

# Two great souls, two grand missions, two instructive prayers to the Lord

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There are interesting parallels between the initiating events for the missions of both Srila Prabhupada and Lord Brahma. This article explores some of those parallels.

## Parallels in their missions

Lord Brahma is the first jiva or living entity in the universe, born from the lotus flower sprouting from the navel of Garbodakasayi Visnu. Along with Lord Visnu as the maintainer and Lord Siva as the destroyer, he is the principal creator or engineer of universal affairs, on behalf of the Lord. He takes charge of matters such as fashioning the planets, situating them in their orbits, as well as creating and assigning bodies for the different species of life. He is also a pure devotee of the Lord, and one of the twelve mahājanas or great authorities on the science of Kṛṣṇa, who pass down this knowledge in paramparā<sup>1</sup> from Him [[Srila Prabhupada, Lecture on Brahma-samhita, Bombay, India, January 03, 1973](#)].

We hear in Chapter eight of the third canto of Srimad Bhagavatam that, after manifesting on the whorl of the lotus flower originating from the Lord’s navel, Lord Brahma first inquired from the Lord within His heart about his origin and constitutional position. After seeking out and connecting with the Lord, he realizes he is part and parcel of the Lord, subordinate to Him, and becomes inclined to serve Him through creative activities. In Chapter nine of Canto three, through beautifully composed prayers, Lord Brahma requests from the Lord creative potencies to serve Him by constructing the features of this universe. Brahma was very much eager and ready to serve the Lord at any moment, that was his sincere desire “...I pray only to engage in His service in the creation of the material world.” [[SB 3.9.23](#)].

However, even such an exalted soul as he was very anxious and overwhelmed at the magnitude of the task before him. Srila Prabhupada relates to us Brahma’s mental state and predicament “The devastating water was so fearful that even Brahmā was perturbed at its appearance...The task was meant only for Brahmā, and no one in the universe can even understand how difficult it was.” [[SB 3.9.27-28, purport](#)].

The image of Brahma sitting atop the original lotus contemplating his situation, amidst a vast churning ocean of devastation, certainly evokes awe and empathy for the challenge that lay ahead for him—and his feeling of being overwhelmed. As one of my spiritual teachers His Grace Syamananda dasa of Radhadesh in Belgium clarified, Lord Brahma’s grief is distinctly different to the grief experienced by Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Whereas Arjuna was filled with doubts as to what his true duty was, Lord Brahma was not in doubt as to what to do, but he was overwhelmed with its complexity and he was in anxiety about how to go about it.

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<sup>1</sup> disciplic succession



Figure 1. Left – Brahma receives encouragement, knowledge and guidance from the Lord within his heart; Right – Lord Brahma atop the lotus emanating from the navel of Garbodakasayi Visnu who lies submerged in the great ocean of devastation in this universe.

From the tumultuous waves shifting Lord Brahma side-to-side on the original lotus, we turn our gaze to another oceanic scene here on Earth. On the undulating waters of the Bay of Bengal, Laccadive<sup>2</sup> and Arabian seas, in the period of mid to late August of 1965, our Srila Prabhupada lay aboard the MS Jaladuta steamship on its passage from Calcutta to New York. In his Jaladuta diary, Prabhupada related how he suffered several bouts of sea sickness due to the lurching of the ship caused by rolling swells and tides “There was vomiting tendency and dizziness and I felt uncomfortable the whole day and night” [[The Jaladuta Diary, August entries](#)]. He also suffered a serious heart attack while passing through the Arabian Sea “Passed over a great crisis on the struggle for life and death.” [[The Jaladuta Diary, 31 August entry](#)]. So, just as Lord Brahma was tossed about in an ocean on the original lotus, our Srila Prabhupada was also tossed about in an ocean at certain points on the Jaladuta. And, just as Lord Brahma was anxious about his mission, Prabhupada was in some anxiety about his. Brahma had a grand mission to create and arrange the different features of the universe. Srila Prabhupada also had a grand mission but his was to establish and spread Lord Caitanya’s saṅkīrtan movement in the western world. Amidst his anxieties on board the Jaladuta, Prabhupada remained always connected with the Lord and his spiritual master through prayer and constant meditation “There is slight lurching(?) of the ship and I am feeling slight headache also. But I am struggling and the nectarine of life is Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita the source

<sup>2</sup> Sea connecting waters off the southernmost coast of India with the Arabian sea; anglicized form of original sanskrit Lakṣadvīpa, meaning “hundred thousand islands”

of my all vitality.” [[The Jaladuta diary, September 9 entry](#)], just as we hear Brahma did in Chapter nine of Canto three in the Bhagavatam. One of my favourite entries in Prabhupada’s diary was on 13 September 1965 when he wrote “Today I have disclosed my mind to my companion Lord Sri Krishna. There is a Bengali poem made by me today in this connection.” revealing a mood of constant and intimate companionship with the Lord in his heart. He never considered himself alone at any stage.



Figure 2. The Jaladuta ship in which Srila Prabhupada travelled from Calcutta to New York in 1965.

He composed a famous prayer called the [Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma](#) upon his arrival in America at Boston Harbor on 18 September 1965. In it, he relates, among other transcendental sentiments, his feeling of being overwhelmed at the monumental task that lay ahead, just as Brahma did for his own mission. Just like Brahma, Prabhupada understood what the goal of his mission was, but he was understandably concerned about how to go about it. He feelingly relates this to the Lord in his poetry in various ways, including “...I do not know how they will be able to understand it.” [[Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 3](#)] and “How will I make them understand this message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?” [§].

Brahma emanated forth into the universe from the umbilical stem connected to his Lord and master Garbodakasayi Visnu. And Srila Prabhupada emanated forth into the Western world from his dwelling with their lordships Sri Radha Damodar in Vṛndāvan, via an umbilical attachment of love for Them. Prabhupada exhibited much attachment to deities from the Goswami temples in Vṛndāvan, including Sri Radha Damodar. He speaks of his feeling of separation from them while on the Jaladuta “...I am feeling separation from Sri Vrindaban and my Lords Sri Govinda, Gopinath, Radha Damodar” [[The Jaladuta diary, 10 September entry](#)].





Figure 3. their lordships Sri Radha Damodara continue to be worshipped today at Seva Kunj near Loi Bazar in Vṛndāvan, Mathura, India.

Housing the samadhis<sup>3</sup> of such erudite exponents of transcendental scholarship as Srila Rupa, Jiva and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswamis, it is very apt that Prabhupada chose the Sri Radha Damodar temple in Vṛndāvan to reside at in preparation for his voyage West. He mentions this temple in his public correspondences more than any other of the seven goswami temples of Vṛndāvan [[Vanipedia Search](#)]. He also directly confided to Nripendra Natha Banerjee, a benefactor and sevait<sup>4</sup> at Sri Radha Damodar temple, “Srila Jiva Goswami’s temple [Sri Radha Damodar temple] is my heart and soul.” [[Letter to Nripin Babu, 18 March 1967](#)]. Prabhupada resided here to fill up his proverbial kamaṇḍalū<sup>5</sup> from one of the most potent reservoirs of scholarship in our Gaudiya-Vaishnava disciplic line, before travelling West to distribute its contents for the benefit of all. This is reflected in his own remarkable contribution to the West – his authoritative books on Vedic wisdom echoing the same realizations of these ācāryas<sup>6</sup>. Srila Rupa Goswami contributed several central texts in our Bhakti-yoga tradition, such as the Upadeśāmṛta (Nectar of Instruction) and Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (Nectar of Devotion), and Srila Prabhupada translated them into English for our benefit. He also emphatically reminds us, in the Preface to

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<sup>3</sup> Resting places

<sup>4</sup> Person rendering regular service to a particular family, person or place of worship

<sup>5</sup> Sanctified water pot

<sup>6</sup> Great authorities on transcendental knowledge



Nectar of Instruction, of the elevated role of Rupa Goswami in our disciplic line “The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is conducted under the supervision of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī”.



Figure 4. Srila Prabhupada taking prasadam (sanctified food stuffs offered to Lord Krishna) in his quarters at Sri Radha Damodar temple, Vṛndāvan, Mathura, India.

He also often spoke of the elevated scholarship of Rupa Goswami’s nephew, Srila Jiva Goswami. In Letters to Bhavananda Prabhu [1 Aug 1972] and Dr. Chakravarthy [3 Nov 1970], he spoke about how extraordinary he is, unparalleled in our sampradaya<sup>7</sup>, and world-wide, as a philosopher and scholar. One of Jiva Goswami’s sublime writings is the Ṣaṭ-Sandarbha, a treatise on love of Krishna, which Srila Prabhupada once referred to as “...the most scholarly work in the world” [Conversation, 2 Sept 1970, Calcutta].

Just as Lord Brahma depended on the Lord, the ultimate source of all creative power relevant for his creating mission “May He be merciful towards me so that I, as before, may be empowered with the introspection to create...” [SB 3.9.22], Srila Prabhupada depended on the Lord also for his mission of spiritual education “Only by Your causeless mercy will my words become pure.” [Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 14]. But he also fittingly relied on the blessings and work of the foremost scholars in our devotional line, Rupa and Jiva Goswami, for success in his mission, which was itself also built upon a scholarly foundation of books.

The parallels between the circumstances of these great souls and the inceptions of their missions are certainly compelling. We bear witness to two pure devotees who floated atop vast and precarious oceans, in daunting circumstances, thrust into the unknown. Both having grand missions they accepted responsibility for in service of their spiritual teachers. Both experience anxiety in planning how to fulfill them. Upon embarking on these

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<sup>7</sup> Chain of disciplic succession

missions, both expressed their hearts to the Lord in elaborate published prayers. Both remain constantly connected with the Lord through remembrance and meditation. Both have implicit faith in the mercy of the Lord. And, poetically, both are architects, but of diametric projects – Lord Brahma of our material prison house; and Srila Prabhupada of our means for transcending it.



Figure 5. Left – Rupa Goswami’s samadhi; Right – Jiva Goswami’s samadhi; both samadhis can be found within the Sri Radha Damodar temple grounds in Vṛndāvan.

The Lord also reciprocated with both of His dear devotees during their missionary struggles with great empathy. He was always personally present watching over them, offering either words of encouragement or acts of reciprocation. Although Srila Prabhupada experienced some turmoil on the Jaladuta through lurching of the ship in some places, once they reached the Atlantic ocean onward to America, the seas became uncharacteristically calm. Prabhupada records in his Jaladuta diary “The captain tells that they had never [seen] such calmness of the Atlantic. I said it is Lord Krishna’s mercy. If Atlantic would have shown its usual face perhaps I would have died. But Lord Krishna has taken charge of the ship.” [[The Jaladuta diary, 13 September entry](#)].

While on board the Jaladuta, Srila Prabhupada also had a dream in which Lord Krishna personally appeared in his many forms to row the boat to America. He tells Prabhupada not to fear and to come along for the journey [[Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Chapter 12](#); [Room conversation, 8 June 1976, Los Angeles](#)]. The Lord was his constant companion, just as he was for Lord Brahma. We recall how sweetly and reassuringly the Lord responded to Brahma’s anxiety “O depth of Vedic wisdom, be neither depressed nor anxious about the execution of creation. What you are begging from Me has already been granted before.” [[SB 3.9.29](#)]. And the Lord goes on to give further reassurance that Brahma’s mission will be successfully fulfilled “Since you have desired to increase the population innumerable and expand your varieties of service, you shall never be deprived in this matter because My causeless mercy upon you will always increase for all time.” [[SB 3.9.34](#)].

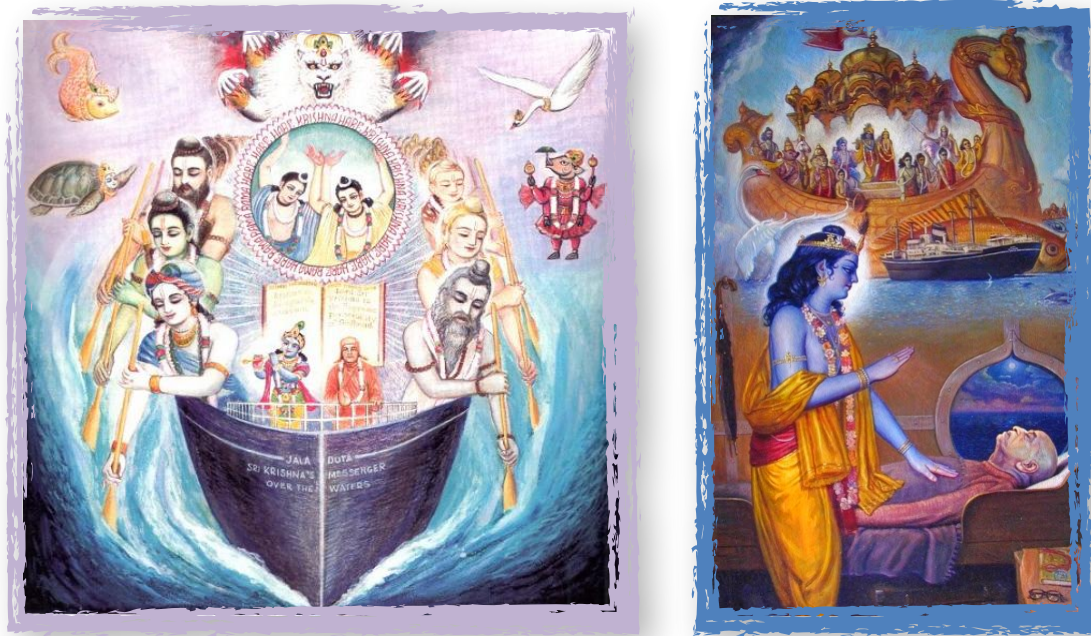


Figure 6. Artist renderings of the dream that Srila Prabhupada had while on the Jaladuta in which the Lord had personally taken charge of rowing the ship across the ocean to America.

## Parallels in their prayers

Vandanam, offering of prayers to the Lord, is one of the nine authorised processes of devotional service [SB 7.5.23-24]. The Bhagavatam is full of wonderful, sincere prayers to the Lord by his devotees. They intimately reveal the mood and heart of these devotees, and give us insight into the nature of their devotion to the Lord. Lord Brahma and Srila Prabhupada each composed such prayers during the inception phase of their missions. Prabhupada actually wrote two poems while on the Jaladuta, one on 13 September and the other on his arrival in Boston on 18 September. The latter, called Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, reveals more about his feelings concerning his mission specifically. Just as there were parallels in the initiating circumstances of their missions, there are instructive parallels in the prayers of Lord Brahma and Srila Prabhupada. We explore some of these parallels here. We have identified one central feature common to both the prayers of these souls that reveals their sincerity, a further four that reveal their hearts (their mood and emotions), and another two demonstrating their specific intentions behind these particular prayers.

### Their only desire was to please their spiritual masters and the Lord

First and foremost, what we see very strongly in both these prayers by Brahma and Prabhupada, are their pure intentions of desiring only the Lord's satisfaction and nothing else. Srila Prabhupada says so disarmingly in his poetry "...I do not know why You have brought me here. Now You can do whatever You like with me." [Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 1]. And Brahma declares "...I am born from the house of Your lotus navel for the purpose of creating the universe by Your mercy." [SB 3.9.21], and that he is only interested in fulfilling that purpose for the Lord's service "I pray only to engage in His service in the creation of the material world, and



I pray that I not be materially affected by my works...” [\[SB 3.9.23\]](#). This sincere mood of only-to-please-the-Lord is conspicuous across all the stanzas of both of their prayers, whether implicitly or explicitly presented. In fact, in Srila Prabhupada’s Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, there are no less than ten explicit phrases which directly indicate that his interest is solely to please the Lord:

- “If You like” (3 times)
- “As You like” (2 time)
- “If You so desire” (1 time)
- “make me dance as You like” (1 time)
- “do whatever You like with me” (1 time)
- “make me a success or failure” (1 time)
- “I am just like a puppet in Your hands” (1 time)

These indications highlight the completely unalloyed nature of Srila Prabhupada’s devotional service. Lord Brahma is similarly focused purely on the Lord’s desire. Srila Prabhupada emphatically explains this in his Bhagavatam purports “The prayers offered by Brahmā cannot be chanted by anyone who desires to fulfill his own sense gratification. Such prayers can be selected only by a person who wants to satisfy the Lord in His service.” [\[SB 3.9.40, purport\]](#).

#### Lamentation and compassion for the conditioned living entities

Lord Brahma and Srila Prabhupada both express compassion for the suffering of the souls drowning in the miseries of material existence. Brahma says to the Lord “O great actor, my Lord, all these poor creatures are constantly perplexed by hunger, thirst, severe cold...I take pity on them, and I am very much aggrieved for them.” [\[SB 3.9.8\]](#). Prabhupada also laments for the sorry state of the conditioned souls “Most of the population here is covered by the material modes of ignorance and passion...they have no taste for the transcendental message of Vāsudeva” [\[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 3\]](#). He appeals to the Lord to save us “I wish that You may deliver them” [\[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 7\]](#) and shows how he is considering our happiness by mercifully and simply stating the secret to it “I am sure that when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts, they will certainly feel englanded and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life.” [\[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 14\]](#).

#### Feeling overwhelmed, expressing doubt

It may be surprising to some to hear that such great personalities as Srila Prabhupada and Lord Brahma, despite all their qualifications, can often feel unqualified. Parts of their prayers convey a sense of feeling daunted, like they have great mountains to climb, not absolutely certain of the best route to take to the summit. In other words, a feeling of being overwhelmed and having doubts as to their abilities. Prabhupada states “Most of the population here is covered by the material modes of ignorance and passion. Absorbed in material life, they think themselves very happy and satisfied...I do not know how they will be able to understand it.” [\[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 3\]](#), and “How will they understand the mellows of devotional service?” [\[Mārkinē](#)

[Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 5](#)]. He further laments about his perceived lack of qualifications for accomplishing his mission “I am very unfortunate, unqualified, and the most fallen.” [[Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 11](#)]. Brahma was similarly flustered atop the ocean of devastation, in the vast emptiness at the beginning of this universe. As Prabhupada writes in one of his Srimad Bhagavatam purports “Brahmā was perturbed at its [the devastating waters] appearance and became very anxious about how to situate the different planetary systems... The task was meant only for Brahmā, and no one in the universe can even understand how difficult it was.” [[SB 3.9.27-28, purport](#)]. Brahma’s doubts in his own abilities are also apparent in his appeal to the Lord for protection from material contamination “Brahmā wants to be protected by the Lord because he has to contact many, many vicious living entities.” [[SB 3.9.24, purport](#)].

### Firm faith in the Lord

Despite their doubts and anxieties, both these great devotees had unflinching faith in the Lord and his mercy. What does this firm faith mean? It means both Prabhupada and Brahma knew that, provided their intentions were pure (one is fully surrendered to the will of the Lord), the Lord will surely act to assist them in a manner that is for everyone’s ultimate benefit “Yes, if I surrender to Kṛṣṇa, then all my business will be perfect...” [[BG 6.47 Lecture, Ahmedabad, December 12, 1972](#)].

Despite Prabhupada’s doubts arising from the difficulty of his task, he says “But I know Your [Krishna’s] causeless mercy can make everything possible, because You are the most expert mystic.” [[Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 4](#)]. Brahma also glorifies the Lord’s unlimited competence and capacity for mercy “The Lord, who is supreme and is the oldest of all, is unlimitedly merciful... He can uplift the entire cosmic creation and remove our dejection by kindly speaking His directions.” [[SB 3.9.25](#)].

One may ask, how is it possible that they could feel daunted and doubtful, and simultaneously have full faith in the Lord’s mercy? The paradox can be explained by observing that Prabhupada and Brahma are showing us that, on our own strength, we cannot accomplish anything, what to speak of their most arduous tasks? At the same time they are demonstrating that the Lord’s kindness upon his surrendered devotees is sure (there is no doubt that He will help them) “The surrendered soul knows nothing but the Lord, and therefore the Lord is very affectionate towards him.” [[SB 3.9.22, purport](#)], and that no task is impossible for Him “He is able to do anything and everything without being deterred by limitations of time and space.” [[SB 3.9.20, purport](#)]. Nevertheless, the Lord is never the order supplier of anyone [[SB 3.9.11, purport](#)], so it demonstrates a lack of surrender to expect the Lord to fulfill one’s every wish on demand. Hence, the mood of a surrendered devotee is to, while depending on the Lord for success, sincerely request His mercy and accept whatever His desired response is. This point brings us naturally to the fifth commonality in these prayers revealing their authors’ moods.

### Complete dependence on the Lord for success

In practically every stanza of his Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma poem, Srila Prabhupada exhibits his complete and utter dependence on the Lord for any success in his mission. There are many explicit phrases exemplifying this dependence such as “I am seeking Your benediction..., for I am powerless to do so on my own.” [[Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 11](#)] expressing his feeling of helplessness without the Lord. He also shows his

realization that the result is dependent on the Lord “Now, my Lord, it is up to You to make me a success or failure, as You like.” [[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 12](#)] and the Lord is the ultimate doer “O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands.” [[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 16](#)].

Brahma implores the Lord “May He be merciful towards me so that I, as before, may be empowered...” [[SB 3.9.22](#)] indicating how he is dependent on the Lord’s mercy to receive the qualities required for his task. He also asks for protection from the Lord “I therefore pray that in the course of my material activities I may not be deviated from the vibration of the Vedic hymns.” [[SB 3.9.24](#)] which indirectly indicates his dependence on the Lord to keep him safe so that he can successfully carry out his duty.

During pregnancy, the umbilical cord is the via medium through which the mother transfers essential nutrients and oxygen to the unborn child. The child is completely dependent on the mother and this sustenance for their very livelihood in the womb. Therefore, the umbilical attachment directly indicates this relationship of complete dependence. Similarly, the umbilical lotus stem connecting Lord Brahma and Garbodakasayi Viṣṇu, as well as Śrīla Prabhupada’s umbilical attachment to his Lordships in Vṛndāvan and his spiritual mentors also indicate very strongly their factual dependence and mood of dependence on Them. And specifically, on the nourishment and blessings of their predecessors and spiritual teachers for success in their services.

#### Requests to the Lord for empowerment in their missions

Turning our attention to the intentions of the prayers by these great souls, we note that they were composed at the inception of two extraordinary missions. It makes sense, therefore, that the prayers contain specific requests by these souls to help fulfill their missions. Both Brahma and Prabhupada explicitly requested the Lord for mercy and blessings to accomplish their goals. For example, Prabhupada says “...seeking your benediction...” [[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 11](#)] and “Only by Your causeless mercy will my words become pure.” [[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 14](#)]. Brahma was also very eager to receive the same mercy and blessings from the Lord “Let the Supreme Lord be merciful towards me...May He be merciful towards me...” [[SB 3.9.22](#)]. Specific to his mission, Brahma asked for introspection to create “May He be merciful towards me so that I, as before, may be empowered with the introspection to create.” [[SB 3.9.22](#)]. Śrīla Prabhupada asked for the speaking power “if You like You can make my power of speaking suitable for their understanding.” [[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 13](#)] and convincing abilities “...that I will be able to convince them about Your message...I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them...” [[Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanzas 5 and 11](#)] needed in his mission. It is very noticeable that both these souls were quite specific and thoughtful in their requests. They did not ask for anything extraneous or in excess of what was required for their services.

#### Glorifying qualities of the Lord relevant to their missions

Glorification of the Lord is an essential element of any prayer. Yet it is noteworthy the specific qualities of the Lord that Śrīla Prabhupada and Lord Brahma choose to glorify in their prayers. They mentioned qualities and potencies of the Lord that are specifically helpful and relevant to meet the challenges ahead of them. This choice demonstrates, among other things, Prabhupada’s and Brahma’s constant absorption in the Lord – always connecting whatever circumstances they were in with the Lord. As a reader, one can also appreciate how these specific choices for glorification infuse their prayers with additional intimacy and make them feel more personal.



Some examples of these glorifications by Lord Brahma are “Your Lordship is the prime root of the tree of the planetary systems. This tree has grown by first penetrating the material nature in three trunks — as me, Śiva and You, the Almighty — for creation, maintenance and dissolution...” [SB 3.9.16]. This glorification highlights the Lord’s position as the ultimate source of the whole cosmic manifestation, for which Brahma has been delegated as chief engineer. It is clearly connected with his own mission to engineer and populate the universe. And it is also especially personal because it describes his relationship with the Lord in this circumstance “...This tree has grown by first penetrating the material nature in three trunks — as me, Śiva and You...”.

Brahma also offers his respects to the Lord in the mode of enjoying pastimes of creation (the key goal of his mission) and maintenance of the cosmic manifestation “I offer my obeisances unto Him who by His pastimes enjoys the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the cosmic manifestation.” [SB 3.9.14].

Prabhupada came to the west to establish and teach the principles of devotional service. It is not surprising, then, that he emphasises the Srimad Bhāgavatam (the Lord’s literary incarnation) in his Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma. The Bhagavatam elaborately teaches devotional service through many narrations of the Lord’s interactions with His devotees, and the interactions of His devotees with each other. He says “The words of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are Your incarnation, and if a sober person repeatedly receives it with submissive aural reception, then he will be able to understand Your message.” [Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 8].

Prabhupada also relates his feeling of being daunted by the difficulty of his mission by appealing to the Lord to help him as the expert mystic. “But I know Your causeless mercy can make everything possible, because You are the most expert mystic.” [Mārkinē Bhāgavata-dharma, Stanza 4]. Mystics are persons who have developed some extraordinary powers (siddhis) which make seemingly impossible things possible. Prabhupada here is telling that although the task seems very difficult, he is sure that the Lord can make it possible through His mystic power.

## What can we learn from these great souls and their prayers?

Lord Brahma and Srila Prabhupada had objectively grand missions or services to the Lord. Many of us practicing Krishna Consciousness might not identify with the magnitude of such services. But, many of us might relate with being confronted with services that felt beyond our capabilities, and similar feelings of being overcome with how to execute them. Perhaps it was your first time leading a large harināma in a crowded city, convincing people to accept Srila Prabhupada’s books on the street, constructing a large temple for the Lord, preaching in a country with a foreign language to your own, or even your first time giving a class to devotees on Bhagavad Gita as it is or Srimad Bhagavatam at your local temple.

It is reassuring to know that even exalted personalities such as Lord Brahma and Srila Prabhupada experience these feelings. It is not necessarily a sign of struggle only reserved for neophyte devotees. Since these kinds of feelings can confront any devotee, it is more important how we respond in those situations. We can take lessons about how these souls responded in such circumstances, and the reasons why they were able to do so in this way. Srila Prabhupada and Lord Brahma were both in full cognisance of the fact that they were never alone in all circumstances. They were implicitly aware of the Lord in their hearts who is always observing and accompanying them through their journeys.

However, this quality of theirs is a symptom of their devotional practices. One cannot prematurely imbibe this consciousness of always feeling connected with the Lord. Attentive sādhana (devotional practice following the

prescribed rules and regulations) is an essential prerequisite. Lord Brahma performed a thousand celestial years of penance and meditation prior to reciting his prayers full of realised knowledge about the Lord [[SB 3.6.38](#)]. Srila Prabhupada spent a lifetime (decades) in preparation, after receiving the instruction of his spiritual master to preach Krishna Consciousness in the English speaking world. During that time, he was also deepening his own sādhana, as well as reading and writing literature on transcendental topics about the Lord. In other words, completely absorbing himself in Krishna Consciousness. So Lord Brahma and Srila Prabhupada clearly have this taste for absorption in Krishna. It is this taste that, whenever they have a so-called “free moment” or “spare time”, they naturally choose to spend it with Krishna. In the case of Srila Prabhupada, through reading the scriptures and writings of the previous acaryas.

Another takeaway from the stories of these two great souls is the value of [vandanam](#) as a process for connecting whatever circumstances we are in with the Lord, and elevating our consciousness to stay aware of the Lord’s constant companionship and presence in our hearts. Hearing the prayers of the Lord’s reminds us of the essential requirement of engaging the heart in the process. It also shows us through practical examples how great devotees perform this process. Not only that, but the act of simply reciting, reading and hearing the prayers of such great souls is also purifying for the heart. This fact is confirmed by Srila Prabhupada in a conversation with several of his disciples. In response to Prabhupada quoting emphatically “...by even a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.” [[CC Madhya 22.54](#)], Revatinandana Prabhu asks Prabhupada “Does that also apply to reading the words of a pure devotee?”. Prabhupada responds with “Yes.” but also reminds us of the importance of sincere endeavour “One must be very eager to take it” [[Conversation, December 14, 1970, Indore](#)].