vedic *shastra* and does not sin; less reasonable learns by his experience, getting into a bad situation, and the fool, which was Shanti, again and again, chews once chewed, remaining a habitual, and hardened criminal. The facts can be judged by the example of others, by their own experience while being guided by *shashtra*, but because of his childish stubbornness, Shanti did not want to admit this to himself. What a shame!

How and when our paths with Shanti crossed in the past? It is known only to God.

Everyone tries to write about themselves better than there is in reality, exaggerating their virtues and shading the shortcomings. By idealizing, people create for themselves saints and idols. In some, it comes from the desire to aggrandize oneself, but in others, it comes from the desire to establish the truth, ideal of life. People tend to aspire for the higher. However, misled by material nature (by *gunas* of passion and ignorance), they create for themselves an ideal according

to their understanding, forgetting about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Who is beyond the dirt of this world. Instead of progressing, they degrade, gradually slide into the pit of material existence. This turned out to be Shanti. Upon receiving mercy from Shрила Prabhupada, he started with austerity, and ended with humiliation, began with a high note, and finished in low tones. Where and when did this happen? The soul incarnates in this world many times and, performing actions for the sake of sense gratification, becomes entangled in the nets of *karma*, plunging more and more into ignorance. Only by trusting in the mercy of pure devotees, the soul can revive its dormant Krishna consciousness and not otherwise.

Ethics states that one should tell people only pleasant truth, but when it comes to the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, it is necessary to drop formalities and, for the sake of others, speak the truth, relying on the *shastra*, and nothing but the truth. My life is not impeccable, but my desire for truth is beyond doubt; it can inspire others to follow my example, so I'm talking about all this. Straight-heartedness is a synonym for *Vaishnavism*.

## WHEN PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSIONS BECOME CRIMINAL CHRONICLES

I had no special business in Moscow, and I took a ticket to Minsk, but the day before I Shanti called me.

- Hare Krishna!
- Hari bol... are you in Moscow?"
- Yes, if you want, let's meet.
- Well, you know, now I'm busy... maybe tomorrow ..."
- I am leaving tomorrow...

After a pause, Shanti said:

- Well, let me call in the morning.

The next day in the morning, somewhere around 10 am the telephone rang.

- Hare Krishna.
- Is this Murali Mohan?
- Yes! Who is it?
- My name is Dima. The devotees gave me your phone. I read your books and articles on the Internet. I like your independent position and your mood... Sometimes I visit the ISKCON *namahattas* and seek a *guru* for

myself... I know that you are leaving tomorrow and would like to meet with you to get a *darshan*.

- Okay. Let's meet in an hour, — I answered in my usual, rather free manner. — Can you?
- In an hour I cannot, I live in Tsaritsyno... I'm calling from someone else's phone...
- Well, invite me to your place...
- No, now I am in Moscow. I need an hour or two to get ready; I have not yet chanted the mantra...
- Well, when you're done, call me.
- Deal.

Around noon the telephone rang. It was Dima.

- I can meet you at Izmaylovskaya subway station at noon. Does it suit you?
- Fine. How will you look?
- I will be wearing a t-shirt with Hare Krishna.
- Well, and you will recognize me...

When I told Arjuna about my upcoming meeting, he said:

- I don't like this. Take me with you. I'll stay somewhere nearby just for safety sake.

Arjuna was a master of sports in freestyle wrestling; for some time he was on Zhirinovsky's team as his personal chauffeur and bodyguard.

- I think this is a vain precaution...
- Who knows, now such lawlessness is around, it is difficult to assume, leaving the house that you return back.

He was right. When the last time, we parked our car, an armored Mercedes was standing by the entrance, and several armed people were walking nearby.

- What is it?
- There lives an influential person on our floor, that's his personal guards.

It is not surprising to such concerns when law enforcement agencies themselves can belong to various gangs. The news on all TV channels reported an incredible case. In Moscow, the police colonel fired a gun at customers in the supermarket. There were victims.



Be that as it may, Krishna says: "In all activities just depend on Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me" (Bh.G. 18.57)

"It is so, but Krishna is pushing me to go with you." — Arjuna said.

— Don't worry. If anything, I'll call you, wait for the call.

*After going through the whole stagnant period in the USSR, I gained the experience of preaching in extreme conditions, relying on Krishna. And although it seemed that everything is already behind, the feeling of danger never leaves me. It is not wise to be reckless. I always felt responsible for the mission and for my disciples, who were sometimes naive, like children. "The material world is not a place for a gentleman," Prabhupada said. "This is a very dangerous place ... jeopardy lies at every step." Faced with difficulties, the unbelievers can abandon devotional service to Krishna. Although the years of repression are over, the trials are continuing.*

Around noon I was by the subway. People were going in and out of the subway station, some were waiting for someone. Not seeing anything suspicious, I took out my beads and started chanting Hare Krishna. A woman came up and offered me a leaflet. Probably a Christian, a sectarian ... I was always sympathetic to preachers and missionaries, that's why I always took leaflets from them.

Ten minutes later Dima appeared. He immediately approached me.

"Hare Krishna!" — I greeted him. He replied in the same way: "Hare Krishna!"

"What a nice young man," — I thought

Naturally, the heart of a devotee melts at the sound of the holy name of Krishna. When someone tells you "Hare Krishna", you feel Krishna's presence and forget about the danger. At the name of Krishna, which is non-different from Himself, the devotee forgets everything ... only Krishna and nothing else.

People say that God is one. It is not so, that there are two, three Gods or each one has his own. This means that there is nothing but God. Every cultured, educated, and spiritually developed person should know this.

Whoever one worships, he worships Krishna but often does not do so properly. In accordance with the influence of different modes of nature, there are different types of faith...

Those who have material desires worship the demigods; those who eat meat cannot worship Krishna directly, therefore they worship His personification of material nature — goddess Kali, or the creator of the Universe, Brahma, who also acts as the Heavenly Father.

Moving away from the subway station, we went into the nearby park and sat on a free bench.

— Well, tell me who you are and how long you've known Hare Krishna.

A little embarrassed, Dima began:

"I've been to Bhaktivigyan's lectures, but I do not like what he does and says... I do not feel inspired, but when I read your books, I really understand what Hare Krishna is..." His voice intonation and the manner of talking somehow reminded me of Shanti.

"Shanti probably gave him my phone number, — I thought. — No one else knew that I was in Moscow and today I'm leaving... My Moscow phone was known only to him. When I called yesterday, he probably saw it on his cell phone.

"Do you know Bharadwaj?" — Dima asked.

— I know him. And where is he now, in Moscow?

— No, in Dnepropetrovsk...

— When Ananta Shanti took sannyasa, Bharadwaj was his servant...

Memories of Bharadwaj evoked unpleasant feelings in me, therefore, I changed the conversation into philosophical themes of Krishna consciousness...

— Krishna is in the heart of every living being: demigod, animal, insect, Christian, Buddhist, believer, and an atheist.

Having said this, I reached for my purse and took out my new book.

— Recently I published another book, "Culture and religion of demons" ...

— Can you give it to me?

— Yes, of course, let me sign it for you.

I handed him the autographed author's copy, and then I took out the *karatalas*...

— To become Krishna conscious, we chant the Hare Krishna mantra ..."

Dima stopped me: "Wait, let me call my friends, please. They also wanted to meet you."

— Very well...

I gave Dima my mobile phone, and as soon as he dialed the number, two guys of his age appeared in the distance. It seemed that they came with him, but missed each other.

After approaching me, one sat next to me on the bench, and the other stood in the distance as if being on the lookout.

Looking at the situation, I involuntarily felt some uneasiness.

- What's your name?
- Kirill. I am a Buddhist...
- Although the philosophy of Buddhism is in contradiction with *bhakti*, however, the Buddha is the incarnation of Krishna; he preaches *ahimsa*, nonviolence, which helps the conditioned *jiva* to cultivate mercy towards all living beings. Buddha forbade His followers from eating meat ... Are you a vegetarian?
- Not really...

Foreseeing the evil, I picked up the *karatalas* and, striking them rhythmically, began to sing Hare Krishna.

First I sang Panchatattva ... then the Hare Krishna maha-mantra...

Dima followed me...

The anxiety remained, although I tried to suppress it, counting on the power of the Holy Name. Glancing at the guys, I thought that it was time to get up and leave.

At this very moment, the one who called himself Dima rose abruptly.

"All right, enough already ..."

A metal object resembling a brass knuckles flashed in his hand. Before I came to my senses, he hit me with it on the head, swinging, with all his might.

I tried to get off the bench, but he hit me again and again... The blow was so strong that it could knock the bull down. The wound on my head bled. It covered my eyes with a thick shroud.

In such cases, it was not in my rules to portray humility and non-resistance to evil by violence. Having prayed to Krishna, I took up *karatalas* and began to wave them. It slightly cooled the bandit's zeal. After that, having seized the initiative, I began to pursue him. Those two who came to his aid, remaining on the sidelines, quietly retreated. Seeing that he is alone, Dima ran ... I started to pursue him. Like a driven animal, he began to rush about the park. At first, he ran to the subway, but when he saw people emerging from the station, he rushed to the other side. Keys, money, mobile phone, and a book I signed for him flew out of his pockets.

Without losing self-control, I picked up the book and his phone on the move. Material evidence.

- God marks rascals! — I thought.

I took out my phone and started calling Arjuna, but, alas, I could not dial the number. During the scuffle, I lost my eyeglasses and now I did not see anything. At random, I tried to dial again and again, but unsuccessfully... I tried to stop some passer-by to ask him to help me. Seeing me, bloodied with a look full of burning hatred, all passers-by just jumped aside. Relief was not expected from anywhere, so there was nothing left to do but go to Arjuna's home.

Approaching the house, at the very gates, I managed to dial the number.

- Murali Mohan, where are you?"
- At the door. Come out, please, and open the gate.

A few minutes later Arjuna appeared. Seeing me bloodied, he was dumbfounded.

- What happened?
- Bandit bullet, — I replied, without losing a sense of humor.
- I told you, take me with you... We need to call an ambulance and the police urgently."
- Wait, do not fuss, it seems, the attackers were from within...
- Whoever they were, call the police, they will sort it out. Evil must be punished. In this case, relying on Krishna, we must do something ourselves. If you remember, Shri Rama was beaten. He resisted, and when asked: "Why did you not turn to Krishna, for help," he answered: "You cannot exploit Krishna; it is necessary to make the most efforts yourself as well."

We called an ambulance and the police.

Only a few people knew that I came to Moscow, and only Shanti had my phone number. In the history of religion, this is not the only case when philosophical discussions end up in a criminal chronicle.

(The second book "Hare Krishna yesterday and today" begins with my arrival to Minsk)

## **HARE KRISHNA IS NOT OF THIS WORLD**

*Like any truly spiritual movement, Krishna consciousness is not of this world. Therefore, it often meets desperate resistance among materialists, conditioned souls.*

Thus often you can hear from the parents when they find out that their daughter or son have met with Hare Krishna: "Let them drink vodka, smoke tobacco and use drugs, let them eat meat, let them do anything, but not Hare Krishna!"

The question arises: “Do not parents love their children? Are they enemies to their children? Do not they realize that drugs, meat-eating and sexual promiscuity are evil? Do they not have compassion for children when they push them to the path of sin, or, perhaps, they consider sinful life a boon for their children? Do they not understand that suffering is the result of sinful deeds committed by a living being in this and past life?

Egocentricity and ignorance of parents are the cause of their own suffering, of problems in the family and in the society.

When we preach Krishna consciousness to such people, we are confronted with not understanding the simple truth: LIFE IS ETERNAL. LIFE IS SOUL IN THE BODY. While changing the material body constantly, we suffer and enjoy the results of our own activities.

For good, we receive good, for evil — evil!

## **WHAT IS THE KRISHNA’S MERCY?**

*The question arises: why did the great messiahs, the saints and devotees of God, suffer? Why did they crucify Christ? Why Haridas Thakur was beaten in 22 market squares, and even to Nityananda Prabhu, the very embodiment of God’s mercy, an attempt to kill was made by Jagaya and Madhaya. Why do the preachers of Krishna consciousness have so many enemies who sometimes try to kill them? At one time, there were attempts on Bhaktivinoda, when he brought the yogi-impostor Vishnu to justice; there were attempts on Bhaktisiddhanta. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada? They say that even his own disciples poisoned him.*

*When Chaitanya began the sankirtana movement, Kazi, the Muslim ruler, sent the police to disperse the crowd. He threatened that he would convert Chaitanya Himself to Islam if he did not stop making noise around his strange religion. In no other movement, the materialists are making as many obstacles as to Hare Krishna.*

*Shrila Prabhupada said: this is NORMAL! This is a sign that we are on the right path.*

*Indeed, if we think about it, it is just like that. After all, the material world is created for those who wished to forget God, therefore, when someone reminds us of God or tries to inspire us to devotional service to God, naturally, this is met with the greatest objections and resistance from materialistic people. When we begin devotional service, the material nature begins to resist. Figuratively speaking, starting devotional service, we thus declare war on maya.*

*In fact, a distinctive feature of the true spiritual movement is that it causes desperate resistance from the representatives of maya.*

Only after passing through severe trials and withstanding them, we can deserve the mercy of the Lord and return to the spiritual world. It is easy to talk about faith, but it is difficult to follow the path of truth.

On the other hand, if everyone agrees with us, it means that what we preach is worthless.

The material nature itself, the whole world is driving us out of here.

People are envious and when, without pretending to anything, we leave everything and go to Krishna, everyone, including the demigods, thinks: "And it's good! More for us!" In this case, there is no objection. After the test, the demigods will help us.

It is said for a reason, that Krishna consciousness is the path of eternal good luck and even a little advancement in it will protect a person from all kinds of fear.

A true devotee of Krishna is fearless! He never compromises with the material energy. He is like a *chataka* bird, which drinks water only from the cloud. The lightning flashes, the thunder rolls open the sky, but the bird does not descend to the earth to quench its thirst. This is its nature. Although *chataka* sees water splashing in gutters, it never goes down but drinks water only from the cloud. Like this bird, a devotee of Krishna never compromises for sensual pleasures; he never surrenders his principles of spiritual life for the sake of material desires and senses.

LOVE and devotion to KRISHNA are tested not in ordinary, but in EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES! The really great and glorious are those who, went all the way to the end, did not break down and stood firm. Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

On this, I end my essay titled "My friend Shanti" — a fragment that was included as a separate chapter of the book "A Historical Novel from the First Person". Soon the reader will get acquainted with the contents of the book, which is a pearl of memoir literature, dedicated to the history of the spread of Krishna consciousness in this country.

In conclusion, I would like my readers to understand what is happening and try to change their thinking and consciousness. In Krishna, everything is perfect and only our imperfect vision creates the illusion of disorder and suffering. For a serious disciple of Truth, his leg will never stumble over the stone of his own ambitions.

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu did not come to this world to save the chosen or those who belong to a specific religious sect, but to liberate everyone. In His

causeless mercy, He began the SANKIRTANA Movement, the congregational chanting of the holy names of Shri Krishna, which is both a *yuga-dharma* (method of spiritual realization for the people of Kali-yuga) and *sanatana-dharma*, (eternal religion, that is, the soul's original activity). He distributes the love of God to the learned man, versed in the Vedic scriptures, to the ignorant, to men and women, to people of different nationalities and different skin colors, to believers and atheists.

## HARE KRISHNA IS THE BEST!

The Lord incarnates into this world in the form of the Holy Name to fulfill His wonderful pastimes. In the Vaishnava literature, which is the peak of theistic thought, there is a detailed explanation for this. The material world is dual. The name or sound here is nothing more than a symbol denoting an object or person. However, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is transcendental to material nature, is beyond this duality. The Lord is advaita, He is non-different from His name, form, and deeds. Everything that is connected with Him, has a spiritual nature.

Shrila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, the spiritual preceptor in the chain of disciplic succession, teaches the worship of the Holy Name, referring to it as to Shri Hari-nama Prabhu. He says that the name of God is the avatar of the Lord, and is the immortal abode of bliss. Out of boundless compassion and kindness, Krishna reveals Himself to the fallen souls in the form of a transcendental sound. When Narada Muni, playing the *vina*, sings the holy name "Radhika-ramana," He incarnates immediately and reveals Himself in *kirtana*.

"O Harinama, You assume an unlimited number of transcendental images and forms, such as the son of mother Yashoda, you are the source of all incarnations, just like the Lord Himself. O Harinama, thanks to Your sweet will, You appear in a multitude of incarnations. Please, let them increase love and affection for You! Your name is worshiped by every one of its letters: O Lord, You manifest Yourself in two forms: *vachya* and *vachaka*. *Vachya* is Your beauty, full of knowledge and bliss, *vachaka* is Your holy names, such as Krishna. This transcendental sound is the resting place for all souls. *Vachaka* is more merciful, it allows to enter into Your transcendental pastimes. O Lord, bestow Your holy name on me. Even if a person commits offenses to Lord Krishna, but at the same time, he is respectful in his heart to His name, then, when he chants: Rama! Krishna! Hari! — all offenses go away, and he submerges into the ocean of divine love, enjoying the *rasa*. He who has taken shelter of the holy name of the Lord, will certainly find love for the Lord and get rid of all offenses. At the lotus feet of Shrila Rupa Gosvami, Bhaktivinoda prays for the attachment and love of the *vachaka*."

In Bhagavata-Sandarbha, Shrila Jiva Gosvami also describes the holy name as the *avatara* of the Lord. He calls the NAME the very essence of the Lord (*nama-naminor abhedah*). The Padma Purana says:

*nama chintamanih krishnas  
chaitanya-rasa-vigraha  
purnah shuddho nitya-mukto  
'bhinnatvan nama-naminoh*

“The holy name of Krishna is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Krishna Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. He is the source of all rasa. It is not a material name under any condition and it is no less powerful than Krishna Himself. Since Krishna’s name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with maya. Krishna’s name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Krishna and Krishna Himself are identical”

The holy names of God are innumerable. They can be found in any language, in any religious tradition. All-Good (GOD), All-Powerful (ELOHIM), Heavenly Father (AWOON), Brahman, Paramatma (Supersoul), Enlightened (Buddha), He Who gives life (ALLAH). All these names of God are absolutely pure. They can cleanse the soul of material contamination and grant liberation to anyone who humbly and carefully chants them. The method of chanting the name of God is recommended by all the scriptures of the world. In the Qur’an (87.2) it is said that “the glorification of the name of the Lord is the most exalted.” In the “New Testament” (Romans 10.13) — “He who calls on the name of God will be saved!” In the teachings of the Buddha — “everyone who addresses My name, will come to Me after death.” Thus, the names of God are countless, and they all possess the absolute nature of God Himself. The name (*nama*), and the One who owns them (*nami*) are identical. Of all the forms of Lord Vishnu, it is considered that Krishna and Rama are *purna* (most complete), and *pravastha* (the most important). These two original names of God are included in the *maha-mantra*, which is recommended for the benefit of all people living in Kali-yuga. In Kali-santarana Upanishad there is a story about how, at the end of Dvapara-yuga, Maharishi Narada, crossing the Universe, asked its creator, Brahma: “Oh the great, be kind, tell me how to get rid of the corrupting influence of the age of Kali and cross the ocean of *maya*?”



“This is a good question,” Brahma said, “for the benefit of all the people of the Universe, I will answer. People in the Kali Yuga will be able to escape the influence of the Kali age if they repeat the name of Bhagavan Narayana.”

Narada asked: “What’s the name?” And then Brahma (Hiranyagarbha) gave him a *maha-mantra*: *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Ramah Rama Rama Hare Hare*. These sixteen names of Bhagavan Narayana will wash away all the dirt of Kali. Having studied all the Vedas, one cannot find a method more sublime than chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. These names can eliminate ignorance that covers the soul. The Supreme Brahman manifested Himself like the sun, to dispel the darkness with His effulgence. “Lord, are there any rules for repeating the holy names?” asked Narada. Lord Brahma replied: “There are no strict rules and limitations for chanting the name of the Lord.” It does not matter whether the brahmana is pure or not pure, through the pronunciation of the mantra, he immediately attains any of the four kinds of liberation (salokya, etc.). One who repeats the mantra of the 16 names of the Lord three and a half crores, is released even from the sin of killing the brahmana, he is cleansed of all sins: adultery, the theft of gold and others, and he is cleansed of the offenses that he committed in the performance of his dharma.

This *maha-mantra*, revealed by Lord Brahma, has a number of invaluable advantages: it contains the two most important names of God — Krishna and Rama, which are extremely powerful; Lord Shiva explained the importance of the name of RAMA to his wife Durga: “When I repeat the name of RAMA, RAMA, RAMA, I enjoy the splendor of sound. One holy name of Ramachandra is equivalent to a thousand names of Lord Vishnu” (Padma Purana, Uttara-khanda, Brihad-vishnu-sahasranam-stotra, 72.3.35) But the name of Krishna is even more glorious: “The result of repeating three thousand names of Vishnu can be achieved by only one repetition of the name of Krishna!” (Brahmanda Purana, Laghu-bhagavatamrita, 5.354)

The names of Rama and Krishna are the most powerful: *ramante yogino ‘smin iti ramah*. RAMA means “one who gives pleasure to yogis.” The names Rama, Balarama and Krishna Himself mean “Radha-ramana” — one who delights Shri-mati Radharani. In addition, another definition is given in the Padma Purana: “The Absolute Truth (*param brahma*) is called RAMA because it is the source of the enjoyment of the transcendentalists who have attained the supreme goal of Ananda” (Padma Purana). This verse illustrates the extraordinary power of Sri Krishna — *karsati yoginam manamsi iti krishnah*... Krishna means “one who attracts the hearts of yogis.” Another meaning can be found in the Mahabharata. “The root of “krish” indicates the attractiveness of the being of the Lord (bhu), “na” means spiritual pleasure. When the “krish” is connected with the suffix “na”

they create the word “krishna”, which means “all-attractive”. This indicates the Absolute Truth (*param brahma*). “Hare” means “one who steals the hearts of yogis” (Udiyoga-parva, 71.4, Madhya 9.30). “Hari destroys people’s sins, even when they are angrily pronouncing this name, just as a fire burns, even when it is touched accidentally.”

The other meaning of the maha-mantra is also very special. It becomes meaningful because of the name Hare, which in the form of Hara means Sri Radha, the very embodiment of the compassion of the Lord. Therefore the maha-mantra is a kind of appeal to the mercy of the Lord: “O Lord, O divine energy of the Lord (Shrimati Radharani), please engage me in your service.”

Thus, the name of the Lord is completely pure. In this prayer, there is nothing of self-interest or mercantile. It came from the spiritual world together with the Lord Himself, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The appeal to the compassion of the Lord out of the desire to attain *prema-bhakti*, a devotional loving service, makes Him accessible to the conditioned *jiva* in this age of Kali.

The material world is like the ocean of ignorance, which is full of the bloodthirsty monsters of different theories. They capture a person trying to understand the truth. But by the grace of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, even an inexperienced infant can understand the final word of truth (Chaitanya Charitamrita).

Devotees who preach the glory of the Holy Name, and pure devotional service to Krishna, endanger themselves constantly.

Materialistic people do not want to take medicine from a materialistic disease, just as for someone sick with jaundice the sweet seems bitter, so are materialists who do not have a tendency to serve the name of the Lord, despite many pieces of evidence from the sacred shastras.

## PART FOUR

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### REFLECTIONS ON HINDUISM (CONVERSATION, MOSCOW, JULY 2007)



*Tatyana Borisovna Lyubimova, Doctor of Philosophy, senior researcher at the Moscow Institute of Philosophy. She works with the issues of religion, consciousness, and society, she is the author of the translation of René Guénon's book *Reflections on Hinduism* and several articles on Krishna consciousness. Having preliminarily acquainted with her publications, I met with her to discuss several issues of interest to our readers. The conversation began with my question: "If God is one, then religion should be one. What is the need for a variety of religious practices in the worship of the one God?"*

**T.B.:** In fact, God is one, and everyone in his heart has a knowledge of God. But as for religions, I do not have such a simple opinion... The variety of religious practice is actually good. Each in his own way, from his point of view, sees and understands God so I would say that everyone can have his own individual religion because everyone in his heart has his own personal connection with God. As for religion as a social institution, it has its own function of social control. Therefore, a person who aspires to the truth must maneuver between the truth and the conventions dictated to him by society. It's deadly. Such a person often has to overcome dogmatic, formal, ritualistic and ceremo-

nial aspects. He has to go through many formalities to find the living core of religion and find himself.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, when the soul receives a human incarnation, then, as they say, the time has come to ask: "Who am I? What is the Absolute Truth? Who is God?" But here, using our spiritual desire to know the Truth, we are being exploited for the sake of mercantile goals. Shрила Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur once said that every spiritual movement is supported by *acharyas*. When it becomes a religion, a social institution, then, occupying the departments of staff preachers, mentors in the spiritual life, like Putana, feed their followers with poisoned milk. Empiricists like Kamsa are not able to understand the transcendental, that is, what lies beyond their sensory experience and the possibilities of the limited mind. Therefore, in order to control the situation, they create dogma and apologetics, which protects that dogma. Religion does not really give us knowledge about the soul or about God. It may, to some extent, help us overcome some of the difficulties of material existence in the struggle for daily bread. But what is the use of such a religion? If people can feed themselves by using their achievements in science and technology, then they refuse such a religion. Krishna consciousness, something I would like to talk about, is different from religion in the traditional sense of the word. Krishna consciousness is a pure consciousness that connects the soul with the Supreme Soul, God. This connection exists right now on a transcendental level, and it is eternal.

**T.B.:** In philosophy, the term "transcendental" is more used to divide this material, physical, manifested world and spiritual one, not manifested, the one that is on the other side. I think that it is not worth dividing those two worlds so much since both are in unity. We should not oppose them to each other, as is often done in different religions that God is somewhere, and we are here. This is completely wrong, it gives rise to many obstacles in the spiritual life. What is now manifested, for example, your appearance, the physical body is part ... the soul remains in the spiritual world. Through the consciousness and the physical body, it fulfills the divine task. Roughly speaking, it fulfills the plan of God, using its body and consciousness. Consciousness is like a screen. On this screen, the soul sees. The soul is not a physical being so it cannot act directly. Through consciousness, it learns about the physical world. And through the physical body, it acts. For example, we see the skin, but we do not see the body organs. We cannot separate them (your appearance from your body). It's part of your body. Similarly, your body can not be separated from the soul. We should not do this. This is one of the parts of the whole person.

**M.M.d.:** I beg your pardon, we "cannot" or "should not"? According to our philosophy, the soul does not need a material body. It has a spiritual body, and the material body is just a covering of the soul, like a man's clothing. As a person

changes clothes, so the soul changes this body constantly. In fact, there is no need in the material body. It is like a cage into which a bird is placed. Even if the cage is golden, then the bird is better off without the cage. We are connected with this body only by consciousness, because we identify ourselves, the soul, with it. As the oil does not mix with water, so the soul never mixes with the material body. Covered by material energy, the soul can be enveloped and carried away by its flow just as oil on the surface of the water can be washed away by its current. But, in fact, nothing connects us to the material body and this world, which is the manifestation of the lower energy of Krishna. Yes, Krishna is the Absolute Truth, He is the source of all material and spiritual, and as He is spiritual, so everything that is connected with Him is also spiritual. Matter doesn't exist for one who has attained pure consciousness, Krishna consciousness, but for all others, it is not like that. Therefore, being in a conditioned state, we are compelled to make a distinction between the spiritual and the material, calling the soul transcendental. What is the criterion in determining the spiritual and material? Spiritual is everything related to Krishna and used in the service of Krishna, and the material is everything that is not used for Krishna. For example, if we use our body for Krishna, then the transformation of energy takes place, and the body is spiritualized. But if we use it for sense gratification, then it takes its material form. So, for example, if the iron is put in a fire, it becomes hot, it starts to act like a fire. If the iron is removed from the fire, then it again takes on the qualities inherent in iron. Similarly, if we use everything that is at our disposal (including body, mind, a gift of speech and even money) for Krishna, then it all acts as a spirit, manifesting spiritual qualities.

There is an Absolute Truth — the source of all that exists, in its highest manifestation — God. He is the source of everything. The original name of God is Krishna. And matter and spirit come from Him. He is the source of both spiritual and material worlds. Duality arises when we try to understand the spiritual world with the help of material senses and the material mind, but this is impossible. In this, strictly speaking, there lies the reason for the delusion of modern scientists.

**T.B.:** It's all about where we start...

**M.M.d.:** I would say in other words: "What is our consciousness. Everything arises from consciousness." There is a spiritual body that has spiritual senses and a spiritual mind, but there is also a material body that has material senses and a material mind. In fact, the soul has feelings and reason, and they are spiritual, but now these spiritual feelings are covered by matter. There is a coating that distorts reality. What we consider to be knowledge is ignorance, and what seems to us reality is an illusion. The material world is a reflection of the spiritual. Although this reflection is non-different from the spiritual world, it is not a reality. The material world is not reality, but as a reflection of reality, it is real.

Baffled by material energy, we take a reflection for reality - this is the problem. Such a misconception and false understanding about life are called *maya* ("ma-ya" means "what doesn't exist"). The spiritual body is eternal, therefore, it still exists. We do not use it, because we decided to forget Krishna. Material senses and the mind do not allow us to perceive the spiritual world, but the spiritual body, which has spiritual senses and spiritual mind, willfully give us its perception as a higher reality.

**T.B.:** Yes, the spiritual body determines everything, but not the physical one, is it?

## **CRAZY IDEAS ARE THE CAUSE OF CRAZY LIFE**

**M.M.d.:** Our consciousness determines everything. In Bhagavad-Gita it is said that during life we cultivate a certain consciousness or way of thinking and at the end of our life, leaving the material body, we obtain this or that form of existence according to our consciousness. If the consciousness of man is like the consciousness of an animal, then he will receive the body of the animal. If his consciousness is divine, he will receive the body of the demigod, and if he has Krishna consciousness, he will receive a body like Krishna's, spiritual, not material. *Yam yam vapi smaran bhavam...*

**T.B.:** Forgive me, I don't know Sanskrit.

**M.M.d.:** I'll translate. This verse says: "Whatever state of being a person can remember, leaving his body, he achieves this state without fail". In other words, what kind of consciousness he has at the time of death, this type of body, he will receive. No matter what comes to a person's mind - any crazy idea or thought — it can become his real existence.

**T.B.:** This Hindu concept of samsara, the infinite incarnation, encounters Buddhism, and Buddhism concluded that it would be necessary to stop the rotation of this wheel and get out of this circle of birth and death.

**M.M.d.:** Buddhism teaches that desire is the source of suffering; the absence of desires is the cessation of suffering. What does it mean? Death! But as it is said in the Bhagavad-Gita: *na jayate mriyate va kadachin.* — "for the soul, there is neither birth nor death." From the standpoint of the Vedas, the philosophy of Buddhism is absurd. Philosophy, which teaches that everything is originated from emptiness, is absurd.

**T.B.:** ... the modern man's desires have disappeared, but suffering has remained.

**M.M.d.:** A living being is not a stone, he has desires. Desiring is the nature of the soul. Therefore, in our philosophy, one should not give up desires, they just must be cleansed. Now we have the desire to satisfy the senses and mind of the material body because under the influence of a false ego we identify ourselves

with it. It is necessary to stop this kind of activity and direct it to the satisfaction of the senses of Krishna, as the soul is an integral part of Him.

**T.B.:** Of course, desires need to be cultivated.

**M.M.d.:** Desires are inherent in the soul, and they need to be changed; they will change when we change the consciousness of the “I am the material body” to the awareness of ourselves as a soul. As we become aware of our true, spiritual nature of ourselves, desires are also transformed; the desire to satisfy the senses of the material body transforms into the desire to serve Krishna, as every living being is an inseparable part of Him.

**T.B.:** This is understandable, but the very manifestation of your “I” is your body — this is also a divine manifestation. You serve God with your desires at every moment of your existence. He is present in you, and you cannot avoid serving Him. He is everything in everything.

**M.M.d.:** You are absolutely right in one thing — we remain His eternal servants...

**T.B.:** No, not servants, no! God does not need service ... God needs only our love. He does not need servants, slaves ... Christians say “servant of God” ... If you are a servant of God, and God lives in you, then you, turning yourself into a slave, thus make God a slave.

**M.M.d.:** Please note that the word “service” and “servant” are not adequate in meaning to the word “*bhakti*”. They do not accurately determine the meaning. In Russian, the word “servant” and “service” is often used disrespectfully, with some derogation, because we are brought up in such a way. We were taught: we are not slaves, slaves are not us. In another cultural tradition, speaking of Sanskrit, the word “*bhakti*” does not have an adequate meaning; its etymology does not match our translation. *Bhakti* cannot be translated into any language, therefore it is translated as service, but at the same time, with an addition, “loving service”... love manifests itself naturally in the service of one person to another. So, for example, one friend serves another friend, the mother serves the son, and the husband — the wife; in this service, there is nothing irreverent or humiliating. This saying “the mother serves her child,” — this is the manifestation of the mother’s love. By loving her child, she cares for him, not expecting any reward, simply driven by a natural love affection. This is another emotional state that is difficult to describe in one word.

## WHAT IS LOVE?

**T.B.:** Love is not so much a service as it is a manifestation of sublime energy

**M.M.d.:** And it is correct.

**T.B.:** ...but this love, which should exist in a person, it should, it seems to me (I do not want to impose my point of view on you — it's not good, I can only express it), manifest not only outside, but it must be to oneself as well (inside).

**M.M.d.:** Of course, and I'll tell you more. In fact, everyone loves oneself...

**T.B.:** And rightly so (and my opponent burst into uncontrollable laughter to tears).

**M.M.d.:** "Right" or "wrong" are not appropriate here, because such is the nature of a living being — to love oneself; everyone loves himself, but from the realization of his "I", this love for oneself manifests itself in different ways. Those who identify themselves with the material body, their love manifests itself to their bodies. In the lower forms of life (among animals), it focuses on its own body. For example, if the rat is hungry and there is no other food, it will stop at nothing and eat another similar rat. Typically, humans don't do this. Because of the more developed consciousness, one is bound by a sense of duty, morality, ethics, and religion. In the human form of life, self-love extends to others under the guise of nationalism, patriotism and some other "ism," on their fellow tribesmen, co-religionists, like-minded people, and in some cases, pursuing the idea of universal brotherhood — for all living beings. International or even interplanetary love, this indicates a fairly high level of human development. However, in all cases, without exception, love is the highest manifestation of selfishness. From the consciousness of who "I" is, self-love takes various forms. If a person recognizes himself as a material body, love takes on material nature and acts as lust. If a person recognizes himself as a soul, then it manifests itself spiritually. Love is in the nature of the soul, which is a part of Krishna. Ultimately, if we love Krishna, then our love encompasses all living entities, for all living entities (souls), are inseparable parts of Krishna. In fact, Krishna enjoys His own love. Out of love for Himself, Krishna has spread Himself into many expansions (including all living beings), and by endowing them with His love, He, Himself enjoys through their love for Him. If we have love, then this love is for Krishna. When we voluntarily surrender it to Krishna by participating in the process of *bhakti* (loving service to Krishna), then, immersed in the ocean of His transcendental love, we truly experience happiness. This concept deserves special attention of real philosophers and scholars who are versed in spiritual science. Their spiritual realization can help ordinary people to solve insoluble problems existing at the level of the individual and at the level of society as a whole. If we are particles of the whole, then the self-love manifests itself in relation to this whole and to Krishna in particular.

**T.B.:** Yes, love seems to overflow. There are Christians, they think I am a servant of God, and in the Gospel, it says, Jesus tells his disciples: "Why do you divinize me? You are gods." That is, He says that you are also divine by nature.



## OUR NATURE IS DIVINE

**M.M.d.:** Yes, our nature is divine; we are one in our spiritual nature with the Supreme Personality of Sri Krishna: we are eternal, full of knowledge and bliss (sat-chit-ananda). This is our nature, our nature.

**T.B.:** This is our enlivening principle. This is our soul.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, it is, but, at the same time, we are different from Krishna. We are inconceivably one with Krishna and different from Him; united with Him qualitatively and distinct quantitatively. God is God, and all other beings, although one with Him in their spiritual nature, being His particles, are simultaneously different, as part and whole.

**T.B.:** There is one God, but at the same time, everything is full of gods. Do you call them demigods?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, there are demigods. There is a source, and there is energy. There is a sun, and there are stars that shine with the reflected light of the sun. There is the sun, and there are its light and heat - the energy of the sun. With absolute unity there is also an absolute difference; I would say diversity in unity. This philosophy, which was preached by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, is called *achintya-bheda-bheda tattva* — the philosophy of inconceivable oneness and simultaneous difference. The source and its energies are one, but they are also different at the same time. There are a qualitative oneness and a quantitative difference. When sunlight enters our windows, we say: "The sun has come." But in fact, if the sun came to our room, then everything would be immediately reduced to ashes, destroyed...

We have the qualities of Krishna. For example, He has consciousness, and we have consciousness... But He has a higher consciousness; His consciousness is unlimited, it covers the whole world, all the bodies in which He is present as Paramatma, and our consciousness is limited by this material body. He is aware of all bodies, and we are only a given body that represents a particle of creation. God is omnipotent, but we are not. It is necessary to learn to see oneness and difference in everything ... In the Chaitanya Charitamrita it is said: *jivera svarupa haya krishnera nitya dasa tatashtha shakti bheda-bheda prakasha*. Being the energy of Krishna, we remain eternal servants of Him. We are free when we are dependent on Krishna.

**T.B.:** I agree with you, but I want to continue my thought. Christians say, "God is love!" Vaishnavas talk about loving service, worshiping God... that's fine. Hinduism is a very complex system... Vaishnavism is, like, as it were, taken out from there like a certain structure... God is one!

**M.M.d.:** God is one and plural - at the same time.

**T.B.:** That's what this is about. The whole problem is that it is very difficult for the human mind to combine these two concepts. Infinite variety and diversity with absolute oneness. It is difficult to understand and, as philosophers say, to satisfy one's own mind. Therefore, everyone seeks for himself his convenient design and makes up. Everyone has his own way at his point of time and place.

**M.M.d.:** The soul has personal qualities. It is an individuality.

**T.B.:** ... your definition is absolutely unique in time and space. And I cannot fully understand you. As they say, another person's soul is a mystery.

**M.M.d.:** Without likewise spiritual experience, we are not able to understand each other.

**T.B.:** But we can discuss, exchange information: as I understand it, as you understand it. But ultimately, we can neither convince each other nor prove anything to each other. I have this kind of impression. I'm different from you...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, we are individuals, personal in serving the one God and our relationship with Him.

**T.B.** Question: why did God create us like that? God does not do anything for no particular reason.

**M.M.d.:** There is an explanation for this; in the Vedic literature it is said that the creation of the material world has two purposes: 1) to give the living being the opportunity to act independently from God, by imitating the creator, the creator and the enjoyer, and on the other hand, 2) to give the living being the opportunity to attain liberation, by devoting himself to the devotional service to God.

**T.B.:** I think that it's not so easy...

## **BUT WHY HE CREATED US?**

**M.M.d.:** For His own pleasure.

**T.B.:** I think He enjoys the act of creation itself. He creates and you create; you too get pleasure. It is important for us not only to receive pleasure but also to continue this His creation. He knows the world through us. We are carrying out some great plan. Even if we do not know this plan. And we, as it were, are developing our part in this plan (the plan of this great architect). Perhaps, after leaving this world, we will drop this body and this accumulated experience. What is the physical world? We do not know. It is not separate from the spiritual world. As the Sufis say, it is just a membrane in the spiritual world. We just do not know this.

**M.M.d.:** You say, "We do not know..." means that knowledge exists besides us. There is a concept that we do not know — it is normal. Therefore, in conditioned life, we must look at the world through the eyes of the Vedic shastras,

given by God Himself and the eyes of those who have the knowledge, having received it through the chain of *parampara*, the chain of the disciplic succession of spiritual masters.

**T.B.:** Soul knows everything, but the body remembers everything...

**M.M.d.:** There is a gross physical body, and there is a subtle one, which records the activity of the gross body as a film or tape — namely our thoughts and desires. Our ideas and our concepts of life, enclosed in a subtle body, are the cause of our incarnations in the material world.

**T.B.:** Yes, that's why we have to work on this body of thought. This body of thought and our desires in this life should blossom. We have to find the plan that God showed us. When the soul comes to God, it begins to create with Him.

**M.M.d.:** God is perfect, He is the whole from which everything originates, and into which everything returns. Of Him, nothing decreases and nothing is added: *Om purnam idam purnamidam ...* In fact, everything is eternal, so nothing needs to be created. One who possesses the fullness of all energies does not have to create anything by Himself...

**T.B.:** Well, we are not creating God, but this universe...

**M.M.d.:** He gave us some freedom by putting this inferior material energy at our disposal so that by manipulating it we could imitate the Source of all energies — to use the conventional terminology — the God, "creator". We have the potential to create and enjoy, because it exists in God, of whom we are an integral part. But if we want to understand the purpose of our stay in this world, the Vedas say that one goal is to satisfy lust (our material desires), and the other is to gain liberation through *bhakti*... from where I started (this discussion).

## **BHAKTI IS THE STUFF OF LIFE**

**T.B.:** Bhakti, Sufism is all the same...

**M.M.d.:** No, not exactly. Sufism is one of the mystical schools in Islam, and bhakti is the Vedic concept. We are talking about the Vedas now. I want to explain that religion has a beginning and an end in the annals of the history of mankind, but Krishna consciousness has no beginning and no end. It is eternal and eternally enclosed in the nature of the eternal soul, different from the material body. Therefore, bhakti and religion have their own fundamental differences and particularities. *Bhakti* is the loving service of the soul, undividedly devoted to God, and religion is simply piety, which helps to maintain our material existence by seeking help from God. *Bhakti* means that we give our love to God, *anyabilashita shunyam*... and religion is an appeal to God asking for this or that, for the sake of our sense gratification.

Krishna consciousness is eternal. It's just a pure consciousness of the soul that loves God. To consider it as a religion is foolish. When we present Krishna consciousness as a religion, then many objections arise: "Why do we need Hinduism? We have our own religion, Orthodox. Why do we need your God? We are Christians, we have our own God." It's foolish to say: "My" and "your" religion, "my" and "your" God." There is only one God. And only one religion, that is the love of God. It is a big mistake to call Krishna consciousness a religion. Krishna consciousness is not a religion, but a pure consciousness of the soul, conscious of God. Krishna consciousness is the goal of any religious practice.

Krishna says, "I am in the heart of every living being." This means that He is in the heart of a believer and an atheist, in the heart of a Muslim and a Christian, a Hindu and a Jew, a cat and a dog, in the nucleus of every atom. Neither Allah, nor Buddha, nor Jesus — none of them say anything similar, because Krishna is in everyone's heart, and this place is forever occupied by Him. Forever.

**T.B.:** Well, these are just different names...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, these are names, but they are different names; In His names, Krishna manifests His inconceivable spiritual energies so that people can approach Him. The name "Krishna" contains all the other names of God. Krishna is like a candle, from which all others are lit. One candle does not differ from another. However, there is the first, from which all the following are lit; this first candle is Krishna. Different names of God define His different qualities, for example, the all-powerful, omniscient, all-good, etc. Krishna means "all-attractive." Krishna is the cause of all causes, He has no cause - this is the definition of God. He is the richest, most intelligent, strongest, most glorious, most beautiful and renowned. He is the source of everything. In the name of Krishna there are all names: and Allah, and Buddha, and Jehovah and Christos ... Krishna is the *avatari*, the source of all incarnations and *avatars*.

**T.B.:** But "Krishna" is also translated as "black."

**M.M.d.:** Yes, there is such a translation. The black color is considered the absence of any color. Krishna is wholly spiritual, in Him there is nothing material, although He is the source of both matter and spirit. In this case, this can be interpreted as the absence of any material qualities in Krishna; to this, we add that among the inhabitants of the spiritual world, black and red colors predominate. Let it not perplex you.

**T.B.:** Black means incomprehensible

**M.M.d.:** Let's say, with a reservation, "incomprehensible" for material feelings and material mind.

**T.B.:** The Chinese also have black and white — they complement each other. The whole consists of two...

**M.M.d.:** In the spiritual world, there is no duality. There, all diversity is in unity. Black and white, good and evil, male and female - this is a material idea of life. In the spiritual world there is no duality; there everything is in unity; in pure consciousness, there is no duality.

**T.B.:** But we do not know this.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, we do not know, but we want to know...

**T.B.:** Who does not want to know the truth? However, there is no special hope for consciousness. Consciousness must be cleansed: without evil, without aggression, and even then one should not place special hopes. Why? Because the soul and consciousness are two different things. The soul knows everything, and consciousness arises when we are born here. Here the child is born, he screams - in the body, he turned out, in the darkness, in the darkness ... and only then the consciousness is born is an instrument.

**M.M.d.:** Forgive me for continuing this topic, but it is necessary to agree on terms: what do you mean by saying "consciousness", what do I mean and what is really consciousness? Consciousness is defined in the Vedas as an awareness of who the "I" is. Who am I"? The Vedas answer *aham brahmasmi* — "I" is the soul. From this, it follows that consciousness is a sign of the soul. Although we now do not see the soul, the presence of consciousness tells us that the soul is in the body. The soul manifests itself as consciousness through the activity of the body and the activity of the mind. As Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am."

Now the question: "How do I realize myself?" Most people realize themselves as a material body, identifying their "I" with it ... and so they exist under different definitions, taking different forms and names: Russian, American, Christian, Hindu, man, woman, etc. But pure consciousness determines my position as a soul, an integral part of Krishna. We call this Krishna consciousness. Krishna manifests His higher consciousness in every particle, so we call this Krishna consciousness. In fact, it's just pure consciousness. It is eternal, like the soul. But now, as a result of the connection with the matter, it is contaminated, and this is the problem. To eliminate contamination, it is necessary to purify the mind. The method of purification of consciousness is called bhakti-yoga. So, following the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga, chanting the holy name of Krishna, which is not different from Krishna Himself, we gradually purify our consciousness of the false concepts of life and false ego. When we have Krishna consciousness, we realize our position as an eternal servant of the Lord.

**T.B.:** But you define yourself in the physical world, and after you leave your body, you do not need to define yourself, you already know who you are.

**M.M.d.:** In fact, even if I do not know who "I am", I still exist in this capacity. The process of realization is to know ourselves as an eternal soul and restore our relationship with Krishna.

## AS THE ORACLE SAID

**T.B.:** Yes, the Oracle said: “Know yourself, and you will know the gods and the whole universe.” You have everything in you. Remember in Mahabharata? Mother Yashoda looks into Krishna’s mouth and sees there the whole universe...

**M.M.d.:** Krishna created us in His image and likeness. Knowing ourselves as a soul, we know not only the whole world and the universe, but also, to a certain extent, Krishna Himself. We are a small replica of Krishna. We can learn the chemical composition of the sea and the quality of seawater by examining only a few of its drops.

**T.B.:** And one more philosophical principle, it resonates with your teachings: “everything is in everything, but in each — in a special way.”

**M.M.d.:** This is what we have already talked about: *achintya-bhedabheda tattva* — an inconceivable oneness and difference are in everything. Now about the implementation and practical side of this issue. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu began the Sankirtana Movement, congregational chanting of holy names. He gave us the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*, naming this chanting *yuga-dharma* — the method of spiritual realization of the Absolute Truth for modern people. What can you say about this?

**T.B.:** I do not presume to judge. Repetition of the mantra or prayers — people borrowed it from the East. I’m not an expert. Self-realization is very difficult. Oh, if I could realize myself... (it was said with sadness in her voice).

**M.M.d.:** At the heart of any activity, there lies philosophy. To realize what we were talking about, we need an experiment...

**T.B.:** There are different ways, for example, in Islam it is *jihad*. You look into yourself and begin to realize: who you are, and what is in you, why are you so, why are you wrong in this life. This process is very complicated. You say that for a modern person it’s easier not to untie this knot, but to cut it, the “Gordian Knot” of karma. That knot is so entangled that it cannot be untied.

**M.M.d.:** In this case, we rely on the mercy of the Lord. The struggle in the material ocean of ignorance is very severe, and, even if the swimmer is experienced, he cannot be saved by himself...

**T.B.:** Yes, only by turning to God ... As soon as you turned to God, help will come right away. Another thing is that sometimes you, yourself, cannot do it, turn to God. What is the problem? And the problem is that there is a distortion not only in the mind, but in what you call karma, and not just karma...

**M.M.d.:** “Karma” means to follow the teachings of the Vedic scriptures. This kind of activity leads to the acquisition of material prosperity or ascension to heavenly planets. The *karma-kanda* section of Vedic scriptures offers us various rituals and sacrifices addressed to the demigods (in particular, to Indra). *Vicarma*

is an activity contradicting Vedic instructions; this kind of activity leads a living being to degradation. *Akarma* is an activity for Krishna or what we call devotional service to Krishna. Action in inaction, and inaction in action — this topic is discussed in the Bhagavad-Gita.

**T.B.:** To this I want to add that the matter is not only in action. Actions and thoughts, as well as words, are important. Take Zoroastrianism... and Vedism — they have the same roots.

**M.M.d.:** Of course, once there was a single civilization so we will find the roots of any religion in the Vedas.

**T.B.:** Quite right, a common spiritual tradition: Avesta and Rig-Veda. It is very difficult for scientists to decipher this Avesta. But, in any case, they found there that God has a second hypostasis — the truth. The Goddess of Truth is the main goddess. Therefore, every Zoroastrian must: truly think, act truly and truly speak.

## WHAT IS TRUTH?

**M.M.d.:** What are the criteria of truth?

**T.B.:** That's the whole point. If to say essentially, this is conformity with the plan of God.

**M.M.d.:** Quite right. Krishna is the highest manifestation of truth! He, Himself is the very Truth!

**T.B.:** The true word is if I say and feel (I have an inner sense of truth, that I speak correctly), and this coincides with the divine plan - I act, but here we have a conscience; conscience is a code of laws given by God. And it is more difficult to truly think. Control of thoughts is the most difficult. The mind is like a monkey. It is very difficult to keep thoughts. Therefore, philosophy, in fact, is engaged in this quest for truth only. Philosophy is a devotion to the truth. It puts truth in the center of the world. Western philosophy tries to reach it only by reason. It forgets about the action and the word. So there is a heap — the library is huge, but there is not enough truth there. Philosophy is not only books that are written under the heading of philosophy. Philosophy is a love of truth. I would clarify the meaning of the word "philosophy" — love not only for wisdom but for truth as well. Wisdom refers to practical life, and truth refers to the practical, theoretical, and sensory aspects of life. It covers everything. God is ascribed to the truth, and truth cannot be false.

**M.M.d.:** The truth is that our desires are to coincide completely, correspond to the desires of God.

**T.B.:** ... and not only desires but thoughts, words — everything has to match the desires of God. The path of such a realization is very complex.

**M.M.d.:** The path lies through the knowledge of oneself..

**T.B.:** That the thought is to be not just right, but also sound.

**M.M.d.:** All activities in this world are carried out in the process of thinking. Everything in the mind: happiness and misfortune, good and bad... If a living being enjoys or suffers in this world, so this pleasure and suffering are also in the mind. When we lose our connection with Krishna, the material energy envelops us, covers and carries away, as the flow of water carries away the oil that has fallen on its surface. And to restore our connection with Krishna, for modern people, the process of chanting holy names is recommended.

**T.B.:** I think that in your movement many people manage to realize this, only due to the fact that you are pronouncing the name of Krishna. You, of course, set up the soul, mind, and body for some musical correspondence of this divine world. It means a lot — the musical mood of yourself and everything... Maybe there is no other way! Through reflection only it is impossible to do so.

## THE MYSTICAL FORCE OF A SOUND

**M.M.d.:** There are other methods as well, but for the modern age Kali they cannot be used. The mind, although it is not very stable, is controlled by sound vibration. In my article “The Mystical Force of a Sound” I give some idea of what sound represents, and what sound vibrations exist in nature, and also how they affect us, causing us to have various emotions. The material world is a reflection of the spiritual world. Therefore, everything that we can perceive with material senses and mind, exists really in the spiritual world. It is no accident that for the description of the spiritual world we often use analogies and comparisons with things we know.

There are material vibrations, and there are spiritual vibrations. The form, color, sound, etc. exist both in the material and spiritual world. But unlike the material world, the spiritual world represents reality, and the material world is its reflection.

**T.B.:** You should not so rigidly contrast the material with the spiritual. I want to say about music. It is all spiritual, but the one that causes clashes between us, rather than exalts, leads to illness or kills (there is such music that is hostile to a man, it can kill), as well as art (Malevich Square) is, in fact, a murderous thing... Do you agree with me? Therefore, the images, shapes, and sounds that knock a person out of the way are a distortion of the spiritual. If the tree grows normally, it blooms, fructifies, but if it has lichen on it, the tree is deprived of its ability to develop normally. This is not in itself an evil, a substance, but a distortion, a defect...



**M.M.d.:** Just this defect is a distortion of our consciousness. Initially, our consciousness is pure, but when the soul comes into contact with matter, it becomes contaminated or, as you say, distorted.

**T.B.:** If the mirror is even, smooth, we see ourselves perfectly, but if it has a defect, the image is distorted...

**M.M.d.:** In Bhagavad-Gita, the vegetative form of life is compared with the embryo covered with the womb; an animal life form is compared with a mirror covered with dust. The reflectivity of such a mirror is very low. Human life is like a fire hidden by the smoke. Obviously, there is no smoke without fire. Having received the human incarnation, we can kindle the fire of our Krishna consciousness, freeing ourselves from the materialistic "smoke". We can find liberation from the circle of birth and death. The process of purification of consciousness comes down to chanting the holy name: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. The word "mantra" is translated as purification of the mind. Here you go, the method of clearing the mirror of the mind and heart with the help of the transcendental sound vibration of Hare Krishna. The name of God is non-different from God Himself, so it is just as powerful as God Himself. Following the principles that you know about, such as developing in oneself the qualities of goodness, when one can accept unconditionally devotional service to Krishna, and by chanting the holy name, one is able to elevate himself to the transcendental level of pure Krishna consciousness.

**T.B.:** Prohibitions, of course, are in all religions. In Krishna consciousness, these prohibitions are extremely reasonable and moral, and I like it very much... The Bible also has prohibitions (10 commandments), but for a more savage people...

## **PROHIBITION ON KILLING**

**M.M.d.:** Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal ... You are one hundred percent right. A normal person does not need to say that killing is not good and stealing is bad, because in his nature this is not the case; The Bible is scripture for savages.

**T.B.:** Of course, all religions have some prohibitions. But what do I want to say? These bans are a kind of shell, fence, fence, for which you should not go out — otherwise you will die. When a person gradually develops, then after some time it will never occur to him to disturb them. Everyone has their own divine task, and you just need to do it - that's all.

**M.M.d.:** A similar comparison is the Vedas. For example, a cow walks and grazes. They put a ring in her nose and tie her to a rope So that she does not go into someone else's garden. The regulative principles mentioned in the Vedas are

a kind of rope that limits the activity of material senses that can lead the soul away from the path of truth. These restrictions are an absolute benefit for the living being.

## **ABANDON ALL RELIGIONS AND DO WHAT I SAY!**

**T.B.:** Now all religions have become an instrument of the state...

**M.M.d.:** Therefore, it is no coincidence, Krishna says, and I will quote it again: "*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja, aham tvam sarva-papebhyo...* abandon all religions and just do what I say." Krishna, the Father of all religions says: "Abandon all religions and do what I say..." This is the meaning of the spiritual life: to gain the consciousness of God, to develop the love for God, to do what God says and return to His kingdom of God. If we use religion inappropriately (for some economic or political purposes), then it loses its purpose and value. And as such it does not make any sense...

**T.B.:** That's right...

**M.M.d.:** It is necessary to draw a clear line: what is religion and what is Krishna consciousness. When we call Krishna consciousness a religion, it means that we put ourselves at this level of consciousness of savage people who need to be told: Do not kill! Do not steal! Do not commit adultery! Etc. And then these people (thieves by nature and highwaymen) say: we have our own religion, why do we need yours. And in fact, this means that under the cover of "their religion" they oppose religion in general and God Himself who gave it to them, provoking clashes between believers in Christ and followers of Krishna consciousness. That's what it means! This is a trick of materialists who have adopted a religious guise.

**T.B.:** One must live in the spirit...

**M.M.d.:** Even if we have any material desires...

**T.B.:** They will pass...

**M.M.d.:** Krishna satisfies all our desires, to our heart's content, if they do not contradict our spiritual life.

**T.B.:** When material desires grow like a snowball, they press a person down...

**M.M.d.:** The human form of life, out of 8 400 000 forms, is not at all intended for sense gratification. Therefore, there are so many restrictions, unlike for animals: do not do this, do not do that! Morality, ethics, and religion are constantly pulling back and limit a person, not by a coincidence; the advantage of human life is that in it we can know the Absolute Truth, unlike animals. What is Truth? *atha-to brahma jigyasa...* to know oneself as a soul, to restore one's relationship with Krishna (the soul of all souls) is the goal of human life — to be happy indeed, not just in words! There are principles of material existence: to sleep, copulate,

etc.; we can have it all in any form of life, but only the human form of life gives us the opportunity to develop the love for Krishna. Therefore, in our understanding, material life and animal life are synonyms.

**T.B.:** Absolutely. But again, do not contrast so strongly...

**M.M.d.:** I have to do it because I preach.

**T.B.:** You yourself write that there is no need for love affairs outside of marriage, but in marriage for the conception of children, they can be.

**M.M.d.:** Certainly! In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says: "I am a sex life that does not contradict the principles of religion." If you live according to Krishna's instructions, you will become Krishna conscious and overcome all difficulties and temptations.

**T.B.:** Sensuality, it does not just need to be blocked. No, it should be delighted. It should be joyful, in the spirit...

**M.M.d.:** This happens in a natural way when our consciousness is purified, our senses are spiritualized. Spiritual senses allow one to enjoy spiritual life unlimitedly. There is no need to artificially restrain senses. They must be cleansed, by occupying them in the service of Hrishikesh, the master of the senses! In itself, the process of devotional loving service to Krishna (Hrishikesh) is so wonderful that it brings nothing but joy when it is followed under proper guidance, based on the Vedic scriptures and authority of true spiritual masters.

**T.B.:** In God everything is joyful. There's nothing sad about it.

**M.M.d.:** The Bible says that it is sinful to be gloomy. When a person forgets about God, plunging into worldly reflections, he becomes gloomy. In other words, everything that is conducive to forgetting our relationship with God is considered sinful: meat-eating, intoxication, illegal sex and gambling... When we violate these principles, we forget our relationship with Krishna and become gloomy, after which we have problems.

**T.B.:** Well, couldn't say it better!

**M.M.d.:** I can only be glad that we had such a wonderful time, touching on some issues of philosophy, ethics, religion and Krishna consciousness, which is a way of life of *homo sapiens*. Having attained Krishna consciousness, a person will gain peace and prosperity at the level of the individual as well as society. Hare Krishna!

*In conclusion, after honoring prasadam (fruits, nuts, stewed vegetables offered to Krishna), we still exchanged several phrases in the hope of continuing our conversation in the near future.*

*The topic that we discussed is a little different than the one I discussed with my other opponents. It is not always possible to find mutual understanding.*

*However, I am ready to repeat, again and again, that Krishna Consciousness is an invaluable gift! After all, this topic itself deserves attention. Chanting the holy name is the very perfection of spiritual life, and the philosophy and way of thinking of the person who is Krishna conscious is the ideal for every intelligent being. The best representatives of mankind are striving for this. And what prevents us from becoming one of them?*

## CHAPTER 2

### MEETING WITH AHMET KHALIYEV



*On September 17, 2009, I met with the founder of the Union of Muslims of Russia, the initiator of the unification of all religious movements of Russia around one God, General Secretary of the Liberal Democratic Party Ahmet Khaliyev and had a two-hour conversation with him. A. Knyazev, the Project Director of the Vedic city, was present during the meeting.*

The first time we met with Ahmet Khaliyev in 1993, shortly before my trip to America. He suggested that I create my own party. Since then, more than 16 years have passed, and Krishna has brought us together again, as it were, in the continuation of our dialogue.

**A.K.:** Thanks to people like you, the Devil is left out.

**M.M.d.:** From the standpoint of Krishna consciousness, everything, including the Devil, is subject to God.

**A.K.:** Of course, the Supreme Person...

**M.M.d.:** The Devil also serves God.

**A.K.:** Yes, he serves. Peculiarly...

**M.M.d.:** Krishna is the cause of all causes. With one hand He gives, with the other He takes. He treats all living beings equally. He has neither enemies nor friends.

**A.K.:** Oh yeah!

**M.M.d.:** He is impartial. In accordance with the activity (karma), everyone gets his own. For good — good, for evil — evil.

**A.K.:** Yes, yes... what can you say about iso-planets? In chemistry, you know, there are isotopes, and in the universe — iso-planets. Iso-Sun, and around it there are iso-planets. They are not a mirror image... but they are the evidence of the unlimited possibilities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In Shrimad Bhagavatam there is a story that tells how the demon Vrikasura addressed Shiva for the blessing...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, I remember. Vrikasura asked Narada which of the three main Deities (Vishnu, Brahma or Shiva) is easier to receive a blessing from, and Narada said Shiva; Lord Siva is very merciful and gives blessings to anyone who addresses him, without thinking about the consequences. "Turn to Shiva," — Narada said. And so Vrikasura began to perform *yajna*. In order to propitiate Shiva, he began cutting off pieces of flesh from his body and throwing them into the fire, but Shiva did not appear. Then, burning with the desire, Vrikasura decided to cut off his head and throw it into the fire. Seeing that his devotee decided to commit suicide, Shiva appeared before Vrikasura.

"Wait," he said, "what's the point in this severe penance if you die? I'm already here and ready to fulfill your every desire."

Using the opportunity, Vrikasura asked: "Give me such mystical powers, so that the head of anyone to whom I touch, is blown into small pieces." Of course, such blessings cannot come to the mind of a normal person. Only demons can ask God for something like this. So, what was next?

After receiving the blessing from Lord Shiva, Vrikasura decided to try his power on Shiva himself. As a result, Shiva was forced to flee. Rising from one planet to another, he reached the planet of Lord Brahma, but he could not help Shiva. Then Shiva went to Vishnu's planet. Vrikasura pursued him at his heels.

Having fallen at the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu, Shiva folded his hands and offered him a prayer, asking for protection from the demon: "Oh, my Lord, deliver me from this wicked person."

Lord Vishnu heeded the prayers of his devotee and protected him.

Vishnu said to Vrikasura with words, sweet like honey. He said: "Shiva deceived you, his blessing is invalid. To make sure of this, you try first to touch your head."

Since demons do not have sufficient intelligence, they easily fall into their own snare, as they say. To make it short, when Vrikasura touched his head, it was blown into small pieces. So by the grace of Vishnu Shiva received salvation. From this, it follows that one cannot give blessings to wicked people. For those who turn to Vishnu, for the sake of material blessings, the Lord fulfills only the desires that don't contradict common sense, do no harm to other living beings and contribute to spiritual progress.

**A.K.:** Vishnu occupies a higher position than Shiva?

**M.M.d.:** Vishnu is like milk, and Shiva is like yogurt. You can make yogurt from milk, but you cannot get milk from yogurt. Krishna (Vishnu) is the source and cause of all the demigods. Only Krishna (Vishnu) can bestow liberation from the circle of birth and death. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**A.K.:** I see, Shiva, like yogurt, is a secondary product. And how do Krishna and Vishnu relate?

**M.M.d.:** Krishna is the Original, the Supreme Person, and Vishnu is His expansion. From the first candle many similar others can be lit, however, the first remains always the first. Similarly, Krishna is the cause of all the avatars and incarnations, all moving and immovable beings. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says: "I am the Father who gives the seed of all living beings!" Krishna is the source of all energies and everything in existence.

**A.K.:** I have the Torah, the Koran, and the Bible, and that's my point here; I study these scriptures and more and more come to the conclusion (whether I would like it or not) that the Hindu religions are older and deeper.

**M.M.d.:** This is true, but speaking of Krishna consciousness, it is necessary to understand that like every religion, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, have a beginning in the annals of the history of mankind, but Krishna consciousness has neither beginning nor end. Consciousness is a sign of the soul. The soul is eternal and its consciousness is eternal. Primordially, the soul, as an integral part of Krishna, is conscious of Him. Krishna consciousness is the pure consciousness of the soul.

Hinduism is a conglomerate of various religious performances. There is Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and the worshiping of the demigods (there are 33 million demigods).

However, whomsoever one worships, he worships Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but often does not do so properly. Hinduism is the worship of Brahma, and Shiva, and Indra, and the god of Sun, and so on... This is the system of *dharma*; different forms of worship, which are described in the Vedas. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are not Vedic religions. They are designed for a lower level of consciousness of people. There are religions even for savages. The merits of religion can be judged by its principles, commandments. For example:

Do not kill! Do not commit adultery! Do not steal! And so on... These are the principles for a low level of people's consciousness. Normal, civilized people do not need to be explained that it is not good to kill and to steal because it is not peculiar to them, it is alien to their nature.

Speaking of Krishna consciousness, we often use the word "*bhagavata-dharma*". "*Dharma*" is a duty inherent in one or another way of life in the system of *varnas* and *ashrams*, as well as what is the main characteristic of a particular subject. For example, the main property of water is moisture; the water is wet, there is no dry water; fire is inherent in heat and light; this is the property of fire. Similarly, when speaking of a living being, we must agree that each of them is connected with the service of the Supreme Soul, Krishna, — God. Such a service is *bhagavata-dharma*. We serve the society, the family, the nation, the government, or the people, cats, dogs, demigods or the Supreme Personality of Godhead — in all circumstances we remain servants of Shri Krishna. Whomsoever we serve, we remain, eternal servants; whether we serve God directly or serve indirectly to His energies; under all circumstances, we remain His servants — this is called *bhagavata-dharma*.

Krishna is the Supreme Enjoyer, all others enjoy to the degree that they serve Krishna.

**A.K.:** If we consider Christianity, it is limited to the Middle East, but the "Shrimad Bhagavatam" gives people knowledge of the soul and God unlimitedly. Studying Bhagavatam, modern people discover the truths that have been known to mankind for millions of years. This is the only work that emphasizes the vastness of knowledge. As you said, Krishna consciousness is not limited by time or space.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, this is the science of the eternal relationship of the living being with God; it is unlimited, it is beyond time and space. Religion has a beginning and an end, but Krishna consciousness is eternal. Perhaps we learned about it quite recently, but it existed before we even appeared in this world. Initially, the soul is aware of Krishna, therefore it does not need to be taken from some other source. As the soul is purified from material connections, this consciousness will begin to manifest itself in its pure form as an all-encompassing love of God. This is the goal of any religion.

Krishna consciousness is the result of all truly religious and pious activities, performing austerities, studying the scriptures and full devotion to the Lord, which allows us to free ourselves from the cycle of birth and death.

**A.K.:** I want to express my gratitude to Alexander Ivanovich Korchunov because he introduced me to Krishna consciousness and provided an opportunity to associate with you. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare



Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare — I repeat this mantra and, as you see, Krishna is pleased with me.

**M.M.d.:** The name of God is not different from God Himself, therefore, as it is said in the same Bible, “He who called on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Having found his spiritual body, a person returns to the world of eternity, knowledge and bliss.

**A.K.:** By birth, I am a Muslim...

**M.M.d.:** In fact, you are a soul. You are embodied in the body of a Muslim. Whomsoever one is worshiping, he worships Krishna. In the Bhagavad-Gita Krishna says *sarvasya chaham hridi sannivishito*... I am in everyone’s heart... so Krishna is in the heart of a Christian, a Muslim, an atheist or a Buddhist, an animal or a demigod... Krishna is in the heart of Jesus Christ, too. We are eternal souls as part and parcel of the Supersoul — God.

**A.K.:** A beautiful explanation... but some do not understand what Krishna consciousness is, and they start criticizing, calling the followers sectarians, and the Hare Krishna movement is a sect — I’m talking about Orthodoxy — then I stand and say: “Let me throw back 2000 years before the birth of Christ, so back then nothing existed?” They forget their own history, the same Nero, who strongly persecuted Christians... You have no right to call Hare Krishna the sectarians...

**M.M.d.:** According to them, according to the biblical tradition, a man appeared 6,000 years ago... Absurd ... The real problem is that people have forgotten God; they are not interested in God. They are busy meeting their material needs and often use religion for selfish ends. They even try to exploit God...

**A.K.:** Yes you are right...

**M.M.d.:** Such is an illusion, but God cannot be exploited. He can only be served, honored and glorified. God is the only object of our worship.

We say that God is one! This means that there is nothing but God (and not that, there are two, three Gods or that each has his own God). Whether He manifests Himself in the form of energies or locally enters into the core of every atom and in the heart of every being ... we are already in the kingdom of God, and as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He controls everything and enjoys everything. It is necessary to realize this, for this we need the consciousness of God. He is an inexhaustible, absolute source of all energies.

**A.K.:** When some atheists begin to say something against religion, I say to them: “Let me say, India is a huge subcontinent with a population of over a billion people... with its history and philosophy... when you create disturbances for them, you prevent the implementation of even your pragmatic tasks. When you create inconvenience to our friends from this great country, you become enemies to yourself. With them, we expand our own worldview, develop our

own sciences... and prioritize If we interfere with them, we automatically give them the right to interfere with us (atheists and Christians who conduct business). This is a great sin and is against one's own interests. No one can oppress the Hare Krishnas... and the followers of the Hindu religion. It is necessary to establish normal, good relations between these two nations, and then I give examples with excavations in Orenburg, in the Urals... As a result of the cooling due to the onset of the ice age, nature pushed them... and what is interesting about it is that in Kashmir, houses from tuff, cut as our houses made from logs, are found... this indicates the common culture of Russia and India, the remains of which we find here... they left traces of their culture here (*arkaim*). I do not know if I'm right, but I'm trying to relieve the tension created by ignorant people between our people and their beliefs... no one has the right to separate his soul from God.

**M.M.d.:** Quite right, in God, we are all brothers. You are the soul, I am the soul, in whatever body the soul is. If God is our Heavenly Father, then, consequently, from the spiritual point of view, we are all brothers and sisters. Here you are — equality, brotherhood, and freedom. These are spiritual concepts. On this spiritual basis, we easily find mutual understanding with people of different political and religious beliefs, different social level of life, with different mental abilities and different levels of consciousness, because the soul is transcendental to all definitions and designations, such as Russian, American, Indian or Christian...

**A.K.:** This is the truth. I am a Muslim, but this does not stop me from talking to you (krishnait) or to Alexander Ivanovich (a Christian), because we live in divine values.

**M.M.d.:** To what you have already said before, I want to add that on this planet there once existed a single culture known as the Aryan or the Brahminical culture. The Mahabharata, this historical literary monument, describes this story. The planet Earth at that time was called Bharata-varsha by the name of the emperor Bharata, who ruled the whole territory washed by all the seas. India, Russia, China, America, etc. — these names appeared much later when under the influence of the age of Kali, people began to degrade, depart from the principles of Vedic culture, gradually forming separate states with their non-Aryan culture. Thus ancient Egypt, Greece, and later the Roman Empire appeared...

## THE GOD-CENTERED SOCIETY

**M.M.d.:** Somewhat twenty years ago, at the very beginning of perestroika, we met and discussed the Vedic social institution of the *varnashrama*. At that time you were the editor of Zhirinovsky...

**A.K.:** Yes, yes... I remember, I published the newspaper "Liberal".

**M.M.d.:** The Vedic *varnashrama* was designed to help people rise from the material platform of consciousness to the spiritual platform; its goal was to achieve liberation from the circle of birth and death by performing prescribed duties in accordance with certain *varna* and *ashram*. We talked about a God-centered society in which each of its members works to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We are members of the same family of God. If we recognize the fact that everything belongs to God, that He is the supreme enjoyer and well-wisher of everyone, then peace will naturally reign throughout the world. If concentric circles are drawn from one center, they will never intersect each other. Similarly, if we put God at the center of our activity, our interests will never conflict. Despite our material inequality, we have equal opportunities to become conscious of God and to gain liberation from material slavery by devoting ourselves to serving the Absolute, which, in its highest manifestation is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**A.K.:** Listening to you, I recall our conversation, and in my memory, it is being restored... we talked about the creation of your own party. Later, I tried to create a party called the Union of Muslims of Russia, but since there is now a strong attack against Islam, I quieted down a little. Now Islam is credited with something that is not inherent in it. Different demons are just trying to use it against reasonable goals... But now, when you said about uniting our efforts in the service of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then you need to think about the form which would be understandable to all citizens of our country, and then beyond its borders ...

By believing in one God, it could unite all the scattered attempts to gain peace and prosperity on a material basis.

**M.M.d.:** It is on a spiritual basis that relations between people should be built — this is the foundation on which a perfect civilized society is to be built. Having found the human form of life, we must use it for its intended purpose. What is the purpose of human life? In perceiving the Absolute Truth and in developing a love relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna.

**A.K.:** This truth is unlimited; it has neither a beginning nor an end — beyond time and space. It consists of the development of love for God, which you cannot buy for all the treasures of the world. It is thanks to this truth that the universe exists... there are ten laws of adequacy... perfect adequacy is God!

**M.M.d.:** All the most controversial points of view easily coexist in the Absolute...

**A.K.:** In the Absolute everything is getting along...

**M.M.d.:** All the relative concepts of this world are contained in the Absolute. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says "... there is no Truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread." (Bh.G. 7.7). Having become Krishna conscious people, we will easily reach a mutual understanding. In the

language of love, we will reach the agreement with the Devil himself, because every living being is a soul; only bodily concepts of life, names, and designations that refer to the material body lead us astray, illusion, forcing us to rush between the concepts of good and evil. From the Absolute point of view, all that we do for Krishna is the absolute Good. He who ascended the ship of transcendental knowledge, even being the most sinful of sinners, easily crosses the ocean of the disasters of material existence (Bh.G. 4.46).

At all times people have sought the possibility of peaceful existence under the banners of nationalism, patriotism, socialism, communism, internationalism ... For example, Karl Marx and his followers created one, another, the third INTERNATIONAL, but as a result, they were defeated... they tried to create a classless society, to level everyone and again were defeated. Because it contradicts the law of God. In the material world there is no equality; in the nature of the very existence, this does not exist...

**A.K.:** Moses, when he led the Jews out of Egyptian slavery, was also forced to appoint Levites from among them... I agree with you, in this world, there is no equality. There are women, men, adults, and children...

**M.M.d.:** In the material world, there is no equality: there are the rich — poor, smart — foolish... man — woman... In the material sense, on the platform of materialistic consciousness, we can never achieve harmony. There is no harmony in it, so there is no need to look for it there. But there is harmony in the spiritual world, having reached that, we will have everything that the soul seeks for...

As the oil does not mix with water, so the soul does not mix with the material elements; there is material, but there is also spiritual energy. As there is no equality, so there is no harmony in the material world. Since the living being is spiritual, by its very nature spiritual happiness is meant to him for living in the spiritual world, and suffering — for living in the material world.

**A.K.:** In the material and spiritual diversity, the creative potencies of God are manifested.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, God enjoys His creative potency in the material world and love pastimes in the spiritual one. The material world is diverse, but the spiritual world is much more diverse. The material world is a perverted reflection of the really existing spiritual world...M.M.d. All the relative concepts of this world are contained in the Absolute. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says "... there is no Truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread." (Bh.G. 7.7). Having become Krishna conscious people, we will easily reach a mutual understanding. In the language of love, we will reach the agreement with the Devil himself, because every living being is a soul; only bodily concepts of life, names, and designations that refer to the material body lead us astray, illusion, forcing us to rush between the concepts of good and evil. From the Absolute

point of view, all that we do for Krishna is the absolute Good. He who ascended the ship of transcendental knowledge, even being the most sinful of sinners, easily crosses the ocean of the disasters of material existence (Bh.G. 4.46).

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**A.K.:** The attempts to level it all are ridiculous. Even if you see a beautiful meadow of tulips in front of you, then after a while you will want a variety...

**M.M.d.:** In one tree, we do not find two identical leaves. This diversity in the material world indicates a diversity of the spiritual one. The spiritual world is a reality, and the material world is its reflection. People are bewildered by the materialistic concept of "I am the material body and satisfying the senses of this body is the purpose of life." They seek knowledge and happiness where there is none. In reflection, there is no reality, although it, like two drops of water, looks like reality.

**A.K.:** By identifying ourselves with the material body, we limit the development of our consciousness.

**M.M.d.:** Quite right. The whole vortex of material activity is like the adornment of a dead body. In Vedic times, the bodies were cremated, burned. When a man died, his corpse was washed, dressed in clean clothes, sprayed with perfume, decorated with flowers, sometimes jewelry, money, and then burned. People with materialistic thinking are doomed!

**A.K.:** If a person is in the consciousness of God, then God always gives him access to TRUTH!

He Himself incarnates and creates us...

**M.M.d.:** It is similar to eyes being able to see in the light. Light is a necessary condition for us to see. Similarly, we can realize our need for the eternal being, knowledge, and bliss that is inherent in the nature of the soul, when we attain Krishna consciousness. Parts of the body can perform their functions when they are with the body; if the hand is separated from the body, although it remains a hand, it will be useless. Similarly, when we are with Krishna, serving Krishna, we are worthy; outside of this consciousness, we are nothing.

## **COMMUNITY OF LANGUAGES**

**A.K.:** Sanskrit has been preserved in many languages with its fragments...

**M.M.d.:** No wonder, Russian, like many other languages, belongs to the same Indo-European language group. The geographical names of places and rivers still contain words of Sanskrit origin. For example, the river Moksha, Kama, Om (Omsk), Ayrovata, etc. In spiritual life, the language barrier is not an obstacle to the development of God consciousness. Having found love for God, we can freely communicate with the whole world. The language of divine love is understood by every creature.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.**

**M.M.d.:** Now they have agreed that it is necessary to introduce the law of God in schools.

**A.K.:** Yes, religious education.

**M.M.d.:** It is optional, anyone who wishes can listen to the course of Orthodoxy, or Islam, Buddhism, and they ignored Hare Krishna...

**A.K.:** They ignored Hare Krishna because Hare Krishna did not meet the unity among themselves...

**M.M.d.:** It can't be ruled out...

**A.K.:** In the spring there was a meeting in the House of Journalists, which also included the Hare Krishnas. I had to smooth out their opposing views. The Orthodox call Krishna consciousness a sect, but let's remember history. At one time, Christians were also persecuted, called sectarians. Now those who were persecuted are elevated to the rank of saints and are called "great martyrs"; history repeats itself, yesterday's "sectarians" came to power, on the basis of other religions create obstacles themselves and make new "great martyrs." If we want good secular relations, then we must start with religion, so that representatives of God will not experience oppression.

**M.M.d.:** From the standpoint of the Constitution of Russia (Article No. 13. 29) and the law, such actions are punishable. No religion can be the state religion (art. 14); freedom of conscience and religion are protected by the Constitution of Russia. The Constitution (Article 28) guarantees citizens freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, including the right to individually or jointly with others profess any religion or not to profess any, freely choose, have and promote religious and other beliefs and act in accordance with them. If someone calls a newly formed group of people a sect and a citizen of Russia a sectarian, then this should be regarded as an offense to the personal dignity and religious feelings of the believer, which is a direct violation of the existing legislation.

**A.K.:** These are vestiges of the past; the old restrictions that are stuck in their head, they took them to a new time and can't get rid of them. Therefore, such meetings of intellectuals dedicated to God are needed to talk about this. Then the idea itself will not freeze, but by waves will spread, move on...

**M.M.d.:** When one generation replaces another, then, naturally, there is a change of ideas. My father was an ardent Communist, and he could not even imagine that perestroika would happen someday. But now, he passed away, and the ideas of communism began to crumble. In the same way, this generation will leave and new people with new thinking and new ideas will come to replace the old ones. This is what we see. The old generation of functionaries is living out its own and a new one is taking its place. Everything flows, everything changes, and among all that, the only thing that remains unchanging is Krishna consciousness. It is in the nature of the soul, as soon as we are freed from the bodily concept of life, its values also change along with it. The old tradition has become a custom, a habit; time will come, and it will give way to a new way of thinking, a new tradition, the foundation of which is being laid now.

**A.K.:** ...Residual effects, due to inertia, clog our consciousness.

**M.M.d.:** I preach, sometimes at the offices and businesses, and I see, there are young people sitting there. More and more young people, sensible, searching for the truth... not only money... a new way of thinking, a fresh look at politics, religion, science, and economics, makes us change the traditions. Christianity,

as an ideology, has become obsolete; its restoration is a step back in the era of the Paleolithic, to a backwoods man seeking salvation in illusion. It is necessary to involve young people in the channel of a truly spiritual tradition that is not subject to time. As I said, every religion has a beginning and an end in the annals of the history of mankind, but Krishna consciousness is eternal.

## **CREATION OF THE PARTY**

About twenty years ago, Ahmet Khaliyev suggested that I create my own party. It was somewhere on the eve of my departure to America. Then I did not know that my trip could drag on for many years. I thought I'd make it snappy. I thought that when I return, we will continue once initiated conversation about the creation of a political party. But the invisible hand of Providence stirred our plans. Now the moment is lost. Ahmet Harisovich himself is no longer the same, and the situation in the country is different. The creation of the party of Sankirtana became history — all in the past, which cannot be reversed. After our conversation (see above), I asked:

“But why it is impossible? The word “impossible” is from the vocabulary of fools. Let's try.” Back then I have made the documentation for registration of a party (the charter, the program, and the manifesto). In 1997, living in America, without wasting time, based on the philosophy of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who started the Sankirtana Movement, we registered a cultural and social organization called Sankirtana Corporation. It was based on ideas, which we will give below, which will help the reader to understand the innermost meaning of this great mission.

## **MANIFESTO SANKIRTANA**

### **Manifesto “Sankirtana Corporation”**

#### **A life dedicated to the Absolute**

There are different ways and means of achieving spiritual realization. Thus, in the days before the modern age of Kali Yuga (Satya, Treta, Dvapara), people practiced meditation, performed sacrifices and worshiped deities in temples. But in the modern age of enmity and hypocrisy, none of the above methods (meditation, worship in temples, etc.) brings the desired result. The life of people is short and they are engaged in material activities so much that they do not have time to think about the needs of the eternal soul. They are completely bewildered by the materialistic conception of life, therefore, they even have learned to use religion, the true purpose of which is to develop a love relationship with God, exclusively for the satisfaction of their material needs for food, sleep, sex and defense.



Having such a sad experience, out of great compassion for the fallen conditioned souls, the Lord Himself descended into this material world in order to teach them the principles of bhakti - devotional loving service. On the day of Brahma, during the life of Vaivasvata Manu, which is 27 x 4,320,000 years, according to the Vedic calendar, in the year 4586 from the beginning of the Kali Yuga, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, came. He began the Sankirtana Movement — a congregational chanting of Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. As stated in Shrimad Bhagavatam (11.5.32.): In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead, Who constantly sings the names of Krishna. Although his complexion is not blackish, He is Krishna Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions — *krishna-varnam tvishakrishnam sangopangastra-parsadam yajnah sankirtana-prayair yajnant hi su-medhasah* “Chaitanya” means “life force.”

Having begun the Sankirtana Movement, Lord Chaitanya rejected the old and outdated forms of spiritual realization, breathing life into the principles of pure bhakti - a devotional love service to Krishna.

SANKIRTANA is yoga for our age, which connects with the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

SANKIRTANA is meditation. The name of God is non-different from Himself.

SANKIRTANA is yajna, that is, sacrifice. Since nothing belongs to man, but everything belongs to God, everything must be paid for. And this fee is paid by performing yajna (sacrifice).

SANKIRTANA is the glorification of the Lord, His form, qualities, His amazing transcendental pastimes. It can also be expressed in work and arts.

SANKIRTANA is the association, communication, the very life itself in peace and love with other living beings inhabiting the Universe. Even the demigods from the higher planets descend to take part in the sankirtana of Shri Chaitanya. So, for example, Yamaraja (the god of death) takes a “vacation” for the time of sankirtana and then no one dies.

SANKIRTANA is what purifies the mirror of the mind and heart, filling it with joy - the nectar that the living being always craves.

SANKIRTANA is a special manifestation of the mercy of the Lord and the highest religious principle - pure bhakti, love gained through spontaneous devotional service to Him.

To better understand the mission and meaning of the name “Sankirtana Corporation,” from the above definitions, let’s consider the main thing.

First of all, Sankirtana means Harinama-sankirtana, that is, the congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Krishna. So, a group of devotees of Krishna walks down the street and sings loudly: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, accompanying their singing with mridanga (a type of drum) and karatals (cymbals). "Where two or three are in my name, there I am with you," says the Lord. With ecstatic dancing, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself takes part in such *kirtan*, attracting the attention of even spiritually undeveloped people, giving the chance to everyone to become Krishna conscious. The soul is eternally connected with Krishna, therefore love for Him sleeps in the heart of everyone. It awakens even in the lower forms of life (animals and plants) when the name of the Lord is sung in a state of pure devotion. An example of this is the wild animals inhabiting the jungle of Jarikhanda. When Sri Chaitanya sang Hare Krishna, passing through their thicket, the tigers and the deer, forgetting their eternal enmity, echoed the name of God, the century-old trees accompanied the kirtana, echoing names of Krishna.

Public chanting purifies the atmosphere polluted by materialism. The more devotees participate in sankirtana, the less material problems are there. The less material problems, the higher the spiritual ecstasy. But even if three or four people participate in *sankirtana*, even two or one, then, in that case, everyone who listens is benefited. The distribution of books or *prasada* (sanctified food) in many ways animates and diversifies *sankirtana*. Beautiful dresses, flags, images of the Lord and His great devotees create attractiveness and festive mood. For the pleasure of the Lord, *harinama-sankirtana* is needed to be performed as often as possible, and then Shri Chaitanya will give His blessing. The Lord will be satisfied then and only when His holy names are sung in every city and village. Another form of *sankirtana* is the glorification of the Lord in work, in science, literature, and poetry, in art, theater, music, and cinema. A person can achieve his professionalism and spiritual perfection, by using his talents for glorifying the Lord, describing the transcendental pastimes and amazing deeds of the Lord. Dedicating all of his activities to the Lord, without attachment to its results, one also performs a kind of sankirtana. Distributing books on the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, preaching the glory of the holy name or giving donations to the missionary activity — all this, according to A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is a sankirtana. All this is completely in line with the instructions of the holy teachers, the acharyas of Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya. Of course, one who is devoid of the spirit of *sankirtana* will try to avoid this name in his vocabulary, and often criticize his followers. However, when we

name our Sankirtana Corporation, we have no other purpose but preaching the mission of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Our only desire is to please the Lord and His pure devotees.

There are many people who take the liberty of representing the Lord, but at the same time avoid participation in *sankirtana* — such a view will not be effective, because it is material. We are not responsible for their actions. As a tree is recognized by its fruits, so a person is recognized by his works, by his practical participation in the mission of sankirtana of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. *Sankirtana* is the only process that can protect a person from imitation and *sahajiya*, providing an excellent opportunity for communication and cooperation. Therefore, we urge everyone who has a body, mind, gift of speech or has money to participate in the activities of Lord Shri Chaitanya's World Sankirtana Corporation, cooperating with us, printing and distributing Krishna consciousness books, as well as participating in other forms of *sankirtana*. We encourage everyone: "Conditional souls unite!"

Sankirtana Corporation is one of many organizations that exist in the West. It contributes its modest contribution to the universal cause of the liberation of mankind. "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare will be sung in every town and village" — this is the prophecy of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu — and our goal is to fulfill His desire by spreading the holy name of Krishna all over the world.

We humbly appeal to all who read us on the Internet: "Please chant Hare Krishna and be happy!" When we meet with you in the eternal *sankirtana* of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in His transcendental pastimes, it will be the most beautiful and unforgettable day in your life.

**FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE  
OF THE SANKIRTANA CORPORATION**



Murali Mohan and Ananta Shanti.  
“..I took out a recorder, which I prepared for this occasion  
and recorded our conversation...”



Murali Mohan and Ananta Shanti. Vrindavan, 1992.

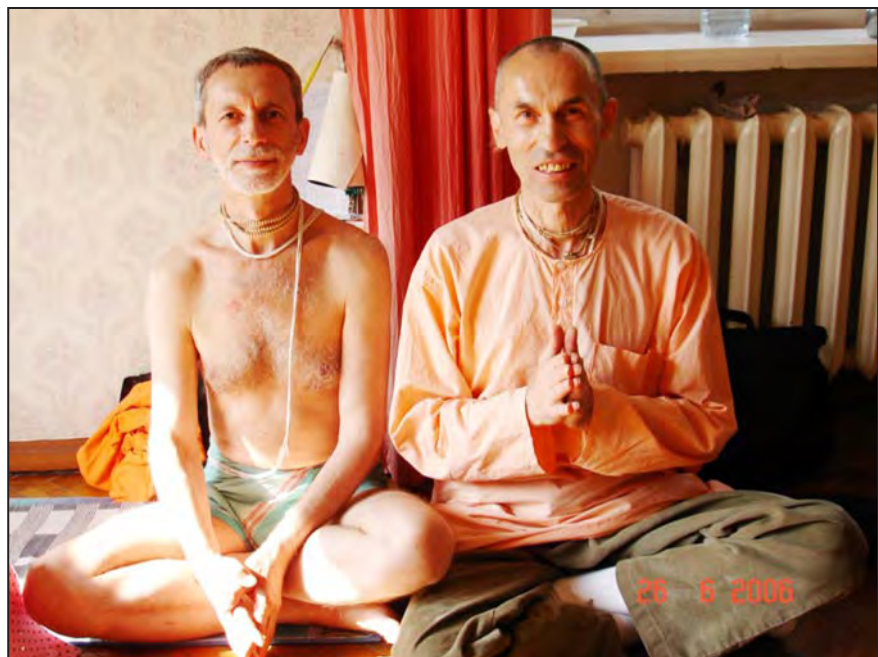


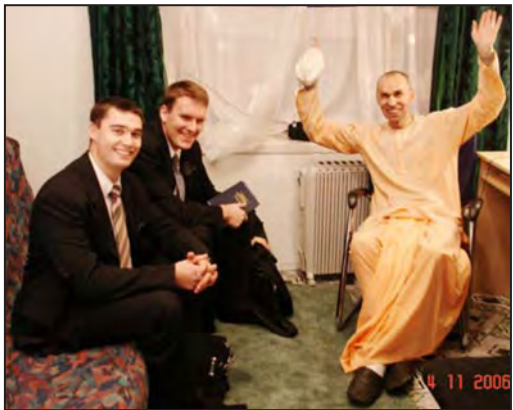
Meeting with Ahmet Khaliev. 16 years have passed from our first meeting.  
Krishna has united us again to finish our dialogue



Talk about Hinduism with Tatyana Borisovna Lubimova.  
I started our conversation started with a question:  
"...If there is only one God, then there must be only one religion?..."











# PART FIVE

## BELARUS

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### MELLOW SEASON NEAR SUDAK (PREAMBLE)

The holiday season was over; vacationers left and the beaches were empty. The heat was not too high, but the sea was like milk fresh from the cow. It was the end of September. I rented a room from my friends near Sudak. It was a family of pious, religious people with whom I had maintained a relationship for many years. Every year for several weeks I came to them to take a break from a busy life and paint etudes. Sometimes I took rides on a boat; sometimes I was lying on the sand on an empty beach, sometimes I was doing yoga *asanas*; Sometimes I went to Karadag, to Koktebel in the places of Voloshin, painted fanciful outlines of rocks, sunsets, and sunrises. I liked to visit the grotto of Chaliapin, where they shot the “Amphibian Man” and in seclusion to reflect on the purpose and meaning of human life.

When I became acquainted with Krishna consciousness, I changed not only my way of life but also my appearance: I shaved my beard, cut my hair and left a *shikha*, a small strand of hair on the top of my head. In this air, even old friends stopped recognizing me. They would accidentally meet me on the street and looking at me point blank, they would pass by. It amused me very much.

It’s amazing how people are conditioned by external form, names, and notation. You can imagine when I came to a friend, then instead of “Hello”, I heard from him:

- Young man, what can I do for you?
- As for whom? I just needed to see you. Gee!

Whenever the police stopped me, I held out my passport. The policeman looked at the photo for a long time, collating it with the original, and then dragged to the police station for identification. I had to change my passport. Back then, only prisoners and new army recruits were with shaved heads, and I did not look like either one or the other. The strand of hair, on the top of my head, gave out to me as a man out of this world. To tell the truth, I’ve been somewhat ex-

travagant before, thus expressing my inner protest against the existing order of the society.

And so, when in this air I came to my friends who lived near Sudak, they did not immediately recognize me. Aunt Klava, looking at my shaved head, was puzzled:

- What does all of this mean?
- I became Hare Krishna.
- What is it?

Back then, almost no one knew about Krishna consciousness in our country, and for me, it was a great opportunity to tell and share this wonderful news.

Although due to atheistic education I was indifferent to religion, to those who believed in God, I had profound liking; read a lot about hermits, mystics, saints, and yogis, and secretly thought of becoming the same at the end of life. Some people wanted a position in society and money, but fate pampered me, so at the end of my life I wanted to become a hermit. I loved comfort, but I was lazy, so I would rather not do anything than do what others do. I read the Bible and books of ascetics, I looked for a worthy object to follow, but could not find it. Only when I met with devotees of Krishna, I came across my calling, I found the meaning of life, my future, and my destiny.

Every evening, after work, when a family of my friends gathered in a large room to watch TV, I took *mridanga* and started *kirtan*, then I talked about Krishna consciousness all that I knew and at the end, I treated everyone with *prasadam*. Truthfully, my knowledge of Krishna consciousness at that time was not great, but it was not an obstacle for me. I believed in the holy name of Krishna and my preaching was always a success. And this time, there was no exception: my hosts, Aunt Klava and Uncle Misha, their children and grandchildren became my followers; they easily abandoned the meat and began to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. Having made beads from an ordinary necklace, the head of the family sat on a bench or somewhere in the garden and with the air of a man who realized the truth, he repeated: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Seeing him occupied with this activity and hearing his chanting of the holy name of Krishna gave me unspeakable pleasure.

People showed interest in Krishna consciousness not because I promised them life in Heaven, but because I did not promise them anything of the kind. "Hare Krishna," — I said, — "is not of this world!"

A little later, the krishnaites were declared accomplices of imperialism, agents of the CIA and authorities began to persecute the followers of Hare Krishna, but it

was later, sometime since 1982. While Hare Krishna was not sanctioned, I made a *mridanga* of epoxy resin, traveled on trains and sang Hare Krishna, gathered youth in apartments, cooked prasadam, showed a slide show and preached: "I am not a material body, but the spiritual soul, a particle of Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead!" The militia successfully fought with fans of the Beatles, fans of rock and pop music, but against Krishna consciousness, they did not have the means then. Before Krishna consciousness became a "sect", many legends went about it. No one knew what Krishna Consciousness is. Now in the post-perestroika period, modern ideologists took out Orthodoxy as if from the coffin, declared the "Rus of the Orthodox" and created a lot of pro-fascist groups in the struggle against dissidents under the patronage of the patriarch of all Russia and the same KGB, yet it was a golden time.

- Consciousness is a sign of the soul. Since the soul is an integral part of Krishna, we call this consciousness Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness is the pure consciousness of the soul conscious of Krishna!

At that time, I rarely used the word "God", which was so overused that it lost all meaning. I used the words "transcendental," "absolute," "true," "pure," "spiritual," and so on. The spirit is not limited, it is free and soars where it wants. This is a special type of energy. He is not subject to the laws of material nature. Anyone who identifies himself (his true self) with his material body, one or another nation, religion or society, limits himself to the framework of the law of morality and ethics, or a religious dogma established only so that the powerful can control the situation and people. After all, if we talk about God, then we already live in the kingdom of God and if we are devoted to God, then we are free, and if not, then we are not free.

- What is this philosophy? What is this Krishna consciousness about? Usually, people turn to God when they need something from Him. People ask God for health, money, wife, pray for themselves, for their neighbor, but if they can satisfy their material needs in some other way, for example, developing science, technology or working by the sweat of their brow, they forget God. When a person is ill or in trouble, has no money, he turns to God, goes to church and begs: "Give, save and preserve, what you gave..." Of course, the psychology of people of the era of "developed socialism" was very different from the psychology of the modern Russian bourgeois, however spiritual values are unchanged. One who seriously accepts Krishna consciousness involuntarily becomes attractive, like Krishna Himself. Most people were attracted not so much by philosophy as by the way of life in Krishna consciousness. They were interested in finding out an alternative to hopeless Soviet reality.

How do the devotees of Krishna live? What do they live on, and what are the prospects for such a life?

At first, I laughed, jokingly saying:

- The prospect of all is one: “Entrance to the crematorium — exit through the smoke stack!” To each his own! According to the law of karma, everyone reaps the results of his pious and sinful activities. The wicked, impious, drunken crowd goes to hell, paying travel expenses with money stolen from God, and the righteous go to paradise, on higher planets, where life is long and pleasant...”
- And where will we go? WHAT WILL THE FUTURE BRING?
- The soul is not created for the material world, and this world is not created for the soul. We are eternal living beings, we belong to Krishna; our place is with Krishna in the spiritual world, and here we are wanderers (very strange), rovers. Human life is good only in one case: if we try to become people who are Krishna conscious and strive to return back home, to God, to the world of eternity, knowledge and bliss.

Sometimes the neighbors came to my hosts, and I did not miss the opportunity to preach; everyone I preached to, promised to abandon the killing of animals, become vegetarians and begin chanting Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. People asked me to bring them a beads (rosary), and I did not disappoint them; sent or personally brought rosaries, images, and books when books became available. So during my entire stay there every day I gathered people around me until the rumor reached the local council. The policeman came to see what kind of gathering it was. However, not finding anything reprehensible, he checked the documents and left. It was 1980. The directive for persecuting Hare Krishna has not yet been sent down from above. The persecution began sometime after 1982.

Before leaving my hosts, in order to recharge a bit of the impression of a trip to the Black Sea, I decided to go to the beach. The waves gently rolled one on top of another, rustling with small pebbles. After a little while, as through a dream, I saw some people approaching me, they approached and settled nearby. They were students from Minsk. Instead of practice, they settled on a state farm for collecting grapes. Today they had the last day. At parting, they decided to get together and celebrate this event. Sprawling around the camp, male and female students pulled out liquor, a snack and cards. They laughed, smoked, talked all kinds of nonsense, and it was sickening to listen to them. Without waiting for turning this gathering into a wild party, while they were still sober, I took out *mridanga* and started *kirtan*. Seeing the exotic, unusual form of the instrument, they approached me.

— What is it?

Ignoring them, crossing my legs and sitting down comfortably, I began to sing Hare Krishna — Hare Rama. Rhythmic blows of *mridanga* and singing attracted these young people. Burned by curiosity, they left their occupations and surrounded me. A ring around me has been formed.

I was hitting on a small, then on a large membrane of my *mridanga*, and sometimes, I hit both at once... Among the present there were musicians. From somewhere appeared a guitar (a tourist companion), there was also a guitarist... One played the guitar, others clapped. By the end of the *kirtana* we were already engaged in a choir; a friendly relationship arose, after which I was invited to Minsk to take part in their student's talent activities.

# CHAPTER ONE

## YOUNG MAN, WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

Since then, almost two years have passed. In 1982, I settled in Abkhazia and began to preach in the southern regions of the Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia, and the Black Sea coast. But when the situation became tougher and the followers of Hare Krishna began to be mercilessly persecuted, I decided to leave for a while, move to the middle regions, to the East, to Central Asia and Siberia. And so, I'm sitting at the airport in Adler, hoping to fly to Moscow, to Leningrad, or to Kamchatka — anywhere, because staying at night was dangerous. The police at the railway stations and airports constantly cracked down, checked documents, and searched people, and although I did not seem to stand out from the general mass, by my detached appearance I always attracted order keepers. Later, having lived in America illegally for almost 10 years, nobody ever stopped me or asked for documents, but in Russia... documents are required at every step. Knowing this, I never tempted fate and took the first ticket anywhere, where the eyes look. Thus, unnoticed for myself, I traveled the entire Soviet Union: from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, and from the republics of Central Asia to the White Sea.

Without leaving the ticket office, I ask for a ticket to Novosibirsk. There are no tickets. To Perm? Also no! Good. I asked: "Do you have tickets anywhere?" The cashier looks at me suspiciously. "Young man, where do you want to do? Or do not you know?" At this time, the boarding on the plane to Minsk, and the additional sale of tickets was announced. "Oh, this is what I need, please, one ticket to Minsk!"

I've been to Minsk before. I had an acquaintance there who sang in a church choir, Vadim Zaslavsky. He was interested in yoga. And when I became acquainted with Krishna consciousness, I came to him. For a long time, I lived with him, prepared prasadam and preached to him, his wife and children. It turned out quite well. He was a vegetarian and easily agreed that killing animals and eating meat is not good. One has to be compassionate. He was in full solidarity with me on this. The chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra was also not objected to. But that with which he could not agree, was sexual relations only for the conception of posterity. Although he was married and enjoyed the reputation of a good family man, but had a small weakness — in secret (or maybe not secretly) from his wife he was engaged in the affairs to the right and left. One day, when I got it badly about the commandment "Do not commit adultery!" he lost his

temper and kicked me out of his house. At night, I had to take my things and leave. Since then, I have not appeared in Minsk.

A year or two passed, and I again found myself in Minsk. The devotees from Riga gave me the address of a woman who was somewhat interested in Krishna consciousness and asked her to support me. The woman's name was Nadezhda Nikolayevna. She lived on Gorky Street in a three-room apartment. This was a meeting place for freethinkers, psychics, and intellectuals, seeking their vocation, their own unique path in the spiritual life. Nadezhda Nikolayevna was an informal leader of the bards, heading the All-Russian Tourist Song Club. Among her acquaintances were Okudzhava and Vysotsky, Elena Kamburova and others. Later, on her recommendation, I met with Kamburova, preached to her. In turn, she introduced me to her circle of friends. So from one "get-together" to another (previously it was called "salons"), I preached to many well-known people of my time. When the perestroika began, Nadezhda Nikolayevna moved to Moscow, exchanged an apartment, but she also willingly accepted me there, inviting her acquaintances to the programs.

One of the constant Nadezhda Nikolayevna's visitors was Vladimir Nikolayevich Buchal, musician, vocal teacher (we will put his memories at the end of the book). He introduced me to his circle of the local creative elite: with the famous Belarusian poet Oles, with the artist Tonya and several other theatergoers, as well as the stars of the Belarusian ballet from the Academic Opera and Ballet Theater. Unfortunately, their names have faded from my memory throughout time. I got easily acquainted with the theater-goers and found common ground with them because I myself once worked in the theaters in my youth and knew well this contingent of people and their interests. Somewhere in the same period of time, at the apartment of Nadezhda Nikolayevna, I met a local yogi (Igor Nikolayevich) and Vera Vasilyevna, a choreographer. Vera Vasilyevna directed the children's choreography studio, and there were always a lot of young people around her. Regularly visiting Minsk, I preached to many and many people, creating real prerequisites and the ground for the rapid flowering of Krishna consciousness in this republic.

## **VERA VASILYEVNA**

Vera Vasilyevna was a choreographer and conducted a studio-ballet. Her house was a place of pilgrimage for the youth. If Nadezhda Nikolayevna was gathering people of more mature age, then Vera Vasilyevna had only schoolchildren. She led several groups at once. One group was schoolchildren of the 7th and 8th grades, and the other group was 9-10, graduates of the senior classes. There were also the entrants, preparing for admission to higher educational institutions. It was a pleasure to preach to them. Curious boys and girls, respectful to

elders, morally uncorrupted. At that time there was no, as now, that school children smoked, or drank alcohol, swore and engaged in sex without any embarrassment in the sight of outsiders. When the children came to Vera Vasilyevna, I treated them with prasadam, sang kirtans and told about Krishna consciousness. Vera Vasilyevna herself actively participated in my programs, encouraging her wards. When I dressed the saffron dhoti and in the lotus position took a place on the couch that served me as a *vyasasana*, and her students were sitting on the floor, covered with carpet, listening attentively to Krishna the Supreme Personality of Godhead, my heart rejoiced. Since they were engaged in ballet, they could easily perform any yoga posture. They enjoyed sitting on the floor, cross-legged, like real yogis. Programs of that time were remembered to me the most.

Due to tradition, like many modern people, Vera Vasilyevna considered herself a Christian. She regularly visited the church, and she even had a mentor, whose name was Father George. However, she did not try to instill Christian views to her students, well aware that Krishna consciousness is the very perfection of spiritual life. Christian faith is not really bad if it is followed. What Christ taught 2,000 years ago, — Krishna taught 5000 years ago. Christ taught love for God, being the son of God, and Krishna, who is God the Father himself, teaches the same love for Himself.

Any religion was originally given by God, and it is necessary to evaluate it with dignity.

- 1) How much it is eternal; the soul is eternal and its connection with God is also eternal, it does not cease, even when we are born in families of atheists and become atheists.
- 2) how much it helps us to become conscious of God. The pure consciousness of the soul is Krishna consciousness. Krishna is the cause of all causes. We do not call Krishna consciousness a religion. It's just a consciousness.
- 3) And, finally, how much joy, *ananda*, bliss, which is inherent in the very nature of the soul, religion brings us. The search for eternity, knowledge and happiness should ultimately lead us to the consciousness of God, which is the source of the Supreme Bliss. *Ananda chin maya rasa* — the spiritual world is full of bliss. Such is the nature of the soul and such is the criterion in the choice of religion. Everyone strives for eternal life, perfect knowledge, and ever-increasing bliss. This longing is eternal. As much as a religion allows us to find eternal being, to develop our dormant consciousness of God and to become happy, as perfect it is. In this case, an intelligent person without delay should accept Krishna consciousness as it is, leaving all religions.



Speaking of God, it is necessary to agree that if God is one, then religion should be one. And what is the true religion? It is the love of God. Love for God is inherent in every living being. It is in the nature of the soul, but in the material world, since we identify ourselves with the material body, it manifests itself like lust.

The eternal soul is covered with a gross physical and subtle, invisible body that contains all the desires, ideas and concepts of life. Here the soul is covered with different bodies, and the soul's love manifests itself in different ways. In history, there are many examples of it. Out of love for God, some believers fight with others, believing that their religion is better than the religion of others, and only their love for God is true, wanting to prove it by fighting. In fact, this is not loving, but lust, though its nature is spiritual. Crusades, wars for the "kingdom of heaven" do not stop to this day. Although they are of materialistic nature, they are provoked by a love for God, which under the influence of material nature was transformed into lust. Initially, there is love, but under the influence of material nature, it transformed into lust just as milk, when touched with sour tamarind, becomes yogurt. Intolerance among believers, envy, greed, anger and other negative manifestations are all manifestation of divine love, but in a material way. Because everyone identifies himself, the soul, with the material body, the love for the one God looks different because of a different kind of material conditioning.

When having changed consciousness, we will be freed from the subtle and gross material covering and we will discover our spiritual body, then we will be able to enter the kingdom of God and see Him in all beauty and perfection. To see the kingdom of God, one needs spiritual vision. Material feelings do not allow us to perceive the spiritual world. There is no need to leave the body of a Christian or a Hindu. Whoever realizes himself as an eternal soul, a particle of God, he immediately reaches liberation from the circle of birth and death. One just needs to discard the materialistic conception of life as "I am the material body and everything related to it is mine." All names and designations refer to the material body. They are false. When the soul realizes itself, the love of God immediately begins to manifest itself in its divine nature. Since love is spiritual, it extends to all living beings, including even lower forms of life, because every being is a soul. I am the soul, and God is the Supreme Soul, the Soul of all souls. God is neither a Christian, nor a Hindu, or a Muslim ... God is God. He is wholly spiritual, beyond materialistic concepts. He cannot be known through material senses and mind, so sometimes they say that nobody saw Him. But what is the use of listening to those who have not seen Him? Let us turn to those who see Him. It is pointless to discuss what does not exist and cannot be perceived in any way. If there is a God, then I want to see Him! Here are the names of God: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama

Rama Rama Hare Hare! They are non-different from Himself. If you repeat them, you will soon see Him Himself.

So I preached, and those who listened to me began to chant Hare Krishna. One day, Vera Vasilyevna took me aside and asked: "I did not dare to offer you for a long time, but now it seems that the time has come. What if you meet with our pastor, father Georgy. He is an educated man with a wide range of interests. Maybe he could help you..." Without waiting for the end of the phrase — whatever father Georgy could help me with — I myself asked Vera Vasilyevna to talk with the holy father-abbot about a possible meeting. To start a dialogue with representatives of the traditional cult was my old dream. If God is one, then religion must be one!

"Maybe we'll agree," I thought. At that time, I still had the illusion that you can "sing along" with Christians. Now, having a rather sad experience, I changed my mind: it is possible to come to terms with anyone, even with Satan, but not with Christians who call themselves Orthodox.

Of all those who regularly attended my lectures, there was one boy named Grisha. He appeared to be somewhat reserved and differed from others in his age, and manner of behavior. He, like Vera Vasilyevna, was a churchgoer and was a novice to father Georgy. When Grisha learned from Vera Vasilyevna that I want to meet father Georgy, he brought an invitation to the temple the next day. It was a cathedral that rises on a mountain on Masherov Avenue.

## **CONVERSATION WITH PRIEST**

Father Georgy was the rector of this church. A young, burly, educated man, he was interested in yoga, the ancient oriental philosophy, heard something about the Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, but did not know anything about Krishna consciousness. Frankly, at that time very few people knew about it. The lack of information and truly spiritual education makes a person a sectarian and an enemy to himself. In the Bhagavad-Gita (5.18) it is said that truly learned individuals "see with equal vision a brahmana, a cow, a dog, and a dog-eater." He simply sees the soul in each body and Supersoul in the heart of every living being, honoring each body as a temple of the Lord. This is true spiritual knowledge.

When at the appointed time, I came to the temple, father Georgy was still in the service. When he had finished waving the censer, he read a short sermon and after that he began to bless the parishioners, releasing their sins. People stood in line to grab grace. At first, they approached the wonderworking icon and kissed its overly kissed framework, after which they lined up to the hand of fa-

ther Georgy. Having kissed the plump hand of the abbot, they left with the consciousness of a fulfilled duty and with an easy heart, continuing to sin further.

To get myself noticed, that I'm here, I came, I also queued up. When I reached father Georgy, the holy father automatically extended his hand to me, but as no action followed, he looked up in surprise and angrily. Our eyes met.

"Oh, you are from Hare Krishna society? Kindly wait for me there. And he pointed to the curtain, which I pushed aside and found a small couch behind it. Several more people were waiting for him there, probably for special mercy and special blessings. Having gained patience, I sat down and began to chant the mantra.

When the service was over, father Georgy threw back the curtain in a broad gesture, went in, gave some orders to the people waiting for him, and, dropping the mask of inaccessibility, approached me.

"I'm sorry to keep you waiting. Come along." Descending the spiral staircase, I followed him. Vaulted ceilings, thick walls of a labyrinth — here involuntarily I have recollected medieval inquisition and martyrs of a sacred church. There was a strong smell of wax and frankincense. And although they say that the devil fears holy water (or incense), it seems that the modern devils have adapted to it. Passing through a narrow dimly lit corridor, we arrived at the door, which was covered with wrought iron. My father took out a bunch of keys and picked up the right one. The lock slammed, and the door creaked open. We entered the cell.

"Let there be light!" With these words, the priest turned the switch. And God saw that it was good. After little fluttering, the fluorescent lamp lit up the office. On the desk there were scriptures and on top of them, some business papers interspersed with newspaper clippings.

— I wonder what directives the holy father uses, from which office?

Seated in an armchair, father Georgy gestured to me at the other armchair, standing opposite. After that, he took a nail file and began to file his nails. Involuntarily came to mind: "No reason why a man of energy should disregard the subject of his nails." (Eugene Onegin by A. Pushkin) Flashing gold rings on his plump hands, he asked: "What brought you to us?"

— God works in mysterious ways. — I answered in the book language.

— This is true, as well as the fact that the virtuous soul goes to those places in which he used to create the truth.

— This is true. And what is the truth?

— God is the truth. He commands, in mirroring of His Resurrection, to every Christian soul to ascend in Heaven for the worship of God.

- In the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad, it is said: AHAM BRAHMASMI. I AM A SOUL! The soul is transcendental, it has no definition because it does not belong to this world of forms and designations. The soul is different from the material body, therefore it cannot be Christian, Muslim, Russian, Jewish...

In a tone that does not tolerate objections, Father GEORGY SAID: "THE CHRISTIAN SOUL MUST SEEK CHRIST."

- Such a statement can often be heard from Christians. But even among Christians opinions differ. The Orthodox will talk about the Orthodox soul, Catholics — Catholic, Protestants — Protestant soul. From the Jews, you can hear about the Jewish soul... What should the soul of the Jew seek?
- For Jews, hell is prepared...
- Atheists deny the existence of the soul and God. What awaits atheists?

Father Georgy became thoughtful... Taking advantage of the pause, I continued: "The soul is spiritual, therefore it is impossible to grasp it with the help of material senses and minds, neither for believers nor for atheists.

- Christ is God, and every soul belongs to Him.
- Of course, if we recognize that Christ is God, then all souls belong to Him. All souls are His inalienable particles, and there are no others. But is Christ the God? — That's the question. Some Christian preachers claim that Christ is God. But, what does Christ say? He speaks nowhere of himself as God. "I and my Heavenly Father are one, as the flesh of the flesh, the blood of blood ..." This statement does not give us the right to consider Jesus Christ as God. On the contrary, his words state that he is the son of God. "I and my Heavenly Father ..." If there are a Heavenly Father and me, we must think that Jesus Christ makes a difference. He points to the existence of two personalities: father and son. All thinking people turn to God as to the Father, therefore, in relation to Him, they are all His children, sons and daughters. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-Gita. Krishna says: "I am the seed-giving father. — *Aham bija-pradah pita*" (Bh.G. 14.4). Krishna is God the Father and all other beings are His children, including Jesus Christ, Who is no exception.

## THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

*The first five minutes of talking with Father Georgy we had some sort of a warm-up. He said something, I answered something, without much thinking. But*

after another five minutes, we began to see the canvas and the tension of the conversation. Believing that this can be of interest to our readers, I tried to reproduce it as accurately as possible.

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** What is the soul? It is not possible to understand this experimentally. Therefore, let's talk about the soul, relying on the Vedic scriptures and the authority of those who see the soul. This is the only sure way to comprehend the soul.

**FATHER GEORGY:** To my shame, I'm not very familiar with the Vedas. But I've heard of it...

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** The Sanskrit word "Veda" means knowledge. Any knowledge can be called Veda. However, speaking of the Vedas, we mean the knowledge gained through the chain of disciplic succession through Lord Brahma, the first living creature and creator of this universe from Lord Krishna Himself.

**FATHER GEORGY:** We are Orthodox, we rely on the Bible and the authority of Jesus Christ.

The word, which in the Russian version of the Old Testament, is usually translated as "soul", — nephesh, is derived from the word "naphash", which literally means "breathe" in the active voice, in the passive voice — "to be blown in, to blow in". So the word "nephesh" literally means "breathing". From more than 750 uses of this word in the Old Testament, having analyzed their context, it is possible to draw conclusions about what the extended meaning of this word is, usually in this sense it is translated as "life" or "life energy".

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** I agree, the soul is energy, the vital force that fills the body with consciousness, every cell of it. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says: "Know that which pervades the entire body is indestructible. No one is able to destroy the imperishable soul.." (2.17) And what is pervading the whole body? Consciousness, which is a sign of the soul.

**FATHER GEORGY:** It's quite logical because we know that consciousness is a sign of all life. Anyone who has consciousness is a "living soul" (for example, in Book of Genesis 1:20, 24), where animals are called "the living soul."

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** Yes, there is also a soul in the body of the animal. It is in the body of a tree, a microbe ... *Sarvam khalv idam brahma* — everything originates from Brahman, therefore everything is a Brahman. Living beings, souls, are everywhere: in water, in a fire, in the soil ... The soul is eternal, therefore it can exist under any conditions

"The soul can never be cut into pieces by any weapon, nor can he be burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind." (Bh.G. 2.23). "This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the

same.” (Bh.G. 2.24). In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna also says: Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent there is no endurance, and of the existent, there is no cessation. These seers have concluded by studying the nature of both.” (Bh.G. 2.16). “Only the material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is subject to destruction...” (Bh.G. 2.18).

**FATHER GEORGY:** You’re right. However, we can find both the figurative use of words and their meaning. For example, “my soul”. The meaning of “my soul” is equivalent to the word “I”, which accentuates attention. This is the figure of speech known as synecdoche. What is the soul with respect to man?

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna relates our soul to our true “I” and therefore says to Arjuna: “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.” (2. 12).

**FATHER GEORGY:** Similarly, there is a statement in the Book of Genesis. 2:7. It describes the creation of a man. “Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Gen 2: 7). Here it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that man has become a living soul, and has not received a soul. Hence, from this quote of the Holy Book, we cannot conclude that the soul is something separate from the body.

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** Yes, the soul has a body. It can be both material and spiritual. A soul is a person, our true self, and it can be in this or that body, visible with material eyes and not visible. The spiritual body is eternal, but the soul changes the material body constantly. From childhood to adolescence and old age, the body changes, but the soul remains unchanged. The process of his re-incarnation or relocation from one material body to another is described as follows: “As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death...” (Bh.G. 2.13). To this, we should add that such changes do not bother those who have known themselves as an eternal soul. “As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” (Bh.G. 2.22).

**FATHER GEORGY:** The word “soul” is used especially where animals are called “the living soul”. Therefore, we can say with certainty that the name “soul” refers to a person as a whole, a person, as a form of life.

**MAMA THAKUR DAS:** If we make historical references, we can see that this concept of the immortal soul entered the Christian teachings during the unification of Christian, Greco-Roman and Jewish ideas. Its philosophical roots are to be found in Plato’s dualism that has undergone some changes over time under the influence of the ideas of Gnosticism and Manichaeism. Both of these schools considered the matter in general and the body in particular as something that

has a negative connotation. For both schools of thought, existence in the image of the soul was an ideal state, and the body was for them not only a temporary shelter for the soul, as in Plato but a truly burdensome object for it. And so, in this refracted light, Plato's idea entered the Christian teachings and was very firmly entrenched there. This idea is not new. It finds confirmation in the Vedic scriptures.

**FATHER GEORGY:** Perhaps, I am not familiar with this. But, as for the ideas of the ancient Jews, which we can judge from the Old Testament and partly from other sources (for example, from rabbinic literature), for them the existence of a soul outside the body was absurd; they could not imagine a soul deprived of a body; moreover, the soul for them was synonymous with a "live body."

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** Let's not forget that the body is material, but the soul is spiritual. The soul never mixes with the matter, just as oil does not mix with water. In the Bhagavad-Gita we again find a verse that confirms this: "Only the material body of the indestructible, immeasurable and eternal living entity is subject to destruction..."(Bh.G. 2.18.); "For the soul, there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." (Bh.G. 2.20)

**FATHER GEORGY:** The same can be found in the Bible. Let's understand in more detail, as much as possible, what exactly is a person, or "a living soul". In addition to Gen. 2:7 there are still a number of places in the Bible from which you can try to make such a conclusion. For example, in Ecclesiastes. 12:7 we can find the description of the essence of man, true, in fact, not for creation, but for death: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Turning to Hebrew, let us consider the words that are applied to man as a fact of creation. These are the following words: body, breath, spirit (basar) (neshamah) (ruwach)

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** In the commentaries to Bhagavad-Gita Shrilu Prabhupada explains that the soul floats in five air streams (*prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana*). When, with the help of yogic *pranayamas*, it is purified, it attains liberation.

**GEORGE:** Yes, this is confirmed. Let's look at the context of the places where the words "breath" and "spirit" occur. Here you can see that very often these words are used together and create the following picture: Breathing (neshamah) has several meanings. To begin with, this word can be used in relation to God and to man. (This is the first step of division). In 90% of cases, this word is used together with the word "spirit" (ruwach). The combination of these words, or even the single use of the word "breath" in relation to God, symbolizes His Eternal Living Mighty Creative Essence. We can see this from the fact that the action of

these forces of God entails the appearance, the emergence of something. These forces, having different emotional coloring, acting, can create either destructive or creative consequences. Thus, the doom of the living according to Job 4: 9: "By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His nostrils are they consumed"(neshamah) (ruwach)

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** The soul is transcendental, and it is not subject to the influence of material energy, to the forces of good and evil. But, when it comes into contact with material nature, the false ego forces one to identify his true self with the material body. The conditioned soul is connected with this body by consciousness and therefore feels the influence of the external environment. It interacts with other bodies, falls under the influence of certain processes that occur directly in the body itself. So, he experiences threefold misery (from one's own body and mind, from other living beings and forces of nature).

**FATHER GEORGY:** These same forces awaken the elemental power of nature. But these same forces gave life to man: "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." (Job 33: 4). It was the "breath of life" that animated man, as we can see from Genesis 2:7. In relation to man, these two words: "breath" and "spirit" are also very often used together, speaking of animacy (about the fact of life) and of the presence of consciousness (Job 34:14-15, Isaiah 42: 5, 57:16). In cases where the word "breath" (neshamah) is used in relation to a person separately with the word "spirit", it can mean either a purely physiological phenomenon of breathing (1st Book of Kings 17:17, Daniel 10:17), or figuratively imply thought or idea, or rather — the action of this idea or thought (Job 26: 4, Proverbs 20:27). It can also indicate the animation and the presence of consciousness, concretizing a particular form of life, as in the case of the joint use of this word with the word "spirit" (ruwach) (Genesis 7:22, Psalms 150: 6, Isaiah 2:22). At the same time, everywhere we see that there is no question of any "substance" separate from the body (as we are traditionally accustomed to imagine the soul), which carries a completely autonomous consciousness, intellect, and personality traits. Everything acts in totality: body, breath, and spirit. Actually, "breathing" and "spirit" are even difficult to distinguish, so they are in some cases interrelated (when it's not about breathing as a physiological phenomenon). If you still try to determine how they relate, then, most likely, judging by the context of those places where these words are used, the "spirit" is a kind of information part, a thought, or a bearer of some consciousness (in animals — limited, more developed — in man, and, finally, unlimitedly powerful — in God), and "breathing" is a manifestation or action of the spirit.

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** Man remains an animal until he takes initiation from a true spiritual master, self-realized person, and under his guidance realizes him-



self as an eternal soul different from the material body. That is, returning to the beginning of our dialogue, the Vedas affirm *aham brahmasmi*, I am the soul, and we do not question it, because we accept the authority of the Vedas as perfect knowledge, it is given by Krishna Himself (Bh.G. 15.15)

We want to realize ourselves as an eternal soul through the process of bhakti-yoga, which is through devotional service to Krishna. When we fully dedicate ourselves to the service of God, the Absolute Truth, then by establishing a connection (*yoga* means connection) we automatically realize ourselves as an eternal soul different from the material body, as an eternal servant of the Lord. We are Krishna's particles, and this consciousness is pure consciousness, as it corresponds to our constitutional position. This means that it is inherent in us as a soul and does not need to be taken from any other source.

**FATHER GEORGY:** As for the difference between man and animals, several interesting verses from Job's book can be cited in this connection. 1) Job. 12: 2 - 3. Job, bitterly responding to the words of his friends, says: "Doubtless you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you! But I have the mind (heart) as well as you; I am not inferior to you: who doesn't know all these things?" Here we see that the word "heart" emphasizes the distinctive feature of human essence. And the word "heart" in the Old Testament (by the way, in meaning this word is paralleled with the word "conscience" in the New Testament) means self-awareness of the individual. So, the person is distinguished from animals by the presence of self-consciousness.

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** There is no doubt that man differs from an animal by his intelligence and more developed form of consciousness, articulate speech ... it is a man who is able to know himself as a soul and to restore his relationship with Krishna, the soul of all souls. Animal life and material life, that is, aimed at satisfying the material body and mind - are synonyms. Until a person knows himself as a soul, he will forever rotate in the circle of birth and death, changing different types of bodies, being born, sometimes on the higher, sometimes on the lower planets of the universe.

**FATHER GEORGY:** In the biblical sense, man is a kind of synthesis. The body is a complex of parts that draw life and energy from the spirit and breath which do not exist as a separate conscious substance outside the body. I really like the words of J.T. Robinson in this respect. He notes that the Greek antithesis between body and soul is completely alien to the ancient Jews. So, in contrast to the Greek concept of man, where the soul appears as an "angel in a gambling machine", enclosed in a material shell, from which it finally breaks free. The biblical conception represents the human personality not as an "embodied soul", but as a "lively body".

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** There are a number of philosophers close to Buddhists who do not believe in the existence of a soul outside the body. Philosophers, such as Lokayatikas and Vaibhashikas, believe that the signs of life, that is, the soul, appear at the time of a combination of material elements. And that with the death of the body, the soul or *atma* dies with the body. Such a philosophy existed also at a time when Krishna Himself was personally present on this planet. Therefore, in the Bhagavad-Gita, He says, referring to Arjuna: "If, however, you think that the soul is perpetually born and always dies, still you have no reason to lament, o mighty-armed." (Bh.G. 2.26) "For one who has taken his birth, death is certain; and for one who is dead, birth is certain. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament." (Bh.G. 2.27). "All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when they are annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation?" (Bh.G. 2.28). "Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all." (Bh.G. 2.29).

It is impossible to understand the nature of the soul with material senses and reason, therefore, for the living being embodied in the body, it remains an incomprehensible mystery. However, for a person who has acquired transcendental knowledge, its existence is an obvious fact that is beyond doubt. The Vedic conception of the soul, held by the Vaishnavas, the followers of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, is different both from the one preached by Buddhism and the one preached by the Vaibhashika philosophers. This is alien to the *bhagavata-dharma* preached by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu which, ultimately, will prevail over all other philosophies.

**FATHER GEORGY:** Nevertheless, I will continue with the Bible's point of view which Paul Tillich expressed perfectly well: "A person should be viewed not as a combination consisting of such levels as body, soul, spirit, but as a single whole having many dimensions. It represents the unity of all dimensions." From all the above said concerning the human soul, we can draw the following conclusion: we cannot speak, in the light of Holy Book, of the soul as an autonomous, conscious substance that can exist outside the body. We can say that the person as a whole is a "living soul". We cannot talk about any existence of the human personality, separated from the body. In this we can now see, turning to the question of the mortality of the soul and the resurrection. Now that we have figured out what "soul" is in the biblical sense, it will be easier for us to find answers to these questions. So, to the question — "Is the soul mortal?" we can answer: "Yes, it is mortal."

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** Allow me to disagree. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says: "The soul can never be cut into pieces by any weapon, nor can he be burned by

fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same. It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable, immutable, and unchangeable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body.” (Bh.G. 2.23-25)

**FATHER GEORGY:** Yes, but, as we have already learned, “soul” is a form of life, and we all know perfectly well that man is mortal. In addition, we found out that a person cannot exist without a body, he cannot survive the body because it is the fruit of his animation by the Holy Spirit and the breath of life. The places from the Gospels (Matthew 10:28 and Lk.12: 4-5) confirm the mortality of the soul to us. We can find many other confirmations from the Holy Book (Gen. 17:14, Ex 12:15, 31:14, Numbers 15:31, Ps 32:19, Ezekiel 18:20, Acts 3:23, James 5:20, etc.). Matthew. 10:28, Luke. 12: 4-5. “And you should not be afraid of those killing the body but not being able to kill the soul. Indeed rather you should fear the One being able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” (Matt. 10:28) “... do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that can do no more... Fear the One who, after you have been killed, has the power to plunge you into hell...” (Luke 12:4-5). And here, as in all Holy Book, the word “soul” means “life.” However, understanding is difficult. Let’s try to figure it out. First, let us pay attention to the context of these places: Mt. 10:29 - 31 and Lk. 12: 6-7 - even with small birds, nothing can happen without the will of the Heavenly Father, especially with humans. In conjunction with the verses of their book of Job (Job 2: 6), we can conclude that even Satan has no right to deprive a person of life if there is not a will of God for that. And if you consider that in Matt. and in Lk. the Greek word *apokteinonton* (killing), stands in the present tense, then we can draw the first conclusion: that those who currently make Christians suffer, by torturing them and trying to take the lives of their bodies do so not without God being aware, and they cannot kill them according to their own evil will. Secondly, God has the power not only over the life of the present but also over future life. If a godly person is exposed to the threat of losing his life on earth, then he has the hope given to him by God - the hope of resurrection. At that time, God could have deprived them of life in the 1000-year Kingdom. In a word — Mt. 10:39. Without the knowledge and will of God, no one could deprive Christians of life here on earth, and even more so of life after the resurrection. And only God has power over life — the soul of man. These verses from Mathew, and Luke tell us so. So, “will we become spiritual beings in the heavens or will we be bodily resurrected?”

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, as if making a concession to people with underdeveloped consciousness, says, referring to Arjuna: “If, however, you think that the soul is perpetually born and always dies, still you

have no reason to lament, o mighty-armed." (Bh.G. 2.26). Back in those times, there was a similar philosophy. As we can see, all the most contradictory concepts and views on life easily coexist in the Absolute. What to grieve for? "For one who has taken his birth, death is certain; and for one who is dead, birth is certain. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament." (Bh.G. 2.27). "All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when they are annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation?" (Bh.G. 2.28).

## RESURRECTION

*When the question of the resurrection of Christ came, Father George in one word crossed out everything that was said above. But talking about the resurrection of the material body is foolish. Christ was such a great personality that He could walk on water, in fact, He who is authorized by God to spread the principles of religion, certainly has a spiritual body.*

**FATHER GEORGY:** The Bible touches on the question of Resurrection. "Who do we become when we are resurrected?" First of all, we must seek the answer to this question in the example of our Head, Lord, and Savior - Jesus Christ, for all Scripture testifies to us that we will be resurrected "like Him." Let us recall those passages from the Gospels, which speak of Christ risen. For example, in Lk. 24:38 - 43 we can find clear evidence that Christ, having been resurrected, did not become a "disembodied, spiritual being," but we can see something opposite here. "Look at my hands and my feet: this is I myself; Look at me: the spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see in Me, and they gave Him a piece of baked fish. And taking it, he ate it before them." We can see similar precedents in Jn. 20:19-20, 27-28. From all this we can conclude that Christ was resurrected in the body, but not in the perishable, but in the glorious body, which, apparently, had other qualities and possibilities in comparison with the corruptible body. Therefore, our hope of resurrection is that we will receive a glorified body, as in Christ.

**MAMU THAKUR DAS:** If you talk about resurrection and at the same time deny the existence of an eternal soul, then in this way you contradict yourself. How can you explain the phenomenon that life is eternal? The soul is eternal and life is eternal. Life is a soul in the body. And how can you be resurrected? By finding a spiritual body. The spiritual body does not mean that you will become a spirit, a ghost, — invisible. This means that you will find your original transcendental body — eternal, full of knowledge and bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*).

*Father Georgy was talkative, but then he came to a standstill and fell silent.*

*After that, I continued.*

When one attains a pure consciousness, Krishna consciousness, then leaving his material body, he receives spiritual, eternal body, but when he says that the spiritual body is eternal, it should be noted that it exists and now in the form of a seed, in its infancy. The spirit has the ability to expand. When we use the body, the mind and the gift of speech in the service of Krishna, our body is spiritualized. It begins to act as a spiritual one. I will give an example, if you put iron in a fire, then, warming up, it will gradually acquire the properties of fire. Similarly, our material body, when we use it in the service of Krishna, is spiritualized.

Since we wanted to forget God, God gave us a material body, material senses, and a material mind. Therefore, we do not see God and do not recognize His existence at all. But if we want to serve the Lord, love the Lord and communicate with Him, then by His grace we will have a spiritual body. In the spiritual body, we can personally see the Lord in His original image. It is said that God created man in the image and likeness — this is a fact; only with the difference that our body is material, and we are spiritual, but the body of the Lord is spiritual, and He Himself is spiritual.

In fact, Christ's body was spiritual. Otherwise, how could he communicate with God? If we follow His commandments, we will also receive a spiritual body and inherit the kingdom of God, eternal life, full of knowledge and bliss.

The material world is a reflection of the spiritual world. It seems real because it reflects the higher reality, but in reflection, there is no reality. Therefore, we say that this world is illusory; it is real, like a reflection. As in the mirage of the lake, there is no water, so in the material world, there is no true knowledge and true happiness. Reflection, which in appearance does not differ from reality, misleads us.

Being dominated by the illusory energy of the Lord, it is difficult for us to move from one level of consciousness to another without the help of someone who is Krishna conscious fully.

To help purify our consciousness, Shri Chaitanya began the Sankirtana movement, the congregational chanting of the holy name Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare... The name of God is not different from God Himself. And because He is spiritual, He manifests Himself in His innumerable names, and all His transcendental, spiritual qualities.

*Having finished the sentence, I took out the karatalas and sang maha-mantra several times. Without much enthusiasm, Father George listened to my chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra to the end and then rose, as if to let me know that the audience was over.*

Our dialogue about the eternal soul really came to an end, and there was no need for me to stay. I thanked the holy father for the honor he had given me, took out a copy of Bhagavad-Gita from my bag, and handed it to him. He accepted the Gita with reverence, without objecting, and still smiling with his faint smile. "I hope we will meet again to continue our conversation."

Our dialogue about the eternal soul really came to an end, and there was no need for me to linger. I thanked the holy father for the honor he had given me, took out a copy of Bhagavad-Gita from my bag, and handed it to him. He accepted the Gita with reverence, without objecting, and still smiling with his faint smile. "I hope we will meet again to continue our conversation."

I left the church for fresh air and, not hurrying, walked towards Vera Vasilyevna. However, before reaching her house, I unexpectedly changed my mind, got on the first bus and went to my friends, where I spent the night. The next morning, Vera Vasilyevna's apartment was searched. I do not think it was an accident. After all, Father Georgy was her spiritual mentor, just like Grisha's mentor, who introduced me to Father Georgy. And this time again, by some miracle, I remained at large and did not get into the KGB torture-chambers.

*SUMMARY: When religion serves the powers that be or is in collusion with the enemies of religion itself, like godless people and atheists, then it should be abandoned. "Religion", Shrila Prabhupada said, "is meant for emancipation, that is, for freeing man from material confusion, for developing the love for God and for knowing God. If religion is used for some other purpose, then it becomes more dangerous than a cobra, the hood of which is decorated with a precious stone."*

*After this incident, I completely changed the circle of my friends and moved to another apartment.*

## **NATASHA RUDOVA AND OTHERS**

Natasha Rudova was a photographer and worked in the laboratory of a research institute. She was very enthusiastic and emotional. As soon as she became acquainted with Krishna consciousness, she immediately abandoned the meat, followed all regulative principles and chanted the Hare Krishna mantra. Moreover, she with great enthusiasm began to take part in my programs, learned a little bit to cook prasadam and preach. She had a good ear, a beautiful voice. When she sang in *kirtan*, she inspired everyone with her temperament. In her photo laboratory, where she worked, she began making copies of Bhagavad-Gita and distributing them to her acquaintances. It was very impractical, but the

thirst for spiritual knowledge among people was at that time so great that they took every opportunity to enrich themselves with this knowledge.

Natasha lived with her father and her young daughter. Natasha's father was an alcoholic. It seems that he did not work anywhere, and she struggled to support the house and buy him vodka. Her father's drinking bout lasted for months. But at the same time, I never saw him kicking up a rumpus, making scenes like drunkards do. He was peaceful, calm and harmless. Most often I saw him asleep. He was lying on his bed in the big passage room, in his clothes, without taking off his shoes. The only thing that brought the disturbance was his smoking. It was impossible to protect oneself from that stink, so one had to endure. Of course, Natasha limited him as best as she could. She gave him a place to smoke in the bathroom, which created a new problem — no breathing in the bathroom. In order to take bath, I took in the air, plugged my nose with the fingers and jumped under the shower, then I back popped up, as if on fire. A smoker and a drunkard in the family is a great misfortune for the family, and for the whole society. Eating meat, smoking tobacco, alcoholism, and drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, and gambling are national evil, from which many troubles occur, including wars, epidemics, and dissatisfaction. If a person can restrain his feelings, not indulging in low inclinations, he will easily rise above the modes of material nature and achieve liberation from suffering, from the circle of birth and death.

Natasha and her daughter lived in a small tunnel-like room. When I happened to stop at them, she put me a quilt on the floor right at the very door. Conditions of life were, frankly, more than modest. However, I never heard her complain about her fate, her lack of money, always ready to share the last piece. For all that, she somehow managed to maintain fairly enviable cleanliness and order, especially in the kitchen, where I began to prepare prasadam and feed all family members with it. Kirtans and prasadam have dramatically changed the general atmosphere in the apartment and in the minds of the household. It became possible from time to time to invite strangers, including her acquaintances and preach to them Krishna consciousness.

## **...AND OTHERS**

In addition, I had several more addresses independent from each other, where I successfully preached from year to year. One of them was outside the city, in about 40 minutes by bus. A large family. The father, the head of the family, sang in the Orthodox church choir, was interested in Oriental philosophy and yoga. As soon as I explained to him the need to follow the regulative principles, he immediately accepted them, and the whole family, 8 people, followed his example. Parents, their children, and children of their children lived very peace-

fully under one roof, which is rare in Kali-yuga. They immediately became vegetarians and the eldest daughter Valentina and her husband, a young guy who studied at the Institute of Culture, began to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. The doors of their home were always open for me, and I stayed with them for a number of years and conducted programs in their house

## LIDA TOWN

Lida is a small town located to the south-west (few hours' drive) from Minsk on the road to Grodno. Here we also had devotees of Krishna, mother, and son. Mother's name was Slava Frantzevna. I met her in Kiev. Slava taught English at the technical school and attempted to translate the books of Shрила Prabhupada. Her son was in high school. Like his mother, he also chanted Hare Krishna and followed all regulative principles. When the persecution began, they were followed by undercover surveillance. One day, when I came to see her, bringing the books for distribution, I was almost caught by KGB. Fleeing, I dragged books and hurt my back so bad that I could not move. Loaded with mridanga, bags of books and personal belongings, I dragged all the luggage, literally, on the ground, making my way to the bus station through the private gardens, ravines, on practically impassable roads. It was winter, and it was quite cold. I had to wait for the bus at the station for two hours, but at the last moment, it was canceled. Staying until the morning at the station was not an option. I went out on a big road and went hitchhiking, but when I came to Minsk, it turned out that there was nobody to stay at in the city; I went to the suburbs of Minsk, to some of my new acquaintances. I felt very sick, ready, as they say, howl like a wolf out of pain. My lower back hurt at the slightest twist or movement. Lie down and die! Death would seem to be a joy at that time. Having chosen the role of "Superman", I could not back down, so, getting out of my last strength, I went forward through the jungles of hatred and human stupidity. But just at these critical moments of life, when you find yourself helpless and completely dependent on Krishna, you feel relieved. One has only to realize oneself as a servant of Krishna, then the veil of illusion falls from the eyes, and the person becomes free from fear, pain, and sorrow.

Dark night! Overhead, the starry sky and one thought — these books will save the world. Finally, I got there, found a house among the snow-covered plain and knocked on the window. Here I was accepted at any time. Surprisingly, sometimes even those who were called devotees were not as happy to see me, as were these people. The hosts greeted me cordially, helped me to take off my coat, and dragged my things inside. After bathing, I prepared *prasadam*. Despite the late time, everyone gathered to listen to the Hare Krishna chanting and the Bhagavad-Gita lecture. Sitting unnaturally straight, as if swallowed a



stick, I sang a short kirtan, and by the end of the *kirtana*, the pain in my lower back was gone. I could not connect this with anything except with the power of Hare Krishna mantra. In the “Chaitanya Charitamrita,” there is a story of one devotee of the Lord, Garuda dasa, being bitten by a rattlesnake, chanted the Hare Krishna mantra and managed to neutralize even the poison.

## DISSIDENTS

By the same period of my missionary and preaching work in Belarus, I got acquainted with local dissidents and nationalists. At Tonya’s apartment, an artist, I met one of the leaders of this movement Oles, the famous Belarusian poet. We were at his apartment, and I preached to him. For some time I managed to persuade him in favor of Krishna consciousness, although a little later, he found for himself an alternative in Orthodoxy. Nationalism, politics, and religion in Kali-yuga are so closely intertwined that it becomes impossible to separate them. This is due to the desire to use religion for the satisfaction of the material needs of the body, mind and to establish dominance over others. People want to do without God. They do not understand their good fortune in serving God because of their demonic nature. They do not seek to attain God-consciousness and love for the Most High, but madly crave the satisfaction of their brutish, animal-like propensities. Kali means “struggle.” This struggle will continue until people accept pure devotional service to Krishna.

Another dissident was Nikolai Nikolayevich, a local second-hand bookseller. He was a night watchman at school and lived in a separate apartment for official use. In the city, he was quite a famous person. At his place, he gathered a lot of different people with different ideas, from fairly educated individuals of mature age, to completely callow young boys and girls. It was a miracle how he managed to handle his work with this kind of activity. When we met, he actively helped me to distribute Bhagavad-Gita and invite people interested in spiritual life. Once he said: “You must prepare well, I invited lawyers, they do not like tongue-tied people, so if you stammer, you’ll spoil everything.”

“Nicholai, did you ever see me at a loss for words? I am Krishna’s servant, and Krishna gives me memory, knowledge, and oblivion. He is my Mentor and my Lord. I do not belong to the circle of your acquaintances, those who chatter without restraint and those who can not utter a word. Invite your greatest speakers. I assure you, you will not be ashamed of me.”

He was a funny old man with a long beard, with a prosthesis instead of a leg and a stick instead of a crutch. He ate sprouted wheat and drank spring water. And despite his advanced age, he was active and intelligent.

Several times, when I was strongly pursued, and I was forced to hide, he hid me at his home. At school there was a “group of the extended day” for children, when parents picked them up later, after work, then a lot of beds were empty for the night. I could take any. Nicholas gave me bed linens and a blanket, and I lived with him as in a hotel. The advantage of his apartment was that it had several entrances and exits, and in case of a round-up, I could easily escape.

Another circle of people in Minsk, with uncommon thinking, revolved around the local Opera and Ballet Theater. I taught the leading ballet dancer to chant the Hare Krishna mantra. He became a vegetarian and began to preach the holy name. From time to time I stayed at his house. When I visited Minsk, he invited friends and we chanted Hare Krishna together...

Of this period, an endless series of names and persons passed through my memory. Of these, I will mention one more person. Vladimir Yefimovich was a doctor in the Republican Hospital and was engaged in scientific work in the field of parapsychology. He suffered a pretty sad fate — paralysis. As he himself said, while helping others, he hurt himself. What to do? I advised him to chant the Hare Krishna mantra and take shelter of the lotus feet of Krishna. I made him some audio recordings of Shрила Prabhupada and recommended to him to listen to them every day for several hours, in the mornings and evenings, better yet, all the time.

“My apartment can be taped,” he said.

“Excellent, everyone who hears about Krishna will receive the absolute good.”

Imagine the surprise of everyone who knew him, when a couple of months later he was seen walking alone, without any help, on the street.

Hare Krishna mantra is a panacea. It removes all the sins that are the cause of our suffering. A person cannot commit more sins than to nullify them, once inoffensively repeating the name of Lord Krishna.

## **KOBROIN AND BREST**

In the same period of time, I visited Kobrin and Brest. In Kobrin, I had an old friend, a yogi, who served as a link to Hare Krishna for me, but he himself, oddly enough, was staying out of Hare Krishna. From him I received the first information about Vedic literature and later, he helped me to meet with followers of Krishna consciousness. Although he himself stayed out of Krishna consciousness, he helped me through our old friendship. He gathered people, and I preached to them. Some of them became followers of Krishna consciousness.

## **PRABHUPADA'S GRACE!**

Frankly, I have never seen Prabhupada, and his books were not available at that time. The first Bhagavad-Gita appeared in Russian only at the end of 1984. However, when I heard about the Hare Krishna mantra, I began to chant it and preached quite successfully. Later, when the books became available, I began to print them in an artisanal way, interlaced and distributed them, and the people whom I attracted to Krishna consciousness helped me in this. Thus, the Society of Krishna consciousness arose, practically from nothing. I started from scratch... there were no books, no association with devotees. Where did this desire to serve Shri Krishna come from? How did it happen that I accepted this movement of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu? — I cannot exactly answer this question. It feels like I was born only to preach Hare Krishna. Perhaps this singing of Hare Krishna came with me and will leave with me ... It is difficult to say to whom I am more indebted? Who is my true well-wisher and friend? All the devotees I have ever met have given me their blessings, but if I myself had not had a craving, a thirst for spiritual life, I could hardly have used those blessings. Lord Krishna's mercy is like rain that sheds life-giving moisture on fertile soil, rocks, and water — indiscriminately. Where and when did my Krishna consciousness begin? I cannot pinpoint the time and date, just as I cannot tell who am I more indebted to and who is my true guru. I collected my Krishna consciousness by bit from each person and so, in the end, received it in full.

How to hold the hyperbole of my luck? Through what meridians of fate have it passed? I went to Brest several times and met with some people, but I could not find steady followers at that time. Now there are also devotees of Krishna who are invisibly connected with my mission in Belarus, which started in 1980.

## **GOD HELPS THOSE, WHO HELP THEMSELVES**

When the wave of repressions against Hare Krishna reached Minsk, I stopped going there, and I learned about what happened from friends later. They first arrested Natasha Rudova. There was not my fault in it. Bhagavan, a devotee from Vilnius, who worked with my people, had her address. As he himself told me when he came to distribute books, he was taken out on the street and, having searched him, they found Natasha's address in his notebook. He himself was released, and law enforcement, for communication with me began to shake her. As a result, on her behalf, there appeared in the "Soviet Belarus" defamatory Krishna consciousness article. The author of the article wrote that I forced Natasha to give up meat, and she so wanted a cutlet ... He called me a fascist, and Prabhupada the Fuhrer. The second, who they began to question was already known to us, Vladimir Nikolaevich Buchal. Miraculously he managed to escape;

shortly before those events he moved to Moscow; following him, Nadezhda Nikolayevna moved to Moscow as well. A manhunt was announced against me. Even before the publication of that article on behalf of Natasha, my supporters warned me that among the various groups of psychics, yogis and those who are interested in oriental philosophy and martial arts, the KGB ordered to “locate Misha from Leningrad” (as I was known at that time) and “eliminate” as a particularly dangerous CIA agent . To capture me, a special, strategic plan was developed: to take me alive or dead. Only by the mercy of Krishna, I managed to sneak out of the hands of the KGB; I was elusive, filtering, like water, through one’s fingers. While everyone who could preach Krishna consciousness was in prison, I was still at large. After carefully checking all the places of my appearance and routes of travel, the KGB officers were constantly on my heels. I shuttled between Minsk and Novosibirsk Akademgorodok, where for a long time I conducted systematic work among scientists, involving them in the “totalitarian sect” (as they called it) of Krishna consciousness. In 1985, on the New Year in Novosibirsk, the KGB hunters finally managed to detain me. During the interrogation, the investigator stingingly distorted:

— Mikhail Nikolayevich! We know your “transcendental verbiage”.

Instead of “vibration,” he called the Hare Krishna mantra “verbiage”, and me - “recruiter” (in Russian - “verbovschik.” Interpreter’s remark.) So, this expression took hold of me and entered the annals of the history of Krishna consciousness as my second name, so to speak.

Since then several years have passed. After visiting India in 1989, I again came to Minsk. Perestroika was in full swing. Although all my old connections were destroyed and it seemed that the plant of devotion to Krishna in Byelorussia was uprooted; as on the ashes, starting all over again, literally within the next year I again revived this Movement there. It was a time of great achievements, and my second appearance in Minsk became historical. Therefore, we invite those who are interested in the history of Krishna consciousness development in Belarus to follow us to the next chapter of our book “Hare Krishna yesterday and today”.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE MINSK EPIC

### 1989 -1992

This period was the most saturated with various events, the most fruitful and bright in my preaching in BELARUS.

When we returned from India, after visiting the holy *dhama*, Vladimir Nikolayevich met me in Moscow. By that time in Leningrad, my business was surprisingly uphill. The cafe was working, people came to the programs in crowds, the books were distributed, and the *harinamas* were performed. What could be better? I was looking for an opportunity to show my vigorous activity in a new place.

- Do you remember Yevgeny Nikolaevich, yogi, he was at your lecture at Nadezhda?
- Yes.
- He opened a vegetarian cafe in the Palace of Culture of Ilyich's factory, but something did not work for him. I told him about your cafe in Leningrad. Everything is thriving in your place. Therefore, he asks you to help him, offers to take part in the share, and even buying his cooperative. Let's go, look and decide on the spot what to do.

I liked the offer. From Moscow, I went to Leningrad to see how things were going, left the Leningrad cafe in the care of Chaitanya Chandra, took Misha with me and together we went to Minsk. Since the perestroika began, I did not visit Belarus.

From old acquaintances there I had Vladimir Nikolayevich, Nadezhda, and Yevgeny Nikolayevich, to whom we were heading. He led a section of yoga. Occupying a leading position at the Ilyich plant, while remaining a member of the Communist Party, he opened a cooperative cafe in the Palace of Culture of this plant. Perhaps his business was his party's assignment. Unfortunately, the cafe was unprofitable, and he wanted to sell it, or share with someone to continue the work to get his money back. Everything rested on the money.

In all this story, the Director of the Palace of Culture Anastasia Mikhailovna took an important part. I also knew her before. After my trip to India, my authority in her eyes grew significantly. In view of cultural Soviet-Indian friendly relations, she wanted to prove herself on the good side as a progressive leader. I knew the weaknesses of the cultural elite and, on occasion, never missed the opportunity to play on them. The first thing I did was to enlarge the photo on which I was

standing next to Rajiv Gandhi as part of the delegation of Soviet Hare Krishna's and, framing it, hung it in the most prominent place in the premises of the future Sankirtana cafe. For me, the cooperative and the opening of the next vegetarian café was an act more political, ideological, than just economic. In this respect, our interests fully coincided with the interests of the administration of the Palace of Culture. Without stinting on epithets and metaphors, I drew a picture of the bright future of the Palace of Culture, when we open our cafe. Virtually no cultural work in the Palace has ever been conducted. People did not attend it, and the auditorium was leased to the youth theater "CHRISTOPHOR". Therefore, our activity was greatly appreciated. What to say, Krishna arranged everything so that my second appearance in Minsk was predetermined by the many favorable, concomitant circumstances.

Having the experience of opening a cafe in Leningrad, I began by deciding to change the interior and paint the walls of it, in the spirit of Krishna consciousness with the pastimes of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. On one wall, I intended to portray the Jagannatha deities, as if it were the temple of Jagannatha Puri. On the other, the ecstatic *harinama*, in which Sri Chaitanya Himself participated with His amazing dances in a large cluster of devotees, His close companions and followers. The remaining walls were supposed to be painted purely ornamental in spirit and in the style of His time. The inscription of Hare Krishna mantra in Russian and Sanskrit was the main attribute and decor of the panel, but I decided to write it at the very end, so as not to cause unnecessary comments and complaints from the pro-communist and atheistic administration at the beginning. Geese will not be teased before time.

While I was engaged in the interior design, I, with the *bhakta* Misha recruited new members of the new Sankirtana from among the ideologically loyal, able to conduct business and present the philosophy of Krishna consciousness in the best possible way. From the Stavropol Territory, where Misha was from, we brought the *bhakta* Nicholai, from Leningrad — *bhaktin* Gulya, and later — Raghunandana, whom, after some changes, we made the chairman of the cooperative in Leningrad. He was the most experienced in conducting business and could manage it correctly without sentiments.

At first, as they say, everything went into the hand. Kolya (Nikolai) came from the Stavropol Territory, I brought Gulya personally from Leningrad, Raghunandana joined himself when the time came. With the administration of the Palace of Culture and Yevgeny Nikolaevich, we had the friendliest relations. Everyone was waiting for our grand opening with impatience. By that time the design was almost finished. And so, Hare Krishna Mantra was written under the ceiling, on the curbs. Kolya, meanwhile, helped to finish the ornaments on free walls. Everyone who visited the panel liked it very much. But here's the ill luck: the fac-

tory's labor inspection committee came and stumbled upon Hare Krishna mantra inscription on the walls... It happened in my absence, and it was not easy to fix it. What to do? It was decided to open urgently. The newspaper was given an announcement about the opening of the first vegetarian cafe in Belarus. All those wishing were invited to the grand opening. Even if they try to close us, then, if we raise the hype, this will not be easy. Just imagine: a crowd of people came to the opening of the cafe, and they were not allowed in — a big scandal. Taking advantage of glasnost and perestroika, we will collect the signatures of people and start our company against lawlessness and discrimination of the administration. We will inflate and blast about Krishna consciousness as widely as under other circumstances it would not work. I was sure that the People's Front of Belarus and even the nationalists will stand on our side. We will shout about the violation of human rights, which assume the freedom of religion, assembly and free preaching of the ideas of our philosophy as equally as atheists. In the end, something like this happened.

At the opening of the cafe a huge crowd gathered. Representatives of large public and cultural institutions came on special invitations previously sent out, for example, the secretary of the House of Indian Friendship and their accredited representative from India. Journalists and representatives of the official and non-official press came. Our friends from the People's Front came, who only needed to make a noise. To the great surprise, the guests found that the front door was locked.

So, for the bulk of the people, the rally took place right on the street. We brought important and famous people of the city in the cafe, using the service entrance; we let them into the cafe lounge through the kitchen. The necessary effect was achieved. Further, using information and fanning the precedent, we started a company in defense of Sankirtana. Everything went as planned. First, we collected the signatures of more than 500 people, residents of Minsk who spoke in favor of vegetarianism and in defense of a healthy lifestyle, which devotees of Krishna offered. Violation of the rights of believers and violation of the contractual conditions of the cooperative and an act of arbitrariness and discrimination was a special issue. We acted in several directions at once. Compiled letters, protests and petitions depending on the addressee. With Maitreya, the first letter with Maitreya we sent to the Council of Ministers of Belarus, with a letter in hand, we personally came to the office of the department for cooperation. Here we presented the case in such a way that showed when carrying out decisions taken at the party congress, local officials are giving us obstacles. After that, we wrote a petition to the Communist Party organization and reached out to the secretary of the city Party committee. We sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party by mail.

So, we went to the authorities and wrote letters. And what did we do? Using the opportunity, we preached Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the highest people in the party and government apparatus, many of them were presented with “Bhagavad-Gita” and were treated with *prasadam* from the cafe Sankirtana.

At the same time, we invited people to the cafe, letting them in from the service entrance. The café regardless of anything. Trying to annoy us, out of envy and helplessness, Anastasia Mikhailovna decided to take away the furniture, which she herself gave us for free use, while we were friends. But later, having quarreled, she took away everything: tables and chairs — we were left with only the bare walls. For us, it did not become a hindrance, but exactly opposite. We hosted guests, sitting them on the floor on mats, which we bought cheap. In fact, from such exotics the people came to a perfect ecstasy, coming to our cafe in crowds. Day by day, things were spinning and becoming more and more serious. In the beginning, a simple situation became increasingly difficult for an amicable solution. To somehow disengage from us, Yevgeny Nikolayevich began to offer us cash compensation for registration and other costs, wishing to part with us for good. But I refused his “handouts”, insisting only on one thing: “The Sankirtana cafe must belong to the inhabitants of Minsk!” People should taste the real *prasadam*, breathe in the smell of incense, listen to transcendental music and take part in *kirtan*, — joint chanting of the holy names of Krishna. Our conditions appeared to be unacceptable.





At the same time, we were joined by a large group of those who are engaged in martial arts. Hefty guys, with muscles, dreamed only of who to fight, so they immediately stood on our side. One of the leading karatekas of Minsk offered us his patronage. His name was Oleg. He regularly came to the cafe and brought his guys. (After the passage of time he took initiation from Govinda Maharaja). He himself happily spent his free time with us, helping to distribute our books. Maneuvering between law and lawlessness, Yevgeny Nikolaevich ultimately surrendered. As a chairman, he introduced into the structure of his cooperative (and now ours), one more companion and tried to give him the reins of governing. That man was a real demon. An early retired major of the landing force, healthy and dumb like a kersey boot. Of course, this is a metaphor, because I have never seen him in boots and in uniform. He wore Adidas and some other sneakers. I already forgot his name. But with him, we had a struggle for life or death. Realizing that it was impossible to deal with us in good faith, he arranged a racket, decided to force us out of the premises. One day, he came with his comrade, the same muscle guy as himself, and began to break the dishes and destroy everything to the right and to the left. Yevgeny Nikolayevich, who was present at the same time, being smart, immediately realized that the situation smells of crime and tried to get out without wanting to be involved. "Major", so we nicknamed him, went into a rage and with fists pounced on Kolya and Mi-sha. My guys were not from timid ones. They themselves could overwhelm anyone. But then Krishna gave them reason and to defend their legitimate rights, they, without a long thought, called the police. Police came, made a report and turned the case over to the court. As they say, "Major" has thundered under the fanfare. Such people have no place in our society! — one of friendly to us correspondent wrote an article called "Sankirtana was the name of the café," in which completely debunked and morally destroyed our ideological enemies. Here is an article from the newspaper "The Banner of Youth" of August 9, 1989, No. 152 (11186) presented as a special case:

## **"SANKIRTANA" WAS THE NAME OF THE CAFE**

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare.

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare...

The *karatalas* are ringing, the rhythm of the *mridanga* is beating loudly, jasmine and sandalwood incense sticks are smoking. And it feels that the figures of the wall painting, for the time being, frozen in the poses of classical Indian dance, will come to life. The dance, full of gold, azure, and ochre... Honestly, it is beautiful! Add to this Indian national dishes with seasonings and spices delivered directly from the banks of the Ganges, exotic clothes of waiters — no, rather incredibly friendly hosts, noiselessly scurrying between tables and

together with saffron tea and warm milk offering guests well-printed, in bright colors covers, books. Nikolay Zolotarev is good, but Gulya Mukanova... She is a thin, dark-haired former student of the choreographic department of the Leningrad cultural institute, she silently slips through the hall, and with the intended shy look, and light smile welcomes every new visitor with affectionate "Hare Krishna."

I feel that readers are ready to rush to the phone, call the editorial office and ask them to explain where to find this exotic paradise. Therefore, I immediately let them know to look for it — alas! — is too late. Minsk cafe "Sankirtana", barely having time to open, ceased to exist. A small room in the club of the Minsk Production Association named after Lenin, which until recently as a magnet attracted all passerby and curious not only from the nearest streets but also from the most remote districts, is closed for good, the inventory of Sankirtana property was drawn up by the officials.

And it all started just fine. The Springs of Health cooperative, which had a lease agreement for a small, thirty seats, premises in the MPA Lenin, decided to open a vegetarian café in Minsk. Not a bad idea, is it? There is more than enough vegetarians in the city. As for the club, his management has long wanted to have something like a buffet. Squares for this were allocated minimal, and space, according to sanitary norms for preparing and storing meat dishes was not enough — so why not try this vegetarian cafe? By the way, eyewitnesses who came from Leningrad claimed that the vegetarian cafe with an assortment of Indian national cuisine enjoyed unprecedented popularity there. The dishes are exotic, they are inexpensive, and the profitability of the cafe is almost the highest among cooperative catering outlets in Leningrad. So, it was decided: urgently send messengers and invite vegetarian cooks and their aides to us, to Minsk.

Indeed, soon a group from the local cafe Sankirtana arrived from Leningrad. People are quiet, well-mannered, they did not chase after a particularly long ruble. Without any delay, the contract on a contract with the cooperative "Springs of Health" was formalized and, having received the blessing of the club bosses, the arrived specialists proceeded to the design of the premises.

Strictly speaking, this is the end of the commercial idyll. Because, seeing the painted wall, the administration's representatives, to put it mildly, were taken aback. And not the dignity of the painting (or suppose, the lack thereof) produced such a stunning effect. Just a suspicion arose that grew into the certainty that the Leningraders who came to Minsk, professed some strange, little-known among the functionaries religion — Krishna consciousness. They began to take a closer look: the aliens did not drink or smoke, they refused tea and coffee, and in their personal lives they adhere to extremely puritanical rules. In this context,

even the vegetarian assortment of their cuisine seemed suspicious. Moreover, they themselves readily explained: the Krishnas knowingly do not eat meat, fish, and eggs. In a word, a scandal! Cat in a poke.

And according to the logic of the scandal, further developments went on. The administrators made desperate efforts to get rid of the unwanted acquisition, and the co-operators — just as desperately fought for their survival. In the Sankirtana archive, all the evidence of the struggle has been carefully collected: "Having read the announcement about the opening of our cafe, the first vegetarian food point in Minsk, the interested people came to the address indicated in the newspaper Vecherny Minsk, but unfortunately they were caught by unpleasant surprises: locked entrance door and disconnected electricity... And the thing is that after seeing the design of the cafe, in particular, painted on the motives of folk Indian legends and stories, the leadership of the MPA Lenin regarded our work as an ideological act of sabotage. These are the lines from the statement of the workers of the Minsk Sankirtana submitted to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus. The next appeal of the co-operators — to the Directorate of MPA Lenin: "Due to the fact that the power in the premises of our cafe is disconnected, and visitors cannot be received, we suffer losses of 300 rubles daily." One could also quote the statement to the cooperative department of the Minsk Oblast Executive Committee, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the republic, and the society of Soviet-Indian friendship. Or this extremely emotional complaint, entitled "Administrative racket": "...the club authorities, — it says in it, — resorted to the help of the director of the cooperative cafe "Orion", and he is the one interested in getting these premises. He appeared in "Sankirtana", cursed us, threatened, and even broke the dishes, so I had to call the police ..."

But let's listen to the other party. The word to the director of the club, in whose territory all these battles were fought, Anastasia Mikhailovna Rounkevich:

— The lease agreement between the club and the cooperatives Springs of Health is terminated by the decision of the general meeting of members of the cooperative. Hence, all relations with the cooperative of Sankirtana are automatically ceased, because we do not have any legal relations directly with them ... Have you seen what they did there? We agreed to a vegetarian cafe, and they arranged a prayer house. We met them in an amicable way and then tried to explain... Here is the club, the state institution, and all sorts of religious activities in it are inappropriate. But they wanted to spit on other people's interests! We have the Christophor Theater. At the top, there goes the performance, and these below sing "Hare Krishna". No one would think that people are hampered... You can't imagine how grasping they are, how aggressively they are agitating for their Krishna. They are way more persistent than I am. I sometimes

feel like a schoolgirl with them... Where did we look before? But did you personally know beforehand that they were such people, the Hare Krishnas? What and how do they preach?

I must admit to Anastasia Mikhailovna that I knew something. There were publications in the central press, and recently presented on our screens the film "Is it easy to be young?" one of the stories of which was just telling about the Hare Krishnas. The doctrine is based on the unquestioned authority of the spiritual master, on the affirmation of the predetermined fate of man by his actions in the previous earthly incarnations, the pseudo-reality of the material world: "Everyone should know that the living entity is an eternal servant, if he does not serve Krishna, he will serve illusion. One, bewitched by illusion, tries to be happy, in various ways serving his own senses, but by doing so one will never know happiness."

I have to clarify: the ideas of the Hare Krishnas, their persistent desire to convert everyone into their own faith has always provoked my inner resistance, the desire to defend the right to my own world-view errors and searches. But the history of Sankirtana makes one speak not so much about the content of ideological differences as about the ways of their solution.

It is not easy to determine the degree of guilt of each of the participants in the conflict. As for the administration of the Lenin MPO Lenin and the club bosses, it can be seen with the naked eye: they understood whom they are dealing with, and launched the administrative-command pressing to the full. The cooperative Springs of Health, with which Sankirtana was bound by a legally registered contract, all of a sudden ceased to exist. As soon as the cafe had opened, due to the "unforeseen" problems, the light in the premises was disconnected. Let me recall two curious documents that were received by Sankirtana in response to its statement about the illegality of the "electric sanctions". The first official letter was received on July 26. It states that "the lease agreement with the Springs of Health cooperative was terminated by the decision of the general meeting of the cooperative members on June 25. In connection with the inability to use the cafe premises by members of the Sankirtana cooperative (Leningrad) under an agreement with the Springs of Health without coordination with the management of the MPO, it is proposed to release the premises of the cafe from June 25, 8am in connection with the holding and preparation of the factory event on June 27." The second letter came on June 27 and interprets the situation in a new way: "On June 1 6th club partially shut off electricity due to the flooding of the basement and repair work." After their completion, Sankirtana" is promised to connect the electricity. And both documents were signed by the same person — an assistant general director of the association for social and domestic development.

As for the co-operators from Sankirtana, they are not angels either. The level of ignorance of the club administration was probably appreciated quickly by them, but for the time being, cards were not disclosed. They did not announce that their program is not limited to vegetarian cuisine and national Indian art. I can only sympathize with Anastasia Mikhailovna: the situation in which she fell was not easy. I can understand her and the administration's wish to get rid of extremely inconvenient guests as soon as possible. But it leaves me feeling that the officials who "took action" against the co-operators are themselves experiencing something of fright and confusion. Specifically administrative fright and administrative confusion. Too many details were given to me about what bad people gathered in the Sankirtana and why they cannot be allowed to stay in the club. They even sympathized with the theater Christophor — in vain, by the way; the theater did not remember that singing or noise from below would interfere with their performance.

Where to look for the motives of unpleasant administrative emotions? I think the matter is simple. What, apart from the hasty repair, can the club and factory administration present to counter the "ideological diversion" of the same Krishnaites? Methodical guidelines for the study of scientific atheism, which are of interest only to those who developed them? Dissenting truths, like this one: every religion is opium for the people and every belief or teachings need to be approached critically? However, after all, neither in schools nor in institutes, they simply did not teach a critical approach to a particular philosophical trend. And the amount of knowledge on Marxism-Leninism needed to be remembered as an unquestionable religious dogma. Where, then, should this criticality and intellectual independence come from, if there is a habit of obedience to the Authority? And the more absolute this Authority is, the safer and more reliable life is.

"You know," Anastasia Mihailovna pointed out suggestively, "when I shared my troubles with one philosopher in Moscow, he told me: "Congratulations because neither Moscow nor Leningrad managed to do this."

I will add that five hundred residents of Minsk signed the letter against the closure of the Sankirtana cafe, with their names and home addresses disclosed. And since this cafe does not work now — shall we be glad that Minsk was the first to "cope" with the Hare Krishna? I do not know, I do not know... Personally, I am convinced that very soon, on one of the streets of Vitebsk, Minsk or Grodno, in a cafe, in a park or just on the street, there will be heard a familiar Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare ..."

N. KOSTEROVA

After that, Anastasia Mikhailovna began to plot against us, taking advantage of her position as the director of the Palace of Culture. She decided to break the contract for renting premises with the cooperative. And we, who did not deal with her, but with Yevgeny Nikolaevich, remained in limbo. We had nothing to lose, and we threw in all our ingenuity. While living in the Palace of Culture, we were involuntary witnesses to the illegal activities of Anastasia Mikhailovna, and now we decided to report all of her frauds to the appropriate authorities. Exceeding her authority, she handed over the premises of the Palace of Culture to various organizations and private individuals for entertainment and night boozing. At that time, such a business was unacceptable (this alone could be a good word to remember the Soviet authorities). In addition, the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which backed Anastasia, had its share of participation in her activities, arranging its own orgies. Publicity of this kind of activity threatened its organizers and participants with big troubles. Knowing this, Maitreya and I sharpened the pen and wrote a well-reasoned letter to the Republican Prosecutor's Office, the KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. To this, we added the fact of obvious abuse and violation of the rules for the functioning of cultural and public institutions, which consisted in the following: a veteran died at the plant, and the party leadership arranged a funeral for him in the Palace of Culture. This was in contradiction with the existing provision on the work of cultural and social organizations. If you take into account that it was a time of great revolutionary changes and scandals, it was enough to bring a wick, and a "barrel of gunpowder" would immediately explode. Who raised his sword on us, by the sword died. When our letter reached the highest levels of power, proceedings began and Anastasia Mikhailovna lost her director's chair. She was fired and as punishment was forced to work in the same DC as a janitor. Having lost leadership, for some time the Palace of Culture of the Lenin plant was completely left at our disposal. People telephoned us and we called everyone; the phone did not stop ringing; from all sides, Hare Krishna and Hari Bol were heard. The actors of the theater, who were also here on bird rights, began to like us very much. They often came to our cafe, and we treated them with prasadam, for free. Our business was not so bad, but for how long? An omission on our part was that when drafting the documents we did not rewrite the lease agreement on ourselves, but relied on the honesty of Yevgeny Nikolayevich, who, when the troubles began, transferred his rights of the chairman of the cooperative to the major, and left "on soft paws", and after a while changed his place of residence and even left the city. Although the joint venture agreement remained valid, when the contract with the Palace was canceled, we were up in the air. The plant administration conspired with the major who bought up the cooperative Springs of Health and terminated the contract with us. Now no one could help us. We fought to the last, but in the end, we had to give up our positions and

leave. The plant paid us monetary compensation and a penalty, and we were, as they say, out on the street.

Our eviction from the DK was as noisy as the opening of the cafe. First, they cut off electricity and all communication lines. We could not cook anything, and we were forced to live in the dark. Then they closed all the doors from outside, by sealing them. What was there left to do? It was already useless to sue, and I, having released the reins, waited until the situation was resolved by itself, by the natural course of events. In less than a couple of days, a large delegation of representatives of the plant's laborers, ten men, came to us. They were very determined.

— The Palace of Culture is ours, and we have a legal right...

— Yes, but we invested money and labor, according to our joint venture agreement, and until the second party pays us compensation, we are not making a step away from here.

So we argued for about an hour, each standing on their own — some sort of battle of nerves. Finally, I said: "Okay, invite the prosecutor, and in his presence, we will pick up our belongings and leave." But instead, they invited the police, and we had to quietly take things out on the steps of the palace. There was no other choice left... On the street in front of the entrance there gathered a huge crowd of sympathizers and onlookers. Fortunately, it was a good sunny day. With all the belongings: pots, food, boxes of books and bedding we found ourselves "on the church porch." Palace of the Ilyich plant was like a home for us — a cafe, a hotel (*ashram*) and a preaching center at the same time.

What to do? Where to go? Sitting on things in the open, for a while we got a little sad, but within an hour, Krishna sent us a person. Some unfamiliar to us woman came up and invited us to stay at her place.

"I have a free three-room apartment," she said. "You can stay there until you find a new room." When I recall this incident, sometimes I, myself do not believe it: was it with me or was it a dream? (To this day I live without difficulty and leave the care for the daily bread completely in the care of Krishna, as His servant). At this woman's place, we lived a few more months, and Krishna gave us premises for a cafe in the hostel of the Institute of Culture. So in fact: when the time was up, Krishna moved us to another, more suitable place. Fantastic! Sea of people: young people, students from all over the world — you cannot imagine a better place for preaching.

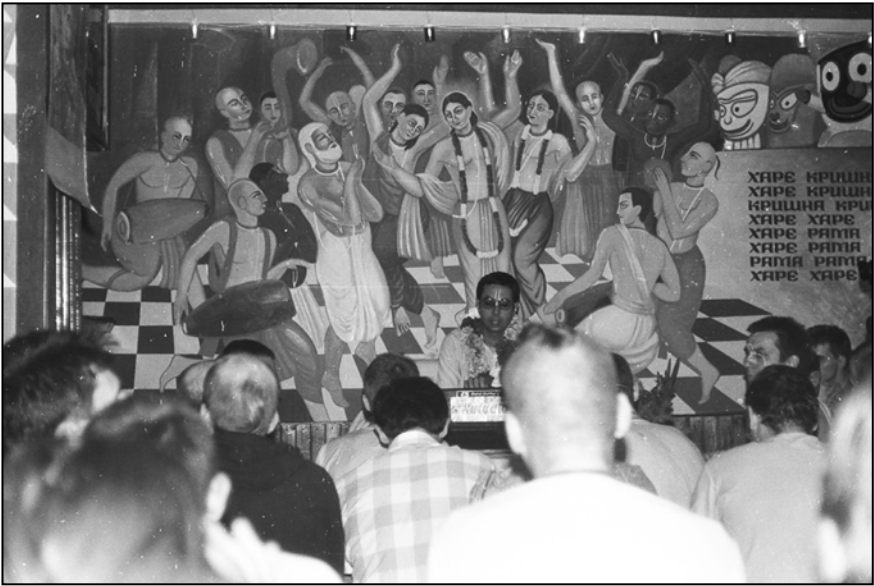
## SANKIRTANA CAFE

To formalize the documents for the cafe, as it should, it was decided to get Minsk residence permit for Nicholai and make him the director. We paid for his gold tooth crowns and found a bride from among our parishioners with an apartment and a residence permit in Minsk. The wedding was held; everyone was happy, especially Kolya himself. He was far from being a talentless person and he came to us well-suited. Together with Nikolay, we again painted new premises in the spirit of our Sankirtana. Pancha-Tattva was depicted in the very temple of Jagannatha Puri; the deities stood to the right of the dancing devotees. Shri Chaitanya was in the center among his eternal associates: Lord Nityananda, Advaita Acharya, Gadadhara Pandit, and Shrivasa Thakur. The room here was much smaller, but cozier than the old one.

Without hurrying, we transported the equipment from the old cafe to a new place and, having repaired it a little, quickly launched it into action. Among all his other good qualities, Kolya was not bad at all at cooking, and at first, could manage cafe alone. By this time Misha and Gulya had been initiated and became known as Maitreya dasa and Gayatri Devi dasi.

Having rented a two-room apartment for an ashram, we installed there the deities of Sri Gaura-Nitai. A lot of young people began to come to our regular programs, as well as the public of venerable age. We were invited to conduct programs in various educational institutions and societies (societies of disabled people, karatekists and yogis). In the gym at Oleg, who led several youth groups, we arranged big *kirtans*. When enough people joined us, we began to conduct street harinamas in the central park of Chelyuskintsev, as well as in other busiest places in the city. At the same time, our Sankirtana had its own publication, the journal Sankirtana Vedomosti (Sankirtana Gazette), in which we covered the philosophy of the Krishna consciousness movement and the practical activities of the devotees of Krishna. By popularizing a healthy lifestyle and vegetarianism as a path to spiritual perfection, we managed to publish Krishna Kitchen, our first cookbook. Of the most remarkable events of that period, we should also mention our first exhibition at the House of Arts, where we presented the exhibits of the original painting, posters, reproductions of paintings by famous Krishna devotees, attributes of cult worship, books on philosophy, photo chronicles, and materials reflecting the activities of the Sankirtana Association. More than 50 unique photographs of historical importance were first presented, for the first time, for public viewing. The exhibition was accompanied by music, *bhajans* in traditional Indian and modern performances. Later, this initiative was accepted by other devotees. Having made similar expositions, we began to hold such exhibitions in other cities of Belarus, and not only in Belarus. The exhibition Photo Sankirtana Express was held with great success in Sverdlovsk,





Izhevsk, and Alma-Ata. Many of my paintings in Krishna consciousness remained in private collections of devotees and friends of Krishna.

Krishna consciousness is not some sectarian, religious departure, as our enemies represent it. This is the world-view and way of life of a person who has risen to the transcendental level of God consciousness. Philosophy is dead without its practical realization. Religiousness without philosophy is mere sentimentalism or fanaticism, bordering on obscurantism. The society should develop harmoniously, awakening a dormant love for God, by following the scientific path of bhakti or karma-yoga activities in Krishna consciousness, as indicated in the Bhagavad-Gita: "O son of Kunti, all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all *tapasya* (austerities) you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me" (Bh.G. 9.27). Until this philosophy enters the consciousness of people and is reflected in practical activities, literature, and art, in politics and religion, it will remain dead.

At the end of each exhibition, we held a free discussion, which was attended by a lot of people. In a word, in a practical example, inspiring creative and intelligent people, we tried to extend our initiative to work and create for Krishna in the spirit of glorifying the Lord, His form, name, and qualities, describing His wonderful, transcendental pastimes. Shrila Prabhupada called this kind of painting — windows in the spiritual world.

So, as we represented Krishna consciousness, it attracted the most intelligent people. It was not by chance that we were invited to the best audiences. One of our many performances was held at the Belarusian Academy of Sciences, in the halls where the luminaries of modern science were holding their speeches and conferences.

The ingenuousness, sincerity, and artistry of the devotees always produced an irresistible impression on any audience and on scientists, too. The living being — the soul — occupies a marginal position between the inner and outer potency of the Lord. Internal potency represents spiritual energy, external — material energy. The soul is wholly spiritual, therefore it feels comfortable when it enters the stream of spiritual energy. This was not difficult to observe on the example of our performances. None of us were scientists, but due to the sincere desire to please Krishna and the whole mission of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Shрила Prabhupada, we were irresistible to even the most refined audience. Later I met with great scientists and the most famous personalities of my time, such as Academician A. Sakharov and Academician F. Uglov, poets and artists, politicians and spiritual leaders. I preached to the members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, was acquainted with Voznesensky, Vysotsky and the actors of the Taganka Theater, was visiting Yeremey Parnov, sang Hare Krishna in the Kamburov's living room, before the famous Juna Davitashvili, Buteyko, Shatalova, before the Bolshoi Theater soloists, Mosfilm actors, Ilya Glazunov and many others.

While in Minsk our business went uphill, the work of the cafe in Leningrad was temporarily suspended. Having united in the fight against the Sankirtana, led by Vasudama, my opponents began to write Kirtiraja vicious letters against me. The counter-campaign in my defense has begun as well. At that time, Kirtiraja enjoyed authority among devotees who believed in his decency, they believed that he would solve everything on conscience. But in fact Kirtiraja was totally different fish, so to speak. He deliberately warmed up the passions, intriguing, deliberately wishing to destroy the Sankirtana, which had become to him a bone in the throat. Western ISKCON, which he represented, began to clash with us. For my part, I was not going to undermine his authority, nor the authority of the organization that Prabhupada created. Sankirtana was the first officially registered organization, as a private business. It did not compete with ISKCON, on the contrary, it strongly supported ISKCON. This is a historical fact: the possibility of registering a religious organization ISKCON in Moscow and other cities became possible only owing to the activities of Sankirtana. The short-sighted policy of Kirtiraja led gradually to real problems that arose in ISKCON itself. They say, "The apple spoils from the core."

Maitreya compiled a letter in my defense and many devotees signed it. This somewhat inspired me. At that time, things continued to go well in Minsk. The registration of the Belarusian Yatra was next on the agenda.

## CRUSADE AGAINST SANKIRTANA

Just as in Leningrad, the struggle against Sankirtana began in Minsk. And understandably so. This Sankirtana began to compete with the structure formed in the West, ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Although this is only the name of the organization, nevertheless, very soon the neophytes and people far from Krishna, began to associate it with the very concept of Krishna consciousness. In the spiritual world, this is exactly so; name, title, and substances are one and the same. But let's not forget, we are in the material world, where there is a difference between the name and the object that it stands for. Of course, if at least one person was truly conscious of the Lord in this organization, then it would have a chance to claim Krishna consciousness. But the last and only was Shrila Prabhupada himself, and after his departure, not a single new one appeared. Someone may object — ISKCON is the body of Shrila Prabhupada, it is spiritual. Maybe yes maybe no! As for any body it is of interest, while the soul is in it. When the soul leaves, *samadhi* is built for the body so that it does not begin to stink. The burial of ISKCON in Russia began from the first day of its existence. An alternative to this can only be one — if everyone who considers himself a disciple of Shrila Prabhupada, will come together.

Just as in Leningrad there was an attempt to seize the property of Sankirtana in Minsk. This was done very tactfully and skillfully. Kirtiraja decided to convert the director of the cafe bhakta Kolya, making him president of the non-existent Minsk Yatra. Just like in Leningrad, Chaitanya Chandra was made, at the same time, the leader of Sankirtana and ISKCON. As Maitreya told me, Pundarika Vidy-anidhi and several others arrived from Vilnius (Lithuania) and held a general meeting where Kolya was elected president, bypassing Maitreya and my consent. Maitreya was the only initiated devotee in Minsk, and Kolya was just Kolya. The danger for the already established association Sankirtana was real. I saw everything, but I was not able to compete with the existing structure alone. I knew that after a while they would compromise me and, seizing my followers, would ruin my Sankirtana association. That's that? For all, there is the will of Krishna, but let us see what lesson He will teach us.

Maitreya was in a very excited state and although I did not want to go into private affairs and showdown, due to my position was forced to. When I came to the cafe, everything happened involuntarily, by itself. Kolya has clearly lost his sense of reality. Feeling the support of the official ISKCON and the precariousness of the Sankirtana situation, he brazenly stated that cafe now belongs to

ISKCON, and he is the president of the *yatra*. There is no one to blame, there is no one to present invoice and claim. The split occurred as it were inside the Sankirtana, and its instigators were left out of the question. Kirtiraja, as a pirate attacked me, exposing me in the eyes of the official ISKCON as a dissenter, encroaching upon the sacred. Hiding behind the name of the founder-acharya Prabhupada, he put me as if in opposition to Prabhupada himself. It was useless to get into a fight — wouldn't worth it. In the heat of the moment I said that if Kirtiraja arrives in the USSR, I will not let him out. According to the Vedic laws, a person who encroaches on someone's land, property and so on, can be killed on the spot.

In the cafe of Sankirtana, some people began to gather, the behavior and manners of whom were not at all Vaishnava, just ordinary karmis. Kolya, whom I made the director of the cafe, stopped coming to the programs at the ashram, and his criminal past (karma) took over. Bandit from the big road. I took him aside to the kitchen and, shutting the door behind him, punched him in the face. He did not expect this. But strangely, instead of rushing at me, he flew with fists on Maitreya. A fight ensued. Without any emotion, like an outsider, I looked at what was happening and was amazed at how maya acts. Everyone got his own. Why did he not rush at me, but on Maitreya? I still cannot understand. The blow was to come to me, but it literally turned 180 degrees and fell on Maitreya. O Krishna! Your ways are inscrutable. I understood that my behavior was contrary to Vaishnava etiquette, but what could I do? Evil should have been punished, an abscess is ripe, and it must be removed by surgery. I was taught: "In Kali-yuga, the struggle is inevitable, but if it is in Krishna consciousness, then it is promising." It is a pity, of course, that there was a potential devotee to whom I preached, on the part of the opponents. As on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, there are devotees all around, among them, Bhishma and Arjuna. But we are on the side of Arjuna, because Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is with him. It is incomprehensible. Without regret, as if I had hit a racketeer or a bastard, I felt some disgust and vexation. Escaping from the embrace of Maitreya, Kolya ran to the door, opened it and began to yell crazily, as the prisoners do, tearing off his shirt. Then he grabbed the nunchaku and waved them in front of Maitreya's nose, threatening him, but more from fear and powerlessness than from the desire to continue the fight.

The visitors were his friends. They went in, but they did not understand anything. What happened? I stood there as if nothing had happened, and Kolya went on like an epileptic. Indeed, nothing good will come out of it.

## SHOWDOWN

I conducted a Sunday program at the apartment, which served as an ashram. Many people have come. After *kirtana*, as usual, there was a lecture. But, in the middle of the lecture, a bell rang. We open the door — there is some sort of a gang on the threshold; Kolya decided to take revenge and brought his friends. In fact, these were the ones I preached to, the guys from the gym, the same Oleg and others. Apparently, Kolya tuned them, and they came to find out, what's going on. Entering the room, they occupied vacant seats. It seemed as if a thundering cloud, came into the house.

The forces were unequal. It is known that *raja guna* (guna of passion) warms up the spirit of warriors, in this case, it is inherent in both demons and demigods, but before true *brahmanas*, it weakens, loses its force. So Vasishtha Muni, with the help of the brahminical *tejas*, alone, defeated King Vishvamitra with a whole army when the king came to him to take the cow Kamadhena. While I was giving a lecture, Kolya and his minions did not have the opportunity to insert a word, for fear of angering the crowd, so they had to remain silent. But then, when it was time for questions, my “opponents” raised their heads and loosen their tongues, but not for long. Soon from the kitchen, from where smells and flavors came, the devotees brought fresh *prasadam* and began offering them to the guests. And first, they served those who came with Kolya. And so, enjoying the *prasadam*, they seem to have forgotten what they came for. Meanwhile, while the tongues were busy, and the ears were open, I explained the situation as I understood it, and not as Kolya have. Cafe Sankirtana is created by our common joint efforts. Kolya is only formally considered its owner, in fact, he is not the owner. He can be a director, and you are the owners. Kolya decided to deceive us by taking the initiative, but in fact, he is deceiving you. Therefore, before you take sides in a dispute, think carefully. It is necessary to weigh the pros and cons.

Oleg and his friends liked what I had to say, and after that they left, leaving Kolya with nothing. Kolya was removed from the cafe by his friends and soon they re-formed and renamed the cafe, calling it Lotus, a very banal name, reminding more of the detergent “Lotus” than the truly spiritual Movement of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. It was impossible for us to keep the cafe. Those or others will claim it, so I decided not to yield to either one. ISKCON lost a wonderful cafe and with it, a lot of followers and Kolya forever lost our liking and friendship. When it was time for him to receive initiation, Maitreya, as president of the yatra, refused to give Kolya a recommendation. Gopala Krishna asked me to help, but I evaded, mindful of another incident. “Which one?” The reader will ask, but more on this below: Fight to the end!

Holding the malice, Kolya and Oleg began to write complaints on me and Maitreya, bringing up all that was and what was not happening, mentioning the occasion when in annoyance I threatened to finish off Kirtiraj if he comes to visit. Half-jokingly, half seriously, Kirtiraja once asked me: "Is it true that you wanted me ...?" and he gestured as if slashing his throat. I said, "Yes, if you act like a pig, then you will be dealt with accordingly." The pig is a useless animal, but it is fed to be slaughtered later. We laughed, and this was the end of the quarrel. Little by little the situation in Minsk had normalized. After a while, Maitreya built a beautiful brick temple in two floors with a turret, a spire, and a chakra, along which one can always recognize the temple of Vishnu, but that was then, and what now?

## ARRIVAL OF NIRANJANA SWAMI

Niranjana Swami I remember well. When we were in Gaura Purnima at Mayapur in 1989, a lot of devotees came that year just to see "Russian devotees", as they were legendary. The stories of their superhuman heroic deeds spread, seemingly, throughout all three worlds.

Among the many *sannyasis*, one stood out, a young, tall man with rather a prominent face profile. He sang well and very skillfully led *kirtan*, playing the *mridanga*. But my memory of him was not about this. In the temple, there was pandemonium. The people literally flooded in, pushing each other. Everyone wanted to get closer to the Deities who rose on their pedestal, giving everyone the opportunity to observe their lotus feet. Naturally, with such an accumulation of people, people were not always polite in relation to each other.

When they opened the altar, the whole avalanche of devotees rushed forward, and I, carried away by the general flow, appeared near Niranjana Swami. Hardly standing on my feet, I crashed straight into him. Without turning around he gave me an elbow in the chest with all his might. From his blow, I almost fainted. "Excuse me ..." I said. With an unseeing eye, he angrily flashed his glasses at me and began *kirtan*. It was "*samsara davanala lidha loka ...*" — "just as a cloud, shedding rain, extinguishes a forest fire, so Shri Gurudeva, the rain of divine mercy extinguishes the fire of material life ..." The situation was comical, but I was not to laugh.

And when I was in Dushanbe, Maitreya called me.

"Niranjana Swami has arrived. Mamu Thakur, come here at once, without you, everything will collapse." Having received a telegram from Maitreya, I immediately went to the airport and luckily there was a direct flight to Minsk. Literally in a couple of hours, on the same day, I was already in Minsk.

There were many devotees in the ashram, who came from different cities of the USSR to see the visitor from overseas. I remember when Western devotees, *gurus*, and *sannyasis* began to come during the perestroika period, Harikesha Swami, knowing the sentimental and fanatical nature of the Russians, wrote: "Do not think that they all came down from Vaikuntha." At that time it was rather unusual to hear such things. The Russians believed that the ISKCON guru is as good as Krishna!

Having crossed the threshold and rinsed my feet, I went to the altar. Akinchana Gochara led kirtan without much enthusiasm. He struck the *mridanga*, making a sound: boom, boom and sang Hare Krishna. No one followed after him. People were sitting in the corners, standing, supporting the wall, waiting for a miracle! Niranjana Swami was not in the altar room.

"Where is the Maharaja?" I asked.

"He fell ill after the trip and lies in a small room."

I bowed to the altar, took the *mridanga* from Akinchana and started kirtan. After the first sentence of Hare Krishna, Hare Rama ... all who were in the *ashram* rose from their seats and joined me. Someone picked up karatalas, someone clapped their hands. There was a noticeable enlivening. A few seconds later the whole audience began to dance. I sang again and again — gradually the *kirtan* began to pick up the pace, becoming increasingly harmonious. In less than five minutes, the crowd began to sway, and Niranjana Swami's head appeared in the doorway.

"Break off! Let Maharaja in!" Under the conditions of Soviet reality, Niranjana Swami was different, not as I remember him when I met him in Mayapur. Gently stepping, he went to the altar and bowed to Shri Gaura-Nitai. I suggested that he lead the *kirtan* and give him the *mridanga*. But he did not hurry and gestured at me to continue. When the *kirtana* ended, he uttered the *premadhvani* and thanked me for ecstatic *kirtan*.

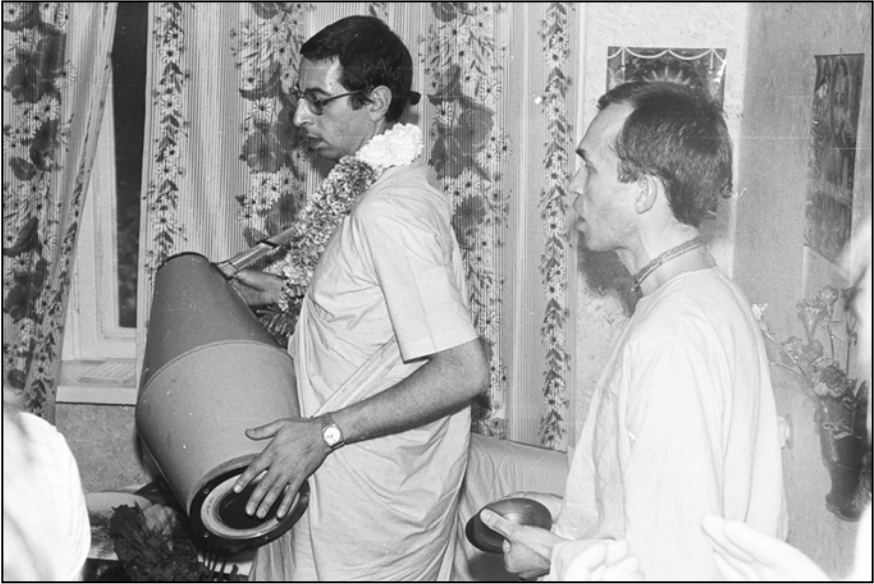
After that, there was a lecture and *prasadam*.

While he was in Minsk, I served him, and everything went like clockwork.

## PROGRAM IN SANKIRTANA CAFE

It was an unforgettable program. Devotees from Lithuania, from Moscow and Leningrad, arrived, not counting those who lived in Belarus. The people filled the whole room. Many have never heard the real kirtana and generally had a pretty rough idea of Krsna consciousness. Having seen Niranjana Swami, a living devotee, many wished to become his disciples.

In fact, if we accept a devotee as our guru, then he is as good for us as Krishna Himself. At the time of his arrival to the USSR, Niranjana Swami had not yet giv-



en initiation. But when the question arose that some wished to accept him as a guru, he wrote a letter to me personally, because at that time everyone received recommendations from me, and said: "You must know my demands." I want to see in my disciples, not how many books they distributed, but how they can rely on Krishna in everything". His words were well remembered by me because at that time mass propaganda of book distribution was conducted.

The second program took place at Oleg's apartment; Niranjana was leading a kirtan; from that day, his singing of Jaya Radha Madhava really touched my heart...

## **AND THIS IS REMEMBERED TOO...**

Lithuanian devotees came by their own car and since I knew Minsk a little, I drove Maharaja around the city. On the way to Oleg, we stopped at the traffic light; when the green light turned on, I tried to drive the car forward, but as the road was going uphill, instead of forward, the car rolled back. Niranjana Swami, who was sitting next to me on the front seat, jerked a handbrake. The engine stalled. I tried to start and release the clutch, but the car again rolled backward. Finally, after a little stalling and skidding, together with Maharaja we mastered this uphill road. Later he asked me to help him in Siberia, and I took this as the mercy of Krishna and served Maharaja there. Each time when our paths



crossed, our relationship was becoming a more informal, increasingly friendly type. When I was sent to Mayapur-dhama, he donated \$100 to me.

## **RATHA YATRA IN MINSK**

I was always in a hurry to be the first in devotional service and didn't want to give up this special mercy of the Lord, therefore, conscious of the value of devotional service, always fought for it. When we still lived in the ashram on Zina Portnova, I already had an idea to organize Radha Yatra. Members of my team liked the idea, and Andrei took up the making of the chariot. He found the handymen, the premises (the whole hangar) and made the wheels, but without the body, you will not go far! While we were thinking how and from what to make the body of the chariot, times mixed up our plans and scattered us at different places. We moved to live with Alexei, and Andrei created his own team. So of holding this event was missed and others used it elsewhere. Now I was invited to a festival of chariots as an honorary guest. The first Radha Yatra was held in Kaunas (Lithuania).

Between the anticipation of the arrival of Prabhavisnu Maharaja to Minsk and time I visited this city for the first time, it took about ten years. It was somewhere in 1982. My second visit to Minsk fell to the time when I returned from a pilgrimage to the holy places of India; back then, with Maitreya, we came to open a cafe. Sitting on a bench in the open air, we drank milk and thought about how to arrange everything. We had not even a place to stay. And now I'm going to Minsk to hold a Ratha-yatra festival. Krishna consciousness triumphed in Byelorussia. I knew that Maitreya and devotees are waiting for me, and Maharaja himself personally invites me to his own name-day celebration.

Of course, in order to conduct some kind of mass event on the streets of the city, it was necessary to take permission from the mayor of the city. But I was not sure that such permission would be given to us, so we decided not to ask anyone. If we ask and we are refused, then we cannot disobey. When we conduct such an event without permission, we violate the law, and we, for sure, will be punished. But, if we do not ask and conduct, even if we violate the law, then, most likely, no one will stop us and punish us, because while authorities are finding out whether we violate the law or not and consult with higher authorities, our event will be over by then. As they say, you don't shake your fist after the fight is over. If we want to conduct Ratha Yatra, then we must conduct it, not reporting to anyone, and if not, then... We were not going to create problems by blocking or stopping traffic. We did not intend to bother civilians by hooliganism or any kind of disturbing behavior. Freedom of conscience and religion is protected by the constitution of the state. In fact, any legislation in a civilized society should be based on the unshakable principles of religion and the law

of God. Therefore, we will take advantage of this approach, and we will justify ourselves later. Even if it comes to litigation, in any case, we don't risk anything. Our cause is right! Such was my reasoning.

I met Maharaja at the airport and took him to the apartment of one female devotee; she herself went for a time to live in the ashram. After arranging himself and putting himself in order after the road, Prabhavishnu Swami expressed a desire to immediately go with me to the cafe Sankirtana, where by that time a lot of devotees had gathered, not only from Minsk but also from other cities. On this occasion, Maitreya ordered a hotel, rented rooms, and prepared apartments for a larger number of devotees, which he expected, so there were enough premises for everyone to stay. In order to prepare a festive *prasadam* from Riga, Gurudas and his wife, both Prabhavishnu Swami disciples, arrived from Australia. They were fine cooks.

When we entered Sankirtana, *prasadam* was about to be served. Almost simultaneously with us, the Jagannatha deities came from Lithuania. All guests were assembled, and Prabhavishnu began *kirtan*. The cafe was small. But a panel, wall size, with the image of Gauranga and his companions Nityananda, Advaita, Gadadhara and Shrivasa, dancing before the Deities of Jagannatha under the vaults of the temple, extended cafe's space indefinitely. The spiritual world is unlimited. Only man's materialistic consciousness, his classical "triad" (thesis, antithesis, and synthesis) and the speculative approach to spiritual life limits his possibilities. In the presence of Krishna, time becomes "eternal now," and space becomes infinity. So, after stepping over the threshold of Sankirtana, we ended up in the world of Vaikuntha.

After *kirtana* there was a lecture, then *prasadam*. Devotees and guests were in ecstasy. Maharaja was pleased. Already sitting in the car, when we were returning to the apartment, he shared his impressions of the cafe and the program. I took him to the apartment and stayed with him until morning. The day after the repetition of *japa*, and *arati* before the house altar, and the class of Shrimad Bhagavatam, we took *prasadam* and, when we were sent a car, we went to the cafe. As I said in previous chapters,



the cafe was located in the hostel of the Institute of Culture. The best place for preaching. Imagine Ratha-Yatra — at noon, on the palanquin, Deities go for a walk along Lenin Avenue — from the hostel through downtown, to the government offices and back. It is said that those who see the Lord of the Universes in the chariot will immediately be liberated in this life. The mercy of the Lord!

Of course, the KGB and the police were a bit worried, but not much. On separate sections of the road, simply out of prejudice, they patrolled, talking on the radio. The procession was festive, peaceful and attracted the attention of the people of the whole city. Fearing popular unrest, the Popular Front and the Belarussian nationalists, who always looked for a reason to make noise, nobody touched us - there was no reason. In the event of a clash, Oleg and his squad of karatekists zealously patrolled and guarded the Deities all the way and back to the ashram. A small incident arose already at the very end of the festival, and then Oleg's squad defended us knightly. More peaceful people than followers of Krishna consciousness are difficult to find in this world. Of course, if they are not stepped, as they say, on their tail.

After the Deities returned from a walk, there was a great feast, then, after a little break, there was an evening program. Maharaja gave darshan for his disciples and those who had questions, and the next morning he and Ananta Chaitanya left for Lithuania. Our next meeting with him was planned in Novosibirsk.

## **SPEECH AT THE TEMPLE OF SCIENCE (SPEECH AT THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES)**

Even before I became acquainted with Krishna consciousness and began preaching Hare Krishna, I had many acquaintances among scientists. Not without vanity, I painted portraits of outstanding figures of science and art, thus supporting my reputation. I really appreciated educated people, and they appreciated me. Being quite a pert little fellow, I was stuffed with a lot of different kinds of information, loved to read philosophers, was familiar with literary classics and poetry. I knew a lot of poetry and whole poems by heart. So, for example, I could quote whole chapters of "Eugene Onegin", knew all "Demon", loved Baudelaire and Russian decadent literature, recited Yesenin well and enjoyed the reputation of patron among my friends. All my friends were much older than me by age and by status, and it did me honor. I practiced the first attempts to preach Krishna consciousness in meetings with them. I will not say that everyone agreed with me and perceived everything I said seriously, however, when I sang the Hare Krishna mantra, everyone listened with bated breath. Later a list of my acquaintances was added by the names of those that Kirtiraja sent me. He was finding Soviet tourists abroad and secretly forwarded their in-

formation to me. Here I was connecting with them and methodically preached to them. It has to be noted that not everyone could go abroad at that time. As a rule, these tourists were big scientists, movie and theater actors. To this, I would add that Krishna consciousness was then of interest to people intellectually and spiritually developed, who did not agree with the existing order and atheistic ideology. Later, when a lot of foam arose on the wave of perestroika, people who joined us were doing so for the purpose of gaining fame, position and personal gain, often with a criminal past, and they gradually superseded those intellectuals and spiritually developed individuals by creating an oligarchy within the Movement.

Perhaps, for future generations of historians, it will be interesting to know how it really was, but I do not set as my goal the writing of a monograph or scientific research. Without going beyond the frame of the memoir work, I cite facts from my life and what I encountered. At the same time, so that I am not accused of falsification, I bring up photographs, letters, and surviving documents. It is possible that I have infringed on someone's interests and has ignored someone — let them forgive me. On them I do not hold evil — forgiveness is the true religion.

Shrila Prabhupada wanted his disciples and followers to preach to scientists, but for this, it is not necessary to become a scientist oneself, although it is absolutely necessary to become a devotee. Among those to whom I preached, there were many scientists, with some of whom I maintain friendly relations up until now. When I started my preaching in Belarus, one of them invited me to speak at the Belarusian Academy of Sciences.

In the assembly hall, in which the luminaries of the national science were holding speeches, we began kirtan. After kirtan, I laid out the foundations of our philosophy. I spoke of the Sankirtana of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who, for the benefit of all living beings, began this movement, supporting the idea of spiritual equality, brotherhood, and freedom. At that time, no one called Krishna consciousness a religion, until the devotees themselves put this spiritual Movement as a religion. The inept preaching in this country has damaged the spread of Krishna consciousness, which is *bhagavata-dharma* maintained by the *acharyas*. When it becomes a religion, a fanatical crowd joins it to achieve its mercantile goals, and so-called gurus and staff preachers like Putana feed their followers with poisoned milk. The *varnashrama* institution, because it was created by God, exists, it just needs to be revived, revived by performing *sankirtana-yajna*, chanting, and preaching the holy name of Krishna.

After the *kirtan* and the lecture there were a lot of questions, then we handed out prasadam, sweet balls made from baby milk powder “Malyutka”. Scientists are like children, first, they need to be given baby food and then “Bhagavad-

Gita". In fact, after prasadam, they started buying Prabhupada's books, and everyone who bought them lined up to get my autograph.



In the journal for honorary guests, where the luminaries of the world science left their autographs (such as Academician Kapitsa, for example), I wrote with a stroke of my pen: "Chant Hare Krishna ... and be happy!" Krishna was merciful, and I did not stint on blessings.

## **MOGILEV**

Mogilev means "the tomb of the Lion". Legends tell us about the ruler who founded this city. Here we have conducted several excellent programs in the Palace of Culture. Maitreya, having already become the president of the Minsk *yatra*, gradually began to master the Belarusian lands, spreading Krishna consciousness as widely as possible.

We stayed at the apartment, of a man whose name was Misha. Fifteen years later, I met him in America, in New York.

## **GOMEL**

While we were preaching in Gomel, an atomic reactor exploded in Chernobyl, which was nearby. People, wishing to escape from radiation, crowded into our

programs. Increased radiation contributed to the spread of Krishna consciousness.

The three kinds of suffering are inherent in the material world, but those who dedicate themselves to devotional service become free now, being in this body in the zone of increased radiation. Was there at least one person who would not want to find rehabilitation in such a simple and sublime way? Just chant Hare Krishna and do not eat meat!

## **FESTIVAL IN VITEBSK, ETC.**

The most significant event of that time in Belarus was the holding of the Sankirtana festival in Vitebsk. We rented the premises of the Academic Theater. During perestroika, people stopped coming to the theaters and cinema, and the cultural and mass events premises were empty. Everyone was busy with the revolution. It was a very favorable period in the history of the development and spread of Krishna consciousness in the USSR. After the Union split into many sovereign states, natural difficulties arose with the moving around the former Soviet Union. Now it was necessary to register or even take a visa at the embassy to cross the border of the same Lithuania or Latvia, Estonia or Georgia... Even at the entrance to Ukraine, it was necessary to get a stamp in the passport. Ukraine's self-reliance, instead of putting an end to the strife, caused even greater problems. This was how the transition from developed socialism to premature capitalism took place. Struggle — as a characteristic feature of the age of Kali — accompanies people along the whole path of their short life on Earth. As for Hare Krishna, according to Shrila Prabhupada: "This struggle in Krishna consciousness is very promising!" We were not against fighting for Krishna consciousness, overcoming, sometimes, more and more new obstacles.

In theater, we held a wonderful festival of spiritual liberation and spiritual perestroika; in the lobby, we staged a fine art and a photo exhibition of Krishna consciousness, where we also presented positive reports on Sankirtana from all over the former Soviet Union. *Prasad* and book distribution were organized. One could see how the devotees in the dhotis and saris preach to inquisitive people, explaining to them the philosophy of *bhagavata-dharma*.

At the beginning of the program, as usual, there was kirtan, then a short lecture and answering the questions. The hall was full. Because of the lack of places, people stood in the passages and in the boxes. Throughout the festival, a very peaceful and friendly atmosphere was maintained. Even the Christians who came to our program behaved quite correctly, without creating confrontation and a situation in which conflict could arise due to a different kind of culture. In fact, there is one culture. This is a culture of Krishna consciousness that can

eliminate all misunderstandings between different religious denominations and religions.

After ecstatic kirtana, I gave the lecture, touching on those questions that could interest any sensible person. This definition of the concept “who am I?” and the scientific method of “knowing oneself.” From the consciousness of “who I am” comes the direction of all our activities depends, our goals and the possibility of living together and communication between different groups of people, including believers and atheists.

## **MINSK (SPEECH AT THE CONGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF BELARUS)**

This event was of special interest to me, and here is why. There I met representatives and delegates of other parties and made a decent presentation of the idea of Vedic society (varnashrama-dharma), just as in Chelyabinsk before the administration of the city and the region. Reflecting on the possibility of preaching Krishna consciousness from the standpoint of modern politics, I myself have strengthened the idea that I had been bred for a long time - this is the creation of my own party of Sankirtana.

## **MAITREYA**

Talking about the spread of Krishna consciousness in Belarus, without naming the names of the participants in the Sankirtana mission, would be an unforgivable mistake.

Maitreya became acquainted with the Krishna consciousness in “places not so remote” (expression in Russia implying on jail or places of imprisonment — interpreter’s remark) from Aleksey Baida, who passed through the sensational Kurdzhin case, as one of the most active Hare Krishnas. I preached to Alexei in Perm, and he, in turn, preached to Maitreya. I am not going to describe all the details of this case in this issue of Hare Krishna yesterday and today. Moreover, they are recorded in archival records and are already described in the book “Krishnaites in Russia. Truth and Fiction” by the religious scholar Sergei Ivanenko. I have never been particularly interested in a scientific view of Krishna consciousness. Since there is not yet such science as to adequately represent the spiritual life of the devotees of God. Not the files kept in the departments of justice and archives, in the departments involved in the registration of religious organizations and in statistical offices, but the evolution of consciousness interests me; not the chronology, but the philosophy and practice of Krishna consciousness, which, if represented in the historical aspect, will lose all attraction and true spiritual value.

As a rule, speaking of ascetics, great saints and yogis, we forget about which caste they belong to, who their wife is, and what their track record is. Even if he was the emperor of the whole world, such as Maharaja Yudhishtira, Arjuna and his brothers, we are actually more interested in their relationship with Krishna, and not how they punished sinners by cutting their heads with their sharp arrows on the battlefield Kurukshetra.

Maitreya learned about Hare Krishna in the prison camp from Alexei Baida. Then we met in Leningrad in 1987, when we distributed books.

Since 1988, he lived in my ashram on Zina Portnova in Leningrad, and when I was invited to Minsk, he wished to go with me. I really appreciate people's devotion to the cause of Krishna consciousness, not their erudition.

How we got to Minsk, I already briefly described. Now I want to tell how we preached, how we distributed the books and published the first magazine of Krishna consciousness, how we built the temple, and how later, we created the Belarusian *yatra* without any support and upheld its registration in Minsk at the highest level. The Hare Krishna trial lasted for several years, and Maitreya won that trial. All devotees should be very grateful to him for the titanic work that he performed in the name of Krishna. About how Maitreya founded a farming community, how he built a house for the devotees in the field and got a farm — there were legends! To describe all this, there should be a separate book, but this is another topic. It is thanks to Maitreya's perseverance that the Krishna Consciousness Temple, the first in the USSR, appeared on the Belarusian soil. How much effort it cost — I am the only one to know.

## TEMPLE ON BLOOD!

When the cafe business was completely lost, and there was nothing to count on, we decided to buy a house. Maitreya found a building with a small plot of land in the city on Pavlov Street, and I laid out for those 70,000 rubles (quite a money back then). Excellent wooden mansion with heating, hot water, bathroom and toilet, kitchen and two separate rooms. In the bigger room, we set the altar. The second, smaller, was set as a *brahmachari ashram*. In the courtyard, there was a garage, a barn, and a little later, Maitreya bought a cow and turned a barn into the cowshed. Looking at this miracle, I couldn't be happier. What more to wish? But Maitreya is not the person to stop on what has been achieved. He decided to build a bigger house. It was irrational, first, because it required a lot of investment and effort, and secondly, the house itself, which we already bought, was good enough. I told Maitreya, "How long will you be here as president?" Others will come to the freebies and will overtake everything by a majority vote, and then they'll let everything go in the wind, and you will be out with no resources



left... one appreciates only what one put his efforts into." I advised Maitreya to make the best use of what we already have and simply preach, to attract people who will later build or buy us a house. I told him: "Naturally, if we catch the soul, then everything in its pockets will be ours too. You need Krishna consciousness. We did not come here to build but to carry the teachings of Shri Chaitanya, Who started the Sankirtana Movement, Any place where the names of Krishna are chanted, where his *murti* is worshiped, becomes non-different from Vaikuntha, or Goloka Vrindavana. And is it not enough built by our friends, ordinary *kar-mis*? If they become Hare Krishna, they will give us their palaces and shacks, it is not difficult to build a house, but becoming a devotee is difficult. Come on, let's build a temple in our heart."

But Maitreya didn't listen and started a large construction of iron, concrete and bricks. He overlaid the existing house with bricks, mounted the second floor and a bell tower with a spire with Sudarshana chakra.

"Of course, there is no arguing, it's a worthwhile project, but, Maitreya, you started a business that will swallow up all of you and you can get carried away and even give up devotional service. As a result of your efforts and exploitation of others, you will make enemies for yourself, who, out of envy, will dethrone you by the majority of votes. In the end, that's what exactly happened.

I remember, in winter, in the cold, the devotees mixed concrete and, to satisfy the ambitious dreams of their president, began to erect a temple. The president himself, too, did not stand aside, in strict order, as in the prison barracks, he squeezed out all the juices from the neophytes and worked hard himself. As a result, he created the *yatra* and built the temple on blood, but lost the mercy of the Lord and ISKCON leadership, which later removed him from his position. Great disappointment awaits the one who builds a house in the sand. The winds will come, they will pour rains and wash such a house off.

The house should be built on a stone. What do we mean by saying "on the stone"? It's a foundation, which is our Krishna consciousness. In fact, the Lord's temple is already there, he is in the heart of the one whose eyes are moistened with the balm of love for God.

If the eyes of the devotee are moistened with the balm of love for Krishna, then he sees the Lord constantly in his heart, in the form of Shyamasundara. That's what should become our ideal! I wanted to see in devotees, in their eyes, a love for Krishna, which is like a balm for the blind. Krishna is already here. Each body is a temple of God if a person is able to see the Lord.

Maitreya always had difficulties with the *yatra*, and when the explosion of protest was about to ripen, he called me, and I used to come to remove the thunderclouds that were gathering. When lightning and thunders were already shining, I came, conducted *harinamas*, programs, lectures on Bhagavatam and

Bhagavad-Gita, and left when the situation normalized. After I left for America, the economic activities and implementation of the grandiose construction projects with the farm eventually brought all my efforts to naught. Currently, there is a farm, but there are no those who would like to work there. The farm was left empty, the temple was left without leadership. When Maitreya was dismissed with a big scandal, everything gradually began to decline. GBC did not need to strain about the situation in Belarus, especially, because they, in their dioceses are all well and always cloudless. They have bank accounts, they have followers and a roof over their heads. They are disciples of Prabhupada and his heirs.

When Maitreya lost his position, he and his wife experienced great difficulties. Now, after finding an occupation, the main theme of his research is network marketing. This is the theme of his dissertations and occupation.

## **MAITREYA WINS THE TRIAL**

*When the right-wing people came to power in Belarus, ISKCON found itself in a quandary. Under the pressure of nationalists and local Christians, Krishna consciousness was declared a totalitarian sect and there was a decision to close it down. The lawsuit began. Without using inaccurate information and rumors, I will quote excerpts from Maitreya's letter, which he wrote to Mukunda Goswami.*

"In this letter, I will first set out those aspects of our Minsk trial that I would like to draw attention to, then their similarities and differences with the situation in Moscow and my specific proposals. I apologize in advance if my words hurt someone. In no way did I want to offend or criticize anyone.

The main result of three years of our trial in Minsk is not only a victory in court but also that these years corresponded to the peak of preaching activity of the community. During the trial, we completed the main work on the construction of our temple, which was not authorized by the authorities. (Later they were forced to register our temple). In the same period of time, we realized a farm project where we started to hold festivals. We published dozens of preaching articles about the Krishna consciousness in the mass media without spending a penny on it. Our small community translated and published the circulations of the newspaper Hare Krishna World and the Farmer's Life of Hare Krishna, distributing them to all the temples of the former Soviet Union. The results of the preaching work at that time are indicated by the fact that most of the devotees, who are up to the present time most active, were brought in by the community during the trial."

In Minsk, we initiated about fifteen lawsuits against the media, which found that if the prosecutor's office brought us to trial, it will definitely win this pro-

cess, and our community will be closed down. We, referring to the principle of the presumption of innocence, demanded through the court to refute this information, insisting that before the final decision no one has the right to defame the reputation of ISKCON.

Once on the national radio, an Orthodox priest made an improper mention of us. In response, we immediately filed a lawsuit against the priest and the national television and radio station, and also we increased the flow of appeals to local and foreign publications, where from different angles they spoke of religious intolerance that comes from official Orthodox persons. The latter, caring about their reputation, surrendered and invited us to conclude an amicable agreement in court, under which the national television and radio company of Belarus provided us with free 15 minutes of airtime for our refutation, that is, in fact, for preaching. To one newspaper, we filed such a major lawsuit for moral damage, that when its representatives saw in court the force of our arguments and determination, they very quickly liquidated their newspaper in order not to pay on this suit. Although not all our claims to the media were satisfied, the media did not dare to write anything negative about us anymore. But this does not mean that we have spoiled relations with the media. They respected us and subsequently wrote about our victory (As they say, "defeat is an orphan, and the victory has many relatives").

Our three-year trial against the authorities of Minsk brought to us many worthy people. You remember, probably, what a wonderful conclusion, at the request of the court, was given about us by the Chief Psychiatrist of Belarus, honorary member of many international organizations of psychiatrists, V. Ivanov that Krishna consciousness not only does not harm but, on the contrary, "is beneficial for the health of the Belarusian nation." It is noteworthy that as an expert of the court he was invited not by us, but by the prosecutor's office. He told us that on the eve of our meeting with him the authorities demanded that he give an expert opinion against us. He did not know us at all, but he knew the moral character of those who opposed us well enough. Although out of 16 experts in the scientific and religious studies we chose the eight and eight - the prosecutor's office and the anti-cult movement, yet half of those with our opponents who had an agreement to give expert opinions against us, changed their mind and spoke in our favor or even refused to give their conclusions under the influence of their colleagues. This happened because the judicial battles had strong support, which we carried out outside the court, that is, in society and in the media. In the court we made winning statements, then we quoted it in the newspapers under the guise of "public opinion", and then — once again wrote about the fact that the public position in our favor was presented to the court. And this influenced not only the members of the court but also the experts.

I remember how we brought a selection of newspaper articles about our trial to the Institute of Advanced Physicians. That professor-psychotherapist, who had an agreement with the anti-cult movement to act as an expert against us, was not there on site, and we distributed copies of newspaper publications to other doctors of this institution. One of these articles had the following subtitle: "On how authorities zombied some scholars and Hare Krishna was blamed on everything." In it, with great sarcasm, was told about the philosophers of the Academy of Sciences who went on a deal with the authorities and opposed the consciousness of Krishna. As we later learned, this professor-psychotherapist, who wanted to write his opinion against us, refused to take the side of the authorities, fearing to lose the respect of his colleagues, whose opinion he valued. A good conclusion was also given by the chief sociologist of Belarus, Academician E. Bobosov and other people who respected us because we, as a small organization of non-traditional religion, challenged the huge power apparatus and Orthodoxy that infringed upon our rights.

When everyone in Belarus already knew about our conflict with the authorities, the culmination was such an ambitious religious festival, which was not conducted by any religious confession ever before. We went on the trick, telling the officials that we are worried that the media are writing a lot about the authorities allegedly violating our rights. To mitigate this situation, we asked officials to allow believers to hold an event in the prestigious concert hall on the occasion of Gaura Purnima. Officials underestimated us, and we took advantage of this. Officials felt that they could control this event by sending their officials to the festival.

But they could not imagine that we are not the religious confessions with which they have dealt so far. We secretly printed 10,000 large and small posters and unexpectedly for the government posted them not only in Minsk but also in other cities of Belarus. More than two-thirds of the area of the posters took the name of the festival, which officials did not think about to agree upon. This title, written in bright colors with an exclamation mark, was our short but powerful message to the inhabitants of Belarus: "Krishna consciousness is to be in Belarus!" It declared our unshakable confidence in the victory over secular power and the religious monopoly of Orthodoxy that encroached on our rights.

We did not have at that time a legal education, did not hire expensive lawyers, but were guided by the fact that reliance on the basic principles of protecting our rights is quite enough for victory. As they said in ancient times "knowledge of principles frees us from ignorance of certain facts." We believed in the strength and effectiveness of the principle that says: "The winner is not the one who is the strongest or the most skillful, the winner is the one who wins before the start." And we were not mistaken, for we persuaded ourselves and the au-

thorities, and all those from whom something depended, that the devotees are worthy of victory, and we won even before the final decision of the court. The court formally confirmed our victory, which we achieved in society.

We did not face any big dilemma in Minsk, because we did not allow to even penetrate these Christian views of the law into our minds. Instead, we have very seriously recognized the value of the principles coming from Roman law, which underlie modern law. The approximate meaning of one of them is that "one who seeks his rights should not be considered an attacker on someone." All that we achieved in Minsk was obtained on the basis of our demands for granting us the rights specified in national and international legal acts. Since we did not demand anything superfluous, we did not have to put ourselves in the position of owing something to the officials. We did not seek their special treatment of us, knowing that for this, in the long run, we would have to pay for it.

Since in Minsk we had no illusions as to who we are dealing with, it helped us to use what was happening to strengthen our position. For example, when one wall of our temple under construction was doused with gasoline at night and set on fire, we opened a criminal case, and in the newspaper publications on this matter we emphasized that responsibility ultimately lies with the authorities that incite religious intolerance towards us

# CHAPTER THREE

## TEN YEARS LATER

After perestroika, Belarus became a sovereign state. I called Oleg and said that I am in Moscow already and I plan to come to Minsk soon. After a long separation, Maitreya and Oleg met me at the railway station. Touching, and an unforgettable meeting. Maitreya put me in his Volkswagen and drove...

- Where are we going?
- It is necessary to make a registration.
- What does it mean?
- Now Belarus is a separate state, Batka (Father) Lukashenko ordered to register everyone who is not a citizen of Belarus, within three days of arrival.

So I came across one more fact of the total stupidity of a pro-communist society. A person of the West can go anywhere without a visa, cross all Europe, one border after another, without presenting a passport, and here even what was once considered one state is now divided into many principalities. History repeats itself: The Russian empire collapsed and buried under itself the autocracy, religion, and hope for a brighter future under communism.

After that, we went to the temple. It was the day of the appearance of Balarama. All the devotees who remembered me were very happy to see me, and it was nice to see their happy, joyful faces and to realize my involvement in their spiritual life.

It was Sunday, and many people came to the temple. I was offered a seat on *vyasasana*. I sang a *bhajan*, then gave the class of Bhagavad-Gita, as back in the days, and when the time came for *gaura-arati*, I performed an ecstatic kirtan; and stayed in the temple till the morning; they gave me a room, and in the morning I conducted a class of Shrimad Bhagavatam. Everyone, who was able to make it, came to the class. But when the rumor spread that I accepted Narayana Maharaja as my *guru*, the next time I was refused to attend the temple, which we built with Maitreya.

- What kind of nonsense is this? — I thought but did not object.

The next time I stopped at Oleg's place, who took initiation from me and became known as Achyuta das. I installed the Deities at his place and began to continue the mission of Sankirtana which I once began. So year after year I began to preach, and very soon I had disciples and followers. Now I was coming to

Minsk with my students and conducted *harinamas*, as back in the days. Eventually, we established an *ashram* Sankirtana.

The first time we conducted morning programs, while it was warm, in the park on the shore of a small river. We sang *kirtans* early in the morning, filling the neighborhood, with the sounds of *karatalas* and *mridanga*. At the end of the *kirtan*, we returned to the *ashram*, and there I gave the class of Shrimad Bhagavatam. Very soon the ISKCON management became aware of my activity. And then, one day, a district policeman came to the *ashram* and demanded documents from us. Involuntarily I thought that someone had sent him to us, it is possible that it was a tip-off from ISKCON leaders. In the first case, we managed to negotiate with the policeman, but on the second, we were fined and had to give a promissory note — we had to leave, and the third time while we performed *harinama* on Francis Skoryna Avenue, we were arrested and locked up for the whole day. Since then, I have ceased to test fate and stayed in Minsk for no more than three days, avoiding possible contacts with ISKCON devotees. I recall those days when loaded with Prabhupada's books, I came to distribute them in Minsk. Sometimes the load was so heavy that the handles of the luggage could not endure and broke away. I had to wrap it across with belts and ropes, and when I packed so I lifted the load from the ground, then, after just a few steps, I had to stop to gather strength. I put the load with the books on the ground, then again raised it and again, after taking a few steps, again put it to the ground. So I moved forward with small dashes. But the biggest difficulty is to drag luggage into the rail car. My knees trembled, my legs gave way, but I could not show my weakness or that the baggage was too heavy, I did not want to get the attention of the police. They could immediately search me, detain and put in jail without trial and investigation simply by the arbitrariness of the authorities. These are the memories that stirred up in me the desire to take revenge.

The printing and distribution of books at that time was a matter of honor, not of business, or for the sake of sustaining one's existence, so no one was doing it. As for me, by dedicating myself to the mission of Sankirtana, I did it from the consciousness of duty, and not from self-interest. I was ready to give people money so that they would just read these books and chant Hare Krishna. I was a philanthropist by nature and an ideological person, devoted to Krishna, so I tried to spread His teachings at all costs, always supported good beginnings. But surprisingly, I gave people money, but they did not become devotees. They just took the money and left. Thank you, Krishna! I realized that Hare Krishna cannot be bought with money. This is a very expensive thing, which you must pay for at the price of life. You can imagine my condition when later there appeared people who turned the godly activity into business, speculation on

Krishna consciousness. They tried to use my enthusiasm and dedication with which I did it.

Dragging bags of books all over the Soviet Union with me, I did not count on anyone. Knowing how much dangerous it is to distribute Prabhupada's books, many devotees were afraid to deal with me. Only those who were not already acquainted with Hare Krishna were not intimidated and those who did not have direct communication with cowardly devotees helped me. From them, I gradually formed my own team, which believed in me and on which I could rely, which was also, often, temporary. I always started a good activity with new people and supported them while they burned with the fire of renunciation and selflessness.

## **SANKIRTANA IS MY LIFE!**

At one time I spoke to Maitreya: "Register Sankirtana." But he registered ISKCON out of ambition, wishing prestige and fame. "Prabhupada built a house in which the whole world can live," — he repeated from another's voice. "It's true, — I agreed with him — as true as the fact that now there is no place for even those who built it with their own hands. Moreover, even those who inherited the property of Prabhupada according to his will, cannot get along with each other there. What is the conclusion? This is a miraculous House. Prabhupada gave his sincere followers Krishna consciousness, in which all material prejudices and limitations are erased. ISKCON is the great House of the Great Architect! Time does not have power over the creation of His genius. I never doubted that this house would stand the times. It is indestructible, but the one that Maitreya built, in about ten years, went to demolition.

The house we built was registered on Shesharupini devi dasi. When Harikesha Swami left his position, the prestige of ISKCON reeled badly, Maitreya called me and asked: "What to do with the house?" If Shesharupini remains in ISKCON, then the house will be ISKCON, and if she moves to some Matha, having found a *guru* there, then the house will follow her. This and other situations I asked Maitreya to describe on paper, but he abstained. Before I started my mission, I expected support from him. He was a participant and a living witness to the emergence of the Sankirtana mission; he could present the matter in the best light, thus rendering me a considerable service. He kept a photo archive of Sankirtana and many documents, and I counted on his help. But after he was kicked out of the house he built, he plunged into his problems, got married and moved away from the active preaching of the Sankirtana mission, ignoring my proposal.

And here I am again in Minsk. This time I start all over again. Will Krishna be pleased with me? Will He give me His mercy? Time will tell.



## OSIPOVICH I

In Osipovich, I conducted several programs at the apartment of Sanatana-kumar and in the district hospital, in which he managed to arrange this with the head physician (photo attached).

After Harikesha left ISKCON, Sanatana-kumar accepted Bhaktivallabha Tirtha Maharaja as his *guru*, and for a time took an active part in my programs, as well as some other devotees, but not for long. At first, he visited my lectures every time when I came to Minsk, but gradually, losing spiritual power, fell into oblivion.



## SPEECH AT THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Around the same time, Haridas arranged for me a lecture and a meeting with students and professors at Minsk State University. University, at the Department

of International Relations. After my return from America, this was the largest public event I took part in. Despite some objections from pro-Christian leaders (see photo), the program was well organized and had a good continuation. I got acquainted with the head of the Department of Political Science, Vyacheslav Bobrovich, and later I met with him and discussed several issues of the country's spiritual, political and economic development in the post-perestroika period. The conversation was recorded and later published in our almanac "WITHOUT ILLUSIONS". With the small revision, find it below.

## CONVERSATION

*Murali Mohan das, and the head of the Department of Political Science and International Relations of Minsk State Linguistic University Vyacheslav Bobrovich.*



**V.B.:** I teach political science, as they say in the West, or politology, as they say in our country.

**M.M.d.:** Is this a new subject?

**V.B.:** Yes. For us, this is a new subject. It is about 10 years old. But for the rest of the world, it is old, like the world itself. It is important to teach people how to live in the state, to know the state in which they live, how the government is organized, what duties and rights they have. It is very important. And now we are also thinking about this.

**M.M.d.:** In Vedic times there was also a state institution, as such, there was also administration. In history, it came under the name *varnashrama-dharma*. Do you know about it?

**V.B.:** Well, I've heard of it. Although, I myself respect Vedic knowledge. There are many words in the Belarusian language that have Sanskrit roots. So, for example, the word "Veda" means "knowledge." It is not by coincidence, is it? Obviously, it is not. But due to my professional background, I take care that my students "veda" in this field of knowledge. Someone cares for another...

**M.M.d.:** Any knowledge can be called a Veda. The original meaning of the word "Veda" pointed to the knowledge of the nature of the soul and its relationship with God. But this includes also that nominal knowledge of which you just mentioned. How to live in this world, in this society, how to manage it. Another thing is that in Vedic times there existed *ishavasya*, the theocentric concept of life. There is God. In accordance with the influence of this or that mode of material nature (*guna*) and human karma, He created four classes of people. The first, most intelligent class, who knows what the Absolute Truth is, was called a *brahmana*. Those who were engaged in administrative activities, politics, they were called *kshatriyas*. Those who were engaged in the production of food, agriculture, trade, and various businesses, they were called *vaishyas*, and those who engaged in manual labor, crafts, enjoying the service to others, called *shudras*. So these classes were created by God, and now, although we are dealing with a non-vedic culture, there is also such a division into different classes, i.e. social groups of people engaged in certain activities. There is so-called intelligentsia, there are politicians, and there are people involved in the production sphere and physical labor for the benefit of society. Whether it is socialism or capitalism — under any political and economic formation, these four classes always exist, no matter how they are called. There are intellectuals, there are administrators, etc.

**V.B.:** I must say that I'm reading a course entitled "The History of Political and Legal Studies," and I familiarize students, especially those who study law, with ancient management systems. They know about that hierarchy of varnas or castes that existed in ancient India. I must say that in the West there was a similar system. In his ideal state, Plato also determined that there are philosophers who govern, there are guards that protect, and others who are engaged in productive labor. Comparing this system with modernity ... In each person one there are certain qualities: in one — the reasoning, he is inclined to control, in another — fierce, he is capable of protection, — the warrior, kshatriya, in your language, in other — lust, they work for the satisfaction of their material needs, increasing their possessions. Those who have a violent nature, try to find themselves in military affairs: firefighters, police. Their nature requires a way out. Ide-

ally, this is when the propensities of a person and the needs of society coincide if one finds oneself and places oneself at the service of society. And not as it sometimes happens: if you do not find yourself in useful activity, it goes somewhere into the mafia, into criminal structures and so on. It is much better, if it is a military man, to serve the fatherland and society. Nature requires a way out ...

**M.M.d.:** In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says: "*chatur-varnyam maya srishtam guna karma vibhagashah*" — "According to the three modes of material nature, and the work ascribed to them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me." Something similar to what you just said. Not the soul, but the material nature, body, and mind. The soul is transcendental in relation to the qualities of material goodness, passion and ignorance, which, accordingly, are called sattva-, raja- and tama-guna. Under the influence of sattva-guna, one is inclined to intellectual and spiritual activity. Raja-guna makes him passionate, capable of administrative activity — what you call "violent nature." Such a person can lead well. He is strong, brave, and able to protect the weak. Those influenced by raja- and tama-guna — this combination makes them good businessmen, bankers, and producers of agricultural products. Those who are affected by tama-guna find themselves in physical labor and service to others. This scheme could be represented in the form of a human body with a head, arms, stomach, and legs. Cooperating with each other, all parts of the human body maintain the whole organism in good condition. Similarly, these four classes of people, cooperating among themselves, support the normal economic state of the whole society. At the same time, the purpose of such cooperation is not only material maintenance but also spiritual development, i.e. satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Being an integral part of the Supreme Being, Krishna, everyone must use his abilities to satisfy the spiritual whole. As I said at the very beginning, ishavyasya, that is the theocentric conception of life, which presupposes an activity, not for the sake of satisfying the material feelings of members of society, but the satisfaction of the feelings of the Supreme. Therefore, along with these varnas, there were also four ashrams (brahmachari, grihastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa), which determined the development of man, his spiritual position.

If we imagine that a person lives for 100 years, then for twenty-five years he lives as a brahmachari, an unmarried disciple. He studies science and learns to control his senses and mind. The next twenty-five years he lives as a householder, with a family, wife, and children. When children reach adulthood and can support themselves, a person leaves his home, stopping intimate relations with his wife and travels to places of pilgrimage, exposing himself to some austerities, for spiritual perfection. This is called a vanaprastha. After another twenty-five years, he completely accepts the renounced order of life, which is regarded

as civil death. Leaving all kinds of material activity and devoting himself completely to the service of God, the rest of his life he practices pure devotional service, relying solely on the mercy of the Lord. Thus he attains liberation from the circle of birth and death, gaining a love for God, which is the goal of human life. Having become fully Krishna conscious, he, leaving this world, returns home, back to Godhead. In the Bhagavad-Gita, it is said that the state of being, about which a person recalls at the time of death, leaving his material body, he achieves without fail. What you think at the time of death, there you will go. A subtle mind carries us as an eternal soul into the next material or spiritual body. If you think about God by chanting his name, you go to God, having an eternal spiritual body; if you think of your dog, you will be born in a family of dogs, that is, the consciousness that a person has acquired during his lifetime determines his next birth.

The Vedic varnashrama allowed a person to fulfill all his material duties in relation to society, family and other people and achieve his spiritual goal, which is to realize his relationship with God.

**V.B.:** This could be regarded as the most optimal way of life...

**M.M.d.:** ... which combines both absolute and relative concepts. In one way or another, we live in the material world, the world of relative concepts and truths. But all these relative truths are contained in the Absolute. Therefore, the goal of human life is the attainment of the Absolute Truth, the highest manifestation and expression of which is God, the Supreme Person. This is the concept.

**V.B.:** I would like to add to what I said before this. In my opinion, the East and West are by and large unified. The farther into the depths, into antiquity, the more this unity is observed. That is why Plato's views and Vedic wisdom have so many similarities, parallels, although different words would seem to be used. As for the social structure of the society of varnas and ashrams, then in the ideal state of Plato, there are also some layers... say the violent nature and those who are under the influence of the raja-guna. This is, clearly the same thing. When I bring examples of the present, that we have people in whom this nature prevails. Is not it? That's noticeable. And it is not bad if they find themselves in useful activities for society. Of course, we should not understand that this applies only to the military ... In the West, a transformation has long occurred that was considered before as a lot of those who are aimed at the material gain. Today we see people more attracted to this kind of activity. What used to be the sphere of battles on the battlefield, has shifted now to the economic sphere in modern society. It's very dangerous, very stressful. The battle of wits, the battle of strategies ... is a very narrow activity that raises adrenaline in the blood, forcing the heart to beat. Modern states tend to fight less and trade more. This rajas is moving into the economy. Where there are competitors, a win-loss. Before, if

you remember, there were merchants. The lower class. It was considered better to be a beggar, but proud. Modernity has overcome this, and this has become a normal activity. But we also have a lot of peculiarities that do not agree with neither the East nor the West. We somehow fall out of the context of both. For example, in the east, the old man is a wise man. This is a person who has achieved a lot. He can teach youth. We have an old ... — this is a clear dissonance. Young people do not listen to the elders, because the older generation has nothing to teach them of. Personally, I do not see those examples that the old man is associated with wisdom. That the old people wisely argue that they are ready to teach that they are interested not in the material, but in the spiritual. We sense a great problem in this. And it probably has its own explanations. This is a serious problem. And this is a reason for reflection.

**M.M.d.:** You and I live in the age of Kali-yuga, a century of struggle and degradation. It started somewhere 5000 years ago. Its influence affects all classes and all spheres of human activity. We can see the decline of the varnashrama in India itself. Of course, it should be noted that in the Vedic times there was a single civilization. A single state. Every land that is washed by all the seas was under the same flag. By the name of the emperor Bharata, this planet was called Bharata-varsha. In the celestial world, it is still known by this name. Its history can be found in the Mahabharata, the historical epic of the ancients, "The History of the Great Bharata." There was a single language, a single culture (what we call "Vedic") and a single form of worship to God.

But under the influence of Kali, this civilization has broken up into many others. Later, the Greek (Hellenic), Egyptian, Roman empires arose and so on. The same India varnashrama degenerated into a vicious caste system. Now belonging to one or another *varna* is not accepted according to the influence of gunas and karma, that is, qualities and activities of a person, but by birth. It is not right. Brahman, for example, must possess the qualities, qualifications of a brahmana, he must be in sattva-guna and engage in activities that correspond to his position, spiritual status. He must know what is the highest Brahman, Krishna...

This is similar to how an engineer, after graduating, becomes a janitor. Naturally, without working in his profession, he loses his qualification. Similarly, a brahmana becomes below the shudra, if he engages in any other activity or goes into service to others. A real brahmana should study the Vedic scriptures and teach others, perform yajnas and teach others, live on donations and engage himself in some form of charity.

In the West, we too can see some kind of varnashrama, and, looking into the history of, for example, ancient Egypt, we see that at first, the power was in the hands of the priests (the same brahmanas). Then they degenerated and gave way to pharaohs, representatives of worldly power. It's the same in Europe. Ini-

tially, the power belonged to the clergy. The Papal Church controlled all spheres of public life. Then the power was seized by the feudal lords. The same kshatriyas. Because they are very passionate, under the influence of raja-guna, they tend to indulge in sensual pleasures, and the bourgeois, that is, the producers who supported their treasury, rebelled. So there was a bourgeois revolution. Since the bourgeois, the same vaishyas, are under the influence of the raja- and tama-guna, they are very greedy. Exploiting mercilessly shudras without giving them bread or entertainment, they created unbearable conditions for them, because of that they united, overthrew them and took the place of rulers. But, not having before themselves the highest spiritual ideals, they simply plundered and let everything go on its own. So, one after another, the revolutions ended in the fact that proletarians came to power. Complete degradation. When the legs took the place of the head, people who are in their position at a lower level of spiritual development, the situation in society has become intolerable for all classes. In the beginning, I did not accidentally gave an analogy with the human body, where there is a head, arms, stomach, and legs. Each part that is represented, in this case, by a social group when it is in its place, is good and necessary for the normal life of the society as a whole. But when the lower strata of the population, who do not have a spiritual ideal, get to power in one way or another, the situation becomes unbearable and completely hopeless. This leads society to complete degradation.

One, the other revolution — we are restructuring so often, changing one law to another, but no improvement, because the law of the supreme ruler, God is violated. We all live in his kingdom. And if our own, local laws are not consistent with His fundamental law, we are doomed to endless suffering. The law of the Creator is violated, as He created this society from the very beginning.

**V.B.:** Very interesting. I did not think about it before. The analogy with the human body works in this case. The domination of the bourgeois is the dominance of the stomach?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, it is the domination of those who are under the influence of the modes of passion and ignorance (the combination of raja- and tama-guna).

**V.B.:** We have humorists, such as Zadornov. They actively criticize the Americans, comparing them with the stomach and believing that the Russians have not yet lost their spirituality, which raises them higher. But I do not share his opinion, I am critical of his statements, believing that Russians are as much a stomach, and maybe even lower. Considering that this revolution did not raise them, but, on the contrary, lowered them even lower. It gave an opportunity to decide state affairs to those who have never done this before. We see that overcome by greed, they left no room for even a stomach ... Well, as for the head, — naturally, there is no question...

To defend honor, to be brave are features of military class...

**M.M.d.:** This is normal. Violence is just as necessary. To bring order, to punish criminals, bandits, and thieves, violence is necessary.

When Shrila Prabhupada came to America, to the West, from this ancient culture he began to preach Krishna consciousness and varnashrama-dharma. He said that the problems of the so-called Western civilization are that they do not have a class of brahmanas, those people who possess qualities of goodness, *sattva-guna*.

Those who are mentors in the spiritual life according to their social status, even they, in fact, do not possess these qualities. They do not follow the principles of spiritual life or those precepts that are given to them within their own religion. Christians should at least follow the commandments given to them by Christ: "Do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery! ..." This is what allows us to develop in this body the sattvic nature (goodness). Previously, the brahmanas were strong in their austerity, *tapasya*. Therefore, they could lead even those who have a strong constitution and large biceps, so to speak. Performing *yajna*, sacrifices, they possessed the brahminical *tejas*, the spiritual power with which they could control the situation in the country. They did not engage in any practical activity, let's just say. But they taught people on the basis of the Vedic scriptures, which are nothing but the laws of God. Thus, they guided society along the right path — on the road to liberation, awareness of their spiritual nature and love relationships with God. Along with these four varnas, there also existed spiritual division, *ashrams*: *brahmacharis*, *grihasthas*, *vanaprasthas*, and *sannyasis*. Ultimately, a person must completely depart from all worldly activities and at the end of his life to prepare himself for achieving liberation from the circle of birth and death.

The state of being about which a person remembers, leaving his body at the time of death, he will certainly attain. Hence the goal of life will be achieved only if a person becomes conscious of God. It is for this that different religions exist — to somehow raise a person, tear him away from the material, animal life, the only goal of which is to satisfy the senses of the material body, and to engage him in activity for the sake of satisfying the Supreme. Undoubtedly, this will benefit everyone, since every being is an integral part of the Supreme. The *varnashrama* system is designed to help a person to combine relative, material existence with the Absolute Principle. As they say, render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. Live in accordance with the law of society, maintain your status quo, engaging in economics, science, politics, living in the family, raising children and so on, but at the same time keeping the main goal — the realization of your relationship with God, through performing your worldly duties for the satisfaction of the Supreme. This is called *karma-yoga* or activity in Krishna consciousness.



**V.B.:** I wanted to make some comments that arise in the association, in connection with the teaching. For sure, being true, it affects today's life. The dominant of the mind, one way or another, manifests itself even in those societies where today this is not something important. What I'm talking about? Well, for example, where the power dominates, valor, there still can be some sort of ethics. Take the thief-in-law. Gangs are dominated not by those who are strong on the physical plane, but by those who are strong in spirit and reason. Even in this case, intelligence is higher...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, it is true. In the Bhagavad-Gita it is said that the senses are higher than the dead matter, the mind is higher than the senses, the intelligence is higher than the mind, and the soul, our own self, is higher than the intelligence. But if you look again, from the standpoint of the various modes of nature, even if you have the intelligence, if a person is under the influence of the mode of ignorance, then his intelligence will act in the wrong direction. Not for good, but for evil. Not creating, but destroying, not contributing to spiritual growth, but contributing to the degradation of man.

**V.B.:** But now they often write about the fact that intelligence has invented many things that it itself is unable to cope with.

**M.M.d.:** To create gas chambers and an atomic bomb, you also need intelligence... What of it? Therefore, it is so necessary to cultivate sattvic nature in people.

How is this achieved? This is achieved by following the regulatory principles: refusal to eat meat, to consume intoxication, refusal of free sexual relations and participation in gambling.

These four principles are the pillars of every truly religious and pious life. The acquisition of the quality of goodness creates the necessary conditions for peace and prosperity in society. Because all these crises, political and economic, all kinds of revolutions, epidemics, hunger and so on are associated with the influence of the lower modes of nature and the bad karma of people. Regarding the social order, Shrila Prabhupada said that in society it is absolutely necessary that some part of the population possess the qualities of goodness, following the regulative principles.

If *raja-guna* predominates, people become too lascivious. They attach too much importance to sensual pleasures. They work too much and quarrel for every occasion. The manifestation of anger is the influence of the mode of passion, which then passes into the mode of ignorance. If *raja-guna* does not rise to the mode of goodness, then it passes into the mode of ignorance, which contributes to the destruction of the world. Darkness and ignorance are *tama-guna*.

When ignorant people come to power, completely spiritually undeveloped, this affects the whole population. The lost civilization is doomed to many sufferings

and repeated births and deaths, because of sinful activities. The soul constantly transmigrates from one body to another, being tied to pleasure by these things, this body. Most of all, attachment to the concept of "I am the body and everything that has to do with it is mine" stimulates sexual desire, which is the manifestation of *raja-guna*. Sexual desire is like the shackles of material life, it makes us think that we are this body. While a living being, a person, is a soul. While we do not know who we are, we do not know our primary needs. Therefore, all activities will be aimed at achieving false goals. Even if people belong to some kind of religion, they will try to use it for sense gratification. While the goal of any religion is to gain liberation from the circle of birth and death, the development of love for God and devotional service. Emancipation. A living being is a soul, and the same Socrates knew this. He postulated: know yourself as an eternal soul. But many who are now quoting him do not really know what the true object of knowledge. Falsely thinking that they are a material body.

**V.B.:** Going back to the social ... society for a long time was at the turning point. Since 1917 and until now, it has not yet ended. This is an unnatural condition. And now... If the *rajas* prevails in the West, in Russia, most likely, it is *tamas*. *Rajas* can be used for something good, but *tamas* is a state of indifference. Inertness. Even with the ability to do something, *tama-guna* makes a person inert. People are used to the fact that the state is giving something, and they do not need to worry about anything. Vedic culture gives us a good methodology. If we are not the West, this does not mean that we are higher. Most likely lower...

**M.M.d.:** Be that as it may, material prosperity attests to the piety of people. This means that in the past the soul performed some pious deeds, as a result of which it received a good incarnation in a good family, wealth, intelligence, healthy and beautiful body. As a result of good karma, one has the possibility of some sensual enjoyment. Whereas, as a result of bad karma, sinful activities committed in the past result in poverty, suffering, bodily and mentally, and disgusting conditions of existence.

**V.B.:** This is a good methodology that teaches us. Perhaps we will have to go through *rajas*. The revolution of 1917 threw society back. And how can we rise, jumping over the stages of development? From *tama-guna* to *raja-guna*, then, gradually acquiring *sattvic* qualities, stopping sinful activity, we rise above the *gunas* or modes of nature.

**M.M.d.:** Shрила Prabhupada insists in this connection that in society it is necessary to bring up people who are *sattvic* in nature, true brahmanas, by following the regulative principles, practicing Krishna consciousness.

When society has a head, that is, a class of intelligent people, the situation will radically change. There will appear prerequisites for achieving peace and pros-

perity. Otherwise, — as in the picture of Brueghel, — the blind lead the blind, and all fall into the pit.

**V.B.:** It seems to me, in a society where there is a leveling... in this environment, it is very difficult to cultivate in people sattvic qualities. There is universal jealousy, universal humiliation, and the desire to worship without thinking. This is a big obstacle to the spread of these ideas. Here ideology always prevailed. How to justify this condition? From time immemorial there was a society in which there were thinking people, there were people of honor. But here everything has changed. Now there is an ideology that justifies everything. Now for those who think on their own, there is no place at all. They are persecuted, they are outlaws.

**M.M.d.:** Everything you are talking about is the result of the influence of the Kali age. These are symptoms of Kali-*yuga*, a century of degradation. The very atmosphere of it — the lowest energy, enslaves people. Even those who are striving for spiritual life fall prey to their bad habits, which they acquired because of bad association. They are not able to resist this common pressure.

**V.B.:** I don't fully understand. Here is a question: "And what does Vedic literature recommend for this age?"

**M.M.d.** Good question. In this age, there are no *brahmanas*, no *kshatriyas*, no *vaishyas*. Mainly, the *shudras* or, the lower, the *chandals*. People of lower descent. Therefore, the Lord Himself came as Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to begin the sankirtana movement, the congregational chanting of the holy names of God, preaching not *varnashrama-dharma*, but *sanatana-dharma*. Directly the activities of the soul, not of material nature, but of the soul. The body can be woven from the lower qualities, *tama-* and *raja-guna*, but the soul is transcendental to them. It never mixes with material energy and is always pure. No one is Russian, nor American, nor male, nor female, nor Christian, nor Hindu... nor *brahmana*, and nor *shudra*. Every being is a soul. In spiritual nature, there is that unity, brotherhood, and equality that everyone dreams of. This is what unites us all. This we call Krishna consciousness — the pure consciousness of one's kinship with Krishna, the source of all souls.

In God, we are all brothers. You are a soul, I am a soul — we are all individual souls. And as such, we are eternally connected with the Supreme, with Krishna. This is pure consciousness. Our position is the position of the eternal servant. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu preaches pure devotional service, which is able to satisfy every being, regardless of its position in the material world, conditioned by the law of karma. By serving the Lord, chanting His names, a person will easily rise above the *gunas* of nature and will reach the spiritual platform. Being engaged in the most insignificant, inconspicuous activity and serving the Lord,

any person can become completely satisfied. And so he will achieve eternal peace and tranquility.

In whatever body the soul is, it can become God conscious. For this, no *adhikar* is required, because it is in the nature of the soul.

The method of chanting the holy name, proposed by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, is so powerful that anyone will rise above the *gunas* of nature. The name of God is not different from God Himself. In the world of Absolute, there is no duality. In the material world, for example, the word “water” and the water are two different things. Therefore, when we say “water, water,” we will not quench our thirst. But in the spiritual there is no such thing — a name means someone who has it. *Nami* and *nama* are one and the same.

Thus, the most ignorant person can find the mercy of the Lord, if he chants the holy name. The only payment is faith. He will rise even above the material mode of goodness. This method is universal. The congregational chanting of the *maha-mantra*, of which you have probably already heard, — Hare Krishna Hare Krishna... — will allow you to surpass all the untenable conditions of material existence and return back home to God.

The realization of one’s position as an eternal servant of the Supreme Lord solves all problems of material nature. In all circumstances, we remain servants. Whether we serve the family, society, nation or government, each other or, if there is nobody, we serve cats, dogs, our senses, etc. If we do not serve God directly, then, remaining His servant, we serve His energy.

The material energy, consisting of the three *gunas*, is inferior. A living being is a manifestation of higher energy. It cannot be satisfied with the service of the lower energy of the Lord, but only by direct service to the Lord Himself.

Material energy controls a living being when it identifies itself with a material body. Connected with the material body, with the consciousness “I am the body,” we come under the influence of material nature, obeying the law of karma, the law of cause and effect, thus remaining in the cycle of birth and death.

Consciousness is an indication of the soul. The material body is dead. The soul is conscious. Therefore, matter can neither evolve nor develop. It is inert. The living being creates the appearance of life by manipulating dead matter. The soul evolves, rising from the lower forms of life to the highest. Having attained a human form of life, it can realize itself and its relationship with Krishna. This is called Krishna consciousness. The soul can be free from rebirth and death. This is the purpose of human life. For this, there are different religions. Even for savages, to raise them from material life to pure devotional service to God.

How? The name of the Lord is perfect. Therefore, the Bible says: “He who called upon the name of God will be saved ... Where there are two or three in my name, there I am also with you.” Such is the possibility of spiritual realization: to realize

oneself as an eternal soul and restore our relationship with God. We all live in the Kingdom of God, and it is necessary to recognize this fact and coordinate our laws and bills with the will of the Supreme, who gave us this or that religion. Krishna says: "*Mayadhyakshena prakritih suyate sa-characharam...*" — "this material nature acts under My direction... and it is producing all moving and unmoving beings ..." (Bh.G. 9-10). Our body is like a machine, and it is controlled by the Supersoul. We are placed in this body to suffer or enjoy the results of our sinful or righteous activities. The individual soul and God, the Supersoul, are in the heart of man. Krishna says: "...from Me comes remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness..." (Bh.G. 15-15). Let's try to understand it. This realization will put an end to all the problems of material existence.

We say inequality! But in the material world there can be no equality. There are men, there are women. Women give birth to children. Men do not. Of course, attempts to equalize women and men are being made. And now we see: women work on a par with men — waving a sledgehammer, and in the police, in the same way... But in fact, it does not correspond to the female nature. In the material world, there is no equality. There are smart, there are stupid, there are poor, rich, there are old and young, sick and healthy... all this is the result of different karma and a combination of different modes of nature. Some are born rich. It would seem that they never worked ... if it were not for the law of karma, then one could accuse God of injustice, of bias — to one He favors, to others — no. Everyone reaps the results of their work, their activity. For good reward is good, for evil — evil. What goes around comes around. We receive this or that material body as a result of our own activity, accomplished in the past.

And what do we want to say... Where is the equality? In equal opportunity to become Krishna conscious. In the spiritual world, everything is perfect. Brotherhood, equality, and freedom. All these concepts have a spiritual meaning. They are not related to material existence. Before God we are all equal, we are eternal souls. In a spiritual sense, we are brothers and we are free.

Equality is an equal opportunity to become God conscious. Not in the material sense, but in the spiritual. There is no equality, neither economic nor political. With material inequality, there is spiritual equality and freedom for the soul, which has realized its relationship with God.

In the material world, there are sinners and the righteous. As a result of good or bad karma. But for those and others, there are opportunities to become God conscious and so achieve liberation from any *karma*. How does Lord Chaitanya set them free? Through the joint chanting of the holy name.

Give up bad habits: meat eating, intoxication, illicit sex, gambling and chant Hare Krishna... and you will achieve liberation, no matter what *guna* your body is in... Even if you are not capable of intellectual activities.

**V.B.:** I was interested a bit in nutrition. And I know that the quality of food is also different...

**M.M.d.:** According to the three modes of nature (*gunas*), there are three kinds of food. Sweet, oily, pleasant to heart. Such food is dear to those who are in the mode of goodness. Spicy, peppered, too hot food is for those who are in the mode of passion. And stale food, as well as meat, fish, and eggs is for those in the mode of darkness and ignorance. "We are what we eat," as Bernard Shaw said. If we want to develop the quality of goodness in this body, it is necessary to take appropriate food, which includes vegetables, fruits, grains, and milk, and avoiding meat, fish, and eggs.

**V.B.:** I think, this is stated in Ayurveda. Three types of body constitution...

**M.M.d.:** Ayurveda does not encourage meat-eating at all, because it is the result of bad karma.

**V.B.:** I noticed that in Belarus there is a lack of fastidiousness. I came here 10-15 years ago and I can see that there is such a common problem here. People are preparing food for future use, for a week. Naturally, such food is stale, tasteless. This is a delusion, it is not accidental and it is unsafe. The tendency to things like lard... and there... it leaves an imprint on consciousness. I know this from my friends' experience as well as from mine. Consciousness is dulled.

**M.M.d.:** The soul is covered with a gross and subtle body, and the consciousness, as a result, manifests itself rather weakly. We can change the combination of *gunas* that make up our body, by changing our diet. It is not by chance that all religious writings forbid killing animals and eating meat. And even if there are some indulgences for meat eaters, the system of fasting and abstinence aims to completely abandon meat. Gradually developing *sattvic* qualities.

**V.B.:** This undoubtedly allows one to cleanse...

**M.M.d.:** Yes. Any religion preaches: do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal...

But what is the quality of religion itself? Who do they preach to? — Bandits. People with low consciousness. A normal person does not need to be told that it is not good to kill and to steal. In his very nature, there is no such thing. Civilized people have never eaten meat and used sex only for conceiving offspring. Nature is made up of karma, sinful activity, which gives the body in the lower *gunas*, namely the *raja* and *tama-guna*.

**V.B.:** In Western philosophy, and, probably, in Eastern wisdom as well, there is often a question: how to reconcile a person's free will and ordination, predestination? In Christianity, for example, there is such a dilemma. If God has already predetermined everything, then what is a man to decide? Protestantism and Calvinism solve this issue in such a way that success in activity indicates that

God has chosen the man. And therefore it is necessary to constantly prove and show this success. That is why Protestantism gave impetus to the development of capitalism. He put high labor and frugality. Do not spend money, but perform austerity...

If everything is predetermined, by the ratio of the *gunas* and belonging to one or another *varna*, then what should we decide? And what's the point of encouraging people to change? As it is, it is only necessary to follow this. Here is the problem...

**M.M.d.:** No, there is no problem. Krishna is God, He is the cause of all causes, our happiness, and our unhappiness. He created this body. He put us in this body. It operates under His control, controlled by the three modes of nature. We only receive a reward according to our *karma*, as they say, according to the works. In accordance with sinful and righteous activities, He gives us sensations of both happiness and unhappiness. In fact, this is because we, as a soul, are conscious. Our free will is our freedom to desire. We have a choice.

The living entity is said to belong to the *tatashtha-shakti*, the marginal energy of the Lord. It is located between the spiritual and material energies. Like the edge of the water separating the ocean and the land, it constantly fluctuates. From this position, we have a choice: whether to go to the material world or the spiritual one. Whether to serve Krishna or serve your material senses. Whether we are under the auspices of His spiritual energy or in the slavery of the material energy, being engaged in gratifying the senses of the material body and mind. We try to use this body by imitating God, the Creator, the Enjoyer, however, in fact, we are used... remaining eternal servants, we serve, as they say, either God or Mammon. We have a choice. To surrender to God or not to surrender to Him, but to surrender to Mammon, that is to a material illusion.

When we come to the material world, here too we have a choice — to commit pious or sinful acts. We have a choice. But when it is done, we are forced to follow this besides our desire. If we want to forget God, God satisfies our desire by covering us with the shells of the material energy of ignorance. Here we are reaping the results of our activities, which, in fact, are carried out by the modes of nature (*gunas*). If you want to sin — here's a knife for you... God gives a knife and a victim to the murderer... but after the murderer has killed, He puts the responsibility on him: sends to hell. It is your right. You can commit sinful acts, but God is not responsible for it. By giving man intelligence and the Vedic scriptures, which prohibit, in this case, violence, God places all responsibility on us for the crime committed. If He did not give us intelligence and knowledge in the form of Vedas, then there would be no question... In the animal kingdom, one animal kills another — this is not a sin. For them, the law is not written. They have neither intelligence nor choice. But they never digress from the laws of

nature. There are herbivores, there are carnivores... a lion eats meat, and a cow grazes. Neither one nor the other violate the laws of nature. But a man with his intelligence and free will must reckon with the law of God, which is represented by the *shastras*. One must cultivate obedience to the High Will. Coordinate your actions with the will of the Lord, the Supreme Lord of all masters. This is the peculiarity of the human form of life. This is the form of responsibility.

In human form, we create *karma*, and in others, we realize it: as demigods, on heavenly planets or in lower forms of life, like animals and plants, on planet Earth, or in the worlds of complete ignorance, that is in hell.

The Lord gave the man the scriptures and said: Do not kill! By restricting his freedom, He gave him reason to study these scriptures and to know God as the highest manifestation of the Absolute Truth. And God makes man responsible for his actions. What goes around comes around!

By giving us intelligence, scriptures, and freedom of choice, the Lord disclaims responsibility for our actions. You can commit sinful and righteous actions, you may disclaim the law of God — this is your business — but, as they say, the law is harsh but fair.

As the apostle Paul said: "I have the right to do anything — but not everything is beneficial..."

A man has been given great opportunities, he has been given intelligence to know God, but if he uses his mind for other purposes, who is to blame?

The law of karma, which is sometimes not recognized in other religions, is precisely what puts everything in its place. If it were not for this law, then God could be blamed for creating cripples, fools, beggars and a sea of suffering, and, on the other hand, people that are rich, intelligent and enjoying life, rolling like cheese in butter. But everyone reaps the results of their activities...

**V.B.:** That activity that was in previous, in past lives. Before...

**M.M.d.:** Yes. This body is the result of your past life, and now we are preparing our next body. Whether it will be material or spiritual depends on your activity, which defines your consciousness. Being in a certain sense defines our consciousness. Conversely, if a person has consciousness like an animal's consciousness, he will receive an animal's body... if the consciousness is divine, then the body is the same as God's body. Spiritual, not material.

All that is here — some can predict your future because it is already known — was created as a result of your past *karma*. How much money you will earn, how much you will spend, how many years you will live and how much happiness and unhappiness will be released to you.

The soul is transcendental, it changes the body, as a person changes clothes.



**V.B.:** Okay. Well, and the ability? I mean, to see in people what they are adapted to, able... what is the reason for this ability? Now we have a lot of different trends and there are many different speculations on this subject...

**M.M.d.:** Krishna says, "I am the ability in man." (Bh.G. 7-8) Krishna gives a person any abilities he desires. This world is woven from the desires of living beings. It happens that a person wishes something that is detrimental to him, and then when Krishna satisfies him by fulfilling his desire, he searches for the guilty. Who is guilty? Fool himself. People suffer because of ignorance. Even with intelligence, being in the tama-guna, they desire "the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and, having received it, go to hell. The mercy of the Lord. You insist, and He fulfills your desire. So fear your desires. They are being fulfilled. That is why it is necessary to purify your desires. Desires are inherent in living being. It is not a senseless stone. But the desires of sensual pleasures need to be transformed into a desire to serve Krishna, the source of everything. Only in this way, watering the root of a tree, you can saturate the leaves and branches with moisture. By satisfying Krishna, you will be satisfied.

**V.B.:** That is, He does not prejudice, He simply fulfills our desires and gives what we wished and deserved in our activities.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, we desire. He provides us with everything necessary for the fulfillment of desire. Having received permission, we act and reap the result. But all this Krishna organizes and arranges as Paramatma.

For example, you want to work, but if someone does not want to work, what, they should not eat? Almighty God solves all problems. Birds do not sow and do not plow, but they also eat. And the elephant, which has a big belly, also eats ... God supplies each and every one with everything that is necessary for life. They say — God will give the day, and will give food!

Last time we talked about education too. Spiritual education is necessary because even with the presence of intelligence, a person cannot make the right choice for himself if he is not educated. What do we want? What is truly good for us?

People ask God for daily bread and promise to toil in the sweat of their brow. And when He harnesses them, they complain: oh, how hard life is... but they themselves wanted it. In fact, the Almighty God can free them from material slavery and give the kingdom of God, where everything is already ready for their enjoyment, but out of ignorance and foolishness, they only ask for a piece of bread... Fools.

If we acknowledge the fact that God is the Father of all living beings and that everything belongs to Him, He is the richest, famous, reasonable, beautiful, strong, and renounced... well, with such a dad, do you really need to work? You just have to be stupid to do so. People invented, by virtue of ignorance, such a

kind of civilization, where everyone must work until the seventh sweat. And still for nothing. As stubborn as mules...

Hard work does not guarantee that you will become rich. Large estates are earned by pious activities. But hard work earns you only a hump.

**V.B.:** For Belarus, such a situation that I call “workaholism” is very characteristic. This is a feature of the older generation. They are aimed at work, not because they have nothing to eat, but simply — work for the sake of work... Work becomes just a narcotic. A man without work absolutely cannot live. And it works even when this work is unprofitable. A vivid example is my relatives in the village. They feed pigs by buying bread at the store, spending more on it than it will bring them profit. They plow the garden, harvest, preserve for future use, then they cannot eat all of it and they throw it away. They cannot live without work. And this focus on work (workaholism) is like a drug. Without work, they do not know what to do.

**M.M.d.:** This is called *ugra-karma*, a very heavy burden. Man is not meant for hard work for the slice of bread, but for the realization of the Absolute Truth.

Fools may think what they are creating something... but in reality, material nature creates itself, controlled by God. When a person identifies himself with this body, he thinks that he is doing something, but in fact, he, as a soul, does not do any work. The body is given to him, — in joy or in punishment, — it is given to him, and he is placed in it. The soul is the active principle, the life force in this dead body. But it doesn't do any work itself.

I will give an analogy. You sit in the car and turn on the ignition, but you do not need to pedal, like in bicycle. It rides itself. Of course, without you, it will not move. But that is another question.

**V.B.:** Can you manage it?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, and then under the control of the Supreme Soul. The traffic controller... This soul is also governed. It is a particle of the Supreme Soul and, therefore, there is also dominance over it. Where is freedom? In fact, there is no freedom. But there is freedom in freedom to desire. We have a choice, free will. To serve God or not to serve Him. In either case, we remain His eternal servants. Whether we serve directly to Him or His energy, trying to gratify the senses of this material body and, in reality, being a slave to our lust, stomach, and genitalia. Sometimes it takes different attractive forms. Serving the motherland, party, government, society, nation, and so on. All sorts of “isms”. Nationalism, patriotism, altruism and the like.

But when we directly serve God, it makes us happy. Because we are meant for such a service, motivated by the feeling of love. We are not meant for hard work and sense gratification of this foreign body. Because being spiritual, even if this body is satisfied... we are still unhappy. Because we are spiritual, and the body is

material. With no amount of material happiness, we can ever satisfy the spiritual need of our true self, the soul. From the awareness of oneself as an eternal soul, there comes an understanding of what is good for us and what is not.

Now we are engaged in the same absurd activity as your friends, who are working at a loss.

**V.B.:** This can be considered as a kind of drug, it serves something like to forget about oneself ... Someone rushes into drunkenness, smoking, sex, drugs. And someone — into the work. All these are different forms, but the principle is the same.

**M.M.d.:** There is a similar explanation to why a living being, spiritual by nature, decided to go to the material world. Comparison with the same drug. In the beginning, a person may think: "What will happen if I inject or take cocaine... wine... cigarettes..." — out of curiosity. And he pricks himself once... Nice. The second, third, and so he becomes a drug addict. And then he cannot live without it. This is not a natural need, but the person has already become a drug addict, an addict — and he begins to break. There is no need for drugs, no need for sex ... no need for cigarettes, no need for meat-eating ... but we become attached and become addicted to this body, more and more identifying ourselves with it. And although I, as an eternal, full of knowledge and bliss soul, have no benefit of doing all this, nevertheless I become addicted. Krishna devotees develop a relationship with Krishna. And becoming dependent on Him, they are freed from dependence on this body and the needs of the senses and mind. Attachment to Krishna as the source of eternal enjoyment helps one attain renunciation of this material existence, which is temporary, and full of suffering.

This is not a simple thing, but if we are deeply aware of this, then we will be able to cope with all the problems that exist both for the individual and for society as a whole.

Material dependence can be overcome by following the process of *bhakti-yoga* or devotional loving service under the proper guidance of a true guru.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## I HAVE FOUND THE MOST PHILOSOPHY... (FROM THE MEMOIRS OF VLADIMIR NIKOLAYEVICH)

I do not remember exactly, it seems it was 1980, no — 1981. At that time I have been interested in Agni Yoga and have even seen a teacher. I attended a group led by Spartak Korolyov.

— Well, you got me with your questions. Here is the address.

At that time, one yogi-mystic, Jean Karlovich Zakes, lived near Riga. I was given his address, the name of the railway station, and I took the train. I do not know, 20 kilometers or more, or less ... I got off the train and went through the woods there. I was told that in the village it is the third house of the red brick on the left. I go inside and see: this Jean Karlovich is sitting in meditation. It was the month of July ... sunny day, at 11 o'clock in the morning... He was sitting, and without turning to me, he said: "I knew that you would come to me. Your path is *bhakti*. You will practice *bhakti*." I stand silently. When he came out of meditation, it turns out every night he went into the subtle/astral world, he continued: "There are seven of us, and we are working to get the Americans and the Communists to sign a disarmament agreement."

At that time, Reagan was sick, he had cancer. He was in the cancer care unit, and he was being prepared for the operation. Jean Karlovich (he was a very strong mystic) was instructed to materialize before him. He possessed amazing abilities, for example, could connect and speak in any language. So, in the subtle body, he appeared before Reagan. When Reagan saw him, he got afraid:

— How did you get here?

He pressed the button and called the guard. The general, the head of the guard came in.

— Mr. President, what happened?

— Arrest him...

— Whom?

The general does not see him, because Jean Karlovich materialized for Reagan only.

— Mr. President, whom to arrest?

- That's him... well, he understood it, because Reagan is a Mason himself, 33 steps...

He says to him:

- Get out.

General:

- Yes, Mr. President — and left.

And Zackes, Jean Karlovich says:

“Mr. President, you have been instructed to prepare and hold in Congress and the Senate a proposal on negotiations with the USSR on disarmament. This is your mission. If you do not, you will go to hell. You are a mason, you understand perfectly well what have you done here? You have such karma that for millions of years you will not be enough to work it out. Either you prepare the American public, the Congress, and the Senate for the adoption of a resolution on disarmament or... the planet is in danger.”

And Reagan answers him:

- Do I have a choice? I have cancer, and even if I survive, I have elections in the fall.

Jean Karlovich continues:

- If you agree, you will be cut and sewn back. You have no cancer. As for the elections, we will elect you for a second term. And for this second term, you must sign a disarmament treaty with the Soviets.

There was nothing left for Reagan, and he agreed.

- Now about life... you do not worry, you will live for a long time, up to 90 years. You have a high mission, and you can do a great blessing not only for America and the Soviet Union but also for the entire planet.

And mind you, as Jean Karlovich said, it happened. Reagan was cut and sewed. There was no cancer. Doctors were amazed:

- Mr. President, you do not have cancer.

And when they said that he had no cancer, then Reagan decided to conduct negotiations with the USSR on disarmament 100%. True, doubts about his second term were still remaining, but Jean Karlovich also removed these doubts.

“We guarantee you,” he said — “Do not doubt, you will certainly be elected for a second term.”

And it did not take long to wait, Reagan was elected for a second term, according to the prophecy of Jean Karlovich Zackes.

"But you don't have much time, just about three or four months, and you should start a new policy of reconciliation and preparation for negotiations with the Soviet Union right now. One year later, on November 10, Brezhnev will die, and Gorbachev will be the General Secretary. He is not a fanatic, he is quite a reasonable person. You will make an agreement with him.

And when Reagan wasn't found cancer and when he was re-elected for a second term, Jean Karlovich again appeared to Reagan and said: "Well, what did I tell you?"

And that was a story. After that, Jean Karlovich told me how the Soviet Union would fall apart. It was still 1981. He told me about the wars of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and about Chechnya. He also said that a group of terrorists would appear, and how I would get to America, Germany ... He told me everything in advance as if it had already happened. And even called the exact dates when all this will happens. He told me when Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko will die... And everything has happened exactly as he predicted.

I remember this phrase. He said that "Mikhail the Marked will begin to destroy the Soviet Union, and Boris the Second will finish it. (Boris Yeltsin)."

He also said that the term of the USSR is coming to an end and that all states will first depart, and then will converge again, only in a different capacity. And you see, now the integration has begun. He also said that Europe will also unite into a single economic system. He said also about disasters. Since 1997, cataclysms will begin, which will increase from year to year, and a handful of terrorists will terrorize the whole world, blow up houses, trains, hijack airplanes... In a word, he predicted everything that happens now. When I told my friends about him in the Academy of Sciences — they often invited me to perform with concerts (I worked at the Philharmonic society at the time) — they did not believe it. "You have gone off your rocker because of Hare Krishna." And I say: "No I haven't, it's you who have gone off your rocker because you believe all sorts of nonsense... What scientists are you! You're just puppets!" They got mad at me. One of them met me later and said: "You were actually right, Brezhnev died on November 10th".

"But I did not say that that was a yogi-mystic. I just conveyed the information to you."

All the dates, everything matched about Andropov and Chernenko.

And after that, they started buying books from me. I told them: "Guys before it gets too late — as Mao said, — get ready for war and famine, otherwise all is lost." And they bought books and started reading them. I brought them two large bundles of books...

And now about how I got to the apartment of Svetlana Orlova, where you were preaching.

Svetlana was concertmaster at the Opera and Ballet Theater. She saw me and said: "You know, a yogi comes from Leningrad, my ballet mates are coming to my place, come by as well."

— Well, I will come.

And then when I listened to you, I had no questions. I immediately accepted this philosophy, unconditionally. Well, after I invited you to live with me. My wife left. As always you got up at 4 am and chanted Hare Krishna. I do not know how I can convey all this? When you started to repeat the mantra, with such a sonorous voice that everything started to ring in my head as if my head was cast-iron, and it was beaten with a sledgehammer ... So, every name of the Lord was reflected in my head. And most importantly, I could not wake up. It seems that I did not sleep, and was not awake. I wasn't sure if I am laying down, and if I do, in what position... Hare Krishna Hare Krishna ... and flashes of fu... fu... fu... in my head, bright red, orange — as if a flame and sounds from my ears fly out. By the time it was quite long, an hour or more. This is the state of the ringing of holy names in my head, and my head is like cast iron. The sound of the mantra was similar to the way we knock on the pan, and sparks fly from our eyes. Imagine sounds coming out of your ears, sparks from your eyes, and a flame from your head. Feeling as if brains are burning. It lasted an hour or more. In the end, I got up somewhere to 6-00. This is the feeling I had from the Hare Krishna mantra. It was great mercy — layered purification, which penetrates deeper and deeper. And these vibrations occupy my brain. I felt it purely physically. Initially, my head ached very much. A few days later, I began to enjoy. There was some joy some kind of light. As if the light penetrated into me. My eyes widened. I began to look at the world with different eyes. I do not know whether you remember or not, but when you gave me beads, I could not even repeat one round. My tongue did not work. I could not utter Hare Krishna. And if I repeated at least one round, then my tongue got tired, and I could no longer even roll it. Oh, it was torment. You lived with me for a week, and then you left for Kiev, and I was left alone. For a whole week, I learned to repeat one round. I told you: "I cannot do it!" And you patted me on the shoulder and said: "It is okay, Hari Bol, just chant Hare Krishna and be happy!"

And I did my best. I walked here and there like a beast at bay and chanted: "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna ..." For every step: "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" and again... That's how I suffered and studied as a schoolboy. I was blinkered to such a degree that beats everything. I couldn't even utter the holy name. Such karma was gained. I don't know what would have happened next?

Probably, I would have been jumping down from the tenth floor. I had such a spiritual crisis... problems with my wife...

When Svetlana told me that you came (I worked in the theater, gave vocal lessons), I hung up the note that the teacher is sick, and I went to your lecture. I rushed as a bullet. Then I received the book "Beyond Time and Space" ("Easy Journey to Other Planets"). When I read it, I was stunned. The soul rejoiced with enormous force to the fact that I found the very philosophy that is close to my heart.

## **DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

### **MINSK STATE UNIVERSITY**

**JUNE 4, 2007**

With Nicholai, we agreed to meet at the University at the Department of Political Science. Arriving five minutes earlier, I waited for him for half an hour. I called, it turned out that he was waiting for me in the main building, and I was waiting for him in building D. This time we agreed to meet at the main entrance. Going downstairs, I ran through the eyes of everyone who was waiting and choosing one, approached... It was not difficult to recognize me — shaved, with *shikha* and in a saffron *kurta*.

- Is it you?
- As you can see, it is me.
- Where should we go? I suggest we go to the park.

There was a beautiful park nearby. The weather was sunny, and we decided that the park would be the best place.

Searching for a free bench, and not finding anything suitable, we sat down on the first one next to some old lady, diligently solving a crossword puzzle.

- Excuse us, do you mind?
- No, no, please.

## **CONVERSATION WITH THE SENIOR STAFF SCIENTIST NIKOLAI PANCHISHIN**

- The concept of the illusory nature of our world is that it is transient. It has a beginning, and naturally, he will have an end. If it was created by someone, even by God himself, it cannot be called real. The only real thing is something that hasn't ever been created. For example the soul, God and our relationship with God — they exist forever. Even if we deny the



very existence of God, this relationship is not interrupted. We are in the kingdom of God, in His energies. The spiritual world is a manifestation of the higher, inner potency of the Lord; the material world is a manifestation of external, lower energy. It can't be called illusory. It is real as energy, though transient. This is a world of forms and designations. The illusion is that being in it, under the influence of the lower material energy, we begin to identify ourselves with the material body, considering everything that relates to it as ours. In fact, there is nothing of ours here (*nirmama*). When the jiva turns away from Krishna, it immediately finds itself in *maya*, an illusion. Under the influence of the material energy, jiva forgets Krishna. This is the problem.

Looking forward to the end of my sentence, Nikolai said:

- I would not like to engage in a philosophical dispute... especially since we are in the same positions. True, I am an adherent of Advaita Shankaracharya's philosophy...
- And I am a follower of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who preached *achintya-bheda-bheda tattva* — a philosophy of inconceivable oneness and difference. This is not exactly the same... In the Absolute, both oneness and simultaneous difference are included. The living entity is one with Krishna but at the same time different from Him.
- There are so many spiritual schools, various movements, groups, and movements. They all try to answer the question: "What should I do? How should I live? How can I become better and how can I be saved?"
- To do this, you first need to determine who you are, what or who to save, and who to make better... If we want to find salvation, then we need to know what salvation is for us, based on our nature.

*The beginning of the dialogue was promising, and I turned on my voice recorder.*

**Nikolai:** There are two points: we must start with ourselves, and if we want to save the world, then we need to think about where we live. We live in a state where there is a system of governance and mechanisms of violence. The state is an apparatus of oppression, and the question is: "Is there a way out of this system. If someone needs to be managed, then the one who is controlled is conditioned. He has to submit to someone. Deep in our hearts, we feel unlimited freedom, so we don't want conditionality..."

**Murali Mohan das:** As one philosopher said, "freedom is a recognition of the need." Another added to this that "absolute freedom for the state is anarchy, and for intelligence it is insanity." Common sense tells us that if our desires coincide

with the desires of those in power, we are free, but there is no absolute freedom in the material world.

**Nikolai:** The problem is that their desires often go not only to our detriment but also contribute to the development of the exploitation of man by man. The world is built on a monstrously unequal social system, and the mechanism for suppressing a person is tightened through advertising, through the media, the education system... The essence itself remains unchanged (this is my inner world), but the external world is a system of suppressing a person — I'm talking about the state... The problem is this: when I achieve freedom, enlightenment and radiate love, feeling more or less comfortable, then I get out of this system and, as an individual, separate myself out of the whole... I no longer belong to this world.

**Murali Mohan das:** Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's! Our conditionality lies in the fact that, as spiritual beings, we are forced to serve for a while the family, the society, the nation, and the state, but at the same time we remain eternal servants of God. And in the Vedas, there is an intermediate link that gives us the opportunity to rise from the conditioned state to the liberated one, from the material platform to the spiritual level, without disturbing the general world order. This system of social order is called *varnashrama-dharma*. Have you heard anything about this? At one time I discussed this topic with your colleague, head of the Department of Political Science, Professor Vyacheslav Bobrovich... God created four classes of people employed in various fields of general useful work: the intelligentsia, administrators (warriors and rulers), businessmen and producers of agricultural products, and those who serve the above named, enjoying physical labor. It is arranged by God, therefore, regardless of the political-economic formation, there are always those who are engaged in spiritual or intellectual work, administrative, productive activities and service to others. Just as the body has a head, arms, legs, and a stomach, so the social body of society consists of these four classes of people. Whether we like it or not, in any formation there are groups of people, which are employed in a specific social activity, which is determined by the various kinds of influences of the modes of material nature (*gunas*) and *kar-ma* (activity) of the human. When a person works by performing his prescribed duties for the satisfaction of the Lord, he achieves liberation from the reactions of his activities. In essence, this is the God-centered concept of life. It provides an opportunity for any conditioned being to rise from the material platform of consciousness to the spiritual one and gain ultimate liberation from the cycle of birth and death, old age and disease.

While we do not have enough faith to fully devote ourselves to pure devotional, loving service to God, we can gain it by working for God, sacrificing the results

of our labor in the spirit of serving God. This is called *karma-yoga* or Krishna consciousness activity. It is described in the Bhagavad-Gita.

**Nikolai:** This is an ideal system, but at the present time there are neither real intellectuals, nor administrators...

**Murali Mohan das:** Yes, those who call themselves intellectuals and rulers do not have the appropriate qualities. The mode of goodness is manifested in what we eat, in what activities we are engaged in, what our aspirations and faith are. At one time, I wrote an article entitled "The Three Gunas of Material Nature," in which I described in detail their characteristics.

**Nikolai:** I know all this.

**Murali Mohan das:** Well, now we need to implement this knowledge in practice, applying it in life.

**Nikolai:** This is a general concept...

**Murali Mohan das:** There was a time when people lived according to this concept. Once on this planet, there was a single civilization, which was called the Aryan or Vedic culture. Everything that is washed by all the seas was under a single flag. People spoke the same language and worshiped one God.

**Nikolai:** This is stated in the Mahabharata ... now we live in Kali-yuga. I have a question: When will Kali Yuga end, and what will society be like?

**Murali Mohan das:** World day is divided into four periods, yugas: Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali-yuga. Kali Yuga began 5,000 years ago, its duration is 432,000 years.

**Nikolai:** It came into law when Krishna left this planet. So, roughly speaking, it will continue for another 427,000 years.

**Murali Mohan das:** Absolutely. The distinctive features of this period are as follows: this is the century of struggle, discord, and degradation of a person...

**Nikolai:** I know that, but now we are present at some unprecedented event, the global emergence of the Internet, everyone is talking about a quantum leap, about the threshold that humanity will move to a new type of energy-information existence. In fact, this should only happen in 427,000 years?

**Murali Mohan das:** Why? No, this is happening now, with the arrival of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the golden avatar of Shri Krishna. Until recently, we lived on the Christian calendar, and earlier on the Julian ... But what do I want to say? That with the arrival of Shri Chaitanya everyone will celebrate the new year from the day of the appearance of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. As you know, history was rewritten more than once, and now we are crossing the threshold — Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu incarnated 521 years ago in western Bengal — this is the beginning of the golden age. Having started the Sankirtana

Movement, chanting the holy name of Krishna together, He predicted that Hare Krishna would be sung in every town and village...

**Nikolai:** The last 10-15 years ago, I have seen a big change. Have you heard about 2012? Esoteric scientists say this year will be the end of civilization. Now we live according to the Maya calendar...

**Murali Mohan das:** Do not believe scientists. They have deceived us more than once, they are deceiving us now. They lie constantly. Take for example the Americans. At one time, they announced that their astronauts had landed on the moon and everyone believed it. But after the last 30 years, they themselves gave a refutation, admitting that the shooting of the lunar surface was made in the pavilion. But before that, when Shrilal Prabhupada heard that the Americans had landed on the moon, he said bluntly that this was impossible. The Moon is considered to be a paradise planet and, in order to get to it, the predominance of *sattva-guna* is necessary... Currently, the prevalence of *tama-* and *raja-guna* is observed all over the world. Imagine if an ignorant and lascivious person who lives like an animal can, despite his nature, rise to such a perfect level? In Bhagavad-Gita, it is said that those who are in *tama-guna* (the mode of darkness and ignorance), leaving their bodies at death, are embodied in lower forms of life, and those who are affected by *raja-guna* — in the bodies of human beings on the planets like the Earth. Only by finding a *sattvic* nature, man can reach heavenly or higher planets of the universe. The Bhagavatam says that the Moon is one of the higher planets. In fact, it is larger than the Sun and it is much more difficult to reach it than the Sun, because it is far from the Earth, far from the Sun. Who should we believe, the Vedic scriptures or modern scholars? Scientists are cheaters! When the Americans confessed to their fraud, I was not at all surprised. Now "about the end of civilization." Christian prophets are much smarter than scientists. Their prediction about the end of the world always remains relevant. After all, there is nothing more predictable than death! At one time, the end of the world overtakes everyone — every second someone dies. Therefore, it is a win-win for Christians. You cannot go wrong if you say that the end of the world will come in 2012. After all, for some of us, it may come tomorrow. Who knows? Only Krishna can know this. Because no one can control time, only Krishna.

Intelligent people are focused on what is said in the Vedas, in particular in Bhagavad-Gita. Being in a conditioned state, a reasonable solution to all questions is to look at the world through the eyes of the Vedic *shastras*, which are reliably protected by *acharyas*, spiritual teachers who belong to the chain of disciplic succession. This is called the *parampara*. The Vedas are given by Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He knows everything: the present, the past and the future, being the cause of all causes and the source of everything.

Everything that should happen or everything that has already happened is described in the Vedas.

## AS MANY PROPHETS AS PROPHECIES

**N.:** You do not take into account the intensity of all these transitions and do not think that this will happen?

**M.M.d.:** Scientists often make mistakes...

**N.:** And the Mayan calendar and other prophecies?

**M.M.d.:** There are as many prophets, as prophecies, and vice versa, as many prophecies, as prophets. If these prophecies are not consistent with the Vedic scriptures, then they should not be taken seriously.

Judge for yourself: if a person eats meat and has sex for pleasure, he can see the Moon as his ears. He will go not to the Moon, but a direct path to hell. Modern man lives thinking like this: "Everything is good that I like, that gratifies my senses, stomach, and genitals." But in reality, it is an animal life which leads the soul to degradation, condemning it to suffer.

Being in the conditioned state, one should look at the world through the eyes of the Vedic scriptures.

**N.:** What is your attitude towards the schools of initiation called "Mahatmas"? Shambala, Blavatsky, Roerichs... how deep are their concepts?

**M.M.d.:** As much as they correspond to what is said in the Vedic scriptures...

**N.:** Blavatsky treats the Vedas deeply. She found the key to the Vedas.

**M.M.d.** The question is not that. The truth is simple, but it can be understood when we turn to a spiritual master belonging to the chain of disciplic succession, the parampara. There are four authoritative *paramparas* who transmit knowledge of the Vedas: Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya, Rudra, Shri, and Kumara *sampradaya*. Knowledge already exists, and it is simply conveyed adequately to what Krishna Himself, Who is the originator of Vedanta, the knower of Vedas, and the ultimate goal of knowledge, said. If Blavatsky or some other "mahatma" belongs to the parampara, that is one thing, and if not, then that is quite another. The result of gaining knowledge can be diametrically opposite.

**N.:** But those, such as Mori, to which parampara do they belong?

**M.M.d.:** Nobody knows that. Do they belong to any parampara at all?

**N.:** And what parampara did Buddha belong to?

**M.M.d.:** Buddha Himself is an incarnation of Krishna. Although He formally rejected the teachings of the Vedas, he actually established true Vedic principles. He forbade his followers to eat meat and set "ahimsa" non-violent way of life. He forbade killing animals and eating their flesh. But to this we must add that

his teaching contradicts the philosophy of *bhakti* as much as the philosophy of Shankara, therefore Shri Chaitanya forbade his followers to even touch both the commentaries of Shankara and Buddhism. He rejected Buddhism, because it is essentially atheistic, and Shankara's impersonalism, because by denying the identity of God, his teachings offend the Lord.

Speaking of religion, we must recognize that Krishna is the father of every religion. Every religion is good for someone. Religion is necessary. But, as they say, what is food for one, is poison for another. If we are talking about a particular religion or philosophy, then it is necessary to take into account for what level of consciousness it is given. After all, religions among themselves often enter into seeming contradictions. There are many religions for different types of people. Krishna consciousness is universal and suitable for all. In fact, it is not a religion — it is just pure consciousness. Within a particular religion, we can find it. The soul is transcendental to all definitions, it is not related to religion. It is part of Krishna and is eternal, and therefore Krishna consciousness, which is in the nature of the soul, is also eternal.

## ABOUT THE STATE

**M.M.d.:** It was not by chance that I asked about the history of the emergence of the state? The first thing that Brahma created was the five shells of ignorance: Tamisra, Andha-Tamisra, Moha, Maha-Moha, and Tamas. If it were not for ignorance, no one would have even thought to remain in the material world. This ignorance is manifested in the fact that everyone identifies himself, the soul, with the material body, as a result of which he feels the fear of death and struggles for existence. Although life is the soul in the body, it is eternal, but everyone is fighting for existence. Fear makes people unite in societies, create states, develop science, technology, and medicine. Religions also arose from the fear of death. It is ignorance that divides us from God. Although we live in the kingdom of God, in His state, which is securely protected, by imitating the Supreme Person, we create “our new world” and try to realize the desire for domination and enjoy ourselves independently from God. This is the problem. The material world is created from the unclean desires of living beings. Therefore, in order to purify one's desires and go from the material level of consciousness, conditioned by the laws of material nature, to the liberated state, ascending to the spiritual platform, the Vedic *varnashrama*, the system of social structure was created. It is created by God and is intended for knowing God. Currently, it has degenerated into a vicious caste system, in which belonging to one or another *varna* (class) is determined by birth. Now everyone who was born in the family of a brahmana considers himself a brahmana and tries to use his higher position for the sake of sense gratification, exploiting the lower ones. If a person

does not have the qualities of a brahmana, he cannot be a brahmana. For example, if you graduated from university and received a bachelor's degree, but you work as a janitor, you lose your qualifications. Similarly, a brahmana, if he acts like a shudra, then he loses his affiliation to the brahmana *varna*. On the other hand, without learning, he cannot be a brahmana.

*Varna* is determined by the influence of different modes (*gunas*) of nature and the nature of the activity, *karma*, and *ashram* is determined by the spiritual level of an individual. If a brahmana is in the service of someone else, he loses his belonging to his *varna*. A brahmana is one who knows who the highest brahmana is, that is God. In the *varnashrama* society, the brahmanas are recognized as teachers. They live on alms, teach and accept donations from their students. Only in this case is their instruction worth something. Only in a state of complete purity, spiritual morality and non-attachment can they teach the Absolute Truth. In another case, they say that the one who pays is the one who orders the music. If priests receive money as salary, then instead of serving God, they are forced to satisfy their employers. Therefore, no one needs them. Brahmanas are influenced by the mode of goodness (*sattva-guna*). If they fall under the influence of the lower modes of nature (Raja and Tama), then the whole society is in danger. No one can help such a society. If religion is used for economic or political purposes, it becomes useless.

**N.:** Then it turns out that the guna of ignorance prevails in the church...

**M.M.d.:** This is a fact because clergymen eat meat, have sex like crazy and work for a salary, living at the expense of parishioners, a refined system of requisitions, selling indulgences, bijoux, church paraphernalia, often doing some other business.

In our time, religion has become a profitable business and has lost its independence from the state. Among its representative the worldly mindset dominates. Religion is used as a kind of control mechanism in the state apparatus, while its true purpose and goal is the emancipation of the soul and the development of love for God. One has to become Krishna conscious, find love for Krishna and return to the spiritual world — that is the true goal of not only religion but also human life. Therefore, it is not by chance that Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita says: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me..."

## **MARKET ECONOMY RULES RELIGION**

**N.:** Our world is now ruled by a market economy. You will not find a person who will preach calmly, without considering the parameters of money. He will demand payment and then where does his holiness go? Such a priest loses his belonging to the brahmanas *varna*...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, a brahmana is one who knows that he is a brahmana, that he is a soul that serves the Supreme Brahman, Krishna. Krishna is completely spiritual; for one who is in Krishna consciousness, there is no difference between the material and the spiritual. Everything that is used for Krishna is totally spiritual. Even money, if you use it for Krishna, it acts as spiritual energy. Krishna consciousness can spiritualize the whole world.

**N.:** The priest of the Orthodox Church can say the same thing, that he serves God, and uses the money for God. Who judges? Only he can judge this.

**M.M.d.:** If he really uses the money for God, he can say so. He may say so in the opposite case, but what is the use to him of this? If he is deceiving, then he is deceiving himself. "To whom much is given much will be asked." Sense gratification is a direct road to hell. Everything belongs to God, and if we don't use the money for God, then with money stolen from God, we will have to pay the trip to hell. Of course, only Krishna can understand whether a person serves God or not. Does he use for God everything that God gave him or not. In fact, God does not look at what you give Him. He looks what you keep to yourself. God gave us money, body, mind, and gift of speech — everything just, so that we serve Him, thus manifesting our love for Him. In this world, in order not to stray from the path of truth, one must strictly follow the instructions of the Vedic scriptures; otherwise, any deviation from Vedic principles will make him an atheist.

**N.:** But it is very difficult to follow the scriptures. Because there are a lot of ciphers, codes ... it takes a lot of work, schooling, and dedication.

## FIND A GURU

**M.M.d.:** Yes, in order to study the scriptures you must find a guru for yourself, otherwise, you will be confused by many seeming contradictions. Although in the Absolute all the most contradictory opinions get along, but for the uninitiated, this is not possible to understand — words are dual.

**N.:** The study of the Vedic literature requires a decade of painstaking study...

**M.M.d.:** Not only years but also many lives... Krishna Himself says that many and many lives the soul goes through in order to attain true understanding and thus gain liberation from ignorance.

**N.:** A person himself cannot understand...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, to learn Vedas, you need a *guru*. Spiritual life begins with the acceptance of the *guru*. But there are difficulties here too, because, in Kali-yuga (the age of mistakes and misunderstandings), you may be deceived. If you are not a serious person and you want to use knowledge, not for Krishna, then you will be deceived. Krishna, who is in your heart as a *chaitya-guru*, will send you a deceiver... In Kali-yuga, the situation is hopeless. We were deceived, and we,



being deceived, tend to deceive others. Therefore, by His special mercy, Krishna Himself came. He incarnated as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the spiritual master, and started the *sankirtana* movement, congregational chanting of the holy name, Hare Krishna mantra... distributing to everyone the holy name of Krishna and love for Krishna... Krishna embodied in the form of His name and Krishna Himself, playing the role of *guru*, began to teach chanting of His name. This is a manifestation of the special mercy of the Lord to people who seem to be completely incapable of attaining spiritual enlightenment.

Shri Chaitanya does not preach *varnashrama-dharma*, He preaches *sanatana-dharma*: "No one is a *shudra*, no one is a brahmana, no one is a *sannyasi* or a *grihastha*... neither this nor that... neither a man nor a woman... every being is a soul. Since the soul is inalienable part of Krishna, then becoming Krishna conscious to it is easier than, for example, becoming an engineer or someone else... you need to study, get a corresponding incarnation... but to surrender to Krishna you only need your desire... if you want, Krishna will take care of and arrange everything in the best way. If you chant Hare Krishna, then Krishna takes custody of you and guides you along the path of liberation... He is inside your heart... before the *shudras* and women were not given initiation at all...

**N.:** Many mantras have died out energetically, some work, and some don't. I taught in esoteric schools and wrote a book on prayers and mantras. I discovered an interesting phenomenon that a person can work with the same prayer ... and he has an obsession. He becomes a zombie, more and more swallowed by the egore, which he enters, losing his self-identity...

**M.M.d.:** There are different *mantras* and prayers ... The Hare Krishna mantra is specifically designed for modern people. In Kali-yuga, people will misuse *mantras*, for the sake of their own self-interests. This may create additional concerns. For example, you can turn to God, saying His name, to curse someone to death... Therefore, there is a warning. It is said not to say the name of God in vain, i.e. for material purposes. "Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven." But by the grace of Shri Chaitanya, who gave us the Hare Krishna mantra, you are freed from worries... the name of Krishna is so pure and so perfect that anyone, for whatever purpose, he would repeat His name, cleanse and get rid of bad inclinations and pretensions. This is the grace of Shri Chaitanya. The holy name of Lord Krishna is not desecrated. A person may be defiled, trying to use the mantra for his own selfish purposes, but the Hare Krishna mantra itself is pure, and it will cleanse anyone who has listened and repeated it. The only thing that should not be done is to hear the Name of Krishna from the non-devotees of Krishna. In order to receive maximum benefit, you must receive a mantra from a devotee of the Lord. But where to start? We simply chant Hare Krishna, and Krishna sends us such a devotee who will be our *guru* to teach

us how to chant the holy name. Krishna will send us a *guru* who will explain the essence of the subject with a human voice, and it will find a response in our heart. Krishna acts from within your heart as a *chaitya-guru* and externally manifests itself as *diksha-* and *shiksha-guru*. We are in the energies of Krishna, and He is within everything. Therefore, Krishna controls every situation, giving knowledge, memory, and oblivion... *sarvasya chaham hridi sannivishhto*... "By all Vedas am I to be known, — says Krishna, — indeed, I am the compiler of the Vedanta, and I am the knower of the Vedas." If you want to understand Krishna, Krishna will give you a guide, the true *guru*. But if you decide to deceive Him, He will deceive you by sending you a rascal...

**N.:** Will this also be given by Krishna?

**M.M.d.:** Yes! For ordinary people, atheists, God also fulfills any desires. Fear desires! Ignorant people are asking God for what is detrimental to them — that is the problem. If a person surrenders to God, then God will arrange everything in the best way, taking care of the good of man. God is all-good, He is always a friend to those who turn to Him...The cause of people's suffering is their ignorance and, in order to help them, we want to give them a true understanding of things, the knowledge that frees them from the cycle of suffering, birth, and death.

## **TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY, AND TODAY HAS ALREADY BEGUN YESTERDAY**

**N.:** Why does, in the last years, the disintegration of all spiritual groups, and the rollback of many students happen? Judging by different schools, I see the same picture. In one particular case, it could be explained that the spiritual teacher is not qualified, but it happens in many, everywhere, and many who enter these schools suffer. They have problems... It seems that the age of full individualization is coming. Groups disappear, all spiritual trends and movements are leveled. Of course, I can explain how I understand this myself, but what is your concept?

**M.M.d.:** Everyone gets the results of their *karma*, the acts committed in past births... This body is the result of past *karma*, but now we are sowing the seed of a new one ... As I said at the beginning of our conversation, we live in Kali-yuga, the age of degradation. People have forgotten what spirituality is, and what the purpose of spiritual practice is. Even religion, which is the law of God, people try to use for their own self-interest. It's not by chance, that Krishna says in Bhagavad-Gita: "Leave all forms of religion and just do what I say ..." Now Krishna came as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to teach how to surrender onto Krishna. He began the sankirtana movement, which is *yuga-dharma*, the perfect method of worshipping the one God, which will help solve all problems.

**N.:** Chanting Hare Krishna mantra is the easiest and most effective way.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, it is a universal way. The name of Krishna is not different from Krishna Himself. Whether a person has material desires, seeks liberation — in all cases, without exception, he must connect his life with Krishna. First, Krishna took the form of His name, then, as a guru, he came to teach how to chant His name — *kali kale nama-rupe krishna avatara...* God is one, but He has many names; you can chant any of His names, but Chaitanya insists on chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. Why? Because it is a great mantra.

**N.:** Kali-yuga is the age of the destruction of morality, this is understandable. Religion now plays the role of a gendarme. But why does this happen anyway? If we have to move into a new state, then, on the contrary, there must be a spiritual rebirth.

**M.M.d.:** Revival happens in general. It needs to be understood. It occurs on a global scale. With the advent of Shri Chaitanya — you know from history, better than me — the Renaissance began, the revival of science, religion, the time of great geographical discoveries... So it was in the Middle Ages, and similarly, it happens now.

**N.:** But now most of the spiritual groups have collapsed (not only in Belarus).

**M.M.d.:** Whenever is the beginning, there will be an end, but if there is an end, there will be a beginning... Every religion has a beginning and an end in the annals of human history, but if we talk about Krishna consciousness, pure consciousness, then, as an attribute of the soul, it is eternal. It never began and will never end. From the lower forms, religion moves to a more perfect one, until, at last, people acquire the pure consciousness of God. This consciousness we call Krishna consciousness.

**N.:** Can this pure consciousness be connected with the ionosphere?

**M.M.d.:** It makes no sense to associate it with anything. It contains everything. Krishna consciousness is perfect. And even if someone does not take it seriously, this movement does not lose anything, it does not decrease. I say the right things, but how you perceive it depends on you.

**N.:** But if all the groups break up, then it depends not on individual perception, but on the general process, which is of a planetary nature. This is not because I personally did not accept it because of my dark nature. This is my question "why?"

**M.M.d.:** Particular and the whole! You speak from the perspective of your perception, but I speak from the perspective of the Vedas. From the standpoint of Vedic prophecy, this movement spreads in different, invisible ways, totally. Krishna has a plan for how to embed it into the dull heads of the materialists, in spite of all their obstacles and stupidity. The Sankirtana movement is the *lila*

of the Lord. And some of us take part in it. Everyone can judge this from their point of view, but, speaking in general, the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. In general, there is a process in which everyone consciously or unconsciously takes part — such is the will of the Lord. For 10,000 years from the beginning of the appearance of Shri Chaitanya, there will be a Satya-yuga period in Kali-yuga. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare will be sung in every town and village. This Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu movement will cover the whole world. It will be the only one. Having absorbed and destroyed all religious denominations, assimilating all creeds, it will unite all nations based on our spiritual identity. Every being is a soul — this consciousness is the basis of peace and prosperity in the whole world. Whether we want it or not, *prithivite ache yata nagaradi grama...* in every town and village the names of Krishna will be sung. For this, certain favorable conditions are created. The soil of consciousness is loosened and prepared, weeds are pulled out. We perceive it as much as we can accommodate. From birth to birth, the soul gains experience. And isn't it surprising that yesterday's communists who persecuted religion have now become Christians and yesterday's atheists, who deny the existence of God Himself, are deeply religious now? They go to church for communion as they used to go to the party meeting. Faced with Hare Krishna... we all get some experience of communication and spiritual enrichment. Perhaps someone opposes, but there is a gradual process of purification... and who is for, and who is against — they are all already familiar with our philosophy and the chanting of the holy name of Krishna, which is able to free anyone who listens and repeats it. And now, having left its present body (communist, atheist or Christian), the soul will incarnate in the family of devotees of Krishna, in which it will receive the knowledge and development of her dormant love for Krishna. When Hare Krishna comes to power, yesterday's Communists and Christians will begin to chant Hare Krishna. Just as they are today baptizing and praying: "... do not lead into temptation and deliver from the evil one... May Your name be sanctified, may Your kingdom come ..." this kingdom has already come. When they chant Hare Krishna, they can realize this. We already live in the kingdom of Krishna, where everything belongs to Him. In Bhagavad-Gita, this fact is confirmed: *bhoktaram yajna-tapasam...* now it's time to realize this. This is an irreversible process. To give an example, my father was a Stalinist hardened communist. He believed that their power would be eternal, that the people would gain a bright future without even knowing about it ... And when he died, perestroika began. Where his soul went I do not know. But I am sure that now he was born somewhere in the family of devotees, he repeats the holy name, because at the time of death, as strange as it is, he remembered me... Just like yesterday's communists become Christians, Christians will once

become devotees of Krishna. Time is coming. These will go away, and other souls will take their place. This assimilation process does not take place in one day or in one birth. But it happens. Interest in Hare Krishna is constantly increasing. Small groups break up and reappear, break up again, losing touch with the Shri Chaitanya tree. But new shoots grow. The Chaitanya tree spreads its crown throughout the universe. Today, Christians gild domes, sell crosses, sell Christ's covenants, but let's turn to history. For Christianity to become a world religion, it took centuries. With fire and sword, they implanted it Russia, but when they leave, other souls will come to replace them who have had experience with Hare Krishna... now the age of Chaitanya is coming...

See for yourself: Hare Krishna has a very strong influence on all spheres of the social, political and religious life of society on the entire planet. By hindering the spread of this movement, materialists and atheists are trying to get under the cover of today's Christianity, which in this country is becoming the state religion. They do a political trick, they resort to religion, playing on the feelings of patriotism, declaring Christianity the traditional religion to restrain this process. But when they come in contact with Hare Krishna, they themselves lose their identification ... Hare Krishna cannot be stopped. Anyone who, with whatever interest, comes into contact with the true followers of Krishna, will certainly change his mind. Now everyone knows about the law of karma, many become vegetarians... learn horoscopes, interested in Ayurveda... The influence of Vedic philosophy, martial arts and the very way of life spread everywhere, pushing and destroying alien interests and trends and creating a single viable organism. If you become Krishna conscious, realizing that you are an eternal soul full of knowledge and bliss, who can bribe or intimidate you? If you have restored your relationship with Krishna, you become invincible.

Empiricists like Kamsa do not understand this. Therefore, when they come to power, they create an institution of religion in the state in order to control the situation. And then the spiritual movement, which is supported by the acharyas, is used by the fanatical crowd to satisfy their material needs. Staff preachers like Putana feed their followers with poisoned milk. Such a religion does not make sense, so it is doomed to die without being born, but that which has no beginning, no end will overcome all obstacles and survive.

**N.:** What is not interested in freeing people will it die? But this is a change of a shell...

## HIGH HOPES

**M.M.d.:** In the spiritual sense, according to your own *advaita* philosophy, there is no difference between the external and the internal content; in the material world, there is a material body and a spiritual soul. As the oil does not mix with

water, so the soul never mixes with the material energy which is represented by this body. But in the spiritual world, you have a spiritual body. It is equivalent to everything becoming butter. The information is distributed. Krishna is in everyone's heart: an atheist, a communist, a believing Christian, and a Muslim. He is the cause of all causes. If He desires Hare Krishna to be, His will is an existing fact. Another thing is that we, being conditioned, cannot see this — time separates us. Everyone will become Hare Krishna! How will this happen? One can only wonder at this. We look and wonder because it happens before our eyes and in our heart.

We know from the Bible that a flood had happened once, and Noah, having collected a pair of each creature, escaped. What is the cause of the flood? Knowledge was stolen, it was interpreted by demons. People were sinful, and their sinful life became the norm of behavior. Then Krishna arranged a flood and cleansed the face of the earth, washed away all the dirt and set aside only those who could give the seed of a new life. Likewise, now all the foam, scum, impurity, which takes shape, the appearance of religiosity and righteousness will go away. The demons terrorize and kill the demons... Shri Chaitanya does not kill anyone but liberates everyone. He changes the mindset of those who chant the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. The subtle body (our desires and concepts of life) is purified and, leaving a vicious way of life, the souls are born as devotees of Krishna capable of radically changing the world. The demigods incarnate in this world to enjoy Lord Chaitanya's *sankirtana-lila*. May there be wars and cataclysms, natural disasters, in order to destroy the old concept of life and give a new seed to the new culture, the civilization that once existed on this planet, again manifested in all its glory. All in its place. In the Ecclesiastes, it is said that the sun rises and sets and what should happen, will happen... *Jivas* will come, who from birth will chant Hare Krishna... Vegetarians are already born to meat-eating families ... Krishna consciousness spreads totally. Wherever we are, we chant the holy name of Lord Krishna, and this vibration purifies the consciousness of the people of the whole world. Yajna is the greatest sacrifice. Krishna satisfied with such a yajna spills streams of endless mercy on all living beings in all forms of life. Through the vibration of Hare Krishna, purification takes place. Transcendental waves spread throughout the universe. They cannot be localized, locked a vessel, hidden in a flask. This vibration spreads, clearing the consciousness of all on a very subtle, invisible energy level. You can see it yourself.

**N.:** You refer to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as the main force. But this is the limitation of the global process. In this process, there will be no name, because all points of view will be correct.

**M.M.d.:** Krishna has and has no name. He is the Absolute Truth, from which everything flows. He is impersonal, localized (located in one place), but He is also

a person who spreads His influence everywhere, through His incomprehensible energies and personal expansions and incarnations.

**N.:** But how can He be a person if He is impersonal?

**M.M.d.:** Let me give you an example: here is the sun, its energy (light and heat) is not different from the sun itself; as we approach the sun, we see the disk of the sun (the planet of the sun), but in the sun there is a sun deity who controls the sun; it is the source, cause of the sun itself and the energy of the sun (heat and light). Similarly, the Absolute Truth is cognized in three aspects: impersonal (as energy), locally (as the Supersoul) and personally as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna, who is the cause of all causes. *Vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvam yaj jnanam advayam brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti shabdyate.*

**N.:** *Para Brahman*, how can He be a person? If He is outside of this world?

**M.M.d.:** Now we identify ourselves with the material body, and we associate our personality with it: here is Nikolai, the scientist, he has hands, legs, head... he has feelings, mind ... but in reality, these are attributes of the body. All these designations belong to the body. My body, but I, who has a body, am different from my body. Having known ourselves as a soul, we will see a spiritual person who has a spiritual form, spiritual feelings, and a spiritual mind. The soul is not only the life force but also the personality that has the life force. You are this person who has never been born and will not die. Just as a person changes clothes, so the soul (personality) changes a material body. This is described in Bhagavad-Gita ... In the radiation of a Brahman, there are innumerable living beings who are of a personal nature. *Nityo nityanam... eko bahunam yo vidadhathi kaman...*

## **GOD IS SUPER PERSONALITY**

**N.:** Ok. A personality is a form that has appeared and will disappear, and impersonality is that from which a person emerges. It never appeared and never disappears. This is the classic concept of *advaita* philosophy — the soul is a mortal personality, and the spirit is immortal.

**M.M.d.:** This concept has replaced Buddhism, a purely materialistic philosophy. In practice, both of them deny the existence of God and the soul. Be nothing or be a stone, the same thing. Therefore, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu strictly forbade studying the commentaries on Vedanta belonging to the *advaita* philosophers. He rejected Buddhism because this teaching is in direct conflict with bhakti, and the philosophy of *advaita*, which is the same Buddhism, but in the form of a brahmana. In essence, you are trying to understand God, who is entirely spiritual, in a material way, with your mind and material senses. It is impossible... Therefore, it is quite logical that you deny the existence of a spiritual person who has a spiritual form, feelings, and mind. In fact, your foot is the boot

of your foot, the feeling, and the mind are the covers of your spiritual feelings and mind. We look through this eye, but it is the covering of our spiritual vision. We listen through this ear, but this is the covering of our spiritual ear... That's the problem: the spiritual world is a reality, the material world is like a reflection of this reality. You have the concept of personality, which you identify with the material body and mind just because there is a spiritual person with a spiritual form, body, and mind. The material body and everything else that relates to it is a reflection of a real spiritual form. Do not try to understand the spiritual in a material way. The spiritual body cannot be seen with material eyes, therefore for many (including Buddhists and philosophers-impersonalists), it does not exist. It is not by chance that they deny the personality of God and His spiritual form and attributes that are inherent in this form.

**N.:** But you do that too...

**M.M.d.:** No, being in a conditioned position, I try to understand the true state of affairs, guided by the Vedic shastras, accepting their direct meaning. I have already told you at the beginning of our dialogue that it is necessary to look at the world through the eyes of the Vedic shastras and of those who have realized the truth while being engaged in pure devotional service. In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says *bhaktyam abhijanati*... One can understand me as a person only through devotional service... one can enter the kingdom of God by the grace of God, through love and devotion. If you are a follower of advaita philosophy or Buddhism, then from the very beginning you are rejecting bhakti. Therefore, relying on material feelings, you deny the existence of a spiritual form, a spiritual person and everything else. Yes, a living being does not have a material form, but a spiritual one is inherent in it, which we can attain through devotional service.

**N.:** I also refer to the Vedic literature...

**M.M.d.:** Of course, but the Vedic writings are given both for materialists (ordinary *karmis*) and for all sorts of transcendentalists. For example, most Upanishads describe Absolute impersonally. Why? Because the personality of God cannot be comprehended by philosophical speculations. At best, you can become aware of yourself as a soul (*aham brahmasmi*), but you can only perceive the Lord through His grace through bhakti, devotion, and love. This is what Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who started the sankirtana movement, teaches. Vedas give knowledge to different types of people...

**N.:** Bhagavad-Gita is my favorite book, but I understand it differently from Prabhupada's understanding...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, because you accepted the impersonal concept of Shankara, which is the beginning of the attainment of the Absolute Truth, and Prabhupada accepted the philosophy of Shri Chaitanya, which is a very perfection of it. Krishna



says that He is the originator of the Vedas, the knower and the ultimate goal of knowledge. In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna Himself says: "There is no truth higher than I ("I" means personality, not something without form and characteristic features inherent in personality). Everything rests on Me like pearls are strung on a thread..." Chaitanya strictly forbade the use of Shankara comments. Although Shankara himself is a partial manifestation of Lord Shiva, the great devotee of Krishna, his mission is to deceive the materialists who have rejected the Vedas. He began to teach the philosophy of the Vedas, giving people only the first acquaintance with the Absolute Truth, impersonal ... But he was replaced by Ramanuja who proclaimed *advaita-dvaita* philosophy of dualism. There is one person — God, and there are many other personalities — living beings who are associated with God in serving Him. Shri Chaitanya went even further by establishing spiritual affinity, the oneness of living beings and the incomprehensible difference at the same time ... The personal nature of Krishna can only be understood through *bhakti*. Do not limit yourself to the *advaita* philosophy and accept what Shri Chaitanya preaches — *achintya bheda-bheda tattva*. Simultaneous oneness and incomprehensible difference — we are one spiritually and as individuals are different. There are a qualitative oneness and quantitative difference. God is the whole, and we are His particles — atoms, although we belong to the same category of Brahman. By our nature, we are spiritual and possess consciousness, therefore we do not deny the *advaita* philosophy, but we do not accept it as the ultimate goal in the knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

**N.:** Ramanuja said: "A drop in the ocean (as salty as the ocean), you are part of the whole, but not the whole," and Shankara says: "You are the whole..." For me, this means that personality is temporary, and the spirit is eternal. Ultimately, I should not worship form...

**M.M.d.:** The material world is a reflection of the spiritual, if we see a form here, it really exists in the spiritual world, in the very object of knowledge.

**N.:** Yes, now I understand you. Spirituality has a form, it is spiritual. In mathematics, recently, various forms of space have been studied, figures... and these figures have energy, i.e. spirituality. Sacred geometry and holographic geometry has great potential for the development of modern technology and science. But the subtlety lies in the fact that each form has its own name.

**M.M.d.:** Well, you yourself answered your own question.

**N.:** But the name that is unifying on the material plane cannot be uttered. If you say it, the material world will be destroyed. When we chant Hare Krishna, we chant some intermediate, not Supreme Personality — this is some intermediate name. The supreme name of the Supreme Personality cannot be known...

**M.M.d.:** Why? If God is almighty, then He can give His name and manifest Himself in any way accessible to our perception. Krishna manifests Himself in the

form of Deity worship. This is not idolatry. If you know the process of *archana*, the Lord will manifest Himself to you in an accessible way in order to accept your service in one form or another of His energy. God is omnipotent, do not limit God with your imperfect understanding. By showing His mercy, He gives you the opportunity to come closer to Him. In the age of Kali, He Himself wished to appear in the name of Krishna. This is not your choice, but His ... If you accept His conditions, then you come to the realization of God. Devotional service is a downward process. We are progressing not at the expense of the tension of the brains and personal virtues (although this is also necessary), but by the mercy of the Lord Himself. We become devotees of the Lord, by the mercy of the Lord Himself. To start devotional service and take advantage of its invaluable merit to all other methods of realizing the truth, you must have faith. Where does this faith come from? Through communication with those who already have it.

**N.:** But God appears not only through the name of Krishna but through other names. All the names of God are equal.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, that's right. There are countless names of God, each of which has all the potencies of God.

**N.:** ... and the bija mantra is equal and Omkara...

## THE MANTRA OF ALL MANTRAS

**M.M.d.:** Yes, you are right. But among the many mantras that represent God, there is a maha-mantra — this is the great mantra, the mantra of all mantras. It already has all the other names of the Supreme Person. Omkara, unlike the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, has some limitations. You can get liberation by practicing it, but when you reach the spiritual world when you are liberated, its action stops, while the Hare Krishna maha-mantra acts unlimitedly here, in the conditioned state, and there in the liberated one. Therefore this mantra is of all mantras, it contains all the energies of the Lord and all forms of liberation, His *lilas* and full manifestation of the *rasa*. When you come to the spiritual world, there Krishna is called Krishna. There is no concept of God, Parabrahman, Bhagavan, or Paramatma — the creator, all-perpetrator, etc., but there is Krishna. There are different mantras that have certain actions. What mantra do you want to get?

**N.:** I don't know this yet, and just want to explain my concept. If each person is a letter of this text, and the whole text is God, then each letter has its own tone, and each person has his own mantra. Each person has his own way to this level, at which he must know himself, find this tone within himself, his own individual sound, and then he will become Krishna.

**M.M.d.** No, then he will become one who is: *jivera svarupa haya krishnera nitya dasa...* aware of his true position as the eternal servant of Krishna. A living

being can never become God. It can manifest the qualities of God, inherit the kingdom of God, enjoy as God, but it is not given to him to take the place of God Himself.

**N.:** I have been given the mantra Om namo shivaya namaha from above... This is my mantra, my melody, it came to me, and I chant it ... any other person also has his own key.

**M.M.d.:** Everyone has a key, but where is that secret door, behind which the realm of knowledge and light will open. Lord Shiva is a devotee of Krishna and worshipping him as a devotee of the Lord, is the recommended process. If you repeat his mantra with such a mentality, then he will help you to come closer to the spiritual goal, he will show you the door to the spiritual world, to Krishna. In this sense, all the mantras are good if they promote your development of Krishna consciousness. But Hare Krishna is the maha-mantra, you will not confuse it with any other. For all your individuality and in the presence of other mantras, maha-mantra remains unsurpassed. Its greatness is that whoever repeats it, with whatever interests and ambitions, he will certainly ultimately purify and find love for Krishna. This is the goal of any spiritual practice. To this, I also want to add that in any mantra the most important is the name of the deity to which we appeal. Everything else (petition and appeal), you can repeat in your own language ...The peculiarity of Kali-yuga lies in the fact that Krishna incarnated in the form of his own name *kali-kale nama-rupa krishna avatara*... Krishna took incarnation in the form of the transcendental sound of the Hare Krishna Mantra...

**N.:** I have nothing to add to this. What I do is to bring these spiritual truths through modern sciences (sociology, political science, philosophy, mathematics). In this way, I want to show people that they are not all contradictory in the spiritual sense. The individuality of a person is not lost in this mechanism of the mission, but on the contrary, it is acquired, flourishes and realizes itself. The first thing I urge people to do is get out of the egregore, a separate cult, and feel like a citizen of the whole world.

**M.M.d.:** To do this, try to scientifically explain the simple truth that you are a soul, that I am a soul, that we are all souls. There is no sectarianism in this, it is divided into ours and yours, ours and those of others, the chosen ones and outcasts... It is necessary to go beyond the limits of the materialistic consciousness, which makes us identify with the material body. One must devote oneself to the service of the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna — this is the foundation. When you go beyond the bodily concepts of life and know yourself as a soul, then naturally you will show individuality, your abilities, the purpose and meaning of your existence. Those who have reached this level of spiritual realization have concluded that if you love Krishna, you

love all beings in whatever forms of life they exist, that they are all your god-brothers and sisters. This is what Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu teaches. He is Krishna Himself. He came to give this great all-encompassing love, therefore He is called *maha-vadanyaya avatara*. Anyone who chants the Hare Krishna maha-mantra can find love for Krishna. In the Brihad Naradya Purana, it is said that there is NO other way in this Kali-yuga! This is repeated three times. The congregational chanting of the holy name is called *sankirtana*. And although different people are at different levels of spiritual development, they all share one goal.

All that we have talked about will be quite enough to make a small article and in conclusion, I offer you to take a small snapshot.



*We asked a passerby to take a picture, which I have attached to the text.*

## **QUESTION:**

Before parting, Nikolai asked me his question. Its essence is as follows: at the beginning of the 90s (from about 1995), when simultaneously with wild capitalism they gave free rein to various movements, a sharp surge of interest in spirituality formed a huge number of different esoteric, spiritual and other groups. But by 2003, according to sociological data, their growth completely stopped.

And the process of their decay began, decomposition in social terms. Now they are in the stage of such paralysis as if they exist and at the same time they don't. People do not attend them. WHY? Possible answer: the market economy is very hard on people, demanding constant profitability. The market of spiritual profitability is the opposite of material one. People are not able to pay for spiritual practice... The requirements have become tough, you need to pay money for everything, and so many groups have lost their premises and their followers. Money is strangulation, the cause of internal contradictions. Many cults, where the so-called gurus began to use the system for the sake of self-interest programs and ambitions, turned into a profitable business ... Of course, there is another tendency, very strange, which I observe, is that people, even being in the same group, cannot unite because of some psychological barriers and collisions. Over the past year, I have seen the intensification of these processes, literally an explosion. What should this lead to? What are the cause and fate? It seems to me that the groups will be updated in principle, and temporary disconnections will lead to some new development.

- Well, you see, you yourself answered your question.
- Yes, I answer, my answer. But what is your position? And the next question: What will this new level be and what will it be characterized by? What will it look like on the official society? And, finally, what should we all do now?
- WHAT IS TO BE DONE? — The eternal question of the Russian intelligentsia. It was asked by Chernyshevsky, Lenin, and now I hear from you. Good questions and I'll think about how to answer them. This is not an accidental phenomenon, it is a tendency of the mechanism of regularity.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## MY POSITION

We walked, and we were met by a motley crowd of young people. Like a wave that had ebbed away from the University, it was running up, as if it was fawning at my feet. Nikolai met his friend, and we said goodbye to each other. When and how we meet again, none of us knew. Each went his own way and therefore had to find for himself the answer and the right solution to the questions. We agreed that as soon as I finish this book, I will let him know about it. I had Panchyshyn's phone number in my notebook.

12 years I lived in America. Now I have come to understand and take part in this unusual and interesting process. I am a servant of Krishna — THIS IS MY POSITION, and since I am here, I have to think that Krishna has a business for me.

WHAT WILL BE THE NEW LEVEL, WHAT WILL BE ITS CHARACTERISTICS?

HOW WILL IT LOOK OUT IN SOCIETY?

WHAT DO WE ALL DO NOW?

Here I will give excerpts from Ecclesiastes and my commentaries:

*What is to be will be  
And there is nothing new under the sun  
All goes in rounds  
What you wish is what you'll get  
And to each his own.*

One can cite many passages from the Scriptures that have found expression in popular wisdom in order to continue the list of popular expressions and aphorisms taken from the BIBLE.

## WHAT IS TO BE, WILL BE!

In this maxim, one can see the doom of the conditioned soul. If we are not able to resist this, then we will have to agree. "Before the genius of fate, it is time to put up with, sir!" Naturally, this gives us sad thoughts.

## **AND THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN!**

Cyclicity is observed in nature not only in the changing seasons of the year (spring and summer, autumn and winter), in calendar days (months and years), in life and death (all kinds of life pass through six stages: birth, growth, maturation, aging, wilt and death), but also in motion in a circle. If you take a point of reference, then starting from zero, you end up with zero.

## **ALL GOES IN ROUNDS...**

In space, cyclicity manifests itself in the change of the yugas (Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali, and again Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali...) and in terms of eternal time. Satya is flourishing, piety, longevity, and knowledge. Treta is the reduction of piety, longevity, and knowledge, Dvapara — even more falling, and finally Kali — this is complete degradation and decay, after which everything starts from the beginning.

## **WHAT YOU WISH, IS WHAT YOU'LL GET!**

Life is eternal, life is the soul in the body. During this eternal life, we suffer and enjoy the results of our activity (karma). We lived under “developed socialism”, now we live again under capitalism, and many under feudalism and under slaveholding system... just as we lived under Neolithic and Paleolithic ages. Modern people look like people; they wear beards, jeans, and ride in jeeps, but in reality, they are Neanderthals. But the chaos with which we encounter testifies that this is not a struggle of archetypes. The impression is that some monsters from the past are coming back. There is a point of view that the Neanderthals have not gone anywhere, have not disappeared. They are among us, so there is a specific struggle. These are not just cultural archetypes, class phenomena, religious personality types, namely: biological, organizational, species. The soul travels from one planet to another and from one form of life to another. Climbing the evolutionary ladder, finally, it gets a human body. The time has come to ask the question: “What is Absolute Truth? Who is Krishna?” Having received the answer to this question, we go beyond the limits of time and space into the world of eternal being, knowledge, and bliss; and there, having reached our destiny, we gain a love for Krishna, after which we will never return to this temporary world, full of suffering...

Otherwise, everything will be repeated again and again, birth after birth... at the time of death, our activities are summed up and awarded according to merit: good for good, evil is rewarded with evil...

Thus, throughout eternal life, we change bodies and forms of existence, then we rise to higher planets, then we descend into the worlds of ignorance. When we gain Krishna consciousness, we will reach the planet of Krishna, going beyond the enchanted circle of material existence.

**THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN, the sun rises and the sun sets and what is to be will be.**

Ecclesiastical prophecy confirms the Vedic concept of the eternity of life and the reincarnation of the soul, which represents our personality, our true self.

There is nothing new under the sun. *Nile sub sole novum...*

We were born in all epochs, lived in the bodies of 8,400,000 life forms, existed at different times, under different conditions of material existence in various formations, spoke different languages, met and parted without recognizing each other. There is no death — death is like a dream. When morning comes we wake up in a new incarnation and begin to stay awake, and at nightfall, we fall into a dream. Material existence is hibernation for the soul. For one who has known himself and restored his relationship with Krishna, there is no death! Time of wakefulness for the one who has known himself is the time of sleep for the ignorant. In the continuous flow of time does it make sense to ask what will happen? Everything flows, everything changes ... in a world where there is no present, does it make sense to ask about the future? How the dream will be the affairs and thoughts of people. The hero will be forgotten, the mausoleum will decay and merge together into dust. Both thoughts and deeds, as if from a slate blackboard, unnecessary words will merge with a hand without a chance... and not the same words, but with the same hand far from the ground, frozen and dumb, will appear again a pale mystery... And it is impossible to comprehend and understand what forms the spirit will wear again, what creatures it will incarnate. Speaking of a market economy, the disintegration of groups and a kind of rebirth of spirituality, we, like insects, crawl along the surface of a jar of honey, unable to enjoy its sweetness. What is the meaning of the predictions, if these prophecies can't be escaped? If everything is already predetermined and everyone is destined to receive his own, then what is the point in what will happen? For me one thing, for you another. We are spiritual personalities, individuals, and our perception is different from each other. Krishna is the ultimate reality. He is the cause of our suffering, misery, birth, and death. But He is the cause of our happiness and joy as well. He gives us feelings of joy and grief... He is the lord of the senses, the source of all pleasures and sensations... He is the highest object of worship, to which there is no beginning or end... Om purnam adah purnamidam...



Krishna is the only reality. On the map of the Universe, there are no nations, states. There are no such concepts as Russia or the USA... These are the far-fetched concepts that we enjoy in our minds. If the entire material creation is broken into elements, we get 24 — they are described by Kapila in his Sankhya philosophy. When we go beyond those elements, we reach the transcendental world of eternity, knowledge and bliss!

We think in different ways and therefore what I understand is not accessible to others who are in this society... Our consciousness determines the level of our material and spiritual existence.

Western philosophy and the thinking of a Western man teaches us to look outside, around ourselves. Trying to arrange everything outside for one's own good. But Eastern wisdom says: "Make yourself perfect, and you will be OK anywhere, free and independent of circumstances.

## **WHAT IS AN ABSOLUTE TRUTH? (MOLODECHNO JULY 2007, TALK WITH ADVENTIST OF THE SEVENTH DAY)**

*My opponent's name is Michael. He graduated from the university's history department, received a bachelor's degree and, becoming an Adventist, decided to try himself in the field of religion. He had a small parish in Molodechno and one of my disciples arranged for me to meet with him. The meeting itself was noteworthy, and therefore I decided to put a separate chapter in this book. People converge with each other, pursuing material, mercantile goals. That is why they often part with each other. In fact, human life is designed for spiritual realization, for realizing the Absolute Truth. When we get a human incarnation, then it is time to ask: *athato brahma jigyaasa...**

*WHAT IS AN ABSOLUTE TRUTH?*

**M.:** Very good question: What is the truth? People inquired about truth for thousands of years...

**M.M.d.:** And why, what do you think?

**M.:** Because the soul of man is always empty when he does not know the truth. This is the specifics of man.

**M.M.d.:** Exactly. This is what I said: *athato brahma jigyaasa...* the time has come to ask about the Absolute Truth; when the soul receives a human incarnation — the time has come! The purpose of human life is to ask about the Absolute Truth, the highest manifestation of which is God.

**M.:** To this, I would like to add in the words of the scripture, the Bible, what Christ says. What is the truth? Once Pilate asked him this question... he was also looking for an answer, but, unfortunately, he did not find it, and he died. Christ speaks to his disciples (my interlocutor opens the Bible and reads out), Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me"

**M.M.d.:** Naturally, the one who preaches always says: "Only we are good, only we have the truth, only through me ..." You preach, and I preach, and we both say to our followers: "Only through me..." Similarly, Jesus, the great preacher of the glory of the Lord, being His representative, speaks to his disciples.

Christ says I am the way — this is right, you can come this way to God the Father, to the truth. Jesus Christ is the son of God, the representative of God and the path to truth, to God. Jesus is addressed as a rabbi — a guru, a spiritual master; respectively, apostles are His disciples. The original Christian religion is called "apostolic". As you know, the Apostle Peter was the first Pope; initially, there is knowledge of the Vedas, which is transmitted through spiritual masters...

Similarly, the teachings of Christ were transmitted through the apostles. When the question of the Absolute Truth arises, a person appeals to a spiritual master, which was Jesus Himself. When you want to know what truth is, Krishna sends you His representative, GURU.

So Christ is the path to Truth. And what is the truth? In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna Himself says: "I am the truth. There is no truth higher than Me. Everything rests on Me, as pearls are strung on a thread."

**M.:** And who is "I"?

**M.M.d.:** "I" is Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead; He gave us the Gita from the first person. "Bhagavad-Gita" means the song of God. Krishna is God. He told Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna, in which He claims that there is no truth higher than Him.

**M.:** Krishna?

**M.M.d.:** Yes. While Christ says: "I am a son of God (in fact, God has many sons and daughters, and we are also children of God. We are all from the same family — therefore we are all brothers). You are a soul, I am the soul — we are all souls. Although we are imprisoned in different bodies, however, our ancestry is from Krishna. In the same place, in Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says: "I am the seed-giving father..." Krishna is the Father of Jesus. By being called Christ, Jesus pointed to the name of His Heavenly Father... *Aham brahmasmi* — I am the soul; in whatever body the soul is — it is an integral part of Krishna. There is only one God — we know this ... but who is God? We have to find out. There are many names of God, and the name Krishna is the original one. Whatever you call God: Christ, Buddha, Krishna or Allah — you address Krishna, the original Supreme

Personality of Godhead “There is no truth higher than I ...” In the Brahma-Samhita it is definitely stated: *ishvarah paramah krisnah...* — Krishna is the cause of all causes, and He himself has no cause.

**M.:** Turning to the scriptures... I would like to quote. I would not, of course, dispute your words, but my arguments are based on scripture, which rather testifies than proves... and a person has a choice. God so wisely arranged our world, our life, that here everything happens by choice. People are individuals, great beings, and so that they remain great in this world they have the right to choose. God seems to be silent when there are wars and devastation. Different teachings (Buddhists, Confucians, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, different philosophies... atheists, believers...) and from the pulpit everyone can preach something of their own... and it seems to be silence... God will not break with lightning, nothing will burst... But where is the truth? Here, listening to you, it seems to be good. It is also good to listen to them... But where is the truth?

**M.M.d.:** Similar is said in Chaitanya Charitamrita. It says that the ocean of material existence is overrun by the monsters of various theories that take hold of whoever has fallen into this ocean. But by the grace of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, even a foolish baby can understand the final word of the truth... Socrates said: “Know yourself!” Having known ourselves as an eternal soul, we to a certain extent know God (the Supreme Soul), who created us in His own image and likeness.

**M.:** True...

**M.M.d.:** Therefore, let us begin by knowing ourselves... from this comes our understanding of the truth, our responsibilities and our relationship with God. God is one, but different living beings have different relationships with Him... Just as the body has a head, legs, hands, and a stomach — different parts of the body make up the body — similarly, different creatures have integral relations with God as integral parts of God.

**M.:** I want to note that knowing oneself is a big problem because a criterion is needed...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, we must know who we are as an object of knowledge ... In the Vedas, it is said I am the soul ... here is the criterion: I am the soul, the eternal servant of God.

**M.:** God in the Bible says that He created the whole world ... I am God and there is no other God besides Me. He gave me life, gave me the way ... he gave me the rules of life ... and then I would know myself. In Christ, we have the atonement of his blood and the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, born before any creature. For by Him, by Christ, everything was created... by Him and for Him.

**M.M.d.:** Right thought. Now let's try to determine what is what. Christ is the Greek interpretation of the name Krishna. Christ — Krishto and Krishna are one. By calling Himself the son of God, Christ gave us the name of his Father, Krishna.

**M.:** I would like to note. That the man who sinned before God on this Earth broke the spiritual bond, the relationship with the Heavenly Father, withdrew himself and began to develop as if by himself. Man forgot the image of God, the law of the command of God... People turned into egoists, militant with each other... and how could God show His holiness? Only embodied in the human body. Therefore, Christ is born and grows into an adult and is God. He resurrects, heals... but, most importantly, he gives relief to a sinful soul. Christ spoke as no one spoke. And in Christ, people first began to know God. Of course, before the appearance of Christ, there were prophets: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others. But to reveal the glory of God, as Christ revealed, no one revealed. They were righteous. No doubt these were pure people, but before Christ they were sinners. He is the true God because He is akin to people... Krishna was not on Earth...

**M.M.d.:** Why? Krishna incarnated many times. In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says that when religion declines, He descends Himself to restore the principles of religion. So 5000 years ago He came Himself, playing the role of an ordinary person. This is described in the historical epic of the Mahabharata, of which Bhagavad-Gita is a part, and in Shrimad-Bhagavatam. In fact, in different incarnations, Krishna comes every millennium. Sometimes He comes Himself, and sometimes He sends His sons, as, for example, in the case of Jesus Christ... Krishna is the Father of all religions. According to the level of consciousness of people, He gives religious principles at a lower or higher level in accordance with the ethnic characteristics of a person, geographical location or some other material conditions of his existence. Before Christ appeared, Krishna Himself incarnated on this planet in order to recite Bhagavad-Gita. I hope you are familiar with this source? We live in Kali-yuga, the age of degradation... The world day is divided into four periods: Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali-yuga. Satya is characterized by virtue and a practical lack of sin. In Treta-yuga, the tendency to sinful activities begins to manifest. What is a sin, exactly? It is what contributes to forgetting our eternal relationship with Krishna, it is meat consumption, intoxication, adultery, gambling. In Dvapara-yuga, these tendencies began to spread to a large extent throughout the world, while in Kali-yuga they entered people's minds and became commonplace, the norm of their behavior. Now, when, for example, you tell people that they should not kill animals and eat their meat, then, referring to the scriptures, they try to justify meat-eating, interpreting, believing that the commandment THY SHALL NOT KILL applies only to humans. But a normal person does not need to say that it is not good to kill and commit adultery — to commit such sinful acts is not characteristic of his very nature. In Kali-yuga, peo-

ple are so degraded that it is often impossible to even preach these principles to them — life is short, the struggle for existence is harsh, and the interest in the spiritual life is almost nonexistent.

**M.:** Why is this happening, why are people degraded?

**M.M.d.:** Due to the prevalence of materialistic tendencies, which increasingly forces us to identify ourselves with the material body, tied to the material, sensual pleasures. Under the influence of Kali-yuga, people forgot about God and their spiritual nature, identifying themselves with the material body. Even if sometimes they turn to God, they, exclusively, do so for the sake of material goals. Now even religious people everywhere violate the principles of religion: they eat meat, use intoxication, have sex for pleasure, gamble and engage in money fraud... What to speak of religion which is based on four pillars: mercy, austerity, purity, and truthfulness, when a man eats meat (the flesh of dead animals), intoxicates himself, gambles and commits adultery?

**M.:** Do you think this is normal when there is a decline in spirituality when people forget God, are mired in sins?

**M.M.d.:** For Kali-yuga, this is normal. Just as there are some regular cycles in nature — spring comes to replace winter, then summer, then autumn and after autumn — winter and again spring and summer... the period of flowering, development ends with withering and death, but then rebirth again... so on a global scale there are different periods of time. For the material world, this is natural, normal...

**M.:** Wars, discords, we kill each other, we steal — is this all normal?

*My opponent was waiting for me to lament, but I, as if nothing had happened, answered: Yes, this is normal for the material world.*

**M.M.d.:** If this does not suit you, let's go to the spiritual world. Everything is perfect there. What would you suggest? The material world is like a prison... and in prison, there is its own order. There are instruments of torture, strong bolts, shackles and warders, and executioners... these are attributes of material existence, especially in Kali-yuga — this is normal.

*It seemed my interlocutor was completely confused. However, not trying to understand the essence of the subject, he immediately hooked on the word "normal" trying to establish the superiority of the BIBLE, and continued, interpreting and distorting the meaning of what was said in his perverted and undeveloped consciousness.*

**M.:** The Bible says that man was created right, but he set off into different thoughts... The sins that he committed separated him from God.

*Listening to his ranting, I once again was convinced that Christianity is alien to judiciousness; it is important for them to be aware of their position of imaginary, absolute superiority among such sectarian mindsets.*

**M.M.d.:** And what is sin exactly?

**M.:** Sin is lawlessness.

**M.M.d.:** And what does “lawlessness” mean?

**M.:** God gave the law...

**M.M.d.:** The law is necessary for sinful people, and you say that God made man right. What is the need for the law for the righteous? The righteous is the representative of the law. And further, how could this person go into different “thoughts” if he was born right? If God created this world for sinners, then it is understandable. As they say, “all are tarred with the same brush”... but in another case, give me the definition of what is a sin.

**M.:** Sin is disobedience to God.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, but the fact that we have forgotten about God is in itself a result of sinfulness, and everything that contributes to the forgetting of God is considered sinful.

**M.:** ... and it spoiled our nature. “We are the sinners — the Bible says so... and you say Kali-yuga is a consequence of our sins — this is not a normal phenomenon... this is not a period that comes cyclically by itself.” Christ will come the second time, he will establish the kingdom of heaven... and the evil of materialism will never be again. This period was not planned by God.

**M.M.d.:** What do you call “material life” and what is spiritual? What is the definition? Give an example.

**M.:** The spiritual is determined by my degree of approaching God, my prayer and a passionate search for the depth of truth — knowledge of God and knowledge about God... these are different things — knowing God or knowing about God... you cannot know God without having Him in your heart.

**M.M.d.:** Krishna says, “I am in the heart of every living being!” Krishna is in the heart of a Muslim and a Christian, a Buddhist and a Hindu, in the heart of a believer and an atheist, a cat, a dog, and a demigod. Yes, God is always in our heart, as Paramatma (the Super Soul) on which yogis meditate.

**M.:** Materialism is a reliance on wealth...

**M.M.d.:** I am the soul, I am not the material body. All definitions, such as Russian, American, Christian, Hindu, man, woman, etc., refer to the material body. But “I” as a soul do not have names and definitions in this world. The soul is forever connected with the Supreme Soul with Krishna, with God. Krishna consciousness is just pure consciousness — a simple fact. We can develop this

consciousness within the framework of a particular religion and, having gained enough *sukriti* (piety), freed from sins, eventually become Krishna conscious. False ego makes us identify the soul with the material body and act to gratify the senses of this body. This kind of activity is strictly material, but the same activity aimed at pleasing Krishna is spiritual. If you use the body, mind, and speech in the service of Krishna, you will be liberated from the laws of material nature of birth and death, old age and disease. Your body and your existence are spiritualized... but if you are engaged in excessive gratification of your senses, identifying yourself with the matter, this kind of activity is material from beginning to the end. For example, if I built this house for myself, it is material, but if I built it for Krishna, as a temple of Krishna, it is spiritual. Krishna is spiritual, and everything connected with Him is spiritual.

**M.:** Krishna did not tell people that they are sinful?

**M.M.d.:** As a soul, you are pure; the soul is transcendental, it is neither a sinner nor a righteous person. It is perfect, as the Lord Himself is perfect. If it is engaged in serving the Lord (as I have already described), then it remains pure, but if it uses its independence and free will to act independently of God, then it becomes sinful.

In the material world, all souls are conditioned, and in the spiritual world, they are liberated. Duality, including sinfulness and sinlessness, righteousness and unrighteousness — are inherent in the material existence. If you are Krishna conscious, you are pure and sinless; if you are of material consciousness, you are always sinful. If you look at the world and our being from the perspective of the soul: “I am the soul, and I have a body, which I change, as a person changes clothes”, then we will surely find a definition of what is sinful and what is sinless in this world. The soul is always pure, perfect. Therefore, the person who has known himself as an eternal soul and has restored his relationship with God is also ideal.

**M.:** A little earlier you said that when evil is created, that is normal...

**M.M.d.:** The concepts of “good” and “evil” are inherent in material existence. There is no such thing in the spiritual world. For material existence, this is normal, but there is no such concept in the spiritual world. It all depends on how you look.

**M.:** Do you agree that there is obedience: what to do or not to do?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, in the material world there is morality and ethics, which replaces the pure consciousness of God.

**M.:** How to agree that evil is normal?

**M.M.d.:** As they say, nature doesn’t have bad weather... Depends on what point of view it is seen. If from the position of Krishna consciousness, it is one thing, if

it is from the position of a conditioned soul, then this is another, and from the position of God Himself it is the third. I have given you some description of the position of conditioned soul, and the position of a Krishna conscious person. As well as what Krishna Himself says in Bhagavad-Gita; from the defilement of the material existence, which makes us identify ourselves with the material body, and from the position of the soul, free from pollution by matter. As a soul conscious of God, you are perfect, you have no flaws; as a soul, you are even now engaged in the service of God.

**M.:** I can evaluate myself from the position of how I approach...

**M.M.d.:** It all depends on your consciousness, your spiritual realization, and understanding of who you are. Within the framework of Christianity, you hold one point of view, referring to the Bible, and from the standpoint of Islam, on the other, turning to the Koran ... But you were not always a Christian. In this case, you always remain the same person — a soul that is transcendental to all definitions ... Until recently, many people believed in the Communist Party and that there is no God! The very same people who were atheists recently and persecuted believers have now become deeply religious people. Now they go to communion with the priest as to a party meeting. But this was not always like that. Therefore, the time will pass, you will leave your material body and possibly be born in the family of devotees of Krishna ... who knows, who will you be in the next incarnation? Even in this life, you can change your beliefs and appurtenance to a particular religion. — But the fact is that in all circumstances you REMAIN THE SAME spiritual person. You are the soul, you are not the material body with which you now identify yourself. If your idea of life changes, then your philosophy and realization of your self will also change. Now you are preaching the teachings of Christ as the only true thing, but I assure you that this is the beginning, therefore there will be an end; it is not yet known what you will preach after our conversation...

There are people who believe that the soul is good. I am a Christian, I am a Muslim ... I am this, I am that ... But look at the world differently. I am a soul, and I have the body of a Christian or a Muslim... now you are looking at the world through the prism of your Christian consciousness and quote the Bible to me. But before that, most recently, you read, with the same conviction, a book on Marxist-Leninist philosophy or something like that. The body of the righteous and the sinner, the body of a Christian, the body of a man or a woman ... — all this is material, therefore everything changes. But you, being in this body, are the soul; the same unchanging soul. This is your true position, the position of the eternal servant of Krishna. Understand that. You are not part of this society, country or religion. You are a soul, perfect, ideal in all senses, as God Himself is



perfect. It is a little replica, a likeness of God. It is a part of God, therefore it cannot be imperfect.

**M.:** The Bible says that the soul is sinful...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, when it turns away from God and takes refuge in the Christian faith — it is a sinner! But by becoming Krishna conscious, it will become sinless. Krishna consciousness is the goal of every religion. This is the pure consciousness of the soul loving God. What does not suit you?

**M.:** “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst,” says the Apostle Paul about himself. “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.”

**M.M.d.:** A voice from heaven revealed about the apostle Paul: “For he is My chosen vessel to declare My name!” Previously, the Apostle Paul was a persecutor of Christians, but then he received the mercy of God and became a champion and preacher of Christianity. Here we go, an example — the metamorphosis that occurred with Paul. Before his name was Saul...

**M.:** It was the Christ whose power changed Paul.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, no one denies that Christ was authorized by God to change people’s hearts and make them His followers. No one can spread religion without being authorized from above — it is a fact. But Jesus Christ himself is not the Father, God... He is the son of God. As well as many others... we are all children of one Father, God, therefore we are all brothers. Do you think that the omnipotent, infinite God has only one son?

**M.:** Do you believe in Christ?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, I do believe. “Christ, — Shrila Prabhupada said, — is our spiritual master.” He teaches love for God, so how can I doubt him?” Christ says: “Love my Heavenly Father!” How can I deny Christ? In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, God Himself, our Heavenly Father, says the same thing; He tells us: “Love Me!” Where is the difference? You say that Jesus is the son of God, I accept it. He says to His followers: “Love Krishna!” And Krishna Himself says the same thing: “Love Me!” Of course, if you say that Jesus is God, here I cannot agree with you. Because you will not find anywhere in the Bible the confirmation of this — where Jesus Christ would say that He is God. I believe the words of Jesus and do not believe you when your claims are different from the Bible. Krishna is God. But Jesus is the son of God, Krishna! When he was called Christ, he indicated the name of his Heavenly Father, Krishna. Sooner or later everyone will agree with this, and you too.

**M.:** That Christ is the son of Krishna?

**M.M.d.:** Naturally! Of course, you understood everything correctly; we are all brothers in God. All living beings, moving and motionless, are children of God, Shri Krishna! In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says, "I am the seed-giving father." Maybe you were born in an incubator or you were cloned, produced like that sheep in a test tube, but the seed of life, in either case, was given by Krishna. Therefore, He is rightly the Father of all beings.

**M.:** But I never doubted that I was a son of God, but I was created, and Christ is eternal... Christ is God! "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Amen!

**M.M.d.:** In this case, we can say the following: when the Bible was translated from one language to another, the original meaning of the scripture was lost...

**M.:** We do not know this... you suppose...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, but my assumptions have a good reason. Here, for example, THOU SHALL NOT KILL! From ancient Aramaic and Greek, this word means do not kill anyone. And today, meat eaters interpret the words of Christ, saying that this means not killing a human, so people with materialistic consciousness adapt the description of the eternal soul to themselves. In this case, the question arises: "Do you think that Christ preached to the bandits from the high road?" However, I have absolutely no doubt that this was the case. But what do you say to that?

**M.:** This is not true, people cannot be killed!

**M.M.d.:** Yes, but even in this interpretation there is a sarcastic meaning; How about that: after people crucified Christ himself, these same people began to worship his crucifixion. For whom are these "thou shall not kill," "thou shall not commit adultery," "thou shall not steal" commandments? A normal person does not need to be explained that killing is not good and stealing is bad. A normal person doesn't have such sinfulness in thoughts. From which it follows that this religion is for wild people, for whom to kill a person is just a child's play; In the history of Christianity, we will not find a single bright day, nothing but enmity and hatred, crusades, the sale of indulgences and violence. With fire and sword, it was planted and now, using new technologies is trying to convince its followers that only through Christ you can come to God. Let it be known that civilized people have never eaten meat (especially cow meat).

**M.:** I wonder why?

**M.M.d.:** Because Krishna loves cows. If a man is created in the image and likeness of God, then the cow is created in the image and likeness of the spiritual cow, *Surabhi*. In the Bhagavatam, it is said that one who eats the meat of cows will be in the hellish conditions of existence of as many millions of years of life as hairs on the body of a cow.

**M.:** Well, I do not eat meat, but I live according to the Bible.

**M.M.d.:** It is not bad that you live according to the Bible, but not everyone lives that way.

**M.:** The Bible says that you cannot eat a pig...

**M.M.d.:** You can fill your stomach with anything, even with your own feces — this is not important; but a person must make a choice, following the commandments THOU SHALL NOT KILL! THOU SHALL NOT STEAL! THOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY! etc. God gave the man the scriptures (the Bible) and the intelligence so that he, living according to the law of God, could curb his fervent desires, which are a cause of concern for others. The etymology of the word “meat” means “I eat you, and you will eat me,” that is, roles change; in the next life, the meat eater’s soul will receive the body of an animal and will fall into the soup or frying pan for someone.

**M.:** God created animals and said in the Bible, after the flood of Noah: this shall be your food... These are His own words; He allowed to eat the meat of animals ... animals that have cloven hooves and chew the cud, can be eaten. And animals that do not chew the cud and their hooves are not cloven, cannot be eaten. The cow has cloven hooves and chews the cud — you can eat it. I do not eat it, because it is better... and it is pleasing to God that meat is not eaten at all. But God is wise in giving a man the right to choose. Here I have allowed you this and that, but the best of all: to eat or not to eat this and that — you choose. Why? Because otherwise, we are robots. I chose vegetarianism.

**M.M.d.:** Continuing your thought, I will quote the words of the Apostle Paul, he said: “I have the right to do anything,” you say — but not everything is beneficial.” You are a reasonable person ... You are not a simple person, and you should not be left at your best. You must go further ...

**M.:** Should I go further than the Bible?

**M.M.d.:** The Bible is not the pinnacle of one’s dreams.

**M.:** The Bible is not the pinnacle? The Bible is the pinnacle!

**M.M.d.:** Allow me to disagree with you. After the Old Testament of the Bible, the New Testament was given, but in it, Christ says: “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.” So it is still far from perfect; here is not all that Christ wanted to say. Old Testament was followed by New, and now New is waiting for the second coming of Christ to find out what he did not say because the ability to bear is little... The Bible means BOOKS (not one, but many books). They are written in Holy Spirit and, starting with the first, we are waiting for the next one, as our spiritual development proceeds, to get something more perfect... And what if it already happened and Christ has already come to give you more perfect knowledge, and you did not recognize Christ, same as the scribes

and Pharisees did not recognize him in their time, and now you reject? After all, the Bible did not always exist. Like any religion, Christianity has a beginning, and there will be an end to it. Here is the Old Testament — a little over 3,000 years; New Testament — 2000 years..., and then what? There is a beginning and there will be an end... Now everyone talks about the end of the world, and they are not mistaken, because the end of the world comes in time for everyone; this statement is risk-free! Prophets will not be mistaken if they say that the end of the world will come tomorrow, because every second it comes for someone. There will be a beginning and an end. For Christians, the end of the world has already come, and now they are waiting for the second coming of Christ to re-animate them... Of course, in order to talk about philosophy, it is necessary to establish oneself in terms of what you mean, saying "soul", what I mean... Having become acquainted with you, I hope that we will continue our dialogue, but in a different way. I am a little familiar with the Bible; I know some Vedic scriptures, but are you familiar with Vedic scriptures? I strongly recommend that you approach a true spiritual master, who belongs to the authoritative Vedic chain of disciplic succession of spiritual masters, *parampara*, to get acquainted with Bhagavad-Gita and Shrimad Bhagavatam so that our dialogue would be productive. *Parampara* is a tradition of transmitting Vedic knowledge; it existed long before the Bible appeared. At that time, there was a single civilization on the planet Earth, known as the Aryan civilization; its story is described a little in the Mahabharata, the historical epic; there was a single culture on the planet, and people spoke the same language; by the way, something similar is mentioned in the Bible; it says that before people began to build the Tower of Babel, they spoke the same language. Have you heard of this? Now we live according to the Christian calendar, but before that people lived and they had a different calendar and they celebrated the New Year on Janmashtami Day, the day of the appearance of Krishna; by the way, there still are those who are counting the time on this calendar. No wonder, since history was rewritten many times. But as they say, "it all comes full circle". After some time, people will start all over again.

**M.:** Do you want to know what happened before? The Bible says: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; on the day when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from the sky to destroy them all. So it will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

*After reading this text from the Bible, my opponent looked meaningfully at me.*

## VEDIC PROPHECIES

**M.M.d.:** In the Bhavishya Purana, Jesus Christ is mentioned long before His appearance, as well as the flood; in the Vishnu Purana, there is a rather amusing story that describes life on planet Earth before and after the flood; When the knowledge of the Vedas was stolen by the demon Hayagriva, the Lord, taking the form of a giant fish, saved it; He killed a demon, made a flood and destroyed a civilization that had deviated the principles of religion; Manu, the forefather of humanity, with his wife Shatarupa, and seven wise men plunged with all belongings, “taking every creature on a pair” on their ship and survived a natural disaster, and then, having reached the promised land, sowed the seed of a new culture.

**M.:** Why was the flood?

**M.M.d.:** For the sins, or rather, when the demons took power on Earth, the Lord arranged a flood to destroy them. People interpreted the knowledge of the Vedas, for the sake of their vested interests... Now a similar case... when the knowledge of the Vedas, which Krishna gave, is interpreted for self-interest it loses its value. Then the Lord Himself descends or sends His sons (for example, Jesus Christ) or servants...

**M.:** Who are the demons?

**M.M.d.:** These are individuals who oppose the will of God; they are trying to seize power and establish their own rules.

**M.:** The demon himself doesn't exist?

**M.M.d.:** No, why? In the material world, there are divine and demonic individuals who are constantly in struggle with each other, representing the forces of the so-called good and evil...

**M.:** So there was such a person.

## ABOUT CHRISTIAN SECTS

**M.M.d.:** As far as I know, there are half a million Christian sects in the world, and each of them, relying on the Bible, says that they are the best, and all the others are worth nothing ... as they say, “wolves in sheep's clothing.” They all speak the Bible, but cannot agree among themselves. What's the matter?

**M.:** The reason for the million disagreements of Christians is that they do not seek God, but rather aspire to know more about God. They want to know about God, like Eve... she wanted to get knowledge, but she did not seek God in her heart. “You will be like gods, you will know what wisdom is ...” — the serpent seduced Eve with these words, and she ate the forbidden fruit... such is the story ... the most important thing is to know God.

**M.M.d.:** How is it possible without knowing anything about Him? The soul is atomic, and God is infinitely great. Without the grace of God Himself, no one can come close to God. Only when God deigns to show Himself to us, only then can we see the truth.

**M.:** Of course, God reveals Himself to us when we call upon Him... you said that I am an intelligent person... but only God knows whether I am intelligent or not because only He Himself knows how much He has found a place in my heart. And this is an indicator of my intelligence, my wisdom. When God is in my heart, I reverently open the Holy Scripture and admire the wisdom of God, moving even closer to Him — that is the right way.

**M.M.d.:** Since you are on your way to God and you already have a connection with Him, what can you tell us (our readers) about God?

**M.:** God is love. He created this world. He came to this earth and died for our sins, taking those sins upon Him...

**M.M.d.:** Wait a minute, you said that God is dead. Can God really die? He is eternal from all eternal, and you are eternal... There is one philosopher who said: "God is dead!" He just wanted to show off, stand out from among his own kind ... but he ended badly. Do you also think that God can die (and then rise again)? This is incredibly absurd. "I am the God of the living, not the dead." The concept of God and the concept of death are incompatible with each other.

**M.:** Christ died in the human body, but his divine nature of course...

**M.M.d.:** Chris is Christ, but now we are talking about God, who sent Christ to atone for sins...

**M.:** Look, sin is so strong that even the most perfect angel could not atone for it. Only God Himself can be set free from sins because the universal law is eternal like God Himself ... it has been broken and a corresponding price was needed...

**M.M.d.:** Do you think the material universe is eternal?

**M.:** It is based on God...

**M.M.d.:** It's clear. God is eternal, but the question is: "Is the universe eternal?"

**M.:** (quotes) "... and then the universe will be eternal."

**M.M.d.:** The universe was originally created, therefore it will be the end; it cannot be eternal, because it is created. There is a beginning and there will be an end.

**M.:** No, there will never be the end!

**M.M.d.:** Do not worry, if there is an end, there will be a beginning. The matter is eternal as energy! In this sense, the material world is eternal; cyclically; it manifests itself, then goes into the unmanifest state; this repeats constantly and there is no beginning or end to it, but the creation itself will come to an end — no doubt about it.

**M.:** No! This is some sort of phase... if a person went to the first class, then upon graduation of it he will go to the next; this is not the end, it is a phase of development.

**M.M.d.:** The universe is created, and it must once be destroyed; this body is like a universe, we got it once and it will die sometime, but after that, we will incarnate again in some other body...

**M.:** Do you believe that the dead will be resurrected?

**M.M.d.:** What is of the flesh is flesh, but what of the spirit is the spirit! The question is not about the "resurrection." There is an eternal substance, such as spirit and an eternal spiritual form, and there is a changing form — matter. There is lower material energy and there is higher spiritual energy; in the combination of these two, both the creation of the universe and the birth of the material body take place; you said that "there was a body, and that God breathed life into him, the spirit." Spiritual birth is when we gain knowledge of the soul and its connection with God. We receive this knowledge through a spiritual master...

**M.:** Christ speaks: only through Me...

**M.M.d.:** He is a spiritual master, so He told his followers that they could enter the kingdom of God only through Him. I also tell my disciples that they will become Krishna conscious only through me, but there are other teachers who can make a person God-conscious.

God is great, and He manifests Himself for different types of people, taking many forms and images, sending each one his spiritual master, to all at once — a prophet or messiah, to preach the word of God and to give knowledge of the one and infinitely varied God. For example, if Christ does not suit you because you are a Muslim, you can turn to Mohammed. For the Mohammedans, Mohammed is an authority and there is no other for them. Accept Allah as your God and Mohammed as His Prophet, if he teaches you to love God. Shrila Prabhupada (I repeat) said that Christ is our teacher because he teaches the love of God.

**M.:** I doubt that Mohammed represents God.

**M.M.d.:** Well? And the Jews, for example, doubt the authority of Christ, they do not recognize Him in any capacity. It was not by chance that they crucified Him, considering Him an impostor; they consider Him neither God nor teacher; they do not need a mediator. They say that it is necessary to serve directly to God, following the law that was given through Moses, according to their TESTAMENT. They made a pact with God.

**M.:** This is a lie...

**M.M.d.:** But, nevertheless, they believe that they have the truth; after all, all religions are given by God and in each of them there is truth; for some, Judaism,

Islam, for others, Christianity, whose representatives consider all others as sectarians, although they themselves essentially belong to a sect; There are many Christian sects, but they all talk about God and try to teach the law of God. The only question is, what would those who teach themselves, follow; A personal example is the best teacher. "Much can be proved with a word, but only an act will finally convince." "A tree is known by its fruits; a bad tree does not bear good fruit, just as a good tree doesn't bear bad fruit." If the tree does not bear fruit at all, then it is cut down and thrown into the fire! It is said that the ax, chopping down such a tree, lies at the roots of it!

**M.:** There is a barrel of honey, but if you throw a spoon of tar in it, the honey will look like honey, but...

**M.M.d.:** But what reasonable person will throw there the tar? Why should we throw tar in a barrel of honey? Let's follow at least our commandments, and let us not throw...

**M.:** But it is already thrown. Mohammed had thrown a spoon of tar!

**M.M.d.:** Do you think that Mohammedans do not want to serve God or do not love Him? Do not tell them about it. After all, it is the love for Allah that encourages them to commit terrorist acts, to fight against dissidents and infidels as much as Christians defend their positions; we still remember both the crusades and the fires of the Inquisition, which burned throughout Europe. All of them — the true champions of faith — out of love for the One God, drew swords and fought each other, brother and brother, father and son, some clan rebelled against another.

**M.:** They want, but they...

**M.M.d.:** They probably want to love God, it's in the nature of the soul, but they don't know God. How can you love someone you don't know? People do not want to know God to love Him; they want to exploit God, taking unlimited use of everything that belongs to God. They pray to God for the kingdom of God "on earth as it is in heaven", confusing desirable with reality, illusions with reality. They are simply materialists and therefore constantly fight for what does not belong to them. God gives everyone his share in accordance with one's (karma) pious and impious activity, and everyone would have to be content with what was given to him, without claiming anything else. Enough for everyone — just do not take too much, don't take the share of another being. For example, there are carnivores and herbivores; each of them accepts only what is its share; some eat flesh, others eat grass. But man is inclined to lay claim to what belongs to someone else, declaring himself the king of nature, the crown of creation. This is nonsense... he should study the Vedic scriptures and follow the principles of religion, without pretending to someone else's property...



By nature, man is a vegetarian. But by virtue of more developed consciousness, he can violate this law of nature; as a result, problems arise. Here is the answer to the question, why people constantly fight. Jealous of each other and of God Himself, who created them, they claim to what doesn't belong to them, imitating God the Creator, wanting to exploit the resources of material nature. The householder prays to God, and the thief prays to the same God. The thief prays in order to rob the householder and the householder prays so that the thief does not climb into the house, in his absence; and whoever more strongly prays, God satisfies him...

**M.:** In your opinion, whoever is praying harder will get it?

**M.M.d.:** Yes...

**M.:** So God is the source of good and evil at the same time?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, it turns out like this — whether you like it or not, but such is the truth. God is the source of all things and the cause of all causes; He created this world, not for pleasure; the material world is a prison for disobedient and recalcitrant souls.

There was one teacher; when his students frolicked, he said to one and the other: "Take each other by the ears, and now pull... stronger, stronger — that's what he needs, like this..."

Material nature acts in the same way; the stronger a person seeks to possess something for his sense gratification, the more suffering this nature gives him. Man is happy in this world as long as he does not try to become happy!

**M.:** So the mother who has a daughter, prays to God, blesses her daughter, and rapist also prays to the same God to rape her?

**M.M.d.:** Yes...

**M.:** And God gives him strength?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, but God does not teach this; no scripture allows killing animals, eating meat, it limits sensual pleasures by marriage, and sex — by conceiving children, placing responsibility on parents for their upbringing; God does not encourage the use of intoxicants and gambling and adultery. God is always on the side of the TRUTH! Therefore, He is not responsible for the actions of the abuser.

**M.:** This is a lie.

**M.M.d.:** Why? It's true... even if it doesn't suit you, it's true. God is the cause of all causes, and there is nothing but God. You do not know God, how can you dispute this statement?

*And then a verbal brawl broke out... a Christian shouted: "You don't understand!" And I stood my ground and tried to convince him that I understand and*

*that he does not understand anything... in the end, he again took the Bible in his hands and attempted to make me see the light.*

**M.:** All problems on Earth occur because...

**M.M.d.:** ... we are trying to understand the spiritual with the help of material senses and mind, not accepting the authority of the Vedic scriptures and those who see the truth; that is the problem. If you know why this is happening, then you could stop me...

**M.:** There is a Devil who does...

*When a Christian preacher does not know what to say, he remembers the Devil. This is the last argument, after which, mêlée or curses begin — an old song. After giving my opponent a little breath, I continued.*

**M.M.d.:** Do you think the Devil acts independently of God? That there is some person who can compete with God? Nonsense! Everyone obeys God, and the Devil works for God.

**M.:** The Devil does not obey God; he interferes with God.

**M.M.d.:** If God is the cause of all causes, then He is the cause of the Devil as well. Where would the Devil come from, if not the will of the Lord?

**M.:** There was Lucifer, the perfect angel; he departed from God...

**M.M.d.:** So Lucifer came from God?

**M.:** The Devil is not from God.

**M.M.d.:** You said that he was “the perfect angel, but departed from God.” These are your words, it means he was created by God, although he accepted a hostile attitude towards God... this in itself proves that there is nothing but God, although to say that everything is God is not correct. The philosophy of monism is contrary to bhakti, devotional loving service, but it does exist; all obey God...

**M.:** SATAN — means an opponent of God; he is limited by God...

**M.M.d.:** But he was created by God.

**M.:** He is not created by God...

**M.M.d.:** Do you think the Devil is higher than God?

**M.:** God controls the Devil: “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt.” The problem is that people choose the side of the Devil, not God.

**M.M.d.:** That’s right, but ultimately, everyone obeys the will of God. God granted the right to choose. You can follow, or not follow, you can surrender, or not surrender; giving the right to choose, God cannot force you to surrender onto Him without your desire. But the material nature, which is the lower energy of God, can push you, make you... This material nature is ruled by God, although it

seems to be separate from Him. God has neither righteous nor sinners. He has neither enemies nor friends... He equally treats everyone... and yet Krishna says that if someone is His friend, He is his friend too.

**M.:** The Bible says, you are My friends if you do all that I command you...

**M.M.d.:** God is always on the side of the truth. He Himself is the truth, the ultimate truth, in the highest sense of the word; thus, if your desires coincide with the plans of God, you are perfectly in order ... But God does not harbor enmity and hatred towards those who are hostile to Him.

**M.:** We will never agree because you follow the Vedas, and I am the Bible...

**M.M.d.:** Why not? If in God we all are brothers and sisters, and the Vedas affirm this, then accept the Vedic concept, and the peace will be achieved — this is perfect; every being is a soul; do not be a sectarian, accept what God has given, incarnated as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, He gave a perfect philosophy, called *achintya-bheda-bheda-tattva*, about inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference. He began the SANKIRTANA movement, the congregational chanting of the holy name of Krishna. Chant the holy name, follow the principles of your religion, and you will become a man conscious of God. In this pure consciousness, you will see the world in a different way.

**M.:** We are all created by Adam...

**M.M.d.:** And Adam came from whom? God created Adam, and Eve from his rib. God created both the serpent and the tree, under which He laid the ax to cut it down when it ceased to bear fruit. But Adam has nothing to do with what we are discussing. Krishna says: "I am the seed-giving father..." All moving and immovable beings came from the seed of Krishna. God is the Father of Adam and Eve; He is the father of Jews, Hindus and Christians, believers and atheists. Accept what God said. In Bhagavad-Gita (Song of God), Krishna says: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me." Why don't you obey God? He said: "Surrender onto ME!" If you do not know how to surrender, approach a spiritual master and he will teach you. Just chant the holy name of God! What are the objections, is it difficult?

**M.:** God did not create evil...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, He Himself did not create anything at all; HE IS GOD! If someone creates, maintains and destroys, he is not a god, but a servant of God! God does not need to create anything, because He is God. If someone creates, maintains, or destroys, then he is a servant of God. God did not create either evil or good, but those who created acted in accordance with His will and purpose.

## **GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS!**

The sun shines to all (good and bad); under its rays grow good crops and poisonous plants. Without the sun, life is impossible in this world; however, the sun, being the cause of life, is not responsible for the actions of living beings; it is impartial. Another example is the Ganges River. It is a Holy River, but it feeds a poisonous tree that grows on its bank. Similarly, Krishna is the cause of all causes, but He is not responsible for bad and good deeds, for the folly that exists in this world. God is simultaneously the cause of both absolute knowledge and absolute ignorance. God is not a usurper; He gave the right to choose, He created a great many different types of living beings, the righteous and sinners. God is perfect, and He should not be limited; only an imperfect knowledge of Him makes us act sinfully; ignorance — that is what causes our suffering.

Every creature is a soul! Accept this philosophy, it is perfect; look at the world from this position... We turn to the same God with different material aspirations — this is what creates problems. The Shrimad Bhagavatam says that by rejecting any religious practice that pursues material, selfish ends, this Bhagavata Purana proclaims the highest truth that only those who are pure in heart can understand... This truth frees man from three-fold miseries (body and mind, other living beings, forces of nature). True knowledge frees one from suffering.

**M.:** The Bible says that Christ liberates.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, Christ gives knowledge. If we speak of truth, and the truth is Christ, then He points the way to truth... He says: "He who calls the name of the Lord will be saved!"

**M.:** Christ gives suffering...

**M.M.d.:** Sends the Devil to test and strengthen faith; remember how he tempted Jesus Christ Himself?

**M.:** Lord Jesus Christ, save us and have mercy, deliver us from evil... do not lead us into temptation...

**M.M.d.:** So Christ can "lead you into temptation"?

# CHAPTER SIX

## NEW CHAPTER IN OUR STORY

In June 2008, I sent Vasudeva to Minsk.

- Rent an apartment for me, let's start a fresh page in the history of Hare Krishna in Belarus.

By that time I had friends in Belarus. My books began to spread and the need for my personal presence increased greatly. In parallel with this, I was getting tooth implants, combining business with pleasure. I settled in a small one-room apartment on Platonov Street, opposite the Chinese Embassy. Having paid the apartment for two months in advance, I hoped for significant success. The enterprise was risky but caused by an extreme internal sense of necessity. Krishna was pushing me from the inside, and my ambitions did not let me rest.

By that time in Belarus ISKCON had difficulties with “daddy” (president Lukashenko) — they were not re-registered. And after some time the authorities decided to build a large house on the site of the temple, transferring the land into the hands of a construction company. In view of these events, my chance of success has greatly increased.

All who knew me for a long time treated me with respect and were not averse to taking part in my mission. Arriving here, I restored relations with my well-wishers, and over the next few months, I re-initiated few devotees.

After I moved into the apartment, which became an ashram, in just a few days, new people came to my program.

It was a married couple (husband, wife, and daughter).

They knew Hare Krishna, used to visit the temple, but somehow did not find themselves in ISKCON. Because of formalization and the struggle for survival, the society for Krishna consciousness has lost the attractiveness that distinguishes it from any other religion. Krishna consciousness is simply pure God consciousness. This is not a religion, in the generally accepted meaning of the word. When someone calls this movement of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu a religion, opposition naturally arises. Christians, for example, say: “Why do we need your religion, we have our own, only through Christ can you come to your Heavenly Father.” In saying this, they really do not even know who their Father is. Krishna is the father, the giver of the seed of life. He is the father of all living beings, moving and not moving. He is the father of even the creator of the universe, Brahma, who is worshiped by Christians, without them even knowing it.

Everyone worships the same God, Krishna, but they often do it in the wrong way. This is the problem! In the age of Kali-yuga, God will be worshiped by chanting His names, by performing sankirtana. This method of worship is established by God Himself and is recommended by the Vedic shastras.

When Vasudeva came to Minsk to rent an apartment, I sent another devotee to help him. Together they held several street *harinamas* in Minsk.

When I saw young people in my program, I asked them:

- How did you find out about me?
- We met your disciples at the Komarovsky market when they were singing Hare Krishna... and we were very much impressed. One Maharaja came to ISKCON, and at first, we thought that these were his disciples, but then it turned out that it was Vasudeva.

Hearing this story, without a second thought I gave my new followers spiritual names, a rosary (*japa*), and conducted an *agnihotra-yajna*.

This was a fresh page in the preaching Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's SANKIRTANA in Belarus, a continuation of the story I started more than a quarter of a century ago.

## ACHYUTA

For many years I stopped at Achyuta, supporting and inspiring him to devotional service. But my efforts were like water in the sand. Achyuta did not take my side because he wanted to be independent and enjoy material life.

The last time I stayed with him more than what was supposed to be, our relationship became aggravated and this stimulated my decision to rent an apartment and connect with new people. No one could have expected, but the result was phenomenal. One had only to abandon the old connections and get out of the well-grooved rut, as the panorama of my success opened up on the new turn — Krishna supported my initiative and the goddess of fortune shed mercy. When old devotees get tired and their bad habits get the better of them, you need to leave them and start preaching to new people. The influx of fresh forces and new horizons open when we risk.

Krishna consciousness is the path of eternal good fortune. Like any truly spiritual movement, it is supported by acharyas. The need to become an acharya, to take responsibility for his preaching, to abandon the hackneyed methods, to accept new ways and means to spread the glory of the holy name.

Our generation has outlived its time without giving the world a single acharya. A new generation is coming to replace it — the future arises from the present and the present — from the past. You cannot live by the past only. It is neces-

sary to make efforts and open unfathomable fount of the soul. The spiritual is always modern, and the material becomes obsolete from the moment it born. Day by day, our dress (material body) decays, and the soul is always young. Krishna consciousness and preaching it is always in the present. Prabhupada taught that one cannot preach with the old methods, one must constantly look for new ones. Guided by this, I decided to disregard the tradition that has become a custom, and revive the spiritual values our sampradaya is so rich with.

## **VISHVANATHA**

With him, we have maintained relationships for several years, and possibly several lives. I saw how he develops, being in some duality, whether to accept the guru of ISKCON or to prefer me. In the beginning, he wanted to combine both, but very soon he was denied by ISKCON. After we went to St. Petersburg together, his attitude towards me changed, he became more serious and, eventually, expressed a desire to become my official disciple. I took care of him like a father.

## **YASHOMATINADANA**

I was acquainted with him from the time of perestroika, even before my trip to America. Relations have evolved over the years. He was a disciple of Gopal Krishna, but not finding the opportunity to show his abilities and talents, with which, however, every devotee is endowed, after much deliberation and doubt, he took my side, becoming one of the leaders, developing the sankirtana preaching in Belarus.

## **VRAJESHVARA**

He was with ISKCON for 15 years, but he never received a second initiation. I invited him to join me. For a while, he lived in my ashram in Yekaterinburg, served Panchatattva, and then returned to Belarus to participate in my program.

PANCHATATTVA and JANAKA joined me on my last visit to Minsk. Anirudha, who became my first officially initiated disciple, preached to both of them.

ANIRUDHA, DRAUPADI, and RENUKA were my first official disciples in Belarus. I was pleased to see how they are progressing in their spiritual life, day by day. In the second year of our relationship, I installed the deities of Shri Gaura-Nitai in their homes, and gave them *gayatri-mantra*; having received darshan, they turned their home into the temple of the Lord.

MY BLESSINGS ALWAYS are with my sincere devotees. May Lord Chaitanya bestow His special mercy upon them by giving them the nectar of *krishna-prema*.

If one of them becomes a pure devotee of Shri Shri Radha-Krishna, my life will be crowned with success.

## **WORLD OF ENERGIES**

Once again, I met with my old opponents with Nikolai Panchishin and Vecheslav Bobrovich and had a conversation with them.

**12/24/2009. Minsk.**

### **National State Library.**

TALK WITH THE SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER NIKOLAI PANCHISHIN and his group. Until recently, Nicholas taught ideology at the Institute of International Relations; now, in his words, he is developing a theosophical model of society, based on Blavatsky.

**NICHOLAI:** No dogmatic lectures. Everything is very democratic. If someone has an idea, then it is discussed, while it is interesting to the majority, then proceed to the next.

Everyone has the right to vote, accept or reject someone's authority, stay with his opinion, without imposing it on others. In our classes, you can sing mantras, dance or practice hatha yoga.

After reviewing the statutory provisions of the Minsk Theosophists, on their terms, I received an invitation to participate in the discussion of the impersonal and personal aspects of the Absolute Truth.

## **THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH, THE IMPERSONAL AND PERSONAL ASPECT OF IT**

**Nicholai:** As for India, for me, it is very important, I adhere to the *advaita* philosophy. Vaisnavas and *advaita* philosophy are two opposites.

**M.M.d.:** From the standpoint of philosophy — yes, but from the standpoint of practice — no! In Bhagavad-Gita (4.11), Krishna says: "Everyone follows My path in all respects..." The same idea is confirmed in Shrimad-Bhagavatam (2.3.10):

*akamah sarva-kamo va  
moksha-kama udara-dhih  
tivrena bhakti-yogena  
yadjeta purusham param*



“A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must, by all means, worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead.”

In the Bhagavatam (Sh.B. 1.2.11) it is said:

*avadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvam yaj jnanam advayam  
brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti shabdyate*

“Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramatma or Bhagavan.”

The impersonal (Brahman), local (Paramatma) and personal aspect of the Absolute (Bhagavan) are different levels of His realization. The impersonal aspect is the realization of *sat*, eternal being; *chit* — knowledge, and *ananda* — an aspect of the bliss of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Shri Krishna is the full realization of *sat-chit-ananda*. Is it clear?

**NICHOLAI:** We have a topic that we are discussing today. We take the Bible and try to understand what is hidden behind Jehovah, Elohim, etc.

**M.M.d.:** If we are talking about God, and He is one, then we will definitely find common points of contact. Here we do not disagree; the difference of views and opinions does not make people enemies of each other. Everyone says that God is one, there are no two, three or more Gods. There are many names for one God; for example, Jehovah, Christ, Buddha, Allah, Krishna, Rama, etc. — these are the names of the one God. There are countless such names of God, the main one being Krishna. Why? Because He is the cause of all causes and He has no cause! This is confirmed in the Brahma-samhita: *ishvarah paramah krishnah sat-chit-ananda vigrahah...* Krishna’s body is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss (unlike ours). This is the fundamental difference between the conditioned soul and Krishna; our body is not eternal, it is a lump of ignorance, a source of suffering because it is material; but the body of Krishna is *sat-chit-ananda*; it is spiritual and therefore not different from Himself — this is the fundamental difference. Our body is material, and Krishna’s body is spiritual.

**NICHOLAI:** Great, we will discuss this topic, but first, let’s introduce ourselves.

**M.M.d.:** My name is Murali Mohan Das, I have been preaching Krishna consciousness since 1980. In fact, I founded a Krishna consciousness society here...

**NICHOLAI:** And what is happening to it now?

**M.M.d.:** With Krishna consciousness or with the society?

**NICHOLAI:** ... with the Krishna consciousness movement.

**M.M.d.:** It is spread worldwide. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said: *prithivite ache yata nagaradi grama sarvatra prachara haibe mora nama* — in every town and

village the chanting of My name will be heard... And we see how this happens before our eyes. I have just returned from India, where, on a pilgrimage, I visited all the holy places associated with the pastimes of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: Mayapur, Jagannatha Puri (where he spent the last 18 years of His life) and Vrindavan. Every year several millions of people gather at Rathayatra festival in Jagannatha Puri. How big is the population of Minsk?

**NICHOLAS:** About two million...

**M.M.d.:** That's it? At the Rathayatra festival, the number of people gathered is at least two times more than the whole population of Minsk. Can you imagine this?

**NICHOLAI:** We are taking off shoes here. If you want, you can take off your shoes too.

*Having said this, Nicholai took off his shoes and climbed into a soft armchair and sat with crossed legs, as real yogis do. After that, he offered to all those who did not introduce themselves to give their names, social status, and positions.*

**PANCHATATTVA DAS:** I am a disciple of Murali Mohan Maharaja, I live in Minsk; entrepreneur...

**NICHOLAI:** Once again, what is your name?

**PANCHATATTVA DAS:** Panchatattva das!

**NICHOLAI:** Punch — five...

**PANCHATATTVA DAS:** *Panchatattva* — five truths, I said Panchatattva. When Chaitanya came to this world, He was accompanied by four companions... He is the fifth; all five are called *Panchatattva*. I am a servant of Panchatattva.

**NICHOLAI:** I see...

**M.M.d.:** *Panchatattva*, of which we speak, is the full manifestation of the Absolute Truth.

**NICHOLAI:** I see...

*After Panchatattva, Janaka and Vishvanatha introduced themselves.*

**JANAKA DAS:** I am also a student of Murali Mohan... I live in Minsk; I study as a banker (in the third year) and work.

**NICHOLAI:** Is it difficult to combine it with Krishna consciousness?

**JANAKA DAS:** Krishna consciousness is the most important... If Krishna is placed in the center, everything else will automatically fall into place...

**NICHOLAS:** Yes, if there is no consciousness, then everything else is useless.

**VICTOR:** I am a fourth-year student at the Pedagogical Institute... I am interested in a healthy lifestyle; IMMORTALITY, if you will. I want to know life in all

its manifestations, not excluding anything. Align everything with each other so that there are no disputes and contradictions inside; find my place in all this.

*The last was Vishvanatha das.*

**VISHVANATHA DAS:** I am very grateful to you that you invited us. My name is Vishvanatha das. I am a disciple of His Divine Grace Murali Mohan Maharaja. My service is the distribution of transcendental literature.

**NICHOLAI:** Are you ready for synthesis, communication, and unification with all spiritual movements?

**VISHVANATHA DAS:** My divine teacher will cover this topic a little later.

**NICHOLAS:** I see! Well, let's relax first... Otherwise, it looks like when a girl is asked a question, she is trembling, worried, as in the exam...

I told Murali that today we will have a round table, and everyone has the opportunity to ask a question and speak out.

*Sneakily I looked at the peephole of a hidden camera under the ceiling and smiled. The all-seeing eye does not slumber. ROUND TABLE with sharp corners.*

*The desire to combine incompatible things: material pleasures with the spiritual life is like trying to make a fire by pouring water on it. Bhakti philosophy is not compatible with impersonalism and Buddhism. Krishna says, "Abandon all religions and surrender unto Me."*

*But if people think that they are Krishna themselves, then to whom to surrender? Or if people think that God is emptiness, then to whom to surrender? Only when there two personalities, love can be between them, otherwise, whom to love? Nobody... Therefore, impersonalists, imitating God, open doors for sensual pleasures for themselves. People do not want to surrender to Krishna — they are atheists. Even those who consider themselves believers do not actually accept Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By deceiving themselves, feeding illusions and imitating devotion, they cannot achieve inner peace.*

**NICHOLAI:** What is theosophy, esoterica... do any of you know what it is?

*At the same time, Nikolai looked around from above to everyone present. Taking advantage of the confusion, before Nikolai himself gave his definition, I said:*

**M.M.d.:** Theosophy is the knowledge that God exists. We all agree that we acknowledge the existence of God. On the other hand, theology is the knowledge of WHO IS GOD, knowledge of God. Here we may have differences of opinion. For example, the impersonalists believe that God has neither form, nor intel-

ligence, nor feelings — He is incorporeal, impersonal Brahman. They deny the existence of the personality of God as a spiritual being, and, in the end, deny the existence of God Himself, opening for themselves access to the material senses gratification.

**NICHOLAI:** Yes, we are Gods...

**M.M.d.:** By Parashara Muni's definition, God or Bhagavan is the One who has six opulences: all power, all wealth, all knowledge, all renunciation, all glory, and all beauty. It is necessary to recognize the fact that God is the source of all in existence.

*In the Brahma-samhita it is said: ishvarah paramah krishnah... Krishna, whose body is eternal, filled with knowledge and bliss, is the cause of all causes, and He has no cause. After analyzing this, we find that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead; He possesses in full all the opulences and matches to the above statement.*

## AFTERWORD

Questioning, formalities are not compatible with ease and revelation. Nicholai's concern was passed on to everyone, and it didn't matter that he tried to hide it, it didn't work well. The desire to combine incompatible things in itself leads to nervousness and anxiety. Material life and spiritual perfection cannot be combined in any way; they can develop in parallel. The mistake of all the religious reformers was that they tried to combine the material with the spiritual, not knowing how it all relates to Krishna. Religion without God, without love and without serving God is a waste of time; *shruti smriti puranadi pancharatra vidhi vina ay chantiki harer bhakti uptatayayava kalpate...* bhakti not based on the *shastras*, knowledge of the Upanishads, Puranas and Narada-Pancharatra, causes only anxiety in society. No matter how much political leaders call up to people for happiness, happiness does not come.

When in the end, we sang Hare Krishna, only then some relaxation came, the tension subsided. But we already had to go back to the *ashram*.

The desire of the conditioned soul to control the situation is stronger than the desire to serve God, thus it always fails. They say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Unfortunately, people do not understand this. They do not know that simply by bowing their heads to the lotus feet of Krishna, all problems can be solved and peace and prosperity can be achieved, but only good wishes are just not enough

**MINSK 01/08/2010**

*The second conversation with the candidate of philosophical sciences, head of the department of political science and international relations of the Minsk State Linguistic University V.I. Bobrovich. A few years ago, we already met with Vyacheslav Ivanovich to discuss problems in modern politics. In light of the achievements of modern science, philosophical thought, and transformations in modern society, we examined the Vedic system VARNASHRAMA-DHARMA. Today, in continuation of this topic, we touched upon the basic principles of bhagavata-dharma or Krishna consciousness.*



*The Shrimad Bhagavatam says: “Being full of contradictions, all forms of religion but bhagavata-dharma work under conceptions of fruitful results and distinctions of “you and I” and “yours and mine.” The followers of Shrimad-Bhagavatam have no such consciousness. They are all Krishna conscious, thinking that they are Krishna’s and Krishna is theirs. There are other, low-class religious systems, which are contemplated for the killing of enemies or the gain of mystic power, but such religious systems, being full of passion and envy, are impure and temporary. Because they are full of envy, they are full of irreligion.” (S. B. 6.16.41). “Bhagavata-dharma is free from contradictions. It lacks*

*the concepts of “my religion” and “your religion.” To follow bhagavata-dharma means to follow the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. “How can a religious system that produces envy of one’s self and of others be beneficial for oneself and for them? What is auspicious about following such a system? What is actually to be gained? By causing pain to one’s own self due to self-envy and by causing pain to others, one arouses Your (Lord’s) anger and practices irreligion.” (Sh.B. 6.16.42).*

*Any religious movement, with the exception of bhagavata-dharma — the religion of eternal service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead — is simply organized violence against oneself and others. For example, numerous religions prescribe the sacrifice of animals. Such sacrifices do not benefit neither people nor animals...*

## **CIVILIZED SOCIETY**

Every civilized society is divided into four classes (*varnas*) and four stages of spiritual life (*ashrams*). By performing his prescribed duties according to social status and spiritual realization, one satisfies the Supreme Personality of Godhead. These duties (*dharma*) are not determined by the person himself, but by the influence of the various modes of nature and *karma* (occupation/activity). In Vedic literature, this system was called the *varnashrama-dharma*. It is designed to achieve the consciousness of God, love for God and to achieve ultimate liberation from the circle of birth and death. This is the God-centered concept of life. If concentric circles are drawn from one center, they will never intersect with each other; similarly, if we place Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the center of our activity, then our interests will never collide. In the material world, there is inequality: there are smart, there are foolish people, there are poor and rich, men and women — great inequality. This inequality is due to various kinds of activities and the various influences of the *gunas* (modes of nature). Trying to equalize everyone, the foolish rulers of the world face insurmountable difficulties. For example, a bird needs a couple of grains, and an elephant needs 40 kilograms of grain. If they are equalized and given the same amount of food, will it be fair? No!

While speaking of justice, people deny the existence of God, reserving a place for themselves. Since the place of God seems vacant, now everyone is trying to take it. As a result, a struggle arises between individual aspirants and entire nations, states and those who identify themselves with one religion or another. Religion without God! How do you like it? Everyone strives to become God. In science, in art, in politics, in business — everyone wants to become: the most learned, claiming absolute knowledge; the richest, trying to take possession of

all the treasures of the world, the most powerful, and the greatest, to rule and enjoy all that falls into his field of vision. The communists, for example, tried to unite into the International, in order to nationalize all the resources and riches of material nature, thus pretending to the property of God. If you remember their hymn: "We will destroy the whole world of violence / To the ground and then / We are ours, we will build a new world / Who was nothing, that will be all," that is to become God! This is called *maya*. When someone wants to take the place of God, imitating God (the greatest, the richest, the most learned, etc.), it is called *maya*, illusion.

In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna says:

*bhoktaram yajna-tapasam  
sarva-loka-maheshvaram  
suhridam sarva-bhutanam  
jnatva mam shantim ricchati*

In the universe, everything (the planets and the demigods) belongs to Krishna. He enjoys everyone, and He is a friend to everyone. To become happy and satisfied, it is enough to know these three truths: that everything belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna; that Krishna enjoys all good things, and that He is everyone's best friend. If a person does not know this and acts on the basis of the bodily concept of life, material nature will constantly send misfortunes and miseries on him.

Brahminical, that is Vedic or Aryan culture is based on the principles of spiritual life. Its goal is the consciousness of God, the development of love for God and the achievement of liberation from the circle of birth and death. A civilized person knows who he is (as an eternal soul) and knows who God is.

**V. Bobrovich:** As a political analyst, I had a question that relates to my work. In the twentieth century, the largest event was The Great October Revolution of 1917 and all that was connected with it, and then, that particular path that the former Soviet Union showed the world. I am interested to find out, within your teachings and adherents, is there any particular strategy or understanding that what you and I experienced here is different from the west, is there any particularity in this? Or the experience of our compatriots suggests some kind of amendment? Of course, in America the situation is different; it differs from the one in Belarus and Russia. If you understand this, then you need to think that you have to somehow take it into account and make some amendments in your work.

**M.M.д.:** Preaching Krishna consciousness since 1980, I met with various people. In order for my sermon to be successful, I have to take into account the peculiar-

ities of a particular place, the peculiarities of the character of people, their culture, traditions and, in a certain sense, their state policy. In Sanskrit, this is called *deshha-kala-patra*, i.e. to preach according to the place, time, and circumstances. But knowing the common problem for everyone, I do not meet resistance, because I appeal to the person, not to his body, but to his soul, which represents this person. If I managed to “reach out” to their essence, then regardless of external, material conditions, social, ethnic and other factors, Krishna consciousness is perceived adequately. Because initially, in whatever body the soul is (in the body of an American or Russian, Christian or Hindu, man or woman), it is conscious of Krishna. Krishna Consciousness is pure consciousness that is inherent in every living being. We are all connected with Krishna, as His inalienable parts, we are initially conscious of Krishna. Now our consciousness has been polluted by materialistic ideas about life, and we have forgotten about Him. But if I reach out to your true “I”, then in whatever language I speak to you, you will understand me. In fact, Krishna consciousness is a language of love that all living beings understand, even those in lower forms of life. I am preaching Krishna consciousness, not some religion. This is pure consciousness, which is inherent in every being. It manifests itself in the presence of Krishna or one who has the love for Krishna. Eyes can see, but the necessary condition is the presence of the sun or some other source of light. Similarly, love for Krishna and Krishna consciousness is manifested when we meet pure devotees of Krishna. In fact, I simply remind people of Krishna and ask them to chant the holy name of Krishna. And since the name “Krishna” is not different from Himself, then anyone who listens and chants this name becomes Krishna conscious. The only warning is that one should not listen about Krishna from non-devotees, neophytes, and demons. If you listen to atheists about God, then you will become an atheist. But if you listen to a true devotee of the Lord, then you will easily become a devotee. Perhaps I lost Krishna consciousness by talking with demons, but having met a pure devotee of the Lord, I gained it back. I accepted Krishna consciousness from one who possesses it, so I myself became conscious of the Lord.

Nobody wants to die (neither the rich, nor the poor, nor the Americans, nor the Russians) in the same way as everyone wants to gain knowledge and become happy. Therefore, we have enough followers among the Belarusians and Americans. Every being is a soul, it is transcendental to all definitions, therefore, from this position, we can preach to everyone and be successful. The very philosophical concept of *aham brahmasmi* — I am the soul, gives us the opportunity to get rid of the false notions about life and so gain common understanding with all living beings. If God, they say, is the FATHER, then in God we are all brothers and sisters. When we attain Krishna consciousness, we immediately become members of one great, spiritual family. We may differ in the level of develop-



ment, material wealth or social status, but there is no equality in the material world, and we are not seeking it. Equality means having equal opportunities to become God conscious and go back home to Godhead.

By nature, the living entity remains the eternal servant of Krishna. Whether we serve society, the family, the nation, cats, dogs, or God, under all circumstances we remain the eternal servants of Krishna. Service to Krishna is also manifested in the service of society...

This is our permanent constitutional position. *Jivera svarupa haya krishner nitya-dasa...* We serve Krishna, sometimes even denying His very existence. We serve the family, the nation, the government or the party, and someone serves us; we are all connected, in one way or another to some service. We serve our ideas or senses that is we serve Krishna not personally, but His energy. We are in bondage to material nature, which is the lower energy of the Lord. Krishna, being the source of all energies (matter and spirit), is independent, commanding all that is material and spiritual in all three worlds.

**V. Bobrovich:** So we will always be someone's servants? Is this axiom, postulate? Where does it come from?

**M.M.d.:** It is a fact. Each person serves somebody or something in exchange for benefits — something that gives him sense gratification, money, position in society, honor, respect, and so-called love and recognition. A husband serves his wife, a wife serves a husband, one friend serves another...

**V. Bobrovich:** In different religions, there are cohorts of people who leave the worldly life. I take it they fully devote themselves to serving God. Right? But take Buddhism, there is not very much expressed service to God... man devotes to the consciousness of something.

**M.M.d.:** If we talk about Buddhism, then this is a completely atheistic concept. It is in direct conflict with *bhakti*, devotional service to God, because there is neither God as a person nor soul, as a spiritual substance. The philosophy of Buddhism is known as *shunyavada* — the philosophy of emptiness. But this does not happen in nature.

In Buddhism, there is no question of serving God, because there is no concept of God at all. It is a religion without God. However, the Buddha himself is the incarnation of Krishna, as stated in the Shrimad Bhagavatam. Although Buddhists are materialists, they nonetheless serve the Buddha, worship Him, and so gradually become purified from materialistic views. Buddha rejected the teachings of the Vedas because people used the Vedic animal sacrifice for gluttony. Buddha forbade his followers to eat meat and, thus, restored the Vedic principle of ahimsa (non-violence). Following certain ethical standards, Buddhists gradually progress; it is difficult for them to accept something transcendental, un-

manifest, beyond the senses. When Buddhists detach themselves from material views, having reached nirvana, they will again turn to the Vedas.

Shankara came after Buddhism and restored the authority of the Vedas, and later Chaitanya Mahaprabhu converted many Buddhists into a cult of bhakti, making them devotees of Krishna.

Krishna is enjoying everything regardless of us. He enjoys in Himself. He gets by without us, but we cannot do without Him. We can be happy and enjoy as much as we are devoted to Him. Krishna says: "All of them — as they surrender unto Me — I reward accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects..." (Bh.G. 4.11).

**V. Bobrovich:** Again, I return to the topic of social order. Society has always been divided into different classes of people. Can this be considered normal? But not what they invented in Soviet times... if we admit that there is a certain hierarchy, Plato also has it... these are the varnas we spoke about last time...

**M.M.d.:** In Bhagavad-gita (4.13), Krishna says: "According to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me..."

**V. Bobrovich:** It would be optimal to return to the system when everyone does his job... to give smart people the opportunity to do what they can...

**M.M.d.:** It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that everyone performs his duties and progresses spiritually.

Krishna has given us body, mind, a gift of speech, and money. There is nothing of ours. Everything belongs to Krishna. He gave us all this only so that we could show love to Him, using all this in the service of Him. If we act in such a consciousness, then we are freed from karmic dependence, from the reactions of any kind of activity (sinful and righteous). This means that we will not need to be born and die, grow old and be ill.

The only thing that belongs to us is love and our life. If we commit ourselves to pure devotional service in full Krishna consciousness, then we return to the spiritual world, where everything is already arranged for our enjoyment (where everything is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss). This is our natural state. Just as a fish feels great in the water, so are we in perfect order when with Krishna in the spiritual world.

When the soul comes in contact with the material energy, through a false ego, identifying itself with the material body, it becomes influenced by the *gunas* of passion and ignorance, and the original love for Krishna transforms into lust. On the one hand, there is love for Krishna, prema, on the other — *kama*, passion or lust. Freud calls this "libido." Material sex is the bondage of material existence, but its nature is spiritual. Therefore, we cannot free ourselves from it in any way

unless we try to attain love for God. As the fire that is contained in the wood, when it burns, turns the wood into ashes, so the love of Krishna, which is in the soul, as soon as it manifests, all impurity in the heart goes away.

It is a sexual desire that makes us identify ourselves, the soul, with the material body and engage in absurd activities, trying to satisfy the senses of this body. Such an attempt to be happy in this world is a foolish pursuit that dooms the soul to eternal suffering in the cycle of birth and death.

Just think, the whole human life has been sacrificed for illusion. In fact, the material body is the source of suffering for the conditioned soul. Like a bird in freedom is happier, as opposed to sitting in a golden cage, so the soul outside this material body is freer. We have a spiritual body, but since we decided to forget God, He gave us a material one. The soul is a living being, it has a mind and feelings. The material body, the senses, and the mind are the covering of the soul, mind, and senses. We look through this eye, we listen through the ear, but it is the cover of our true spiritual sight and hearing. Therefore, we are not able to see God or hear what He tells us. Although Krishna, as the Supersoul (*Paramatma*), is in our heart, however, we do not understand Him, do not hear, and because of our ignorance, we sometimes deny His very existence. Ignorance pollutes our consciousness, and we mistakenly take ourselves for a material body. Being under different identifications, we assume an unnatural position for ourselves, depicting a hero, lover or a corpse, like on a stage... a tree, an animal or a demigod.

We all live in the kingdom of God. One-quarter of all energies make up the material world and three quarters is spiritual. Most living beings are in their natural state of eternal being, knowledge, and bliss in the spiritual world, and only a small part of beings is in the material world. Those who are in the spiritual are called *nitya-siddha* (eternally liberated), and those in the material world are called *nitya-baddha* (eternally conditioned). If all living beings were equally Krishna conscious, then there would be no need for material existence. There would be no need for administration, state power, or criminal law and the laws of religion. The spiritual world is ideal not in the sense of idealization, i.e. attributing to it non-existent qualities, but in the sense of ideality, perfection, which lies in the very nature of the soul. *Ananda maya bhyasat* — the spiritual world is blissful; it is all perfect. Only our imperfect knowledge and judgments about it due to the limitations of our experience makes it no better than a clay pot.

**KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS** is not a religion; it is the pure consciousness of one who is God conscious. Krishna consciousness is the goal of religion. Do not confuse these two concepts.

**V. Bobrovich:** But what is religion, I can judge. Religion is one of the themes or concepts that is widely used in political science and in general in the theory of

the state, in society, because it performs a certain function there and has a quite visible embodiment in its servants. But in terms of assessing its role, I can note (from my own experience, not as a scientist, but as...) that many of those who are adherents of a religion attend churches, mosques, and temples, at the same time, do without what we call purifying the mind. They, like everyone else, are immersed in material concerns, committing countless sins. In Christianity, there is such an attitude that it is not so bad to be sinful, as opposed to how much worse is not to repent.

**M.M.d.:** Sin and repent! If you don't sin, you won't repent!

**V. Bobrovich:** Yes, that's why everyone is sinning, right and left, then they repent and then again... and this will allow them to live within the framework of this ignorance — *tamas*.

**M.M.d.:** ... the euphoria of happiness. Happiness can be in different gunas of nature.

**V. Bobrovich:** Religion acts — in this case, you can agree with Marx — as opium for the people, creating the illusion of liberation, tranquilizer, as a kind of drug. This is clearly seen in these people, because they themselves are not interested in knowing some complicated things (truths) or even purifying their body... they know that there is a certain set of rules that a person can follow to live, hoping that after his death, he will go to heaven... in Christianity there is such a focus on the fact that it is not sins that are most terrible, but pride, when a person disagrees with some statements because he puts himself too high; a mere mortal with all his flaws — it's not so awful... but it is important that he believes...

**M.M.d.:** It is convenient for the government to ill-treat people so that they do not commit coups. "Humiliate a person," said Dostoevsky, "and he's yours!" Beat him, crucify him and in the place of happiness that the soul is looking for, palm off on a pill or a glass of vodka.

**V. Bobrovich:** As a matter of fact, a person does not need any changes or efforts in terms of knowledge of soul and body.

**M.M.d.:** There is no philosophy as such in Christianity. Dogma replaces the knowledge of the soul, and miracles — the knowledge of God.

**V. Bobrovich:** The whole philosophy is narrowed down to some kind of dogma — belief! "I believe because it is absurd!" If I believe, then everything else becomes unimportant...

**M.M.d.:** Bhagavad-Gita says that in accordance with the three gunas of nature (*tama*, *raja* and *sattva-guna*), there are corresponding kinds of faith. Those who are in *tama-guna* worship ghosts; those who are in the *raja-guna* worship the powerful of this world, and those who are in the *sattva-guna* worship the demi-

gods. Accordingly, the results of such worship are different. Those who worship ghosts or spirits will fall into the planets of the ghosts; those who worship demons (the mighty of the world) are born among demons, and those who worship demigods will reach the heavenly planets. Apparently, many people do not know at all who God is, idolizing the forces of nature, themselves, some kind of personality cult, or something mentally concocted. People do not know who they worship! They do not know who God is, so there's no difference for them whom or what to worship. When, because of their ignorance they get in trouble, they begin to moan, curse God, or repent.

God has neither friends nor enemies. He treats everyone equally, and rewards everyone according to one's work, paying back good for good, and for evil — evil! Krishna satisfies the desires of every person in accordance with the person's efforts. If someone wants to forget Krishna, He gives him oblivion. If someone wants to remember Him — He gives memory; if a person commits sinful acts and wants to go to hell, the Lord gives him that opportunity, helping him to achieve the desired goal. Krishna does not push anyone onto the path of sin, but if someone insists, contrary to common sense and the teachings of the Vedic shastras, then He allows him to fulfill his desires. The material world was created from the impure desires of living beings who wished to act independently of God. As I have already said, three-quarters of all living beings are in the spiritual world, beyond the cycle of birth and death, beyond good and evil... this is what interests us.

**V. Bobrovich:** So, what happens is that if a soul is eternal and it is constantly re-born, then you have to think that from the moment of creation there is a certain number of souls? If it is eternal and new ones do not appear... How?

**M.M.d.:** You see, we are not able to count the atoms in the universe, although in the material world everything is limited and everything is counted by someone. There are countless such planets like the Earth in the universe and countless such universes like this one... How can we count the number of souls in the universe with our limited mental abilities? Besides, the soul is not material, so what is the point in your question?

We have some material experience, but no spiritual experience. Our logical conclusions are worthless... The spirit can expand infinitely, it is always in motion while remaining unchanged. Everything that comes from Krishna returns into; while nothing diminishes from Him and nothing is added to Him. One minus one equals one, and one plus one also equals one. He is a thing in itself. He is a spiritual person free to act as He wishes. For ourselves, although we are conditioned, it is incomprehensible what we will do in the next moment of time. How can we understand One who is truly free, being beyond the duality of good and evil, time and space? *Achintya* means unfathomable. Trying to understand

the spiritual world with the help of material feelings and mind, we constantly stumble upon an insurmountable wall. This wall is our consciousness, polluted by false identification of ourselves with the material body and mind.

**V. Bobrovich:** We cannot say when the souls came into existence?

**M.M.d.:** No, we cannot say, because in the spiritual world there is no time — everything is eternal; there is no past, present, or future. Time, which is the impersonal aspect of the Lord, is absent on the Vaikuntha planets in the spiritual world. Therefore, the question: “When?” does not arise for one who has known himself as an eternal soul, has attained eternal existence, knowledge, and bliss. There is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the One who does everything that He wishes, having unlimited desires and unlimited possibilities to carry them out. He makes laws and everyone follows them strictly, but He Himself does not obey them! The name of that person is Krishna. If we accept this, then everything else does not cause us any objections and it becomes clear as the daylight! Krishna gives us knowledge, memory, and forgetfulness...

**V. Bobrovich:** But does something depend on us too?

**M.M.d.:** Yes, our efforts.

**V. Bobrovich:** Probably, this is from this area of our desires. Aladdin — a cherished dream, to get someone who fulfills all our desires. This probably is the way it is all conceived.

**M.M.d.:** Yes, in fact, we cannot fulfill our desires ourselves, but Krishna is the One who fulfills them. Without the sanction of Krishna, we cannot even go to hell. God gives the scriptures, gives the intelligence and freedom to desire, at the same time, puts on us the responsibility for our actions.

**V. Bobrovich:** Freedom of the will...

**M.M.d.:** Yes, free will. We can love Krishna, or we can love a dog... if there is no free will to love or not to love... there would be no love.

**V. Bobrovich:** I got the impression that the materialist note is very strong in the Eastern teachings. Many things can be explained by materialistic factors. For example, Ayurveda says that if you mix such and such products, then such and such a result, such and such emotions, or such and such problems can result from this... In general, it turns out that Eastern religions are very idealistic, generally based on consciousness, and on the other hand are materialistic.

**M.M.d.:** No, the issue is not like that. We are talking about the Absolute Truth from which everything derives (matter and spirit). We do not say this is primary, and that is secondary. All (both consciousness and matter) spring simultaneously from the Absolute Truth.

Both materialism and idealism are all the same materialism since there is no question of comprehending the Absolute Truth, which is the source of every-

thing. Krishna is spiritual, and for Him, there is no difference between matter and spirit. He uses both (matter and spirit) in accordance with His desires so both of them can differ only in their functions. Everything connected with Krishna is spiritual, and that which is not directly connected with Him is material. Where does the line between spirit and matter lie? In our mind. When we identify ourselves with the material body, we try to become happy by satisfying the senses of this body. Such activity is dictated by a false ego because it is material. But when we recognize ourselves as a servant of the Lord and use our body, mind, and talents for Krishna, devoting ourselves to the devotional service of the Lord — this is spiritual. Krishna is spiritual and everything connected with Him is also spiritual. By devoting ourselves to the devotional service of Krishna, our body, mind, and senses are spiritualized. The transformation of energy occurs. So through devotional service to God, we can spiritualize the whole world. There is no matter for one who is Krishna conscious! For example, if you put iron in a fire, heating it up, it begins to show the qualities of fire. It becomes fire — touch, and you will get burned. Similarly, this body is material, but if it is used for Krishna, it is spiritualized and acts as a spiritual one. Some yogis have *siddhas* that allow them to act contrary to the laws of material nature. Scientists cannot explain this phenomenon, but it exists as a fact. There are many wonders in nature. Where do they come from? Krishna is the greatest mystic and He does whatever He pleases to do!

If we have hostile feelings towards Krishna, He becomes our enemy; if friendly, — He is our best friend. He is not a friend and not an enemy, but we perceive Him that way. Now think, in what capacity do we want Krishna? All kinds of relationships that exist in the material world between different living beings are a perverse reflection of the relationship with Krishna. God can be loved not only as a Father but also as a son, friend, and lover. They say: “God is love!” All kinds of love (in friendship, parental, conjugal love) are in Shri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Any woman except one’s wife should be treated as a mother, and a civilized person understands this. Although a woman can be not only a mother but a sister, daughter, and wife, nevertheless, at all times a woman is honored as a mother. Of course, we can love a woman in different ways. The father loves her like a daughter; brother — as a sister; husband — as a wife. There are different types of relations between people: neutral, friendly, parental and matrimonial. Depending on this relationship, we love differently; only animals make no difference. Speaking of modern people, you can’t help but get amazed. They have degraded so much that they look even at their mother as a wife. What can be said to this? This is also a manifestation of love. The living being is the soul, which is the energy of the Lord (*prakṛiti*). In relation to Him, it symbolizes the

feminine principle. Therefore, one *jiva* cannot marry another *jiva*. Of course, a living being is not a man or a woman, but by analogy, in relations with Krishna, it plays the role of a woman. God is the only man! This is the real status quo. In the material world, everyone imitates God, receiving bodies of men and women. A woman, by nature, is passive, she is meant for the enjoyment of man. But when they get together, it is not known who enjoys the most; in the perfect married couple, both enjoy equally. But from the spiritual point of view, in the spiritual world, there is only one enjoyer — Krishna. Through various energies, Krishna enjoys (in Himself), and all others enjoy with Him to the extent they devote themselves to Him, or in other words, participate in His enjoyment! Krishna enjoys everything, and His eternal consort, Shrimati Radharani, is a personification of His enjoyment energy. It is difficult for a materialist to understand because he is inclined to judge everything from his limited experience. It is said that everyone judges others by himself! The pure devotee of Krishna sees everyone as the devotees of the Lord, and the non-devotee, denying the very existence of God, sees every being as his rival. In order to understand the true state of things, it is necessary to abandon bodily designations, gain Krishna consciousness and rise to the level of divine, transcendental love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

## HEALTHY LIFE SYSTEM

**V. Bobrovich:** The significance of the soul is absolute, this is understandable, but what is the attitude towards the body? Does the body exist by itself or somehow need to be taken care of?

**M.M.d.:** Since the body is the temple of God, as both the individual soul and the Supreme Soul, Krishna, are there, we take care of it, keeping it clean. External purity is achieved by ablution, and internal purity is obtained by hearing about the glory, the pastimes of the Lord, the chanting of His holy names and His wonderful deeds, as well as constant remembering of Him. It is said that the state of being, about which a person remembers, leaving his body at the moment of death, he reaches, without fail. That is, his thoughts and consciousness at the time of death form the next body, spiritual or material. Accordingly, it is, therefore, necessary to learn to use the body, mind, and speech in the service of the Lord. This body does not belong to us and, being in it, we serve God and try to become God conscious.

**V. Bobrovich:** What about food?

**M.M.d.:** We are vegetarians, but that's not all. When we eat vegetarian food (vegetables, fruits, grains, and milk), it forms the material body. But when we offer this food to Krishna and take it as *prasadam*, such food forms our spiritual body. In Bhagavad-Gita, it is said that one who does not offer food to God eats



his own sin. We prepare food for Krishna, then offer it to Him with devotion and love, and then we take as remnants of His food, as prasadam. Our health is connected with our activity (*karma*), stop sinning, and you will become healthy. But that is not all. Devote yourself to pure devotional service to Krishna. Start chanting Hare Krishna mantra and you will be free from all karma; if you do not have *karma*, you will not have to be born again and die. You will get a spiritual body and you will live in perfect Krishna consciousness and enjoy such a life forever. If we only take *prasadam* health problems will be solved once and for all.

**V. Bobrovich:** Well, what about physical activity? In order for the body to be healthy, it is necessary not only to nourish it but also to develop it by performing various kinds of activities. In Buddhism and Taoism, they invented various kinds of gymnastics, qigong, etc. What do you have?

**M.M.d.:** In the spiritual world, each word is a song, each step, is a dance.

In the spiritual world, there are no factories or plants, but there are desire trees that can fulfill any desire. Therefore, there is no lack of anything: neither in food nor in pleasures, with the fundamental difference that in the material world it is material, and in the spiritual it is spiritual. By participating in *sankirtana*, in the congregational chanting of the holy name of Krishna, and dancing in front of the deities in the temple, we develop harmoniously, not only by eating right, but also enjoying properly. Krishna devotees do not practice physical exercise or sports, considering it to be a waste of time, but perform *sankirtana*. We worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead through *sankirtana*, chant together the names of the Lord: *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*, dancing in ecstasy. Here you go — aerobics, gymnastics and *yoga pranayamas*. To dance, sing, play musical instruments and glorify the Lord in poetry, in art, is natural for the spiritual living being. Having such a lifestyle, a person does not need to worry so much about his health, because the healthy state of the body depends on the soul, which is the vital energy that supports this body.

**V. Bobrovich:** Thank you for such a meaningful conversation.

*After that, I offered our guest prasad, and we parted, saying “Hare Krishna” to each other, hoping to continue the conversation soon for the good of all who read and listen to us.*

*Hare Krishna.*

Your well-wisher  
Murali Mohan Das

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## OMNIA MEA MECUM PORTO! (I CARRY EVERYTHING WITH ME)

There is no need to seek for anything. When I serve a perfect whole, as His integral part, then I represent perfection in myself.

At the heart of any activity lies one or another philosophy. Therefore, the correct choice of philosophy assumes the right actions, and the action determines the appropriate result. Since everyone is reaping the fruits of his pious or unholy activities (*karma*), suffering or enjoying, it is necessary to find the best philosophy. Let us try to look at the world through the eyes of the Vedic shastras.

Let us examine the verse from Shrimad Bhagavatam

**“Completely rejecting all religious activities which are materially motivated, this Bhagavata Purana propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from the illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. This beautiful Bhagavatam, compiled by the great sage Vyasa-deva [in his maturity], is sufficient in itself for God realization. What is the need of any other scripture? As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of Bhagavatam, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart.” (Sh.B. 1.1.2.)**

PURPORT

**“Completely rejecting all religious activities which are materially motivated, this Bhagavata Purana propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart.”**

The attempt to use religion in one's petty interests is a foolish thing. We are in the embrace of material nature, its harsh laws. As the law of the state is protected by the departments of justice, so the law of God is protected by the representatives of God, the demigods. It is impossible to break it and not to be severely punished. In worldly society, we sometimes break the law and sometimes are able to avoid punishment. Because these laws are a fraud, they are not laws. We thought them up ourselves and break them ourselves. But the laws of God are different. Following the laws of God, we thrive and at the end achieve liberation, and breaking them we find ourselves in a bad situation, dooming ourselves to suffering. God's law cannot be broken without being punished.

Religion, which represents the law of God, is intended for the emancipation of the soul, the development of the consciousness of God and the love of God. If religion is misused, it becomes useless.

Until a person clears his heart from envy, greed, and lust, he won't understand the essence of what has been said in this verse.

Frivolous commentaries on Vedic scriptures lead to suffering and exacerbating them.

**The highest truth — reality, in the name of the common good, is different from illusion. Such truth destroys the threefold miseries.**

When a person, having undergone the process of purification, is free from the coating of materialism (greed, envy, and lust), he will be able to understand the truth and free himself from this suffering. From this, it follows that knowledge is not a collection of information, but a real practical thing in itself. He who has known himself as the eternal soul is freed from suffering, even while in this body, which serves as the source of suffering.

There are three kinds of suffering: *adhyatmica*, *adhibhautika*, and *adhidaivika* — suffering from the body of the mind, from other living beings, and natural, climatic conditions. The soul that represents our true self is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*). Having known oneself, one will gain eternal being, knowledge, and bliss, and thus will attain all kinds of perfection.

Since the soul is a particle of the highest spirit of Krishna, by knowing ourselves, we will know Krishna. This is possible by the grace of Krishna Himself and His devotees. As parts of the body serve the body, so all living beings are engaged in the service of Krishna, in various types and forms. Only by acting with a common interest in full Krishna consciousness can we be sure that we will finally achieve perfection. May our desires always coincide with His desires!

The soul is transcendental, it is alien to material sufferings and pleasures, but, being conditioned by the laws of material nature is forced to suffer or enjoy, reaping the results of its righteous and sinful deeds. The material world is like a prison. The different position of living beings in this world is explained by different kinds of activity. So, for example, there are those who are behind bars, and there are those who look after them. One who is in Krishna consciousness even in this world is in a better position than all the others. It is said that if a person uses the body, mind, and speech in the service of God, then he is considered a liberated soul, even being in this body. It is not bound by the laws that apply to criminals.

**“This beautiful Bhagavatam, compiled by the great sage Vyasadeva [in his maturity], is sufficient in itself for God realization.”**

The purpose of human life is to know the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, who is the highest manifestation of the Absolute Truth, and the Bhagavata Purana is His literary incarnation. It encompasses the essence of all transcendental knowledge. This work is compared with the sun, which has risen in the impenetrable darkness of ignorance, to illuminate the path of truth for civilization, strayed from the path of Truth.

**“This beautiful Bhagavatam, compiled by the great sage Vyasadeva [in his maturity], is sufficient in itself for God realization. What is the need of any other scripture?”**

It is said in Shrimad Bhagavatam:

*“Being full of contradictions, all forms of religion but bhagavata-dharma work under conceptions of fruitful results and distinctions of “you and I” and “yours and mine.” “The followers of Shrimad-Bhagavatam have no such consciousness. They are all Krishna conscious, thinking that they are Krishna’s and Krishna is theirs. There are other, low-class religious systems, which are contemplated for the killing of enemies or the gain of mystic power, but such religious systems, being full of passion and envy, are impure and temporary. Because they are full of envy, they are full of irreligion.*

*Bhagavata-dharma has no contradictions. Conceptions of “your religion” and “my religion” are completely absent from bhagavata-dharma. Bhagavata-dharma means following the orders given by the Supreme Lord. (Sh.B. 6.16.41).”*

*“How can a religious system that produces envy of one’s self and of others be beneficial for oneself and for them? What is auspicious about following such a system? What is actually to be gained? By causing pain to one’s own self due to self-envy and by causing pain to others, one arouses Your anger and practices irreligion.*

*Any religious system but the process of bhagavata-dharma — service as an eternal servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead — is a system of envy of one’s own self and of others. For example, there are many systems of religion in which animal sacrifices are recommended. Such animal sacrifices are inauspicious both for the performer and for the animal.” (Sh.B. 6.16.42).*

**“As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of Bhagavatam, by this culture of knowledge the Supreme Lord is established within his heart.” (Sh.B. 1.1.2.).**

It is clearly stated here that one who listens carefully and humbly to the Bhagavatam will gain immortality. **What is the need of any other scripture?**

In Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, the father of all religions that are designed to emancipate the development of love for Krishna, confirms this truth: "*sarva dharman parityajya...* Leave all religions and surrender to ME!" It is necessary to leave not only religions but also all other activities that are aimed at satisfying material senses and devote oneself to pure devotional service. Man's sole duty is to serve Krishna, love Krishna, and enjoy the happiness of this mutual love. "Do not fear! — says Krishna. — I will free you from all the reactions of your sinful activities that cause suffering." Krishna guarantees because He is the almighty God, the cause of all causes and there is no cause for Him! Why do we doubt His words and believe insignificant personalities who really have nothing in this world and use only what is borrowed from Krishna?

The essence of all religions is to surrender to Krishna! By the grace of Krishna, any person surrendered unto Him can overcome ignorance. The knowledge that Bhagavatam represents destroys suffering and makes it possible to enjoy the nectar that a living being craves so much!

HOW TO SURRENDER UNTO KRISHNA?

This is taught by Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

## **GOLDEN AVATAR BEGAN GOLDEN AGE**

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu did not come to this world to save the chosen or those who belong to some religious sect, but to free everyone. By His causeless mercy, He distributes love for God to a learned man, versed in religious scriptures, and ignorant, men and women, people of different nationalities, different skin color, different political and religious beliefs, believers and atheists. Therefore, Shrila Rupa Goswami refers to Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as the most merciful incarnation of Krishna, calling Him *maha-vadanyaya avatara*:

*namo maha-vadanyaya krishna-prema-pradaya te  
krishnaya krishna-chaitanya-namne gaura-twishe namah*

**"O most munificent incarnation! You are Krishna Himself appearing as Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Shrimati Radharani, and You are widely distributing pure love of Krishna. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You."**

In 1486, February 18 (according to the Christian calendar), on the day of the lunar eclipse, when pious Indians bathed in the Ganges, filling everything around

with shouts of “haribol”, a son was born in the house of learned brahmana Jagannatha Mishra and Shachimata. The famous astrologer Nilambara Chakravarti predicted a great fate for the newborn. “The time will come,” he said, “and the whole world will worship the son of Shachidevi!”

*prithivite ache yata nagaradi-grama  
sarvatra prachara haibe mora nama*

**“In as many towns and villages as there are on the surface of the earth, My holy name will be preached!”**

In anticipation of these amazing events, the boy was named “Vishvambhara,” which means “one who supports the universes.” No one doubted that Shri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead incarnated Himself in the household of Jagannatha Mishra. Who, other than Him, can maintain the entire material world? This is confirmed in Shrimad-Bhagavatam:

*krishna varnam tvishakrishnam sangopangastra-parsadam  
yajnaih sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah*

**“In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Krishna. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Krishna Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions.”** (Sh.B. 11.5. 32.)

The childhood of Shri Chaitanya is described in detail in Chaitanya Bhagavata by Vrindavan das Thakur. It says that, like all children, the Lord cried. When He began to cry, unlike ordinary children, he could be pacified by the only means — by exclaiming “haribol!” Which means: “Praise Lord Hari!” Sometimes, local girls making fun of Him deliberately brought the child to tears and then, in order to quiet the child, clapped and shouted: HARIBOL! The baby immediately calmed down. But, as soon as they fell silent, resumed crying again. By itself, this amazing fact pointed to the mission of the Lord who initiated the Sankirtana Movement, the congregational chanting of the holy names: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. In the eighth year of his life, his father sent Shri Chaitanya to the school of Gangadas Pandit. Two years later, He already perfectly mastered Sanskrit grammar and speech craft and continued His education further on His own. After studying the Vedic philosophy of the books of his father, he soon received the title of the scholar — pundit. At the age of 14–15, Mahaprabhu married Lakshmipriya, but he became a widow early. The wife died from a snake bite. At the insistence of his mother, he married again. By that time, he had his own school and many followers.

At the age of 16, in a scholarly debate, he defeated the great Kashmir pundit, Keshava Kashmiri, and became known throughout Nadia, which at that time was one of the largest centers of Vedic culture and education.

At the age of 16-17 years old, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took initiation from Ishvara Puri, a Vaishnava *sannyasi*, a disciple of Madhavendra Puri, and began actively preaching Vaishnavism. He chanted the holy names of Lord Krishna in ecstasy, and signs of transcendental ecstasy began to appear in his body. Shri Advaita Acharya, Shrivasa Pandit, and other devotees were astonished at the amazing changes that took place with the Lord after He accepted the initiation. Until the age of 23, Shri Chaitanya preached *sankirtana* all over Bengal. *Smar-ta-brahmins* who led the spiritual life of the Indian society at the time envied his success. After consulting with each other, they complained to Chand Kazi, a Muslim governor who forbade the Vaishnavas to make a fuss about “a new, very dubious religion.” Kazi came to the house of Shrivasa Pandit, broke the mridangas (clay drums) and said that if Mahaprabhu did not cease His activities, he would convert him to Islam. When the news of this reached Mahaprabhu, he became angry. Having gathered thousands in the crowd of 14 sankirtana groups, he headed for the Kazi’s Palace. With torches in their hands, chanting “Hare Krishna,” accompanied by mridanga and karatals, which created an unbelievable noise, his followers approached the residence of the governor. Seeing the impending crowd from afar, Chand Kazi got scared. Fearing for his life, he hid in his quarters, but after some time, after making sure that the demonstration was peaceful, he came to his senses and went out for talks.

Mahaprabhu’s spiritual strength was immeasurably great. Therefore, as a result of a brief philosophical conversation, he turned Chand Kazi into Vaishnavism. Referring to the Qur’an and the Vedic scriptures, Mahaprabhu proved to him that in the modern age of hostility and hypocrisy, congregational chanting of the names of Lord Krishna is the best way of spiritual realization for all people of the whole world. By touching the body of Kazi, Mahaprabhu evoked signs of transcendental ecstasy. Kazi’s heart filled with bliss and indescribable joy. He burst into tears and, prostrated at the feet of the Lord, confessed that he had experienced feelings unknown to him before. He experienced moments of a deep state of divine love. Since then, in the Muslim governor, the Sankirtana movement of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has found official support. Kazi issued a decree according to which no one has the right to interfere with the chanting of the holy name of Lord Hari. This decree, signed by the hand of the Muslim governor, remains in force to this day. Of course, even today, Krishna devotees often encounter difficulties and obstacles created by the government when they preach and spread the glories of the Holy Name. However, just as in the time of Mahaprabhu Himself, all these obstacles are easily removed by

His grace. After all, sankirtana-lila is eternal, it continues, and we can enter it by taking part in the preaching mission of the Lord. A wonderful opportunity to become a disciple, a participant, and a living witness of the unfading, all ascending glories of the Lord. Shri Krishna Chaitanya will be completely satisfied only when all over the world, in every town and village, the Holy Names will be sung: *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare Hare*. May the words of the prophecy come true! At the age of 24, in the prime time of youth and strength, Shri Chaitanya accepted sannyasa, a renounced way of life. Anyone who knew the amazing traits of His nature and saw the extraordinary beauty of the Lord, His face and body, resembling molten gold in color, all begged Keshava Bharati, Chaitanya's sannyasa guru, to refuse to initiate Him. "Monastic life and total renunciation of the world, sannyasa, is meant for the elderly who are on the verge of death," they said. — "This young man has his whole life ahead of him. He was created for pleasure..." The hairdresser, who was told to shave Sri Chaitanya's head, saw his beautiful blue-black, slightly curly hair, could not stand it and burst into tears. He threw the razor and ran away. This scene, skillfully described by the author of the Chaitanya Bhagavata, is now difficult to imagine. The barber had to be forced to cut off the hair of the Lord. For this, Shri Chaitanya called upon all who were present to chant the holy names of Krishna. After the Vedic ritual was completed, the Lord forever left this world of illusion for the sake of eternal love pastimes and entertainment of Shri Shri Radha and Krishna. Not for the sake of an easy life, and idleness, as often we can see now, but for the salvation of the world, the devotees of Chaitanya sacrifice their precious lives on the altar, in sacrifice to His lotus feet.

*Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur once said: "In India, there are at least 60 million so-called sadhus who have taken sannyasa or babaji-vesha for not being able to feed themselves and their families. They made a business out of it, giving some of the money collected as donations to their relatives, using it for sense gratification."*

*Bhaktisiddhanta does not recommend turning an ashram of sannyasi into a profitable business. The duty of a sannyasi is his constant participation in sankirtana and the preaching of the holy name of the Lord.*

After taking sannyasa, Mahaprabhu traveled to South India. He converted to Vaishnavism in his path everyone who met Him. As we see, Krishna consciousness is not some form of religion that would divide people, restricting their service to the Lord by the temple, mosque or church. Krishna Consciousness is the pure consciousness of the soul, forever connected with God by its devotional loving service, bhakti. Rejecting all materialistic concepts of life, based on the



consciousness of “I am a material body, and everything that is related to it is mine”, Mahaprabhu preached spiritual brotherhood, freedom, and equality of all living beings.

*naha vipro na cha nara-patir napi vaishyo na shudro  
naham varni na cha griha-patir no vanastho yatir va  
kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramananda-purnamritabdhher  
gopi bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah*

**“I am not a brahmana, I am not a kshatriya, I am not a vaishya or a shudra. Nor am I a brahmachari, a grihastha, a vanaprastha or a sannyasi. I identify myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Shri Krishna, the maintainer of the gopis. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with brilliance.”** (Padyavali, 74)

“I” is the soul, the eternal servant of Krishna. Speaking of equality, brotherhood, and freedom, we must always remember that equality is not in material equalization, but in equal opportunities to become the beloved of Lord Krishna, the Lord of the gopis. Having gained pure consciousness, a person can achieve liberation and true happiness. All living beings are endowed with this feeling, desire, and the pursuit of happiness because every being is an integral part of the Lord.

Having made Jagannatha Puri his residence, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu spent most of his life in a mood of ecstatic love for Lord Jagannatha. With his transcendental pastimes, He attracted the attention of all living beings in the universe. He converted thousands and thousands of ordinary people and scholars, prominent statesmen of his time and businessmen to Vaishnavism. His disciples and followers were: Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya (the great Vedantist, recognized authority among philosophers), the king of Orissa Maharaja Prataparudra, as well as Shрила Rupa and Sanatana Goswami, who in their worldly life were ministers in the government of Bengal. Having followed Lord Chaitanya, they laid down in their books all the basic principles of the science of devotion and love of God. Speaking about each of their books: we would have to live more than one long life.

From the age 31 to 48 years old, before his departure, Mahaprabhu lived in the house of Kashi Mishra. Svarupa Damodara was His personal secretary, and Ramananda Rai was the confidant for the most intimate topics when discussing the relationship between Shri Radha and Shri Krishna. Paramananda Puri was an advisor in matters of religion. During this period of life, Mahaprabhu was surrounded by the highest level Vaishnavas, who were distinguished from ordinary people not only by their knowledge but also by their spiritual realiza-

tion. In fact, they were the eternal companions of the Lord in His pastimes in Vrindavana. If Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is Krishna Himself, then who are His associates? — The gopis, shepherdesses of Vrindavana.

The pastimes of Lord Chaitanya in Navadvipa-dhama are not different from those of Lord Krishna in Vrindavana. They attract the attention of great sages and demigods, such as Shiva and Brahma, who consider it an honor to incarnate in the human form of life to participate in *sankirtana-lila* and help the pure devotees of the Lord.

The last years of his life, Mahaprabhu slept very little. His mind and senses were completely absorbed in serving Shri Shri Radha-Krishna. He sang and danced, displaying previously unseen signs of ecstatic love that Shrimati Radharani experiences in separation from Krishna. These signs are not characteristic of ordinary living beings, conditioned souls. They do not even manifest in very elevated devotees such as Shiva and Brahma. These manifestations of ecstasy are characteristic only of the inhabitants of Goloka Vrindavana, — the *gopis* of Shri Krishna.

To get into the world of higher reality, the extraordinary abilities of man and his rational thinking are not enough. The transcendental realm is beyond the experience and perception of material senses and mind. Therefore, only a revelation from above can become a method of true, spiritual understanding. It is represented by Vedic scriptures, which serve us as an inexhaustible source of transcendental knowledge.

- 1) God is one.
- 2) God has unlimited power.
- 3) God is the ocean of *rasa*, the source of unlimited enjoyment.
- 4) The soul is an integral part of God.
- 5) Some souls are captured by material energy and conditioned by the laws of material nature.
- 6) Some souls are liberated.
- 7) Everything spiritual and material comes from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna. He is the highest manifestation of the Absolute Truth.
- 8) *Bhakti* — devotional loving service to Krishna, is the only way to achieve the spiritual realm.
- 9) *Krishna-prema*, love for Lord Krishna, is the ultimate goal of our spiritual quest.

Next, we briefly outline the teachings of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Absolute Truth is known in three aspects: Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan. It is cognized as impersonal Brahman, localized, as Paramatma (Supersoul) residing

within every living being, and as a person, Bhagavan or God, who possesses the fullness of all energies, being the source of all in existence and the direct and indirect cause of all causes. All the transcendental forms of God are enclosed in the original all-attractive image of Shri Krishna. When a person is freed from bodily, material notions of life, he immediately throws off the shackles of illusory existence and irrevocably, completely, surrenders himself onto the Lord, by whose mercy he enters the realm of His transcendental pastimes and enjoyment. Krishna's energies are limitless, they have neither beginning nor end. Although in the material world everything can be measured and expressed in various measurements, the Lord and His energies are immeasurable and inconceivable. Shri Chaitanya teaches the philosophy of *achintya-bheda-bheda-tattva*, the inconceivable simultaneous oneness, and difference of the Absolute. In addition, He explains the transcendental rasas, which manifest themselves as the attachment to material life and sense gratification decrease. Shri Chaitanya teaches pure devotional service, *shuddha-bhakti*, which is the essence and ultimate goal of any spiritual practice. Pious activities, the development of knowledge and *yoga* cannot themselves cause the emergence of *bhakti*, although they contribute to the purification of consciousness. *Karma* (fruitful activity), the acquisition of knowledge and mystical perfection are directly dependent on *bhakti*. *Bhakti* itself is free of *karma*, *jnana* and the results of *yoga*. The seed of pure devotional service is received from a pure *bhakta*, completely devoted to the Lord. This is the result of strong desire and is expressed in *shraddha*, faith. Philosophical discussions are fruitless, because the Vedas may claim that the *jiva* is different from the Lord, and at the same time may prove the opposite, that it is identical to Him. Shri Chaitanya, in his concept of *achintya-bheda-bheda-tattva*, combined both these concepts, presenting simultaneous qualitative oneness of the living being and the quantitative difference with the Lord. Although God and the soul have the same qualities, God possesses all of their totality fully, and the soul has only an infinitesimal part. Krishna is the whole, and the *jiva* is an infinitesimal part of this whole. In other words, God is the source, and the soul is His energy. Vedic literature describes the soul as eternal, possessing knowledge and bliss — spiritual in nature. In the material world, it manifests itself in the form of consciousness through the activity of the material body. The Mundaka Upanishad presents its characteristics and description. It says that "the soul is equal in size to an atom, and it can be comprehended with the help of the perfect mind. This infinitely small particle floats in five air streams (*prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana*, *samana*). It resides in the heart and spreads its influence throughout the body of a living being. When the soul is cleared of the five air currents, its spiritual nature manifests itself." The size of the soul is also indicated in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad. It is the size of 1/10 000 of the tip of the hair.

All souls are the same in quality: *sat-chit-ananda* — eternal, filled with knowledge and bliss, there is no higher or lower souls, although they are conditioned in different ways. In different forms of life (animals, people, demigods, etc.) they manifest their consciousness in different ways, depending on their conditionality. In Bhagavad-Gita, the life of the plants is compared to an embryo covered in the womb, animal life is compared with a mirror covered in dust, and human life — with a fire covered in smoke. Having incarnated in the human body, the soul gets a chance to know itself and restore its eternal connection with Krishna. In the material world, all souls are considered eternally conditioned, while in the spiritual world they are considered eternally liberated. Occupying a marginal position, the *jiva (atma)*, the soul, is sometimes engaged in devotional service to Krishna, and sometimes engaged in the service of *maya*, i.e. the energy of Krishna. And *bhakti*, devotional service to the Lord, helps the soul attain liberation. *Bhakti* is of three kinds: *sadhana-bhakti*, *bhava-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti*. Of these, *sadhana-bhakti* is of two types: *vaidhi* and *raganuga*. The first type implies adherence to the regulative principles, and the second — spontaneous service, driven by love attraction. Both types of *sadhana-bhakti*, include nine processes:

1. Hearing about Krishna.
2. Chanting of the names and glories of the Lord.
3. Remembrance of the Lord.
4. Serving the lotus feet of the Lord.
5. Praying
6. Worshipping the Lord in the temple.
7. Service.
8. Developing friendly relations with the Lord.
9. Total devotion and dependence on the Lord.

Hearing and chanting the Holy Name of the Lord (*shravanam-kirtanam*) of all nine methods of developing bhakti is considered the best for modern people. They can be perfectly combined with all other processes of bhakti, for example, *archana*, i.e. worship of the Lord in the temple, with kirtana. But even hearing and chanting is enough to find love for Krishna. Shri Chaitanya particularly emphasizes the congregational chanting of the Holy Name — *sankirtana*, which is *yuga-dharma*, a method specifically recommended by the scriptures for modern people.

*harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam  
kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha*

**“In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the Holy Name of Lord Krishna. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.”** (Brihad-Naradya Purana, 3.8.126)

For people who are interested in fruitful (*karmic*) activities, every religion promises pleasure in this life on Earth, and after death in Heaven. God is usually worshiped and served in exchange for material pleasures as if making a kind of deal with Him. This is the main difference between the concepts of religion and *bhakti-yoga*. Of course, elements of *bhakti-yoga* are inherent in any religion, but pure *bhakti* is loving devotional service to God. Its characteristic feature is that it is unmotivated and continuous. It is because of this that it is able to fully satisfy the soul. *Bhakti* is self-sufficient and different from anything that is not *bhakti*.

There are people who seek liberation by studying Vedic philosophy and knowing themselves as a soul different from the body. For such there are five types of exemption: 1). *Sayujya-mukti* — merging with the impersonal Brahman. 2). *Salokya-mukti* — life on the same planet with the Lord. 3). *Sarupya-mukti* — to have a body like that of the Lord. 4). *Sarshti-mukti* — to have the wealth of the Lord. 5). *Samipya-mukti* — personally communicate with the Lord. For pure *bhakti*, any kind of liberation is considered an intermediate stage. The desire for liberation harms the development of love for Shri Krishna. Because both, desire for liberation, and attachment to the activity are dictated by a person’s selfish desire to enjoy the results of this activity. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu advises avoiding both, the one and the other, relying solely on the mercy of the Lord. If Krishna desires, He will give liberation, if not, the devotee is ready to go anywhere to please Krishna. Thus, the goal of devotional loving service is always *prema* — love of Krishna.

When a person develops affection for serving God, it is called *rati*. When he is diligent in the performance of the loving service, it is called *priti*. In turn, when a person cannot and does not want to hear about anything else, only about Krishna, and when he thinks: Krishna is mine, and I am for Krishna, it becomes *prema*. Thus, following the process described above, the heart of the devotee gradually softens and becomes like nectar.

Worldly life and relationships between people who do not practice *bhakti* are a perverse reflection of spiritual life. Pure *rasa* or transcendental taste of love is degraded under the influence of *maya*, material illusion. Therefore, the discussion of the sublime themes which are realized by pure *bhaktas* has no practical value and significance for most people who are too attached to the gratification of body and mind. First one needs to learn to clearly see the difference between spirit and matter and then begin to discuss them. Otherwise, delusions are inevitable.

*Bhakti* involves purifying the heart. As long as material temptations perplex a person's mind, it is impossible for him to reach a spiritual platform. The mistake of the Western philosophers is that they cannot distinguish the mind from the ego, and the ego, *ahankara*, from the true "I" — the soul (*jiva*, *atma*). Therefore, for novice devotees, Shri Chaitanya recommended association with those who are more advanced than themselves, discussing Shrimad Bhagavatam in their circle, hearing and chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna with them.

Just as life comes from life, so *bhakti* comes from contact with *bhakti*. No way of cognition is suitable for comprehending the Absolute Truth. Only loving service, attained by our strong desire, can bring us closer to Krishna. Sincere wanting to become a devotee of the Lord is necessary to drop all religious prejudices, philosophical speculations, not to mention fruitful (*karmic*) activities. This is the only path to the goal. The craving of devotional service nourishes the faith of man as water nourishes the lotus flower. Nityananda Prabhu says that in the market of the Holy Name, the only pay is faith, *shraddha*. We can receive the priceless gift of the Holy Name according to our faith. The name of the Lord is not different from the Lord Himself, but it can be obtained in proportion to our faith. The Holy Name reveals itself fully only to the *bhakta* who sincerely seeks it. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu preached the consciousness of God, rejecting all sectarianism and idolatry. God is one, there is no other God. Nobody is equal to God — this is Mahaprabhu's declaration. At the same time, the Lord did not forget to teach virtues, which is a constant companion of spiritual progress. If virtues do not manifest themselves in the nature of *bhakta*, then one can doubt his sincerity.

According to Shrila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, the mentality of all people can be divided into four categories: atheistic, pantheistic, agnostic and theistic. Of these, Shri Chaitanya rejected the first three as hostile to the Absolute Truth. In the presence of many points of view and in all cases, without exception, the theistic point must always be affirmed. Otherwise, man cannot realize the Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Shri Krishna, Who is the highest summit of it. By eliminating any division of people on the basis of bodily designations and materialistic concept of life, Shri Chaitanya taught pure theism on a platform of self-knowledge: *aham brahmasmi* — I am the soul. This is the eternal religion, *sanatana-dharma*. It is not some sort of sect. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu encourages all conditioned souls to join his Sankirtana Movement, abandoning empty talk on the topics of good and evil. A scholar and student, rich and poor, intelligent and ignorant, a man and a woman — everyone can take part in the chanting of the holy name Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare and thus go back home to Godhead.

In conclusion, we must add that Shri Chaitanya is the Most High Lord Himself, therefore you should not think of Him as an ordinary living being. Such a mentality is sinful. Currently, there are many people who call themselves the incarnation of God, entertaining the world with miracles and tricks. But it is foolish to take anyone for God if it is not mentioned in the Vedic scriptures. The true incarnation of God, as a rule, never declares himself as the Supreme, so as not to confuse the minds of innocent, ordinary people and not give a reason for false prophets. Chaitanya Himself was very strict about self-evaluation and did not allow anyone to call him God. When someone out of the fullness of the heart, called him Krishna, He refused and closed His ears. Shri Chaitanya did not allow anyone to call Him God. Among people, He played the role of the humble servant of God, while kindling the flame of an unprecedented ecstasy of love for God in their hearts. So, preaching on His behalf, going door to door, we humbly urge people of the whole world to chant the holy names of Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. "In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting (*sankirtana-yagya*) to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Krishna." (Sh.B. 11.5.32):

*krishna varnam tvishakrishnam sangopangastra-parshadam  
yajnaih sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah*

## HOW WILL IT LOOK IN A SOCIETY?

From the particular to the whole, from the whole to the particular — so gradually we will be able to understand the significance of what is said in the scriptures. The Vedas have four goals that people aspire to: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. Briefly:

*Dharma* is religion and piety.

*Artha* is material well-being and economic development.

*Kama* is sense gratification.

*Moksha* is the achievement of liberation.

In fact, all these goals are full of the ego-centrism of those who elect them. Therefore, only one who is free from false claims can be truly happy. From the activities in Krishna consciousness, *karma-yoga*, to the attainment of true knowledge and liberation, one must develop an all-out loving attachment for the Lord and thus solve all the problems of material existence. The love of Krishna is the goal of piety and the asceticism.

Chaitanya distributes this love to anyone who chants the holy name of Krishna inoffensively.

This chanting is *yuga-dharma*, the religion of this age, but at the same time sanatana-dharma which is the only activity for liberated souls.

Bhaktisiddhanta says we did not come to this world to build, but:

- We did not come to this world to engage in building anything. Our goal is to carry the teachings of Shri Chaitanyadeva out to people.
- We will not stay in this world for too long. We will plunge into *hari-kirtana* and, having left this material body, we will receive the highest award available in this world.
- Dust from the lotus feet of Shrila Rupa Goswami, who fulfilled Shri Chaitanyadeva's innermost desire, is the only goal of our life.
- If I, fearing not to please the listeners, do not speak about the Absolute Truth, I would deviate from the path of truth inscribed by the Vedas and enter the path of hypocrisy. Thus, I would have become an opponent of the Vedas, an ungodly person, and would have lost my faith in Bhagavan, the very personification of truth.
- One may receive *darshan* of Krishna only through the ears, listening to *hari-katha* from the mouth of pure Vaishnavas, and not any other way around.
- Any place where *hari-katha* is told should be considered a holy place.
- By learning the correct *shravana*, in the *kirtana* process, we get the opportunity to practice *smarana*, remembering. Then one can begin the inner practice of the direct service in *ashta-kaliya-lila*, the divine pastimes of Shri Radha and Krishna in each of the eight parts of the day.
- It should be understood that the loud chanting of the Holy Names of Krishna is *bhakti*.
- Bhagavan will not accept anything from someone who does not repeat *hari-nama* a hundred thousand times daily.
- If a devotee sincerely tries to chant *hari-nama* without offenses and constantly, then gradually offenses disappear, and pure *hari-nama* begins to appear on his tongue.
- One should not be disappointed when worldly thoughts come to us during the chanting of *hari-nama*. Gradually, these empty thoughts will no longer overpower us — this is one of the side effects of the chanting of *hari-nama*, so you should not worry about it. If we dedicate our mind,



body, and speech to the service of Shri Nama and chant the Holy Name with great persistence, Shri Nama Prabhu will show us His all-good transcendental image. When, as a result of the continuous chanting of the Holy Name, we completely get rid of the *anarthas*, then, along with the image of Shri Nama Prabhu, His divine qualities and *lilas* will also open to us.

These few thoughts above answer the question: HOW WILL IT LOOK IN SOCIETY? In every town and village, people will chant the names of the Lord, without changing their social position. By chanting the Holy Name and performing *kir-tana* and listening about Krishna, people can change their consciousness and attain Krishna consciousness.

And finally, there is another unanswered question.

## WHAT DO WE ALL DO NOW?

For devotees of Krishna: preaching the Holy Name and for those who are not devotees yet is to become a devotee by joining this movement of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Who predicted that in every town and village around the world, people will chant Hare Krishna.

Those who do not have faith should associate with those who have and taking refuge in them follow a gradual process while performing their duties in the system of varnas and ashrams.

Eventually, they will realize the depth of what Shri Chaitanya said:

*naha vipro na cha nara-patir napi vaishyo na shudro  
naham varni na cha griha-patir no vanastho yatir va  
kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramananda-purnamritabdher  
gopi bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah*

**“I am not a brahmana, I am not a kshatriya, I am not a vaishya or a shudra. Nor am I a brahmachari, a grihastha, a vanaprastha or a sannyasi. I identify myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Shri Krishna, the maintainer of the gopis. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with brilliance.”** (Padyavali, 74)

# APPENDIX

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It is impossible to remain impartial while telling the stories in which you yourself participated. Only time is unbiased, eternal; it is a witness; it does not interfere and does not rush things.

The story we recounted began in the distant past, and the fate of the heroes, according to the plan of the Creator was written long before they were born. Who was Maitreya? Who was Kolya or Gayatri? Who was Kirtiraja or the narrator himself, who knows? And how many events and personalities, not mentioned by us, remained unknown? The hand of providence ranges figures as if on a chessboard, and when the time comes, it shuffles the pieces in order to give others the opportunity to play their game. We can only retell the facts, inclining the readers to rejoice or let a tear with us.

## CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MAITREYA AND MAMU THAKUR

**Hare Krishna,**

**Dear Mamu Thakur Prabhu!**

**Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.**

Glad you're all on upgrade. I hope, when we meet or in a letter, you will tell me about your activities over the past months. Here we seem to survive the winter in our almost completed house. The promised global warming never came: we had to sleep in sweaters and hats. But soon it will get warmer here anyway, and whether intentionally or not we start to make some plans. I wanted to ask about your development of relations with the leadership of ISKCON, which you started with the assistance of Akinchana Gochara. Did anything go beyond their declarations? My intended participation (or non-participation) in preaching activities in this region will depend on it. It would be ideal, of course, if ISKCON recognizes your full-fledged leadership in preaching. Maybe at least in this region, which, seems to be the Prabhavishnu Maharaja's zone? I did not contact anyone with this offer. This is still at the level of some idea. Therefore, I would first like to ask you about the state of this dialogue (if there is one at all) and whether you need it. (See how I developed the bureaucratic writing style?)



In any case, we will be glad to see you on a visit. Our telephones: 8-8652-230-926; 8-928-814-43-12; 8-918-773-71-67. Address: 355010, Stavropol, Start St. 25. But this address is unlikely to be found on the maps. (Although the post office said that if you specify a postal index, then the postmen will know.) Such a street has just appeared in Stavropol (our house is registered first on it). This is called the neighborhood "Demino". From the Upper Market half an hour away by bus and bus 27 to the final stop (the final one is called "Military town"). Here, opposite the gas station, our two-story house is the only one. (The rest are mostly only at the level of the foundation.) If you are ready — call, I will meet you here.

Your servant Maitreya das.

**All glories to Shri Shri Guru and Gauranga**

**Dear Maitreya,**

**Please, accept my blessings.**

After that meeting with Bhakti Vigyana Maharaja at Dynamo, when he said: "According to actual facts, you, Mamu Thakur, founded ISKCON in the USSR", I ac-

identally met him in Sukharevo, where Subuddhi Rai invited me (see photo attached). Maharaja went to the temple during guru-puja when I was leading kirtan. He approached me, greeted me, making it clear that he had noticed me, bowed to Shrila Prabhupada and left.

The attitude of ISKCON towards me remains the same: “with all due respect to Mamu Thakur, stay away from him. Moreover, since he arbitrarily accepts disciples, he may tempt ours (to switch to him).”

For this same reason, *the mathas* also turn up their nose at me. “Guruism” is not a standard case! For three years, on the Internet, everyone discussed this situation. Anyone who knows me, and who has not ever met me in person, has tittle-tattled about me. Now it seems the steam has floated away, and my time is coming.

Why do I don't join any organization? Because if I join the ISKCON, I will have to preach in favor of ISKCON and criticize *the mathas*, and if I join the mathas, I will be forced to reproach ISKCON. This is what they expect from me. All those to whom I once preached took refuge here and there (both at ISKCON and at *the mathas*). They are like my children, and I do not want to undermine their faith, depriving them of the possibility of spiritual advancement.

Judging “according to actual facts”, the history of Krishna consciousness from 1980 to 1992 is associated exclusively with the name of Mamu Thakur. I printed and distributed the first books of Prabhupada when it was severely persecuted. In Leningrad, I founded the first Hare Krishna *ashram* and opened the first vegetarian food service, which later became the beginning of Food for life. In addition, I conducted the first street *harinamas* in all the major cities of the USSR (including the first *harinama* on Red Square), conducted the first *padayatra*. In 1992-1993, I published the first book on Krishna Consciousness, Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today, which had — according to professor Lisovsky — quite a significant resonance in scientific circles. Between 1990-1992 (when I was the regional secretary and vice president for the Volga-Ural-Siberia and the Far East regions), I registered about 20 Sankirtana preaching centers, some of which were destroyed, and some were renamed. Why did I register SANKIRTANA? First, because it is the movement of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the USSR; secondly, because it originated in the USSR distinctively, without the participation of the western ISKCON, by the efforts of local devotees, whom I mobilized and inspired for heroic deeds. From 1980 to 1990, nobody was allowed into the USSR, none of the Western devotees and *gurus* came, except maybe a few visits from private individuals; thirdly, because there was direction of the GBC to register Hare Krishna in the USSR under any name, as long as there is no denoting a connection with the International Organization; and finally, fourthly — I fore-

saw that other people would come over time and say: this is the International Society created by Shrila Prabhupada, we are his disciples, and who are you?

Of course, some now say that the success of Shrila Prabhupada is due to the grace of his *guru*, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, that actually Prabhupada is not Prabhupada, that the real Prabhupada is Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada, and that ISKCON is the result of the activities of the entire *sampradaya*, including Lord Brahma Himself. There are many interesting opinions about the emergence of ISKCON, which I heard. But, in that case, why not say that spreading Krishna consciousness throughout the world is because of Krishna Himself, that there is no merit neither for Shrila Prabhupada nor other *acharyas* and thus put an end to all claims and seniority in this glorious mission. "Consider glory, because we are our own people..." (V. Mayakovsky, interpreter notes). But this kind of statement has a great stench of impersonalism, which all Vaishnavas struggle against because the philosophy of impersonalism (and Buddhism) contradicts the cult of *bhakti*. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu strictly forbade His followers to associate with the impersonalists and Buddhists, who are the greatest offenders of Krishna and read their books. Therefore, my statement is fully justified. Krishna is the Supreme Person, but besides Him there are countless other personalities that He supports, giving everything necessary for their existence and activity. Krishna gave me money, intelligence, and strength so that I founded ISKCON in the former USSR. I did not borrow from anyone, did not ask for favors in return, and let those who can challenge this fact.

I knew that in time other people would come who would start writing the history of the spread of Krishna consciousness in the USSR. Therefore, in order to avoid forgery and not create difficulties for future historians, I asked you to tape and photograph everything we did and keep a journal. Now we have an archive that we have to publish. The best way to save information is to spread it. Glasnost and perestroika in Krishna consciousness! We were the first, and all subsequent ones should know their heroes. Although I am not very interested in who will take the upper hand, but whoever takes it, he will write a story "of himself and about himself." Such is life — success is never blamed. Currently, I have already encountered attempts to falsify reality in the same Minsk. One Prabhu (I met him) conducted a survey of devotees, wanting to present "his" objective view on how Krishna consciousness has spread to Belarus. In an interview with him, our Achyuta talked about how he learned about Hare Krishna, having met Dima (Devarshirata), who was the chairman of the Sankirtana cafe. At the same time, he "forgot" to mention that Dima learned about Hare Krishna from me and I recommended him for initiation, and later he became the chairman of my cooperative SANKIRTANA, the branch of which we came to open with you in Minsk. Further, Achyuta says: "I came to Minsk to Dima, his parents lived there,

and so it all began ... Well, of course, Maitreya built the House and the farm. As president of the yatra, he usurped the devotees for six years. Mamu Thakur is the one who was coming and going somewhere else..." So, in a rather vulgar, unceremonious form, Achyuta told our story about how yatra appeared in Minsk. Listening to his recording tape, I had my ears "twisted into a tube."

Recalling the past, I somehow find that we are very lucky. By the grace of Shrila Prabhupada and Krishna, all those who participated in our program lived with us the most beautiful times of the formation of Krishna consciousness in this country. And I would like to share the nectar that I enjoy unceasingly even now with my friends.

Life is eternal, it is important to find your place in this eternal life. With everyone with whom we are connected in it, we will probably meet again and again. Of course, we are servants of Krishna, and we will be where He wishes. But the ones who will be with us must decide right now.

When I began to preach, Krishna consciousness in this country and the followers of Krishna consciousness were severely persecuted as enemies of the people. They were incriminated in connection with the CIA, and an ideological diversion. Now it is in the past. You have not encountered this. Therefore, many things that I am going to tell you will be incomprehensible to you. But who can understand this? I knew that if I start to preach Hare Krishna, then I would have to leave everything: career, family, friends... and be in exile for the rest of my life. Having joined this Movement, I did not think that perestroika would ever happen and that it would be possible to sing and talk about Krishna freely ... but at the same time, I thought: "A wonderful chance to strike a relationship with God, preaching the consciousness of God. This is His mission. Why don't I take part in it and get the grace of the Lord in such a simple way?" It was a risky business, but I did not see the point of living differently. Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita says, "My devotee will never perish!" Hearing this, I decided: "Krishna is an almighty God. If He promises, then I have nothing to worry about!" I wanted to see how Krishna will protect me in these extreme conditions. It may not be entirely right to make the Lord responsible for my personal ambitions. But under the pressure of circumstances and temptations, few stood the test. I have seen some devotees testify against others. I preached also to Bhakti Vigyana Maharaja, and I know him, not from the best side. You have to understand, I speak of Krishna consciousness not as an outside observer or impartial scholar, but as a person eager to become a devotee of Krishna.

Of course, I would like to reestablish my relationship with Prabhavishnu Swami or some other Swami, but I do not think that this is possible. Western people see Krishna consciousness in Russia as an enterprise, as a business. They come to receive, not to give. In Russia, on programs and festivals, gurus are raising money

to build a “temple in Bangladesh”, while there is no temple in either Moscow or St. Petersburg. In the past, I gave disciples to various gurus by the whole yatra along with capital facilities or premises. Now they come to see how their disciples are progressing in Krishna consciousness. And the disciples are not progressing. For me, Krishna consciousness is my life, and for them, it is the arena on which their egos collide. I have my own passions, and for me to be a devotee or to be known as a devotee is not the same thing. Talking about devotional service and serving Krishna are two different things! Now I am not conditioned by anything and free from any obligations towards anyone, so I can say anything and do as I please. Being engaged in positive activities, I am indifferent to the so-called happiness and unhappiness, so I do not need to divide and fight back dogs that constantly bark out of envy. Hare Krishna!

Your well-wisher Murali Mohan Das.

### **Hare Krishna, Mamu Thakur Prabhu!**

I have a bad Internet connection here: only through a mobile phone. The land-line here is not available here yet. Therefore, it is difficult for me to receive letters of large volume. I copied the text of your letter, but the photos attached to it have not been downloaded for several days (I will do this later from some point of public Internet use).

Your position is justified, and, as you know, it is quite close to my position and I understand. The idea I mentioned to you is to make a very specific proposal to a number of ISKCON authorities interested in this case. After a while I could take up the construction of the temple here, having organized all the related structures (community, preaching, creating the necessary public resonance), in which I have some experience. For this, I do not have here either money or individuals with whom I could interact. But this is good since it will be possible once again to rely on the grace of Krishna. It is not a matter of excess money, thirst for action or unrealized ambition. The most important thing in this is a worthy goal. And it is that this temple would be the temple of Mamu Thakur and at the same time the temple of ISKCON. For this you need — no more, no less — to make you here with the co-GBC, along with Prabhavishnu Swami, who leads in this region. If you do not mind, I will state this position in my letter to Maharaja, making Bhaktivigyan Swami (as far as I understand, this question will not be solved without his opinion) and Mukunda Goswami (the spiritual master of my wife, Teji d.d.) co-recipients. Of course, they may not respond to my initiative at all. But I will offer, and let them think and decide. At the same time, this is a good reason to reiterate to them our vision of the situation, consonant with your letter, which, in my opinion, wouldn't be a bad idea.

Being active in building a community and building just the 1st ISKCON temple is not such an ambitious goal now. And to start organizing something other than ISKCON — it will invariably cause again the same tearing to pieces and criticism from those whom we already know and even are not familiar with. Because they have nothing better to do, they have already become skilled in searching for various (often imaginary) “biases”, ideological sabotage, which involuntarily will embroil us in this policy, which makes me feel disgusted and lowers me on the same level as them.

So it turns we have one of two options: either let them recognize the authority that you legally and fairly deserved in the eyes of the devotees, or (if they consider this to be the best option) my wife and I will realize our activity, not in the spiritual sphere, but where our opinion, our views, experience, and ability are appreciated more. If it turns out that our inaction is preferable, then we are ready for it, having fulfilled our promise not to create any organization other than ISKCON. We respect the authority of the GBC and since they are authorized, directly or indirectly, by Shrila Prabhupada, they will control us, even if they decide what kind of offering in their area of competence would be more desirable for Shrila Prabhupada.

Do you mind if I explain all this to the specified recipients (sending a copy, of course, to you)?

As for questions of historical fact, the archive, in my opinion, is not even the most important thing. At least not the only one. There is also the so-called “artistic truth”, which for the majority of people is more convincing than other evidence. It is very difficult to imitate details of what was experienced. But presenting it now, episodically, ahead of time, revealing your cards is not the most winning strategy for someone who is focused on complete victory. I have a plan for this too. I think we need to wait a little more. I am not a fan, I never watch sports programs, but one time I turned on the TV and immediately heard the phrase of the commentator of the boxers’ fight: “The puncher (knock-outer) has an advantage even in a lost fight.” I think that I need to wait a little longer, let our spiteful critics run out of breath, exposing their vulnerable spots.

Hare Krishna. Your servant Maitreya das.

**All glories to Shri Shri Guru and Gauranga!**

**Dear Maitreya,**

**Accept my blessings.**

My life is simple and ingenious. Everything that I once did, said, wrote, published and even what I thought, is open to the public in any form and in any interpretation. At the same time, I reserve the right to continue to do as I wish.



This is my lifestyle and my realization of Krishna consciousness. All the best. Evil will never overcome the one who does the good. Hare Krishna!

Your well-wisher: Murali Mohan Das.

Defeat and success are few that stand because both are manifestations of illusory energy. Transcendental Disorder! I do not climb on the rampage, but I will not miss my own if I fall into my hand. I have no right to invade the holy of holies. I never feigned, but I learned to accept good and evil as the grace of Krishna, believing that gold and stone are the same things, not much different. That is my credo. Therefore, many are afraid of me, not knowing "what ideas will come into his head." ALL IS AS KRISHNA WILLS IT!

# AFTERWORD

Collecting material for the fifth edition of Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today, I often used articles I had previously written and published. One link, the other, connected by a common theme, is in itself a logically complete work and combined in a book, create its monolith.

There are essays and conversations with different people, reflecting the spirit and philosophy in it, on its pages there are memories similar to a memoir, and small sketches from life. The plots for the book, the characters and the names of the participants represent real-life personalities. In the appendix below we will make an insert of the photo material and autographs, which can serve as material for a monograph on the history of the development of Krishna consciousness for future generations of devotees.

To put this together takes time, which we have a big shortage of, so we don't put an end to it and are not in a hurry with the conclusions, leaving this right to the readers. Let everyone make a conclusion for himself.

Time does not stand still pushing us. The last chapter of this series Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today will be written by my disciples and well-wishers.

As an illustrative material for the book, we attach video and audio recordings of lectures of the last period and extensive photographic material from the archive of the Sankirtana Association.



Second part of the book "Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today" in this edition starts with my visit to Minsk.

## FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE OF THE SANKIRTANA CORPORATION



2009 year, Minsk. Meeting Murali Mohan Maharaj after arriving from Moscow at the train station.

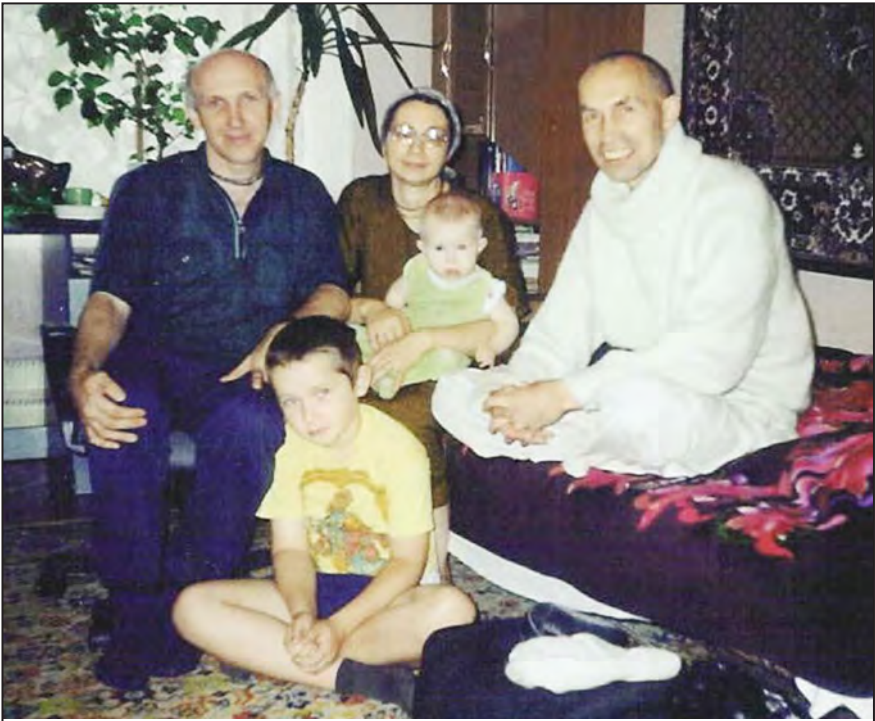


2009 year, Minsk. Murali Mohan Maharaj with his disciples after yagya.



2009 year, Minsk. Disciples of Murali Mohan Maharaj:  
Anirudha Das, Remuka Devi Dasi, Panchatattva Das, Vradjeshvara Das  
(from left to right) and Yashomatinda (back; middle).

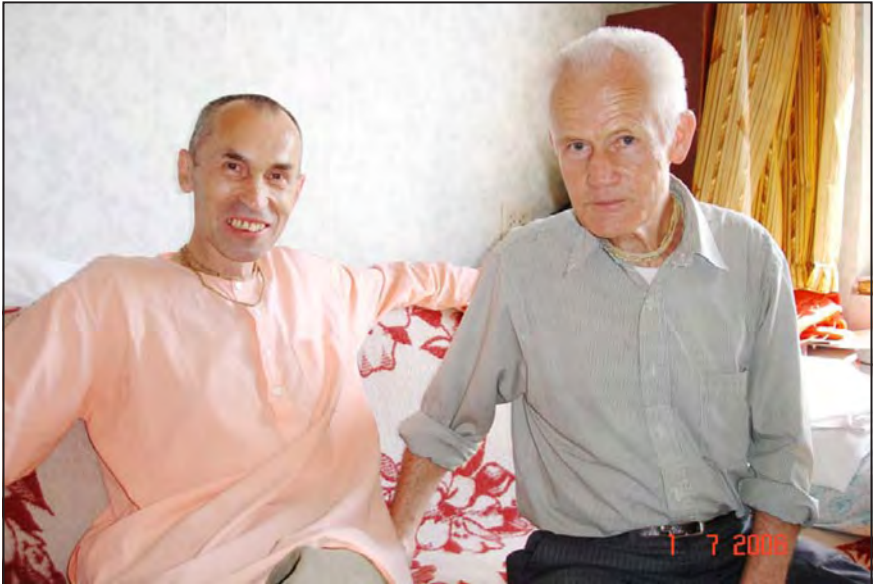




2004 year, Moscow. Maytreya Das and his family



2004 year, Minsk. Kharidas has arranged a meeting with the students and faculty of Minsk National University, international relations department. Murali Mohan Maharaj in the center in light clothing after the lecture. Vyatcheslav Bobovich is to the right of him.



Murali Mohan Maharaj and Vladimir Nikolayevich Buchal (Vradj Bihari Das)



"What is an absolute truth?" July 2007, Molodechno.  
Conversation with Seventh Day Adventist

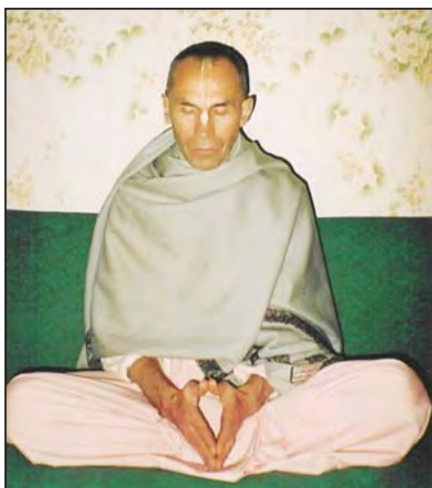


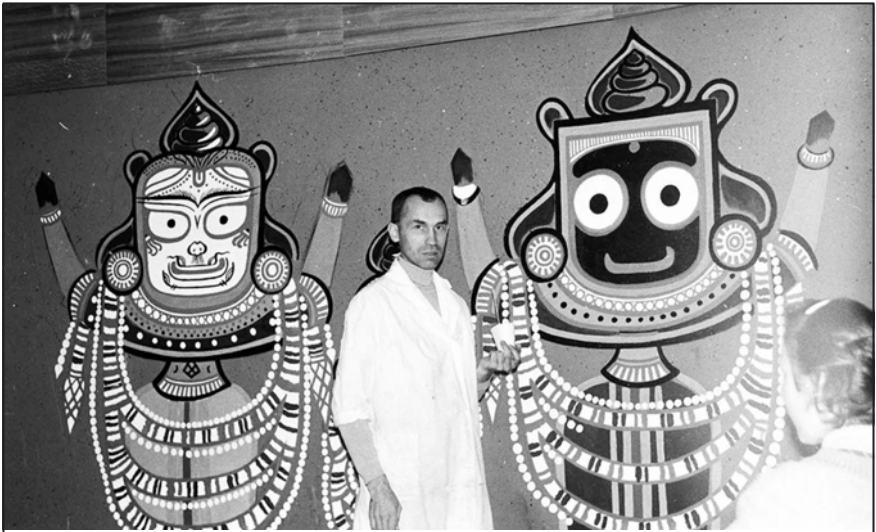
2009 year, Moscow. Sucharevo. Murali Mohan Maharaj leading kirtan



2009 year, Minsk. Murali Mohan Maharaj near National State Library after conversation with Nikolay Panchishin.







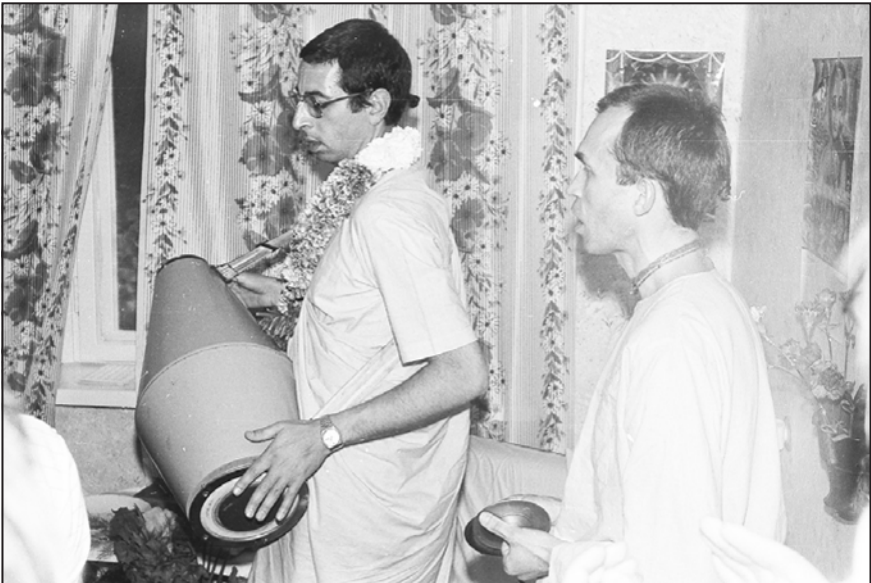
1990 year, Minsk. First Café Sankirtana. On one side it was intended to paint Dzhaganatha deities as if in the temple of Dzhaganatha Puri...



1990 year, Minsk. First Café Sankirtana. On the other side a painting of ecstatic harinama, in which Sri Chaytanya himself took participation with his amazing dances among many devotees and his close followers.



1990 year, Minsk. Second café Sankirtana. With the help of Kolya we again painted the space in the spirit of our Sankirtana



1990 year, Minsk. Kirtan. Manu Thakur on the right and Nirandzhana Maharaj on the left.





1990 year, Minsk. Gayatri Devi Dasi



1990 year, Minsk. Rathayatra. In the middle Praphavishnu Svami, to the left of him Mamu Thakur



1990 year, Minsk. Mamu Thakur and his team



1990 year, Minsk. Mamu Thakur and Bhagavan Das in café Sankirtana



1989 year, New Delhi. Sankirtana devotees.

**ОБЪЯВЛЕНИЕ**

Проводится прием и запись свободных членов неформального объединения  
**"САНКИРТАНА"**

В плане работ:

1. Слушание и пение древних ведических гимнов и мантр: ХАРЕ КРИШНА ХАРЕ КРИШНА ХАРЕ КРИШНА ХАРЕ ХАРЕ/ХАРЕ РАМА ХАРЕ РАМА РАМА РАМА ХАРЕ ХАРЕ.
2. Лекции по древнеиндийской ведической культуре/именно! более чем 5000-летней истории/. Чтения и разбор текстов "Бхагавад-гиты как она есть" и др. философских и религиозных трактатов.
3. Принятие прасад-вкусных вегетарианских блюд, приготовленных на базе традиционной индийской кухни.
4. Просмотр диафильмов и видеофильмов.

Обратиться по телефону 1576341 по 16 мая 1979 г. 1576341 1576341 1576341 1576341 1576341



Announcement of Sankirtana organization

Year 1990, Minsk. Mamu Thakur is painting the walls of café Sankirtana



Year 1990, Minsk. Nirandzhana Maharaj in café Sankirtana



Year 1990, Minsk. Mamu Thakur in Krishna's Kitchen



Year 1990, Minsk. In the gym of Oleg Makayev where he instructed a few youth groups. There, we conducted kirtans and offered prasad



Year 1990, Minsk. When more people have joined us, we started conducting street harianms in the Central Chelyuskintsev Park





Year 1990, Minsk. Rathayatra. Imagine: the deities are carried out on palanquin at noon on Leninsky Prospekt. It is said that those that see the Lord of the Universes on the chariot will instantly receive liberation



First Yatra in Minsk.



**Murali Mohan Maharaj**

**HARE KRISHNA, PAST AND PRESENT**

(4th edition)

Layout: *Sergei Lukin*

English translation: *Dzhagadisha das, Sat'ya devi dasi*

Cover design: *Irgaleeva Ol'ga*

Correction: *Prataparudra das, Vishakkha devi dasi*

Подписано в печать 8.04.2019. Заказ №5937.

Формат 60 × 90 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>. Бумага офсетная.

Усл. печ. л. 28,63.

Отпечатано в типографии «Скифия-принт».

Санкт-Петербург, Большая Пушкарская ул., д. 10

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The name of Mamu Thakur now known as His Divine Grace Murali Mohan Maharj) is well known in the former Soviet Union to every follower of Krishna Consciousness movement. He was the first one who held massive public appearances and street harinams in all major cities and capitals of former USSR. For example, harinams in Moscow (on Red Square), in Saint Petersburg (on Nevsky Prospekt and Palace Square), in Tbilisi (in front of the administration building), on the streets of Riga, Tallinn, Minsk, Dushanbe, Alma-Ata, Novosibirsk, Vladivostok, Kharkov, Yekaterinburg, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, Tyumen, Novokuznetsk, Ulan-Ude, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Kavminvodi (Yessentuki, Pyatigorsk, etc.), Simferopol – and this not the full list. It is estimated that he preached in 100 cities of his great big Motherland. He printed, published and distributed the first books of Srila Prahupada in the stagnant Soviet times when such activities were not only profitless but were prosecuted as ideological diversion and were in the same category as espionage or schemes of CIA.

He was fearless and devoted to Krishna, and Krishna protected Mamu Thakur. It was a special mercy of Krishna and Srila Prahupada.

It is said that the devotees of Krishna are fearless (narayana parayana). Carrying the mission of the Lord, they can go to hell to save the conditioned souls from the shackles of maya. Undoubtedly Krishna bestows special mercy on them. In Chaitanya Charitamrita it is said that no one can preach the holy name if not empowered by the Lord (Krishna shakti vina nahe tara pravartana).

In 1986-87, he organized the first Hare Krishna ashram in Leningrad (on the street of Zina Portnaya), and in 1988 he opened the first vegetarian cafe and preaching center Sankirtana. Hundreds and thousands of people have been introduced to Hare Krishna, acquired books and tasted Prasad in this center.

He traveled extensively between 1980 and 1993, preaching to millions of people, had personal meetings with famous scientists such as Andrey Saharov, academician Uglov and Vladimir Lisovskiy, political figures such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, businessmen, students, clergy (such as Alexander Men), atheists, religious people (example Muslims in Central Asia), factory and office workers, prisoners, etc.

Mamu Thakur was arrested several times and stayed short terms in jail. His preaching was so powerful that those who prosecuted him would become his followers and well-wishers. Others who were scared to lose social status or work were avoiding meeting him. He conducted first Krishna Consciousness festivals in the cities of Ural and Siberia, first Rathayatra, he was the organizer of first padayatras, he started the first 24-hour radio station in Chelyabinsk; registered

approximately 20 centers of Krishna Consciousness, which later became known as Sankirtana organization. Many of them were renamed as international organization of Krishna Consciousness (ISKON). The success of his preaching work has been phenomenal. His secret was that he addressed not the material body, or the mind of the person but the soul, the real self which is aware of Krishna to begin with, the 'self' which is transcendent to all material existence.

Mamu Thakur published periodicals: journal "Sankirtana News", "Without Illusion", "Sankirtana" and "Sankirtana inform". In 1993 he published his first book "Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today", which was co-authored with leading sociologist academician Vladimir Lisovsky.

Before getting acquainted with Krishna Consciousness, in his professional career as an artist, he painted dozens of paintings: portraits of acharyas, paintings on vaishnava themes (one of them was bought by the museum of Religion and Atheism, at that time Kazan Cathedral). He widely used his artistic talent to inspire others. He organized several traveling exhibitions in Minsk, Izhevsk, Alma-Ata, Yekaterinburg and other Russian cities,

In Yekaterinburg, Mamu Thakur registered cooperative "Sankirtana-art." and dozens more (Sankirtana – business, Sankirtana – land, Sankirtana film, Sankirtana Institute, etc.) He tried to register Sankirtana political party and was preparing to open a Sankirtana bank. It was a wonderful time period. The rise of Krishna Consciousness in the former Soviet Union is associated with Mamu Thakur's name.

As a result of his intensive preaching work, thousands of people were attracted to Krishna Consciousness. Some learned about it from him for the first time, some became inspired by him to engage in devotional service and started to chant the mantra and observe regulatory principles, others he recommended for initiation to various gurus of ISKON. There was a time when all those joining the movement, would receive recommendations for initiation from Mamu Thakur. It is worthy to note that most of them remain true to the principles of devotional service to this day.

In recognition of his efforts, leadership of International Society of Krishna Consciousness has sent him to Holy Dham Mayapur and later on to preach to the Russian-speaking community in the USA.

In the USA his preaching was as convincing and masterful as before. He conducted his first Rathayatra with Russian devotees, whom he handed over to ISKON gurus. He opened a vegetarian café on Brighton Beach and was conducting harinams regularly. While living in New York he was published in several Russian newspapers and journals (example in a monthly journal "Be Healthy"), acquired his own section "Bhagavaita Class", in a weekly "Planet Echo" – and a section "Your Well-Wisher Mamu Thakur das". Continuing his artistic endeavors,

he painted massive canvases for temples in Brooklyn and Chicago and besides that, dozens of paintings, which he exhibited in a private collection in Manhattan. The history of Krishna Consciousness has no known such precedent. In fact he did not create new organizations; he preached in the existing establishments and made people Krishna Conscious, which was most amazing.

In 2001 Mamu Thakur accepted Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaj, one of the most prominent acharyas as his guru. His name now is Murali Mohan das. When a person receives a spiritual master, he receives a new name. Just like when a child is born, parents give him a name, in the same way during the second (spiritual) birth, a guru gives a new name to reestablish spiritual identification of the disciple.

During their first meeting Narayana Maharaj gave Murali Mohan prabhu his blessings and full freedom for his preaching activities. During his lectures, Narayana Maharaj repeatedly said: "I need gurus! I don't need students!" thus Gurudev reminded his true students that they need to become gurus and take responsibility for fallen souls. Chaytanya Mahaprabhu used to say - "Become a guru and free all people of your country..."

*"yare dekha, tare kaha "Krishna" – upadesha amara adjnaya guru  
hana tara yei desha"*

Ordinary people are suffering from ignorance and as true disciple of his guru, a follower of Sri Chaytanya Mahaprabhu, and a true vaishnava cannot remain indifferent seeing their suffering. Following the guidance of his guru and Mahaprabhu, Murali Mohan took responsibility for the fallen souls who are drowning in the ocean of material existence and became a guru. Today he accepts disciples in Russia, countries of former Soviet Union, and USA.

Thousands of millions of lives a soul is traveling from one planet to the other, transforming from one life form into another, until one day it meets a sad-guru and once received the seed of bhakti (bhakti-lata-bidj) gets a chance to return to Krishna. Murali Mohan das offers his obeisances to his diksha-guru Om Vishnupadu Paramahansa Parivradjacharya Sri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaj, all guru-varga (preceding acharyas of Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya) and also to all true vaishnavas, true devotees of Krishna, who inspire us to engage in pure devotional service.

Murali Mohan Maharaj is known to the readers as the author of many articles on philosophy and religion. He he published over 35 books including "Hare Krishna Yesterday and Today" (four editions), "ABC of Philosophy and Practice of Krishna Consciousness", "Transcendental Mosaic" (five editions), "Temple in Every Home - Art of Arcana", "Temple of Sri Sri Kishore Kishori", "Harinama, Diksha,

Vaishnava Sadachara", "Psychoanalysis of the Inconceivable", "Tattva Siddhanta in Prayer and Songs of Gaudiya Vaishnavism", essay "Notes of a Vegetarian" (in Russian and English), "In Search of Happiness", "Anatomy of Love", "Nectar of Sankirtana-lila", "Krishna's Kitchen", "Giver's Hand Will Not Remain Empty", "Tree Which Does Not Bear Fruit", "Culture and Religion of the Demons", "If You Want to be Happy, Then Be So!", "Hinduism and Bhagavata Dharma" and a few practical guidelines for rendering devotional service. Murali Mohan das is expressing his respect and gratitude to his readers. He is incredibly happy to see more conditioned souls being interested in the subject of his books and trying to become a devotee of Krishna.

**Книги**  
**Его Божественной милости**  
**Шри Шримад Мурали Мохана Махараджа**  
ачарии-основателя объединения «Санкиртана»



**КУХНЯ КРИШНЫ –**  
**ВЕГЕТАРИАНСКОЕ КУЛИНАРНОЕ ИСКУССТВО**

Это второе исправленное и дополненное издание этой книги, и мы надеемся, что читатели в нем найдут для себя много позитивной информации, которая вдохновит их отказаться от дурных привычек и принять ВЕГЕТАРИАНСТВО как путь к совершенству человеческой жизни в мире, согласии и любви со всеми живыми существами.



**АНАТОМИЯ ЛЮБВИ**

В этой небольшой брошюре мы объясняем природу сексуальности и ценность целибата (воздержания). Мы описываем трудности и последующие проблемы, с которыми сталкивается человек, пытающийся удовлетворить свое сексуальное желание. Вкратце мы приводим отношение представителей религии ко внебрачным половым связям, затем описываем, что есть божественная любовь и предлагаем метод ее развития.



**О СЕМЕЙНОЙ ЖИЗНИ В СОЗНАНИИ КРИШНЫ**

Семейная жизнь представляет собой основу материального существования. Основываясь на авторитете Вед, в своей книге «О семейной жизни в сознании Кришны» мы представим любознательному читателю альтернативную существующей точку зрения, которая позволит более ответственно отнестись к пути, выбранному в жизни и лишней раз заставит человека подумать: «Стоит ли игра свеч?»



**ПРЕМА-АВАТАРА,**  
**ЖИЗНЕОПИСАНИЕ ШРИ ЧАЙТАНЬИ**

Я склоняюсь перед Шри Чайтаньей Махапрабху и Шри Нитьянандой Прабху! Я также в почтении склоняюсь перед моим духовным учителем Нитья-лила-правришта Ом вишнупада парамахамса Шри Шримад Бхактиведантой Нарайаной Махараджем и Шри Шримад А.Ч. Бхактиведантой Свами Прабхупадой, а также перед всеми ачарьями Брахма-мадхава-гаудия сампрадаий. Только по их беспричинной милости игры Господа Чайтаньи могут проявиться в моем сердце.



**ДЖИВ ДЖАГО – ПРОСНИТЕСЬ СПЯЩИЕ ДУШИ**  
«Jiv jago...» – это мистическая феерия, повествующая о путешествии души в пределах материальной вселенной и её возвращение в духовный мир. Пройдя через многие рождения и смерти, эволюционируя из низших форм жизни: обитателей вод, насекомых, пресмыкающихся, птиц, и животных, поднимаясь до планет полубогов и опускаясь ниже Паталалоки, наконец, нам выпадает удача родиться человеком. Что же мы делаем, как используем этот редкий дар человеческой жизни?



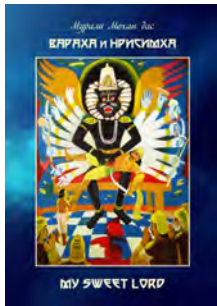
**ЧИСТОТА – НАША СИЛА**  
Книга «Чистота – наша сила» рассказывает читателю о том, с какими трудностями сталкивается человек, решивший посвятить себя служению Богу. О взлетах и падениях, раскаяниях и разочарованиях, которые постигают неофита. В книге говорится, кто такой ачарья, каково его положение и кто такой ученик. Здесь говорится о гуру-обманщиках и учениках-лицемерах, а также о том, как трудно соблюдать данные обеты и как легко поддаться соблазну.



**УЧЕБНИК БХАКТИ – ТОМ ПЕРВЫЙ**  
«Учебник Бхакти» написан для любознательных людей и специалистов, теологов, культурологов и социологов. Первый том, – «Букварь», – для тех, кто ничего не знает о сознании Кришны, но горит желанием узнать, а равно и для тех, кто уже знаком с этим явлением и не оставляет серьезных намерений узнать больше, систематизируя уже имеющиеся знания.

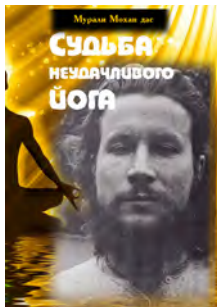


**УЧЕБНИК БХАКТИ – ТОМ ВТОРОЙ**  
Эта часть книги представляет своего рода руководство к практической деятельности, доставляющей удовольствие Шри Кришне, Верховной Личности Бога. Второй том начинается с Садачары, для тех, кто желает быть посвященным в эзотерическое наследие Гаудия-вайшнавизма. Он представляет собой вайшнавские тантры.



## ВАРАХА И НРИСИМХА – MY SWEET LORD

В нашей книге мы расскажем о Шри Варахадеве и Шри Нрисимхе, принадлежащих к числу лила-аватар. История, которую мы предлагаем в нашей книге, поможет читателю понять, кто есть Бог и каковы Его отношения с Его чистыми преданными. Любой, кто внимательно с преданностью ее прочитает, обретет себе в Лице Господа Варахи и Нрисимхадевы надежного друга и покровителя, устраняющего сомнения, внутренние преграды и врагов, стоящих на пути к совершенству в духовной жизни.



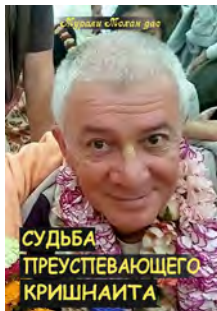
## СУДЬБА НЕУДАЧЛИВОГО ЙОГА

Сознание Кришны привлекает людей своей экстравагантностью, необычайными оборотами, которые часто ставят под сомнение сложившиеся общепринятые представления о морали, этике и религии. Наша книга содержит документальный фотоматериал, записи бесед с ремарками автора и электронную переписку.



## СОЗНАНИЕ КРИШНЫ КАК ОНО ЕСТЬ

Ряд публикаций, собранных в серии выпусков под названием «Сознание Кришны как оно есть», предполагает создание апологетического проекта, который в настоящем отслеживает отклонения в философии и практике бенгальского вайшнавизма. Эти отклонения создают искаженное представление о Движении Шри Чайтаньи Махапрабху, давая повод для критики нашим оппонентам. Наши усилия направлены на выявление этих отклонений и принятие превентивных мер по их устранению.



## СУДЬБА ПРЕУСПЕВАЮЩЕГО КРИШНАИТА

Всякое духовное движение поддерживается ачарьями (совершенными личностями). Когда ачарья уходит, и оно становится религией, то с духовной платформы спускается на материальный уровень сознания. Тогда штатные проповедники и так называемые гуру подобно путанам вскармливают своих последователей отравленным молоком. В нашей книге речь пойдет именно о таких. Главный герой нашей повести А. Хакимов является типичным примером такого гуру. Подобно массовику затейнику и шоумену, он гастролирует, развлекавая наивную публику и вынимая из ее карманы деньги и энергию.





## БХАГАВАД-ГИТА

«Бхагавад-гита» является квинтэссенцией ведического знания, наиболее известным философским и теистическим произведением, принадлежащая перу Двайапааны Вьясадевы, литературной инкарнации Господа Кришны.



## БРАХМА – ТВОРЕЦ, ОТЕЦ, УЧИТЕЛЬ

Господь Брахма – вайшнава, величайший преданный Шри Кришны, Верховной Личности Бога. Брахма – это Гуна-аватара, наделенная способностью творить. Также он – отец всех видов и форм биологической жизни. И, наконец, Брахма – это духовный учитель, ачарья-основатель сампрадаи, в которой принял посвящение Господь Чайтанья Махапрабху, наиболее милостивое воплощение Кришны.



## ХАРЕ КРИШНА ВЧЕРА И СЕГОДНЯ # 1

Предлагаемая читателю книга написана в форме диалогов, длившихся на протяжении нескольких лет между доктором философских наук, профессором социологии Санкт-Петербургского университета Владимиром Лисовским и вице-президентом регионов Волга – Урал, Сибирь – Дальний Восток Международного общества Сознания Кришны Маму Тхакур дас.



## ХАРЕ КРИШНА ВЧЕРА И СЕГОДНЯ # 2

Эту книгу автор посвящает А.С. Бхактиведанте Свами Прабхупаде, основателю-ачарье Международного общества сознания Кришны. Книга «Харе Кришна вчера и сегодня» является продолжением уже существующей книги под тем же названием, написанной Маму Тхакур дасом (а ныне Мурали Мохан Махараджем) в соавторстве с одним из своих оппонентов Академиком В. Лисовским.



### ХАРЕ КРИШНА ВЧЕРА И СЕГОДНЯ # 3

В третьем выпуске этого издания наряду с историческими событиями и реально действующими личностями читатель может ознакомиться с философией, этикой и практикой сознания Кришны. Здесь собраны воспоминания автора, диалоги, беседы с учеными, лекции, публичные выступления, а также статьи и материалы опубликованные ранее.



### ХАРЕ КРИШНА ВЧЕРА И СЕГОДНЯ # 4

Книга «Харе Кришна вчера и сегодня» – это одна из книг серии публикаций, которую мы начали с Академиком В. Т. Лисовским. Позже к нам присоединились: философ Эльмар Соколов и культуролог С. Н. Некрасов. В четвертом выпуске этой серии приняли участие старший научный сотрудник Московского института философии Т. Б. Любимова и один из основателей партии Жириновского Ахмет Халиев, беседой с которым мы и закончим первую часть этой книги.



### ХАРЕ КРИШНА ВЧЕРА И СЕГОДНЯ # 5

Пятый выпуск книги «Харе Кришна вчера и сегодня» представляет собой бестселлер мемуарной и философской литературы. В ней собраны документальные материалы, фото, воспоминания и беседы автора за период с 1987 по настоящее время. Для любителей легкого детектива – это приятное время препровождение, а для искателя истины – это кладезь мудрости. Что же касается последователей сознания Кришны – это неиссякаемый источник вдохновения.



### ХАРЕ КРИШНА ВЧЕРА И СЕГОДНЯ # 6

Наша книга описывает настоящий период, предполагая развитие событий и не опережая их. Написать эту книгу меня побудили обстоятельства. Один из моих оппонентов показал мне Prabhupad Anti Defamation Association – Newsletters & Archive. Пытаясь дать подходящий ответ, я взял тайм аут, чтобы изучить материал этого сайта.



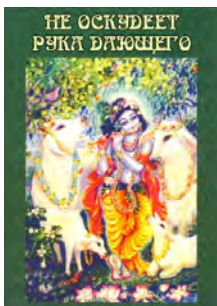
## МАНИФЕСТ БЕЗОБЛАЧНОГО СЧАСТЬЯ

«Манифест безоблачного счастья» представляет идеальное устройство общества как оно было создано Господом Кришной. В этой книге читатель найдет мудрость ведической или арийской культуры, существовавшей на этой планете миллионы лет назад, под названием *варнашрама-дхарма*, целью которой было достижение освобождения от круговорота рождения и смерти.



## КРАСОТА СПАСЕТ МИР

Посвящается Бхактиведанте Нараяне Госвами, моему *дикши* Гуру, непревзойденному рассказчику *кришна-катхи*. Счастье и красота не существуют отдельно друг от друга. Они неразлучны как тело и душа. Хотя, говоря о душе, мы должны сделать оговорку: здесь мы имеем ввиду духовное тело, которое идентично самой природе нашего истинного «я». Духовное тело – источник вечного бытия, знания и блаженства, в то время как материальное – источник страданий.



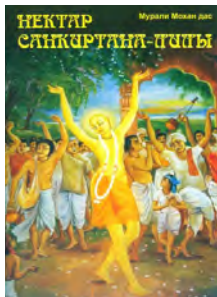
## НЕ ОСКУДЕЕТ РУКА ДАЮЩЕГО

В нашей книге, «Не оскудеет рука дающего», мы коротко расскажем об истории возникновения и развития благотворительности и филантропии, а также об обязанностях человека, его долге по отношению к семье, к обществу, религии и Богу, о его истинном предназначении (дхарме). А для тех, кто не знает или забыл какова цель человеческой жизни, мы напомним, что человек создан по образу и подобию Бога исключительно для того, чтобы познать Бога, служить Богу и любить Бога.



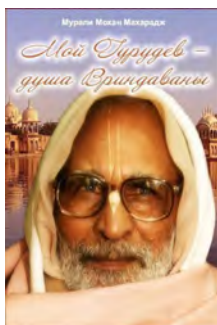
## ПРАВДА И НЕПРАВДА

Понятие «правда» и «неправда», а также «добро» и «зло», относятся к сфере общечеловеческой морали и этики. Однако в нашей книге мы попытались выйти за рамки сложившихся представлений, расширить геополитику культурной традиции Запада и Востока и найти возможность их примирения.



### НЕКТАР САНКИРТАНА-ЛИЛЫ

Вся слава Шри Шри Гуру и Гауранге! Нароттама дас Тхакур, в «Прардхане» пишет: *голокера према-дхана хари-нама-санкиртана...* «санкиртана пришла из духовного мира, с Голоки Вриндавана».



### МОЙ ГУРУДЕВ – ДУША ВРИНДАВАНЫ

Наша книга «Мой Гурудев – душа Вриндаваны» представляет собой воспоминания тех немногих эпизодов моей жизни, которые навечно связали меня со служением Его Божественной милости Нитья-лила правишта Ом Вишнупад Аштоттара-шата Шри Шримад Бхактиведанта Нараяна Госвами Махараджу, который очень дорог Шримати Радхике.



### ЕСЛИ ХОЧЕШЬ БЫТЬ СЧАСТЛИВЫМ, БУДЬ ИМ!

В нашей небольшой книге мы собрали высказывания некоторых философов, поэтов и просветителей, воспользовались энциклопедическими данными и исследованиями ученых, а в конце книги привели мнение спиритуалистов и последователей сознания Кришны.



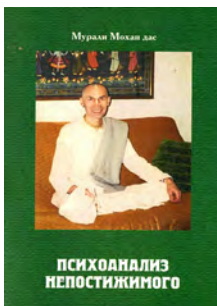
### ЗАПИСКИ ВЕГЕТАРИАНЦА

Любите животных, не ешьте их! Эта книга рассказывает о вегетарианстве с точки зрения этики, морали, религии и здравого смысла, а так же о прасаде – освещенной вегетарианской пище, предложенной Кришне.



### **ДЕРЕВО, НЕ ПРИНОСЯЩЕЕ ПЛОДА**

Это одна из серии книг написанная автором для лучшего осознания человеком духовной природы и природы материальной, а также его отношения к Богу. Что есть религия, и что таковой не является? Какова цель истинной религии, и что таковой не является? – вот вопросы, затронутые в ней.



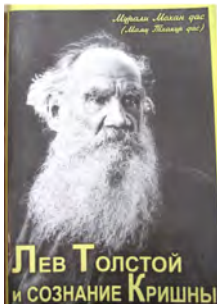
### **ПСИХОАНАЛИЗ НЕПОСТИЖИМОГО**

Наш психоанализ посвящен предмету, который находится далеко за пределами чувственного опыта. Хотя мы говорим о нем как о реально существующем объекте познания, однако его постижение относится скорее к области метафизики и парапсихологии, чем к той науке, в основе которой лежит эмпирический метод познания. Какова же его ценность для человека, желающего обрести освобождение от круга рождения и смерти, старости и болезней, тройственных страданий, присущих материальному существованию?



### **ПОСЛАНИЕ БОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛЮБВИ**

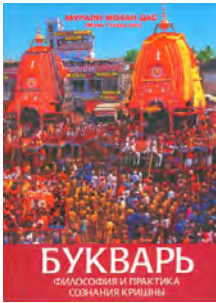
Шри Чайтанья Махапрабху является наиболее милостивым воплощением Господа Кришны. Его учение представляет сущность всех ведических писаний; оно неотлично от учения Самого Кришны. В «Бхагаavad-гите» (18.66) Кришна говорит: «Оставь все религии и предайся Мне...». Как предаться Кришне учит Шри Чайтанья.



### **ЛЕВ ТОЛСТОЙ И СОЗНАНИЕ КРИШНЫ**

Книга «Лев Толстой и сознание Кришны» рассказывает читателю о связи Толстого с древней традицией, которая стала причиной отторжения великого русского мыслителя от русской православной церкви, раскола и предания его анафеме. «Лев Толстой и сознание Кришны» – это недостающая страница биографии великого русского писателя и «антихриста». Она поможет нашим читателям правильно понять и оценить вклад Толстого в историю развития передовой русской мысли и духовной личности человека.





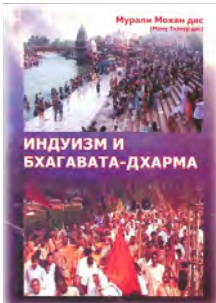
## **БУКВАРЬ – ФИЛОСОФИЯ И ПРАКТИКА СОЗНАНИЯ КРИШНЫ**

«Букварь» – для тех, кто ничего не знает о сознании Кришны, но горит желанием узнать, а равно и для тех, кто уже знаком с этим явлением и не оставляет серьезных намерений узнать больше, систематизируя уже имеющиеся знания. Она представляет своего рода руководство к практической деятельности, доставляющей удовольствие Шри Кришне, Верховной Личности Бога.



## **В ПОИСКАХ СЧАСТЬЯ**

Эта книга рассказывает читателю о том, как человек, стремясь обрести в этом мире счастье, становится еще более несчастным, чем до того, как он пожелал стать счастливым. Столкнувшись с непреодолимыми трудностями, он впадает в депрессию и, чтобы выйти из нее, пускается во все тяжкие прегрешения, одно из которых алкоголизм и наркомания.



## **ИНДУИЗМ И БХАГАВАТА-ДХАРМА**

Книга «Индуизм и Бхагавата-дхарма» написана в форме очерков, которые вошли в нее отдельными главами. Заканчивается книга беседой автора со старшим научным сотрудником Московского института философии, Доктором философских наук Т.Б. Любимовой. Хотя «Индуизм и Бхагавата-дхарма» предназначена для узкого круга религиоведов, социологов, политологов и др. представителей общественных наук, тем не менее, она вызывает живой интерес широкого читателя, интересующегося философией и религией древнего Востока.



## **КУЛЬТУРА И РЕЛИГИЯ ДЕМОНОВ**

В царстве Вишну нет сирот. Господь – Отец всех живых существ. Он поддерживает каждого, предоставляя все необходимое для жизни. Высшие планетарные системы населяют праведники (полубоги), срединные, подобные Земле, человеческие существа, а низшие (миры безверия) демоны.



## ХАРИНАМА, ДИКША, ВАЙШНАВА-САДАЧАРА

Обязанности и этикет для преданных ашрама «Санкиртана». Издание для учеников Мурали Мохан даса. В этой книге представлены правила поведения и обязанности для учеников Мурали Мохан даса. Они составлены на основе «Хари-бхакти-виласы» Шрилы Санатаны Госвами и материалов других вайшнавов-ачарьев Брахма-Мадхва-Гаудия сампрадайи. По сути, они являются общими для всех преданных Кришны.



## ТРАНСЦЕНДЕНТАЛЬНАЯ МОЗАИКА

Представляет собой сборник статей, опубликованный ранее под названием «Трансцендентальная мозаика». Это скромная попытка научить людей наслаждаться жизнью независимо от обычного течения дел и умонастроения в каждый наступающий момент, который становится вечностью с того времени, как мы познали себя (душу) и восстановили свои вечные отношения с Кришной.



## ХРАМ В КАЖДОМ ДОМЕ

Эту книгу я написал для моих учеников и последователей, которые горят желанием постичь науку преданного служения Всепривлекающей личности Господа Шри Кришне во всех его видах. Усвоив основные принципы арчаны, согласно Панчаратрике, человек легко сможет осуществить поклонение любой форме Господа, которая является проявлением Его вечной лилы, воплощенной в арча-виграхе.



## ХРАМ ШРИ ШРИ КИШОР КИШОРИ

В этой книге наиболее известные песни и молитвы Гаудия вайшнавов, которые произносят и поют в храме Шри Шри Кишор Кишори объединения «Санкиртаны» во время Мангала и Гаура-арати, а также на воскресных программах.

**Желающие получить какую-либо книгу или дальнейшую информацию по вопросам, обсуждающимся в этой книге, могут обращаться по адресу: [muralimohandas@yahoo.com](mailto:muralimohandas@yahoo.com)**