

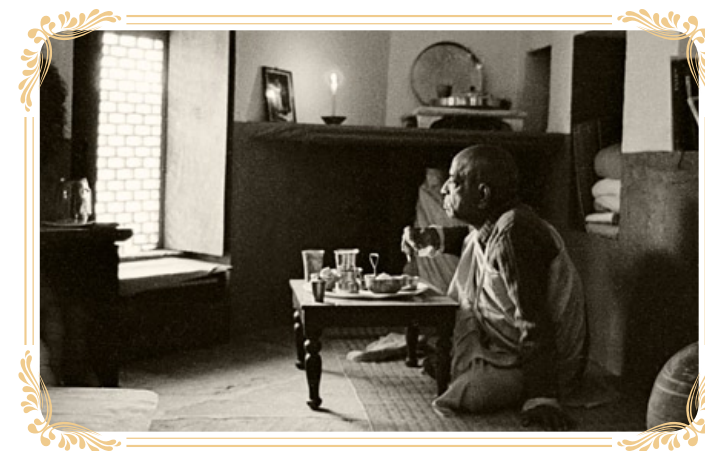


twenty-four hours. I rolled the dough evenly into a paper-thin disk ten-to-twelve inches across, cooked it on a griddle until nearly done, and then rested it directly on neem wood embers to puff up into a balloon. When Srila Prabhupada entered his kitchen, its sparseness was filled with his presence, and he smiled in appreciation. He commented on everything, from the clay water jugs to the newly stenciled *mahamantra* that circled the room near the ceiling. Before taking his seat on the small chair overlooking the *samadhi* of Srila Rupa Goswami, he gazed out the window toward the *samadhi* and folded his hands in respect.

Then I served him the meal, along with a hot Vraja *phulka*. With the first bite of the *chapati* he noted, “You have done everything right. It is Pisi Lahore wheat, milled yesterday, and the neem wood gives it a special, distinctive flavor. One thing though—it should cook for one or two seconds more on the griddle; then it will be perfect.” I was stunned by his perceptive critique. As in all things, Srila Prabhupada was truly a connoisseur of foods, wanting us to learn how to prepare and offer the best of everything for Krishna. For me, these *chapatis* always remained one of my favorite things to make for Srila Prabhupada.

**Visakha devi:** During Kartika of 1972, Srila Prabhupada spoke in the mornings and evenings next to the *bhajan kutir* of Rupa Goswami at the Radha-Damodar temple, but Yamuna didn’t attend. Her time was

fully devoted to her *seva*: cooking for Srila Prabhupada. Cooking was her constant meditation. She would shop for, clean and cut the *bhoga*; pick out foreign particles from the dals, rice and spices; soak and marinate; make *chaunces* and fresh pastes; and consistently clean the utensils, kitchen and eating areas. The loving intensity of her absorption was a wonder to behold and, sampling the preparations she made, one could only think they’d descended directly from Goloka. I sensed Srila Prabhupada’s pleasure in her service, dedication and expertise. Yamuna was attentive and sensitive to Srila Prabhupada’s needs, deferential to him, and keenly appreciative of his presence and the gift of *bhakti* he selflessly and continuously offered. ❧



There is an unforgettable picture of Srila Prabhupada honoring *prasadam* in his newly-decorated kitchen at Radha-Damodar which came about through the collaboration of Yamuna and Visakha devi. For many devotees, this iconic photograph remains transcendent.

**Visakha devi:** Yamuna devi was cooking for Srila Prabhupada at this time, expertly making traditional dishes. One day, after Yamuna served Prabhupada his luncheon repast, she asked him if I could photograph him honoring *prasadam*, and he kindly agreed. I silently entered his dining area, a small, simple space that adjoined the kitchen, and made photographs of Srila Prabhupada meditatively honoring this luncheon that had been so lovingly and exquisitely prepared by his beloved disciple.

It’s an historic scene, as this is one of Srila Prabhupada’s two original rooms at the Radha-Damodar temple. It was at this same spot where, in the years before he’d come to America, Srila Prabhupada had looked out the same latticed window at the meeting place of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan. Deeply contemplating the Goswamis’ profound realizations and his own Spiritual Master’s directive to him to bring Krishna Consciousness to the English-speaking people of the world, Prabhupada had prepared to come West. ❧

## Pishima Cooks for Srila Prabhupada and Yamuna learns from Her

Yamuna had already established a meaningful relationship with Srila Prabhupada’s sister, Pishima, in Mayapur, and that relationship continued