Even before I met my Guru Maharaja, I started chanting with one of my friends, who was also a pacifist. We decided that in order to achieve enlightenment we should travel to India.

In those days, the mid-eighties, we stood no chance of going to India. The Communists were in still power, and with our anti-government reputation no one would let us out of the country through any legal channel. But we were determined so we decided to cross the border illegally and escape. With this plan in mind we proceeded to Uzbekistan which borders Pakistan, and from there to make our way to India. Of course, this was a crazy idea, but we did not care. We were convinced that Krishna would help us. And He did, throughout the trip! We witnessed His protection is many incidents along the way.

PPd: How about sharing some of your travel adventures for our readers?

USd: Well, one particular episode comes to mind. Upon our arrival in Central Asia, while moving here and there, I attracted the attention of one of the local street gangs. They must have noticed that I was a stranger from Russia and figured that I must have some money on me. They surrounded me, demanding that I empty my pockets or else they will kill me. To emphasize their point, one of them put a blade to my throat. I had some money on me, but had I no inclination to give it to them. I was convinced that they could not do anything. In fact somehow I saw humor in the situation and began laughing loudly right in the face of the boy who was holding the blade to my throat. Somehow I knew he had no guts to do anything as Krishna is with me. Surprised by my reaction and with his hand shaking, he declared: “He’s a mad man!” He put the knife back in his pocket and left followed by his friends.

Finally we reached Fergana in Uzbekistan, situated on the foot or Pamir Mountains. Pamir means “roof of the world” and this range formed at a “knot” in the Himalayas lie the other side from India. It was a crazy idea, but we were very determined so we decided to cross these imposing mountains to reach India! We had no experience of mountain climbing and neither we had any information of how to go about it, but we were convinced that Krishna will make the impossible possible. We were singing Hare Krishna practically nonstop.

First warning of the complete madness of the idea we’ve got when we visited  
the local Mountains museum where we saw what kind of animals are living  
there – wolves, tigers, panthers and other predators. But even that did not stop us. We bought some primitive cheap mountain equipment we could find in local shop and went up the range to start our climbing.

On the first level, just few hundred feet up we saw a woman who was running around in panic calling for help. We approached her and asked what was happening. She explained that her husband went up here in a very desperate state of mind and she followed him fearing that he will commit suicide. She was pleading with us to find him. We told her not to worry and started searching for the man.

Soon we found him - standing on the edge of a cliff ready to jump off.  
We started running towards him shouting that he should stop as from this  
point onwards in his life he will has nothing to worry about, since Krishna will take full care of him. He was puzzled, but curious to understand what we were talking about. We just flooded him with our enthusiastic preaching which not only made him to stop his attempt, but also prompted him to invite us home as his guests of honor. We agreed, feeling that it’s was Krishna’s hand at work.

At his home he told us that his life was ruined by the local Government  
authorities, who completely blocked all the opportunities for him to work and maintain his family as he did something they have not approved. This made him so desperate that he wanted to commit suicide.

We realized that it would be safe to discuss our plans with him, so we revealed our mutual disgust with the dictatorship and our intention of crossing the mountains. He thought for a moment. He said that even with Lord Krishna’s help it would still be a very challenging task. The wild animals are not the only danger in the mountains; there are also very narrow trails on the edges of cliffs covered with ice. He explained how even mountain goats slip and fall down the edge to their death. But even if we somehow manage to survive the predators, icy weather and the other hardships, then there would be the border guards…

Helicopters control the border twenty-four hours a day, and there is nowhere to hide in the mountains well above the tree line. If they spot a human being along the frontier, they never bother trying to stop and chat. Convinced that they are intruders, the border patrol just shoots them down from the helicopter. They make sure that the persons are dead and carry on.

After this enlivening description he said that we can go for an easier  
option. He suggested we highjack a track and try to break through a Pakistan road border, which was quite near. He said that of course there will be shooting and chasing behind, but this will still give us better chances. Our prospects seemed dismal, so we reconsidered and went back to Russia, considering that the man whose life we had saved had now saved ours by Krishna’s grace.

Certainly, we thought, Krishna had a better plan for us. And He did - at least for me, because quite soon I met devotees and acquired Prabhupada’s books and learned more about Krishna consciousness. The main aspect which always attracted me was the chanting of the Holy Name, especially japa. Therefore when I met a spiritual master who was completely dedicated to chanting and spreading the Holy Name, I had no doubt that this is my Guru.

I first heard about HH Indradyumna Maharaja in the fall of 1989. I had come to Moscow to join a large group of devotees who were conducting daily harinams. They were also protesting that the first Prabhupada’s books officially sent to Russia by European BBT had been seized and held by customs. Just before this, HH Indradyumna Swami had come to Moscow for the first time. He had charmed everyone with his classes, kirtans and personal qualities. Today, twenty years later I’m very happy that I made the best choice for myself as I can’t imagine anyone else so patient and caring towards me, despite of my unlimited faults and shortcomings.