

Written by Indradyumna Swami

Sunday, 23 October 2011 13:48 - Last Updated Monday, 02 January 2012 06:41



From the mundane view, I was flying home. I was born and raised in San Francisco before joining the Hare Krishna movement in 1970. But there is nothing left for me there now. Both my parents have passed away and my brothers and sisters are scattered throughout the country. Nevertheless, as I looked out of my plane window, memories of my childhood came to mind, bringing with them sentiments not worthy of my attention. I quickly caught myself and came back to reality remembering the words of my spiritual master - reflections on his own family members with the passing of time.

**Where have my affectionate
father and mother gone now,
and where are all my elder relatives
who were my own folk.**

**Who will give me news of them now
I ask you tell me who?
All that is left of this so called family
is a list of their names.**

**As the froth upon the seawater
arises for a moment and then subsides,
the play of mayas worldly illusion
is exactly like that.**

**No-one is actually a mother or father
a family member or relative,
everyone is just like foam on the sea water
remaining in view for only a few moments.**

**But all of us are actually relatives,
O brothers, on the platform of pure spirit soul.
These eternal relationships are not tinged
with the temporary delusions of maya.**

**The Supreme Lord is Himself
the ultimate soul of everyone,
in their eternal relationship to Him,
everyone in the universe is equal.**

(Srla Prabhupada - Vrindavan Bhajan - circa 1958)

Srla Prabhupada writes that no-one is our father and mother, but rather everyone in the universe is equal. In other words, all of us are equal as brothers and sisters, because we all have one common father, God. A devotee of the Lord takes every opportunity to remind everyone of this fact. Therefore, although a devotee may renounce the idea that he is part of a particular family, society or nation, he is not at all averse to helping even his own mother and father in Krsna consciousness. In fact, simply having a devotee in ones family, benefits the

family immensely. Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati writes:

When a great saint, a pure devotee appears in the family, his ancestors and descendants for a hundred generations are elevated. When a devotee of middle stature (Madyam Bhagavat) appears in a family, his ancestors and descendants for fourteen generations are elevated. When a neophyte devotee appears in a family, his ancestors and descendants for three generations are elevated. - Srila Prabhupada Upadesamrita.



I tried my best to help my own mother in spiritual life. Unfortunately, throughout most of her life she never showed the slightest interest in religion. I once asked her if she believed in God, and she replied, "Something may be out there." Whenever I visited her we would often debate the existence of the soul, life after death, karma, and similar topics. Throughout the years I continued cultivating that little "something" in her heart by sending her Srila Prabhupada's books, which invariably ended up in a pile at the back of her garage collecting grease and dust.

A few years ago she telephoned me late one night. It was an unusual hour to call, and I was

surprised to hear from her. She began the conversation by asking if I would take her to Vrndavana, India.

I was shocked. I thought, "Mother wants to go to Vrndavana, the land of Krsna's birth! What is this? How does she even know what Vrndavana is?"

But she insisted and wanted to know when we could go. Although intrigued at the prospect of taking my mother to Vrndavana, because it was late (and I was very tired) I told her I'd call her back early the next morning and we could discuss the matter in detail. I woke up refreshed the next day, and after my shower excitedly dialed her phone number. My brother answered.

I said, "Pete, can I speak to Mom?"

There was a prolonged silence, and I sensed something was wrong. Finally, his voice choked with emotion, he replied, "Mom passed away last night."

I was stunned.

"What happened?" I asked. "I talked to Mom only last night!"

"I know," he said. "She had been battling cancer for six months. She didn't want to tell you."

Collecting myself, I said, "Cancer! Did she say anything at the end?"

"Yes, she did," he replied. "She said, 'Don't lament for me! I'm not this body. I'm eternal spirit soul. I'll never die. I'm going to Krsna!' With those words on her lips, she passed away."

I couldn't believe it. My mother, the intellectual who never went to church, who never inquired about God—debated His very existence—was "going to Krsna!"

I asked my brother, "But how is it possible Mom said those things at death?"

He replied, "When Mom learned she had cancer and was going to die, a strange transformation came over her. She became restless and unsettled. She began asking about you, wanting to know where you were and what you were doing. She had an intense desire to meet with you, to speak with you. But when I suggested calling you she'd always say, 'No, don't bother him now. We'll contact him later.'

"One morning I went out to the garage to empty the garbage, and I found her going through all those books you had sent her during the past twenty-five years. She looked up at me and asked me to carry them into the house. That afternoon she carefully dusted them off. For the last five months she just sat in her rocking chair reading those books. Sometimes she'd underline a certain passage or quote that had particular relevance or importance to her. She also contacted your tape ministry in London and ordered all your lecture tapes. She'd listen to them on her headphones, rocking back and forth in her armchair, looking at your picture, which she kept on the table nearby. She must have listened to at least three a day.

"Gradually her condition deteriorated, but she wasn't afraid. I think there was something in those books that made her fearless. Then last night she sensed she was going to die. She told me to call you. Her last request was that you take her to a place called Vrndavana."

