

Srila Prabhupada in Britain

Yamuna

Interviewed in Vrindavan 22-25 March 2006

Meeting Swamiji

Letters came in **early** 1966 from Jan that she and Mike had met an Indian swami in Lower East Side and were taking Sanskrit and music classes with him. Then **an unexpected** letter – I’m getting married, please come to the wedding. I was ready for a change. I flew to New York, stayed with them for about ten days. During that time a rapport was established with Swamiji. **I was a macrobiotic devotee at the time. The day I arrived in New York, I was whisked off to a lunch at Swamiji’s apartment. He was an elderly gentleman, cordial, with laughing eyes and a ready smile. About a dozen others were there, seated on the floor, already eating lunch. After introductions, Mukunda, Janaki and I joined them.**

The lunch that Swamiji cooked and served was called prasadam. I had never tasted anything like these dishes—one or two were identifiable, but the others were completely new. My eyes watered from chilies. Vegetable dishes were spicy, bold, with assertive flavors. This was a far cry from macrobiotic simplicity.

When I presumed lunch was over, it was not. Instead Swami went over to the corner and opened a large jar, reaching in with two fingers and pulling out this big brown drippy ball. He walked straight over to me and held the ball over my plate.

‘Take.’

Everyone was smiling, some were chuckling.

‘No, thank you. I enjoyed lunch, but I can’t eat another bite.’

‘No, you take, now. Now.’

I put out my hand. I am forced to take a bite. It explodes, and I vaguely hear everyone cheering. My first thoughts—I may not stay macrobiotic for the rest of my life, but this will not be what I turn to. Swamiji is fascinating and engaging, but I doubt I will return and eat a meal here again.’

Wrong. I ate another one the next day. After lunch he asked me to stay and discuss plans for my sister’s wedding, and course I stayed. He asked me to help him cook the wedding feast the next day, and I willingly agreed. On the wedding day Swami cooked for six hours and made a festive multi-course feast for 40 guests. I performed only one task—assembling potato-stuffed pastries called kachoris. In that one day, Swamiji completely charmed me. I ended up returning for his company every day during my short New York visit.

The first Krsna conscious philosophy I registered hearing from Swamiji was the story about Liquid Beauty: the difference between love and lust. I had loved someone who had turned from a creative genius to a drug addict. When I went to my sister’s wedding I was with a man I had been with for many years. But he became a drug dealer and it was the end of our relationship. I knew I wasn’t going to return to him.

So when Swamiji said that love is lust, I thought that’s absolutely true. After that I tried to understand his accent so I could hear more. But I wasn’t going to join just because my sister and Mukunda had joined. I connected with very few of the devotees in the New York temple. My sister was the only woman and she found their company very difficult. I was only there for about ten days. I had no idea Krishna consciousness was going to be for me.