



Dear Srila Prabhupada,

Please accept my humble obeisance. All glories to your Divine Grace.

On this the glorious anniversary of your appearance day I am meditating on why I surrendered my life to you and continue to do so after more than thirty-five years.

Back then I was a youth in search of the absolute truth and love of God, nothing else would do. After studying so many paths I was not satisfied and could not understand why. Somehow by Lord Krsna's grace I came in contact with you via the Bhagavada-gita As It Is. This was what I was looking for, the absolute truth spoken by God, Lord Krsna, Himself in a highly intelligent, philosophical, uncompromising and unsentimental way yet at the same time appealing not only to my intellect but to my heart. The intelligent way that you presented it, like a rigorous mathematician demonstrating a proof, with all pramanas to support every statement conquered my intelligence telling me it was safe to open my heart. This was religion on a solid foundation of philosophy and not sentimentalism or fanaticism. On that occasion I surrendered my life on to you.

Though I had some inkling of Your Divine Grace's greatness I was and still am too immature to truly understand who you really are. But over the years my love and appreciation for you have grown and I strongly feel a very deep and personal relationship with you. I am especially attached to daily listening to the recordings of your conversations, morning walks and lectures. When I hear you speak I feel safe like an infant who is pacified by the sound of its mother's voice. Your words cut through all the madness and confusion in the world around me. You teach by your personal example of real compassion and not being sentimental or compromising. You are Lord Krsna's direct representative and you present the truth without any adulteration, this is real compassion. You are yourself following in the footsteps of your beloved Guru Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who said:

If I were to desist from lecturing about the Absolute Truth due to fear that some listeners may be displeased, I would be deviating from the path of Vedic truth and accepting the path of untruth. I would become one who is inimical to the Vedas, an atheist, and would no longer possess faith in Bhagavan, the very embodiment of truth. **He who compromises is finished.**

*(Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Vaibhava)*

I recently heard a room conversation from August 9, 1973 in Paris where you met Cardinal Danielou, a prince of the Catholic Church. How did you as the direct emissary of Lord Krsna behave? Did you try to make friends with him? Did you give him a hug and get him to open his heart? Did you joke and make small talk? Did you attempt to have inter-faith dialogue for mutual understanding and respect? No, none of these. Though you were totally respectful and polite in the whole conversation you immediately went to the crux of the matter and asked him point blank: "Jesus Christ said, 'Thou shalt not kill.' So why is it that the Christian people are engaged in animal killing?"

From that point on you kept the pressure up and after a while, seeing that he could supply no adequate response, the Cardinal made some polite excuse to leave your presence. It was an example of: Perfect Questions -- No Answers. Immediately after this you spoke at length to our god-brother Yogesvara dasa, who had been translating portions of the conversation, and explained to him how the Cardinal could not give any cogent answer to your persistent questions. The whole episode could thus be seen as you training Yogesvara Dasa on how to preach strongly by your personal example.

Through your personal example we can see that you were not trying to win friends or influence people and become part of the main stream but rather were simply giving Lord Krsna's message and leaving the result of such preaching to Krsna, whatever it may be. It takes a lot of faith in the words of your own Guru Maharaja and Lord Krsna, and the courage of these convictions to go against the dominant worldview. As the late Robert F. Kennedy, former US Solicitor General, and US Senator said:

Few men are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change a world, which yields most painfully to change.

Compromise is for those who want to live comfortably in this material world. Srila Prabhupada you have shown us that the path back to Godhead is only through non-compromise in presenting Lord Krsna's message. I thank you Srila Prabhupada for having the courage to fearlessly represent Krsna no matter what the popular opinion is. As you once said to Umapati Svami "I can't change the truth to please the Americans."

I pray that you will smile upon me and be pleased with whatever little service I am able to do, and that you will also imbue me with the courage to always present the truth no matter what the cost. For at the time of death, when our bodies are wracked in pain and our minds are greatly disturbed and confused the opinion of the world will not save us, but only your mercy.

Your insignificant and useless servant

Shyamasundara dasa