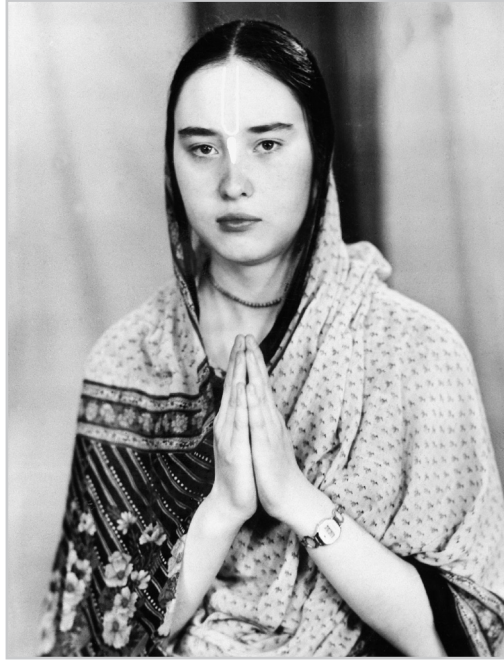


Vraja Līlā



Indradyumna Swami



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For information contact the Publisher



PO Box 52, Badger, CA 93603
Phone (559) 337-2200
Fax: (559) 337-2354
torchlightpublishing@yahoo.com
www.torchlight.com

Dedication

*To Gāndharvikā Giridhārī dāsī
for your devoted service to
your beloved godsister
Vraja Līlā dāsī*



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Introduction

On October 13, 1994, my dear disciple 19-year-old Vraja Līlā dāsī left her body in Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. By the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa I was by her side, along with many other Vaiṣṇavas, chanting the holy names.

One year before, while suffering from leukemia, she had gone to Vṛndāvana assisted by her godsister Gāndharvikā Giridhārī dāsī, to prepare for her inevitable departure. Vṛndāvana is the perfect place to live and the perfect place to die. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

“One must go to the Vṛndāvana forest and take shelter of Govinda. That will make one happy. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness is therefore constructing a Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple to invite its members as well as outsiders to come and live peacefully in a spiritual atmosphere. That will help one become elevated to the transcendental world and return home, back to Godhead.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.13.8 purport)

Vraja Līlā took shelter of Vṛndāvana in this mood. As she told Gāndharvikā Giridhārī several months before her departure, “Some devotees are praying to be able to distribute books, some are praying to be good cooks and still others to be nice pūjārīs; but now at the end of my life I am begging to become intensely attached to Kṛṣṇa.” She strived for that attachment through humble service and sincere prayer. Thus, when I arrived in Vṛndāvana at her request on the last day of her life, her Kṛṣṇa consciousness amazed me. She had developed so much faith in her spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.

*yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā-deve thatā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

“Only unto one who has unflinching devotion to the Lord and to the spiritual master does transcendental knowledge become automatically revealed.”

(Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.38)

I am feeling deep separation from Vraja Līlā dāsī. Her faith and love in me as her spiritual master awoke my love and appreciation for her as my disciple. Through our interactions, especially during the last days of her life, my understanding of the wonderful reciprocation that exists between guru and disciple deepened a thousandfold.

This book was originally intended only for my disciples. But after reflecting on the many realizations that I have gained from Vraja Līlā’s departure, I now want to share them with all devotees.

I have included the memories and realizations of other devotees who were involved with her departure as well, most notably my disciple Gāndharvikā Giridhārī dāsī. Because it is only natural that the disciple will glorify the spiritual master, I ask the reader to overlook the passages where I am praised and focus on the main personality in this book, Vraja Līlā dāsī, whose example at the moment of death all of us may follow.

Several godbrothers and godsisters have also glorified me within this work. It is certainly against the principle of Vaiṣṇava humility for a devotee to publish such statements about himself. However, I am forced to do so in order not to omit the reciprocation of

loving feelings which played such a major role in the departure of Vraja Līlā dāsī. I can assure the reader that I don't feel worthy of the kind statements expressed about me, but rather see them as goals to achieve within many lifetimes.

Indradyumna Swami

Warsaw, Poland

October 24, 1994

*The disappearance day of
Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura*



1

Vraja Līlā

Vraja Līlā dāsī was born in Russia on December 19, 1974. She came into contact with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in August 1991. In an article she wrote for a devotee youth magazine just before her passing away, she recounts how she first met the devotees.

“Devotees are always trying to satisfy the Lord and His representatives by their sincere efforts. This is especially evident during book distribution marathons in Russia, where the devotees are young and full of energy. Holding Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in their hands they feel confident to melt the hearts of the materialists. My heart was melted during one of these marathons, and I started on the path that eventually led me to the shelter

Vraja Līlā

of the lotus feet of my spiritual master, Indradyumna Swami Mahārāja, Śrīla Gurudeva.

“Before becoming a devotee, I used to wander the streets of Moscow looking for meaning in my life. Sometimes I would visit museums and study ancient civilizations. Other times I would go to the cinema to watch educational films or to the theater to watch dramas. And every day I would spend hours in bookshops looking into different philosophies of life. I soon realized, however, that what I required was a person who could answer my many questions and show me the goal of life.

“One day I met the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees in the Moscow subway. Entering a subway station, I saw two boys enthusiastically preaching to a group of people. Behind them, reaching far above their heads, was a mountain of books. Other people were selling things there as well; there was even a man singing for donations. But I was simply attracted to the devotees.

“As I came closer, one of the devotees approached me with a book. He said, ‘Please take this Bhagavad-gīta As it Is. This Vedic knowledge has been given to us by our spiritual master. It will answer all your questions and reveal to you the goal of life.’ I asked where the book had come from. Showing me a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda he replied, ‘It has been translated by the founder of our movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda. He brought Kṛṣṇa consciousness from India to the West.’

“I purchased the book and tried to understand it according to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports. One statement in particular that Śrīla Prabhupāda made inspired me very much. He said that if one is seriously interested in understanding the *Bhagavad-gītā As it Is*, one must take shelter of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Vraja Līlā

“Soon after reading this I went to the temple and met many wonderful devotees. Almost all of them seemed to have come to the movement in the same manner as I, through Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

“In this way, I understood that the happiness of the first devotees I had met came from being able to give Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy to others. Although they had to go into that hellish subway day after day, their compassion melted the hearts of the people, who then purchased their books. I even saw that new devotees, being dedicated to Śrīla Prabhupāda, were also able to distribute many books.

“I have told this story in order to glorify the saṅkīrtana devotees. I pray that all devotees who are beginning book distribution may get inspiration from it. There are souls waiting in each and every country for your mercy.”



2

Coming to Kṛṣṇa

Gāndharvikā Giridhārī: Several days after Vraja Līlā received a copy of Bhagavad-gītā and visited the temple, there was a big Ratha-yātrā in Moscow. She went to the festival out of curiosity and arrived just before the parade began. Indradyumna Mahārāja was lecturing to a large crowd that had gathered around the Ratha-yātrā cart. As Vraja Līlā pressed closer she heard him say that Lord Jagannātha is very, very kind to the fallen conditioned souls and awards special mercy to anyone who prays to Him. This made a big impression on her, and she approached Lord Jagannātha and began praying very sincerely for “special mercy.”

The next day she visited the Moscow temple again. She arrived when Indradyumna Mahārāja was giving Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Vraja Līlā

class. He was recounting the story of Jayānanda Prabhu, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Despite having been very ill with leukemia, he had worked hard to please his spiritual master by preparing a big Ratha-yātrā in America. She listened intently and was very impressed hearing about Jayānanda Prabhu's spiritual determination. Being ill with leukemia herself, she found inspiration in Jayānanda's devotional service. She was also very inspired by Indradymna Mahārāja and later told me that she felt Lord Jagannātha had answered her prayers for special mercy by directing her to the lotus feet of her eternal spiritual master the day after Ratha-yātrā.

A few days later she decided to join the movement. She was only 16 years old at the time and moved into a temple in the Ukraine. Within a few weeks she was on traveling saṅkīrtana with eight other women, distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. She relished this service, but after four months her leukemia forced her to stop, and she returned to Moscow.

Aṣṭa Sakhī dāsī: One year after coming to ISKCON my godsister Vraja Līlā joined our temple in St. Petersburg. All the devotees appreciated her advanced qualities, even at that early stage of her devotional service. She was very humble and was always trying to please our spiritual master, although due to her illness, she was unable to do big service. Whatever little service she got she would try to do it perfectly, being attentive to every detail.

Once when Śrīla Gurudeva was visiting our temple, he stressed the importance of prayer in the life of a devotee. Vraja Līlā took this very seriously. I would often see her praying to the Deities in the temple. But she wouldn't only pray for herself—she also prayed for the spiritual welfare of other devotees as well.

Coming To Kṛṣṇa

Rambhori dāsī: In the summer of 1993 Vraja Lilā came to our temple in Novorossisk.

She looked like an innocent child. In spite of her disease she tried not to cause any disturbance to the other devotees. We all tried our best to help her, but she didn't want service from anyone. She liked to serve others.

She also liked very much to paint. Once she painted a beautiful backdrop of Varṣāna for our altar. She also did a painting of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. The most interesting thing about this painting was that all the Gosvāmīs were painted with faces, except Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. When I asked her why, she replied that she didn't understand the mood and character of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Later on, when she had read a lot about him in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta she finished the work by painting his face.

At night, because of her illness, she would often moan. Sometimes she didn't sleep at all and would simply stay up all night chanting. While with us, she would do pūjā to our temple Deities and sometimes she led maṅgala-ārati in a very soft and beautiful way.

Once she gave me her jacket to hold and in one of the pockets was her diary. In any other situation I would not read someone's diary, but that time I did. Upon reading it I was amazed. She was expressing dissatisfaction that only a little time was left before she would leave her body, but she had such little service for Kṛṣṇa. So many realizations came to me as a result of reading that diary. I could see how pure she was and how contaminated I was.



3

Spiritual Initiation

Indradyumna Swami: I accepted Vraja Lilā dāsī as my disciple in May 1992. Seeing that she was a very sincere devotee who didn't have long to live, I gave her brāhmaṇa initiation only a few months afterwards. Six months later, Gāndharvikā Giridhārī dāsī, my first Russian disciple, who had been taking care of her full-time for several months, approached me and asked if she and Vraja Lilā could go to Vrndāvana. She wanted Vraja Lilā to be able to prepare to leave her body in the holy dhāma. I agreed, knowing that Vraja Lilā would become inspired in her Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Vrndāvana.



4

Living in Vṛndāvana

Gāndharvikā Giridhārī: When we arrived in Vṛndāvana in November 1993, we visited many temples. From the very beginning, the Gosvāmīs in charge of those temples took notice of Vraja Līlā, and she became the object of their affection. This was especially true at the Rādhā-Dāmodara and Imli Tāla temples. On our first visit to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, the head Gosvāmī there invited us to take prasādam. I told him that Vraja Līlā had come to Vṛndāvana to leave her body. He was very impressed by this and said he would pray to Rādhā-Dāmodara for her every day.

“Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be obtained only by paying one price—that is intense greed

Vraja Līlā

to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.

(Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Padyāvalī 14)

The head Gosvāmī at Imli Tāla was also very kind to her. Once she came there while they were holding an initiation ceremony. The Gosvāmī announced to everyone attending that everything was auspicious because a representative of ISKCON was present.

Vraja Līlā would often visit the Deities in the Vṛndāvana temples. At one point I noticed that although she didn't have any money, she was always bringing the Deities sweets and garlands. I asked her where she was getting the money for this from. She replied. "I often find money on the road when going to visit the temple. and I use it to buy presents for the Lord."

She was always eager to go on any parikramā, but her greatest anxiety was that due to her poor health she was unable to do Govardhana parikramā. She would visit Rādhā-kuṇḍa whenever she could. Her favorite places there were the samādhi of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and the bhajana kutir of Lord Caitanya. She was always in a prayerful mood while visiting these places. She regularly visited the samādhis of the six Gosvāmīs and prayed for their mercy. She knew their life stories by heart.

Her favorite Deities were, of course, Rādhā-Śyāmasundara at our Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple, and she would spend many hours a day chanting her rounds in front of Them. She loved the last darśana at night, where the pūjārīs distribute the Deities' garlands. She often said that the Deities were most merciful to the last visitors. And whenever she received any mahā-prasādam from Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, or any other Deities for that matter, she would always share it with others, no matter how small a portion it was.

Śrīla Gurudeva had asked His Holiness Bhakti Bṛṅga Govinda

Living in Vṛndāvana

Mahārāja to help Vraja Līlā in her spiritual life when we came to Vṛndāvana, so she always accepted his instructions as if they were given by her own Guru Mahārāja. She was very attached to Govinda Mahārāja and appreciative of his care and spiritual guidance. Several months before she passed away, Govinda Mahārāja gave her a beautiful Govardhana-śilā. He personally went to Govardhana Hill to get Him and bought all the silver paraphernalia for His worship.

Vraja Līlā was a talented artist. Upon our arrival in Vṛndāvana, she was commissioned by Pārvatī dāsī to do a painting for Pārvatī's children's book of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Pārvatī requested Vraja Līlā to do a painting of Kṛṣṇa waking up in the morning in Dvārakā with Rukmiṇī by His side. Vraja Līlā started this painting, but never completed it.

Sometimes I would become angry with her. She often neglected her personal needs and was dependent upon her superiors like a child. I had to provide everything for her: her place to stay, her food to eat, her art supplies and her clothing. I sometimes wondered where her mind was, but I actually knew that her mind was simply filled with devotional topics. Her endless questions about devotional service in her sincere attempt to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness amazed me.

One morning she related to me a humorous dream which she had had the night before. For me it was indicative of how much she was always absorbed in thinking of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. She dreamt that she took three births in Vṛndāvana. The first one was as a donkey. She told how as a donkey she was searching for clumps of grass here and there in the dust of Vṛndāvana. At one point she ate some bad grass and died. Her next birth in the dream was as a puppy. She saw herself wandering the streets of the holy dhāma until she was killed by a rickshaw. When she gave up that body she took birth as a cow and was roaming around

Vraja Līlā

Vraja. When she came to Govardhana Hill she stopped short of stepping on the sacred hill, knowing that it was very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Then she began circumambulating Govardhana Hill in her cow's body. Half-way through the parikramā she gave up that body. I asked her, "What birth did you take then?" She just laughed and replied, "That was the end of the dream."



5

Praying for Attachment to her Guru

While living in Vṛndāvana she was always expressing the desire to deepen her relationship with her spiritual master. She often praised my good fortune, that although she had received only one letter from him I had received many. She suggested that due to her lack of faith for him he never wrote any letters to her personally. But I always reminded her that he had given her special mercy by giving her first and second initiation so quickly, as well as the instruction to come to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

In May 1994, when Śrīla Gurudeva's disciples in Vṛndāvana observed his Vyāsa-pūjā celebration, she touched everyone's heart with her sincere offering to him:

Vraja Līlā

Dear Śrīla Gurudeva,

I bow down to your divine lotus feet with great awe and reverence. All glories to you.

You always support me by your mercy. This year, by allowing me to come to Vṛndāvana, you have given me the opportunity to pray to the holy dhāma, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Here I have met many elevated Vaiṣṇavas so devoted to Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. I am trying to follow them in their devotion. Recently, we celebrated Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance day. On that day I could see the open hearts of his disciples; I realized that he lives eternally. That festival gave Śrīla Prabhupāda to us, his grand-disciples, who never had the chance to see him. On that day I was thinking about you, my spiritual master, who devote your whole life to Śrīla Prabhupāda. When the ācārya leaves, only the weak disciples become blinded. Those who are strong take vows to follow his instructions even more strictly. I remember your words, "Let us be blessed by Śrīla Prabhupāda to preach his mission all over the world."

You have this blessing and, therefore, you are never separated from him. Wherever you are, you serve him all the time. You are his servant who gives your whole heart to him. There is no more glorious position than yours. That day I prayed to Śrīla Prabhupāda to let me obtain the same strong faith in your instructions as you have in his. I will always try to make your instructions my life and soul. I am inspired thinking of the moments when I will have the opportunity to get your direct association by

Praying for Attachment to her Guru

-serving you personally. Then I won't be separated from you at any time. Even the terrifying thought of death would not be able to cut the thread between us.

Dear Gurudeva, I beg you, please bless me by bestowing upon me the qualities of your best disciples who serve you purely. Make me humble so that the holy name will come and dance within my heart.

Now I am not even half-way to the desired goal and the way is difficult. On this day I pray to you, please free me from lust, greed and envy and everything which keeps me aloof from rendering pure devotional service unto you. You appeared in my life giving me light, and captured me by divine love. I am indebted to you eternally, my dear beloved, eternal father, Śrīla Gurudeva.

*Your eternal servant
Vraja Līlā Dāsī
(Vṛndāvana)*

She missed her spiritual master very much while living in Vṛndāvana. Once in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class, she heard that Vṛndāvana-dhāma is a very special place for praying for the mercy of the guru because the original guru, Lord Balarāma, is eternally residing in Vṛndāvana. That morning I heard her praying sincerely to Lord Balarāma to increase her attachment to her spiritual master.

On Rādhāṣṭamī, September 12th, she got the opportunity to go on Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Varṣāna parikramās. She was so happy to be able to go to these divine places and pray for mercy. But she was already very weak from the previous day's activities at

Vraja Līlā

Uñchogaon, and while climbing the hill to Varṣāna she had to be supported by the other women. They reached Larily Lāl mandira (the main Varṣāna temple) just at the moment that Rādhārāṇī's festival was beginning. There was a huge crowd. Vraja Līlā worked her way close to the altar, and just as she arrived the pūjārī came out with a big plate of mahā-prasādam. He gave her the first portion, and she was immediately surrounded by hundreds of Vrajavāsīs wanting the mercy. Somehow or other she escaped and happily distributed what was left to all the parikramā devotees. Unfortunately, due to her exhausted condition, she then fainted in the temple and had to be carried to the bus by the women.

The next day, without my knowledge (although I had given her strict orders to rest in bed) she took the Russian disciples of Gopal Krishna Goswami on parikramā of all the major temples in Vṛndāvana. I was furious with her and chastised her later. I realized, however, that Vraja Līlā never wanted to miss an opportunity to go on parikramā. She was the proper person to take the devotees on parikramā, because, as I said before, she knew many of the pastimes of the holy places in the dhāma.



6

The Most Critical Situation

The next morning after Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam class I returned to the dharmasālā where we were living. Vraja Līlā would usually sleep until 7:00 a.m. because of her poor health. When I entered our room I saw that she was in intense pain. She told me she had received an electric shock from a bare wire in the room and was experiencing heart pain. I immediately took her to Sarat Hospital, but the doctors there said I should take her to Mathurā. At Mathurā Hospital they kept her for observation for several days. While attending to her chest pains, the doctors became more concerned when they discovered she was about to go into a leukemia crisis. I took her back to our dharmasālā in Vndāvana to rest. A few days later I again consulted the doctors in Mathurā regarding her leukemia crisis. They wanted to begin

Vraja Līlā

chemotherapy, but told me in confidence that it would increase her life by only a few months.

I talked to some senior women in the temple, and they all suggested she should not go through with the treatment. Then I spoke to Vraja, saying that I personally felt she should go back to the hospital and take the treatment because her condition was critical. She replied, “The most critical situation is to be without the association of the Lord’s devotees. I see no danger for myself if I would die in Vṛndāvana, being trained by the senior devotees to be fixed on the Lord at the moment of death. I need this training course. It will be much more helpful than any chemotherapy, which I have no confidence in anyway.”

I was sympathetic to her opinion, but nonetheless, because I was responsible to Śrīla Gurudeva for her, I asked our godsister Mānasī Gaṅgā to fax Guru Mahārāja for his instruction. The next day he faxed back that he had discussed with Vraja Līlā the option of having chemotherapy when she was in Russia the year before. They had decided not to go ahead with it at that time. He had encouraged her to try all possible natural cures, but if everything else failed he instructed her that she should leave her body in Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. Upon hearing Śrīla Gurudeva’s reply Vraja Līlā started intensely preparing herself for the moment of death.

“I am drowning in the painful, fathomless whirlpool of repeated birth and death. O Lord, O friend of the shelterless, O effulgent moon of mercy, please, this one time, quickly extend Your hand to save me.

(Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Padyāvahī)



7

A Message to her Guru

Day by day we could see she was getting worse. Because the end was nearing, we decided to inform Śrīla Gurudeva that there was little hope left for her and request him to come to Vndāvana. Mānasī Gaṅgā called Śrīla Gurudeva on October 5th. Upon hearing the news, Gurudeva said he needed some time to see if he could free himself from his preaching duties in Poland. He requested to hear something personally from Vraja Līlā and asked that we relay her message to him. When I told her this she remained silent for a few moments and then dictated the following message to her beloved spiritual master:

Vraja Līlā

My Dearest Spiritual Master,

I bow down to your lotus feet. All glories to you.

Everything is going away from my hands, every material hope which I had. But I am still a child in spiritual life. I wish I had a little love or spiritual bhāva within my heart. But I have deep, firm faith in you. I am happy because of this faith and I'll be keeping it as a great treasure. It gives me another kind of faith to be back in the spiritual world and attain the service of the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. And this kind of faith is faith in real things, which I am sure are existing and just waiting for me at that side of the door.

I am indebted to you so much that you are guiding me in my spiritual life, although I feel so much separation from you.

Your servant

Vraja Līlā dāsī

After receiving this message, Śrīla Gurudeva said he would try his best to come. Vraja Līlā was extremely happy, saying that she had never expected such mercy from him. She said that Mother Arcā Vighraha, who had recently passed away, was extremely fortunate that her Guru Mahārāja, Girirāja Swami, was present at the moment of her departure. Now she could see that the same fortune might possibly be coming to her. But in Śrīla Gurudeva's message he said, "I might be coming", and she realized that there is nothing cheap in Vraja, so she began to pray very, very intensely for the opportunity to hear from her Guru Mahārāja before she left her body.



8

A Message from her Guru

Days passed and her situation got worse. She started to go blind, being able to see objects only directly in front of her eyes. She was very eager to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but her japa became increasingly difficult because of her weak voice. So she asked me to chant in her ear and she followed me by fingering her beads in her hand. Mānasī Gaṅgā phoned Śrīla Gurudeva again on October 9th to inform him that Vraja Līlā did not have long to live. The next day we received a fax from Śrīla Gurudeva giving her his final instructions:

“Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is like a sun rising in the darkness, like a boat to the drowning, like a sweet raincloud to those dying of thirst, like fabulous wealth to the poverty-stricken, and like an infallible physician to those afflicted

Vraja Līlā

with the most painful disease, has come to grant auspiciousness to us.”

(Śrī Vyāsa quoted from Padyāvālī)

*Wrocław, Poland,
October 10, 1994*

*My Dear Vraja Līlā,
Please accept my blessings. All glories to Śrīla
Prabhupāda.*

*I have just received information from Mānasī
Gaṅgā dāsī that the doctors in Vrndāvana say
you will soon leave your body. I am praying you
will go back home, back to Godhead, because you
have rendered such nice service to the Lord in this
lifetime.*

*Now, in these last moments, please fix your mind
upon the eternal pastimes of the Lord. Pray to
Him to remove any obstacles to pure devotion that
remain within your heart and ask for the privilege
of eternal service to His lotus feet. He will surely
answer your prayers, as He has kindly brought you
to Śrī Vrndāvana-dhāma in the last days of your
life, where He has given you the shelter of so many
loving devotees.*

*Please know that now I am thinking of you
every minute of the day, even in the midst of my
busy schedule. I am constantly praying to Śrīla
Prabhupāda to watch over and guide you in this
final test, your departure from your body. By his
grace we can transcend the most difficult moments.*

A Message from her Guru

You are my very dear spiritual daughter and I will feel your separation intensely. But know for sure that the spiritual master and the disciple are never separated even for a moment, because the relationship is eternal. One day all of us—the members of ISKCON—will be together again in the spiritual world, safe at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda said we will have our ISKCON in the spiritual sky.

My prayer is that Kṛṣṇa will soon take you to the shade of His lotus feet, engaging you in His eternal service. My blessings are always with you, Vraja. I will look forward to seeing you again in the not-too-distant future.

*Your ever well-wisher
Indradyumna Swami*

From the wording of the fax we could understand that Śrīla Gurudeva would not be coming. We hesitated to read it to her. That evening Tamal Krishna Mahārāja, Girirāja Mahārāja and other devotees came and led beautiful kīrtanas in Vraja Līlā's room. But Vraja was looking around anxiously and wanted to know if her Guru Mahārāja was coming or not. She said she was not peaceful, despite the wonderful kīrtanas. I decided to tell her the truth, hoping she might be pacified in the presence of those Vaisṇavas and give up the idea to see her Guru Mahārāja before her final test. So I leaned over and told her that Śrīla Gurudeva had sent a message: he had so many responsibilities in Poland and it was not possible for him to come. I asked her to see Guru Mahārāja's godbrothers as his representatives sent to help her.



9

I Need his Guidance

She remained silent for a while then said. “I have a lot of respect and appreciation for the other spiritual masters. They have helped me in my spiritual life, and I have no doubt that they can help me now. But I want to personally hear my Guru Mahārāja’s final instructions to me. I need him to be here to instruct me step by step. I have so many things to ask him before I go. I need his guidance. Otherwise how shall I take full advantage of all the faith I’ve developed in him throughout my devotional life? He is my heart and soul and understands me better than anyone else.” She then broke down crying.

There were many senior women around her bed, and they started to preach to her. I was also trying to preach to her, but no one could convince her that she could leave her body without final

I Need his Guidance

encouragement from her Guru Mahārāja. The devotees left, and she cried all night until 7:00 a.m.

When I approached her bedside in the morning I said, “Do you want me to sing the Gurv-aṣṭaka prayers for you?” She replied, “Yes.” I started, but she did not like my melody, or my mood, and she started to sing herself with a very weak but sweet voice. She made it from beginning to end without interruption, tears flowing from her almost blind eyes. She had so much attachment to her spiritual master.

The next morning the doctor told us she might not survive that day. By Kṛṣṇa’s mercy we were able to contact my Guru Mahārāja that afternoon, and with the help of my godsister Vaiṣṇavī dāsī I begged him to please come. I was exhausted and crying on the phone. I appealed for his mercy. Then he replied, “I’ll be there as soon as possible. Tell Vraja Līlā I’m coming.”

I ran to Vraja’s room and told her the good news. She was so happy. I told her she had to survive two days more until Śrīla Gurudeva’s arrival. I told her, “Pray to Kṛṣṇa to survive a few more hours, and you’ll see your Guru Mahārāja. He’s promised to come.” Many devotees feel that Vraja Līlā survived the next few days simply in order to see her spiritual master. She waited for him before leaving her body.



10

A Turn for the Worse

That evening things took a turn for the worse. She was struggling to breathe. The doctor suggested we give her oxygen. But it was difficult to find oxygen bottles. Most stores were closed because of the Durgā Pūjā celebrations. Somehow or other, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, a devotee brought a bottle of oxygen one hour later, and she had her first peaceful sleep in days.

The bottle was finished the next day at 5:00 p.m.. Fortunately, someone else acquired two full bottles from Agra, and so we switched to one of the new ones. But the second full bottle was taken away by a devotee who mistook it for the first used bottle. Thus, when the bottle she was using ran out at 11 p.m., we discovered to our horror that the "spare" was also empty. We knew that if she survived that night it would be only because of

A Turn for the Worse

her intense desire to see her spiritual master. I spent the whole night fanning her and speaking into her ear, “Vraja, there’s only 32 hours left until Śrīlā Gurudeva comes ... 30 hours left ... 25 hours left.”

The next day (October 12th) at 11 a.m., a full bottle of oxygen arrived. She was able to sleep throughout that day and night, although she often woke up screaming in pain. I hung a notice on her door saying that she was not to be disturbed so she could take rest before her final meeting with her Guru Mahārāja.

We were expecting Śrīlā Gurudeva to arrive about 5:00 a.m. on October 13th, so early that morning I sat by her bed and spoke into her ear—five hours left ... three hours left ... two hours left. When my Guru Mahārāja finally walked into the room at 7:00 a.m. I felt the weight of the whole world had been lifted from my shoulders.



11

From Warsaw to Delhi

Indradyumna Swami: When it became clear to me how much Vraja Līlā was dependent on seeing me, I arranged a flight from Warsaw to Delhi as fast as I could. When I arrived in Delhi the Vṛndāvana devotees picked me up, and we drove straight to Vṛndāvana. By this time I knew that Vraja Līlā may not be alive when I arrived, and I was praying to Kṛṣṇa to please let her live until I could see her. Half-way to Vṛndāvana we came upon a huge traffic jam that delayed us more than two hours. Finally, we reached Vṛndāvana and the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma mandira. When I got out of the car I ran straight to Vraja Līlā's room. As I entered, I was struck by the intense spiritual atmosphere. Everything was very clean and pure. There were many devotees in the room having kīrtana, and everyone turned to see me as I walked in. The looks on their faces were a mixture of happiness

and sheer astonishment. Vraja Līlā's constant meditation that I come, had become everyone's meditation. When I walked into the room I think everyone felt that Kṛṣṇa had answered Vraja Līlā's sincere and heartfelt prayers.

I immediately went to her and began speaking. The room became quiet as I spoke very slowly, choosing each word carefully. Simha Rūpiṇī dāsī managed to record our conversation.

“Vraja Līlā, this is your spiritual master. I have come a long way to see you because of your very sincere desire to see me. I want to thank you very much for bringing me to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. This shows how the love of the disciple can control the spiritual master.

“I have come here to be with you at this moment of your final test. I want to stay with you, speak about Kṛṣṇa, and chant the holy names of the Lord into your heart. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

“Because of your sincere devotional service to your spiritual master and the Lord, Kṛṣṇa has allowed you to come here to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. Now you can leave this world very peacefully in the association of so many wonderful devotees.

“Be detached from all worldly things. Take the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas in the form of their wonderful association and their prayers for your deliverance back to the spiritual world. Have no fear. See everything here as an arrangement of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He is giving you his blessings. Become completely detached from your material body and all material desires.

“I am here now, so you are safe. We'll have kīrtana and chant. Just fix your mind on the chanting and the pastimes of the Supreme Lord.”

Vraja Līlā

[At this point I chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa to her for five minutes and then continued preaching to her.]

“Vraja Līlā, it was here in Vṛndāvana that Śrīla Prabhupāda spent his last days. He showed us how to pass the final test of leaving this material body.

“The living entity has an attachment to the body because it is the place where he can satisfy his material desires. But a devotee strives to give up material desires and take up the desires of his spiritual master.

“I am very pleased with your devotional service. For so many years you have been my sincere and surrendered disciple. Now fix your mind on the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in the association of the devotees here and listen to the chanting of the holy names.

“Vraja, don’t be afraid to leave your body. Kṛṣṇa will help you. He brought you to this movement. He brought you into the association of the devotees and Śrīla Prabhupāda. And he directed you to your spiritual master. He has helped you in so many ways.

“All your devotional service has been preparation for this moment, so that you can leave your body remembering the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. All the Vaiṣṇavas are here to help you, and we will all be chanting, so you have nothing to fear. Don’t concentrate on the pain, just hear the chanting.”

[At that point Vraja Līlā spoke her first words to me.]

“I need the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

I replied, “Many Vaiṣṇavas are praying for you. By their mercy you will be successful. You have the mercy of the Lord, the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas.”



12

Praying to the Lord

Indradyumna Swami: Throughout the morning I preached to her and led kīrtana. I was praying intensely to Śrīla Prabhupāda to give me the proper words to say at such a crucial time. Her loving attachment to me had awakened a strong attachment in my heart for her. I also prayed to Kṛṣṇa throughout the day to please let her leave her body in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I noticed that every so often she would begin to choke on mucus in her throat. When she was unable to clear it, her eyes would bulge in fear. During those moments we would raise her up a little so the mucus could flow down her throat. I would pray to Kṛṣṇa, “Please let her go peacefully—let her be able to remember Your lotus feet at the moment of death.”

Although her condition was deteriorating quickly throughout

Vraja Līlā

the day, I was amazed at her clear consciousness. Towards the end of the morning she expressed the desire to ask me some questions. Gāndharvikā Giridhārī translated, first by putting her ear next to Vraja Līlā's mouth to hear the question, and then after my response speaking loudly into her ear.



13

Final Questions and Answers

Vraja Līlā: Śrīlā Gurudeva, I'm afraid that if I recover, then I'll have brought you here for nothing.

Indradyumna Swami: You have brought me to Śrī Vṛndāvanadhāma. Every devotee needs the mercy of Vṛndāvana.

Vraja Līlā: I want to be sure I'm going back to Godhead.

Indradyumna Swami: You have been training for this moment for many years. All the rounds you have chanted, all the service you have done, all the prasādam you have taken have prepared you to go back to Godhead. With so much practice behind you, it won't be difficult for you to remember Kṛṣṇa at death. You simply have to be determined.

Vraja Līlā

You said in your message to me that you are certain the spiritual world exists. If you think intensely of Kṛṣṇa in these last few days, you can go to that spiritual world. The spiritual world is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. There, all talking is singing, all walking is dancing, and there is a festival every day.

Kṛṣṇa is engaged in His transcendental pastimes in Goloka Vṛndāvana with His loving devotees. There is Govardhana Hill, the Yamunā River and many other wonderful places. The Lord is inviting us all back to that spiritual world. Your qualification to go there is your enthusiasm.

Vraja Līlā: How can I go to the spiritual world if I am untrained? [referring to being untrained in personal service to the Lord]

Indradyumna Swami: Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are presently being performed somewhere in this universe. When a qualified devotee leaves his body here, he goes to that place and receives training how to perform personal service to the Lord. I know you don't want to come back to the material world, so your only alternative is to go there.

Vraja Līlā: I don't think I'll make it. I'm not qualified.

Indradyumna Swami: Your qualification is Lord Caitanya's mercy. We are all born with so many bad qualities in this age, but by the mercy of Lord Caitanya those bad qualities can be finished. Just like Jagāi and Mādhāi, their qualification was that they surrendered to Lord Caitanya. That's all. They gave up their sinful ways and took up devotional service. You did the same. You gave up sinful activity and became a devotee years ago. So you are also qualified to get the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

By Lord Caitanya's mercy anything is possible. The devotee never feels qualified. It is the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa that we get to go back to the spiritual world. The Lord fulfills the desire

Final Questions and Answers

of every living entity. If one wants material life, Kṛṣṇa will fulfill that desire. But if one sincerely wants devotional service, Kṛṣṇa will certainly fulfill that desire.

Vraja Līlā: I am surrounded by an ocean of mercy. How do I take full advantage of it?

Indradyumna Swami: Just fix your mind on the Lord. Everything else is finished. You have no other responsibilities, no other obligations. You don't even have to take care of your body; Gāndharvikā is doing that. You have nothing to do but think of Kṛṣṇa. And if there is some pain in your body, just scream out in your mind, "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

As your spiritual master I am asking you to set a nice example for all the devotees. Follow Śrīlā Prabhupāda's example: be Kṛṣṇa conscious to the moment of death and go back to Kṛṣṇa.

Vraja Līlā: I still have some material desires left.

Indradyumna Swami: What kind of desires, Vraja?

Vraja Līlā: [*shyly*] Sometimes I desire to eat tomatoes.

Indradyumna Swami: [*humorously, while looking around to the devotees*] Do they have tomatoes in the spiritual world? Anyway, there are kalpa-vṛkṣa trees there, and you can get anything you desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. So I suppose you can get tomatoes also. And if that is your only material desire left at this point, you are a fortunate young lady indeed.

Vraja Līlā: What if I can't remember Kṛṣṇa at the moment of death?

Indradyumna Swami: Kṛṣṇa wants us to go back to the spiritual world more than we do. His desire is stronger than ours. You are His devotee, and He never forgets someone who has done even a

Vraja Līlā

little devotional service for Him. He knows your heart's desire.

Vraja Līlā: How is it you care about me so much?

Indradyumna Swami: Love is reciprocal. When the devotees told Śrīlā Prabhupāda, “Everyone loves you, Prabhupāda,” Prabhupāda replied, “That’s because I love everyone.” If someone loves you, then you naturally love them. This is especially true in devotional service. If an ordinary man has so much affection for his daughter, then how much more transcendental affection must the spiritual master have for his spiritual daughter?

Vraja Līlā: [*calling out*] Mercy! Mercy!



14

The Final Hours

Indradyumna Swami: After these questions, she asked if she could sleep a little. I led a very soft kīrtana, and she dozed off. That was about 1.30 p.m. Most devotees left the room at that time, and there were only three or four of us left. At 2:00 p.m. she woke up and looked over at me. She made an expression that indicated to me she wanted my encouragement. I nodded my head in such a way as to let her know that everything was all right. Then she put her head back on the pillow, and Gāndharvikā Gīrīdhārī attempted to give her a little sweet milk from a spoon. Gāndharvikā looked startled when she was unable to get the milk into Vraja Līlā's mouth. Vraja Līlā's jaw had locked up. Gāndharvikā looked at me and said, "Śrīlā Gurudeva, this is not a good sign. I think she's going to leave her body very soon."

Vraja Līlā

I immediately went to the bed and began chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa into her ear. Gāndharvikā was chanting into her other ear. Mānasī Gaṅgā sat on the bed directly in front of Vraja Līlā, and Gāndharvikā gave her two big photos of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara to hold in front of Vraja’s face. Other devotees started to arrive in the room and joined in as I led the kīrtana. Suddenly I noticed that Vraja Līlā’s breathing was becoming very quick, a sure sign that death was fast approaching. The kīrtana became more intense. I continued encouraging her, “Vraja, listen to the chanting. Don’t be afraid. Don’t panic. I’m here. Just fix your mind on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Chant His holy names!” Then Vraja began chanting. Once in a while she would be seized by fear due to the traumatic nature of the moment, and I would call her back, “Vraja, come on! Chant the holy names! All glories to Prabhupāda! All glories to Rādhā-Śyāmasundara! Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Then she would lose her fear and again start chanting. At one point, Gāndharvikā reached over to the little altar next to the bed and grasped Vraja Līlā’s Govardhana-śīlā. She held Lord Girirāja right in front of Vraja’s face, and Vraja looked at Him intensely with wide eyes. She would look alternately between her Govardhana-śīlā and the pictures of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. Sometimes she would reach out and touch the pictures.

After an hour and a half I was exhausted, but I knew there was no question of stopping. The kīrtana got louder and more intense. Vraja’s breathing remained fast and quick. Suddenly all of us could tell that she was going to leave at any second. By that time there were about twenty-five devotees in the room and, the kīrtana became one unified sound, “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa...” Someone handed me a bottle of Rādhā-kunḍa water, and I put some on her head. Then all of a sudden, for a few moments, Vraja Līlā stopped breathing. I kept chanting the mahā-mantra. While looking at the pictures of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, she took four more deep breaths ... and was gone. At that same

The Final Hours

moment, Gāndharvikā fainted and was caught in the arms of one of the devotees while falling to the ground.

The kīrtana continued as we checked her pulse and I closed her eyelids. At that moment everyone broke down and cried. We cried in happiness that she'd left in such auspicious circumstances—but mainly we cried with the stark reality that she was no longer present. Suddenly the object of all our love and devotion that day, Vraja Līlā dāsī, had gone.



15

Feeling Separation

The men and I waited outside while the senior women bathed Vraja Līlā's body in Rādhā-kuṇḍa water, dressed her in a clean sari and prepared her for the cremation ceremony. When they were finished we returned to the room and had kīrtana by her body. Just at that moment, Tamal Krishna Goswami and Girirāja Mahārāja arrived and came into the room. Tamal Krishna Mahārāja led the singing of prayers to the departed Vaiṣṇavas. Then he asked that the senior devotees present say something. I requested him to speak first. The following are excerpts from some of the realizations expressed while we waited for official permission to take Vraja Līlā's body to the Yamunā River for cremation.



16

Memories and Realizations

His Holiness Tamal Krishna Goswami

Today I have seen how much love a spiritual master may have for his disciples. Although Indradyumna Swami is one of the most active preachers in our society, still he came here for two days to be with Vraja Līlā. Actually, when I inquired this morning from Kārtidā, Vraja Līlā's nurse, she told me that Vraja Līlā might possibly last another week. I said that she knows her Guru Mahārāja will be here for only one or two days, so I think everything was arranged by Kṛṣṇa in such a perfect way.

Vraja Līlā

How fortunate and elevated this girl is, that she had her Guru Mahārāja sitting by her side at death, giving her instructions and constantly chanting for her! When we think about this, we remember how Haridāsa Ṭhākura passed away. Haridāsa Ṭhākura wanted to see the lotus feet of his beloved Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and pass away in His presence. The very same thing has happened here today.

Indradyumna Mahārāja came here to instruct her and to chant for her, and then very peacefully, without having to experience any unnecessary pain or difficulty, in his association she passed away. Now she can bless all of us. She was praying for our blessings, but I think her achievement and her destination places her in a position where we can pray to her for her blessings.

Although some of us begin as gurus for our disciples, it seems that these disciples are more fortunate than we are. They get the right names, and they leave in the right situations. Actually many of them are elevated personalities.

When Śrīlā Prabhupāda was getting ready to leave his body he saw that we were very unhappy, but he kept reminding us there was nothing to lament for. Whether a Vaiṣṇava comes into this world or leaves this world, it is the same. We should understand that this girl is a great Vaiṣṇavī. From what I know, and others can say, she endeared herself so much to so many devotees in Vṛndāvana. Devotees in Vṛndāvana are not ordinary, and for someone to do that means they have a very soft devotional heart.

Other devotees here will speak, and at some point I'd like to hear Indradyumna Mahārāja lead a very big kīrtana so I can remember Lord Caitanya holding Haridāsa Ṭhākura and chanting the holy names. The situation here is very similar. Vraja Līlā's Guru Mahārāja is a most wonderful kīrtaniya, and we should have such a kīrtana that it will immediately uplift all our spirits and enable

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us to understand that there is nothing lamentable on this glorious occasion. We are to be pitied because we are sitting here—at least I am, with all of my anarthas. But here is a girl who achieved such a perfect departure.

His Holiness Girirāja Swami

The first time I met Vraja Līlā was when she came to visit Arcā Vighraha dāsī. I could see they had a sweet relationship. After Arcā Vighraha passed away, Vraja Līlā came back to ask me some questions. Her questions were so elevated and so sincere that I could understand she was a very special devotee.

When I came back from Bombay, I was thinking of her strongly and felt that I must go and see her again. Just as I was thinking this, Kuntī devī came and said Vraja Līlā was asking for me. But I couldn't go at that moment, so I recorded a message and sent it to her. Then I visited her a few hours later.

She was still in good consciousness and could see, hear and speak without much difficulty. We had kīrtana, and I spoke some Kṛṣṇa-kathā, and she asked me some questions afterwards. Then she came to the point of her impending departure and requested that I give her the same mercy I had given to Arcā Vighraha. I said, “What do you mean?” She replied that she wanted the confidence that she would be successful at the time of death. I spoke some words to her, and at the end she said, “Thank you very much. My doubt is removed.”

The next morning, Kuntī devī came to see me again and said she felt that although everything was auspicious for Vraja Līlā, something was not quite right with her. She felt Vraja Līlā was missing her Guru Mahārāja, Indradyumna Swami,

Vraja Līlā

and we should ask him to come. I suggested she contact him. It was Indradyumna Mahārāja's own inner spirit and Vraja Līlā's own pure devotion that brought him here.

The purpose for which he came and the purpose for which she wanted him to come were fulfilled in a very short time. I feel that the event was completely auspicious. She was, and is, a wonderful devotee. Through our association with her in these last days, as brief as it may have been, we have learnt many things. We are indebted to her, and we hope she will look over us kindly and help us in our own attempts to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

I feel that because her Guru Mahārāja is such a perfect representative of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, it is extremely appropriate and glorious that she should pass away in his presence. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

His Holiness Indradyumna Swami

When Śrīlā Prabhupāda arrived at our temple in Paris in 1973 and sat on the vyāsāsana, the first thing he did was thank all of us, his disciples, for all the service we had done. At that time I felt very awkward that my spiritual master was inspired by my devotional service and was thanking me for it.

Now, many years later, by his mercy I understand why he felt like that, because I am also feeling very indebted to my disciple, Vraja Līlā dāsī, for teaching me so many things today. In particular she has shown me how much love the disciple can have for the spiritual master. I pray to love Śrīlā Prabhupāda as much as she loves me. Her love was so powerful that it dragged me thousands of miles across the oceans and deserts to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma to help her leave her body.

A few days ago, I was sitting in an apartment in a tiny village

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somewhere in the south of Poland when the telephone rang. It was my disciple Mānasī Gaṅgā dāsī. My first reaction was “How did she get this telephone number?” I used that apartment two years ago and had come there for only five minutes that day. And suddenly I was getting a phone call from Mānasī Gaṅgā in India.

She said, “Śrīlā Gurudeva, Vraja Līlā is very, very ill and she may pass away at any moment. Please come to Vṛndāvana to help her.”

I hesitated to go immediately, because I knew that Vraja had been through leukemia crises before. Several years ago she had a crisis in Russia and had pulled out of it. I wasn't sure if she would actually leave this time. I was apprehensive about leaving Poland because we were in the middle of a major festival tour. We were holding three festivals a week with more than five hundred people attending each time. I was torn between going to Vṛndāvana for the possible departure of Vraja Līlā and staying and continuing with my service.

I was thinking the only way I could solve the dilemma of whether or not to go to Vṛndāvana was to ask a godbrother to help me. That evening, my secretary, Nṛsimha Kavaca dāsa, checked his telephone answering service and picked up a faint message from Kuntī devī in India. She was also insisting I come to Vṛndāvana because Vraja Līlā was getting worse. Then she mentioned that Girirāja Mahārāja also felt strongly that I should come.

I immediately telephoned Girirāja Mahārāja in Vṛndāvana and discussed the matter with him. We agreed that I should come, but I explained that I couldn't stay away from my service for long. I was in anxiety that if I came to Vṛndāvana and Vraja Līlā didn't depart within the two or three days I was there, then she would be devastated when I had to leave. I asked him, “Considering this, is it better to go or stay?”

Vraja Līlā

I requested him to discuss the matter with Tamal Krishna Mahārāja and said that I would accept their answer. The next day Gāndharvikā Giridhārī called me with their reply, “No one can answer your question. No one.”

This was their answer. But they were very intelligent, because they gave this message through Gāndharvikā Giridhārī and Vaiṣṇavī. When these two disciples got on the phone, they pleaded with me to come. I finally agreed.

But I was still in anxiety about leaving the festival tour. So I went into the temple room and prayed to Śrīlā Prabhupāda, “Śrīlā Prabhupāda, please give me an indication that what I’m doing is right.”

Forty-five minutes later Nṛsiṃha Kavaca dāsa came running into my room. He said, “Śrīlā Gurudeva, B. B. Govinda Mahārāja wants you to contact him urgently in Russia. He’s left his telephone number.” I reached for the phone, dialed and was surprised to get through on the first try. Sometimes it takes days to get through to Russia. Govinda Mahārāja came on the line and said, “Indradyumna Swami, you must go to Vṛndāvana immediately. Vraja Līlā is about to leave her body.” I said, “Mahārāja, it’s Śrīlā Prabhupāda’s mercy you contacted me. I’m on my way. Thank you very much.”

Through Vraja Līlā’s departure I have experienced how deep the guru-disciple relationship can be. Just a few hours before she passed away she was asking such nice questions. As I gave the answers I was thinking this is like Lord Caitanya inquiring from Rāmānanda Rāya. Lord Caitanya knows the answers, but He is eliciting them from Rāmānanda Rāya and enjoying hearing him glorify Kṛṣṇa. As I was answering Vraja Līlā’s questions I felt she knew the answers but she was giving me the chance to glorify Śrīlā Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

Memories and Realizations

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in the chapter describing the glories of Dhruva Mahārāja, Śrīlā Prabhupāda explains that one of Dhruva Mahārāja's gurus was his mother, because she was the one who directed him to go to the forest to find God. Eventually Dhruva Mahārāja became fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. As he was going back to Godhead in a Vaikuṅṭha airplane he remembered, "Oh, my mother, Sunīti! Where is she? I don't want to go back without her." The Lord answered his prayers, and soon Dhruva saw that she was also going back to Godhead in a Vaikuṅṭha airplane.

In his purports to this pastime, Śrīlā Prabhupāda says that sometimes the disciple can actually deliver the guru. So I am praying to Vraja Līlā to please continue to shower her mercy upon me as my wonderful Kṛṣṇa conscious disciple.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to another very dear disciple of mine, Gāndharvikā Giridhārī dāsī, who took care of Vraja Līlā for two years. I entrusted Vraja Līlā to her and she carried out this service perfectly. I know it will be difficult for her to bear the separation of Vraja Līlā. All of us will experience separation, but I think this will be especially true for Gāndharvikā. She and Vraja were like one body.



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*The following are excerpts from letters to
Indradyumna Mahārāja
after Vraja Līlā's departure.*

His Holiness Girirāja Swami

Vraja Līlā's name is so appropriate. When she knew she was going to die, she wanted only to be absorbed in Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes and pray for service. Śrī Vṛndāvana is the best place in the universe, because Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are eternally manifest here. Although we may not be able to see His pastimes, we can feel the presence of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees and pray for their mercy. Every particle of dust, every tree, every creature, the

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Yamunā River, Govardhana Hill, and all the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are full of love for Kṛṣṇa and can give love for Him.

In Vṛndāvana there is no envy. Because Vraja Līlā had no desire for sense gratification, she had no envy. She was kind to all. Without envy or malice she was ready to hear from any sincere devotee who could help her remember Kṛṣṇa.

Although Vraja Līlā had all facility to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and was trying to take full advantage of the association and mercy offered by the devotees, she could not feel fully satisfied until you came. And when she heard you might not come, she cried for hours. Her last desire was to see you, hear Kṛṣṇa's name from you, and give up her body in your auspicious presence.

Finally you came and fulfilled her desires. Then she left.

I pray to become pure and simple like Vraja Līlā. I pray to be offenseless as she was. I pray to be open to all sincere devotees as she was. I pray to remember and appreciate her spiritual master like her. And I pray that I may please her by my service.

When we preach we can remember Vraja Līlā. Every soul potentially is like her. We preach to hundreds of people in the hope that one may become like her. The beginning may be a house or hall program, harināma, a book or a piece of prasāda, but the conclusion may be the same. Even answering the most basic questions may help some sincere soul ultimately reach the same destination. So when we preach we can think of her.

When a Vaiṣṇava departs we feel simultaneously happy and sad, as Śrīlā Prabhupāda said. We feel happy because the devotee has gone to Kṛṣṇa, and sorry because we will miss the devotee's association.

Vraja Līlā

But I think that as we approach the actual perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we will realize that Vraja Līlā is always with us as a very dear disciple, friend and well-wisher, and thus the sorrow of separation will transform into the happiness of association.

Mānasī Gaṅgā dāsī

The past week has been intense and ecstatic at the same time. After you gave Vaiṣṇavī dāsī and me the instruction to give up all other engagements and just help Gāndharvikā Giridhārī dāsī to take care of Vraja Līlā, we were both there most of the time. I took on the responsibility of staying awake all night, in case Vraja Līlā's condition worsened or she needed something. I used to come home to sleep just for a few hours during the day, and then go back and help.

She was in so much pain at the time. We used to have to massage her and fan her and talk to her. It was very difficult, because we couldn't understand what she needed. She was so gentle, though. Right until the end, if she asked for something and we got it for her, she would be very grateful. At one point, when we thought you weren't coming, Gāndharvikā didn't want Vraja Līlā to see me. Vraja Līlā knew I had been in contact with you, and every time she saw me she wanted to know if I had spoken to you and what you had said.

Then we heard that you were coming—but her condition was getting worse daily. All the devotees began to pray that she would stay until you came. She had a very strong desire to, because she had to stay 12 hours one night without oxygen. We didn't think she would make it, and everyone is convinced it was her intense desire to see you that kept her alive that night. We kept telling her to hold on, that you were coming.

It was wonderful when you walked in the door that morning.

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I think she knew that you had come to take her home. I really think she was struggling to stay alive because she so badly wanted to see you. Then, when you came she knew everything was all right and she could go, so she went the same day.

You were writing something on one side of her bed. Gāndharvikā and I were on the other side. I was fanning her, and Gāndharvikā was feeding her some sweet milk. Then she noticed that Vraja Līlā could not open her mouth. Her teeth seemed to be locked and she began to shake. It was a bad sign, and we immediately told you. You instantly stopped what you were doing and began kīrtana.

I don't know how long that kīrtana went on. I know devotees were coming into the room, but I didn't notice who they were. Vraja Līlā was breathing very heavily and with difficulty. You and Gāndharvikā were kneeling on either side of her bed, and I was sitting next to Gāndharvikā. Someone gave me pictures of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara to show her. Time seemed to stand still, and it was just a little world of your Divine Grace, Gāndharvikā, Vraja Līlā and me. I was watching Vraja Līlā's face the whole time. She was staring at the pictures of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara and listening all the time as you were instructing her to chant in her mind, to hear the holy name, to see how beautiful Kṛṣṇa is. At one stage, I think her right eye began to fail. I noticed that it clouded over and I couldn't see a distinct separation between the pupil and the iris of her eye. I think it may have gone, but her left eye was clear until the end. She seemed to be listening to you all the time. In the beginning she looked frightened, but towards the end, when I think she knew that she was definitely leaving her body, she didn't seem afraid any more.

I will never forget the last five minutes. It was clear she was about to leave. She started taking very deep breaths. We knew she was going. Everyone began chanting in unison. Her eyes were rolling, so I put the photos down and put my hands on her

Vraja Līlā

shoulders, and I began screaming the holy names at her as loud as I could. I noticed you were also chanting loudly. The kīrtana was tumultuous. Then we thought she left. Someone put tulasī in her mouth. But then at the same time you and I both noticed that her neck was moving. We continued to chant very loudly. But it took only about another thirty seconds. She took one final breath, and I think I know the moment when she left. I saw her pupils fully dilated, and I knew for sure she was gone. Then I saw Gāndharvikā falling. I managed to catch her before she hit the ground. I was holding her tightly in my arms. When I looked up I saw you were kneeling at the side of the bed crying.

It is the first time I have experienced death. Before it was a secret and mystical thing, and I was always afraid of it. But after witnessing Vraja Līlā leave I am not afraid any more. As long as devotees are with someone to help them remember Kṛṣṇa when they leave, I am sure they are safe. I feel that you took Vraja Līlā home to the spiritual sky.

Vraja Līlā was lamenting before she knew that you were coming. One day she asked me to bring all the letters I had received from you, and I read them to her. She was surprised at how many letters I had, because I have received quite a few from you through the years and have kept them all. She was so happy to listen to all of them. She told me she received only one letter from you. But after I saw your reaction when she left, after I saw how much you care, I understood so much better the relationship between spiritual master and disciple. It is a spiritual relationship—the physical presence and association are important, but insignificant compared with the deep bond of spiritual association through service and meditation. I saw how much love you have for her, and that is what made me cry. You were crying out of separation for a beloved spiritual daughter, and I was crying because I never knew that you cared so much for your disciples.

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So that is my description and realizations of my very special godsister leaving her body. I am actually deeply lamenting now, because I don't think that I will ever be able to please you as much as Vraja Līlā and Gāndharvikā Giridhārī pleased you. Hopefully, by taking Gāndharvikā's association I may be able to learn something from her.

Kumārī Kānta devī dāsī

I was fortunate to have some association with your dear disciple, Vraja Līlā devī dāsī, during the last few days of her life here in Vṛndāvana. I was amazed to see her courage and determination, her clarity of thought and her great love for you. I saw that her attachment for you was so intense and her faith in you and your instructions so deep that Kṛṣṇa personally arranged for you to travel thousands of miles to be with her at the hour of her passing away. She was simply waiting for you to come.

Witnessing her love and faith in guru and your tremendous love for your disciple has given me great hope and inspiration. We are seeing disciples of ISKCON gurus becoming pure and quitting their bodies in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are witnessing wonderfully sweet personal dealings of cooperation between devotees in helping one another at that time of great need, and we are seeing the sincerity and dedication of Śrīlā Prabhupāda's disciples such as Your Holiness, who are so lovingly responsible in their duty of delivering their disciples.

Thank you for allowing us to share these precious moments. I feel purified by your association and by the association of your disciples.

Mahā-māyā devī dāsī

You've asked for my realizations, having been present when Vraja Līlā devī dāsī left her body. First of all, I am marveling at Śrīlā Prabhupāda's mercy that any of us even know of Vṛndāvanadhāma, what to speak of the knowledge that the most auspicious way to leave this material world is chanting the holy names in the association of the Vaiṣṇavas in Vṛndāvana. It is Śrīlā Prabhupāda's glory that Vraja Līlā prabhu left her body in such an auspicious way.

Somehow or other I happened to be allowed to give my support and chant the holy names during her last hour in this material world. I understood that even though your good self, her spiritual master, was there, as well as the other Vaiṣṇavas, still she had to fly her own airplane. We could encourage and chant the holy names so she could hear, but ultimately she had to struggle with the release of the soul from the body. We could do only so much to help her, but we couldn't experience what she had to go through. However, it's more clear to me now that my time, and everybody's time, will come. Since then I've been praying to be allowed to leave my body in Vṛndāvana surrounded by devotees chanting the holy names also. Vraja Līlā prabhu was so fortunate.

I can't claim to have had a personal relationship with her. My role was simply supportive. I chanted in her room a few times during the week she died. One particularly sweet kīrtana, led by Gāndharvikā devī dāsī, a disciple of Madhu Sevītā prabhu, was going on when Vraja Līlā learned that you would come to Vṛndāvana to see her. Then on October 13th I happened to pass by her room and I decided to offer my respects. When inside I was asked to play the karatālas. At first I said I couldn't stay long because I had a meeting to attend. Then I thought that

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being in her room was more important and that the devotees at the meeting would understand, which of course they did. So I felt privileged to witness and participate in the experience of Vraja Līlā prabhu leaving this world. I wonder who this great soul actually is to be so fortunate as to leave her body the way she did.

After Vraja Līlā prabhu left I was looking at those of us still stuck in this material world, and I was thinking how we are not aware of how temporary this life is. Now that a few days have passed, I'm already back into my usual frame of mind and, therefore, I know that the lessons I learned have not been fully realized. Nonetheless, it was an unforgettable experience.

I'd also like to say that I was very moved by your kindness to your disciple to leave your busy preaching schedule to come all the way to Vṛndāvana to see her. You were obviously giving her every ounce of your mercy in her last moments with no thought of your own comfort.

And finally, I haven't mentioned how it was that Vraja Līlā Prabhu was able to choose the time that she wanted to leave her body and wait for your arrival before departing.

Thank you for allowing me to share my meager realizations. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Nārāyaṇī dāsī

I had some association with Vraja Līlā dāsī during the past few months. She would be sitting in the temple chanting and I would sometimes speak to her. She was always cheerful, and if I asked her how she was feeling she would just smile, shrug her shoulders and say either "OK" or "not so good." She was very serious about spiritual life for such a young girl.

Vraja Līlā

I didn't see her for some time, but then I saw her the last few days of her life. She was always very conscious of what was going on around her. About four days before she left her body, I came into the room, and there was a Māyāvādī girl dressed in saffron. She was making offensive statements about a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda that was playing. Vraja Līlā immediately asked that she leave the room. Then I started singing Hare Kṛṣṇa with the tamboura. Vraja Līlā calmed down and went to sleep.

The next day I came back and saw Vraja Līlā drink some milk, which she hadn't done for a long time. The devotees were happy. According to the doctor, she should have left her body by then. But I think that she was waiting for you, her Guru Mahārāja, to come, so she drank milk to stay alive until then.

The next time I saw Vraja Līlā was the last hour of her life. It was 3:00 p.m. and you were chanting in her right ear, leading a kīrtana with the devotees responding. It was an intense kīrtana, but neither fast nor loud. Gāndharvikā was also chanting in her left ear. Mānasī Gaṅgā was holding up two 8" by 10" pictures of the faces of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara, and Gāndharvikā was holding a Govardhana-ṣilā right in front of Vraja Līlā's face. I was told that all the arrangements such as oxygen, injections and pain killers were failing. Vraja Līlā was struggling, but with great effort she was chanting, being urged on by you. She would move her arms and touch the pictures and look at them, and I think she was chanting practically up to the last minute of her life. Many devotees were crying. I was also crying because I thought that she was so fortunate. She had you instructing her and chanting to her right up to the last minute. She was only 19, yet she attained the goal of life. And here I am, a devotee for 24 years, and maybe I'll have to struggle on for another 20 to 30 years in this world. Maybe I'll forget Kṛṣṇa, maybe I won't get to die

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in Vṛndāvana. I just pray to get the same mercy as Vraja Līlā, to die in Vṛndāvana surrounded by devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and reminding me of the Lord.

Pārvatī dāsī

I entered Vraja Līlā's room the afternoon she was to pass away. I had a good vantage point to see your incredible mercy. You were down on your hands and knees, positioned to chant in Vraja Līlā's right ear, while Gāndharvikā chanted in the other. In between mantras you issued instructions to Vraja. I can say with conviction that she was lucid throughout every moment of the experience, right to the end. I kept thinking how fortunate she was to have her spiritual master present before her to personally fortify her confidence. Your main instruction to her was to "keep chanting the holy name." Your kīrtana was so uplifting I can't remember the last time I became so deeply affected. All the devotees in the room became enchanted with this sublime chanting of the holy name. There was nothing more than you chanting harināma, and Gāndharvikā Giridhārī holding the Govardhana-śīlā in front of Vraja's vision. The whole room was uplifted and surcharged. I helped pour Rādhā-kunḍa water on to cotton for Gāndharvikā to drip into Vraja's mouth, then into your hand to drench and smear on Vraja's head. As Vraja's breathing became extraordinarily laboured, your chanting lifted every one of us in the room to an unbelievable transcendental peak. That chanting soared higher and higher and visibly lifted Vraja Līlā right out of her body. Suddenly her heavy convulsive breathing stopped, and I grabbed for the cotton soaked in Rādhā-kunḍa water and squeezed it into her mouth. I also put a tulasī leaf into her mouth. It fell out, and Nandulal pushed another one in. Then there was one last twitch of Vraja's forefinger, a last attempt at a breath within her throat, and Vraja Līlā was carried away by the mahā-mantra.

Rohiṇīnandana dāsa

When I first saw Vraja Līlā Prabhu a few days ago, I felt sorry to see a 19-year-old girl—practically a child—in such a plight. Then, as I executed her request of reading to her, I felt awed and intensely enlivened by her association. Indeed, whenever I had a spare moment I felt drawn to visit her. I was able to see a devotee finishing up her sojourn of billions of births and deaths. Because she had the inestimable good fortune to die in Vṛndāvana and be aware that death was upon her, she prepared herself moment by moment. She knew exactly what she wanted and what she needed. I was struck by her simplicity and honesty, by her courage as she mastered her fear. It was wonderful the way she left her body in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You were reassuring her, coaching her and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I won't forget her final glance at you as if to ask, "Am I doing OK?" a few moments before she died. Certainly she passed death's stringent test with grade A1.

During these events my recurring thought has been how alike birth and death are. Of course, I have a male body and also no recollection of my previous births and deaths. But still I have noticed some parallels such as the pain, the fear, the joy, the atmosphere of expectancy, the sense of loss and gain. Also the labor, the sheer hard work, the feeling of being trapped, of wanting it to end, of losing it and then refocusing one's energies and will on the business at hand—delivering one's baby or one's soul or self. And when the dreadful moment of birth or death arrives, how all present rush to crowd closely around. And perhaps above all, how although birth and death are most ordinary and commonplace, they are also incredibly extraordinary.

I pay my obeisances repeatedly to Vraja Līlā and to Lord Kṛṣṇa's divine energy, Māyā-devī, because although I have been granted the vivid experience of seeing Vraja Līlā living, dying and dead,

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and her charred bones crumbling into the flames, and although I know the very same will happen to me, I cannot imagine it. My mind seems to turn away from the very idea. As Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira said, “Such illusion is indeed the most strangely wonderful thing in this world.”

Śyāmasundari dāsī

Gāndharvikā told me that you were collecting realizations from the devotees who were there when Vraja Līlā left her body, so I thought I would write something. Her passing away made a big impression in my heart.

I knew Vraja Līlā only a little. Because of the barrier of language there was never so much verbal exchange, but I appreciated her qualities of sweetness and shyness very much. She sometimes came to my place with our friend Govinda dāsī in whose house Vraja Līlā was living. We were sitting all together in the temple room, and while Govinda dāsī and I were talking she was quietly observing my Gaura-Nitāi Deities, the painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa above Their heads, and the Prabhupāda deity.

Then one day I heard that she was really sick, and I went to visit her. I could see that she was preparing herself for death and that she was very eager for Kṛṣṇa conscious association and the mercy of the devotees.

Because of her sweet attitude towards others, and because she was looking so helpless, many devotees were inclined to do something for her. I did a little service for her, not much. She was served by nice, qualified devotees who were helping her spiritually and physically. The best thing I could do for Vraja Līlā was to pray to Kṛṣṇa that He could fulfill all her desires and that Vraja Līlā could be blessed with the presence of her Guru Mahārāja while she was leaving her body.

Vraja Līlā

Day by day her pain was increasing and she was getting overwhelmed by it, despite all the efforts of Gāndharvikā and the other devotees to alleviate her suffering and to help her remember Kṛṣṇa. However, something was lacking, and only when you came did I feel that she could now go, she could now reach her desired goal.

I was there when she left her body, and it was an unforgettable experience. What struck me the most was the power of the guru's mercy, the power of the holy name and the power of the devotees' prayers. I could see with my own eyes that intimate heart connection I'm always hankering for with my Guru Mahārāja. There was no longer any bodily designation—only soul to soul—and love was the only connection. I could see how the guru is the best servant of the disciple, and how he loves us much more than we can ever begin to imagine. And I could see how the disciple, when he truly surrenders to his guru's lotus feet, binds his spiritual master with his powerful love. To witness this gave me so much hope and faith, and increased my desire to focus my life on the service of my Guru Mahārāja.

The atmosphere was so intense, everyone was chanting the holy name with all their hearts. We were all pushing Vraja Līlā back to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Because of her strong desire and because of your presence, even though she was struggling so much with her breathing she was able to chant the holy name. It was extremely touching for me to see her efforts, your efforts and all the devotees' efforts to help her remember Kṛṣṇa. This is the essence of devotee association.

The experience of assisting her was intense. Although we were happy she made it, we are also missing her presence because each devotee is unique. Her association was precious and valuable.

I would just like to thank you, Mahārāja, and to thank Vraja

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Līlā and all the devotees who were assisting her for this wonderful experience. It helped me to appreciate more deeply this treasure Prabhupāda has given us, and it gave me a clear vision of the meaning of the guru-disciple relationship.

Kālindi dāsī

I was present when Vraja Līlā left this world, and this experience has made such an impact on me that I felt impelled to write you this short letter of appreciation. I have witnessed devotees leaving their bodies in Vṛndavana before, but this time seemed extra-special. It was so inspiring, enlivening and moving, stirring sentiments from deep within me.

Realizations have been flooding my heart, and I pray that these impressions penetrate and remain with me throughout my devotional life. By Kṛṣṇa and Vraja Līlā's mercy I was able to taste the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, experience the potency of the holy name, observe and relish the loving and caring relationships between devotees, and understand more how the guru-disciple relationship is profound, significant and based on pure love.

I consider myself fortunate to have done some small service for her. I did not previously have a close friendship with her, but started going to see her regularly about two weeks before she died. During this time I noticed how my affection for her grew day by day until I realized that she had stolen my heart. She was sweet and endearing because of her sincerity and purity.

After she left I helped bathe her body in Rādhā-kuṇḍa water and then dress her in new cloth. She was exquisitely beautiful, and again her purity struck me. On her delicate forehead I placed tulasī leaves in candana paste and traced the tilaka mark there.

Vraja Līlā

Someone else wrote the holy names in Sanskrit on her forehead. These moments will remain with me forever.

I am extremely grateful to Kṛṣṇa for all this mercy, as are the other devotees who were present. Some have related how their hearts have been transformed by this auspicious event.

The first time I went to see Vraja Līlā at Lalitā Āśrama she asked me questions about prayer—what to pray for and how to pray with intensity. Yet I felt that she already knew the answers. She was fixed in her desire to know how to capture Kṛṣṇa’s presence in her heart and to be able to have Him in her mind constantly. I told her to beg Him to come, and to have the faith that He would manifest. When I asked her if she was aware of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy and how much He was taking care of her, she said that she was.

She also wanted to know how to transcend the pain in order to have this prayerful mood. I related Mother Gauri’s story to her, how towards the end Mother Jagāttarinī was at her side (with Vidyā on the other) and she would repeat incessantly, “Prabhupāda said if you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa you won’t feel any pain.” According to Jagāttarinī she was able to transcend the pain. Vraja seemed inspired and grateful, but I felt very unqualified to give her guidance.

The next day I brought her photos of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (those we held before her during her last moments). When I showed Them to her, Mother Vṛndāvana Vilāsinī, who was there, said, “Look! They have come to you.” It really felt like They had. Vraja smiled sweetly as we stuck them up on the wall before her.

Two days before she left I requested Vraja Līlā to please say a special prayer on my behalf when she met Kṛṣṇa. She thought, then humbly said, “I will try to give your prayer to Śrīlā Prabhupāda. I hope to see Śrīlā Prabhupāda.” She said it with so much conviction that I became overjoyed at the thought

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that Śrīlā Prabhupāda might hear my prayer—my personal prayer. Gāndharvikā Giridhārī later explained that Vraja did not feel she was qualified to meet Kṛṣṇa directly—but she had faith she'd go to Śrīlā Prabhupāda.

Thank you, Mahārāja, and thank you also to your disciples who took good care of Vraja Līlā, playing their roles wonderfully in this transcendental līlā of assisting a special soul. My faith has deepened considerably.

Vaijayanti Mala dāsī

It was such an honor for me to serve Vraja Līlā. From the beginning she invoked motherly feelings in me, and she reciprocated in a way that made me think this was an appropriate mood for our relationship. This mood continued until the end, when she left her body and exposed the actual nature of the relationship. She was the one giving me shelter. Somehow she allowed me to serve her, and I did it in the mood of helping her. The more she deteriorated, the more help she needed and the more time I was giving. However, after her departure I saw that she had been helping me in a very deep way, and I am still assimilating what I acquired from the experience.

Whenever we went to preach to her (or to discuss or chant), she would often become so enlivened by the opportunity. She would speak with us until she was silenced by exhaustion. Then she would lie peacefully and hear more, often interrupting with a question which indicated how attentive she was. When her hearing diminished she lamented constantly, “I've been cursed. I can no longer hear about Kṛṣṇa.”

Vraja Līlā, thank you for letting me serve you. Your sweet nature and humility won our hearts and taught us deeply. Your clear memory was put to perfect use by learning the prayers of the

Vraja Līlā

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas, which you recited with sincere yearning. A real Vaiṣṇavī, you respected everyone deeply, never wasting a moment on idle talk. You never feared death, just the pain that was torturing you and making our hearts ache. How relaxed I felt when you were removed from that agony.

Gāndharvikā Giridhārī, thank you for letting me assist in my insignificant way. I have never seen anyone serve a Vaiṣṇava as you served your beloved godsister. I never knew that such affection existed between two devotees. I always heard that a mother's love was the closest emotion to selfless love, but I think your love for Vraja Līlā surpassed that. In your mood of service to her you transcended all normal bodily needs—waking every half hour day after day, never becoming disturbed by her incessant flow of requests, and never completing a meal at one sitting. Massaging, fanning, feeding, translating, organizing, preaching day and night minute by minute, you did whatever was required. You have won your way into your spiritual master's heart by your selfless, dedicated and unconditional service. You are so unconditional in your service that you sold your apartment just to serve guru and godsister to the best of your ability. I beg for a drop of your devotion to guru and Vaiṣṇavas.

Indradyumna Mahārāja, thank you for playing your very significant role so perfectly. You were worried that leaving Poland meant that hundreds of conditioned souls would not be exposed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But by coming to Vṛndāvana you preached on a much deeper level to hundreds of Vaiṣṇavas, even though you did not realize this would happen. Because of your soft heart you allowed yourself to be a valuable instrument in Kṛṣṇa's hands.



Appendix II

Excerpts from Vraja Līlā's diary

July 22, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Yesterday someone brought me a flower petal from a kalpa-vṛkṣa tree in Vṛndāvana. Such a desire tree is capable of fulfilling one's sincere desires, and from that petal, which is non-different in potency, I got a chance to make a request.

Since being informed of my inevitable death due to my disease, I've had the wish to go to Vṛndāvana and leave my body there. I was desperately hoping that one day I would get a petal from the kalpa-vṛkṣa tree, so that I could ask for my desire to be fulfilled. But now there are other kinds of thoughts coming to my mind. I am thinking about the service which my spiritual master has given me. He wants me to become a pure devotee and go back to

the spiritual world after leaving this body. He wants me to share my realizations as I get closer to the point of death. He instructed me to become a perfect example for others, which I will be able to accomplish only by getting into the fast lane and accelerating in my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then, after my sincere appeals to Lord Kṛṣṇa, He will give me mercy which I will be able to share before leaving my body.

I am fixed in this desire, because it is service which I can do for my Guru Mahārāja and Śrīla Prabhupāda. They are waiting for me to do this service, and the only way I can please them is by doing it.

Now I have to place the lotus feet of my spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa in my heart, and then the holy Vṛndāvana-dhāma personified will enter there also. In this way I will never lose the pure love and devotion brought into my heart by the lotus feet of my spiritual master himself. That goal can be achieved only by pleasing Śrīla Gurudeva. That is why I am so anxious to fulfill his order.

It was he who told me that the time will come when I will turn into the passing lane and move ahead at full speed. He said, “You will find yourself far beyond many of us by getting Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy at that time.” But it is not my goal to pass anyone or to just be transferred to the spiritual world (at least I am struggling against such a mentality). I wish that I was already driving in that lane, fixed in that desire, because it is the service which my Guru Mahārāja has asked of me and I want to please him. I know it will be extremely difficult to drive in that passing lane, for I’ll be forced to leave behind all material hopes. But I’ll accept those difficulties, because I have faith that my Guru Mahārāja will never leave me alone. He will definitely help me, because he himself gave me this service.

Appendix II

So appealing to the kalpa-vṛkṣa tree I ask, “Please let me fulfill the order of my spiritual master. I am so eager to place the lotus feet of my Guru Mahārāja in my heart. By pleasing Śrīla Gurudeva, I’ll also give Kṛṣṇa pleasure. Then maybe He will one day allow me to roll in the dust of Rādhā-kuṇḍa in Śrī Vṛndāvanadhāma. Let the desire to achieve perfection be present in my heart alongside the desire to fulfill my Gurudeva’s order. Please give me the strength to manage with my service to him. Let this desire be ever strong.”

July 24, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

My dear Śrīla Gurudeva, my dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Please, I beg you for forgiveness. I am so foolish in my dealings with you both. It’s so painful to admit that while calling myself a devotee of yours, I still keep my own selfish interests. Looking ahead, trying to achieve the highest goal, I see that practically speaking my chances are quite miserable. Nonetheless, I can feel your guidance with me always.

Śrīla Gurudeva, once you told me that a job which takes one year can be done in seven days by someone who is enthusiastic. But my heart is so dirty that I cannot manage it within seven days. I am begging for your mercy to be able to do it as soon as possible.

In my thoughts Śrīla Gurudeva speaks to me, “I know for you it seems practically impossible. But I have faith that you can do it. Beg sincerely for Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy and you’ll understand how to go on with your service. Just chant, chant and chant, and keep begging for the same. Chant and open your heart to Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.”

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are so kind. What I am doing now is simply a one-sided outpouring, but how badly I want to serve

Vraja Līlā

You! Please teach me! I hope that one day I will really be able to glorify You by chanting Your holy names, and will offer to You a pure, sincere prayer. But now I am so miserable.

In my thoughts Śrīla Gurudeva speaks to me, “Just go on with your practice. Where is your chanting? Go on! Just follow the process. Dedicate yourself completely to the chanting. Try it.”

(No. Last time he didn’t say “try it,” but “do it.”)

This morning the kīrtana at the temple was not very inspiring. It was enough to cause me to lose inspiration in my chanting. Actually, Kṛṣṇa was testing me. He wants me to see the pure vibration through chanting. He wants me to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teaching within the most simple classes. I could not hear the holy name today only because of my impurity and anarthas.

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, O Śrīla Gurudeva, when will that day come that I will be able to appreciate your mercy?

July 25, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

O Śrīla Gurudeva, my heart is as cold as stone. I am dry, without any devotional sentiments. I cannot appreciate the value of what you are giving me. But please, make me chant.

July 27, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Today I am again begging for my heart’s desire to be fulfilled—to follow my guru’s order.

I don’t know if I will ever go to Vṛndāvana to leave my body or not, but I hope that I can continue to aspire to fulfill the desire of my Guru Mahārāja. I pray to the Lord for that kind of mercy—to become purified to do what my Guru Mahārāja wants of me.

Appendix II

I pray to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, “Please become manifest in my heart, because I want the lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva to reside there. I want to have a chance to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, that’s my appeal to You. Please make it possible for me to follow the order of Śrīla Gurudeva. He instructed me to surrender to You completely. Please allow me to do that. Help me get over into the passing lane. Give me the strength to make it. I don’t want to continue with this one-sided outpouring. Please Kṛṣṇa, let me appeal to You gently and sincerely.

Please dear Śrīla Gurudeva, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, forgive me for crying out to you so dryly. I so desperately want to become qualified to appeal out of my heart to you both, keeping a clear remembrance of you and offering gentle, genuine prayers. Please never leave me.

July 28, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, dear Kṛṣṇa,

You both are so kind to me. I do not know if I am right or not in my desires to serve you in a certain way.

Sometimes I think that in my desire to go to Vṛndāvana, I am thinking I am special because I will leave my body in a holy place and attain a special destination. I realize how bad this mentality is. These thoughts have been created by my false ego. But I hope to accept your higher will. O Śrīla Gurudeva, I am praying for this.

Yesterday Gāndharvikā told me that it might be possible to go with her to Vṛndāvana soon. But she has been warning me that to stay in Vṛndāvana will be very austere, that it might even make my life shorter and my bodily sufferings may become more intense.

O Gurudeva, you will not allow me to go there until I’m ready

for the last test. But I know I am not ready, that's quite obvious. O dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, I pray to You, please give me the strength to accept that decision. I am searching for something that I am supposed to understand in order to get ready. What am I lacking? What is it, that realization which is so necessary to obtain? I am seeing more and more how far I am from perfection. Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, I realize that I don't even have the slightest understanding of, or attachment for the holy name which you gave me. I can do nothing alone, please help me. I am anxious to follow you in your devotional service.

The goal of the disciple is absolute surrender, which is born within one's heart. That's our goal as your disciples, to surrender from our hearts. You have the power to attract us by your purity and sincerity. You are calling us to follow you. If not for this mercy, where would I be now? Please let me really follow you. I am nothing without your help. On my own I have no strength. Please dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, dear Gurudeva, help me, O masters of my heart!

Watching the pure desire of your sincere devotees to please you both, I want to live as they do. Sometimes it's so difficult. I want to become a real disciple who always keeps the lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva within my heart. Let this desire become stronger and stronger. Śrīla Gurudeva, please teach me how to do this.

O Lord Kṛṣṇa, although I know that my desires are proper I still have doubts about my sincerity. I know I am foolish and insincere, because I am still not able to properly chant the holy name. But I promise to keep trying. Just teach me how to chant, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa and dear Śrīla Gurudeva. Let me appeal to both of you over and over again. Please remove those ropes which bind me, help me to kill my anarthas. I want to improve myself. Please help me. Help me to keep in mind how miserable I am. Then I will be able to appeal to you with renewed strength each day.

Appendix II

July 30, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, my dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Thank you very much for the mercy which you give to me daily. Actually it is my only support. I beg you please never stop this flow of mercy even if, due to ignorance, I am unable to appreciate it.

It seems to me that only an extreme situation, like serious disease or death, makes us fully surrendered to the Lord. I can see myself that if one is inattentive and lazy, Kṛṣṇa will kindly provide such difficulties for him. In this sense I realize that the test of living is much heavier than the test of dying. If I am not conscious of my fatal disease and forget my full dependence on the Lord, I become lazy and do not pray for Kṛṣṇa's mercy and shelter. Then Māyā takes up her work, "You are a rascal. You have turned away from your master, let me defeat you." But I don't want to be forced to surrender to Kṛṣṇa because I'm going to die. I want to be surrendered before that moment comes. I want to sincerely surrender.

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, you are kindly allowing me to stay alive, and my desire is to be able to appeal to You daily and to consider every day as the last. I want to appeal to my spiritual master as if I am already dying and he is the one who is most dear to me.

I really desire this—to make Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Gurudeva my dearest friends, to glorify the mercy which they are giving to me, to thank them from my heart. I know how difficult it is to be conscious every day of my shortcomings, the dust in my heart, and to always keep in mind how miserable I am. I am so weak, I may not make it.

I pray that I will never come to the point of complaining that you, Śrīla Gurudeva, are not attentive to me, or you forget about me, or other foolish thoughts like that.

Vraja Līlā

O dear Śrīla Gurudeva, my only wish is to constantly water the seed of our spiritual relationship and carefully remove the weeds of offenses. My connection with you gives me life.

August 3, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

It was such a wonderful day yesterday. It was Lord Balarāma's appearance day. He is the original spiritual master and all the other spiritual masters possess His potency. Therefore, I offered Him a prayer. I strive to water the seeds of the guru-disciple relationship, to become a servant of my spiritual master and develop a deep attachment to his lotus feet. I desire to have faith in his instructions. I was praying to Lord Balarāma to let me obtain that very sublime connection within my heart. Let me get into the same mood of servitorship which my Guru Mahārāja has for his beloved spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

That's the goal. But the reality is quite different. I am independent. How to change this? It's practically impossible! How can I fulfill the order of my spiritual master and realize that I'm not the body? (He instructed me to do this the last time we met.) Recently, one mātājī with a small baby moved to our āṣrama, and the baby cries all day long. Different devotees around me are in anxiety about various things. Gāndharvikā is having a hard time and I am supposed to paint the backdrop for the altar, which is not coming out at all. What kind of devotee am I? I am completely bewildered by my anxieties, physical inabilities and weaknesses. It seems that this is a good time to appeal to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

August 4, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

The difficulties and anxieties surrounding me are still going on, but my heart, dry as a wrinkled pear, makes chanting mechanical. Shame on me!

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My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, dear Śrīla Gurudeva, I wish to develop a drop of sincerity, to be able to appeal to you both, to open my heart to you. Do not neglect me.

I know only I am the cause of my troubles. By chanting neglectfully, I lose the taste for chanting. To please you I must chant much better.

O my Lord, how badly I want to appeal to You with a fully surrendered heart! Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, I need you to teach me how to always be connected with you by my thoughts. You did it once, one year ago when we were waiting for you at Kṛṣṇa Jīvanī's apartment. You didn't arrive for such a long time. Please remain in my heart.

August 10, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

It is a humbling experience to see myself unable to appeal to the Lord while chanting the mahā-mantra.

Dear Lord, have I lost that sublime taste of appealing to You? Does it happen because of my inattentiveness and laziness?

But dear Śrīla Gurudeva, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, without internal appeals to you both I am nothing. It's my fault, I know it.

August 12, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

You are so merciful to me by giving me more and more opportunities to renew my understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Today is the wonderful appearance day of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I have learned many things that will help me become fixed in devotional service.

Several days ago Gāndharvikā and Boris were speaking about me to a Christian lady who is a well-known psychic. She told them

that I was cursed and I have only three months to live. Honestly speaking, I feel it myself that death is very close. When I first heard it I thought that my opportunity to fulfill my guru's order was coming. The curse is my karmic reaction from previous lives. To go back to the spiritual world will be possible only when all my past karma is burnt to ashes. But do I have that kind of exalted devotion and spiritual realization which would burn my karma by the time of my death? Not at all.

Some devotees are saying I should take help from the psychic to counteract whatever curse is supposedly upon me. But I have lost faith in any psychics, whether they are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, atheist or whatever. So many of them have already tried to treat me. It's better to prepare for death. Although I am not sure what to do, I will ask Gurudeva. My ultimate desire is to obtain firm faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa and forget all this nonsense.

Today is Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā. I realized today that now my hope and prayer must be to obtain firm faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa, especially because my life is going to be so short. This is what I am lacking.

I am praying, "O Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lord Kṛṣṇa kindly gave me the opportunity to fulfill the order of my guru, but I am not at all qualified to do so. Your disciples have such wonderful faith in you. Please let me obtain the same kind of faith in my own guru, your spiritual son. Let me establish a proper relationship with Śrīla Gurudeva, because that's the only support for my spiritual life. Please Śrīla Prabhupāda, guide me. Right now I do not understand what Kṛṣṇa wants of me, but please let me know what His plan is. Give me proper vision to see His desire. O Prabhupāda, please give me your mercy to become as good a disciple of my spiritual master as he is of you."

Appendix II

August 23, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

(written before I start to chant my rounds)

Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Please give me your merciful glance, please listen to my prayer.

I am taking my beads and clenching them for a minute, full of hope. Those beads have been given to me by you, Śrīla Gurudeva. You gave me the holy name. You said, “The holy name is Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.” But still I am just begging you, “Give me Kṛṣṇa.”

A lot of time has passed since my initiation, but still I remain in the same place—a beginner. The moment of death is getting closer and closer, but I am still inattentive while chanting the holy names. Soon the curtain will close and the actor will be thrown off the stage. The time is coming when everything will change. That thought is so terrifying for me. I will even be forced to abandon my own mind and everything that it composes. My dear Lord, then I will call You, but first I must realize that Your holy name is my only shelter. I continue to chant, all the while maintaining my material ambitions. I am so ignorant and neglectful. Will You still give me your causeless mercy? Please answer me. I should scream like somebody who is drowning, but where is that scream? Where is that hope against hope to be saved? How horrible it is for me not to have the desire to serve the holy name. O my Lord, I am terrified of losing Your mercy. Although I am so wretched and miserable, please give me a drop of Your mercy. Forgive me, and let me have at least a spark of hope. When will I clutch desperately at Your lotus feet? My Lord, my heart is not at all clean. I am begging You, please pacify my senses and enter into my heart. I really want to change my heart into one made of nectar, but that is possible only by Gurudeva’s mercy. Being on my own I am drowning in the bog of my anarthas, and because of this vicious illusion I can’t chant. But my efforts are supported by you, O Śrīla Gurudeva.

Vraja Līlā

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, please accept this, my prayer—and I hope you are pleased by it, Śrīla Gurudeva. I pray that my desire to chant will increase. I want to become really absorbed by the nectar of the holy name, as you are. O Śrīla Gurudeva! Please Gurudeva, guide me.

August 24, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

This morning, because I cannot sleep, I am trying to offer the Lord prayers to the best of my abilities. It's encouraging me a lot. I see how this affects my service. This is the most valuable thing for me—to be able to appeal prayerfully to guru and Kṛṣṇa, connected to them by the ropes of loving prayers. I want to achieve that goal. I want to take shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa, to become absorbed in His service as much as my Guru Mahārāja is.

This morning I opened the Bhagavad-gītā, and the first verse I read happened to be, man-manā bhava mad-bhakto. I realized that this is the highest position—loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and complete absorption, remembrance of Him. Gradually I came to the point of understanding that by doing this I am actually finding myself in the presence of guru and Kṛṣṇa. I see myself as a tiny being, praying at the lotus feet of my guru and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Will my unworthy prayers give Kṛṣṇa pleasure? Am I doing it to please the Lord or not? I am not sure if my dry way of crying out pleases Kṛṣṇa or not. But one day I want to become a qualified servant, and then I will chant my prayers for the real pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. I know that only they—Śrīla Gurudeva and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, whom I am appealing to—can instruct me and guide me how to become qualified.

My dear Śrīla Gurudeva, whom can I approach but you? Please accept my service to you. Be pleased with my unskilled prayers offered to you. Lord Kṛṣṇa is so great, I simply do not know how I can please Him. Therefore I beg of you, teach me how to

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please the Lord. Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, help me in my attempts to appeal to you, because I want to have this connection with you. Now I am striving, by my prayers, to be absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness all day long and to be connected with you as well. Please guide me.

August 25, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Thank you very much dear Śrīla Gurudeva, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, for kindly supporting me in my daily service to you.

Today I've been doing everything as usual, including my art. But to spend half the day non-stop, painting the backdrop for the Deities, is too much for me. I am such a foolish girl. I've been told many times that I must take rest after working for a short time.

Dear Gurudeva, dear Kṛṣṇa, these days I am also working to cleanse my heart. In doing so I've discovered so many shortcomings. But I also see how both of you are encouraging and inspiring me. I want to hold on to this desire to serve you. Although these attempts of mine are not at all perfect, it is all that I can offer to you now. I suppose that you, Śrīla Gurudeva, will at least be slightly pleased by it and thus well-disposed towards me, because never before have I been trying like this. O yes, I remember I was when you were personally training me several months ago. But never before had I considered these attempts as my devotional service. Now I do. Śrīla Gurudeva, I beg you, let me be with you forever.

(Prayer composed after reading the chapter “Uddhava visits Vṛndāvana” in the Kṛṣṇa book.)

O you, the residents of Vraja, the most exalted associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who always remain in Vṛndāvana absorbed in remembrance of the prince of Vraja, I offer my obeisances to

you. You ask Uddhava if Lord Śyāmasundara likes to remember His cows, His gopīs, His Govardhana Hill, His pastures in Vṛndāvana forest. You ask if he has forgotten everything. You ask if He will ever come back to His friends and relatives. You are always absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, and you forget everything else. Just by following you, even slightly, we'll become successful. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said, we can cultivate a desire to follow you, being greatly impressed by your love. Therefore I pray to you, please, grant me nectarean drops of your mercy.

August 26, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Today was so intense. Many things happened. It was as if the whole day had crumbled into pieces. Gāndharvikā left for St. Petersburg to meet Śrīla Gurudeva and I had a really hard time with my backdrop painting. But I could see that in every situation I was guided by the Lord from within, and each situation produced some new understanding for me. I would like to remember this day when it will be necessary for me to do so.

I have to attempt to fulfill the order of my guru. O Śrīla Gurudeva, you can see today that although I am promising so much to serve you, although I am expressing my heart's desire to serve you, still it is childish play. Today I feel in some ways I've failed. All the passing situations created a new turbulence within me. I was not able to concentrate on my prayers and I've barely read any of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Shame on me! Please forgive me. I am frightened that my false ego is growing. I thought that I had already achieved something, but today I see that it has been nothing. Help me to see things as they are. Now I am reading the ninth chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā, "The Most Confidential Knowledge." It's perfect, and I want to have this knowledge and live by it. But I see my complete disqualification. Even though I am still a toy in Māyā's hands, please dear Śrīla Gurudeva, dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, don't turn me away. Let me appeal to you over and over again.

Appendix II

September 10, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

My Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Please rescue me from myself. By Your mercy I see how offensive I am to the holy name. I think the time will come when I'll be asked to pay for those offenses. I realize also how badly I follow the instructions of my guru. Actually, to follow this practice of devotional service one must be absorbed in thoughts of the Lord. To do so I have to put aside my pretensions, otherwise I will just be an actor in a play. What is the use of this? I am just a miserable impersonator.

I am trying to obtain steadiness in following the instructions of my guru. I've been trying to examine my behaviour, my service attitude. By Lord Kṛṣṇa's grace I've been shown my own shortcomings, but I have not lost hope. I am praying for the opportunity to improve myself. Now I see the Lord is giving me such an opportunity. I attempt to serve my spiritual master better. I wish I could do it.

When Gāndharvikā is not here with me it is very hard for me. Every time she goes somewhere I find myself falling from a sublime level into cruel reality. Each time I think that I'll never get out of it, and I realize that I am completely helpless in devotional service. She will be coming tomorrow. She will tell me about her meeting with Śrīla Gurudeva in St. Petersburg.

September 12, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

Things have changed a bit. Gāndharvikā isn't coming until tomorrow. I am missing her.

But Śrīla Gurudeva is coming here soon. He promised to come on September 19th. As usual, Kṛṣṇa is showing me my shortcomings right before Śrīla Gurudeva's visit. I see how badly I've been serving him in his absence this time. He must be displeased with me. Now I want to write him a letter.

Vraja Līlā

The letter to Śrīla Gurudeva (never sent):

My Dear Spiritual Master,

I bow down at your lotus feet. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I am worried that I am not a good disciple and not fully devoted to you. I am very sinful, and my heart is full of dirt. Please forgive me.

You were so merciful to have accepted me as your disciple, even though I had just come into the association of devotees. You made me promise then to serve you always. Very soon after, a few months later, you granted me second initiation, even though I am devoid of brahminical qualities. Soon I found myself amidst devotees who wanted to follow me, as if I were a senior devotee. You so kindly gave me your mercy, but my anarthas were unknowingly growing, even while chanting the holy names. What a shame!

I must tell you that recently I've been taking treatment from one old Christian lady here in Novorossisk who is interested in the occult. She told me different things about myself, how I was cursed and so on. Please forgive me. Whenever I associate with these kinds of people I become influenced by them and my bad qualities appear on the surface. I am quite unsteady and easily victimized by the materialists. I am frightened by them. I am trying to put my faith in the purifying strength of the holy name.

I am so unsteady and I am a cheater. I am committing nāma-aparādhās all the time. I have to ask you for forgiveness. I know that after committing an offense one must approach the offended person asking him for forgiveness. But how can I approach the holy name if I do not appreciate the auspiciousness of the holy names? So I am appealing to you, please forgive me. I am eternally indebted to you and I want to become your servant. But now I

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am drowning in illusion. Even though I secretly keep the desire to remain a toy in Māyā's hands, please do not leave me alone.

I realize that I am not worthy enough to approach the holy Vṛndāvana-dhāma, but I desire your blessings to go there. Do not deprive me of this merciful opportunity only because of my unworthiness.

Your servant
Vraja Līlā dāsī

September 25, 1993, Rostov-na-Donu, Russia

I am in Rostov. Śrīla Gurudeva arrived here, and we served him by hearing his lectures. This association of his is so valuable for me, it may be the last time I see him in this life. That's why I'm so desperate to become inspired by his devotional service and to tightly attach myself to him. I am constantly praying that one day his lotus feet will always be present within my heart. I do not want to appear devastated after he goes. Let me become more determined in my service for him. I want to bow down at his lotus feet and remain there even after he goes. Let there be a spark of attachment within my heart. Let me remain able to appeal to you, Gurudeva, and by doing this let me always be safe, residing at your lotus feet.

Yesterday I got some wonderful mercy—the darshan of Śrī Śrī Nitāi-Nimāisundara. They were so beautiful. I prayed to Them. We were in the room, Mādhavī and I, and we were singing a few bhajanas for Their pleasure. When we started Jaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya ... They seemed so close to me, and I was stunned by a sudden desire to sing Their glories over and over again, endlessly. Although I am not able to do so, I want to remain in a similar mood of attachment to Śrīla Gurudeva—then I will never be lost.

Vraja Līlā

September 28, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

I am again in Novorossisk. Śrīla Gurudeva has gone to Poland. But this time I will not feel devastated or heartbroken as usually happens. He has given me so much mercy. Yesterday he gave us permission to go to Vṛndāvana. After he granted us permission I asked him a question and was very impressed with his answer. I told him that I felt uneasy going to Vṛndāvana for the purpose of leaving my body. I felt that one should go to the holy dhāma with no material aspirations.

He replied that Kṛṣṇa manifests the holy dhāma in this world for our purification. When we are purified we are able to render better service. He also said that Vṛndāvana is the perfect place to leave one's body. He instructed me to go there and prepare myself to die by becoming fully Kṛṣṇa conscious.

His answer to another question impressed me even more. I said to him, "In the seventeenth mantra of the Śrī Īsopaniṣad, a devotee is praying. 'Let this temporary body be burnt to ashes and let the air of life be merged with the totality of air.'" I asked if this meant a devotee desires to leave his body. He replied, "In many ways this body is an obstacle to our service. A devotee desires to render uninterrupted service to the Lord, but the body gradually becomes diseased and grows old. So at the end of life a devotee happily relinquishes his material body to serve the Lord in a spiritual form."

I was thinking about that for a long time afterwards. My desire to quit this world of mirages and attain pure service to Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet is becoming stronger day by day.

The other night I dreamt of the Deities, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda-Mādhava. I could clearly see the lotus feet of Lord Govinda-Mādhava. They were shining like gold. At that moment, I thought, "This is the real treasure, which only a devotee can obtain."

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Materialistic people become crazy searching for that treasure, but they do not know what it looks like nor the proper place to look for it. How miserable they are!”

September 30, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

My dear spiritual master,

Thank you very much for supporting me and pushing me on my way back home. My dear Śrīla Gurudeva, let me again approach you. I am searching for your presence and attention, but this does not mean that you must immediately appear and answer my questions. No, you are the spiritual master and my appeals to you should not make you worry. Rather, it’s my duty to always remain at your lotus feet and become safe and secure in my spiritual life.

Recently we were reading your 1993 Vyāsa-pūjā book. I was amazed by Nṛsiṁhānanda’s offering, wherein he says, “You carefully guide us to our desired goal. My goal is to attain pure devotional service to your lotus feet.” I thought, “Wait a minute. What is my goal?” So many times I have said, “I want to chant purely, I want to become a pure devotee, I want to surrender to the lotus feet of my spiritual master.” But such thoughts appear just like memorized communist slogans. I repeat them hundreds of times, but what is there in my heart? Am I ready to abandon all material desires for that which is perfect? This is what I think about while I lie sick in bed.

My desire to go back to the spiritual abode is getting stronger. But what will I do there unless I am properly trained by my Guru Mahārāja? And what is the spiritual world without a proper service attitude? And where is my devotion to the lotus feet of my spiritual master? Yes, my desire to renounce the material world is quite strong, but where is my devotion? It is impossible to have spiritual life without devotion, isn’t it? Spiritual life appears only

because we are striving for the satisfaction of both our guru and Kṛṣṇa.

O Śrīla Gurudeva, when I look into my heart I am terrified. I am so impure and my devotion is of little value. But tell me, is there anything more valuable than pure devotion and pure attachment to the lotus feet of the spiritual master?

Śrīla Gurudeva, I really want to realize that there is nothing more valuable than pure attachment to the lotus feet of the spiritual master. Let this be my desire. Realizing this will do away with all my material desires.

October 3, 1993, Novorossisk, Russia

It is said that the order of the spiritual master is the life and soul of the disciple. How many times have I heard it: “life and soul” and “faith in the guru’s order.” But looking at myself, I see how weak and tiny my faith is. Someone could say that the instructions which I got from my spiritual master are not so great. They are to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. But they appear great to me. In order to follow them I must purify myself constantly.

I was so foolish when Śrīla Gurudeva was here this time. I was bewildered by external circumstances and my own mind. Although I was so near to Śrīla Gurudeva, I was almost deaf: I don’t remember any lectures he gave. But the power of Gurudeva’s presence again gave me strong confirmation in the power of the holy name.

October 25, 1993, St. Petersburg, Russia

Since October 7th, I have here along with Gāndharvikā. She is busy selling her apartment, arranging papers, certificates, clearances and declarations. There are so many difficulties in

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getting to Vṛndāvana. I am training myself to be ready to accept whatever may happen as the Lord's supreme will. As Gāndharvikā said, the only thing which is within our power is to have the right desire. She was preaching to me, "You pray, 'O Lord Kṛṣṇa, just allow me to become a little bit closer to Your lotus feet. If You do not want to let us into Vṛndāvana, then just give us a place at Your lotus feet.'"

We'll face many obstacles in the holy dhāma. But aside from the obstacles, there are many pure, elevated devotees in the holy dhāma and they possess the greatest treasure. They can guide you, help you to get into the dhāma, and give you the proper qualifications to reside in the dhāma. They are carrying on with their services there and they never become proud of their treasure: their love and devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. They never have a desire to enjoy this treasure by themselves.

Neither should I become proud. I want to have the desire to please the Lord, to serve Him rather than to enjoy myself in Vṛndāvana. Even though my heart is still dirty I should appear before the Lord as I am, and in this condition just try my best to serve Him and His devotees. My guru can carefully guide me in Vṛndāvana. I pray never to become proud of my progress, but rather strive for purity in order to serve guru and Kṛṣṇa more sincerely. By carrying on with this process, one day I will get the opportunity to enter the real Vṛndāvana and serve guru and Kṛṣṇa there with a perfected service attitude.

Dear Śrīla Gurudeva, when will I be able to serve you? I see that now the poisonous snake of personal enjoyment sometimes bites my heart. I know the mercy I got from you is meant for increasing my service to you, but this snake is attempting to enjoy even this mercy. O holy name, it is you who destroy the seeds of sinful desires.

November 14, 1993, Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, India

We have arrived in the holy dhāma. O Lord Kṛṣṇa, it seems as though I am back home after a long, long time. Here, things slowly become familiar again. My heart's wish is to develop attachment to Kṛṣṇa, which may some day turn into love by the grace of Śrī la Gurudeva.

My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, here in Vṛndāvana You are always present, here is Your home. I do not want to appear as a guest at Your house. Please accept me as Your own. Let me surrender unto You and approach You prayerfully. Please give me the strength to appeal to You with love, because I am completely unqualified to do it. I am so dirty. Be merciful. I need so much to be in Your presence. In my prayers I wish to glorify You, remaining at the lotus feet of my spiritual master.

November 20, 1993, Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, India

Many days have passed. Everything has been changing so quickly. I am here catching drops of nectar from a great ocean of mercy. On November 16th we celebrated Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance day. Because of the presence of his disciples, I could feel the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I realize now how Śrīla Gurudeva took the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda into his heart and how he fulfills his order in practice. Śrīla Prabhupāda always helps my spiritual master personally. Indeed, Śrīla Gurudeva is always with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

At 7.20 p.m., the time when Prabhupāda left this planet, a few sannyāsīs, his disciples, swiftly appeared in the samādhi, circumambulated the mūrti of Śrīla Prabhupāda and left for his house.

I also went there. The house was packed up with Prabhupāda's disciples. By watching them I could feel the presence of their

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spiritual master. We were having the same kīrtana as it was 16 years ago. I saw one mātājī, a Prabhupāda disciple who takes care of his house, crying. I saw Govinda Swami. He was at Prabhupāda's bedside, holding his daṇḍa with crossed hands and leaning his forehead against his daṇḍa. First he began the kīrtana, then someone else continued.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has gone, but at the same time remains forever in the hearts of his disciples. I was also thinking that on this day he is coming into our hearts too, if we stay close to the lotus feet of his disciples, our spiritual masters, in the association of other devotees.

January 11, 1994, Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, India

Dear Śrīla Gurudeva,

Please excuse me for asking for your attention. You are so far away now, but I want to become closer and closer to your lotus feet. Here in Vṛndāvana, I find so many personalities who carry your mercy to me. By associating with them, by getting closer to them, I get closer to you. I hear from them, and my inspiration to serve you becomes stronger and stronger.

O Gurudeva, I know I am not pure and that I am quite foolish, but let me somehow serve these exalted Vaiṣṇavas, because by doing so I get closer to you. Let me know what I can do for them.

I want to thank you very much for kindly allowing me to stay in Vṛndāvana. I wish to stay here for the rest of my life and learn how to serve you and become purified. I desire to become qualified to enter Vṛndāvana in the spiritual sky. My dear spiritual master, I bow down to your lotus feet with the greatest respect, again and again.