

Today is the last day of our yat-ra. On the request of devotees we have come to this place. It is a very unknown part of Vrinda-vana this particular temple. It is not to be found in any of the parikrama books. We only are aware of these deities Sri Sri Radha Gopijanavallabha. The mercy They have personally bestowed upon myself.

Yesterday devotees had a vote, by democratic process; conclusion was we come here today.



We understand Krishna by the grace of Krishna's devotees. We cannot approach Krishna directly. It is by His own sweet will that He has arranged. Krishna wants to give credit to His devotees, He wants to bestow His mercy through His devotees. It is only through the mercy of Vaisnavas that we can understand what is Krishna, what is the Holy name, what is Vrinda-vana, what is the purpose of life beyond just greed and egoism.

I would like to briefly narrate a few personal encounters in my life in relationship to Sri Sri Radha-Gopijanavallabha - with your permission.

In 1971 I was a devotee of Lord Siva, I was travelling from the area Pashupatinatha to Amar-natha for a pilgrimage in month of August. Very crowded third class train, didn't sit down for about 40 hours. Finally the train stopped and I wanted to some-how or other to move, so I crawled over people's heads, somehow I pulled myself out of the window, because I had these attachments. The train started moving and I tried to get back in and it was so very crowded, no window to fit a human being inside.

So the train left and I was in this unknown place. I asked a sadhu on the railway platform - where is this. He said this is Mathura, today is Janmastami! So he took me to Janmastaana where I spent the whole day. It was very crowded and very joy-ful, although I really didn't know who is Krishna or what is Krishna so much. And then at midnight everyone went to Dwarkadhisha. Bathed in Visnu-ghata. So I was thinking actu-ally that night I stayed, al-though I was in Mathura, in a temple of Lord Siva with a ba-baji named Sivananda. And I was thinking I will go to Vrind-vana for about 3 days. Then I will go to Amarnatha.

So I started walking down the road and a bus saw me on the road between Vrindavana and Mathura near fields and it stopped and picked me up. They said I did not have to pay anything. So I went on the bus and then I arrived and I just asked someone is there a river here - Yamuna, because I knew there was Yamuna. So they pointed, so I was just walking toward Yamuna because that was my tradition - whatever holy place I would just go to; whatever holy river was there and just sleep under tree and do meditation. So as I was walking and one Vraja-vasi ap-proached me and said to me; "oh you have come from foreign land." Because foreigners were very rare at that time. There was no ISKCON at that time.

He said you have come to Krishna's home, we are Krishna's family, you are our guest let me give you some food. So he took me to some Vraja-vasi's house and had prasad, nice prasad, and then he said where are you staying, I said on the river. He took me to one ashram of one blind sadhu, then I met him and he said let him stay here and he said yes, but still I went to the Yamuna. So on the 3rd day when I was going to leave in the morning from Mathura to the railway station. I woke up with typhoid fever, so I was very very sick. And some of Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers were very kind to me. And after I was in this Rama-Krishna charitable hospital for about 2 weeks. Laying in a room with 40 dying people.

They gave me shelter in one Gaudiya matha for some time and I was studying there. The doctor told me I had to wait at least 2 months before I could travel or I would die. My body was so weak and emaciated from the way I was living. By the end of the 2 months I came to the conclusion that of all the theologies, philosophies, religions and spiritual paths that I have experienced there is nothing higher, nothing as sweet, nothing more beautiful then the religion of Vrindavana. Devotion to Sri Sri Radharani and Sri Krishna. So I decided to spend the rest of the my life in Vrindavana and never leave.

So after some time I was living on the bank of Yamuna. Sometimes going to Govardhana, Nandaghama, Varsana and various places. I would usually sleep under trees near Chirghata here in Vrindavana. We would go to mangala-arati at Radharamana temple and then Radha-vallabha temple then go to mangal arati to Seva-kunja and Banke-bihari gets up quite late. Sometimes to Radha-Damodara temple. So what happened is some sadhu, one very nice sadhu he got to know me. I would go every night a few sadhu's and myself we would go around Vrindavana, Vrindavana parikrama, we did this every night. For the whole month of kartik, we would just sing bhajans on the bank of the Yamuna. One of the sadhu's was a musical godbrother of Ravi Shankara, he played sitar. But he considered Ravi Shankar to be somewhat in maya because he played ragas without Krishna's names. He would play ragas and only chant Krishna's names when he played. So he was a fantastic sitar player.

We would sit on bank of Yamuna and just chant and he would just play, 3/4/5 of us and then we would go around Vrindavana every night in the moonlight. And one of these nice sadhus told me I want you to meet a very very very simple and pure soul. When you meet him you will understand what is bhakti. So I thought he was going to bring me to some nice temple. He took me in the Radha-Vallabha temple area down this very isolated little ally way where there was an open sewer gutter just flowing like anything, black sewage and had to step over the sewage gutter to get in the door. And it was someone's house. Very, very small house. And a family was living in that house. Always making noise and everything. Then a hallway and in one of the hallways in their house there was a closet. The family was always passing, walking through that hallway and in that closet were the Deities of Sri Sri Radha-Gopijanavallabha. And then he introduced me to the pujari. His name was Ghanshyam.

How gracious and how kind he was! He had such pure love and devotion to the Deities. I was told that many years before when was young a man, he came from a very wealthy family. His Father, Mother all family members came on a pilgrimage to Vrindavana. They spent a few days and what the dhama of Vrindavana did to his heart was something wonderful. He became so deeply attached to Vrindavana.

Just by being here he became completely detached from everything in life. He saw no other purpose or meaning to existence except surrendering to Sri Radha and Krishna in Vrindavana. So when it was time to go he said I will stay here I will not leave. So his parents thought this is ridiculous so they said all right you come a little later. So they went back.

The parents came back again; they said now you must come, he said no I will not leave. So they told him we will take away all your property, all your money everything unless you come back. We will not in any way support you being here.

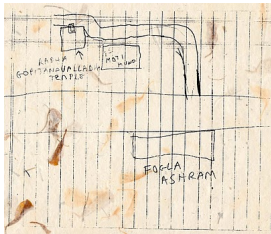
He considered the only real treasure and wealth in life his residence in Vrindavana, in the service of Radha and Krishna. So they left. From a very wealthy family, he was in total poverty. In the summer, which is very hot, in the winter it is extremely cold, he would just sleep in the dust of Vrindavana on the ground in various places. He would go do madhukari and get some roti. At that time Vrindavana was a very very quiet place. He hardly knew anyone. He would just be immersed in chanting the holy name and praying. One day he was just sitting in the dust all day long just chanting the holy names and do you know what his Deity was? - The name of Radharani.

In the Sanskrit alphabet he just wrote "Sri Radha". In the dust with his finger and he would just worship that. And at the end of the day he would erase it so that nobody would step on it. So when he erased he saw some gold. He rubbed the ground and he felt something there and he started digging in a little and there was a piece of gold. So he was thinking what is this. Dug into the ground and what he found was something extraordinary. It was the top of the head of Srimati Radharani's deity. And next to Her underground was a beautiful blackish deity of Lord Krishna. And it was written underneath Him Radha-Gopijanavallabha.

So he had These deities, These deities you see, They're quite big deities. He had absolutely not one paise. He only had one torn-up set of clothes, he had no residence and here is self-manifesting deities of Radhagopijanavallabha. So he felt that They have somehow put Themselves under my care, I cannot leave Them.

So he would just sit there with Them and chant. And sometimes people would come by and give some madhukari. He could not go to homes because he can't just leave the deities in the field. He was worshipping Them literary under a tree, even in the rainy season under a tree. And people would sometimes come by and give some roti and he would offer it. This went on for some time. And this particular family of Vraja-vasis they saw his genuine and sincere devotion. So they said you can put your deities in the closet of our house near our hallway. Those deities remained there for about the next 50 years. And he worshipped Them there.

This is where we met him. He would never leave the deities. He would only one time of the day he would go the Yamuna, because he had no one to help him, to collect water. To bring back. He would bathe in Yamuna and then bring a bucket back to bathe the deities.



Now when I met him he was an old man. Perhaps in his 80's. And he had a certain mood about him. It was that he was the most fallen, insignificant servant of Gopijanavallabha. Most unqualified and that anyone who came to that temple and very few people ever came. But anybody who would come in to that little temple he would consider that was Gopijanavallabha's very special guest, Gopijanavallabha's friend, personally invited. And he would give his life, his soul his everything to serve anybody who came. He was one of the simplest people I ever met.

He was really living in poverty. You know where he slept for that 50 or 60 years? He slept in the hallway. People would just, family would just walk by. Practically stepping over him. The deities were in a tiny little closet near that closet was a tiner closet. Whatever the deities belongings were, were in there. And he just slept on the hallway on the floor.

So I started coming there about 9 o'clock every morning after about 5 different mangal arati's that I would attend. I would go to Gopijanavallabha temple. And one day I just went there because I just wanted to be with Ghanshyam. So one day he told me come today at noon and I will give you prasad. So I was thinking how can I refuse this. So I came at noon, he gave me, all he had was 3 rotis; nothing else. 3 rotis. So he said you come everyday, you must come. He said you must come everyday. Gopijanavallabha and Radharani want you to come everyday to take prasad with Them.

So after about 3 days there was this one sadhu who brought me to his house. He told me do you know that Ghanshyam has not eaten anything for 4 days. I said why. He said because you are eating all his rotis. He said Ghanshyam does not go out to beg really. He can't go far. There's 3 little houses right in that area. Each one cooks one roti. And he goes to those 3 houses everyday to get 1 roti from each house. And he brings, that's all he has. He offers that to Gopijanavallabha. So he said he his giving you all of his food.

So I came the next day and he just put down the rotis down in front of me. And I said Ghanshyam these are your rotis. He said no, no, these are your rotis. I said I already had prasad. He said doesn't matter Gopijanavallabha wants you to eat these rotis. I said no, no I do not want these rotis. He said You MUST, YOU MUST. He spoke nice English, because he was coming from an educated family.

I said Ghanshyam I have been told that you've not eaten for 4 days because I am eating all of your prasad. He said no, who has told you this, it is not true. I am eating so much, gopijanavallabha is giving me everything I need. Now you eat these rotis, please. I said Ghanshyam I am not going to eat these rotis because they are your rotis. Literally he began to weep and tremble with folded palms begging me to eat the rotis. I said Ghanshyam unless you show me that there is more rotis in your house I am not going to these.

He said I have so many rotis in this house. He said Gopijanavallabha is consort of Sri Radharani, She is the supreme goddess of fortune. You don't think there is any rotis in Her house. I said Ghanshyam show me the rotis. He said no need to show you, no need. They are here. You just take this parasad. He became so concerned, I said Ghanshyam I know that there are 12 places in Vrindavana that give madhukari to sadhus at a particular time of the day. In those days every sadhu knew where to go at what time to get free rotis. That was the first thing sadhu's learn when they come to Vrindavana; Time schedule of roti distribution in different temples.

So, I said I can go anywhere, you are here. You are starving. He said No need, you take these rotis. He started crying and pleading and praying to me. I understood if I did not take his rotis I would break his heart. So I was praying to Gopijanavallabha what should I do? Break his heart or starve his body. He would not let me leave without eating the rotis. But I never came back at 12 o'clock. The next day he didn't eat the rotis at 12 o'clock knowing that I would come 9 o'clock the next day. We had a big fight and I refused to eat his rotis.

This was a selfless service attitude. He was so old and so thin. One day I saw him walking with this bucket of water to bathe Gopijanavallabha. And from the Yamuna he would walk about 3 steps and then would have to put the bucket down and rest. Then he would pick it up

strenuously, 3 steps then put it down to rest. At the time I was only 20 years old. So I took the bucket from him and I said I will carry it to the top. He would not let go, he said no need, no need, no need. I said Ghanshyam let me carry it for you. I can carry it in 3 mins, it takes you half hour. I am young. He said yes you are young so you should enjoy. But I am old man. I am just the servant. My life is sacrifice, he said you are Gopijanavallabha's friend. You should not have to work for Him, but I am just his fallen servant. It is my duty to serve Him. He would not give me that bucket. I was walking alongside him for about 20 mins. We were having tug of wars, he would not give me the bucket. And then finally he began to cry and with a choked up voice he said this service I have to Gopijanavallabha; is all I have in life. Please, please do not take it away from me. I never tried to take that bucket from him again.

One day I happened to be there and it was some festival so a Vraja-vasi brought him a cup of sweet rice to offer to Gopijanavallabha. Now please don't give or take the spontaneous love of the Vraja-vasi's but you can hear to understand its nature. He was just eating 2/3 rotis a day for how many years and here was a small pot of sweet rice in a clay cup and it was brought. The way he offered it to the deities is he sat me down on the little hallway in front of the closet. He put the spoon, 1 spoon in a cup and put it right to Gopijanavallabha's mouth and said a little prayer. Then he put it to Sri Radharani's mouth and said a little prayer, then he came to me because it's only a few feet from the deities and where I was sitting. He came and said open your mouth and put your head back. Then I opened by mouth and put my head back and he just poured the sweet rice from the spoon in my mouth. And this is how he offered the entire pot of sweet rice. He just kept on doing it spoon by spoon, Gopijanavallabha's mouth, Sri Radharani's mouth then he would just toss in my mouth. I said Ghanshyam save some for yourself, he said no need, no need. Then with folded palms and tears in his eyes he said you are Gopijanavallabha's friend, you Gopijanavallabha's friend. I am only his insignificant servant.

One time in the month of January I happened to come by to visit him in the night time. So Ghanshyam and I were chanting together. Whenever I went, I would come at all different times of the day sometimes just to visit him and whenever I would come he was never idle, he was never sitting, sleeping, but always doing seva. I'd come and he would be fanning the deities he just be standing and fanning and singing songs. Another time I had come he had sandalwood pulp and he was putting chandan and grinding. But most of time, 90% of the times when I would come he would just be sitting alone with the harmonium and singing beautiful songs for Gopijanavallabha. He was always busy doing some seva. Sometimes he would be doing puja,

offering arati, sometimes he be dressing Them. So this night I came and we were singing this nice kirtan together. In this old broken down little house in a hallway. So then I said I'm going, now I must go and Ghanshyam said where are you going. I am going to take rest. He said where do you take rest. I said I always take rest on the bank of Yamuna. He said oh no, it is January, it is very cold. Then you have no home, you have no proper clothes, no blanket even. He said you stay here tonight it is too cold, I insist you must sleep here tonight. So I said Ghanshyam I sleep on Yamuna every night. He said no no, tonight you must stay here.

Gopijanavallabha, you are His guest, you must sleep nicely. So I laid down on the floor next to him and he came out with this old blanket and put it on top of me. So I was thinking ahhh this is very nice blanket. And then he laid next to me. All he had is just a thin dhoti and little chadar. Not even a pillow. He slept right on the bare floor, he just had a little piece of burlap he would put on the floor and he would lay on his arm. And he was trembling cold. I said Ghanshyam this is your blanket. You sleep with your blanket. He said no no, it is not my blanket. It is your blanket. He said Gopijanavallabha wants you to have this blanket. You are his friend. I am only his fallen servant. You must accept this blanket. I said no it is your blanket. I will only stay here if you sleep with the blanket. So then he was begging me again, weeping, begging me take the blanket, sleep nicely. He said I am an old useless servant. What difference does it make if I suffer. But you are dear to the Lord, you must enjoy.

This was his mood. He was worshipping the deities for 50, 60 years. And I'm just a new devotee, I just arrived in Vrindavana and understood who Krishna is a couple months before. So finally, he surrendered. I was about to walk out. I said if you don't take this blanket I am leaving for the Yamuna. He said all right, all right, I will sleep in the blanket. You just lay down. So I lay down and it was cold. Ghanshyam was under this old tattered blanket but it was a little warm. So sometime later I woke up at night, in the middle of the night. And mysteriously I was feeling a little warm. So, I looked over at Ghanshyam and he's just laying there trembling, trembling like a leaf in the wind. And then I looked at myself and I saw the blanket was on me. While I was sleeping he put the blanket on me.

So very, very quietly I picked up the blanket and I wanted to not wake him. As soon I touched his body with the blanket he just leaped up “NO NEED, NO NEED” I said Ghanshyam you are not even sleeping, you are freezing. He said NO NEED, NO NEED you are Gopijanavallabha’s friend, I am his servant. The duty of the servant is to serve the friend. Gopijanavallabha will never be pleased with me unless I sacrifice my life for the happiness of His guests and His devotees. You must accept this blanket. He said you keep this blanket, you take it with you. I refused. So then we actually, I wasn’t yelling but I said no I’m not going to sleep with this blanket and he was insisting and insisting, then finally I said I am going to the Yamuna. Then he said all right, all right I will sleep with the blanket. So I lay down, he laid down. And I woke up a few minutes later and I was warm. And I looked over there he was suffering, miserably, freezing, trembling and again I tried to really, really secretly put the blanket, as soon as I touched him NO NEED, NO NEED, NO NEED. He said my life is to serve. He said you don’t understand my happiness is to serve, my only function in life is to serve. Whether I suffer or I whether I enjoy means nothing. The only meaning is Gopijanavallabha and Radharani are happy with me. They are happy when I give everything I have to devotees. He was so sincere. I would not except. At least 5/6 times that night this happened of the switching of blankets. I never came back there at night. In the winter.

Then it started getting warmer, started going there sometimes at night and he was aging. It was so nice, somehow or other he had made this little bed for the deities, have you seen the size of these deities? He would, every night, whenever possible, he would put the deities in the bed and lay Them down and massage Their feet and put a little blanket over Them. And then he would sing for Them for hours while They were sleeping. But because he was getting, he did this for many many years, but in his old age he could not lift the deities and put Them in the bed. So any time I would come at night the would ask me please, please help put Radharani and Gopijanavallabha in Their bed.

I wasn’t initiated at that time. I didn’t even have a spiritual master, what to speak of being a brahmana. But he would have me lift, because the feet are lighter he would take the side of Gopijanavallabha’s feet and I would take His shoulder’s and we would carry Gopijanavallabha into and lay Him into the bed and take Sri Radharani and lay Her in bed. And he was so happy, he would just be crying in joy at Gopijanavallabha and Radharani tonight get to sleep in Their

bed again. He would never ask me please come every night and help me. If I happened to come at night he would very humbly appeal, will you put Gopijanavallabha in Their bed. Otherwise he would put Them to rest standing up. And how much he was so happy I could see, it was like the most glorious festival, was like the most glorious feast in his heart to see the deities nicely lying in Their bed to take rest.

One day I said, I came in the morning, I said to Ghanshyam I am going to Varsana. He started to cry. He was so dedicated to those deities. As far as I know, although he was living in Vrajabhumi since he was 19/18 years old he came, this time he was there about 60 years. As far as I know he had never gone to Varsana. He had never gone to Nanda-ghama, never even seen Govardhana hill. Because he was duty-bound to his deities. He would never leave Them. When I told him I going to Varsana he began to cry. With folded hands he said when you go so Sri-ji mandir please, please tell Sri Radharani Ghanshyam is longing to come there to see Her. But that I cannot come because I am only Her servant. And I cannot leave my service.

Another time I was going to Govardhana hill, I said I am going for Govardhana parikrama. Ghanshyam again began to cry. He said when you see Giriraja, tell Him that Ghanshyam has been worshipping to Him and praying to Him for many years and is longing to see Him. He was seeing Varsana, he was seeing Govardhana, much clearer then so many thousands of pilgrims that walk around on parikrama of these places. Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura taught us do not try to see Krishna, decide to serve Krishna in such a way that He will be pleased to see you. When I heard this statement of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura some time later in remembrance of Ghanshyam came very intimately into my heart. Truly lived by the principles of servant of the servant of the servant.

It was actually in that little closet temple that I was with Ghanshyam and 2/3 other old sadhus that would come to meet him in the mornings. And I had to leave India because my visa had expired. So they gave me 2 suggestions in the presence of Gopijanavallabha. 1 suggestion is if

you have to leave India; go to Mithala -Janakpura. It is the Varsana of Rama's lila. It's in Nepal so it is out of India. So I went there.

I was in Nepal in for about a month or something, and then my Nepalise visa expired. And I only had a 2-week transit visa in India. Just to go through then I had to depart. So from Pashupatinatha I went to Ayodhya and Prayag, and then I came to Vrindavana. There I spent about 10 days in Vrindavana. My last day I did Govardhana parikrama and then departed. But the day before Govardhana parikrama I visited Ghanshyam baba. And he and a couple others were saying if you have to leave Vrindavana, because I was crying I have to leave Vrindavana. They said if you have to leave Vrindavana you should go to New Vrindavana. I asked what is this New Vrindavana? They said Swami Prabhupada, when he was here in Vrindavana, because I had already accepted Prabhupada as my guru by that time in Vrindavana.

They said your guru-maharaja Swami Prabhupada, he was telling us that he has created a Vrindavana in America called New Vrindavana. And he told us that it is non-different then from Vrindavana. So you should go there, that way you will never leave Vrindavana until you can come back. And he even told, he said you should be pujari when you go there.

So I had to leave and I went to Amsterdam. That was the first ISKCON temple I ever saw. I would live with Prabhupada when he came to Vrindavana. I was with Prabhupada in Bombay for sometime before. When I never saw an ISKCON temple and the whole expect for 10 days when Prabhupada was doing parikrama around Vrindavana there was never any ISKCON devotees here.

So then I went to the temple of London, Bury place ; stayed for some time. And then I visited my parents because they were severely heart-broken by my spirit of attempted renunciation. So I visited them for some time then I got the news that Prabhupada was coming to New York. So immediately I went and hitchhiked to New York. And I was with Prabhupada for about a week there. And the day he was leaving there was an announcement that Prabhupada is coming to New Vrindavana. And he is going to give a 7-day lecture series on Srimad Bhagavatam and it is going to be called the Bhagavat-dharma discourse. And he is going to celebrate Janmastami there and Vyasa-puja and we need people to help prepare for the festival because devotees from all over the country are going to be coming so whoever can come, please come and help to serve Prabhupada there and be there for his festival. So when I heard that I was thinking in Gopijanavallabha temple I was told that I should go to New Vrindavana and Prabhupada is going to be there. So I went to New Vrindavana. And my intention was only one thing - just to stay there till 6 months expired then I can get a visa to come back to Vrindavana India. That was my only intention. But when Prabhupada came and I heard him preach I realised that we really see Vrindavana through serving the spiritual master. Through the Supreme Lord. As long as we have any selfishness in our heart. Narottama Dasa Thakura (says)- as long as we have any material desire in our hearts we can't really see what is Vrindavana.

So by Prabhupada's mercy he inspired me that you should just surrender to your service, where you are. You are here now to surrender to your service. Surrender to serving in helping in my mission. So I was in charge of milking cows and doing some other simple work. Then the pujari, the brahmachari in ashram got married. That happens sometimes. I was such a simple new devotee. I was thinking how is it possible, he's serving Radha-Vrindavananatha. He is a personal, he is bathing Radha-Vrindavananatha, he is dressing Them, he's feeding Them, why in the world would anyone who had such a wonderful service would want to get married. Inconceivable!! So I went to that devotee I said if you want female association come and help me milk cows. It's the safest way to associate to with the opposite sex. Somehow or other he didn't accept my advice. So he got married.

Then the temple president said you should be the pujari. I said who is going to take care of the cows? He said you, you do both. So I was pujari for Radha-Vrindavananatha. I remember one day I was putting the dress on Srimati Radharani something wonderful happened, I

remembered then Ghanshyam baba told me I should be the pujari at New Vrindavana. So for 11 years I was not allowed to come to India. Because in those days devotees were really in a sense of surrender and they were very duty-bound in the way they rendered their service. We would never ever, ever act outside authority or blessings. So for 11 years I remained there worshipping the deities. And after I was given sannayas, actually I did not want to take sannayas. But the leader of New Vrindavana Kirtananda Maharaja he would. I would just always be talking about Vrindavana, because in those days nobody had ever been to India but a few devotees.

When I was in London in Bury place, I had this old thin, it was one of those wolf grey chadars, was really an old one. Some sadhu wore it for years and gave it me. And I had it on when I was in London and the devotees in Bury place were gathering around me, they said that's just like Prabhupada's chadar. They had never seen a chadar except on Srila Prabhupada. And me, they said where did you get that, its just like Prabhupada's chadar, we have never seen anything, its so. I said a sadhu gave it to me in Vrindavana. VRINDAVANA!, you have been to Vrindavana! People would be very interested to know what is Vrindavana. We would read about it Krishna book, but what is it like today.

So when I came to New Vrindavana only the leader had been to Vrindavana. Nobody else had ever been. So everyone would want to know about Vrindavana and after I would tell everyone, everyone wanted to go. Kirtananda Maharaja made a rule that I was not allowed to speak about Vrindavana. That rule was very very difficult to follow. Sometimes devotees would come way up to that old mountain farmhouse where the temple was of Radha-Vrindavanatha and it would be just me and them looking after the offerings and the aratis. In between they would say tell me about Vrindavana. And I would start telling them about the places of Govardhana and the places of Vrindavana and the places of Nanda-ghama, Varsana. I'd start telling them about Vrajavasi's and start telling them about different sadhus I would know there. Telling them about my meetings with Prabhupada there. And then they'd start telling everybody. And the temple president would say, because I was a brahmachari, he'd say Radhanatha is in maya. He wakes up at 1 in the morning and chants rounds and works all day, why is he in maya? Because he is talking about Vrindavana. Then he'd come all the way up, I told you not to talk about Vrindavana, you are agitating the community.

One day he said Prabhupada said New Vrindavana is non-different then Vrindavana so you just talk about New Vrindavana. So he was trying to convince me, he would say I will never, ever in your life let you go back to Vrindavana because I know if you go you will never come back. So he was trying to convince me to take sanyassa in 1982. And I was refusing refusing, he was pushing, and pressurising, and he had the whole community, he preached to whole community to not give me any peace of mind till I took sannyasa. So everyone would be harassing me.

So finally he said to me you take sannyasa I will let you visit Vrindavana. But I still refused. Finally, it was too much, I had to surrender, and after I surrendered I decided I want to be unconditional so I knew I had to do it anyway I said but I still get to go to Vrindavana. So 11 years later 1983 I returned to Vrindavana. First time. I remember I came to Gaura-purnima, first time I ever went to Gaura-purnima in Mayapura 1983. Because when I was living in India, so then I took a train from Calcutta to Delhi and I took the Taj express to Mathura and I decided to go according to my old tradition. I went to Visvam-ghata, took bath and walked along the Yamuna from Mathura to Vrindavana. But things really changed at that time, there was a lot obstructions in that water if you tried to do it today. So I came to Vrindavana. And I'll never forget, this is 11 years later, you know at Radha-Vallabha temple there is the old temple, there is the new temple where the deities were. Well that old temple is very close to Ghanshyam baba's house.

So I came and I happened to see Ghanshyam sitting on the steps outside the old temple. And now he was 11 years older, he was in his late 80's or 90's, I don't know. And he looked at me. When I lived in Vrindavana, I wore this simple white lungi, that was kind of torn up and I had a little chadar and I had long dredded hair and I never shaved because I was young, it didn't make that much difference that I never shave. And now here I am a Sannyasi, with a danda, with shaved head. So he was looking at me and he was old, he was just looking at me.

Because one great sadhu living in Vrindavana had given me a name when I was little, the name Ratin-Krishna dasa. I never got initiated but he gave it out of affection. So Ghanshyam always called me Ratin. That means Krishna the chariot driver of Arjuna.

So he looked at me and he was just looking and I bowed down, and I got up, and he was just. And then he said, like a father to a long lost son - Ratiiiiin!

Then he started to weep, started to cry. He embraced me. And he said Radha-Gopijanavallabha has been waiting for so long to see you. And he took me by the hand and took me to that same little hallway where the closet was. And he started; he started taking off the jewellery of the deities and giving it to me. Saying Radharani wants you to have this. He's giving me rotis. And I came that night from Krishna-Balarama temple, secretly. I left Krishna-Balarama temple that night to help him put Radha-Gopijanavallabha into the bed, 11 years later. I even brought a couple god-brothers to the temple, he was just taking off, giving them whatever he could give them, he would give them, bow down to each Vaisnava.

Then the next time I came, I came to the door and I walked in. I walked into that little temple there was no Gopijanavallabha, there was no Ghanshyam. So I asked the family members - Ghanshyam, Ghanshyam. And the person, with tears in their eyes, smiling said Goloka.

He was so old but he knew that if he were to die, there'd be no one to take care of the deities. Because that family had nothing to do with the deity worship, they were just working people and

like that. So even though, he was really aged then in poor health, he just lived to take care of the deities. From my understanding, because for many years I was asking people, where is Gopijanavallabha. Nobody knew, even that family didn't know. Then I met one very dear brother and friend named Asika-Krishna dasa Prabhu. Who during the time I lived in Vrindavana he would often, we would go to see Ghanshyam baba. And he told me, what he told was this - that Ghanshyam baba was just living because there was no one else to do the seva of the deities. But then one trust built this temple, but they had no deity, so they were looking for a deity to put in the temple. So someone told them, there is this beautiful self-manifesting deity just in the closet. So they asked him, and he was so happy. After 60 years in this closet Gopijanavallabha, maybe 70 years in this closet, Gopijanavallabha will finally have a temple. So he came here when the temple was built and he was, somebody else's temple, somebody else's trust but he was just the pujari.

And very very soon after, because the trust would supply another pujari. As soon as he saw that Gopijanavallabha had a house and he trained some other pujari, someone to take care of Them. As soon as he saw the deity seva taken care of nicely he gave up his body. A young person will serve the deity better than me.

So he had no reason to remain in this world.

When we read about qualities of selfless service, when we read about the principle of servant of the servant of the servant, when we contemplate actual humility of the heart, Sri Gopijanavallabha empowered him to be a very wonderful wonderful example of that. But only a few people in the whole world ever saw him or knew him. He was just totally an unknown person. But his life and soul is the prayer where the people would just come to see the deities. Probably no more than 6/7 different people a month would come to see his deities. But anybody who came would be the joy of his life. To serve Gopijanavallabha's friend, his special invited guest. So I think today Ghanshyam baba is very happy. That all of you have come to see the

Hare Krishna Centre - Leicester, UK - The Story of Ghanashyam Baba

Written by H.H. Radhanatha Swami

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beautiful forms of his beloved Lord. And what a mystery life is that at the time I was just an insignificant little beggar sleeping on bank of Yamuna. And I been given the wonderful fortune of now bringing, helping to bring a 1000 devotees for the darshan of Gopijanavallabha.



Our beloved Srila Prabhupada was truly the embodiment of selfless service.

Srila Prabhupada left Vrindavana, he left his beloved Radha-Damodara. He suffered heart attacks, strokes, sea-sickness, persecution to give us Krishna. Srila Prabhupada told us that he saw us as the representatives of his guru-maharaja.

And he how served and gave his life to give us Krishna. It is by Srila Prabhupada's selfless compassion that my insignificant self has been spiritually sustained and nourished to whatever extent there is year after year. It is by his selfless service attitude based on pure love that is sustaining all our spiritual lives. And actually it's Srila Prabhupada, his act of such humble devotion even to wretched materialistic people that has brought all of us to Vrindavana. It is

actually Srila Prabhupada who has fulfilled the spiritual desires of millions of people throughout the world. And even it is Srila Prabhupada who has actually fulfilled Ghanashyam baba's great desire. The 1000's of sincere souls will come to take the blessings of his beloved Lord.

So we should know with great faith and conviction that His Divine Grace AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is the ultimate manifestation of the highest teachings of Vaishnava scriptures. He has given us everything, he has given us everything. He has given us the complete, unadulterated mercy of the parampara. And what does he stress, he puts such great great emphasis on the spirit of service. Throughout his lectures, throughout his books and manifested by his life how much emphasis he has put on developing a proper service attitude.

What is a service attitude?

Service doesn't simply mean doing something for someone else. That is a very superficial understanding. But real service is selfless, unconditional, uninterrupted by various obstacles that come in our path. Ghanashyam baba longed to visit Varsana, Govardhana, Mahavana. But there was no consideration because his service was to his Lord. Srila Prabhupada could have been living here in Vrindavana, probably would have lived to over a 100 years old. But he sacrificed his health, he sacrificed the peace of mind of the holy dhama. He sacrificed everything. Selfless to give you the opportunity to love Krishna.

Prabhupada taught us this principle, to live by this principle. It is the principle we read on every

page of Caitanya-caritamṛta - unconditional selfless service. It is the principle that is broadcasted throughout the entire Srimad-Bhagavatam, from the first verse to the last -unconditional devotional service without ego.

What is the pleasure of the Lord, what is the pleasure of His devotees? What is my duty to Him? Prabhupada notes the will of the Lord comes through Guru, Sadhu and Sastra. His guru told him to spread the holy names all over the world.

It became his life and soul. Doesn't matter what obstacles, what inconveniencies. Doesn't matter whether it brings life or death. Because he had that selfless humble attitude of service; all of us have been saved. The doors to the spiritual world of Goloka have been opened to billions and billions and billions of people.

trnad api su-nicena taror iva sahisnuna amanina mana-dena kirtaniya sada harih [Cc. Adi 17.31]

Caitanya Mahaprabhu told us to string this verse of the thread of the holy name and to wear it always. It is our life, we can evaluate how we are successful by how we are pleasing Krishna. We can evaluate how we are pleasing Krishna by studying our hearts, our intentions, our words and actions. In relationship to this teaching.

trnad api su-nicena taror iva sahisnuna amanina mana-dena kirtaniya sada harih [Cc. Adi 17.31]

Be humble like the straw in the street, tolerant like trees, ready to offer all respect to others and expect none in return. If we live by this verse then we can actually follow Prabhupada's teachings. And broadcast the glories of the holy name always.

Today is the last day of our yatra. This is the last meeting we will all have together. The purpose of this yatra is not sightseeing, not just to come to a holy place and get sick become purified from that. The purpose of this yatra is to inspire us to dedicate our lives and soul with the selfless service attitude. To serving Srila Prabhupada and his mission. Because he has given us his life and his life's contribution to the parampara was a society he created. If we are not grateful to him for saving us will Krishna be pleased with us.

However knowledgeable you may become in various high topics. Will Krishna be pleased with if we are not grateful to his pure servant who sacrificed his life to take us out of the ignorance of kali and give us the path of perfection? So let us pray here, with very sincere hearts, that through this wonderful yatra, we have participated in over the last 15 days will bring us a much deeper sense of dedication, humility, to really do that we possibly can to Prabhupada and his mission of pure compassion. And follow his teachings to humbly serve the Vaisnavas, give his compassion to the suffering conditional souls. By reading his books, by speaking from his

books, distributing his books. By helping in what other way and ultimately we can pray that we can sincerely, whole heartedly, understand the importance of chanting the holy names and making it the first priority in our lives.

The more love we have the more love we can give. That love comes when we gratefully serve those who has given us so much. And we could really reciprocate with Srila Prabhupada by taking shelter of the holy name because that is the ultimate gift that he has given us. Prabhupada wanted us to remain united, to cooperate with each other in spreading the glories of chanting the holy names:

*HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE HARE RAMA HARE
RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE*

I wish to thank all of you very much for your outstanding service to the Vaisnava community during Srila Prabhupada's disappearance festival. It was, it was a feast for my heart to see all of you serving so nicely. What a great benediction that was to have the opportunity to perform the sacred service of giving prasada to Srila Prabhupada's followers from all over the world in honour of Srila Prabhupada's disappearance festival. I think some causeless mercy has descended upon us. I think because all of you are very very sincere in your efforts, Srila Prabhupada has rewarded by giving you the chance to serve his devotees. We must be convinced, not only theoretically but practically that happiness is never an acquired, the illusory mirages of this world, real happiness can only come through service, through giving.

Thakura Bhaktivinode said - the sufferings and miseries I endure in my service to Krishna are the source of my greatest joy.

Getting prestige, popularity, followers, getting money, beautiful family, nice home, good health, these things give a very temporary superficial external sense of happiness or pleasure. But in service even if none of those things we just stated are there, in service we gain actual inner satisfaction.

Let me ask of, were you happy in seeing how blissful the devotees were getting served prasad?
– HARIBOL

Who do you think was getting more inner joy - those being served and eating or those for fasting so long rendering service - huh? Would you have been happier sitting there eating?

This is Prabhupada's mercy. This is really Srila Prabhupada and Sri Radha's mercy, that we can understand this principle practically. That our real happiness is in sacrifice of service. And the more that service is unconditional and selfless the more it is a service of love, of pure love. It is that pure love of Krishna that every soul is longing for. And nothing can replace it. We must long for that love. But we have no qualification, we are so far away from the standard of unconditional love. But if we serve sincerely, with humility, and we desperately, desperately,

desperately trying to chant the holy names properly then Krishna will see our efforts.

That little sparrow trying to dry up the ocean and Krishna sees if we are sincere and determined with the right purpose He will bestow that love upon us through the mercy of guru and Vaisnavas. Actually your service to the devotees during Prabhupada's festival will perhaps give faith and happiness to people all over the world, even those who are thousand's of miles away when they hear about it. It is preaching.

If we become proud we have served nicely then that pride neutralises the effect of the great benediction we received. But if we feel ourselves unqualified but grateful, grateful for the causeless mercy that I was allowed to serve amongst other Vaishnavas, soon Krishna will bestow the prime benediction of pure love within our hearts.

So I know all of you worked very hard to do this and on behalf of Srila Prabhupada, and behalf of all the leaders of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and all the devotees who have given their lives, I very gratefully thank all of you very much. Let this be a lesson of what is of real value to the heart.

I'd like to also thank all of you for your incredible enthusiasm throughout this festival. Many of you have gotten sick, physically, and of course many thorns in your feet, much dust in your lungs. But still I didn't hear anyone complaining, everyone is just trying to get purified, trying to help all the other devotees to be happy in Vrindavana. And especially thank you for tolerating

me. I honestly and sincerely do not know how you do it or why you do it but you do it.

That is some special magic of Srila Prabhupada, that he can somehow or other see his eternal resplendent divine mercy through a little piece like me, that is his inconceivable power. So I thank all of you very very much and pray that when you return to your homes and bring the real spirit of Vrindavana -selfless service and the longing for complete attachment to Sri Sri Radha-Gopinatha. And complete determination to glorify Them by hearing and chanting Their holy names.

I want to especially offer my gratitude to Malati devi mataji. She's so humble, I've learnt so much, she's one of the senior most disciples of Srila Prabhupada on the entire planet. She's one of the few people who had accessive personal direct service to Srila Prabhupada and some of the most intimate surroundings of Srila Prabhupada's mission. She's fearless, she's absolutely determined, despite inconceivable health problems, she just never gives up, never complains and never wants any credit, just happy to be amongst the devotees. My deep deep gratitude to Malati mataji for all she's done and all she's doing for Srila Prabhupada and all of us. And to Rasalila mataji who has performed very difficult service maintaining a marriage in the western world in the age of kali for so many years. This is very very outstanding preaching. And in the process to raise a child - Gaurangakishor Prabhu. Raise a child who loves Krishna, loves to preach about Krishna. Good fruits come from good trees. Thank you mataji.

And to Nartaki mataji, is she here? Such a humble devotee and how much she, she really has deep deep attachment to Krishna. To hearing about Krishna, to speaking about Krishna, to being with devotees of Krishna. She has truly been blessed deeply in her heart by Srila Prabhupada's mercy.

During this yatra we had many wonderful souls come and join us speak to us. Amongst them the shining jewel of all Vrajavasis has come to be with us today - Dinabandhu Prabhu - HARIBOL, HARIBOL, HARIBOL!

What would be Vrindavana yatra without Dinabandhu Prabhu! His spontaneous devotion, his enthusiasm to preach the glories of Vrindavana-dhama, with his incredible knowledge and realisations, always a profound inspiration for us. Same time he is very much involved performing great sacrifices in Prabupada's service for making Vrindavana temple for what Prabhupada wants it to be. So my gratitude to you Dinabandu Prabhu. I learnt so much from you. I hope you are all happy.

Devotees: HARIBOL, HARIBOL, HARIBOL!

If you are happy then my insignificant life has served some noble purpose. So I am grateful that you have given me that. Srila Prabhupada ki' jaya!

(See also Bhakti lata bija's [Seed of Devotion Blog](#))