

VYASA-PUJA FESTIVAL FOR SRILA PRABHUPADA

[A Report]

On the mornings of August 21 and 22, 2003 Parama-pujyapada Srila

Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja led a festival in honor of the divine

Appearance Day of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja.

The first day of the festival coincided with Sri Nandotsava, the day after Janmastami, when Nanda Maharaja and Srimati Yasodamaiyi celebrated the birthday of their son, Bhagavan Sri Krsna. On that first morning, in addition to calling on some of Srila Prabhupada's senior disciples to offer their sraddha pushpanjalis (offering of flowers in the form of words of glorification) Srila Maharaja himself spoke about his relationship with Srila Prabhupada, starting from 1946 when they first met. He began by saying that Srila Prabhupada's greatness was indicated on the very auspicious day of His birth – Sri Nandotsava. He then explained how the nitya-siddha associate of Sri Sri Radha and Krsna, Srila Prabhupada, played the role of a conditioned soul gradually advancing in bhakti. He described Srila Prabhupada's business successes and then failures, and his moving to a small broken down room on the bank of the Yamuna when his wife ordered him to leave the house. He also described how he had brought Srila Prabhupada and his luggage, which consisted of a few Vedic scriptures, from that small room to his Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha in Mathura and arranged a room for him right next to his own. Prabhupada's room has since been rebuilt to become the altar room of Sri Sri Radha-Vinodabihariji, as well as the deity of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu who was donated to the Matha in the 1950's by Srila Prabhupada himself, and who has been cared for in great pomp up to the present day. Srila Maharaja explained how he and his brahamacarīs then saw to all of Prabhupada's needs so that he would be able to devote his full time to his writing and preaching.

He explained how he himself, along with his own Guru Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, enthused Srila Prabhupada to take sannyasa and how he himself performed the sannyasa ceremony. He explained how, when Srila Prabhupada first came to America in 1966, Prabhupada wrote to him and invited him to come and preach with him. Srila Maharaja was not able to come at that time, but he came to preach with him to the West thirty years later (in 1996).

Srila Maharaja shared with the three hundred devotees present how Srila Prabhupada wrote to him such letters that he never wrote to others. For example, he wrote to Srila Maharaja in September 1966: "Our relationship is certainly based on spontaneous love. That is why there is no chance of us forgetting one another. By the mercy of Guru and Gauranga, may everything be auspicious for

you. This is my constant prayer. From the first time I saw you I have been your constant well-wisher. At his first sight of me, Srila Prabhupada (Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura) also saw me with such love. It was in my very first darsana of Srila Prabhupada that I learned how to love."

He said that nowadays some persons are trying to propagate a false idea that it was his holiness Tamal Krsna Gosvami who gave Srila Prabhupada Samadhi, but facts are facts. It was Srila Maharaja himself who was given that honor by Srila Prabhupada.

Because August 21 was Sri Nandotsava and the devotees at Sri Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha were going to feed tens of thousands of persons that day in honor of Sri Nanda Baba having done so on the day of His son's birth, the class ended at 8:00 am, at which time Srila Maharaja and the assembled devotees performed arati and offered pushpanjali to Srila Prabhupada. Srila Maharaja offered each article of worship and then passed those articles on to Srila Prabhupada's disciples to offer. After that everyone honored the large feast prepared in Prabhupada's honor and sponsored by Pujyapada Sajjana Maharaja and Srimati Vrndavana Vilasani dasi. After that and throughout the day, bhagavat maha-prasada was served to all the visitors.

On the next day, August 22, just after morning bhajanas, Srila Maharaja resumed the Vyasa-puja celebration. That celebration had a special interesting touch, in that Srila Maharaja, the speakers' siksa-guru, repeatedly taught them and all others how to properly glorify their diksa-guru and how to properly represent him. He began by saying, "Now we continue the glorification of Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. Some disciples have already spoken and I would like that others speak today." Before the first speaker began his glorification he was offering his vandana (prayers), as is customary, to Srila Prabhupada his diksa-guru, and to Srila Maharaja his siksa guru. While he was in the midst of saying his prayers, Srila Maharaja interrupted him and said, "First fix the microphone and then do vandana, or first do vandana and then fix the microphone. Don't try to do both at the same time." As the speaker continued his prayers, Srila Maharaja interrupted him again and said, "It is not proper etiquette to look here and there while doing vandana. Put your head down somewhat, remember your Gurudeva, and in that way do vandana."

The speaker began his talk by relating the history of Srila Prabhupada from his very young childhood, when he was nicknamed Kachori-mukhi, because he so much liked kachoris. He also began telling of a mango pastime of Srila Prabhupada in his young childhood, at which time Srila Maharaja again interrupted him and said, "I don't want to hear about mangos and kachoris. Try to go deep and tell the devotees about the special teachings given by your

Gurudeva." The speaker then began describing how Srila Prabhupada met his own Guru Maharaja, Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who told him to preach in the Western world. Srila Maharaja interrupted him again and said, "But what was that message he told him to preach?" In other words Srila Maharaja was insisting on a presentation of Srila Prabhupada's siddhanta, the conclusive truths about bhakti that he mercifully gave the world.

After some minutes Srila Maharaja called on a second speaker, and in the midst of his vandana Srila Maharaja reached out from his vyasasana, took the speaker's large cloth bag off his shoulder and said, "I want to help you with your bag." Srila Maharaja then placed that cloth bag on his own vyasasana. Then, in the midst of that second speaker's trying to explain some of the philosophy that Prabhupada was preaching to the fallen souls, Srila Maharaja again interrupted and said, "But what did he say about jiva-tattva? If the jiva is part and parcel of Bhagavan Sri Krsna, why did he turn away from Him? As the speaker tried to explain that the tiny jiva is forgetful, Srila Maharaja again interrupted and, desiring that the speaker discuss the truth of the matter – that the jiva in this world never fell from Goloka Vrndavana, that he had never previously seen Lord Krsna before coming to this world, that he is a manifestation of Sri Krsna's tatastha-sakti and is manifest from the tatastha region in between the spiritual and material worlds – Srila Maharaja then said, "Why do all the jivas forget? Where was he first situated? Was he with Sri Visnu or Krsna Bhagavan – or not? He is cit-vastu, transcendental, so why did he forget? What did your Gurudeva speak on this subject?" The speaker replied to his best capacity, and in the midst of that, Srila Maharaja again interrupted him and said, "Don't immediately talk about gopi-prema. Why are the jivas suffering? What is the remedy? You should know all this."

After some minutes, Srila Maharaja called on the next speaker, Srimati Manjari dasi, and requested her to speak loudly. Just as she was about to begin her glorification Srila Maharaja called out to Srila Prabhupada's disciple Srimati Bhadra dasi who was sitting in the back row and said, "I want your bead bag. Please give me your bead bag." Extremely nervous that Srila Maharaja might call on her to speak that morning, on the way to the temple she had not been conscious of what she is normally conscious of, and had unknowingly dropped her bead bag. Now she said, "I can't. I dropped it in the street while I was walking here." Then Srila Maharaja said, "Oh, you don't care about your beads?" She said, "I do, I don't know what happened." Then Srila Maharaja said, "You should try to discover where your beads have gone, and then give them to me." [As it turned out, while Srila Maharaja, accompanied by his disciples, was on his morning walk an hour earlier, one of his party found them in the street and gave it to Srila Maharaja who had kept them for her, and then he gave them to her after class.]

Manjari dasi gave a very nice speech in glorification of Srila Prabhupada, in which she explained the verse by Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami in relation to Srila Prabhupada's glories:

nama-srestham manum api saci-putram atra svarupam / rupam tasyagrajam uru-
purim mathurim gosthavatim

radha-kundam giri- varam aho! radhika- madhavasam / prapto yasya prathita-
krpaya sri gurum tam nato 'smi

[“I am fully indebted to Sri Gurudeva, because he is giving me so many things. He is giving me the holy name containing the highest form of thought, aspiration, and ideal, and he is giving me the service of that great savior, the son of Mother Saci, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is like the golden mountain indicating the way to krsna-lila. And Sri Gurudeva has brought me to Svarupa Damodara, who is Lalita-devi, Srimati Radhika’s closest friend. Then he has brought me to Sri Rupa, who was ordered to distribute rasa-tattva, and then to Sri Sanatana Gosvami, who adjusts our position in relation to raganuga-bhakti. Gurudeva has brought me to Mathura Mandala, where Radha and Govinda have their pastimes, where the forest, hills and every creeper, shrub and grain of sand are uddipana (stimuli) to help me remember Radha and Govinda. He has given me Radha-kunda and Giriraja Govardhana, and aho! He has given me assurance of all these, so I bow my head with deep respect unto his lotus feet.” (Sri Mukta-carita, Raghunatha dasa Gosvami)]

Srila Maharaja then called on Sripad Atul Krsna dasa, who gave a powerful talk, proving very succinctly that Srila Prabhupada's siddha-sarira (spiritual body in his eternal service to Sri Sri Radha Krsna) in Goloka Vrndavana is not that of sakhyarasa. In other words Srila Prabhupada is not a cowherd boy there. Sripad Atul Krsna dasa said that some persons declare that Srila Prabhupada is a cowherd boy because he established Lord Nityananda Prabhu for worship by devotees and often prayed to him. He gave the example of Sri Nityananda Prabhu putting His lotus feet on the head of Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami as described in Sri Caitanya-caritamrta. Being very pleased with Srila Dasa Gosvami, Lord Nityananda took away all his obstacles and he was soon able to leave home and have the association of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami, in his siddha-sarira, is a manjari, a maidservant of Srimati Radhika. Similarly Srila Prabhupada, who has the full mercy of Sri Nityananda Raya and is a follower of Sri Rupa Gosvami and Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, is in that same eternal service.

Atul Krsna dasa then succinctly proved that Srila Prabhupada never preached nor is he in the opinion that the jiva fell from Goloka Vrndavana. After his talk, Srila Maharaja announced, "I want preachers like this prabhu. He summarized everything I have taught about your Prabhupada. He did not speak about mangos and kachoris. He has preached that the jiva did not come from Goloka Vrndavana and that your Srila Prabhupada is not in sakhyarasa but that he is a follower of Srila Rupa Gosvami and Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami. You should all preach in this spirit. Try to have this bold spirit of preaching."

Srila Maharaja next called on Srimati Vrndavana Vilasini dasi who glorified Srila Prabhupada's ability to perform the miracle he performed because, although it appeared that he was alone, that he boarded the Scindia steamship alone and got off the ship alone, actually he was always with Sri Sri Radha and Krsna and all Their associates. Since he was always chanting suddha-vraja-nama and radha-nama he had all the power of those holy names and personalities behind him. She also gave some examples of Srila Prabhupada's deep love for the fallen souls of the world, and included her own personal experience of his love.

After expressing appreciation of her offering, Srila Maharaja called on Pujyapada Bhaktivedanta Padmanabha Maharaja who shared with the assembled devotees Srila Prabhupada's ever-insistence that his disciples and followers continually preach and not be selfish. He quoted Srila Prabhupada as saying this is the best service his followers can do. He said that some devotees argue that, "I haven't realized anything yet, so how can I preach?" Padmanabha Maharaja said that this was not Srila Prabhupada's mood. Prabhupada wanted that everyone preach according to his realization, despite how much or how little realization the devotee may have.

After Pujyapada Padmanabha Maharaja's talk, Srila Maharaja was inspired to speak on the same subject and said, "Parama-pujyapada Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja realized the sufferings of the jivas and, weeping, he came to the West. We also have not established our Mathas (temples) for sleeping or making merry. Some persons like to simply take prasadam and sleep, but I am like Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja and my Gurudeva, Param-pujyapada Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja. When I first moved into the Matha and had been living there for only three months, my Guru Maharaja told me to go out and preach. I didn't know any Bengali at that time, and yet he told me to preach in the Bengali language. So I mixed 75% Hindi with 25% Bengali and preached."

Srila Narayana Maharaja continued, "If Sri Gurudeva gives a disciple diksa and the spirit to serve Krsna, and if that disciple collects millions of rupees for his Gurudeva, can he repay his Gurudeva with that money – or not? We should understand this point. Even if it seems that you have collected a lot of money you are really not doing anything. It is only by the name of Gurudeva that you have collected anything.

"This Matha is not a place for sense gratification, and neither have we collected disciples for this purpose. I want all disciples to preach this mission, to realize it and to give this spirit to others. You should realize even one percent, and if you have realized one percent you can preach. You will not be able to repay Sri Gurudeva in millions of lives if you are sat-sisya, a disciple in the real sense and you know factually what is krsna-prema and you are drinking that prema. Such a disciple can realize the glories of his Guru; otherwise one can never realize it. Keep this spirit in you heart. Don't be idle – engaging in sleeping, eating and mating like animals. This instruction is for both males and females. Offer your

lives and everything you possess to the lotus feet of Sri Guru, and then your life will be successful. I pray to Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, to my

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