

ŚRĪ VYĀSA-PŪJĀ

Śrī Vyāsa-Pūjā
August 19, 2014

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Printed in the United States of America
Design: Arcita Dāsa

Limited Printing: 500 copies



THE BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST
Los Angeles • Stockholm • Mumbai • Sydney

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*The appearance day of
our beloved Spiritual Master*

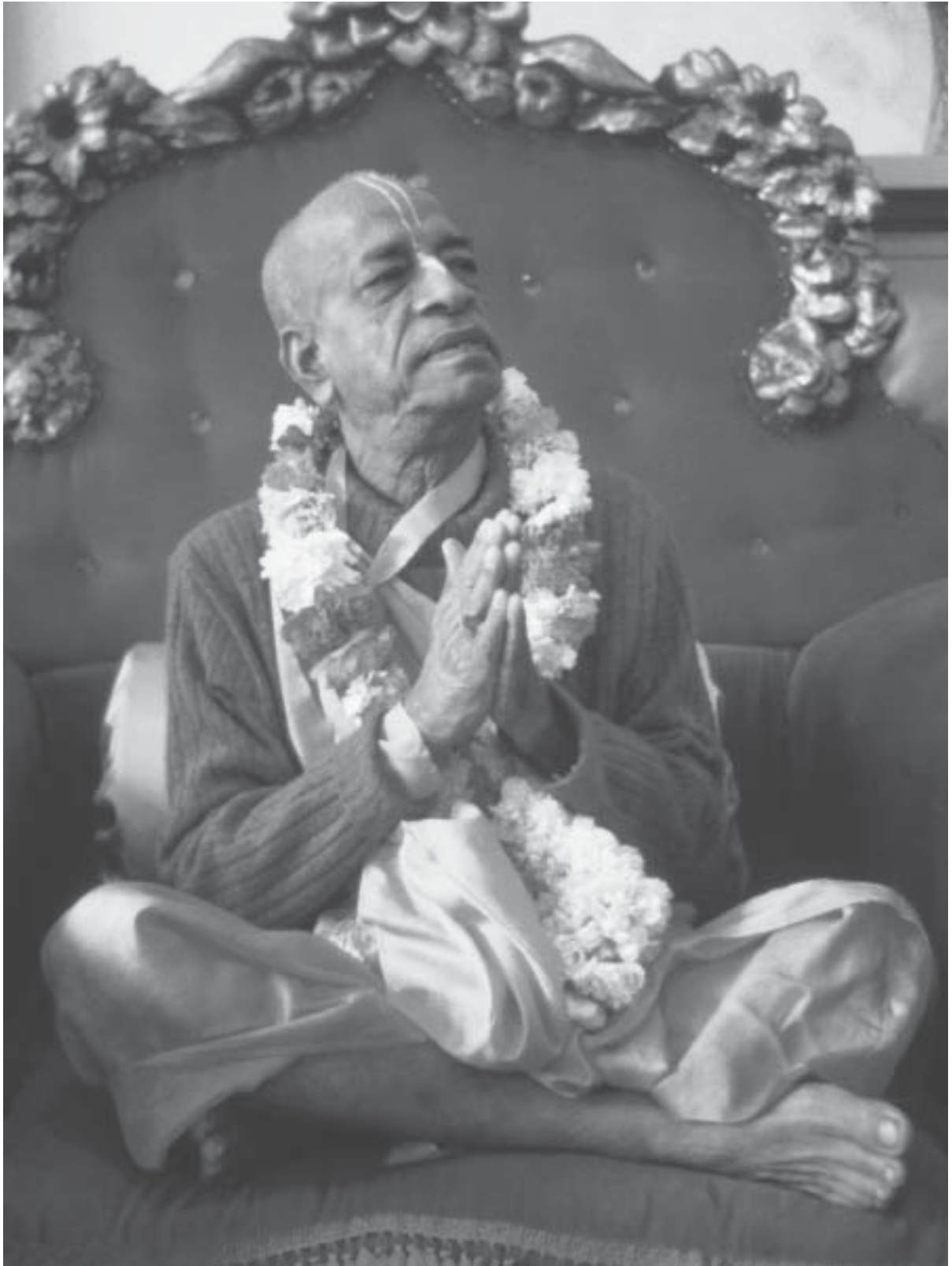
ŚRĪ VYĀSA-PŪJĀ

His Divine Grace

Ομ ViβJuprda Paramahansa Parivrjakrcrya Aβtottara-Ωata Ūrĭ Ūrĭmad

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*rcrya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



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Introduction

As there is nothing static or stale about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is nothing static or stale about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s annual Vyāsa-pūjā book. Each year that I prepare the offerings for this book—and I’ve been doing it for over thirty years—I get a selective glimpse into the hearts of the diverse souls who make up the worldwide community of Vaiṣṇavas known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The praise and prayers, glorification and obeisances, reports and confessions offered in homage to Śrīla Prabhupāda are clear evidence that the deep and abiding relationship between him and the members of his beloved institution burns bright.

In the treasure chest of this forty-sixth annual Vyāsa-pūjā book, we find many gems. Here are a few:

Girirāja Swami, in a meditation on service in separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda, devotes most of his offering to a remembrance of how the late Yamunā Devī embodied ideal service to Prabhupāda in both his physical form (*vapuḥ*) and his instructions (*vāṇī*).

Vāṇī and *vapuḥ* became a major theme in Yamunā-devī’s life—how to maintain one’s connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda through *vāṇī* to the same degree and with the same intensity as in his physical, even close personal, presence. She was convinced that it was possible, and she arranged her life in such a way as to always receive his guidance and mercy—to always be in his association.

Bhakti Chāru Swami devotes his offering to lauding the establishment of Śrīla Prabhupāda, for all time, as the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, noting especially the publication this year of Ravindra Svarūpa Prabhu’s long-awaited book *Śrīla Prabhupāda—The Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON*. Bhakti Chāru Swami writes:

Ever since your departure we have faced many, many difficulties. You yourself cautioned us that after an *ācārya* leaves the planet there will inevitably be crises. How could we expect that after the disappearance of an *ācārya* like Your Divine Grace we would not face any crises? However, we also noticed that just by putting Your Divine Grace in the center we could overcome those difficulties quite easily. We began to realize that it is our love for you that will hold us together and enable this movement to sail through troubled waters. Through those difficulties we realized that the secret of success lay in establishing your position as the founder-*ācārya* of this glorious ISKCON institution.

Echoing this theme, Bhaktivaibhava Swami writes:

As founder-*ācārya*, your writings, oral teachings, and exemplary actions remain the permanent and irreplaceable basis for all subsequent teachings and activities of ISKCON. You are and will remain always the instructing spiritual master of all devotees in ISKCON.

Nirañjana Swami writes of witnessing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s powerful influence on thousands worldwide:

When I travel to so many places throughout the world, I see people come to life when they hear about you. I see devotees becoming ever-increasingly eager to glorify you and to dedicate every fiber of their existence in service to you. I see people dance in ecstasy upon receiving the holy names, which you continue to deliver throughout the world, even in the most remote corners of the world. I see people who never before knew anything about you beg for the opportunity to read the books written by you. I see devotees shunning invitations to find mercy elsewhere due to the deepest conviction that everything needed for Kṛṣṇa’s mercy is coming from you. I see the lives of people changing as they



gradually transform into bright-faced, enthusiastic beggars for your mercy by having associated with those who love you. I see children who have grown up in your movement and who are making plans to spend the rest of their lives in service to you. I see devotees crying unlimited tears in gratitude for all you've done for them. All this, and so much more, is all due to your mercy. The evidence is clear. There is no limit to your mercy.

Rāmāi Swami wrote a moving poem, in which this verse shines especially bright:

O glorious guru, far renowned,
With highest fame and virtue crowned,
Please grant us now, without reserve,
The love and strength by which you serve.

Candramauli Swami writes of his appreciation for Śrīla Prabhupāda's gift of the holy name:

The transcendental gifts you bestowed on us are manifold. Foremost, outstanding, and illustrious by itself is the all-merciful holy name of Kṛṣṇa, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. It is protecting, sustaining, spiritually inspiring, and purifying in all facets of life. It is my life, my soul, my love, my everything, the greatest gift that has ever been bestowed on the created living beings. Without Śrī Nāma's mercy, I am always defeated in rendering devotional service. Because you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, have personally demonstrated the power and glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with your life and words, we are receiving it with great eagerness and increasing happiness.

On a personal note, it was especially blissful to see a few old friends join the ranks of the renounced order and write their first personal homages for the book. They are Bhakti Gauravāṇī Goswami (formerly Vedavyāsa Dāsa) and Bhakti Anugraha Janārdana Swami (formerly Janārdana Dāsa).

Among the offerings from ISKCON Centers, the one from Finland is especially memorable, recounting as it did the great struggle the devotees there underwent to get a place suitable for their devotional service, and their final victory when the government gave them an ideal manor in the center of Helsinki.

Of course, every devotee knows about the magnificent Temple of the Vedic Planetarium that is majestically rising in Māyāpur, but in truth everything about ISKCON India is big, and getting bigger. The report from the ISKCON Food Relief Foundation contained this rather jaw-dropping bit of information:

Śrīla Prabhupāda, as we stepped into our 10th year and reached the milestone of having served over 1.25 billion meals, we organized a wonderful event called Aabhar. . . .

Kind of gives a new ring to this letter Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in January 1977, encouraging *prasādam* distribution: "We are confident Kṛṣṇa will supply! Let the whole world come, we can feed them."

Finally, we have this expression of gratitude from the Matchless Gifts / Food for All Centre in London, thanking Śrīla Prabhupāda for his gift of the holy name:

On our spiritual paths we are sure to meet many hurdles, many obstacles, many difficulties, but our saving grace is your special gift to us, this wonderful *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Draviḍa Dāsa
Vyāsa-pūjā book editor

The Meaning of Vyāsa-pūjā

Earlier this year I visited the city of Kolkata and was taken by a kind devotee to an old building on a back street known as Ultadanga Junction Road. I had never been there before, but I had heard about the place for forty years. The square, rather plain three-storey brown-brick building was formerly known as Bhaktivinoda Āsana, and it was here, on the building's flat rooftop, that Śrīla Prabhupāda met his spiritual master for the first time.

I had always been intrigued by the idea of a sacred meeting place on a roof, and it had a special relevance for me, too. In September 1977 Śrīla Prabhupāda paid his last visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor. I was sitting close to Śrīla Prabhupāda when, during the Vyāsa-pūjā ceremony, Tamāl Krishna Goswami began recounting events from Śrīla Prabhupāda's early life. He faltered when he couldn't recall the date of that rooftop meeting. Even though Śrīla Prabhupāda had said nothing until this point, and was in some obvious physical discomfort, he smiled and said "1922," drawing a cheery *Jaya!* from all of us disciples. I was a direct recipient of what had developed since that meeting, and it was because of what transpired on that Kolkata rooftop that I was now sitting before Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The connection of guru and śiṣya comes after much searching on the part of the disciple and much compassion on the part of God. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that for the meeting of the disciple with his guru, God Himself makes the arrangements. He said:

So guru is also incarnation of God, mercy incarnation of God. Guru means that . . . God is within you, *caitya-guru*, the guru, or the spiritual master, within your heart. *Īsvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*. So this Paramātmā is also incarnation of God. And the same Paramātmā, when He comes before you, being very much merciful upon you, to teach you from outside, that is guru. [Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.26, 1 October 1976]

Therefore God is called *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within the heart. And the physical spiritual master is God's mercy. If God sees that you are sincere, He will give you a spiritual master who can give you protection. He will help you from within and without. Without in the physical form of spiritual master, and within as the spiritual master within the heart. [Conversation, May 1974]

On Vyāsa-pūjā day we worship Śrīla Prabhupāda as the manifested compassion of the Supreme Lord, and we give thanks for the day he appeared in this world, as well as the blessed day we met him and heard his words for the first time.

And what are those words? The spiritual master teaches everything we need to know about the Lord who dwells within us, that one supreme person, who is unseen by our eyes. As the external manifestation of the Paramātmā, the guru teaches the *Vedas*, the sound manifestation of God. He teaches the *Vedas*, the *Vedānta*, and the *Purāṇas*, and he does it as a messenger of the Lord's incarnation, Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa. Śrīla Vyāsadeva is the original spiritual preceptor for all men, and all other preceptors are to be considered his representatives.

Only by learning, understanding, living, and teaching the *Vedas* does a person become a qualified spiritual master, and only by being voiced through the spiritual master can the *Vedas* become fully manifested and understood in this world. The result of this successful combination—between God, the *Vedas*, the guru, and the disciple—is that the cleansing of the heart takes place, the hard knot of material attraction is loosened, lifetimes of *karma-phala* are dissolved, and the happiness of loving service to the Supreme Lord is established.

The spiritual master is a guru because he is heavy with knowledge and thus unmovable by any arguments opposed to the Vedic conclusion. He is an *ācārya* because he moves and lives completely in accordance with



the *Vedas* and teaches the deeper meanings of the scriptures to others. As the *Manu-saṁhitā* (2.140) states:

*upanīya tu yaḥ śiṣyaṁ veda-madhyāpāyēd dvijaḥ
sakalpaṁ sa-rahasyaṁ ca tam ācāryaṁ pracakṣate*

“One who confers the sacred thread, trains his disciples in sacrifice, and teaches them the confidential meaning of the *Vedas* is known as an *ācārya*, according to saintly authorities.”

Such a spiritual master is a rare personality indeed, and he is someone whose very life contributes the best of all fortune to all those who seek his company. His presence in our life is so valuable because it gives us the greatest possible life: a life lived as a preparation for returning to our eternal home. Through the gifts of knowledge, guidance, encouragement, and correction, the spiritual master takes us personally over the darkest valley of repeated birth and death and sets us up in the highest, most glorious place.

When the great Śrī Vaiṣṇava poet Vedānta Deśika (1268–1370) was writing a book about the transmission of spiritual knowledge, he tried to think of an analogy for the importance of the *ācārya*, the foremost spiritual preceptor. Then he remembered something his nephew, Mudaliyantān, had said to him:

When a lion leaps from one hill to another, the little ants on its body are transported with him. Similarly, when Rāmānujācārya leaped over this world of repeated birth and death, we were saved because of our connection with him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has similarly leaped over the world of repeated birth and death, and we tiny souls have somehow or other been transported with him.

On Vyāsa-pūjā Day we try to understand our incalculable good fortune of being connected with such an *ācārya* as Śrīla Prabhupāda. He not only carried the message of Śrīla Vyāsadeva but showed us how to live it. He continues to personally lead us from this world of darkness to the world of eternal light. We give thanks for his boundless compassion and never-ending efforts to save us, and we think that through him we have come to understand the meaning of the phrase “His Divine Grace.”

* * *

“The juiciest, sweetest mango is always in the sunshine at the very top of the tree.” Thereby begins the classic analogy of how the highest spiritual teachings are brought down from ancient times to today. A chain of fruit-pickers, sitting on the branches of the mango tree, carefully hand down the delicate fruit from higher to lower branches until it reaches the ground. Similarly, the compassionate preceptors always ensure that the teachings are handed down intact to the next generations. Yet it is no easy task, and even Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He must personally come to the earth age after age to reestablish the teachings that have been lost. The essential component for preserving the living message is therefore the chain of qualified teachers, the *paramparā*.

Every genuine *ācārya* is moved by compassion to make the teachings of the *Vedas* accessible to as many as possible. Without compromising their integrity, he renders those teachings intelligible and accessible to contemporary listeners, protects them from adulteration, and preserves them by creating the next generation of teachers. Śrīla Vyāsa codified, compiled, and protected the *Vedas* and is therefore known forever as the “literary incarnation of God.” The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.4.21–22) describes how the sage divided the responsibility for the preservation and propagation of Vedic knowledge among various learned scholars. There we learn how Paila Ṛṣi became the professor of the *Ṛg Veda*, Jaimini of the *Sāma Veda*, Vaiśampāyana of the *Yajur Veda*, Aṅgirā of the *Atharva Veda*, and Romaharṣana of the *Purāṇas* and historical records.

Without teaching his disciples, empowering them to become advanced in spiritual practice, and also engaging them in teaching and preaching, the *ācārya* would leave his work incomplete. Only when he has safeguarded the message of the *Vedas* for the next generation—both in precept and practice—can he be satisfied that he has offered the world what his own preceptor offered him. As the *Vāyu Purāṇa* explains:



*ācinoti yaḥ śāstrārtham ācāre sthāpayaty api
svayam ācarate yasmād ācāryas tena kīrtitaḥ*

“One is called an *ācārya* because he has studied and understood the meaning of the scriptures, he practices what he preaches, and he establishes this meaning in the behavior of others.”

Not only does the spiritual master come in *paramparā*, but he also ensures that the *paramparā* continues by making the *Vedas* accessible and intelligible, by making the essential spiritual techniques practical, and by initiating and fully training his disciples. He encourages his students to do the same for their countrymen and the next generation. In this way the ancient knowledge and tradition are preserved yet always kept fresh. Thus the sacred mango gets carefully passed down from the treetop to future generations in human society.

On Vyāsa-pūjā Day we honor Śrīla Prabhupāda as one who preserved Vedic knowledge and made it accessible to a fresh, new audience. We honor him as one who explained the deeper meanings of the scriptures and demonstrated by his example the efficacy of the spiritual techniques described therein. We honor him as one who walked the earth establishing the sacred *arcā-vigraha*, restoring brahminical culture, and arguing for cow protection—the hallmarks of civilized human life. We give thanks that he initiated and trained many disciples to carry forward his message and preserve the chain of teachers.

* * *

On 5 February 1919, just three years before Śrīla Prabhupāda met him, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura performed one more duty of an *ācārya*. He gave a human and organizational shape to the mission of perpetuating the *paramparā*. Although the *paramparā* will continue to exist whenever and wherever there is authentic teaching of the *Vedas*, training, and mantra-giving, it is such a delicate structure that sometimes it may not even be located by those who are any less than supremely dedicated. When an organized mission is established, there can be greater strength. When disciples gather in groups, each with a specific task, the mission to serve the predecessor gurus can be done with improved efficacy. Yes, there is always danger that the power so accrued by such an efficient organization may turn the heads of even the most devoted disciple, but done well and with devotion to the spiritual master, it will serve his purposes well.

The Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana similarly organized themselves and their followers and called their assembly the Viśva Vaiṣṇava Rāja Sabhā. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura revived the mission of the Gosvāmīs as a human organization. In 1919 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura gave a human shape to what he described as the “third descent” of the Viśva Vaiṣṇava Rāja Sabhā. Speaking at the property known as “Bhaktivinoda Asana” at Ultadanga Junction Road in Calcutta, before a large assembly of Vaiṣṇavas, he said:

Even though this Sabhā is eternally established, it has descended into the world three times. Eleven years after the disappearance of Śrī Mahāprabhu, when the world was beginning to darken, six wonderfully bright stars arose in Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala and were engaged in the service of Gauracandra....

Śrī Caitanyadeva is Kṛṣṇacandra Himself—the king of all the Vaiṣṇavas in the world (*viśva-vaiṣṇava-rāja*). The gathering of His devotees is the Śrī Viśva Vaiṣṇava Rāja Sabhā; the foremost ministers amongst the members of the society are Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and his honored brother Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. Those who consider themselves to be the followers of Śrī Rūpa are the members of this Śrī Viśva Vaiṣṇava Rāja Sabhā.

A guru lives to give systematic knowledge, relevant guidance, and inspirational encouragement to all who wish to receive them from him and who are qualified to become disciples. He gives whatever he has with compassion, love, and discipline, and he sets before his grateful receivers a living example of what it means to live in consciousness of God and His laws. To better share his gifts with others, the guru invites his disciples to come and live with him.

Yet the guru’s mission is also to broadcast and propagate the teachings to as many newcomers as possible, even to those who cannot live with him. That enormous task requires the training of future traveling teachers,



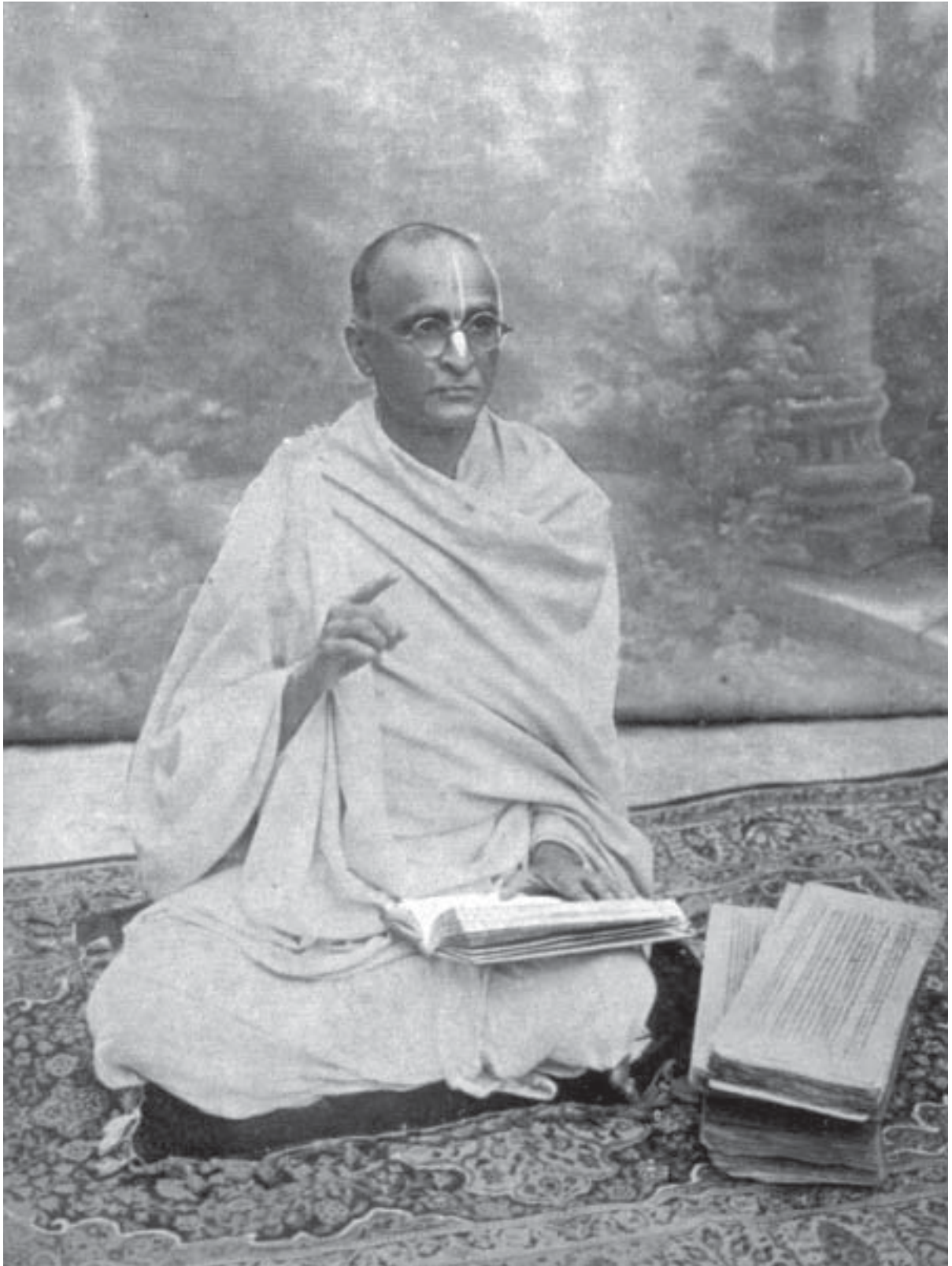


preparation of various types of publications, and the building of temples and other venues so that people can congregate and become educated and inspired, no matter what their level of spirituality or commitment and no matter where they live. It involves organizing groups and devotee farms and villages so that future would-be disciples can be part of a social network and helped toward discipleship. Existing disciples and their families can also live peacefully and be supported through the inevitable challenges of life. The disciple's role in all this is to help the guru and alleviate his burden. When this larger mission of the guru is understood by the disciple, he or she will participate in the mission of the guru by offering energy, time, intelligence, and resources.

It is a privilege to be even a small part of such a glorious movement for the spiritualization of human society. Although to mundane vision ISKCON may be perceived as merely a human institution, with transcendental vision it can be seen as a compassionate vehicle of Śrīla Prabhupāda's divine grace, the most important institution in the world, and an excellent means for completely fulfilling the desire of the Six Gosvāmīs.

Vyāsa-pūjā is an opportunity for all of us gathered here today to reflect upon the mission and movement of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. It is a movement of inspired devotees of Kṛṣṇa, established to make tangible the hopes of all the predecessor *ācāryas*. It began on a suburban Kolkata rooftop in 1922 with a simple instruction to teach the message of the *Vedas* in the English language. Our appreciation for all the gifts we have received from Śrīla Prabhupāda, which have transformed all our lives, must surely inspire us to continue the mission and message of this most extraordinary of all representatives of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. May we honor him today and always, and work together to share him with the world.

Kṛpāmaya Dāsa
Bhaktivedanta Manor



“Adore, Adore Ye All The Happy Day”

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote the following poem in February 1935, on the occasion of the Vyāsa-pūjā celebration of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura. It delighted Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, especially the sixth stanza, which he felt captured the essence of his preaching against the Māyāvādīs. After reading this poem, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was especially keen that Śrīla Prabhupāda preach and write in English.

Adore, adore ye all
The happy day,
Blessed than Heaven,
Sweeter than May,
When He appeared at Puri,
The holy place,
My Lord and Master,
His Divine Grace.

Oh! my Master,
The evangelic angel,
Give us thy light,
Light up thy candle.
Struggle for existence
A Human race,
The only hope
His Divine Grace.

Misled we are,
All going astray.
Save us Lord,
Our fervent pray.
Wonder thy ways
To turn our face.
Adore thy feet,
Your Divine Grace.

Forgotten Krishna,
We fallen soul
Paying most heavy
The illusion's toll.
Darkness around,
All untrace.
The only hope
His Divine Grace.

Message of service
Thou has brought,
A healthful life
As Chaitanya wrought.
Unknown to all,
It's full of brace.
That's your gift,
Your Divine Grace.

Absolute is sentient
Thou hast proved.
Impersonal calamity
Thou hast removed.
This gives us a life
Anew and fresh.
Worship thy feet,
Your Divine Grace.

Had you not come,
Who had told
The message of Krishna,
Forceful and bold?
That's your right,
You have the mace.
Save me a fallen,
Your Divine Grace.

The line of service
As drawn by you
Is pleasing and healthy
Like morning dew.
The oldest of all,
But in new dress.
Miracle done,
Your Divine Grace.

