

The Most Blessed Event

booklet

www.founderacarya.com/vp

THE MOST BLESSED EVENT

SPPC 2015

Introduction

ISKCON is Srila Prabhupada's unique creation. He came to fulfil the prediction of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: that the Krishna Consciousness movement would spread in every town and village all over the world.

He knew that this impossible mission couldn't be achieved in one lifetime. It would need the efforts of many generations. Therefore to continue his mission even after his disappearance, he could foresee the need for an institution. While most of the Spiritual Organisations dwindle after its charismatic founder's disappearance, ISKCON is still going strong, even 38 years after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance. The reason is the institution – a collective endeavour of many.

Srila Prabhupada knew that no one person would be qualified or capable to continue this mission after his disappearance. Srila Prabhupada said that when someone leaves planet, there is bound to be a crisis. So when an Acarya like him left, ISKCON was affected by many crises, but in spite of those onslaughts, ISKCON survived for almost 4 decades after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance. In fact, it has not only survived, it has also expanded in an amazing way. This could happen only due to Srila Prabhupada's expert arrangement in creating the society of ISKCON and structuring it the way he did.

Even if after him (but that will not happen generation after generation) one unqualified person becomes the head then the entire institution will collapse.

Therefore, the natural need was the collective endeavour of many to continue the mission with himself as the head of that institution. That is why we see that Srila Prabhupada put so much emphasis on the importance of the GBC body -

and his own position as the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON. If we are able to uphold these two concepts properly, then ISKCON will continue to fulfil Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's prediction to its ultimate extent.

It is very important that we recognise and properly establish Srila Prabhupada as the Acarya of the entire institution – the primary Siksha Guru of all the devotees of ISKCON for all time.

Vyasa-puja is the occasion when devotees not only get an opportunity to glorify the Spiritual Master – but also recognise the need of him in their life for their spiritual advancement.

Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja often does not get its due grandeur - being next to the Janmastami Festival Day (when after the grand celebration and day-long fasting, most of the devotees are quite exhausted). Recently the leading devotees of ISKCON became aware of that issue and a special effort is now being made to ensure that we all celebrate that day with its due pomp and splendour.

This booklet through its various elements will guide the devotees worldwide as to how to make proper arrangements for this ceremony in order to establish Srila Prabhupada's supreme position in ISKCON as the Acarya. Please make good use of the help offered for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada, and feel free to reach out should you require any further help or clarifications.

Bhakti Charu Swami

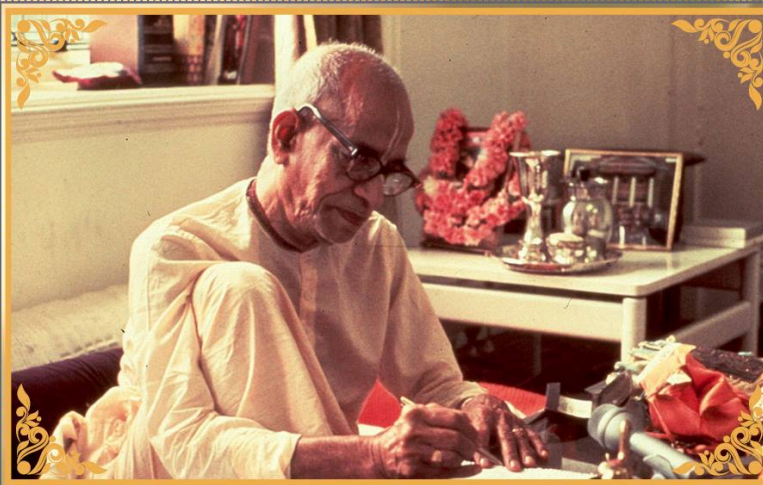
Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh

2nd August 2015

“Vyāsa-pūjā means we receive perfect knowledge from Kṛṣṇa through the agency of spiritual master.”

Sri Vyasa-puja, New Vrindaban,
September 2, 1972

His Divine Grace
AC. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



Content

Introduction	2
DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SRILA PRABHUPADA	7
<i>THE MOST BLESSED EVENT</i>	13
Meaning of Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja	13
Srila Prabhupada about Vyasa-puja	16
Vyasa-puja in the Early Days (remembrances)	22
VYASA-PUJA CELEBRATION GUIDELINES	30
GBC Resolutions Summary	30
Guidelines by Srila Prabhupada (remembrances)	35
APPENDIX	40

One should have unflinching faith in God
and spiritual master. Don't jump over God,
crossing the spiritual master.
Then it will be failure. You must go through.
We are observing Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony,
the birth anniversary of our Guru Mahārāja."
His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati
Gosvami Prabhupada'

Lecture, Atlanta, March 2, 1975

His Divine Grace
AC. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



Deepening Our Relationship with Srila Prabhupada

Fathomless Waters

Sounding the Depths of Our Debt to Srila Prabhupada

When I first met him, I didn't know anything about Srila Prabhupada's vast knowledge of the scriptures or his unshakeable faith in Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I didn't know his story of coming to the U.S. alone, elderly, with no financial support and without knowing anyone, and how he struggled for a year to begin his society. I didn't know how devoted he was and how his entire life was dedicated to pleasing Krishna and his Guru Maharaja.

Yet because I felt that Srila Prabhupada deeply and genuinely cared about me, from the first time I met him he attracted me.

Growing up, I hadn't been uncared for. Throughout my then twenty years, my parents had provided for and loved me, but their caring, while appreciated and while it had steered me toward college and a career in photojournalism, hadn't helped me find my self.

Ostensibly my young life was quite together. Existentially it wasn't at all. I was baffled and distraught over profound but unanswered questions. In my mind a forest fire – *samsara-davanala-lidha-loka* – was raging: What's the purpose of my life? How can I do some good in the world? Why is everything going on the way it is?

Srila Prabhupada was interested in and appreciated my photography, but his primary interest was in me, a person beyond the idiosyncrasies that covered me. His awareness of me as a spiritual being distinguished his caring from everyone else's in my life. As I began to patiently hear from Prabhupada (since I knew he cared about me, I was eager to sit and listen to him), I gradually realized how his caring extended to my divine essence, that is, to me, a tiny part of God.

Little by little, Srila Prabhupada's world view became my world view, his reality my reality. Gradually and occasionally I glimpsed the stupendous, electrifying dimensions of his gift of transcendental knowledge. His transcendental message, which I first heard some forty- five years ago, increases in elegance and attractiveness. Basically, Srila Prabhupada says:

1. There is a Supreme Person, Krishna, who is beautiful, playful, and charming.
2. We are part of Him and He loves us.
3. He's eager for us to join Him in His eternal, glorious, transcendental world.
4. The activities in His world are the same as the process for attaining His world: pure devotional service to Him and His devotees.

These truths are so simple a child can understand and practice them and they're so transcendently sublime that we can spend our lives satisfyingly immersed in them. Srila Prabhupada is offering us exactly what we're looking for and have been missing: the happiness of loving spiritual relationships, relationships not based on the body or mind but on essence, on spirit.

While offering prayers to Krishna, who had appeared before him as Nrsinghadeva, Prahlada Maharaja said:

My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But Your servant Narada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service? [SB 7.9.28]

Only through the grace of Srila Prabhupada will we have any access to Krishna and

His transcendental world of love. Visvananatha Cakravarti Thakura makes this clear:

yasya prasadam bhagavat-prasado yasyaprasadan na gatih kuto 'pi

yasya—of whom (the spiritual master); prasadat—by the grace; bhagavat—(of) Krishna; prasadah—the mercy; yasya—of whom; aprasadat—without the grace; na—not; gatih—means of advancement; kutah api—anywhere.

By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krishna. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement.

— *Sri Sri Gurv-astaka 8*

As a photographer on Srila Prabhupada's entourage, for two summers I toured with him through the United States. Once, speaking from the Vyasasana during his Bhagavatam class in New York, Srila Prabhupada challenged us, his assembled followers, saying, "You sing this song [Guru-vandanam]—do you know the meanings? No. Who can explain the meaning?" Devotees gave the translation to the first lines and then Prabhupada continued:

E bhava toriya jai. If one is, I mean to say, favored by guru, then the path to cross over the nescience is clear. *Jahara prasade bhai, e bha va toriya jai...* And *Krishna-prapti hoy jaha hate:* by the favor of guru one gets Krishna... Topmost yoga system is bhagavad-bhakti [the devotional service of the Lord], and *bhagavad-bhakti-yoga* begins, *adau gurv-asrayah.* First of all surrender to guru. *tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevayam* [Bg. 4.34]

— *Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.2.20 -- July 24, 1974, New York*

Prabhupada's own life exemplified this surrender to guru. Reflecting on the first time he met his Guru Maharaja, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, in 1922, Prabhupada said, "when I was convinced about his argument and mode of presentation, I was so much struck with wonder. I could understand that 'here is the proper person who can give real religious idea.' And I accepted him as my spiritual master. Not officially, but in my heart." From the time of that first meeting, when Srila Bhaktisiddhanta asked Prabhupada to "preach this Caitanya's message in the Western countries," Srila Prabhupada said he was, "simply planning how to do it successfully."

Recalling the dark and snowy months he spent in New York City in 1965 and '66, when he had no supporters, no money, and no facilities but was trying to preach Caitanya's message, Prabhupada said, "I came without any friend, without any means, practically just like a vagabond I came. I never feel that I am alone. I had full faith that my Guru Maharaja is with me. I never lost this faith."

After he'd established a center in New York and one other in San Francisco, a debilitating heart attack on Memorial Day in 1967 left Prabhupada extremely

weak. Unable to fully recover in the West, he decided to return to India to either recuperate or die. Faced with his coming absence,

Devotees worried, speculating on whether they could carry on without Swamiji. One devotee suggested that perhaps one of Swamiji's Godbrothers should come to America and fill in for Swamiji and, if the worst happened, take over the leadership of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. When the suggestion reached Prabhupada, he considered it without immediately replying.

Mukunda: I was sitting alone with Swamiji in his room, and he was very grave and silent. His eyes were closed. Then, suddenly, tears began flowing from his eyes. And he said in a choked voice, "My spiritual master was no ordinary spiritual master." Then he paused for some time, and wiping the tears from his cheeks, he said in an even more choked voice, "He saved me." At that point I began to understand the meaning of "spiritual master" and dropped all consideration of ever replacing Swamiji.

—*Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita 26: Swamiji's Departure*

Just before he left for the airport to return to India, Srila Prabhupada, sitting on an old carpet at the 26 Second Avenue storefront, quietly told the few followers gathered around him, "I may be going, but Guru Maharaja and Bhaktivinoda are here. I have asked them to kindly take care of all of you, my spiritual children."

As much as we try to follow him, Srila Prabhupada is taking care of us, his spiritual children and grandchildren. And when we feel, even theoretically, the delightfulness and richness of Srila Prabhupada's gift to us, we will simultaneously grapple with the depths of our debt to him. We will find ourselves astounded by his kindness, humbled by his determination, his flexible staunchness, the apparent effortless with which he touched and transformed us and continues to do so. We will marvel at the depths of his faith in his Guru Maharaja. And we will be unutterably grateful to him.

In a 1936 address on the occasion of the appearance anniversary of his Guru Maharaja, Prabhupada said:

...let me have this power of recollection: that I am nothing but a tiny servant of the Almighty Absolute Godhead, realized through the unflinching mercy of my

divine master. Let me therefore bow down at his lotus feet with all the humility at my command.

Srila Prabhupada mentions some things that stimulate ecstatic love of Krishna in his Nectar of Devotion. Taking our cue from there, we can understand what things may impel us to deepen our relationship with Srila Prabhupada: his transcendental knowledge, his uncommon activities, his qualities, his smiling features, his apparel and garlands, his affectionate dealings with his followers, his humor, his wit, his desires, his places of pastimes (such as the temples he established), his favorite prasadam (like *bati chachuri*), his followers, and the occasions for remembering him, like his annual Vyasa-puja celebration.

The library of books Prabhupada wrote, along with his lectures and conversations immerse us in his knowledge. The many pastimes that have been and continue to be related about his activities and qualities immerse us in the ecstasy of his remembrance. The places he visited are holy tirthas available for our pilgrimage. We have cookbooks like Lord Krishna's Cuisine, that enable us to prepare and honor what he enjoyed. We can seek out the company of his sincere followers.

And we can celebrate Prabhupada's day, his annual Vyasa-puja, the way it should be celebrated: as the most glorious of all Vaisnava holidays bar none. For if it was not for Srila Prabhupada, we would have no knowledge of or access to any other Vaisnava holiday. To celebrate his day in this way is to allow joy to radiate in our hearts like sunlight penetrating otherwise deep and dark waters. Our debt to Srila Prabhupada is not possible to repay, but our attempt to do so is a source of unending ecstasy for it's pleasing to Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Their associates, our illustrious Acaryas through the ages. In his timeless Gurv-astaka prayer, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says,

*praptasya kalyana-gunarnavasya
vande guroh sri-caranaravindam*

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master, who is an ocean of auspicious qualities."

The deepest part of the ocean on this planet is in a place called Challenger Deep in the western Pacific, where the ocean floor is 36,200 feet or about seven miles beneath sea level. There, that almost freezing water has not even a trace of light and it exerts eight tons of pressure per square inch. By contrast, the deeper we penetrate Srila Prabhupada's ocean of auspicious qualities, the more our lives

are illumined, the more we're filled with warmth and joy, and the more we're freed of lamentation and hankering; the more the pressures of material life release us from their grip.

So, according to the measure of our conviction, let us bow down to Srila Prabhupada with all the humility at our command and celebrate his day, Vyasa-puja, with such ecstatic abandon that we simply can't wait to do it over and over, year after year, forevermore.

Visakha Devi Dasi

July 2015

The Most Blessed Event

Meaning of Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja

Vyasa-puja is the glorious ceremony, which the disciples conduct on the most auspicious day of guru's appearance. The spiritual master is a representative of Krishna, and there is no difference between hearing directly from Krishna and hearing directly from Krishna via a bona fide spiritual master. "Spiritual master is a truth. So what is that truth? The truth is *samsara-davanala-lidha-loka-tranaya karunya-ghanaghanatvam*. The whole world is in the blaze of material pangs, threefold miseries. And a person who is authorized to deliver people from that material pangs, he is called spiritual master."

—*Srila Prabhupada, Sri Vyasa-puja, Hamburg, 5th Sept 1969*

Even though we may not have the fortune to contact the Supreme Lord personally, the Lord's representative is as good as the Lord Himself because such a representative does not say anything unless it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead... The original guru is Vyasadeva because he is the speaker of Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam, wherein everything spoken relates to Krishna. Therefore guru-puja is known as Vyasa-puja. In the final analysis, the original guru is Krishna, His disciple is Narada, whose disciple is Vyasa, and in this way we gradually come in touch with the *guru-parampara*... The mission of the guru is the mission of the Supreme Personality of Godhead: to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world.

—*Srila Prabhupada, purport, SB 8.24.48*

Guru knows what the Personality of Godhead Krishna wants. No one can understand Krishna without His most confidential servant. We receive perfect knowledge from Krishna through the agency of His bonafide representative - our

spiritual master and ever well-wisher, who leads us on the way to the Lord. And we can never repay our debt to our spiritual father. But Vyasa-puja is the day when we can worship our beloved Guru Maharaja and try to thank for what we have received from him. "Guru is as good as God. Here, in this Vyasa-puja day, we are teaching or they are doing, offering respect to guru. That means they are learning how to offer respect to God. It is not personal affair; it is required. Because they are trying to be God conscious, they must learn how to offer respect to God or God's representative. That is required.

—Srla Prabhupada, Lecture, 22nd Aug 1973

— — — — —

This is the process, Vedic process, to receive the transcendental knowledge through the parampara system, and the reception or honor given to the spiritual master, it goes to Krishna. Spiritual master is the official collector. Just like in government there is collector. He receives the money, taxes, from the citizens, not for his personal use but for the government. Similarly, this is the Vedic system, to receive knowledge through the transparent medium, guru, and to receive... Guru means the honor goes to Krishna. So this is necessary. This is not an artificial thing, but spiritually it is necessary. Therefore we hold Vyasa-puja day.

—Srla Prabhupada, Talk, 8th July 1974

— — — — —

We are observing Vyasa-puja ceremony, the birth anniversary of our Guru Maharaja. Why? We cannot understand Krishna without spiritual master. That is bogus. If anyone wants to understand Krishna, jumping over the spiritual master, then immediately he becomes a bogus. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, *guru-Krishna-krpaya paya bhakti-lata-bija* (Cc. Madhya 19.151). That is Vedic injunction. *Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya* (Bg. 4.34). Nobody can understand Krishna without going through His most confidential servant. This is the meaning of this Vyasa-puja. You cannot surpass. If you think that you have become very learned and very advanced, now you can avoid the spiritual master and you understand Krishna, that is the bogus. That is the meaning of this Vyasa-puja ceremony. We should always pray, *yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada*. *Yasya prasada*, only by the grace of spiritual master we can achieve the grace or mercy of Krishna. This is the meaning of this Vyasa-puja, offering obeisances by parampara system.

—*Srila Prabhupada, Vyasa-puja lecture, Atlanta, 2nd March 1975*

— — —

So that is the position of guru. Guru is respected as good as God. Why? Only for this qualification, that he does not speak anything nonsense. He speaks only what he has heard from the acarya. *Acaryavan puruso veda (Chandogya Upanisad 6.14.2). Acaryopasanam.* In the Bhagavad-gita it is said *acaryopasanam*. So Vyasadeva is our acarya; therefore we offer Vyasa-puja. On the birthday of guru we offer Vyasa-puja. Actually, it is not directly Vyasa, but because the bona fide guru represents Vyasadeva, his puja is also Vyasa-puja. *Mad-bhakta-puja abhyadhika.* To worship Vyasadeva, worship the bona fide spiritual master and worship the Lord, they are the same. Rather, Krishna says that if you worship His bona fide representative, that worship is better than directly worshiping. Directly it is not possible to worship the Supreme Lord. One has to go through the Acarya.

—*Srila Prabhupada, Srimad Bhagavatam, 1.7.5.*

Srila Prabhupada about Vyasa-puja

— — —
The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his sincere disciple. We cannot manufacture our own process, therefore mental speculation does not at all help us in spiritual life. One simply has to surrender himself to his guru and everything will be revealed to him.

—*Letter to Sriji, Bombay 7 Nov, 1974*

— — —
Since Vyasadeva is the original guru (spiritual master) of all who follow the Vedic principles, worship of the spiritual master is called Vyasa-puja.

—*Chaitanya Charitamrita, Adi-lila 17.16, purport*

— — —
We adore this auspicious day as Sri Vyasa-puja-tithi, because the Acarya is the living representative of Vyasadeva

—*Science of Self-realization, ch 2*

— — —
Vyasa-puja means one day in a year, on the birthday of the spiritual master, because he is representative of Vyasa, he is delivering the same knowledge which has come down by disciplic succession without any change, he is offered the respect.

—*Sri Vyasa-puja, New Vrindaban, September 2, 1972*

— — —
We offer all our gratefulness to the Spiritual Master on His Appearance Day Ceremony, called Vyasa-puja. So kirtana is our daily function; whatever you have done is all right, but actual worship of the Spiritual Master will be done by all of my disciples on the fifth day of September, just one day after Janmastami.

—*Letter to Gaurasundara, Los Angeles 2 August, 1969*

— — —
Vyasa-puja ceremony means to offer our thanks to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because He is the original guru.

—*Sri Vyasa-puja, London, August 22, 1973*

— — — — —
Vyasa-puja means we receive perfect knowledge from Krishna through the agency of spiritual master.

—*Sri Vyasa-puja, New Vrindaban, September 2, 1972*

— — — — —
Actually there is no difference between hearing directly from Krishna and hearing directly from Krishna via a bona fide spiritual master like Vyasa. The spiritual master is the representative of Vyasadeva also. Therefore, according to the Vedic system, on the birthday of the spiritual master the disciples conduct the ceremony called Vyasa-puja.

—*Bhagavad-gita As It Is, 18.75, purport*

— — — — —
Guru and Krishna are two parallel lines on which the spiritual express runs very smoothly. By the Grace of Guru one gets Krishna and by the Grace of Krishna one gets a bona fide Guru. Krishna consciousness means staunch faith both in Guru and Krishna. One minus the other is no good for the devotee. Do not ever try to approach Krishna directly. Anyone who talks of Krishna without service to Guru will not be successful. So your faith in Guru and Krishna simultaneously will help you to become crowned with success in the progressive march in Krishna consciousness.

—*Letter to Devananda -- Delhi 27 September, 1967*

— — — — —
The bona fide guru is he who has accepted Krishna as guru. This is the *guru-parampara* system. The original guru is Vyasadeva because he is the speaker of Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam, wherein everything spoken relates to Krishna. Therefore guru-puja is known as Vyasa-puja.

—*Srimad-Bhagavatam, 8.24.48, purport*

— — — — —
So keep this parampara system. This Vyasa-puja is parampara system. Vyasa-puja means to accept this parampara system. Vyasa. Guru is the representative of Vyasadeva because he does not change anything. What Vyasadeva said, your

guru also will say the same thing. Not that "So many hundreds of thousands of years have passed away; therefore I will give you a new formula. No. There is no new formula. The same Vyasa-puja, the same philosophy. Simply we have to accept it, then our life will be successful. There is no new formula. The same Vyasa-puja, the same philosophy. Simply we have to accept it. Then our life will be successful.

—*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada's Disappearance Day, Lecture - Hyderabad, December 10, 1976*

— — —

If you want to make real progress, then you must be firmly faithful at the lotus feet of guru.

—*Lecture on SB.6.1.26-27 - Philadelphia, July 12, 1975*

— — —

As we come to this Krishna consciousness understanding through this long parampara, similarly, in the Vyasa-puja ceremony, whatever respect, honor, and presentation you give, that goes to Krishna through that parampara system, from down. As it is received through the parampara system, so similarly, your offering also goes through this parampara system to the Supreme. The connection.

—*Sri Vyasa-puja, London, August 22, 1973*

— — —

So try to receive Krishna's grace through the disciplic succession... Then you will understand everything. One should have unflinching faith in God and spiritual master. Don't jump over God, crossing the spiritual master. Then it will be failure. You must go through. We are observing Vyasa-puja ceremony, the birth anniversary of our Guru Maharaja. Why? We cannot understand Krishna without spiritual master. That is bogus. If anyone wants to understand Krishna, jumping over the spiritual master, then immediately he becomes a bogus. Nobody can understand Krishna without going through His most confidential servant. This is the meaning of this Vyasa-puja. You cannot surpass. If you think that you have become very learned and very advanced, now you can avoid the spiritual master and you understand Krishna, that is the bogus. That is the meaning of this Vyasa-puja ceremony. We should always pray, *yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada*. Only by the grace of spiritual master we can achieve the grace or

mercy of Krishna. This is the meaning of this Vyasa-puja, offering obeisances by parampara system.

—*Lecture, Atlanta, March 2, 1975*

—————

I was very pleased to learn of the elaborate way in which you celebrated the Janmastami Day and Vyasa-puja Day ceremonies.

—*Letter to Upendra, Tittenhurst 15 September, 1969*

—————

Please accept my blessings. I beg to thank you very much for your kindly remembering me on Vyasa-puja birthday, and I have appreciated your warm sentiments with great satisfaction.

—*Letter to Ksirodakasayi, Dallas 9 September, 1972*

—————

I thank you very much for it and your Vyasa-puja appreciation. It is stated in the Vedas that to anyone who has firm faith in the spiritual master and Krishna, to him all the imports of the Vedas are easily revealed.

—*Letter to Sankara Pyne, Bombay 20 Oct, 1973*

—————

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your Vyasa-puja offering dated August 22, 1974, received just now and I am very glad to receive it; better late than never. I thank you very much for your sentiments. Satisfaction of the spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life.

—*Letter to Sriji, Bombay 7 Nov, 1974*

—————

Sons and daughters, I am so much obliged to you that you have become so enthusiastic for offering Vyasa-puja. Now try to understand. Several times we have explained why this function is called Vyasa-puja. I have already explained in the morning, this offering worshipping, one may think that this man is teaching his disciples man-worshipping, anthropomorphism. But it is not man-worshipping. One should not misunderstand.

—*Sri Vyasa-puja, London, August 22, 1973*

So everyone has got duty in Krishna consciousness, and this duty is taught by Krishna and the spiritual master. *Guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpaya paya bhakti-lata-bija* (CC Madhya 19.151). *Ei rupe brahmaṇḍa bhramite kono bhagyavan jiva*. Anyone who is coming to Krishna consciousness, he's not ordinary living being. Anyone who is connected with our movement, he's not ordinary living being. Actually, he's liberated soul. And I am very much hopeful that my disciples who are now participating today, even if I die, my movement will not stop, I am very much hopeful. Yes. All these nice boys and girls who have taken so seriously... Bhaktivinoda Thakura wanted that European and American people may understand the philosophy of Caitanya cult and take part in it. That was his desire. My Guru Maharaja, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Prabhupada, he also attempted to send his disciples to preach Caitanya cult in the Western world. One of them, he advised me also. First meeting, perhaps you know, he asked me to preach. So at that time I was young man, only twenty-five years old, and I was also householder. So I should have joined and executed his desire immediately, but due to my ill luck I could not immediately execute his order, but it was in my heart that it is to be done. So better late than never, I executed his order at the age of seventy years, not at the age of twenty-five. So actually I wasted so much time, I can understand that. From twenty... The message was there when I was twenty-five years old, but I began at the age of seventy years. But I did not forget the message. Otherwise, how could I do? That was, that is a fact. I was simply finding out the opportunity, how to do it. So anyway, although I began very late, at the age of seventy years, so by the help of my disciples this movement is gaining ground and is spreading all over the world. So therefore I have to thank you. It is all due to you. It is not my credit, but it is your credit that you are helping me in executing the order of my Guru Maharaja.

—Sri Vyasa-puja, London, August 22, 1973

All this eulogization about me, people, outsider, may think that "This man is being flattered and he is hearing his own eulogization." But that is not the fact. It is the test, how they are receiving the message sincerely and they (are) expressing their feeling. So it is going to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As it has come through the channel of disciplic succession, all these praises will also reach to Krishna through that disciplic succession. So it is not personal thing. These things are required. Just like in the military training, they are taught

by the officers in a different way, in so many ways. Similarly, this is also training of Krishna consciousness so that the feeling of pure consciousness will reach to Krishna. I thank you all very much for your improving in Krishna consciousness. And... I am a sannyasi, you know. I came here empty-handed. So you are providing me. What can I do for you? I shall simply pray to Krishna. Another thing, that don't be satisfied that you have understood. That's all. No. This should be distributed. Just like in my old age I have come to your country carrying the order of my spiritual master to distribute it. You are all young boys and girls; take this message and distribute it. The whole suffering humanity will be happy. That is our mission. Thank you very much.

—*Sri Vyasa-puja, Hamburg, 1969*

—————
Remain always faithful to the spiritual master and try to understand Krishna. And if you simply understand Krishna, then your life is successful.

—*Lecture, Atlanta, March 2, 1975*

Vyasa-puja in the Early Days (remembrances)

To move forward in our understanding of Vyasa-puja, sometimes it is useful to look back and reflect...

The year is 1972.

As Srila Prabhupada continues to deliver Lord Caitanya's message all over the world, Kali continues to spread deadly karma among all those who've yet to receive the shade of the Lord's lotus feet.

At the New Vrindavan property called Bahulaban, the devotees work hard to finish a farmhouse temple for Sri Sri Radha Vrindavan Chandra. Behind the temple, atop the highest hill around, more devotees work harder to build a wood-hewn *pandal* for Prabhupada's discourses, as well as pit-barrel stoves for the marathon cooking ahead. In addition to the hundreds of devotees and seekers who would come, politicians, academics, and journalists from *Mother Earth News* to *The New York Times* would hear Prabhupada deliver the message of Lord Caitanya to all souls suffering in Kali's grip.

One day near the end of August, I arrive in New Vrindavan at twilight, too late to hear Prabhupada's first discourse but in time to behold him sailing downhill on a palanquin surrounded by a sea of chanting-and-dancing devotees. I bow in the dust, now pink in the setting sun, and thrill to the thunderous *kirtana* filling the sky. I sense a landmark event unfolding, with repercussions beyond America, nay, beyond earth-and-sky itself. From their swanships, surely the celestials must be following Prabhupada as he grips the palanquin's ropes and chants Hare Krishna down the winding, dusty path.

To frame his discourses, Prabhupada has chosen several famous slokas from the Bhagavata's First Canto, Second Chapter, "Divinity & Divine Service." His words are compassionate and strong, addressing the modern world's predicament in general and America's in particular. Despite its wealth and power, the United States of America, the idol of nations, has become their bane, a confused glutton now alienating its own children in a self-destructive war. To find the peace, love, and happiness they seek, says Prabhupada citing the *Bhagavata*, Americans and all peoples must stop chasing the mirage of materialism now ravaging the earth and rediscover their long-lost relationship with Krishna, the Supreme Personality

of Godhead, the proprietor, enjoyer, and friend of all.

After each discourse, Prabhupada fields questions. One day, before he finishes speaking, a long-haired student shouts a challenge from the back of the *pandal*: “If the purpose of life is to know Krishna, then why is *maya* so strong?”

Without hesitation, Prabhupada roars in response: “Your *purpose* is not strong!”

The gale of his words sweeps us back, like wheat in the wind. Devotees and guests alike sit stunned, each left to ponder the implications of his words. Prabhupada’s rhetorical judo is so sudden, swift, and final that the discourse ends. There are no more questions.

As August turns to September, the gathering’s focus shifts to Janmastami/Vyasa-puja, the twin observances of Lord Krishna and Srila Prabhupada’s appearance days. After the Janmastami *arati* at midnight, a dense fog settles over New Vrindaban. By dawn the surrounding hills and valleys brim with a thick, milky mist. Then the sun rises to dispel the mist, and the sky turns a spotless blue, presaging the day’s events.

*kecit kevalaya bhaktya vasudeva-parayanah agham
dhunvanti kartsnyena niharam iva bhaskarah*

“Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Krishna can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays.”

—*Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.1.15

As the sun climbs to the meridian, all the devotees and guests---now numbering nearly a thousand---make their way up the hill for Srila Prabhupada’s Vyasa-puja ceremony. At the *pandal*, the famous traveling Deities, Sri Sri Radha-Damodara, preside at center stage, flanked by wide-eyed Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra on the left and Prabhupada’s *vyasasana* on the right. Everything is draped in scarlet against the late-summer greenery outside. Radha-Damodara’s

singing preacher Visnujana Swami is leading an entrancing *kirtana*, which keeps swelling as everyone arrives.

When Srila Prabhupada alights, the *kirtana* takes off to a new dimension. From the *vyasasana*, Prabhupada plays strong karatalas, his voice responding vigorously to Visnujana's lead, now moving toward a crescendo of Hare Krishna. Suddenly Prabhupada steals the lead from Visnujana, and the devotees go absolutely mad. Arms outstretched, singing and weeping, we rush the stage, where the sky above Prabhupada and the Deities seems to open, flooding the entire assembly with pure love of God. When finally Prabhupada chants the *prema-dhvani* prayers, we drop to the grass and swoon with joy.

During the Vyasa-puja ceremony, Srila Prabhupada leads the devotees in chanting *japa* while, one-by-one, his leaders come before him to offer flowers, presents, and full *dandavats*. Then everyone chants the *puspanjali pranama* mantras and tosses flowers toward the *vyasasana*, where Prabhupada keeps chanting on his beads, as grave as grave can be. He is completely transparent, offering everything he is receiving to his spiritual master, and up the *parampara* to Krishna.

At the same time, for some visitors Prabhupada is a puzzle, the perfect paradox--at once ancient and childlike, powerful and humble, adored and aloof. He speaks with authority yet for many educated Kali-yugans, authority seems to be precisely the problem. Can they trust him?

Sitting erect on the *vyasasana*, his beadbag slung securely round his neck. Prabhupada keeps chanting and surveying the scene. Outside the *pandal*, children run and whine, cows graze and low, flies buzz, bees hum. Inside, where news cameras roll, Prabhupada is the saffron whorl of a scarlet lotus, the cynosure of hungry eyes and expectant ears. Beyond time yet ever sensitive to the time, place, and circumstances of his audience, His Divine Grace clears his throat, leans toward the microphone, and speaks:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this ceremony, of course, those who are my students, they know what is this ceremony. Those who are visitors, for their information, I may inform you, something about this ceremony. Otherwise it may be...misunderstood. An outsider may see it that, "Why a person is being worshiped like God?"

Indeed. Self-made “gods” and demagogues are among Kali’s most effective operatives, driving the game of cheaters and cheated. To establish trust, Prabhupada first presents Vyasa, “the original author of the Vedic literature,” and the disciplic succession of saintly sages who have succeeded him for five millennia. And before Vyasa, how was Vedic knowledge received?

“There was no need of written literature. People were so sharp in their memory that whatever they would hear from the spiritual master, they would remember for life. The memory was so sharp.”

This is a preemptive strike. Prabhupada is identifying literacy, the very foundation of Western civilization, not as a measure of advancement but as a mark of humanity’s dumbing down. From intellectual degradation, he turns to moral degradation.

“Formerly, if somebody is attacked by another man, many persons will come to help him...But at the present moment, if one man is attacked by another man, the passersby will not care for it because they have lost their sympathy or mercifulness for others. Our neighbor may starve, but we don’t care for it.”

Prabhupada is right and the audience knows it. Now he ups the ante, extending “mercifulness for others” to all living beings.

“Suppose your land, America, United States, why the government should give protection to one class of living entities, rejecting others? This means they have lost their sympathy for others. This is Kali-yuga. Formerly, before Kali-yuga, unnecessarily even an ant would not be killed. Even an ant.” As if on cue, a nearby cow moos in confirmation.

Prabhupada explains that modern humanity’s fierce misidentification with matter is what makes human nature so fallible. He explains the “four defects” and how they sabotage our access to true knowledge. “So your senses are imperfect, you are cheating, you are illusioned, and you commit mistake. How you can give perfect knowledge? Therefore we don’t accept any knowledge from an imperfect personality...We want to know fact. That is perfect knowledge. So that perfect knowledge can come from God.”

And how does God, or Krishna, make sure that His perfect knowledge reaches our fallible selves intact?

“It is distributed by *parampara* system, by disciplic succession. The example is just there, a mango tree. On the top of the mango tree there is a very ripened fruit, and the fruit has to be tasted. So if I drop the fruit from up, it will be lost. Therefore, it is handed over, after one, after one, after...Then it comes down. So all Vedic process of knowledge is taking from the authority. And it comes down through disciplic succession.”

Well aware of American antipathy to authority, Prabhupada knows he must demystify the *parampara* to make himself, as its representative, real to the audience. To do this, he makes a comparison to that venerable American pedestrian, the mailman:

“Just like a post peon comes and delivers you, say, one hundred dollars. So *he* is not delivering that one hundred dollars. Your friend has sent you one hundred dollars, and his business is to hand over that one hundred dollars as it is, without any change, without taking one dollar from it, no, or adding. No addition, no subtraction. His honesty, his perfection, is that he delivers you that hundred dollars which is sent by your friend...He may be imperfect in so many other ways, but when he does his business perfectly, he is perfect. Similarly, our, this Vyasa-puja means we receive perfect knowledge from Krishna through the agency of spiritual master.”

From the spiritual master as “post peon,” Prabhupada extends the comparison further to a child and finally to America’s “best friend,” the dog:

“If somebody pats your son, even pats your dog, you become pleased. So the spiritual master is very confidential servant, dog of God...If you can please the spiritual master, then God is pleased...this is the position of a spiritual master. Don’t misunderstand that ‘This person is sitting very comfortably and taking all honors and contribution.’ It is needed just to teach them how to respect the representative of God. This is the sum and substance of Vyasa-puja. Thank you very much.”

The devotees cheer, the guests smile, and continue to ponder, as Prabhupada steps off the *vyasasana* and offers full *dandavats* to the Deities. Accompanied by a roaring *kirtana*, he gets into a yellow Volkswagen bug, which takes him down the hillside and off to his quarters, where he will chat with his servant and await

a piece of his birthday cake.

Inside the pandal, Prabhupada's cake still sits at the lotus feet of the Deities. Spanning the width of the stage, the cake is Brobdingnagian---so enormous, so layered, and so ornate that it has taken several devotees many days to bake. Now that Prabhupada has left, we turn our attention to the cake. And dive in.

I swipe a large piece, tuck it under my right arm, and run broken-field through a gauntlet of brahmacaris. I make it out of the pandal, but not far down the hill I'm tackled and come out on the bottom of a four-man pile. The cake is powder. The ants win.

Across the hillside, similar dramas are playing out. If the cameramen are still shooting, they must be having a field day, recording this wild, anomalous postscript to Prabhupada's message for the evening news. The enormous cake is now history.

The devotees' behavior may be incomprehensible to the public but not to His Divine Grace. When his servant tells him that the devotees have eaten every last smudge and crumb of his cake, Prabhupada smiles and shakes his head: "That's all right, bake another one."

As I write, I am happy to say that many of us, the first generation of Prabhupada's followers, have moved on, from living to eat to eating to live. And dying to live, by His mercy. "He lives forever by his divine instructions, and the follower lives with him." For all generations of Srila Prabhupada's followers, may we live those hallowed words as our daily Vyasa-puja.

Suresvara dasa

The Special Grace of Daily Guru Puja to Srila Prabhupada

The daily offering of guru puja to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada was established in ISKCON between 1973-74 as a regular part of the morning program in every ISKCON center world wide. It allowed his immediate disciples and devotees to meditate and reflect upon the glories of their beloved guru and offer him their tangible humble obeisance's, deepening their heart's connection with their eternal spiritual master. Following his departure from this mortal world, this daily ceremony allows that connection with Srila Prabhupada to remain alive in the lives of his followers, past, present and into the future. The opportunity to participate in this blissful connection with Srila Prabhupada is one of the many on going blessings that he bequeathed ISKCON members. However, it is a function that anyone, within or outside of ISKCON, can take part in without any qualification other than their desire to do so.

In 1973 Srila Prabhupada was at Bhaktivedanta Manor for Janmastami and the installation of Sri Sri Radha Gokulananda. Prior to Their arrival, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai had been installed and worshiped.

One morning, during Guru Puja, Srila Prabhupada stopped the ceremony after glancing around to see who was present. He asked the whereabouts of two prominent men, who were absent. Making the following comment from under his breath, "They are conspiring," the guru puja resumed as someone else went off to locate his missing in action generals.

That was a huge instruction that will never forget. Just as Mangala Arati is not optional, I immediately understood that neither was Gurupuja optional. It was just as integral, important and valuable to our spiritual practice as Mangala Arati. Neither one can replace the other. Standing before him during Guru puja one may reflect upon their vows, their relationship and service to Srila Prabhupada. One can offer further vows of service and surrender. One can just love him. No matter how many or how few others are in attendance, it is just you and him for a few rare moments of very personal communication. He acknowledges your presence and you are there, whoever you are, wherever you are at spiritually, fully exposed in every respect to his divine loving grace that sustains and nourishes all of ISKCON and its members. As always, it is up to us to accept or not his divine loving grace.

Malati devi dasi

“Vyāsa-pūjā means to accept this
paramparā system. Vyāsa.
Guru is the representative of Vyāsadeva
because he does not change anything.”

Lecture, Hyderabad, December 10, 1976

His Divine Grace
AC. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



Vyasa-puja Celebration Guidelines

GBC Resolutions Summary

The GBC resolutions always stressed the importance of Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja celebration. The resolutions continue to place Srila Prabhupada in the center to foster unity in ISKCON's preaching efforts in order to emphasize his pre-eminent position as Founder-Acarya and the main *siksa guru* to all devotees in his movement.

Being faithful to Srila Prabhupada is not just manifested in one event. It is revealed in everything we do and think—in balance, in harmony, and in the daily lives of all devotees. Despite occurring only once a year, Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja, his Appearance Day festival, has untapped potential to bind together many generations of his disciples and followers, now and in the future.

Over the past years, the attitudes to accepting the unique and central position of Srila Prabhupada have matured and grown. Srila Prabhupada has a unique relationship with every ISKCON devotee. It is now very well understood to all ISKCON devotees that Srila Prabhupada is "his (or her) principle *siksa guru*" and that a devotee of a new generation of disciples "derives more spiritual inspiration from Srila Prabhupada's books and *vani*, than from his own *diksa guru*." The 'Zonal-Acarya' system has become history in all properly functioning ISKCON communities, and current gurus are never called by the title '*acarya*' or 'present *acarya*.'

In order to focus more fully on Srila Prabhupada and each devotee's special relationship with Srila Prabhupada, all devotees of ISKCON should have an opportunity to participate in his Vyasa-puja celebrations. This should especially be the case during Srila Prabhupada's Appearance Day festival to emphasize the solidarity with leaders who strongly expressed "that any attempt to minimize the position or teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, will

not be tolerated in any way by the leadership of ISKCON. This is an absolute and inviolable principle.”

In recent years many statements by ISKCON’s leadership has accumulated, and this summary attempts to make them more accessible and in turn more effective. Without a doubt, ISKCON leadership “accepts as its life and soul the divine instructions of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada and recognizes that it is completely dependent on his mercy in all respects.” In fact it has “no other function or purpose other than to execute the instructions” of Srila Prabhupada. One of the core instructions was for everyone in his ISKCON to celebrate his appearance day, Sri Vyasa-puja as the “most blessed event.”

Resolutions emphasize that “ISKCON members *shall* celebrate Srila Prabhupada’s Vyasa-puja ceremony as *the pre-eminent Vyasa-puja ceremony* in ISKCON. All ISKCON members are requested to write an annual Vyasa-puja offering to Srila Prabhupada.” This includes *all of the devotees*, not only leaders or senior disciples or direct disciples of Srila Prabhupada. “ISKCON devotees shall instruct new members to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada and receive guidance, training, and assistance from those who are practically and directly instructing them in Krsna consciousness. ISKCON members shall not compel or force new members to accept any particular *siksa* or *diksa guru* or to take *diksa* initiation at any particular point in time. New members shall chose when and from whom they wish to request initiation; however, for a minimum of six months of strict *sadhana*, they must focus their attention on Srila Prabhupada as Founder-Acarya and their *siksa guru*.”

It is easy to understand why “ISKCON members conducting Vyasa-puja ceremonies for ISKCON *siksa* and *diksa* gurus shall observe them in a modest way, significantly less elaborate in duration and cost than Srila Prabhupada’s Vyasa-puja. In general, devotees shall observe these Vyasa-puja celebrations in their own locales. In ISKCON, *only* Srila Prabhupada’s Vyasa-puja book shall be published.”

The significance of Srila Prabhupada that is specifically celebrated during his appearance festival at a grand scale is summarized as follows:

1. Srila Prabhupada is the foundational *siksa guru* for all ISKCON devotees because he has realized and presented the teachings of the previous *Acaryas* of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya *sampradaya* appropriately for the modern age.
2. Srila Prabhupada's instructions are the essential teachings for every ISKCON devotee.
3. Srila Prabhupada's books are the embodiment of his teachings and should be accepted as the standard by all future generations of ISKCON.
4. Srila Prabhupada should be worshipped daily by every ISKCON member.
5. Every ISKCON spiritual master is responsible to guide his disciples to follow Srila Prabhupada's instructions.

“As it is enjoined in scripture that a devotee must honor his spiritual master, ISKCON members shall be trained to place their faith, trust, and allegiance first and foremost in the Founder-*Acarya* who is the pre-eminent *siksa guru* for every member of ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada is to be worshipped through his words, his *murti*, his picture, and his devotees. All ISKCON publications such as books, magazines, newsletters, leaflets, fliers, invitations, etc., should clearly display the full name and titles of Srila Prabhupada including Founder-*Acarya*, Prabhupada, and His Divine Grace. For example:

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,

Founder-*Acarya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness”

“ISKCON leaders shall teach that Srila Prabhupada's books and teachings are the foundation of the spiritual lives of all ISKCON members. Therefore, all ISKCON members shall consider it their compulsory duty to study Srila Prabhupada's books. Hearing from other devotee's books and teachings is secondary and

supplemental and should not be done at the expense of hearing regularly from Srila Prabhupada.” “At the time of *diksa* initiation, all disciples will be further instructed by their initiating guru that Srila Prabhupada is their pre-eminent *siksa-guru* as ISKCON’s Founder-Acarya, ever present in his books and teachings. Thus they have a recognized *siksa* link to Srila Prabhupada.” And a constant reminder of this prime relationship with Srila Prabhupada is something that is especially important during the Vyasa-puja festival and throughout the year for all devotees in ISKCON: “After chanting the *pranama-mantra* of their *diksa* (or *siksa*) guru, all grand disciples and future generations should chant at least the first of Srila Prabhupada’s *pranama mantra* while offering obeisances...”

"Sons and daughters,
I am so much obliged to you that you have
become so enthusiastic for offering Vyāsa-pūjā."

London, August 22, 1973

His Divine Grace
AC. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



Guidelines by Srila Prabhupada (remembrances)

We observed Vyasa-puja according to Prabhupada's instructions. Kirtanananda Swami, the most senior sannyasi, offered the arati. We each offered flowers at Prabhupada's feet as he sat on the vyasasana and then read him our written homages. Finally, Prabhupada was offered a feast.

Prabhupada told us that each devotee should offer him flowers three times. Kirtana was going on, and after each offering of flowers, the devotee paid his dandavats. After I offered flowers three times, he took a yellow flower and placed it in my outstretched palms.

Prabhupada even specified the order in which the devotees should approach him to make their flower offerings: first sannyasis, then grhastha men with their wives, then *brahmacaris*.

Bhurijana das

Srila Prabhupada taught us how to do this by his own example to his Guru Maharaja's offering. A Puspanjali of flowers and chanting the pranams is done three times as well as arati.

The way I remember Vyasa-puja being celebrated over the years is that earlier in the morning, I would sing some bhajans before hand of Gurudeva, Ohe Vaisnava Thakur etc ... and then we would begin reading some offerings from the Vyasa-puja book. At approx. 11:30 AM, there would be a puspanjali, in which we would recite Srila Prabhupada's pranams three times with offering of flowers and bow down after each pair was recited three times in call and response, like at a fire yajna: *nama ... nama ... om ... om ... visnu ... visnu...* and after one pair was chanted then we say *svaha* and then bow down and then we repeat again. After this we do arati to Prabhupada singing Sri Guru Vandana with a kirtan following and then we present him officially with the Vyasa-puja book, and read the offering of the local temple, and then each of the disciples is allowed to speak something. This is perhaps the only challenge at this festival because some devotees want to go on so long that they don't allow others to speak anything at all. This has happened to me on occasion and I have been guilty of doing this

myself as well. The time needs to be managed during the homages read. After this there is usually prasadam.

Gaura das

— — — —

I was in LA during those years and it was celebrated much the same as it is today. There was half of day fast with readings and offerings from the Vyasa-puja book, pushpanjali, artik and a feast. The Deities received new outfits. The vyasasana was beautifully decorated and Srila Prabhupada's picture was adorned with beautiful gardenia and other scented flower garlands. Along with the big feast for the devotees, we offered 108 preparations to Srila Prabhupada at his vyasana. Everyone would be exhausted after the festivities of Janmasatami and Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja, so usually most would take a little rest then we could meet back at the temple in the early evening for artik and Prabhupada film.

Nirakula devi dasi

— — — —

I remember we sang Guruvastakam to the noon melody instead of Guru Vandanam.

Vaiyasaki das

— — — —

I just remember that on Janmastami we fasted until midnight and then had a light feast, and the next day we fasted till noon or 1 pm, we spent the morning glorifying Srila Prabhupada, we used to write offerings that went into a Vyasa-puja book, and sometimes would read those, then there would be an aroti, we would offer flowers to Srila Prabhupada, and we would then have a huge feast. I am pretty sure we did that according to his directions, but where it might be

written or spoken, I don't know. I was there when Srila Prabhupada was physically present some years.

Arundhati devi dasi

— — —

It was in Bury Place. '71 or '72. We were sitting in the Temple room at Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet the day of his Vyasa-puja. He looked at us and said "Vyasa-puja is the day the disciple should addressed his spiritual master and tell him how he has changed his life". He then ask all of us to say a few words in that mood. So sublime...

Mondakini dasi

— — —

We all wrote our homages and stood and read them to Srila Prabhupada. Brahmananda Prabhu was the MC year before last and reiterated this before he passed away.

Kusha devi dasi

— — —

Once in the early days, Srila Prabhupada gathered together the many letters he had received from his disciples and very feelingly placed them in front of a picture of his Guru Maharaj. As though they were flowers. Beautiful, isn't it?

Rukmini devi dasi

— — —

We had a very intimate Janmastami celebration in Tokyo, Japan.

In those days, Dai-Nippon was the printer that was printing our books, and they were hosting Prabhupada in a nice house. We all went to Srila Prabhupada's

house on Janmastami day because he wanted us to cook a big feast for midnight and read the Krishna Book during the day.

Srila Prabhupada started the tradition of reading as much as you could ofn the Krishna Book on Janmastami. He said, "Read the whole Krishna Book if you m can. Read it constantly throughout the day." So we started. I took a turn reading the Krishna book. Tamal Krishna took a turn, and Kirtanananda took a turn.

Then Srila Prabhupada said, "Now it is my turn." He took the Krishna Book and started reading. When a person reads something you can tell by their manner and the feeling that they put into the reading if they are really fascinated with it. Srila Prabhupada was reading very feelingly.

Later on I said to Prabhupada, "Prabhupada, you were reading the Krishna Book so feelingly." And Prabhupada said, "Yes. I like to read my Krishna Book. It's very entertaining. It's not that because I wrote it, I don't care about reading it anymore. These are Krishna's pastimes, and it's very ecstatic to read the pastimes of Krishna."

On that Janmastami day we went on and on reading Krishna Book until midnight. We didn't finish the whole Krishna Book, but we read quite a bit of it.

The next day was Vyasa-puja. We were not well seasoned. Kirtanananda was the most senior, as he had been a devotee for two or three years. (Although we still should have known how to celebrate Srila Prabhupada's Vyasa-puja.) Srila Prabhupada arrived at the temple about 11:30 a.m., sat on the vyasasana, and said, "Where is the *puspa*?" We were thinking, "*Puspa*? What is *puspa*?"

Sudama thought, "Oh, he wants *puspa* rice, a fancy kind of rice." There is some kind of rice called *puspa* with nuts and curd balls. Sudama immediately started making this rice, which delayed the process even further. Prabhupada said, "Where is the feast?" But the feast was late.

"Where is the garland?" We didn't have any garlands, and there were no flowers to do the *puspanjali*. Srila Prabhupada said, "No *puspanjali*. The feast is not ready. You are not saying the right prayers. There is no garland for the Deities. How is this a Vyasa-puja? This is not a Vyasa-puja. This is a disgrace."

To Kirtanananda he said, "You are a senior disciple. Don't you know how to celebrate the spiritual master's appearance day? Don't you have any

understanding? This is a disgrace." Then he said, "Tomorrow we will celebrate it properly," and got up and walked out the door.

Kirtanananda started to cry, and we were all devastated. The whole temple was full of guests, and everybody felt as if a cold ice pick had been stabbed into their hearts.

Prabhupada called us to his house that same day and said, "I will tell you how to celebrate Vyasa-puja, and you must not forget it for the rest of your lives." He said, "You must have flowers for the *puspanjali*. You must stand and offer the flowers to the spiritual master three times, bow down three times, say the *mangalacaranam* prayers to the spiritual master, and have the offering ready. The offering has to go on one minute before twelve so that it is on the altar at twelve. You must also read homages."

We didn't have any homages written either. "You must have the homages written. This is the way you celebrate the appearance of the spiritual master." Srila Prabhupada was very strict with his disciples, and at the same time he was very kind.

After you became his disciple, he was still kind, but he wanted you to be trained up in Krishna consciousness for your own spiritual benefit so that you would know the right things to do and not be offensive by your ignorance.

The next day, when Prabhupada came back to the temple, we celebrated Vyasa-puja exactly the way he wanted us to do it. He was pleased.

Madhudvisa dasa

Appendix

Posters – www.founderacarya.com/vp

Banner – www.founderacarya.com/vp

Vyasa-puja videos – www.founderacarya.com/vp
