

ELECTRONIC BOOK

By Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami

Originally published by

GN Press Inc. USA

Every Day, Just Write

Volume 1

Welcome Home to

the One Big Book

of Your Life

Geaglum, Inis rath,

November 14 - 30, 1996

Also by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami

Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita

Handbook for Krishna Consciousness

Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself

Your Ever Well-Wisher

Prabhupada Nectar v. 1-5

Japa Reform Notebook

Qualities of Sri Krishna

Vaisnava Behavior/ The Twenty-Six Qualities of a Devotee

Japa Walks/Japa Talks

Japa Transformations

12:40 a.m., Srila Prabhupada's Disappearance Day

I want to be real and writing helps. One devotee wrote me, "Your clarity of service direction has *only* been achieved by deep reflective thought." Yes, that's true. Today is Srila Prabhupada's disappearance day. I want to feel my personal relationship with him in separation. It can't be exactly the same as when Prabhupada was here, but I shouldn't think that the relationship with him in separation is less than the relationship I had pre-1977. The guru-disciple relationship is based on absolute principles, yet it is also subjective and personal. It's also crucial for going back to Godhead. Therefore, I fight to remain on course in my life of writing and *sadhana*.

Ideas are tight-rolled balls. They can be easily relaxed in discussion, these tight buds ready to flower.

I want to live each moment of the day, simultaneously loving life in this world (with Krishna conscious insight) and developing attachment and yearning for the spiritual world where the soul goes. Each day reveal this to one who searches, and writing helps create the attitude of discovery.

5 a.m.

Reading *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* on Prabhupada's disappearance. It is well written and contains plenty of quotes from those who were present. In those days I would never have dreamed of writing so freely and about myself as I do now. It's another symptom of "craziness" from being separated from him. We have nothing left to do but lament and push on, and we each do it in one way or another while we all suffer from his lack of presence. Someone says, "Why lament? He's right here with you at all times." Others may claim equally, "It's not the same without him." *The Nectar of Devotion* describes how Mother Yashoda and Nanda Maharaja had differing attitudes toward Krishna's absence. Mother Yashoda constantly reprimanded Nanda Maharaja's calm appearance in Krishna's absence. She wanted him to do something to bring Him back. Nanda Maharaja said, "Why are you acting crazy and disturbing my home? Can't you see that Krishna is right here?" Both of them were right "He was there and He was not there.

We should feel something, recall the spiritual master, tell others about him. I'm hoping today that my health will hold up so that I can do just that "go over to the temple, get through the liturgy of songs and worship, and then be able to speak my piece. I will not give the world's greatest speech, I know, and it will probably not change the devotees who hear it much. Each of them will still have to contend "the mothers with

their children, the sick with their afflictions, the restless with their minds "with themselves. At least I will have made an attempt to glorify Prabhupada. I can feel that much. I too, after speaking, will have to return to my day and its lack of intensity of love in service. Still, I'm not going to write myself off as a non-lover or as an offender. rather, I'll stay active and read about Prabhupada, or read his book, then write as I know how.

In my talk I plan to mention that Prabhupada departed in a perfect way. He was in the perfect place, Vrndavana, surrounded by devotees chanting the holy names. He taught the perfect lesson of how to die; he was inspired and instructive up until his last breath. After his disappearance he remains with us in our service in separation. In that way, he is open to everyone.

It wasn't easy for him or for us in 1977. Now we talk about it in a philosophical way, but then it was real raw suffering and grief. Crying, crying, our best friend and guide was gone. Everyone felt it. Then the leaders moved in and to top positions, sincerely, but with some motive, no doubt. They were the chosen ones. I am bitter about it now, myself one of the leaders of those days. Gradually backing away from it so I don't commit more mistakes while sincerely trying to maintain and push on his movement. I am pushing on now with the pen and the typewriter, with "wild mind" and honest, unrehearsed feeling.

I want to find again what I actually think. I want to face doubts. This is the time to do these things because these are my last years. Be who you are and then improve. Hare Krishna.

Face it: I don't love him followed by I do love him. I don't believe in Krishna followed by I do believe in Krishna. I don't like to read the *Bhagavatam* followed by I do like to read the *Bhagavatam*.

I'm reading a book called *Nourishing Wisdom* about food and attitudes toward food. It teaches that we should not be slaves to any one diet or person insisting that we follow any one regimen. We have to find out what's best for us at each stage of our lives. But I cannot apply this principle in the same way in my spiritual life. I follow a regimen and a person who is my spiritual master.

At the same time, the "suspect authority" attitude can be helpful even in spiritual life, but only up until that time when you find the actual authority. At that point, all that is helpful is surrender. Then in surrender, we strive to get beyond fear and duty to love.

How to discern our actual level of love? We start by admitting our worst. One way to acknowledge "the worst," however, is not open to me. That is, I cannot break the rules or promises I made to Prabhupada in order to "liberate" myself from taboos. No. The author of the food book tells a story of how he was forbidden to eat bacon by his Jewish upbringing. One day, however, while suffering in many ways in material life, he almost unconsciously went into a cafeteria and ordered a lettuce, bacon, and tomato sandwich. He said it was a happy, liberating experience and that there was no bad aftertaste from it. Of course, he doesn't know that real aftertaste is karma.

11:45 a.m.

Don't wait, just write. Lecture over. I felt loud, strong-voiced, and made gestures, the audience spread left and right in the long room. They didn't *seem* so tuned in; the lecture didn't seem to click. I don't know what it is you feel when it's really good. Questions afterwards weren't to the heart of my lecture at all.

Then outside in the last rich-coloured autumn trees and to the quay. Water in bottom of rowboat and for the second time I unconsciously dipped the end of my *dhoti* in it. Arjuna pushed off the rowboat and away we went.

It gets rough some mornings in the strait. I tense when the boat rocks.

* * *

Looked again at Robert Lax interviewed by Peter France on hermit life. Lax says he's not a hermit but sought solitude to write.

Peter France asked, "Do you write to discover what you have in mind?"

Lax replied, "More to keep it from getting away. I think that from moment to moment I usually know what I have in mind. I also seem to know that five minutes from now I won't be able to rediscover it unless I've written it down. . . . I look back through my notebooks and remember the different things that have happened and read what I said about it at the time, and you won't be surprised to hear that I usually agree with it."

France asked him if there was an element of helping people in his poems and writings.

"Yes, I think first of all I have this confidence that if I can ever manage to clear things up for myself I'll be helping clear them up for some other people, and if I put it in a language that I can really understand and find simple enough to communicate to myself, then some other people will be able to pick up on it too."

Lax mentioned that he listens to the BBC News broadcasts. France asked if hearing the news made him feel a conflict of moral duty, "to be informed of all the disasters you can do nothing about."

Lax replied, "I just don't think we're ever in a position of being able to do nothing. Take an analogy from science. If a man is working on the discovery of penicillin, I think he's right to keep on with his work even if all the cities in the world are falling. He should keep to that work. We'll need some penicillin. I don't think you can rush off with a gun on your shoulder every time there's an alarm. I think if there is destruction and turmoil in the world, people need penicillin. They need any good thing you can produce." (*Hermits: The Insights of Solitude*, edited by Peter France, pp. 200 - 205)

In preparing for this morning's lecture I found a nice section in the *Lilamrta* describing the quiet *kirtanas* in Prabhupada's room:

"Srila Prabhupada would ask that the *kirtanas* be continued, and he would become silent, as the devotees sang softly, hour after hour: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. A very small pair of *karatalas*, the only instrument, produced a soft, pleasant ringing. The voices of the chanters were subdued, but their minds were firmly fixed in devotion to Srila Prabhupada and the holy name, concerned that Prabhupada could hear the *maha-mantra* without interruption."

I read that section during the lecture and added that Prabhupada taught us the importance of chanting Hare Krishna and reading from his books without speculation, and that Prabhupada would always be with us in the future through this method. Then I described (without naming myself as the subject) an experience I actually felt while chanting in Prabhupada's presence. I said that sometimes during this chanting, Prabhupada communicated unspoken feelings to his disciples: "He might simply glance

at one of the devotees, but that devotee would feel a surge of loving emotion and realization. Suddenly he would understand better how pure and compassionate Srila Prabhupada was. And the devotee might recall how Srila Prabhupada had come and saved him, bringing him to Krishna consciousness." (*Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*, "Uniting Three Worlds," pp. 321 - 321)

It was good to remember that again. That's what I'm looking for here in Geaglum "I'm trying to recover fresh love for Prabhupada. I realize, though, that I have to cut through a lot of falsity in myself and also whatever resistance has come into my mind and life, which is perhaps not always my fault but is created by circumstances. More on that later. It was just nice to see and recall how by being near Prabhupada, I felt indebtedness and loving exchange.

2:50 p.m.

Black Kerry cows snort as I leave the house, warning me not to trespass on their bit of green turf. Surly ladies, I don't intend to trespass on your land, although I feel challenged by your leader's snorting. I'll walk past you. Head, hold out.

I walked through a wet meadow to get to this shed on the edge of the lake where I am free to write and draw. Ani has built a serviceable desk with both a central and right-hand surface to it. I place the art materials on the right side.

I read in *Nourishing Wisdom* about cravings and sweets. We all have an innate need for sweets, but by positive control, we can stop it from becoming an unwanted habit. The author recommends a "holding technique." If you don't want to yield to a habit, then sit there and experience all the physical and mental aspects of the urge without giving in to it.

The author asserts that a sweet craving is a yearning for "sweetness" (nectar) in one's life, and he thinks that can be fulfilled by listening to music. Nondevotional music is another forbidden sweet for a monk like me. Oh, gosh,

oh, bosh,

it ain't easy.

Boss, you ask me to

give up Henry Adams and

Bob ribicoff and even Allen

Freed favorites and then Monk

and Miles and Coltrane and

Bach

if I want to find the sweetness in Krishna

madhuram "sweeter than biscuits and apple sauce

Krishna Krishna.

"The seven musical notes "sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha and ni "are used in musical instruments, but originally they come from the *Sama Veda*. The great sage Narada vibrates sounds describing the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. By such transcendental vibrations, such as Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare rama Hare rama, rama rama Hare Hare, he fixes his mind at the lotus feet of the Lord. Thus he directly perceives HrsikeSa, the master of the senses." (*Bhag.* 6.5.22)

Narada muni bhaja vina/ "radhika ramana" nama he. He vibrates the strings and the devotees sing in response, drowning in the ecstatic nectar.

Oh Krishna, I'll write quickly as the sun goes down, those last rays descending like a desk lamp shining in over my right shoulder. White clouds, punched holes, yellow fret work, blue spaces, and the gray angry clouds of Lord Siva. Let it go, Casey.

* * *

Like a bucket, water
not ashes (sometimes)
barber shop memories, unconsc.
Slump in batting average. Gil Hodges down to .250 and below.
Gil,
O God, priest prayed mid-
summer, "May first baseman
Gil resume batting upswing as
he fields with mitt and long
stretch and stride to catch ball."

* * *

Gil, good-natured. Tough and big if need be against rowdies.
Gil, good Gil should hit .260 at least, if not .275. And homers "30, 40. "Bless him,"
they prayed.

Purely material desires in summer Ebbets Field.

Purely material desires. O Krishna, let Satsva rise to the occasion and pour his heart
out within the *sampradaya*. Don't break habits and rules, especially the four, and eat
warm biscuits and sweet apple sauce, sweet *prasada*.

12:30 a.m.

Srila Prabhupada outlives his disappearance day. 7:30 p.m. arrives, he "dies," then
goes on living. He lives forever and his followers live with him. He lives on in
his *murti* and accepts biscuits and applesauce at 7:30 p.m. He's there the next morning to
accept his dictaphone from me and to hear the results of the Prabhupada book
distribution marathon. He lives in me and when I die, I don't die either. You see? Even
my poor love, selfish, body-centered stuff, my concealed fear, is not really me. I'm
within, beyond the modes of danger and pain.

* * *

Feeling restless this morning. A slight warning sign flickers in my head and I'm afraid
to concentrate on any one thing that requires effort. Instead, I write a very little, read
only two *Bhagavatam* verses and purports, read a little in my new book, *Memories*, and
then stop, forewarned. I proceed at risk. I don't want to go back to bed, but maybe I
should.

Restless day after Prabhupada's disappearance. What am I doing right or wrong?

* * *

Two things that came out yesterday while reading *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*:

1. It's not true, as some harsh critics say, that the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* treats Prabhupada offensively as an ordinary human being. I consistently portray Prabhupada as a liberated soul, but as one who manifested human traits to us. There is a good section on this in SPL where Prabhupada's last months are described. I say that his "dying" was obviously a transcendental experience, yet he taught us ordinary persons by example how we may approach death. I felt reassured against the critics by hearing yesterday's readings.

2. *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* is an official biography of Prabhupada's life, and in that sense, it is not my most honest expression of how I feel about him. An example of this was when I described that the dealings with Prabhupada in his very last days were the most intimate that he allowed us in his life. I said that the only thing that could compare to it was Prabhupada's association with his first disciples in 1966, but that those who were present then and who were present at the end of Prabhupada's life said that the later pastimes were the most intimate. I wrote that statement as a concession to the viewpoint expressed by those wonderful servants who were with him at the end, such as Tamal Krishna Maharaja, Bhavananda, and others. It was their opinion that these later pastimes were more intimate than the 1966 ones, and they presented many reasons why this was true. Actually, however, those devotees were not present for the 1966 pastimes. Neither do I, who was there in 1966, concede that for me the later pastimes were more intimate. In fact, for me Prabhupada was aloof in the later pastimes and I was not able to break through the barrier. It was the same barrier that Prabhupada personally had to break for me in 1966 when he said, "If you love me, then I will love you."

Now I am able to write more freely how I actually feel. Thus my writing can be more honest than the official biography. Nowadays I can still recall memories and go over them in various ways and I hope to always be doing so. Still, I must work with my immediate life in separation from Prabhupada, how he is in my life, in my heart "even though in some ways I don't follow some of the externals as strictly as I did when he was here. Let's work at this lovingly and honestly.

* * *

2:25 p.m., Shed

Thinking of Bach and how he was given so much ability by Krishna to create music. Imagine those times, dancers in garters and knickers, women wearing hourglass gowns and décolletage and both men and women in powdered wigs. No electricity in those days"

Like these days in this house.

Oh, happy day

the Lord creates in me bubbles and waves of possibility.

I can do many nice things in His service.

O my Lord, let me not fall down.

* * *

I remember that Bach's suites often had a variety of movements in them, rondeaus and sarabandes, fast dances and slow meditations. I like that image for my writing. A sarabande might tell of sad events, a village wiped out by plague or war or of a dying mother, a simple son betrayed, a candy bar lost, a collie dog who followed someone wherever he went just died (we *all* die), and pain. The story would be told in three or four minutes, the allotted time for sadness before the pace picked up.

You do the same
this pen and others each run out in due course and
you fill 'em up again to
tell the memory "
but forgot to bring
a book of poems, a tape
a dictaphone
a bride and groom and
wedding cake and Woody
Allen joke
but Bach had a
harpsichord player and great
violinist to carry on
and finish the concert to the ghosts
in a German king's court who
said, "Old Bach has arrived." He died two hundred years ago and wet leaves now tell
the story as they pile up and I speculate on the soul eternal. Bach's soul? Somewhere in a
new body.

The Sunday school will tell us what to do. I beseech you, sir, please pray, undo this
button.

Minuet, Krishna, Krishna. We dance the Lord's way "even elephants can prance on
tiptoe under bright chandeliers.

Too many gnats in here to dance, and I forgot to bring my *Srimad-Bhagavatam* out
here, so I can't tell you how Daksa's second set of 10,000 sons were taken by Narada,
who made them saintly and renounced.

Renunciation is superior. Stick to your *asrama* once and for all.

What? You need to meet your emotional needs? Can we help you meet them in some
other way?

There's no joy in stepping down. But judge not and be not judged. Just keep dancing
the minuet.

Oh, Bach, you served Krishna as "Got" with fast beats and slow, violins, organs,
served Him as a person or in His energy manifested in all things

holy God

who can lift Govardhana

no problem.

He doesn't need any hernia operations

like Madhu, and He has no

headaches but wants us all to return to Him

from this

darkening day of work.

Blow deep
you who are not an angel
old sense-gratifying monk
ask forgiveness for you discrepancies
while sitting near this calm lake.
Give me a verse and I'll lecture simple twice a week,
Ridin' the track
a Krishnaite
I bow and scrape
tow and bow "
and move into the presto movement,
sweating and working and loving through the hollow emptiness of my body
made of flesh, bones, pain "
it all brings
Krishna

I seek You, God, and pray to You. Please let me remember to bring
the *Bhagavatam* next time I'm out here and when returning to the house, *if* lights are on,
I'll read (and if not by candle!). Or chant *japa* and be at peace.

I am happiest when in line pulling the traces of *bhakti*. I am servant of the Lord, not
the senses and mind. In mantras find God!

12:45 a.m.

Thinking of a Godbrother who left his duties to satisfy his emotional needs, which he
says he has neglected for many years. I don't judge him, but I fear following that path. I
pray for protection from my own emotional needs. May they be fulfilled in a Krishna
conscious way without my having to relinquish duties. I have nothing left in life but to
fulfill my obligations "to set a decent example as a *sannyasi* and spiritual master. I
accepted the posts; now I must live with them. I don't feel dissatisfied with the posts but
with my self. May Krishna protect me.

I want to write in a way that is suitable for ordinary days "usual and common, as an
everyday occurrence.

There are everyday occurrences here:

Rain,

weeds and rushes on the shore of Lough Erne,

breakfast (Syamananda comes in complete dark and cold by rowboat to cook for me),

lunch.

Everyday wonders. In Zen they say to see wonder in the ordinary. Don't seek exotic
twists but ordinary life, free from self-consciousness,

seen from this

everyday common body.

* * *

Fantasizing that Allen Ginsberg had a late awakening (in his seventies) that he should
give up Buddhism and come to Krishna conscious theism. Devotees direct him to me. I
show him a poem written about him by Anne Waldmen. Then we get down to business
and I see how willing he is, or how possible it is for him, to receive Krishna conscious

blessings. To do so he must become like a child and accept the authority of *brahma-Sabda*.

* * *

Common, everyday prayer doesn't have to wait for inspiration or a special awareness of beauty. Do it in your night notes, your evensong, and whenever you can on legs and feet, in Wellies, walking to the shed, to the beat in your head with the dictaphone, measuring the pollen count, in yesterday's cool and clear and today's spitting rain " anytime is good.

In winter there are no pleasure boats, in early summer I have felt more inspired to write poems from my day's account, or to draw the boathouse in the distance, the fence poles in the foreground. I can't fail because I believe in the "No-fail school." There is no worst or best in that school.

This rowboat has no leaks but there's always a little water in the bottom of it. The devotees put a piece of cardboard down for passengers to sit on as they row across, back and forth from the island to Geaglum Quay.

* * *

5:15 a.m.

My unconscious often floats into my conscious. Of course, that happens when I get sleepy sitting in a chair and trying to chant a few more rounds. I wonder if I have abused transference of states from unconscious to conscious through the free-writing. Does that account for my inability to control the mind in *japa* even when I'm awake? I don't usually blame it on the free-writing because it's already been going on. Free-writing looks into what is going on already and then tries wholeheartedly to bring us to a Krishna conscious state. I hope for Krishna conscious states flowing from the uncontrolled to the controlled. Prabhupada says we are all innately Krishna conscious.

I don't want my Krishna consciousness to be simply a matter of reiterating what I just read. It should be more than that. At the sankirtanam.

* * *

The truth is eluding me,
the *satyam param*, the *Bhagavatam*.
Satya, a girl who married an older man and
no longer writes me, although I'm the guru.
But I am not the guru of her heart. Just as well
because I am somewhat contaminated and we see

most of these Western so-called gurus sooner or
later give up trying and give in to their psychophysical natures.
Fortunately I do this in writing
and don't commit worse barbs. This is the worst.
I hope this is the worst. I don't even jog or binge
or pig-out on ice cream and bran muffins
like the nutrition Ph.D. who confessed it
and then told us how to kick such habits
by sitting through them, feeling all the feelings but
not giving in to actually eating
the homemade vanilla ice cream and bran muffins
or whatever it is that makes you cry and
yearn as you sit on your couch and
the fantasies roar over your *gayatris*.
You think going to India would help?

* * *

Winter

No winter here "or at least no snow. In snow you move indoors and slow down. Oxen
draw carts over the frozen earth and Japanese haiku priests walk in blinding snow, but
all hearts at the hearthside.

Icicles drop from the eaves, and Christmas approaches where people try to overlook
bad feelings
in the world
while devotees run out on book distribution
marathon
in heavy coats, music,
Vivaldi's "Winter" playing
over the radio,
Reminding people of heavy blankets, coats, a scholar's solitude,
the Lord of Heaven.

* * *

Vivaldi's second movement "yes, I remember ice skating with the tune in my head
hearty and healthy
swooning
swooning
then hot chocolate with puff of marshmallow cream on top.
Icy slopes and fire, the world's music meant to dissuade us from suicide, to wile away
our time otherwise,
warming-up, revving.
In winter people rub hands together in prayer, the monks in stone-cold monasteries
warmed by the flames of love.

* * *

It's cold in Vraja "no heat available.
Cling only to beads and master's words,
Deities warm in blankets
and stylish quilts.

* * *

Allegro "rain on green and brown. Can't repent. I belong to the world but have retired until they draft me again and pull me out of solitude. Prabhupada says that a preacher's life is not easy-going. He has to face obstacles and sometimes pain inflicted by *mudhas*.

Oh, I did that when I was younger. Give me days now to write to the Lords of the Boston Common and to the new, almost-born *bhaktas* and *bhaktins* who may wander to this island or get one of my books in the shadow of oaks near Pretoria or Wisconsin or down some back street while sitting on a wooden back porch in Czech republic or China or the streets of Tokyo. May I give them what my master gave me: love and *capatis*, bread balls and chaunced *dal*, and may they eat it with the whole self by the mercy of God as I both fail and succeed.

2:30, Shed

Ugly vision of Sharon Olds "sex and torture. It's the world, of course, and Ms. Olds is just seeing it eye-on, from the poet's mold, full of what she identifies as compassion (a big word "three syllables). She's a good woman, I'm sure, but faces life without God. Can't believe in God because He should have stopped the torture. She stops loving Him there and goes on into her own body and mind, belonging to, loving the world incomprehensibly, with the tough vision of what it is to belly and eye and esophagus.

I don't judge her but I hear my master say that those who don't believe in God, the scientists and other atheists, are the biggest sinners and rascals. That one failure, ravana's failure, caused the golden city to lie in ruins and their families to die. Hanuman finished them off or in this case, Siva or Yama.

12:30 a.m.

I'm a writer but now I'm sacrificing products in favor of the diary expression I hope to also go beyond the usual diary concerns of self into writing exercises and toward the deeper self, into life itself, into *sastra*, and the holy name. I don't seem capable now of a concentrated, sustained effort in reading or writing. This is partly due to health. We read of students writing their Ph.D. theses or a writer burning intensely as he creates his novel, etc. I do a little every day in this roomy form. It's also a form. Other things to do, like writing letters, also occupy me.

Just spent about twenty minutes with Cc., Lord Caitanya's expressing direct meaning of *Vedanta-sutra* to Sarvabhauma. Brahman means Supreme Brahman. Absolute Truth is both personal and impersonal, but personal is stronger. One must favor direct meaning of *sastra* (*brahma-Sabda*) over interpretations, inferences, etc. Lord Caitanya is convincing him.

Read it, little man,
and save your soul.

A disciple writes that she is overwhelmed with material misery. She has seen so much suffering and death in her life, and she wants to use the negative energy to push herself from all attachment and to attain the spiritual world. She wants me to instruct her how to make a dramatic leap forward. I don't think I can or I'd be leaping myself. I can only tell her to be patient. She doesn't think she'll make it back to Godhead in this lifetime and fears being reborn into yet another life filled with suffering. Yeah.

She said she's turning to *japa* and sometimes cries out, but at other times loses that feeling. She wanted to come to me and pour out all her feelings. I'm no rock to sustain all storms. Neither do I know enough deep suffering experienced with the eye of Vedic wisdom to overcome it right on the battlefield of sorrow. Krishna has spared me. I teach what I can, tossed in my own teacup by the slightest storms. Still, we have *sastra*. We have what Narada says, what Vyasa says, and what Prabhupada says. A wise man doesn't lament for the living or the dead.

We have to turn the ferry around in the water (white-capped waves) and head back in the other direction. Each day from morning to night, sing a little song of sorrow and tepid joy and restrained senses and hang in there.

* * *

3:30 a.m.

Got plans today if Krishna will let me carry them out to do the introductions for *sketchbooks of Joy*. I plan to do it this afternoon in the shed if I get the chance. This morning will be taken up by going over to the island and trying to keep myself headache free before that.

O word-spiller, you've got plenty to do. Flying wedge, lipstick "

no, I don't want to say any old word. Why say "lipstick"? I won't allow such words to influence me, you pit poets. I want to find that holy place above the rooftops, above the influence of this world.

Do you mean find yourself or lose yourself and just repeat scripture with no additions or subtractions? Is that writing at all?

Whatever I mean, just get the words out.

On the way here a few days ago through miles of construction work on the motorway, I jammed my last pages with travel data. Now we are settled in and there is nothing to report except that Abhaya dasi's daughter has bad asthma and can't even use her inhaler, but breathes shallower each breath. Her mother thought she would leave her body, but she kept on breathing.

As for me, I've been feeling much better, thank you. Haven't had a bad headache since the day before we left Spain. Maybe I'm getting better and maybe I'm just getting a few good days, but I'm doing what I can with the pain-free time. I still can't leap like Evil McNevel over a chasm in my hundred-mile-per-hour jet propelled motorcycle (he fell down and died).

Yes, it's quiet here in Geaglum. We gather together each night at 5 to light candles and sing "*namamisvaram sac-cid-ananda rupam*." After that we read a section of *Namamrta* and say a few words (we don't record it). The mail will be arriving soon. That's what's going on.

* * *

* * *

11:25 a.m.

I went strong in the lecture, forgetting my semi-invalid condition. In fact, I've forgotten it for almost a week now, and I'm not even interested in looking at the book *Healing the Body Betrayed "A Guide to regaining Psychological Control of Your Chronic Illness*. It was a Sunday morning Cc. reading with comment. After the half-hour lecture, the devotees' questions were so right to the point that it was enlivening, and I kept going for another fifteen or twenty minutes. Then we continued the mood of speaking *Krishna-katha* as we walked from the temple down to the quay. Only when I got back to the house did I notice a tingling starting behind my right eye. I laid down for a while and it hasn't built much. It's not going away, either "my old "friend."

3 p.m.

By Krishna's grace that headache went down. Opened the curtains and saw a bright sunny day out there. The trees are all dressed in rusts and reds and auburns and green this time of year. Each tree was carefully planted by rich men cultivating an island paradise in days gone by. Now they live in all their glory on this sunny November day.

Today I compiled rough drafts of introductions for the three sections of *Sketchbooks of Joy* and awakened in myself a desire to do more of those artwork with words. All glories to the creative flow that Krishna allows us.

I'm dawdling. Madhu wants to talk and pin down the details of our India travels, but the sky is blue and the white outline clouds rise up from the ground and the sea. The wonderful old trees. Shining sunlight on wet grass blades, the dead weeds. Plenty of gnats still banging around outside "their last days. Howling dogs from another island.

* * *

12:44 a.m.

I'd like to be serious and think of Krishna the way a devotee does. Because that's what's needed to go back to Godhead. (Seems like for me a dwarf trying to catch the moon.) At the time of death "that could be at any moment! Don't waste time.

Living with a handicap. Headache returned yesterday, so I took rest at 6 p.m. Feel okay now, but I've canceled the *Bhagavatam* lecture. It requires a big effort to speak like that, and it threatens the entire day. Better I move along in reading and writing and honour the day in a sincere output of words and drawings. Hare Krishna.

* * *

3:50 a.m.

It seems I'll never forget the body as long as I'm living in it. And all the literary allusions and confessions, what I thought about during *japa* (and even in the bathroom), chewing on the same thought again and again. I let it come and told my self that we need safety valves sometimes to let off the pressure.

* * *

Prabhupada sankirtana hall, until the bell rang nine. At the end, he said, "The guru should not cheat his disciples. *Gurur na sisayat.*"

Later, I heard him lecturing on Rsabhadeva entering a forest fire created by the wind. He said it was just like we sing each day in "*Gurvastakam*," *samsara-davanala*. As he lectured on that, I thought, "When I have to lecture, I can remember these techniques and ways to shift to vital topics regardless of the topic of the verse." He said he saw a fire high on a hill in some station in India. No one wanted it to start and no one could put it out until the mercy rainfall came.

My words, my . . . firecrackers. Finger burnt off words that lose control. Now preach and lecture and tell us, dogmatic saint, what you really mean. I mean to be in favour of Krishna consciousness and never against it, but we speak honestly and sometimes you may think I'm putting down ISKCON or worse, our master, when really, I can't do that. I'm only trying to dig under the official surface. Sometimes worms squeeze out, or roaches escape, or even mice or rats have been known to . . . And I want to return to safety, singing, "*He Krishna . . . raksa mam, pahi mam*" "please save me and protect me. Ten minutes per round, "Please accept me" is all we pray.

Again my words, not Zimmer's or Duncan's, or anybody's. Not my Daddy's, "My mind is in the sewer." Not my Mommy's, "Oh Stevie, don't suck around. Ask straight for what you want."

I want a small billiard table like the kid next door has.

And what else?

A chocolate rabbit for Easter and whatever else you can get maybe from Jimmy Duncan. Get me a blue Schwinn tricycle with chain action that I can ride up and down 76th Street and dare (Romapada Swami must have similar memories) to go to 77th Street "strange territory where they never saw this tow-haired kid racing on an expensive tricycle past their houses and they didn't catch me. I went so fast on three wheels. I circled and went around back to 76th Street where everyone knew me in knickers and straight blonde hair, a skinny kid with a father in the Pacific during World War II.

My word, not my sister's. "Stevie, you *are* a jerk."

No, she didn't say that. Or maybe she did. I don't remember. She said, "The truth hurts, doesn't it?" She harpooned, I recall, and cried sometimes, her sweet face.

There now, cuts on your fingers.

I am saying this to you. This is an old memory. Not my words but the words of the *Vedas* and how my spiritual master spoke them in NYC. Yeah, I got that memory too. And bad ones I can't print.

Therefore, I had better sober up.

For looking at poets we fine you and curse you.

Make it tough.

No, make it your own expression of praise of God. If you don't, you'll be killed and smashed to pieces. Why don't you love the Supreme? Because you were contaminated in the past? Then why do you go back and plug into it again? That's what I'm asking. Why don't you do like the strict brothers claim to do and only think of Krishna and ISKCON and stay on the computer and get faxes on how to manage this big movement and get the

deviants in line and fight back and raise money? We've got enough to do without plugging into our pre-ISKCON past, don't we?

* * *

There is no angel, there is no devil, there is no myth. I hear and repeat what Rsabhadeva said. He walked into a forest which burnt his own body to ashes. He did that of his own volition.

There is a spider sitting on the saffron painted wall. This is here and now. What about the spider? He has four legs on each side. Or rather some are both feelers and legs and they encircle his body, the limbs coming out like rays or the points of the compass. He gets around and he distracted me. I was talking about Rsabhadeva. You want varieties. I want the honest truth paved. Lay it down.

So Krishna consciousness is like that. You can't keep your thoughts straight. All you can do is keep moving on.

Then how Krishna conscious can you be?

It depends on your love. You have to receive mercy or you'll stay in the fire of matter. Unless you get at least a drop of the mercy you cannot know God. The nondevotees would reject all this as mythological. You have to know by now that you will never be appealing to nondevotees. You are writing for devotees, but their number is increasing by the distribution of Prabhupada's books and other preaching endeavors. You take advantage of it (as the spider takes advantage of the wall) and write for the audience who knows Krishna. That's my virtue, that I stay within the Krishna conscious context. I am a spider, a spiderman. I stay within the walls and have safety valves (new word and concept) to let me feel emotions without going outside the four rules. My emotions sometimes soar like blues horns and drums and my pulse beats time. My life turns more to prayer, yes, prayer. Please accept me as I chant.

7 a.m.

Manu, on his way out to sell paintings for days at a time (in his car which appears to be falling apart), left me with a letter. He said, "I'm sure you know more than me, how valuable these days are, coming up to the end of the year again. It seems like a good opportunity for you to, with abandon, launch into your most important service to Krishna, Srila Prabhupada, the Vaisnavas, and the greater community, and we need you fit and healthy for that. Today should be a good day and I am praying you'll be healthy and ready. Please keep me informed on the conditions in the hut or in the room so I can respond."

I wrote him back that as yet I haven't been deeply into writing. But yes, the last days of the year are special.

8:13 a.m.

Shed windows completely iced over "can't see out. Ground covered in white frost, amazing red-pink clouds close to ground and going right up against blue and white sky background. Called Madhu to take a photo of it, but he wasn't in his room.

Read *Gita* what Krishna says. Manu wrote to me regarding the place of women in society "they should be subordinate. I make no comment, say I agree. All I said last night was that if there's an aloud reading in the temple and a book is passed around, why can't women take a turn reading?

Cold
necklace
more words "

let's warm-up by reading *Bhagavad-gita* aloud and hear what Krishna says while I write. Otherwise, what's the point? It's all crap and speculation "no good no matter how racy or whatever "human, how human it is.

Krishna is great. He's the source of twenty-one patriarchs, seven sages, four Kumaras, and all the Manus.

Do I believe that? It sounds so much like Indian mythology. I thought He was a universal God? Do we have to insist on twenty-five patriarchs?

Yes, I'm afraid we do. They come from Garbhodaka Visnu and you can't deny Him or you'll end up denying Krishna. Believe it, man, it's the *sastra*. Don't think you can be an eclectic fool with your intelligence stolen by *maya*. Be Vedic all the way. Put it on your T-shirt: Krishna is the source of all.

* * *

Church organ "I remember "and Win B. moving loafered feet across the wooden things to play, me beside him, sound emanating all around us in the Dutch reformed Church. God, Lord of hosts, You are honored and praised directly we hope by this exercise of moving fingers up and down the keys.

This hut is clean and the floors are unvarnished. The desk has "merry eye" knots. I can't see out the frosted panes but I know there's a sun out there to melt the ice and give us sight.

Krishna plays His flute and the demigods are amazed. He doesn't crash down the scale on a rolling organ solo,

crying pax

pax, but when I think of it, the bishops and cardinals, their thirteenth-century scepters "a different world.

I go alone to better follow.

Light of sun breaks frost prisms

into hundreds of white shards

with yellow and a hint of purple

soon to drip.

Your problem, sir, is that you want to be yourself but you want to be Krishna conscious, right? And Krishna consciousness means to follow. Rohininandana asked, "Can you be an original thinker in Krishna consciousness?" Yes and no. You can think originally how to present the old in the best way. For me the question is, "Can you be yourself and be a Krishna conscious person?"

Do you want to dance?

No, not with a dame close and sexy. I want to dance in *kirtana* in my own way, but I have a bad ankle.

The fact is, twenty-five patriarchs means you rule out all other cultural religious systems and say that they are at best shadows and off-shoots of the original *Vedas*. Twenty-five or forty-five million years ago. Whatever it was it's still good. I have to

uphold this. Say I don't know everything about the universe. I don't know but I accept *sastra*. I'm a plain self. No other music or culture required. Okay.

* * *

11:25 a.m.

While massaging Prabhupada I heard him lecturing in Vrndavana, November 30, 1976. His lecture had mostly been about the fire that is repeated birth and death and how it can't be put out by an ordinary fire brigade. It takes Krishna's mercy delivered through the spiritual master. At the end of his lecture he spoke about how envious persons are like snakes who bite even inoffensive creatures. Similarly, cruel persons attack even devotees who are faultless. The "very good example" is Jesus Christ, who was crucified although his only fault was that he was speaking of God. Lord Nityananda continued to give mercy to Jagai and Madhai even after they hit Him and drew blood. "Therefore, a preacher-devotee is so favored by Krishna. They have to meet actually dangerous persons, cruel persons. It is not sitting very idly, comfortably and discuss *Vedanta*. No, it is not like that. Preaching practically, practically meeting dangerous opposition. Because they are sympathetic . . . *para duhkha duhkhi* . . . He meets Jagai and Madhai class and faces all kinds of danger. Therefore, he's the powerful authorized agent of Krishna."

While I listened, at first it sounded ordinary "the same examples I've heard before. But by accumulation, when he got to the end of his lecture I asked myself, "What about me?" What preaching am I doing? And then I thought of my headaches and I wondered if someday I can be more active. I thought of those who are active now, especially the book distributors.

* * *

2:28 p.m., Shed

Do you not want to write? Sorry you're not a preacher? Not a Krishnaite alive with the flame of love? Just poking along (with hurting left ankle)? Missed the touch of gratitude, joy, etc.? Eat too much pasta?

Private thoughts to set into a private log.

M. says our plane to India is booked for January 3 from London, January 1 from here. So there, I'm not sitting idly. Today I insisted that even though we don't have money, we must arrange to go to the Caribbean in early '97. So there, I am a moving preacher.

Rsabhadeva sat in one place like a python; to keep inimical persons away, he smeared his body with his own stool. Srila Prabhupada said that if people disturb us too much we can sit down in one place, but even then *yare dekhe, tare kaha 'Krishna'-upadesa*. People will come and we should preach to them. If I stay for some weeks at Inis rath, the mail will find me and I will preach through my responses. Oh, and set an example "I won't fall down, I've remain attracted to my *japa*, I'll read Prabhupada's books. Many are counting on me to lead them, so I can't fall down. That's even more important than how many miles I travel and how many lectures I give, or how much I huff and puff.

And of course my writing is preaching because it helps others. Although I write mostly for myself, when others read it, it helps them find their own truths in Krishna

consciousness. If I write what's important and meaningful to me, then others will relate it to what's important and meaningful to them. That's my faith.

* * *

The piper. Peter Pan collar. Mary Martin singing in this world, swinging back and forth on a cable, "I'm flying!" And I am looking to the other world, fighting for faith. Rowboat makes its way across
I only see small silhouette
of person rowing.

* * *

Time about up. White paper, blue gloves "colors I see. Noise outside nearby. Sounds like a machine loading or pushing something in this place where I expect all to be quiet. A good day it's been so far despite the lull and the depression about my purpose. I heard Prabhupada say the devotee-preacher is best as I poured warm, clear water on his bare body, my Prabhupada.

Little concerns of my life here. "Oh, write with abandon," he suggested. On wood desk, with feet on floor, write,

Words slip away with the clock.

* * *

As I walked back from the shed I sankirtana van. It was parked right on the path where I walk. The doors were open and music poured out, "*samsara dava . . .*" with electric bass and singing voices. Some men were inside cleaning it out and singing along with the tape. All the doors were open, but I walked by at such an angle that they didn't see me. I hesitated, thinking maybe I should play the friendly old senior devotee and go over and chat with them, but somehow I kept walking. Then I saw one of the *bhaktas* coming out from the warehouse with a big stack of books in his hands. We made friendly eye contact but I kept walking, wishing a little I had stopped to talk so that a little of their energy could rub off on me.

And to show that I was friendly, to get out of the hermit mood and somehow be able to sankirtana men. I'm not so bad." But as I kept walking toward Manu's house where I have my own room, it seemed I had done the right thing. I shouldn't be so dissankirtana life as *brahmacaris* distributing books and I have my life. They're both okay.

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers.

"H.D. Thoreau

"By the mercy of the Lord, all truths were revealed to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, and he could understand the importance of chanting the holy name and distributing love of God everywhere." (Cc. *Madhya* 6.205)

You might think a *bhakta* could write a more ecstatic diary than this one. He would be making discoveries in his inner life and becoming a changed man. He would be crying for Krishna, realizing that Krishna and His name are nondifferent "and record it all in his diary. Or he would record his preaching adventures. This diary is quieter, more "static," telling of me asking Aniruddha to build bookshelves for my room and to please put a lock on the shed door. Let me show the virtue of patiently accepting the life that has been given to me so generously by the Supreme Lord (Kala). Or at least show that I am sorry I couldn't be better.

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Today I have conquered the three worlds very easily. Today I have ascended to the spiritual world." (Cc. *Madhya* 6.230)

Please write here "the emptiness of heart. And this:

"But anyone who is specifically favored by the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, due to unalloyed surrender unto the service of the Lord, can overcome the insurmountable ocean of illusion and can understand the Lord. But those who are attached to this body, which is meant to be eaten at the end by dogs and jackals, cannot do so." (*Bhag.* 2.7.42)

From the purport: ". . . and unless there is knowledge of God, all advancement of material civilization, however dazzling, should be considered a failure."

3:58 a.m.

I have a book here called *rooms: American Writers recall rooms They Have Lived In*. This could be a spark for me to write about rooms "my memories of the places in and out of ISKCON in which I have lived for the past fifty years. A sequel to *Memories*. Why? Because a writer has to keep writing.

Which rooms *have* you lived in? I won't tell of that room I lived in for fourteen years from 1948 until I went into the Navy in 1962. I don't expect to live in any room in my whole life for as long as I lived in that attic boy's room, but it's a place of shame and lonely passions, of blindness when I didn't know self or spirit and gradually passed through innocent, dumb childhood to adolescence. I was a "rebel-without-a-cause" type stinking kid following whatever trends were prevalent and cowering in my dreams, hoping to become popular or at least not discovered for what I was. And what was that? I didn't know, but it frightened me nonetheless. Lived there for my P.S. 8 and Tottenville High School days (class 57-1), and even through my days at college.

That room still seeps through into my memories. I can't pretend that 26 Second Avenue is the only room in my life, and that the room at 125 Katan Avenue counts for nothing. Still, when I went back to look at my old house, I felt dispossessed. Some other Staten Islanders live there now and it's their home. The old Guarino was a stranger and unwelcome. I no longer counted there, not even if my hand still is imprinted in the cement walk from when they poured the concrete in 1952. It doesn't count. You have moved on, so move on.

Besides, what a strange creature I have become. A Hare Krishna? No, you can't go back upstairs to look at your old bedroom. It's completely different now anyway, so just forget it. Your memories are dead. You won't even find them stuffed into the closet.

* * *

I don't seem able to write much right now "can't concentrate. Waiting for later when a topic jumps at me, something to talk about as the sun rises and I'm in the shed. Or maybe it will be just the same. Nothing. A few words and then I stop. I look at a book, think of something else, then assure myself, "This little bit was good. It doesn't have to be so much."

Is this the running down of the clock for me? Is it? Or just that I want to write of the best thing but cannot? Back to packing for India: earplugs, Kleenex, note pads (will you be able to write more there?), Post-its "I don't know what else. It's the mixture and too much hankering for a better form. Anyway, here is the morning black: outside wind rushing against the house like a football tackle and we are all right.

* * *

9:20 a.m.

My interest flared this morning with the plan to write memories of places I have lived. "The whole world is home." After resting for half an hour after breakfast, however, the idea seemed less alive. So I've accepted it that way. If it wants to come and direct me, it will. Otherwise, I can wait until the end of December when Baladeva will visit and we will churn memories. Back to this diffuse diary where I sometimes bang against the wall and ask, "What's the use?" It's all right, though, most of the time. I'm not writing a structured book, so no one should expect that. That was part of the "thrill" of the "Everywhere Is Home" project. It would be a book (i.e., publishable), not a diary.

Rainy, windy day. White caps breaking like rolling waves in the strait between Geaglum and Inis rath. Still the rowboat travels over the water when the devotees want to go back and forth. I thought I wouldn't go out to the shed because the weather was too rough, but if I start that habit, I'll *never* get out. I can expect frequent weather like this.

* * *

Little red spider, get off my page. Go walk on the desk. Me, write along. Pain. Don't stop regardless. I'd like to be serious, keep reading *sastra*, and praying. I don't want to splay my energies. That may be another reason not to do the memories project. I didn't feel it for direct, prayerful Krishna consciousness. Can't say the free-write diary is more so, but it's what it is. It doesn't lead the way; it follows.

There's a quail nest near the path. The large and small quails fly up at my approach. Krishna, Krishna.

Krishna, I lay down in a hotel bed in New Delhi. I put my head under the faucet and relieved a headache. I saw a rat in the lobby late at night scurrying under chairs and sofas. I rode in a taxi. I rode in a devotee's van, heard what they were doing in Delhi, and asked, "What Swamis are in town?" And we planned to go to Vrndavana the next morning after giving the lecture, provided I felt well enough to travel.

Those are real memories and real places.

Kites and bombs in Delhi tenements. That rooftop room the temple president lets us use. The old lady who has the key but doesn't like to be wakened early. Yellow teeth people have (some have none).

That's Delhi and this is here. I see two swans managing to stay afloat on the rocking waters. The island trees are all a dark, greenish-gray by now, and they provide a skyline like a low-lying hill, rising up on both sides and forming a peak. reminds me of Govardhana Hill. The four or five tallest trees on the island seem to be some kind of evergreens. They say there are redwoods there too. and deer, big hares, inbred. They try to keep the wild creatures out of the building.

From here I can also see the brown weeds blowing on Geaglum's shore and mats of green grass flattened by the rain. The brown weeds flutter like a flag. They think it's cold here, but it's nothing compared to America's winter.

* * *

Boat. Matter. Sense perception. Is that all? I dig with the pen and come up with "? Listen, what did you read? About *buddhi-yoga*. It's definitely true *Bhagavad-gita* 10.10 - 11 says the poor, less advanced devotee can get the Lord's direct mercy even if he fails to comprehend the knowledge given by guru and *sastra*. That's what it says. But he must be pure and work for Krishna in love.

My wrist strains too much with the skinny Pilot pen. Need my big pens out here, except they leak.

* * *

Oh, Sarva got happy and the Lord too. The Lord's already happy, but His bliss increased as He danced and touched the converted Sarva. "I was like an iron bar from reading too many books on logic, but You have melted me." Eat the *prasada* with full faith in Jagannatha. Devotees laugh to see him so changed. The joke is on him, but he doesn't mind.

You were in Kansas? Yes, and Detroit. Govardhana dasa, stained pillow, Deities in attic, rock song, "Where Radha-Krishna Kiss." What happened to all those devotees? rudra-sampradaya, magician, black arts. I know I'm not making sense. Mahabuddhi and me, the-*sannyasi*-in-charge baby-sitter, Atreya said. Memories of rain streaking down windows.

10:45 a.m.

I say I want to break through. Maybe I can. M. said, "If you keep practicing at something, you can learn things." Is it not true of this searching from the little life what to say? *KeSava dhrta-narahari-rupa, mina-Sarira, jaya jagadiSa hare*. I play the typewriter while Prabhupada sings "Dasavataras" and the waters lap roughly, rippling, while twigs and leaves shake on the trees. The wind is stormy but the sky blue-gray. I ate a full bowl of *halava* while the storm buffeted outside. Syamananda rowed over and when I asked, "How did you manage it?" he laughed and said, "This is nothing. This is not a really bad storm. They are yet to come." Then while I ate he paced outside the house chanting *japa*.

The true, the naive artist, the dejected. He doesn't want to be comfortable for a month and a half but should produce something. Well, what? My head is on the platter. I mean, I get headaches. It's hard to be always peaceful. Some artists work feverishly for years and produce many brilliant paintings, then drop out all together. I want to be a better devotee and work for that production. I walked to the shed and that's all "a simple life.

"What does he do all day?"

He's a writer.

Oh? What's he writing? A novel? A collection of his memories in ISKCON?

No, he just goes out there and writes what he sees and feels. He knows that isn't much or even enough, but he feels it's what he should do and there is nothing else.

The rat carries Ganesa, the bull, Siva, Garuda, Krishna, the swan, Brahma. Kali-ghat artists are reviewed by the sophisticated Indian who considers all that mythology. What the hell *does* he believe? He thinks he's some kind of hot-shot critic. The British are gone and he wants the world to appreciate Indian culture, that's all. Culture, not religion mind you. He doesn't know Krishna consciousness. Well, I want to be a Krishna conscious artist and depict Krishna in some way.

* * *

I talk of breaking through and here is the moment to do it. I don't bite my fingernails or do anything wrong. I just move through the day. M. will soon take my passport to the Indian embassy in Dublin to have it stamped for a visit to India. Right now, however, it's the dregs. I sit around and look at a book on art "pictures done by Kali-ghat artists and outsider art. And me? I'm an outsider too, or a half-insider to ISKCON.

I once sankirtana movement, for the temple preaching, or I wouldn't express it. In terms of writing, I was either editing for the Swami or writing for *Back to Godhead*. I wouldn't be caught dead writing an extensive diary (or even a single word) like this. What if my wife found it and called it *maya*? "What would Prabhupada say? What would your Godbrothers say? This is *maya*! You are idle. You are speculating. You should do more active preaching. This is the mind. We are meant to do preaching like pure devotees. What if I told Prabhupada you were doing this?" Thus I would be chastised.

Now I give into it, the urge to tell what I am, what I am doing. I have broken free from the mooring. I am lost in the wet blowy air. I seek to find my bearings and to tie the boat to the right dock. This is what I mean to do.

Crying shame. He got his *dhoti* wet and dirty from walking in the air. Saffron sweat pants also got smudges on them. He was walking down the path, but there was a construction machine at work, and a devotee, so he backed away, looking for privacy. Busy little doings at Geaglum. He wanted my own world so he walked in the opposite direction and came here to say this. Krishna, Krishna! He chanted loudly "loud and clear" and the rain beat against his eyeglasses. When it hurts, cold, he chanted at that time. Dear Lord, please allow me to serve my master. He is kind to me.

* * *

First sight of snow. It's driving horizontally due to the wind. I don't think it will stick on the green grass, though, but I can see it blowing across the fence posts with their two strands of barbed wire, in from the lake. From here I can see the boathouse where Abhaya dasi's family lives. She's been away for several days now in the hospital with her asthmatic daughter.

Hearing cars come and go, I anticipate the delivery of the mail pack that went from U.S.A. to France and was re-routed (I hope) to reach us here.

I could go with M. to American and mix and preach in the temples, but I don't want that. Then face the quiet alone here. I think, "But how am I making my time worthwhile?" Improve it. Read more. Pray to Krishna to reveal to you how to be.

Magpies in black and white
formal dinner suits, waiting
on lawn, snow flakes wetter.

* * *

Copper leaves still on tree by lake. Shore lined with tan, plume-headed weeds.
Krishna Kaliya "see Him there?"

* * *

2:40 p.m.

My dear Lord Krishna, please let me cry to You for mercy. I read the purport aloud (Bg. 10.12 - 13) how You are the Supreme. It struck me, and I felt the dirty, unclear things in my heart move about. Let me write to reach You. Let me do everything I can to reach You. And to save myself. Prabhupada says we must become *akincana*, free of all material desire for sense enjoyment. I have to earn the right "we have to earn the right "to cry for pure Krishna consciousness by recognizing our lack of it.

Krishna can be known only by devotional service. Let that information penetrate. Only then will we automatically want to distribute it, this secret of all secrets. When I go to the shed, I pray by reading-crying aloud from Krishna's words, *Bhagavad-gita*.

"Please tell me in detail of Your divine opulences by which You pervade all these worlds." (Bg. 10.16)

Then tell us of the lake chill, the water bucket, and give us words, and more words while Madhu backs the van into its winter shelter. Practice *bhajana* throughout the day and don't waste time. "O Krishna, O Supreme Mystic, how shall I constantly think of You, and how shall I know You? In what various forms are You to be remembered, O Supreme Personality of Godhead?" (Bg. 10.17)

It's almost too dark to read, although it's only 3:05 p.m. Clouds are scudding by like big gray fleece blankets over the island. Reminds me of how quickly water moves on the Tuscarora after a spring rain.

Mail may not come, it could even be lost "all those people who wrote me. In any case, I can read the *Gita* and finish that Cc. chapter where Sarva is happy and Gopinatha Acarya is happy and they are dancing and laughing and clapping, celebrating that Sarva has become a pure Vaisnava. Yes, because of his relationship with Gopinatha Acarya, who is dear to Lord Caitanya, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya has received drops of mercy

from the ocean of love of God. He is ecstatic. *Vairagya vidya nija bhakti-yoga*. Pray for that to happen to you.

Night Notes

Prabhupada assures us that we can be with Krishna and the spiritual master by sound. Don't stress exclusively seeing. Krishna is with us in the chanting of Hare Krishna and in His teachings in *Bhagavad-gita*. I read this in *Namamrta* tonight to four devotees gathered for the Karttika candle lighting. I was impressed to hear it. Suddenly I remembered how I heard Bill Clinton give his acceptance speech earlier this month. I was in Italy and picked it up on short-wave radio. In the same way, spiritually, we can be with Krishna by the "radio" of our chanting and hearing. It's not just us chanting, but Krishna is with us if we want Him. Serve by chanting.

I wrote earlier today that I wanted to break through. I meant breaking through to freer writing, more honest, or whatever. The breakthrough is to touch Krishna, to write without any reason other than to please Him, to swim spontaneously in *Krishna-katha*.

Reading more will help, and I will naturally want to write what I read. Not forced but spontaneously. Not forced . . . Hare Krishna.

Lord Caitanya wanted to go on a tour of South India with just one *brahmana* assistant. He loves His devotees, but wants to spread Krishna consciousness and deliver the people of the South. That was also part of His mission.

Krishna, Krishna, You dove into the Yamuna and displaced the water one hundred yards onto the banks as if something very heavy had fallen into the river. And indeed it had, because You are the source of all strength.

Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna. Let His pastimes become my reality. Hare Krishna.

What about the desire to become a literary artist in His service? Krishna can instantly make me the best artist. I don't have to learn art in some other way. He gives the ability and the memory and intelligence so that I can go to Him. What art do I want anyway but the art of serving and pleasing Him? I want to convey that to readers and know it myself "the art of pleasing Krishna.

* * *

12:58 a.m.

Read of Lord Caitanya who is sometimes like a rose and sometimes like a thunderbolt. I am happy with the simple and quiet routine here although sometimes I feel it's lacking. I may want more outer excitement and action or feel guilty that I'm not "out there" preaching directly. But circumstances bring me here at the end of the year. Let me cherish the time and use it well. Now my "mantra" is to gradually increase my reading in Prabhupada's books and to stay focused in Krishna consciousness. Writing will follow this direction naturally. I also want to look for opportunities to pray and call out to Krishna, to ask for His help. "Please accept me. Please engage me in Your service."

By his grace, my headaches haven't been coming for a week now. rejoice in quiet way to use time productively. When you're not able to do that, accept the shutdown of activities and go on serving and praying in another way.

Please, Lord, I don't want to be splayed out in interests that aren't directly Krishna conscious. I want to be a devotee who thinks only of Krishna, studies the scripture, restrains the senses, thinks of the welfare of others, and distributes the holy names.

Can I write beyond myself and my diary? Yes. I was cold last night, or my body was. I put on a sweatshirt and some socks, then later woke up and took them off again. The hot water bottle placed in my bed for warmth wasn't warm enough, it seems. Dreamt I was obliged to go for counselling. Long waits in office. No apparent benefit, yet I was considered handicapped. Dined with the woman who was my counsellor, although she'd been on the job only three weeks. I went to the cashier but couldn't remember what I'd eaten. I began to cry and hoped they would see that I was absorbed in higher thoughts and that's why I forgot what I'd ordered. Still, the incident proved I was in need of help. (The counsellor had asked, "Are you feeling pain?" "No, not today.") After this I was told I'd be dropped off at the Philadelphia Airport. I looked forward to spending the night in the Mt. Airy ISKCON temple, even though it was snowing, snug in the family of devotees.

* * *

I've said I would go once a week to visit Radha-Govinda in the afternoon. Today is the disappearance day of Gaurakishor dasa Babaji and tomorrow is Ekadasi. I ought to go on one of these days and write notes while there.

Mundane poets "can they help? It seems to help me to read a poem and them springboard off it into writing one of my own, but lately I haven't had the interest to discipline myself into writing separate poems.

This started out with a question: "Can I write beyond myself?" Yes, I say, I can, but I know I told you about needing to put on a sweatshirt and socks. Now I'll tell you how I rankle my prose and wonder what to do. I can think of Srila Gaurakishor dasa Babaji, the spiritual master of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, but he's far, far beyond my comprehension. Therefore, I can only be simple and pray to him from my position not inclined to *tapasya* or devotion. From my position of wishful thinking.

Yes, I *can* go beyond my petty self. I can chant and be with Krishna and realize the self as spirit soul.

Muffins, betoward,
pennants, cold days
winter comin' in.
Be here now "your body
can't last. Everyone dies.
Don't think you are
better than someone who has died.
We who are here now will be swept away by Time
like peas on a plate.
Krishna! Krishna! Please save me.

* * *

Krishna, Krishna. Chant nine rounds. Help yourself. Be your own best friend to body and soul and mind. What? You don't always know how to care for yourself? You are not able to do the right thing. You are not enough of a hero and can't reach out to heroically save others? Well, crawl along the earth then. Be kinder, nonviolent, and walk twice a

day out to the shed or down the road to the quay where dirty-looking foam gathers in from the lake.

The lake "the cold, dark sheen on the water, moved only by the breeze. O my great God, You give us life. I shouldn't complain or rebel against You, but pray to You. Please, as I am reborn in my next life and can't remember this one, please don't let me forget You. I am forced to live in the now and I have a human body, which is precious. Please don't allow me to cultivate attachment to this world. Twice in recent lectures I heard Prabhupada say that if we have even a pinch of material desire, we are not qualified to enter the spiritual world. I also read recently how pure devotees are not interested in going back to Godhead, but in serving Krishna.

"Therefore, of the five types of liberation, the first four are not so undesirable because they can be avenues of service to the Lord. Nonetheless, a pure devotee of Lord Krishna rejects even these types of liberation (*salokya*, *samipyā*, *sarupya*, and *sarsti*). He aspires only to serve Krishna birth after birth. He is not very interested in stopping the repetition of birth, for he simply desires to serve the Lord, even in hellish circumstances."

(Cc. *Madhya* 6.268, purport)

3:40 a.m.

I don't like to disappoint readers by always complaining or by writing too much that I'm not able to write. It's just that gremlin trying to convince me that I'm no good. I'm sure it gives readers the impression that this writer is never able to write, but is only able to talk about it. What can I do? I seem to have to say it again and again. At least I as a reader don't mind reading it provided it's real. I seem to be grieving for something. You can take it as spiritual, authorial bleeding. I mean, because I haven't chosen a more structured form, and because I think what I am writing can't be published, I have to question the purpose of it.

It comes down to having faith in the writing process both for purification and for preaching. I tend to think most of what I write won't be published, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Still, I'm always sorry I can't write something more ordered. I feel like I'm climbing a mountain. I can't change the shape of it, so I simply have to grip the rocks with my hob-nailed boots and begin the ascent. By Krishna's grace both writer and reader can be uplifted.

It's true that I too feel confined by the repetition in this writing. Yes, I'm still waiting for the mail to come, the weather (I'm not really tired of reporting that) is still blowy. One devotee said that he wearied of me complaining of my lack of spiritual advancement and my lack of triumph. He went to another guru. Should I be afraid that readers won't stick with me? Those who do want to read what I have to say. They want me to open up from the heart. If, however, they demand what shape my heart takes, and insist that I form it into a proper novel or essay, I won't be able to comply. Therefore, we both have to accept it in the form it comes.

* * *

8:29 a.m.

Shed windows warming up but still frozen-sheeted. I'm in here cold but hope to warm up before I flee.

It's important to me to write without pretension and to discuss Krishna consciousness. Is it possible to make a pretentious presentation of Krishna consciousness? Yes, if you are trying to show off your learning (Vallabhacarya's pride) instead of glorifying Krishna. Or if you speak Krishna consciousness without full faith, or impersonally, or from way beyond your realization.

Can you understand why I like sentences describing things I perceive immediately with my senses? They can also be non-pretentious because they are what is, even if not absolutely. Krishna tells of His manifestations in this world (*Bhagavad-gita*, tenth chapter) so that the common man can know Him. Of course, He lists only the most prominent features; His opulences are unlimited. As Krishna tells us, we can also appreciate, not separately from Him "the weather, the lake "but in remembrance of Him.

And of ourselves and our own experiences. We identify with the body, so "we" feel cold and the ache in our fingers. We have indigestion or feel sleepy. To mention it, not as if it's absolute truth, but as something touching us now for better or for worse, can be non-pretentious too.

Gurakishor dasa Babaji was against all pretension in the name of *bhakti*. He recognized the phonies among so many so-called *tapasvis*. In his own mood he was tasting was separation from Krishna. He became blind and didn't care if he was dressed or not. He spent twenty years as a *grhastha*, thirty as a *paramahansa* in Vrndavana, associated with leading Vaisnavas, then lived the last years of his life in Navadvipa, associated with Bhaktivinoda Thakura there, and accepted Bhaktisiddhanta as his disciple.

He chanted the names of the *gopis* in a deep voice and sometimes made sounds of disgust.

Wore a tigerskin cap and had a basket filled with devotional items. He gave ropes to Bhaktivinoda Thakura for chanting *nama*. He fasted or ate earth from the bank of the Ganges. He reminded people of raghunatha dasa Gosvami's austerities.

From the dictionary:

"Pretentious: Making claims, explicit or implicit, to some distinction, importance, dignity or excellence. Too affectedly grand; ostentatious."

That's a tall claim, to be free of pretension. You may be dignified, you may actually be important, but you don't claim it. You don't blow your own horn, don't try to make it appear that you are a holy man, a serious writer, anything. You just be. Every day, just write. Every day, just read Prabhupada's books. Every day, just practice Krishna consciousness "without the claim that you are a great devotee, or even a good one, a faithful reader, and so on. There's no reason to be pretentious, factually, because even if you increase a little, you're still so low.

* * *

2:40 p.m.

Prabhupada says a guru should chastise disciples, but when they turn sixteen, he should become their friend. If you try to chastise a grown-up son or disciple, he will break. Prabhupada said he was an old man (1976) and for that reason, he could not chastise us. With folded hands he requested the men to shave their heads at least once a

month on *purnima*. We are known all over the world as shaven-headed, not long-haired. I shaved my head this morning.

Sun over right shoulder, glancing off windows and my eyeglasses. It has warmed the air and I have had to unbundle myself reading, drawing (a Jagannatha today), and writing.

The Himalayas don't move, so they are greater than Mount Meru, which does. Take in what Prabhupada says in his gruff voice in the last years due to cold or old age or transcendental anger. We listeners and disciples have to take it on our heads. No point finding fault. It's like calling the Ganges dirty during the rainy season. We simply bathe in the river, confident of its purity. I like the gruff voice. My soul rises to it. It's as if I've been dying. Adore the master's words. Krishna is the Supreme Soul and I pray for Him to carry me to the purport of *yasya deve para bhaktir*. Krishna, Krishna, Krishna.

Now in the pure light blue sky and sunshine, the island trees are predominately green. Picture postcard clarity. The brilliant water moving, rippling, but no white breakers for sure.

* * *

12:30 A.M.

Lord Caitanya embraced the leper Vasudeva, who then became a beautiful man. To protect him from pride, Lord Caitanya told him to always chant the Hare Krishna mantra. He also advised him to preach about Krishna and to liberate *jivas*. "As a result, Krishna would very soon accept him as His devotee." (Cc. *Madhya* 7.148) Prabhupada writes, "If one wants to be recognized as a devotee by Krishna, he should take to preaching work, following the advice of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Then one will undoubtedly attain the lotus feet of Sri Krishna Caitanya, Lord Krishna Himself, without delay."

Earlier Lord Caitanya advised the Kurma Brahmana to stay at home and chant and teach Krishna's *upadesa* to whomever he met. Even when I'm not traveling or reaching out physically to large numbers of people, I may always chant (my sixteen rounds), speak in classes, and publish profusely (my disciples will print and distribute the books).

December is coming and many devotees in ISKCON will participate in active book distribution on a marathon scale. I'll be here, staying in this room and going out daily to the shed to read and write I'll also speak in the temple once a week. I won't feel guilty about this. By reading and preaching I also participate. Others may criticize me, but I won't be disturbed by that, especially by imagining their criticisms. "He still gets headaches?" I'll do what I can.

* * *

Words. Do I no longer trust the process of free-writing? Do I not want to "sully" or ruin the pages of my quiet diary with silly talk and word experiments? Do I fear if I let go it will not look Krishna conscious? Will it destroy an image I want to project of the simple saintly life? Consider it.

What's the difference between the sober control of mind (beat your mind a hundred times with shoe and broom) and a pretentious restraint? What's the line between right

restraint and suppression which builds up and isn't really doing the job? Writing here to discover this by sometimes exploring, expressing so we can see, "Oh, this is excess." Don't always play it safe.

A tiskit, a taskit. But old Ella Fitzgerald allusions come pouring in. It's like switching the tape recorder onto "radio" and riding the tuner dial, picking up sounds from the world. No profit in that, I say. Better to stay away from news reports and worldly music. Yes, stay on the Krishna conscious wave length that reaches you from *sastra* and by listening carefully to the intelligence and the direction that comes from Supersoul. Prabhupada is in his *nitya-lila*, his *aprakata* form. I have to tune in to him. *That's* the advantage of this quiet Geaglum life. At least that's what's possible. Writing can help.

* * *

M. put the van in the winter shed. The back tires skidded so a small group of men assembled and pushed it in. Now he's getting ready for his trip to America for his hernia operation. I wish him well and pray Krishna will protect him.

We read about an hour in stories of Gaurakishor dasa Babaji. Realized we can't specifically apply the teachings he gave over a hundred years ago in a different place and to his contemporaries. For that we turn to Prabhupada. Still, Gaurakishor dasa Babaji's emphasis remains with us "his absorption in genuine *bhajana*, austerity, and how that was required before we can speak of radha-Krishna. Many examples of his life and words. Hypocrites he exposed.

3:45 a.m.

Rsabhadeva said that we shouldn't trust the mind and Srila Prabhupada lectures on the same point. Look at Lord Siva, who chased after Mohini. Okay, but how does this apply to my writing down what passes through my mind? And what about the writing instructions of Natalie Goldberg regarding "wild mind"? She says a writer should trust the mind. She says it's all we have. We shouldn't think, shouldn't get "logical," etc. Somehow I accept what she says and don't see it as contradictory to what Prabhupada says. My contention is that I have fully accepted Krishna consciousness, or at least have accepted it as my foundation so that I notice when I am not Krishna conscious and I am willing to change and correct myself. At the same time, I have to fight the mechanical, merely official acceptance of Krishna consciousness, as if it was only my "religion," or a dogma. Therefore, I want to know what is actually going on in my mind. A person might be so out of touch with himself that he assumes he's a first-class devotee. He assumes he has no errant thoughts or that they are not dangerous "or that they are too dangerous to even consider. He keeps a lid on the Pandora's box of his self. He suppresses it, but it will explode. I regularly let off steam by letting the mind babble. Often this produces significant data. You start by saying, "I want ice cream and a pretty girl," then you look at that and ask, "What's *this*?" You reason with it and find yourself turning toward Krishna for shelter.

Letting the devil have his due for a while is something I do regularly as writing practice and as therapy. It is truthful too. I have to learn how to control it. It is part of the larger subject of controlling the mind. Controlling a horse, for example, is done not by always holding back on the reins but by sometimes allowing him freer rein. Sometimes you even spur him on. It's a process of letting go and pulling in. It's an art learned by

practice. The mind can learn to cooperate with us, can be supple, flexible, and travel long distances under our control. At least that's the theory.

The distance we want to cover is the distance it takes us to get to Krishna's lotus feet. Turn the mind to Krishna. Always look at the Lord's lotus feet. Don't be in a hurry to see His face. In this way, use the mind in Krishna's service. Chant Hare Krishna. While chanting we often find ourselves conjuring, conjecturing, dozing, hallucinating, struggling with one illusion or another because of our lazy or passionate and uncontrolled natures. We witness the mind's insubordination and then beg to be allowed to bring it back under the control of the higher self, *especially* when we're chanting. When writing, I can easily insert, "Krishna, Krishna," and then while telling of my little life and of what I have read recently, express gratitude befitting a would-be *sadhaka*.

* * *

Abhaya Dasi

Abhaya dasi's at the hospital with her daughter turned blue and the hospital authorities are concerned.

Abhaya is overwhelmed, thinking of the cats and dogs she has seen chloroformed, some she did herself, her three favorite aunts who died in their 40s from cancer, her own younger brother died from an "OD."

"If I were in a man's body," she said, "I would come to you and beg to talk with you."

Please don't. I am only a teacup.

I don't know how to face oceans of misery.

I can quote like a *sadhu*, but are you ready to hear from the scriptures statements supporting that we should be callous toward the death of even a close relative and go on with our Krishna conscious duties?

* * *

Are you ready to admit that lamentation is in the mode of ignorance and recall Krishna's statement that the wise lament neither for the living nor the dead?

* * *

Abhaya asks for instruction. She wants to leap ahead so she won't be reborn in this world of sorrow. I don't know. If I did, I'd be leaping.

But instead I'm slow and steady.
I doubt I'll be going back to Godhead at the end
of this life. Is it faithless
she asked, if she doesn't expect
to go back to Godhead right away?
No, it's realistic, humble.
Even Maharaja Pariksit prayed, "If I don't
make it to the spiritual world at the end,
let me be born with full devotion to Krishna,
with friends who are devotees,
and compassion for all."

* * *

Her daughter's still in the hospital, soon to be released.
Then smoke will rise from her chimney and
life will go on in the cold and happy-sad
Gay-glum. The key to life
on the quay "hard work and don't complain
of cold, eat simply (not too much),
Row your own boat,
and get together with others to talk
out what's wrong, how to make money,
how to improve.

* * *

And where's that hermit?
He's gone to the shed.

* * *

I Am The Man
I am the man who lives in the house
and who treasures his own sayings.
He doesn't allow sarcasm
or bash himself or others.
He's got it figured out, those compassionate sayings
of saints. Looks at himself
under a glass darkly, can't
figure it out, the soul, the *sastra*,
the soul in every atom "can't be cut or burnt "
looks at it by negative and positive definition.
He is a person who can play with Krishna
but who can't surmise it yet.
He goes on walking and chanting and

neverminding until he ends.
Maybe just before that,
he sees what he lacks and what he should have done.

* * *

Muddy walk, cow's hoof impressions, crumbled buildings "walking the same brisk walk, but new ideas.

Walking in the city, the European birds "she doesn't know their names. Did they fly from Majorca, Spain? Are they Irish or British? Does it matter? Oh, yes.

The man walks, wearing three pairs of socks and ten layers of pants and coats. He leaves accuracy behind and moves under the misshapen moon less than half full but still substantial. It won't be long now before we the full moon at end of Kartika. There'll be plenty of sweets in the bazaars, although he's been eating sweets all along and didn't follow the *vratas* he promised at the beginning of the month. At least he lit candles almost every night. It has been good not to have so many headaches. Whatever Krishna desires, he sees the good in it.

* * *

8:20 a.m.

Shed windows frosted over. It's getting too cold here for a morning visit. Aniruddha said that he and Manu could arrange a gas heater which would take the fumes out of the room. When Madhu is away (or when he's here), I thought this morning, I shouldn't demand too many things for myself. Ladies have to give up a morning to cook for me. I shouldn't ask for things I don't need. My hands are cold.

Oh man, I want to see Krishna in Christmas, in wood knots, in men and women working hard to confront *karmis* on the street, "Please take a book."

The end. Has he written his last? I don't believe it for a moment. He won't give up. Here's a story he wrote:

Once there was a mouse and a monster. One was a devotee, the other was innocent. The mouse told the story that once a monster received a Krishna conscious book and was going to eat it, but he decided to read a page of it first. The page was on the immortality of the soul. It opened his eyes, blew his mind. "I believe," he said. The monster decided to drop out of the Monster Flying Academy, but he couldn't because he had signed a contract.

The monster said, "I must always chant Hare Krishna and eat vegetarian *prasadam*," and he began singing loudly. They thought of smacking him on both ears and jailing him, but decided to kick him out of the Academy. He joined a local temple whose devotees didn't like him being a monster.

"But I'm not this body. Don't think of me as a monster."

"Gee, you're right there," they said, but in their minds they retained their prejudice.

O monster, hang in there.

The Lord loves you.

Your soul is bright and pure and
you are the gentle servant

of the true monists who
love God. You'll soon get
awarded your *svarupa* and
that will be lovely and joyful forever.

* * *

My God it's cold. *Matra-sparSas*. Finger tips sting, the body chills.
Of rulers I am Yama
of Devarsis, Narada
of Daityas, saintly Prahlada
of *yajna*, Hare Krishna mantra *japa*.

* * *

9:50 a.m.

Don't get too ordered with your schedule, or too virtuous, about how many Krishna conscious books you're going to read or even how much of Srila Prabhupada's writing you'll cram in in one day. I noticed you spaced out at 9:30 a.m., neither drawing nor reading nor writing. Minutes tick by while you browsed through a few items. Is that wasting time? I prefer to call it "taking a breather," or "looking for sparks."

Adrienne rich wrote in her Introduction to *Best American Poetry of 1996*: "I was constantly struck by how many poems published in magazines today are personal to the point of suffocation. The columnar, anecdotal, domestic poem, often with a three-stress line, can be narrow in more than a formal sense." Hmm.

Back in the house, waiting for the mail (still). So many clear days in a row. How best to use them? What if someone asks me how I feel? Should I say I forget? I think I'm still weak? They might wonder why I didn't immediately sign up as a member of the board of directors for the nearest zone (who draw pistols faster than anyone), or emblazoned my slogan, "Have *danda*, will travel." How about that?

* * *

Oh, you're witty. Diana Witty. Remember her? John Young called her "Dim Witty." Such a cruel boy, that Juan Joven. Did she get him back? I doubt it. They already knew he was a failure with girls.

I made nine points in one intramural basketball game when our class (57-1) triumphed over another class. We lost the next game (or maybe we didn't even play one). O wonder-scorer, that was your afternoon when Kathy Swanson attended and saw you score those baskets. Wonnerful.

These are the memories. A scared kid getting on Bus 103 on Hylan Boulevard, heading north from southernmost tip of Staten Island. The dream can be repaired, the memories revised, if you fish them out and do something with them? But what?

And Navy ships. Don't let them get stuck in the sewer.

* * *

Okay, this has been fun, part of the relaxation, but now it's time to read.

* * *

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami ends Chapter Seven of *Madhya-lila* with this verse: "One who hears these pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu with great faith will surely very soon attain the lotus feet of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu." In his purport, Prabhupada writes that everyone should engage in preaching, following in the footsteps of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Certainly Chapter Seven shows Lord Caitanya preaching mightily, empowering all kinds of people as He tours South India. Every person who met Him went and preached and influenced others to become devotees. "In this way one will be very much appreciated by Lord Krishna and will quickly be recognized by Him. Actually, a devotee of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu must engage in preaching in order to increase the followers of the Lord. By thus preaching actual Vedic knowledge all over the world, one will benefit all mankind."

I again asked myself in an accusatory way, "Are you preaching?" I even wondered why Prabhupada should mention preaching since Krishnadasa Kaviraja didn't mention it in his verse. Thus I tortured myself. Yes, yes, I am preaching with the *brhat-mrdanga*. For example, just the other day a devotee called from Japan and asked to use some of my drawings on the cover of the Japanese edition of *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. That's preaching, isn't it?

But perhaps Prabhupada and the *acaryas* want us to always feel bad. He says that unless we feel really unworthy, then we won't be able to improve. I know the psychologists say we ought to feel good, and that makes sense too, but there's a balance there somewhere.

Am I convinced that Krishna consciousness is for the betterment of mankind? Yes, and I'm also convinced that a preacher has to keep striving to teach that. Out of the many persons to whom a preacher speaks, hardly one will become serious. Still, the preacher is determined to continue for Krishna's pleasure.

* * *

Noon

Just a thought "in December I could chant thirty-two rounds a day, write another directed journal such as *Begging For the Nectar of the Holy Name*, and spend time reading.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

I'm so easily swayed in my resolution. I thought earlier about stopping *Every Day, Just Write* and starting a book about *japa*. I even glanced for a few moments at *Begging For the Nectar* and *Japa reform Notebook*, and then I saw the good in *Every Day, Just Write*. The very fact that it has no focus is truthful. Is that a strange thing to say? But it's saying the truth rather than what should be said in a book on chanting or anything else. The writing's as pure as I can get it. I mean, free from pretension.

Now I find myself swaying toward not increasing my *japa* but increasing my writing. And so I talk to myself as an old friend. Gently, gradually, I remind myself about the goal of life and my need to improve. Srila Prabhupada said that his disciples were too grown-up for him to chastise. If he attempted to correct them, they would break (away). "I am an old man. I cannot chastise you."

I don't feel like chastising myself either. Neither do I want to whip myself into writing a certain book. I made a list of vows or restrictions on the first day of Karttika, but I didn't follow any of them. Or rather, I followed the gist but not the letter. Despite my lack of rigidity, I now find myself without desire to do the things I decided to restrict myself against. I sense that they don't help me in my Krishna consciousness. Maybe that was a better path for me, to do what I want not out of force. I'm too old to chastise. I prefer peace.

This has relevance to my decision about whether or not to increase my *japa* quota. Maybe I should take the same approach. rather than making a bold announcement and forced start "thirty-two rounds to start on such and such a day, with such and such a book to keep me company "it's probably better to keep in mind that *hari-nama* is the only way and an increased quota may help (although whenever I try it, it usually returns to the same state later).

Better to do the free roll ease motion of writing with no topic.

Damn it, *I* like it
even though I don't always know what it is.

I suspect that writing another book like *Begging* would start to feel too structured for who I am right now.

Is that because I'm living too much in ease these days? Would a *japa-vrata* tighten me up? Directed writing might work in the same way. If I'm not on book distribution, at least be chanting. "Then if anyone reads this diary, they will see I'm a serious devotee."

O pretense, begone.

At the same time, improve your chanting if you can.

* * *

4:20 p.m., temple room

Radha-Govinda: dressed in red and white with designs in silver *jari*. Radha's blouse has a high neck and Her flouncy skirt is covered by a pinafore. Tulasi leaf on Her palm, blessing us. Laksmi-Narayana worship they say, but They are Radha and Govinda.

Krishna has a buffalo horn that curves in the same direction as His hip where it rests. His garland extends to His ankles; Her's is shorter.

Radha-Krishna worship is topmost, but we can't jump to it artificially. Gaurakishor dasa Babaji says we need to first practice austerity, give up all sense gratification, and practice *bhajana* for a long time before we will find ourselves free enough of lust and able to hear of Their pastimes. What to speak of serving Them directly "or Their *sakhis* "in our own spiritual form.

* * *

Island paths, beautiful copper tones, leaves piled, clear air, calm and cold "the paths are darkening.

A prayer before I leave: Dear Lords, if You like, please keep me active reading Srila Prabhupada's books and writing. Give me insight how to better serve You. O Harinama, please let me pay attention and *pray* the Hare Krishna mantra.

I want to absorb Your beauty. You are the center of Inis rath. Everything here is Yours and is done for Your pleasure. Even this writing done across the lake at Manu's house is for You. When I look at the lake and the island, the trees, please let me be aware that You are the jewel in this setting and the life of the devotees.

* * *

12:22 a.m.

I hesitate to write more openly because I am unworthy. Would I really outpour so many dirty things? Perhaps. If I could get past the vomiting of blood, as Kaliya did, and get to the offering of flowers and sincere prayers of surrender, if I could get past my brokenness into some kind of wholeness, then it would be worth the effort of living this life. I need to learn how to dance. "O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in me, though they be of lower birth "women, *vaisyas*, as well as *Sudras* "can attain the Supreme destination." (Bg. 9.32)

"*Sri Krishna caitanya prabhu doya koro more*" ""My dear Lord, please be merciful to me. Who can be more merciful than Your Lordship within these three worlds? You appear as an incarnation just to reclaim the conditioned, fallen souls, but I assure You that You will not find a soul more fallen than me." (Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, Prarthana, song 39)

* * *

Rain beginning and pain in this body. The material body is a treasure house of miseries. Then use this time fully in the Lord's service. What other hope is there?

When I read, I pray to be deeply present. I notice the words going by as Lord Caitanya embraces ramananda raya. ramananda raya considered the Lord's embrace His mercy on a fallen soul; the Vedic injunctions forbid a *sannyasi* to embrace a *Sudra*. Then they agreed to meet and speak *Krishna-katha* in private. Prabhupada comments in that section that topics of Krishna and the *gopis* should not be discussed in public.

* * *

Dreamt last night that Mandalesvara Prabhu and I were present at a meeting of top politicians. President Clinton was notable by his absence. reagan was there instead "some kind of coup? Reagan announced that he meditated several times a week. This was a great opportunity for me or Mandalesvara to say something about Krishna consciousness, but we didn't. That's all I remember, that we didn't preach. We were fortunate to be at such a meeting and fortunate that Reagan introduced the topic of meditation, but we could not capitalize on it.

* * *

When we returned to Geaglum last night from our Inis rath visit, the sky's last light was turning the cows into silhouettes. Kaliya warned us not to come near. The sky was cold and beautiful. The collie greeted us, tail wagging, as we landed at the quay.

"Be careful, there is ice on the cement." I placed my hand on Syamananda's back and stepped carefully out of the blue rowboat. I wanted to say that *while it was happening*, but I did not have the presence of mind to do it when I reached the house. I knew it was precious, but I couldn't convince myself it was worth recording. Later, I drew a picture of a man walking with a black cow in the background.

Was it a Krishna conscious moment? Every moment is. Did I see Radha-Govinda in the sky? Maybe not, but I inserted Them in my mind. The collie greeted us and we walked. We were returning from *darsana*. Every moment is a Krishna conscious moment.

* * *

Prayer to Guru and Krishna
O Radha, O Krishna,
outsiders cannot understand You.
They think God is Christ or
Christ's impersonal Father or
who knows what. They see
You only as a statue or cultural
expression of God. I enter
the sacred circle.

* * *

O master, Srila Prabhupada,
you are my household deity.
O *murti* of mine,
my sentimental song becomes purified
when I sing it for you. Please rest
warmly and rise as you like
to write with dictaphone your *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.
Then kindly chant *japa*
with me.

* * *

Lord of all, in my heart,
please grant me better chanting.

* * *

3:38 a.m.

Take a deep breath and let it out. Okay, a story. Once Nellie fell into despair, broke her wrist, and it wouldn't mend. She kept a secret diary of her intentions to go back to Godhead. Her Christian friends told her how they offer their suffering to God, but she read in the monthly newsletter put out by her guru that this is not exactly the same as love of God. Offering suffering means . . .

She went on working in a shoe repair shop, a health sanatorium, in the highways and byways until she was sufficiently old. She was told that women don't take *sannyasa*, so why not just chant Hare Krishna, be simple, and read the books?

That didn't seem practical. There has to be more to fill out a life. She thought the advice was for liberated souls and not for her. She felt she needed human companionship and work, a sense of belonging to a cause. She also wanted to feel part of the *sankirtana* effort, but that she was limited in what she was able to do.

Or let's think of the manager. The intelligent preaching supervisor knows the limits of the preachers and assigns them duties which are not too hard for them. He himself spends most of his time telling others what to do and working to raise the money to carry on, talking on the phone, receiving faxes and e-mails and going out to meet big Indian businessman to ask for donations. Then back to the streets where dogs and cats and men and women engage in endless sense gratification. Our hero eventually makes his way back to the temple where he hopes to find a plate of hot *prasadam* waiting. He knows he's not fulfilling his topmost spiritual ideals, and he thinks he cannot be considered a devotee because of it, but Krishna favors him because he's trying to spread Krishna consciousness. He knows that too.

* * *

I'm not writing "'O America" and "O Tokyo" like that girl. I'm not writing a Paul Zimmer poem. I would like to give a little poetic discourse on some aspect of the nine methods of devotional service instead, something from out of my life and that touches on yours and yours. To touch base with Lord Caitanya and Haridasa Thakura.

Devotee 1: "Hey whatcha reading?"

Devotee 2: "I've been reading this page in *Krishna* book for the last thousand years. I am making a birthday cake for the eight hundredth anniversary . . . and the one hundredth, and my own thirtieth, and the third of when you were born, honey. (Honey is okay. You can offer it to Krishna.)

Slobby Miskept, yeah, we know the type. He does the externals, sometimes, and acts like an *avadhuta*, talking about the *gopis* despite his lack of qualification. Better to start from the beginning, Slobby, and follow the rules, chant the rounds, and follow the Swami. Don't be miskept *and* misled.

(Oh, oh, here comes the gremlin around the block. He sees me and starts his discourse. "Don't you know you should be working to pick up the pieces in that temple where the leader fell down and the other where that Christian New Age psychotherapist came and turned the devotees to a new openness in support of feelings?")

I can't, I just can't. I can't go there and tell them that everything they heard was *maya* and that they should just do whatever their authorities say. I have ulcers and headaches and a bad ankle and athlete's foot and no money.

I will say this, however: It was no ordinary thing to meet Krishna's pure devotee and be allowed to take direction from him. He is the master of our hearts and we should follow him with faith. We have only a few more years left in these bodies. He left in 1977 and we will all be leaving soon after him. I hope to catch up to him and to be with him again.

* * *

Krishna, this day is Yours. I was reading in a collection of writing sessions I did last summer one that discussed our faith in spreading Krishna consciousness. I said that sometimes it gets depleted and smothered by rhetoric. Then I wrote this: "*That's why, more than anything, I seek to free my own language from rhetoric. That's why writing sessions are important.*"

I'm feeling convinced that the more I write, the more the process will work to bring me to new discoveries of truth. And books will also come from it. To confirm this, I saw in these writing sessions I wrote last summer how *Memories* was gradually building and taking shape. It started with giving lectures about Vyasa asking Narada to speak about his life. I said that we all know a life into which we should inquire. That is, our own. In the writing session I wrote, "What I couldn't say, what was really on my mind and heart, is that we ought to tell our confession, our real story, we ought to know who we are and that it is part of Krishna consciousness." That lecture was a harbinger for the *Memories* project, but no one in the audience "and not I myself either" could know that at the time. Let me have the faith and hope that right now I'm on a wave of good things to come. Even when it seems I'm not going anywhere, Krishna sees. He's the ultimate mover behind the process.

* * *

8:31 a.m.

Mail due today. Tenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gita* reading completed. There now. What's new in the world of the spirit soul? Haridasa Thakura said, when Lord Caitanya asked what's the news, "Whatever mercy You care to bestow on me." In other words, I have nothing. I await Krishna's muse, Krishna's direction.

Real free-writing means to admit to the blank and the struggle and to be left with the most external reportage on your own. Then to realize that you know nothing but Krishna as your Lord and He may handle you roughly in His embrace or make you brokenhearted by not being present before you. These are Srimati radharani's words, but all *jivas* know an infinitesimal spark of that feeling, especially those who are treading the *bhakti-marga*. Your mercy, Krishna, is all I know.

* * *

They are putting the carrier on the roof of the car and going to Dublin for the day for ISKCON Ireland's National Council meeting. I plan to walk in the grass and confer with grass blades and the sky and a pen on a blank page. I don't even discuss issues with

managers. I just, just "mouth like a fish and don't pretend this is better or worse, this navel-gazing. I'll read a little too. Not as cold today.

O Krishna, of secrets You are silence and of feminine qualities *ksama* (patience). You are the rod of chastisement for wrong-doers and of birds you are Garuda. Of the Pandavas You are Arjuna, of months, November - December, and of seasons flower-bearing Spring. All these are just a tiny sample of Your qualities as they are manifest in the material world. There is no need to list them all. "Know that all glorious things are but a spark of My splendor." As the Supersoul, You are the life of all that lives.

Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, where do we go from here?

I don't want to go back to what I was before just in order to live. But I do want to live, quietly. I know the external act is not enough. Therefore remembering helps. Each *jiva* must work hard to survive in the material world. Best to work in *bhakti* a produce fruits, flowers, and trees that grow up to Goloka.

Thank You, Lord Krishna, the origin of all, for giving me days of health and pain. Please let me fulfill my aspiration to become a better devotee. My life's not over yet; I could still improve by Your grace.

1:09 p.m.

We draw a blank sometimes in trying to understand where to go or how to move forward in spiritual life. We hear from *sastra* but it doesn't move us. When we get into that mood, it creates an emotion in which we question our entire identity and purpose as we have been living it out. At the same time, it's not that racing to make a change will bring relief. We have to face our lack of taste at certain times of the day because they seem to be almost physical cycles.

I can just see the lake through my window and it's a perfect mirror today. Still cold, though. The lake will change. Will we? How long will we sit and measure time before we are forced to pray?

Those words: bored, dry, empty. We watch ourselves going through the motions and wonder why we don't chant more. It's something to do. We'd feel bored, empty, and dry no matter what we were doing sometimes, but that shouldn't stop our attempt to increase our surrender to *hari-nama*. Chanting will take us where we want to go. And I know I've said this before, but I feel the same way about my writing service. The more I write, the more I will be able to forge ahead in the way I want to go. Simply chant (and for me, write). It doesn't have to be pretentious (there's that word again).

* * *

When I am alone, I like to try to sink into a *bhajana* mood. That means more chanting, actually vocalizing the cries of "Dry!" "Alone!" "Bored!" "Is this all there is?" "through the words of the Hare Krishna mantra, and always looking for more.

It's funny when you chant more what goes through your mind. You might think you have some secret to convey to the devotees. But maybe you don't. Often, all you feel from increased chanting is the sheer increase itself. I mean, more moving of the abacus counter beads. That's all. Still, an undercurrent develops as you recite the holy name more and more. The Vaisnava "ordeal" to chant as Lord Caitanya ordered. Our perfection will be found there. If we give our hearts.

* * *

Prabhupada compared child marriage in Vedic culture to the practice of Deity worship. When the bride and groom are so young, there's really no question of love between them, but the custom is that the girl brings some food to the husband and does little services for him, and in this way they have various exchanges although they continue to live with their parents. By going through the motions of marriage, however, the husband and wife gradually become attached to each other until they fall so much in love that they would never leave one another. This gradual development of love is compared to *vaidhi-bhakti*. What is true of Deity worship is also true of chanting. Chant, chant, chant, without love, chant, chant, chant with offenses "but eventually . . .

* * *

12:08 a.m.

Devotees are always meant to be seeking a balance. I have a list of things I'd like to do all at once but can't. I'd like to
write structured books while remaining intensely focused on the moment;
be peaceful yet excited in life;
not get headaches but accept my pain;
Read books to learn about health and coping with illness, yet avoid reading all non-Krishna conscious books;
travel, but stay in one place;
chant extra, read extra, write extra, and so on.

* * *

The local courier company promised they would come out last night with the mail package. Madhu has their *home* phone number. I took rest and expected to find the package outside my door at midnight, but it wasn't there. The hallway was cold and empty. I went back to reading Cc. and preparing a lecture for the disciples' meeting on the four suggestions Ramananda Raya offered Lord Caitanya, and which were rejected by Him. I have noted down a condensed phrase to describe each of the four suggestions: (1) *varnaSrama*; (2) *krsnekarmarpana*; (3) *svadharma tyaga*; (4) *jnana-miSra-bhakti*. The principle that was accepted by the Lord was *jnana-Sunya-bhakti*, or hearing from self-realized devotees about Krishna.

* * *

Thinking about my health and my resolve to increase my *japa* quota. I hope the increased *japa* will fill up a feeling of I have of "something missing." At the same time, the increased endeavor will bring the risk of more headaches. Samika Rsi dasa wrote and suggested I follow these steps in dealing with my chronic illness: "Please take more slow, natural, positive steps when you take on any stressful situation. Do only what you feel you can handle in a relaxed way. Keep a positive attitude. If it still bothers you, step back and try some other time."

The "something missing" may be health and I simply have to face my limits. Accepting it can increase the sweet awareness of Krishna's mercy. I don't have to see it as something negative or void. At the same time, I don't want to live a life of under-endeavor either. It's a fact that thirty-two rounds a day would strain my daily life. It's also true that favorable stress is a positive meeting the challenge of life. Srila Prabhupada states that Krishna consciousness and an easy-going go ill together. We must do what we can without getting stuck on what we can't do. I remember Saint Therese and even Saint Teresa of Avila saying that they couldn't perform certain devotional acts because of illness and because of the limits of being women (not being able to preach as the male missionaries were).

* * *

3:38 a.m.

When writing you have to go off into thin air and it may not always be so cogent. You allow words to come and never mind the looks from the folks who read them. You are your own first reader, so help yourself. That seems important to me this morning. If writing helps the writer, then it succeeds at least that far. Of course, I may not always know what helps or what I need immediately. I accept that I am Krishna's servant and that I *need* to serve Him, need to work to please Him. Krishna doesn't need my help, but He is willing and eager for us to offer our services ""I want to help Krishna in His pastimes." At the same time, it is a rare soul who is qualified to assist Him, especially in *madhurya-rasa*. To become qualified, we have to serve and satisfy our spiritual master in His mission to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world. That is real self-help.

But . . . does it feel good? Does it help your health? Your peace of mind? Yes, and sometimes no. We used to say stridently, "To hell with peace of mind and physical health! Just work for Krishna twenty-four hours a day!" But we couldn't. We weren't pure enough. And others have been hurt by our inexperienced and contaminated preaching. Dear preacher-self, dear big disciple of your spiritual master, if you're going to take charge of body, mind, and soul, I want to know how are you going to take care of me? Get the point?

Krishna consciousness has to be realistic. It should deliver tangible results as well as the not so tangible spiritual results promised in the *sastra*. No one should be acting blindly in spiritual life. We may not chart our illnesses because we know we're not this body. We may not imitate Proust in our expression because we don't believe in art for art's sake. We pull like horses in the traces, nodding our heads and treading over cobblestones, urged on by the master, but we shouldn't be pulling while forgetting who we are and why we are running. We have to run under the whip of transcendental realization.

* * *

Therapy
Here is the therapist.
She-he says, "Move your

arm. Now relax your body foot by
foot. Now clear your mind of emotions.
Now just be yourself and like a good science student
examine the damage of your pain.
It's okay? All pain gone?
No? Well maybe you didn't do it right. Try again.
Keep practicing with this tape and buy some more tapes.
We also will sell a wristwatch that
denotes your rise in temperature as you meditate."

* * *

That's therapy. Now let's do
bhakti. Mad-gegenantaratmana.
Only by devotion. By even a slight
touch of impersonalism, devotion flees.
Faultfinding, especially blasphemy
against God and scripture and holy men
is bad. You read too many cynical poets
and you'll wind up in hell
(in which they don't believe).
They believe in their egos,
their jokes and publishing and especially
in sex, trees, favorite words,
friends and booze and writing discipline.
They all have editors and most of them work in colleges.

* * *

But devotion you learn from your spiritual master
and it's best you keep away from others because
that's the ninth offense "to teach the glories of the name
to the faithless. And don't teach the intimate pastimes.
Don't eat meat or have illicit sex.
Be calm and work for Krishna.

* * *

After writing a poem, Henry knew from experience that he would get drowsy by
sitting in the comfortable chair, fingering his beads. Today he was prepared to wash his
face, even if it smeared his *tilaka*, to keep the drowsiness away.

* * *

8:28 a.m.
Feeling good on all fronts:

physical health steady like a rowboat crossing on a calm day;
mind cheerful;
spirit fixed on best path;
writing okay;
and happy to be here to give a class on the vital topics Lord Caitanya discussed with Ramananda Raya.

The waves of hope raise me higher.

Is all this only to be dashed by a few ripples and harsh notes, a setback to body, mind, or spirit?

The sailor raises his paper sail, stands on deck, hand on mast, prays the Hare Krishna mantra

and sets off.

He is prepared to live long

or short

to die

or not,

because either way it's the same "

the *bhakta's* position.

* * *

4:20 p.m.

Almost full moon rising over Inis rath. The sky is pale blue, not night, so the moonlight illumines like a lantern. As I gaze at it, one of the black Kerry cows walks into the foreground of this picture and begins to graze. I see pasture, then plume-headed weeds on the shore, then the "drink" of the strait, then the forest island, and above it, the lantern moon.

The mail pack finally came and the mail is now strewn across my desk. I began reading and answering it, but then got the first sign of a headache behind my right eye. I had to stop. I also canceled our evening gathering to sing "Damodarastakam." I'll try to recover so I can answer the letters at midnight. I also hope to go to the temple in the morning.

Devotees express their lives in their letters and they stay on my mind. One disciple straying, one Godbrother sending his encouragement, and dozens of others.

That moon has a face with an "O"-shaped mouth and deeply sunken eyes. I don't know whether he's happy or sad. He looks cool, this end of Karttika moon.

Noon

Missed the earlier writing times because I wanted to answer the mail and I also gave the morning lecture. Now I am back and trying to find the thread of where I left off.

In a few hours, Madhu will leave for two weeks. I look forward to being that much more alone, although it may also be lonely. I also look forward to his safe return. We decided I couldn't go to Guyana next year, but Paramatma dasa wrote me that he's built a little house where I can stay. I think I will go and disciples can visit me there.

Answered the mail. One theme running through a few letters is that ISKCON has ruined some devotees' lives and health. Another said the search for individual spiritual life is in conflict with the demands of the institution. Hearing this places a burden on me.

One devotee who has left ISKCON even suggested I speak out against the whole GBC. He said I don't realize how powerful I am and how much I understand Prabhupada's spirit. How can he say I know more than the whole GBC body combined? Maybe the movement is hollow and superficial. It's certainly full of faults. I don't believe, however, that real spirituality cannot be developed within the institution. It's just not true.

The snow began to fall seriously. It's sticking to the ground. I saw the lake's waves roughen and snow lashed us in the face, soaking our coats and *dhotis* and my gloves. Arjuna dasa was rowing strong, but Abhaya dasi, in a rowboat with her two kids, wasn't doing so well. Arjuna had to go back and tow her. She and her daughter and son wore lifejackets. I wouldn't have minded having a lifejacket myself, but Arjuna got us there safely. I tensed as we made our way across the strait. Then in the temple room, beholding Radha-Govinda and reading the Cc. for the Sunday morning class, I relaxed. Much of what I read was about the Deity and the *nitya-siddha* status of the two *brahmanas* in the Saksi-Gopala story. All glories to Srila Prabhupada. I wish to find him in my own heart and life. There is no other way.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Rainbow against the dark gray sky. Two swans at lake's edge. Snow almost all melted. Fear of material attachments. I don't want them. I want to be detached like a bow without a string, now and at the time of death.

Madhu's about to leave. Shows me how to use the phone. There are some things we should not say in order to protect others. Disciples should think we are happy. Be quiet about your pain. Don't complain (too much) and don't confess the worst if it may harm others. This is a lesson in my Godbrother's leaving. I don't judge him, but I have to face that I myself should not hurt others by my own act of self-expression or self-satisfaction.

The water has calmed.

"He writes with a pen, rises in the middle of the night, and his headaches start near his shoulder blade. He's got half of his work or less done so far" "this the psychic "saw."

Did she see the calm lake? Does God speak in my voice? Will I answer all my mail? My hat is too tight.

No, I knew I wouldn't be able to swim in rough waters with a big coat and boots on, so I tensed my hold on the side of the boat and my gloves became soaked by the snow.

Madhu is showing me more things: how to use the heater, leaving my feelings open. Good-bye. Someone sent a page from the "Washington Post" showing the AIDS quilt on the lawn of the D.C. mall "350,000 people in America have died of the disease and it, is "inter-knit into the U.S. psyche like no other disease." The devotee who sent it was among the crowd, selling Srila Prabhupada's books.

* * *

Is this a form of notes or to be read as final work? How to judge it. I wrote *Svevo* first time free, and Kowitz said, "It's great," but he thought it was only notes not the "finished" work. I'm finished as soon as I write.

To the spiritual world go. When I speak upholding *parampara*, often quoting what Srila Prabhupada said, is that not also true? As true as this uncovering truth? Here I may say, "I don't feel that old innocent love for Prabhupada. I have to fight for it. I don't care for the Italian-made full-sized *murti* of Prabhupada." On the *vyasasana* I wouldn't talk like that. I uphold *parampara* and go light on confessions, on tear-down. They hear and benefit by that performance. Both are required.

"Thank you for coming to the island even in such bad weather."

That's okay, I like to come.

And I like to go home to write, to open the door to "my" room and feel the warm air (glasses fogging) and bow down to Prabhupada for preserving me on the rough strait crossing.

Oh, little people. rwanda rape victims give birth to thousands. What karma. I should not complain.

* * *

She was . . . there, there, calm down and be quiet to preserve the quiet of friends. Not all horrors need be recited. I called it a grocery list of horror and said it didn't have to be stated. You can cruise along.

How about reading?

One cannot be honest even at the end of one's life, for no one is wholly alone. We are bound to those we love, or to those who love us, and to those who need us to be brave, or content, or even happy enough to allow them not to worry about us. So we must refrain from giving pain, as our last gift to our fellows. For love of humanity, consume as much of your travail as you can. Not all, never that terrible murkiness that drains away human warmth. But when we are almost free of life we must retain guile that those still caught in life may not suffer more. The old must often try to be silent, if it is within their power, since silence may be like space, the intensely alive something that contains all. The clear echo of what we refrained from saying, everything from the first pause of understanding, to the quiet of comprehension."

"The Measure of My Days, Florida Scott-Maxwell

9:30 a.m.

Two irregular days in a row. Pain behind the right eye. The old-time favorite special. It makes me feel grateful for those days of quiet and ability which I fill up with a mixed bag of reading Srila Prabhupada (even though I'm not so ecstatic), writing in my own way (although I have doubts), and extracurricular reading (such as books on health or whatever).

* * *

3:45 p.m.

Pain still there. Took a short walk in 3 p.m. sunshine, collie Tilaka walking close behind. She groaned or cried and I turned around to her. Her eyes are scabby and sore at the corners. I couldn't help her, but patted her head and under her neck. Is she groaning

because she knows I have a headache or because Madhu's away? Now Jayananda is coming out of the house and shooting arrows into the air. His sister and another girl join him. Back inside I lay down to relax and hope relief will come overnight. Today's rounds were all silent.

* * *

5:30 p.m.

Dark, I sit facing the window with the curtain open and see the full moon rising over the trees on Inis rath. My headache is clearing. Celebrate with *japa*.

* * *

12:38 a.m.

In *dasya-rasa* the disciple fears the Lord (or the spiritual master). In *sakhya-prema*, friendship, the devotee considers himself equal with the Lord and knows that Krishna will never be displeased with him. Thus *dasya-rasa* is characterized by a lack of confidence and affection compared to *sakhya-rasa* (and *vatsalya* and *madhurya*).

These points may seem disappointing because our relationship with our spiritual master is in *dasya*. Lord Caitanya's devotees also approach Him in *dasya*. Another point: through the *dasya* relationship with the guru, we learn of higher *rasas* up to *madhurya* for Radha-Krishna.

We cannot jump over. We are in a *dasya* relationship with Prabhupada eternally. We will never be his equals. Yet friendship can develop within this relationship and through that friendship with the guru, we can learn of our relationship with Radha and Krishna.

* * *

O Krishna, love for You is never destroyed. *Nehabhikrama-naSo 'sti*: even a little devotional service will not suffer loss or diminution and can save me from the greatest fear at death.

Thinking ahead to next Saturday and what I will say to the eight disciples here at Inis rath. I could discuss *sadhu-sanga*, but the practical application becomes a relative discussion of how to get along with one another. Too sticky. I could talk about the holy names, but it seems I ought to do so out of realization (which I lack?). Since I spoke last week of Lord Caitanya's talks with Ramananda Raya, someone suggested I continue that, but that means talking about the conjugal *rasa* "how could I avoid it?" and that's not appropriate for me or them.

There's a difference between mechanical and spontaneous service . . . No, I can't think at present of what to speak. On our level, spontaneous service may mean doing what we like to do, what attracts us within the nine principles of *bhakti*. That is usually determined by our psycho-physical nature and not pure *rasa*. Pure *rasa* means I want to serve Krishna as a cowherd boy or as a servant (*kinkara*, *manjari*) of Radharani. If we can't serve spontaneously (by *rasa*), then may we serve enthusiastically through one of the services available to us in ISKCON that attract us? Someone wants to be an academic scholar, someone else wants to sing in a rock band, he wants to teach children,

she wants to mother them . . . or someone may want his cake and to eat it too by having the privileges of both *brahmacari*- and *grhastha-aSramas*. Are we free to choose? Or is that only *karma-yoga*? Where is the freedom to find our spontaneity?

* * *

The whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God.
The part truth "the bit-by-bit added parts.
He doesn't have much strength to read.
Gets knocked away (doubts, fears, pain, *something* . . . a loss of taste, over-familiarity, you know).
O Krishna, I want to chant better *japa* today now that I'm not in pain. But I know the mind won't listen
to the syllables of the mantra
and I can't drive hard and fast.

* * *

3:45 a.m.

Nama ruci, vaisnava seva, jiva daya "Lord Caitanya taught these three principles. One Godbrother told me that when people in ISKCON talk about drafting a mission statement, he thinks of these three principles. He also said he thought I was doing good service in these areas.

Taste for the name increasing. When will that day come? Service to disciples by writing books and traveling. Yes, I should extend myself a little further and go to Guyana, but I may not be able to go everywhere. That would be folly, not knowing what would happen with my health. I agreed we shouldn't go to Puerto rico because it would require another plane or two and a long ride up that winding hill and then later down it again. I just can't do it, or I guess I can, but I'm holding back.

Get with it man, and take care of the body. When you're feeling stress, do biofeedback relaxation. Then go out and exercise. And when you eat fruit, add a little cheese for carbohydrate so you don't get a sugar rush all of a sudden.

Oh, but the other guys say don't eat cheese because you can't digest it.

And then the other other guys say don't listen to any of the schools. Just tune in to your body and ask, "What does it want?"

And Srila Prabhupada says don't be so body conscious. Even if you do everything right, it won't work unless the fifth factor is there, *daivanite netrena*, the will of God. He can kill you or save you. Serve Him and He will take care of you. Don't divert your mind to that other body stuff too much.

Krishna, Krishna.

* * *

raga rags

He said they have no right, the ISKCON authorities, to chase me from

the streets. I was not collecting money
on the pretext of ISKCON begging.
I was there as a street musician singing *ragas*.
"Well you can do it but then
don't come to our temple. You are a street musician
selling rags."

* * *

The TP got mad and sent a fax
to the Boston basement
where they found the street musician's guru.
"Your disciple is creating havoc
in Bulgaria. You better tell him
to stop and cooperate with us."
"Oh, yes," said the guru precisely, and
he sent a semaphore message to the street musician:
"Cool it."
And he did.

* * *

Now they live happily cooperating I hear.
He sings his *ragas* in the temple and I don't
know what he does in the streets. What they
don't know won't hurt them either. Now let's look
and see what's coming in the mail.
It's the falldown
and farewell of the latest old-timer,
and rebuttal from headquarters informing us
how to think.

* * *

I'm still struggling with the poets, those who speak hard words and who face enemies
and cower, who admit they are cowards, who work on poems, who say it will be
wretched to get old (what to speak of dead). They rail against God and inhumanity and
one young Japanese poet thinks Coltrane's a saint and then describes all the men she has
slept with. I tell you, they are not my company. They are *asadhu*, *stri-*
sangi, and *Krishna-abhakta*. I prefer to hear from my friends, the devotees, and acorns to
the poets.

This morning I'll hear again how Ramananda Raya responded to Lord Caitanya's
questions about *rasa*. He says that all the *rasas* are good, but *madhurya* is the best. It
contains the qualities of all the others. Lord Caitanya didn't normally discuss this. He
usually chanted Hare Krishna and when there were competent persons with whom He

could speak, He discussed philosophy. But *madhurya parakiya* was for Ramananda Raya and a very few others. Prabhupada kept the same mood.

* * *

God can punish us if He likes. We can't dictate to Him, "God, You must be more responsive if You want us to accept Your ways. Don't expect us to love You if You don't conform to our latest social attachments. You shouldn't be against homosexuals or abortion. Don't be republican but something we can accept, a groovy God without a body."

Srila Prabhupada said that the materialists and impersonalists simply want to kill Krishna. But they can't. All they can kill us the chance the innocent people have to accept Him with faith.

One correspondent wrote and said, "It's better to accept only the little bit that is real for you from Prabhupada's teachings. Don't try to accept the whole thing." I decided not to write him back.

* * *

8:28 a.m.

Reading eleventh chapter ""See Arjuna, all that you wish to see, all in one place."

Using heater in shed. Pieces of ice melt onto the floor, windows frozen but ice on them also melting into droplets. Sun ball rising but sunlight confined to one part of the sky, blazing up through the cold and clouds.

It's quiet. I have nothing much to say because my energy is low today after the headache yesterday. Anticipating travel with the new year. O Lord of lords, fierce of form, I don't know Your mission, Arjuna said.

Fierce of form "thighs, mouths, bellies, soldiers entering the mouths of Krishna's Visvarupa. The demigods see it and are afraid, offer prayers, cry out, "Peace!"

Peace, the sunrise
coming through frets of trees
pouring like colored music,
the sun-eye of God.

In cold November the atmosphere is miles high, those woolly, breaking apart, ever-changing clouds. They seem to influence the nature of the water, now cold and calm. The weeds on the shore are frozen stiff and frosted white.

I scratch this pen
with amends and
salutations,

Ready to chant after hearing

that there is repetition in some of Arjuna's statements about the universal form. It's typical for someone in ecstasy to repeat himself: "Oh! Oh!"

* * *

2:22 p.m.

Pain control books recommend self-hypnosis (which never worked for me. They tell you to imagine the pain to be a red ball getting smaller and turning softer in colour, a mellow pink) and relaxation. They say not to be negative and recommend other strategies, such as taking hot baths and listening to Brahms.

I feel the pain and look out the window at the ever-changing portrait of the lake and island and marsh. Today five rowers in five canoes and four swans all together.

I go by circadian body rhythms. Peak times and ebbs are individual. I do get tired around 4 - 6 a.m., after rising at midnight and doing my *bhajana*, then showering, etc. They also say that old people tend to sleep light and be restless at night "wake about five times during the night. Yeah, that's me. "Over fifty-five" "that's me too. I'm pure spirit soul and never grow old. That's me too.

* * *

Arjuna prays to the Lord. Krishna is all things. As Time, He devours those *brahmanas* and *ksatriyas* instantly. They are already dead. *Kalo 'smi*, time I am, He says, and Arjuna stood in wonder.

* * *

Stick With It

I say "Krishna" and stand by it. I am faithful sticking here to ISKCON even though a guy says why don't you leave if you are right and the GBC is wrong. For what? To join him down the block? No thanks.

* * *

I'm here in December, World Enlightenment Day. I'm here on my birthday and Christ's and the disappearance of BSS. I'm here until the end of the year.

* * *

Blessings come down on those who read in peace. I don't seem to be getting better at prayer, but maybe I am. Don't say "maybe" or "I guess" the pain management book says. Assert yourself.

* * *

Okay, there's no pain, and I
breathe deep from the diaphragm and chase
the blues away. The pain
moves on, diminishing.

* * *

As I was walking back from the shed I heard a car start up and figured it was a Godbrother I heard was visiting. I was too close to it to walk the other way "I could see the exhaust fumes "so I kept walking and went right past him. My Godbrother and another devotee stayed in their car while I passed, then turned it around and prepared to drive away. I could have left it at that, but it seemed too unfriendly. Therefore, I stood on the side path and waited for them to drive past so at least I could wave, and they waved back and folded their hands in *pranamas*.

After they had pulled away, I kept walking and talking to myself, saying that I was glad I was left behind to write. Then I realized that I felt embarrassed. Embarrassed ? About what? That this Godbrother may go and report that he saw me out here apparently not doing anything "not traveling to different continents like him or getting involved in the book distribution marathon, preaching, raising money? Never mind. I am who I am. Still, I wanted to admit it here: I was embarrassed. Better not to have been seen.

* * *

4:30 p.m.

I was speaking about spontaneous, but when I chant, I can see I'm not a spontaneous lover of Krishna. I ground out two extra rounds with Prabhupada's *japa* tape and imagined that I could be doing other things instead. To keep going I told myself, "What if this is the last evening of your life?" That didn't hit me so hard but it was enough to hold on to the rounds.

Please, Lord, please. I can only become truly Krishna conscious if You give me Your mercy. I can read endlessly but still not get Your mercy. You have to actually give it to me. There is nothing I can do to attain it. Please let me chant, and let me pray while I chant.

Madhu is not here and therefore it's especially silent. The silence is so complete it's hard to fill it up. My mind wanders to the fruit I will eat at 5:30 "a sweet taste to substitute for the sweet taste of *bhakti-rasa*, which I don't possess. We each have to pray for that on our own. No one can do it for us. Not Thomas Merton or anyone. We are each alone with Krishna.

* * *

12:30 a.m.

Hope against hope that I could improve in these last days of the year. Wouldn't it be wonderful to become firmly fixed (*nistha*) in mostly exclusive reading of Prabhupada's books? And chanting?

Sometimes I read my own writings and I profit from them. At the same time, I have misgivings, fed by the criticisms of others, that my writings are simply mental life. By contrast here is what Ramananda Raya said about his speaking before Lord Caitanya:

Sri ramananda raya replied, "I do not know what I am saying, but You have made me speak what I have spoken, be it good or bad. I am simply repeating that message.

"Actually You are speaking through my mouth, and at the same time You are listening. This is very mysterious."

"Cc.*Madhya* 8.198, 200

William Blake claimed a similar thing. He said, "I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily and Nightly." His poetry was being written "from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without Premeditation and even against my Will." (*The Essential Blake*, Ecco Press)

When I write, I struggle to express what I want to say and I don't feel God speaking through me. When I do repeat His words from scripture or what I've learned from His pure devotee, that's valid Krishna consciousness, but it's also a student's regurgitation. Of course, everything is within Krishna's energy, so whatever I write also comes from Him, but He allows me (and everyone) my free will. So many writers in this world are babbling and not pleasing to Him.

That is my constant question: am I pleasing Him by my attempts and to what degree is He inspiring me? To what degree am I writing out of my tiny independence? I write uncertain of the answers to these questions, yet I feel enough conviction to continue.

Here are more statements by Ramananda Raya describing his enviable position as he speaks before Lord Caitanya:

Sri Ramananda Raya replied, "I do not know anything about this. I simply vibrate the sound You make me speak.

"I simply repeat like a parrot whatever instructions You have given me. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. Who can understand Your dramatic performances?"

"Cc. *Madhya* 8.121 - 22

Sri Ramananda Raya said, "I am just a dancing puppet, and You pull the strings. Whichever way You make me dance, I will dance.

"My dear Lord, my tongue is just like a stringed instrument, and You are its player. Therefore I simply vibrate whatever arises in Your mind."

"Cc. *Madhya* 8.132 - 133

Srila Prabhupada explains the principle behind the words of a pure devotee:

All intelligence emanates from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supersoul within the heart of everyone. Nondevotees want to ask the Supreme Lord for sense gratification; therefore nondevotees come under the influence of Maya, the illusory energy. A devotee, however, is directed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead and

comes under the influenced of Yogamaya. Consequently there is a gulf of difference between statements made by a devotee and those made by a nondevotee.

"Cc.Madhya 8.200, purport

* * *

3:40 a.m.

This morning I was listening to a tape of Prabhupada speaking in his room to devotees in Paris 1974. He was talking about the guests he had been seeing and how they were not devotees. He said that he strongly believed in Krishna's statement in *Bhagavad-gita* that if one is not a devotee of the Lord he's in one of four categories, *duskrtina*, *mudhah*, *mayayaparhrta-jnana*, or *asuram bhavam*. Then Prabhupada asked that this purport be read from his *Bhagavad-gita*. "It is very interesting," he said. Then he said, "Where is Satsvarupa?"

Someone said something, but I couldn't hear it on the tape. Maybe they said I was typing. I remember that I sometimes didn't attend Prabhupada's meetings because I had so much typing to do. Also, I lacked sufficient interest to stay with him hour after hour hearing him say "the same things."

Now I want to make up for that shortcoming. Srila Prabhupada, Satsvarupa is listening to your purports from *Bhagavad-gita*.

* * *

The truth is vibrant images. The truth is Prabhupada saying people have made wine and women their masters. Rayrama dasa left because he said we do not allow the bare necessities of life. Oh, that's true. They laughed in the room. That one young devotee was talking so much, repeating Prabhupada's instructions and his own opinion and much news about U.S. politics and sins, sins, sins of the nondevotees. I wonder where that devotee is now or who he was. I tend to put them all down and say I am the good one, the quiet one, the faithful one, but how can I make that claim? My actual place is different. Now I'm chronically ill and chronically unable to taste the nectar of the holy name, chronically a faultfinder and chronically not found in the front ranks of the preachers.

The book on chronic illness says that one who has it must acknowledge he can't move with the fast-action crowd. He can do the best he can, but he has to admit that some days are slower than others. Maybe he cannot meet with people "I can't. The chronically ill should not try to forget that they are actually ill. One injured man said that for a long time he kept thinking he would be cured. One day he would wake up and everything would be all right. Now he moves within his actual limits. I know people often ask me, "Do you still have headaches?" They think it's going to go away. When I say that I still have them, I feel as if I'm prolonging something that should have been finished by now. There is a tinge of something inside me that thinks I'm making it up or why would they keep asking? The question seems to imply that my pain ought to have diminished by now and it's unbelievable that headaches could last twenty years. Don't they know some things last for a lifetime? Perhaps we will each find out as we each enter old age and its accompanying diseases. I write this so that people who read it will understand me, and

also to find self-acceptance. The fact is, I get at least one bad headache (lasting over twenty-four hours) a week, and if I push myself, I get headaches every day. Face it and move one step at a time. And I have to face the fact that the illness shapes how I read, how I chant, and especially how I write.

I imagine a greater hero than myself overcoming the pain or being able to ignore it and serve through it. I just can't do that anymore. Instead I find myself moving slowly on the wooded path or staying in a room where it's quiet, not even going to the temple every morning. And so it goes.

This image came to mind: a lily has no thorns like the rose or horns like the ram. It is beautiful without giving others pain. Can I be like that? Give others the best? But I give them the pain of reality in my writing. At least let it be a sleek song and interesting and of ultimate value.

* * *

What Kind of A Poet
What kind of Vaisnava poet
is this who lives in North Ireland,
doesn't stay in Vraja, Uttara Pradesh?

* * *

What kind of blasphemer is this?
Throw him out, some say.
Others recognize my worth as
I ardently, silently walk in the woods.
I can live peacefully
chanting the holy names and
not see anyone and gain
a good reputation and
keep writing, keep reading,
sometimes with others,
from Prabhupada's purport on four kinds of
men who don't surrender to God.
I can also listen and listen to *Caitanya-caritamrta*
Regarding Ramananda Raya's talks.
This is what you get
if you ask me for a poem.

* * *

"You are caustic and cynical in your humor," a disciple said, but he read me anyway. He said it was a wonder that a wise guy like me could also have complete faith in the *parampara*. Was he implying that I didn't have faith?

* * *

Oh, Hare Krishna, the urge to
be saintly, the urge to sin "
these two urges play upon his nerves.

Don't believe a word of it. He makes up a story about a person joining the Hare Krishna temple and it's fiction for sophisticated fools. He delivers an interreligious address and is applauded and writes it up in his diary where he also states that he will refrain from another day of sin but he thinks of himself as one in the universe. Hare Krishna comes straight from Krishnaloka, but with chanting I have no connection. Day and night I am burning in the dark world without seeking to make the connection. Srila Prabhupada noted that in Paris they drink on the street and the churches are empty, but the "Follies" attract thousands. Other cities are like that too.

* * *

9:40 a.m.

All morning I've been trying to come up with a new writing project. I even wrote a farewell to *Every Day, Just Write*, and I attempted a Prologue to a new work. Then I returned to you, dear diary.

When I do a writing session, I'm saying I don't have to write exactly, just put down my thoughts as they come. When I step back and say I will choose a structure and a topic, then I have to face my poverty. It's anguish.

I mentioned earlier that my illness determines how I write. What I meant is that I have to maintain almost absolute peace as far as possible. Anguish is something I can't afford if I want to stay pain-free. Therefore, peace is major theme in my diary. I write to get peace, not to excel in literary structure, and thus I accept only the discipline of writing what comes.

* * *

12:30 noon

My headache is developing quickly into real pain behind the right eye. I'd like to not be afraid of it when it comes. I attribute the pain partly to the passion of trying to think up a new writing project. It really got me into high gear mentally.

* * *

2:30 p.m.

Process is better than product. Just write.

M. made it to America and will have his hernia operation at 9 p.m. our time tonight. I should be sleeping by then and I guess he will too under the anesthesia. May all be well.

Now, sir, you should be satisfied. Just glad to be alive. Calm and grateful. Don't go further right now to lament your lack of *Krishna-prema*. Just say, "Thanks for life." One chronically ill man said he coped by his love for life and his appreciation of little things "the two hours a day when the sun shone in a shaft onto his hospital bed and the sight of birds at the window.

Ringling in ears. Heat in the shed. Body, body, love the body, body betrayed, you can't be happy in the body "it's either pleasure, mixed pleasure and pain, or pain. Actually, it's all pain because it always ends in death.

* * *

The afternoon darkens even before 3 p.m. today because all the sky is covered with one gray mass. Little light to show off the copper leaves, just calm, foggy, not-so-cold, dampness.

"Please forgive me." Arjuna apologized for being the Supreme Lord's close friend now that he saw His splendors and fearful form. "Please forgive me," but he couldn't forget their friendship. Then he asked to see the four-armed form. I could only read a little at a time.

* * *

12:30 a.m.

Who has the most glorious reputation?

One reputed to be a devotee of Krishna.

Who is the richest capitalist?

He who is richest in love for Radha and Krishna.

Draw lines and loops and see what comes out. Accept it. Another face, stylized eyes and mouth and nose. And when you write is it similar?

Are you on the liberated platform and entitled to hear the loving pastimes of Radha and Krishna? Is that disciple who has left me? Should we hear from someone other than Prabhupada? No, I don't want to. ISKCON has declared it wrong and for good reason. "By practicing the regulative principles, one should rise to the platform of spontaneous attraction to Krishna. Then and then only one should hear about Radha-Krishna-lila." (Cc. *Madhya* 8.255, purport)

* * *

Sometimes I fantasize that I may get strong health or some new, strong willpower and become an inspired preacher later in life. It doesn't seem likely though.

Healing the Body Betrayed gives examples of persons who were active and successful despite chronic pain. Mickey Mantle hit 536 home runs despite the intense pain he suffered from crippled knees and legs. Marcel Proust and Robert Louis Stevenson were mostly bed-ridden, yet they wrote their books. FDR conducted World War II and the American Presidency from his wheelchair after suffering from adult polio. JFK campaigned and conducted the American Presidency with intense back pain.

I can't lecture when I have a headache, but I can persist in traveling and when the headache subsides, I can plan to lecture the following day.

It seems even more important that I write in process. If it gives me only one publishable book a year I will be satisfied.

Faith in practice. Faith in service.

Mini and Sal. Mini never became a devotee. She divorced Sal who became a devotee. But he too sprouted more material desires and decided to try for material fortune. He went to Manhattan to work and get the pot of gold. He read *sastra* only fifteen minutes a day. Oh well, what can you expect? It's a full-time endeavour to work in the world. I'm thankful I'm away from it.

* * *

Sukadeva Gosvami invoked the blessings of the Supreme Lord before delivering the *Bhagavatam* to Maharaja Pariksit. The Supreme Lord originally inspired Lord Brahma in the heart. He again appeared in the heart of ramananda raya and manifested all knowledge of Radha and Krishna to him. I pray to the Lord to please direct me in my heart and to allow me to write Vedic truths, bringing mango-like sweetness to the devotees of the Lord.

* * *

Writing in process. remember Henry Miller's statement about writing?

. . . I proved to my satisfaction that, like any mortal, I too could write. But since I wasn't really meant to be a writer all that was permitted me to give expression to was this business of writing and being a writer; in short, my own private struggles with this problem. My grief, in other words. Out of the lack I made my song. Very much as if a warrior, challenged to mortal combat and having no weapons, must first forge them himself. And in the process, one that takes all his life, the purpose of his labours gets forgotten or side-tracked.

"Henry Miller from *Art And Outrage*

True of me? No stories or essays. Few poems.

Another struggle is the balance between implicit expression and explicit expression. I live to cultivate seeing Krishna in all things. When I see a tree, I want to understand that it's the combination of Krishna's material energy and a spirit soul. The combination of atoms is not separate from Krishna; it all comes from Him. Okay, but I want to see Him even if I don't tag on the words: "Here in this tree, matter and spirit combine and come from the supreme source, the Supreme Person."

There are swans on the lake, and the lake itself, and a beaten down path leading to the shed, and the shed itself, and the cold air, The mother and her kids, the island, whatever I see or think "all coming from Him. O Krishna, I know I am limited, but give me the vision I crave to see You everywhere. Sometimes I don't mention it, I just mention the moon or the weather. But You are there and I know it and remember You.

* * *

A letter from a disciple about reading: "I'm slowly but surely reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which I always find to be the answer to all questions. I'm up to the story about Durvasa Muni and Maharaja Ambarisa. It is so nice to hear these pastimes. In doing so it feels like the spiritual world is opening to me. I admit, too, at times, finding myself distracted from reading for different reasons (like my unsteadiness), but I quickly

realize the implications of not keeping a good steady level of hearing and find there's nothing so satisfying as absorbing myself in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and your books when I really get down to it."

I wrote back with these quotes I found in the purports to Ramananda Raya's talks with Lord Caitanya:

"The business of the living entity is to always remember the Supreme Personality of Godhead in every circumstance. The Lord should be heard about, glorified, and remembered by all human beings." (*Bhag.* 2.2.36)

tasmad ekena manasa

bhagavan satvatam patih

Srotavyah kirtitavyaS ca

dheyah pujaS ca nityada

"Sukadeva Gosvami replied to the sages headed by Saunaka, "Everyone should very attentively listen to the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should glorify His activities and meditate upon Him regularly." (*Bhag.* 1.2.14)

* * *

3:32 a.m.

Hearing Srila Prabhupada speak in Paris. I was in the other room. One guy, very aggressive and unsubmitive was speaking of "The Light." Probably a Guru Maharaji follower. Prabhupada said, "Go away! You're wasting my time. You know everything!" The devotees had to ask him to leave. He readily agreed, but I know that if he hadn't, the devotees would have thrown him out "Bhagavan, Pusta-Krishna, and the others.

Prabhupada was always exposing himself to such people as this guest. The night before that, he had spoken at Salle de Playee and a riot had almost broken out. Someone had even come with spray paint.

Srila Prabhupada, please let me worship you unhindered by doubts such as, "Did you know that the Lord Buddha we speak of in the *Bhagavatam* is not the Gautama Buddha who formed that world religion?" I plague myself with these things unnecessarily. When the guy asked you, "What do you think of the Hebraic Kabbala?" you said, "I have not read it, nor do I know of it." That was the perfect reply for me. I do not need you to know everything. You need only know devotion to Krishna, which gives you understanding of everything else. *Yasmin vjinate sarvam evam vijnatam bhavati.*

I can spare myself the plague and the offense if I become simple and have full trust in you as I used to have. It's hard. So many Gaudiya Math teachers and gurus have come and taught a little differently than you, emphasizing something else. Some of your followers go to them for the "extra" or the difference. That's a strain sometimes. And of course there is the strain of the falldowns. I too am full of shortcomings. Just see how I write and don't know what to write.

I pray for guidance. I would like to write something straight from my heart in Krishna consciousness. I don't want to be like that guy in Paris who said he felt the Light "right here" and "that's all I know." I want to surrender even though I fail to do so. Please keep me on course gently, as is my nature, and allow me to read your holy books with faith. Please excuse me and make me more learned, more simple, more pure. Lord of my heart, I pray for this.

And give me faith in ISKCON. We talk of ISKCON's maladies and we quarrel with one another and the schisms hurt the unity of ISKCON. The lack of purity and inspirational leadership also hurts, and the lack of faith due to falldowns. But outside of this imperfect, too-institutional movement, the howling madness of violence and sex is a million times worse. Where else can we turn? We can't go there. Some say that devotees make it sound worse than it is. They say they have been "out there" and seen that it's not so bad. It's just the world, after all, and it is filled with many fine and spiritually-minded people. Just as in ISKCON there are fine people and terrible people, so in the world it is the same. They say we ISKCON people are too insular and afraid and that we have cheated them by our too stark analysis of the outside world.

I don't feel I have to answer this challenge. I can only go my way with the faith that I have accumulated. When you read Cc. day after day, you see the mad, sex-obsessed poets for what they are, despite their ability to use language to express it. It's true that ISKCON has some of that energy too "the madness, the falldown, the political intrigues. I avoid it *wherever* I see it. I'm looking to become more tough to it, but also more obedient to my master. He wants us each to fight on his behalf against infamy "all infamy. O Prabhupada, please help me. I pray for your guidance and the strength you can give me to hear better the holy names and to make ever clearer presentations of Krishna consciousness.

* * *

Prabhupada, I don't know anything. You say we should give things in even numbers; an odd number means we are giving to an enemy. Why? It's just the Vedic way. You say the stool of cow and the bone of a conch are pure, whereas all other stool and bones are contaminated. If you touch stool, even your own, you have to wash. You say that sex is only for the procreation of good children to be raised in *bhakti-yoga*, that education should only be spiritual, that animals are living out karma but not accumulating new reactions, and that there are good ones and bad ones according to their previous deeds. You say the soul is an eternal spirit spark, that it has a shape, that we do not belong in this world and will have to leave eventually. O master, you know Krishna, and you reveal Him in your purports to *Bhagavad-gita* and other books.

Some devotees are reaching out beyond the institutional walls for help in managing the institution. They want to learn how men and women should behave and how to live in community. Learn this from the Jehovah's Witnesses, learn that from the Rama-Krishna Mission. See also their bad examples and avoid them. Ultimately, however, everyone looks to you to understand how to chant the holy name purely and how to honor *prasadam* with devotion. We gave up our sinful habits at your bidding, you had such power. The U.S. government was spending millions of dollars to help its youth

overcome LSD abuse, but not one person could they save. Krishna, Krishna. Only you could really help.

* * *

8:20 a.m.

Dreamt my *dhoti* caught on fire and still I smell burnt cloth. O hippos, O worldly stuff "so much of it. I refrained from listening to anything at all, but sat in silence. A Benedictine monk in Germany told Prabhupada that he chanted, "Jesus Christ, please have mercy on me." Prabhupada approved. We chant Hare Krishna Hare rama, the names of God and His energy. We pray, "Please engage me in Your service."

The Christians in Paris "arguing, arguing.

Layers of soft, white-pink "like a baby's clothes or a blanket "and baby blue, above the island. The trees' silhouettes familiar to me now. He said it takes an hour to cross the strait when it's frozen and they have to chop the ice. If that happens, I'll stay home.

The grass is half-frozen, but still wet and a bit soggy. No hard ridges or ruts. It will probably melt by this afternoon.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

This is the way it is. An ideal setting under a reddish horizon turning yellow-white-blue. The water is blue-gray and dark and cold, with surface ripples and a movement to it. Not like an old fishing pond.

* * *

2:32 p.m.

Last time I was out I saw a squirrel climb a tree. At first I wasn't even sure it was a squirrel because I couldn't see a bushy tail. He climbed to the top of a short tree and stared down at me. He was a pointy-eared ugly pug of a beast, a rodent. Kept looking at me looking at him. As I walked away I thought it was good for me, a kind of training, to see that live rodent face again.

* * *

Now raining. I came out to the shed with an umbrella. Rain beats against the windows, but the heat makes it tolerable in here. Still reading of the universal form. Now Krishna shows His *manusam-rupa*, His original two-handed form for all to know that He is the source of the four-armed and universal forms. *Mudhas* can't believe it; they think the Absolute is impersonal and the universal form is more important than original Krishna. But *Bhagavad-gita* clearly states that Krishna can only be known by unalloyed devotional service and as the two-handed Krishna, He is the source of all (*isvarah paramah Krishnah . . . sarva-karana-karanam. Mattah parataram nanyat*).

* * *

Read a poem by Al Young who let his brother speak through him. O.O. Gabugah:
"Draws strong folk poetry from the voice of a strident but vital revolutionary who attacks the Uncle Tom."

Where does that leave me?

Ofay Hare Krishna

leave it

that's why I say, be here in shed and room and satisfied with regular music of pure Krishna consciousness. You know mainstream black and white civilization puts down Hare Krishna movement. You're in the solidly rejected cult. You're less than a minority. That's okay. I'll tune in to Lord Krishna and Vyasa (both "black") and Balarama ("white") and Lord Caitanya and radharani ("golden").

Pure spirits

United Nations

let there be one religion "there *is*,

it's called *bhakti*.

"Yes, yes," nodded the Benedictine monk but didn't believe

the Swami. After all he's in

his orthodox Catholic monastery

and we are in one Hare Krishna house,

schloss,

after another.

* * *

Leave it

as in spacecraft leaving earth

leave it

ascend

Krishna, Krishna, our culture and language.

If some old stuff clings to you from white Europe or black America I say don't plug into it. You'll get more than you are expecting. You'll get a load of karma. We were right in the old days to take only ISKCON Krishna consciousness day and night in the temple. Whatever else came we restrained and refrained because Krishna consciousness is the truth.

12:20 a.m.

Woke up humming. Wrote a letter to Arjuna's brother, Bhakta Leo, telling him that I'm sorry I caused him sorrow by implying he shouldn't write me because I'm not initiating. That seemed urgent, to write him a letter first thing before he slips away.

Then I started reading of Lord Caitanya's travels to holy places in South India. My mind slips over the terrain and cannot pay attention. The people of South India were as strong as elephants, but they were in the clutches of the crocodiles of various philosophies such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Mayavadi philosophy. My rascal mind says, "Is this an exaggeration? 'He saved all the people of South India . . . by converting them into Vaisnavas.'" The Bengali text does not state which philosophies they belonged to, so why does Prabhupada translate it as Jainism, Buddhism and Mayavadi philosophy?

O Krishna, please don't let me read with doubts. Yes, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was right when he said we should beat our minds with shoes and brooms. Don't trust the mind. Trust authorities such as Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami and Srila Prabhupada, and not with half a hen logic either. We have to accept *everything* they say. We may inquire into why they said the things they said, but only to inform ourselves, never to challenge. Thinking about this, I realized that it's not so much doubt in what is being said, but in *how* it could be possibly true according to my own limited experience and estimation. That means I underestimate the power of the holy name and the Vaisnavas, and even the power "or existence "of the Supreme Lord.

Yes, *all* the people in *all* the villages the Lord visited became Vaisnavas (Cc. *Madhya* 9.7 - 8). Srila Prabhupada states that his disciples are spreading the holy names and becoming "almost as potent" as Lord Caitanya. "Indeed, everywhere people are very seriously chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare." How can I deny it? Therefore, I hereby declare my mind a faithless rascal for not believing that Lord Caitanya and the holy name could convert everyone to Vaisnavism. I need to develop more faith in the potency of *hari-nama*.

I do pray alone in *japa* and desire to see the world become Krishna conscious, but I have a problem "and I doubt it's only my problem. That is, I need to see the *qualitative* spreading of Krishna consciousness. Preaching doesn't mean just cheap taking up of Krishna consciousness for awhile and then stopping. ISKCON "can it accommodate people who come to the institution for shelter and guidance? We see both so-called or real faults in ISKCON and doubt its capacity to actually care for millions of people. This adds to our doubts in the mission. If I as one member concentrate on improving myself and telling of this attempt, I see that as one aspect of Krishna conscious preaching. It's not opposed to other types of preaching. *Apani acari' prabhu jivera sikaya*.

* * *

Doubt is a heavy thing. I see myself getting hung up on material details, such as how could the same *arca-vigrahas* of Rama and Sita be worshiped for millions of years? Well, why not? Do I think stone can't last that long? Or if the Supreme likes, that He can't refurbish it, keep it "young" and in good repair? You fool! Even if He replaces the Deity, what's the harm?

"How old is this tree? Millions of years? I don't believe it. I don't believe Hanuman could jump so far or that a bridge could be made of floating stones."

I *don't* doubt all that. I know Krishna has inconceivable potency. I'm not like Jamadagni dasa challenging Prabhupada to his face about the size of the Yadu dynasty in *Krishna* book: "How could they have so many toilets in Dvaraka?" I'm not that bad, but I'm trying to look at what doubts there are.

* * *

Sometimes I fantasize about doing some really great work. This comes when I hear some well-composed music or see a good painting or hear about some tremendous

Vaisnava activities, such as Lord Caitanya's traveling all over India and converting people, or about the exploits of a Godbrother who is doing the same.

Then I come down to earth and tell myself, "This is it, baby. Whatever you're doing."

Do you mean just this funny kind of writing and these limited travels to the Caribbean and the Northeast U.S.? Those little pilgrimages here and there?

Yes, that's what's happening. If Krishna likes He could expand what I'm doing, and I could also try to work up some new bravery or desire to do more. Regardless of that, I have to see what I'm doing and inject it with quality devotion. I can't see how I will suddenly expand into something else. I already have to pray for the nerve to do these activities. I just pray to remain enthusiastic until my last breath.

* * *

3:36 a.m.

Possible topics of a new book:

What it is to be a guru, how I feel about it.

Or a repeat: my relationship with Srila Prabhupada tackled new each time in directed free-write sessions. I already wrote *My relationship With Lord Krishna*, and I've reviewed the books I read in my life. At the end of the month Baladeva will come and I will give most of my time to discussing memories with him. I have three weeks in which to shift gears if I want to.

Whether or not I shift gears, the more important thing to me is to speak in my own voice. Sometimes I feel physically small (an Alice in Wonderland trick) and that's me too. Beyond me, however, there are the modes of nature, especially the mode of goodness, which is the gateway to the *Suddha-sattva*. That's me too, but I don't know it yet. Prabhupada is leading me toward that identity "I'm eternally his *Sisya* "and I could write a book on that.

Last night I told Syamananda that surrender means to give up things unfavorable to *bhakti*, but also to use those things "good things and talents "in the Lord's service. Like your own voice. That's my surrender.

* * *

Return to your own. I belong with the *sastras*. I feel good that I'm regularly hearing Prabhupada's lectures and inserting them into my diary so there'll be something good to read later. It's like cooking with the best ingredients. Prabhupada spoke on the opening verses of the sixteenth chapter: "This is very important," Arjuna's question about people who don't follow the *sastras* or a bona fide guru but who have some faith." What about them? Prabhupada said again, "This is very important." We listen more closely. We want it; we're interested in what Bhagavan Sri Krishna has to say. When He has something authoritative to say, Krishna is described as Bhagavan because the rascals misunderstand Krishna as an ordinary man.

* * *

8:24 a.m.

What is beyond me? Of course, I'm only a cipher. Almost everyone is more important than I am. I don't have money, influence, etc., except in a very limited way. But to myself I'm important, the center of existence. I ought to see Krishna as the center of my life as well as center of all "*aham sarvasya prabhava. Bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarvaloka maheSvaram*" but I see myself, my body, my mind, my little attachments for food and music and dreams and sex. Just dreamt a very old man was embracing a child of three or four. I was disgusted and tried to stop it. The old lecher was supposed to be giving medical or professional attention to the little girl, but he brought his face close to hers for lascivious kisses "and she was open to it. I tried to stop them but I was doing something dubious myself (can't recall what it was, but nothing like *that*). I'm absorbed in such small things "dreams and other life "and advising myself to become even more absorbed in it. I say it's the way to God and that it's required. We have to know ourselves, be honest, speak our truths, etc. A simpler devotee, however, might think it enough to be fixed in seeking out Krishna's pleasure.

* * *

Sharon Olds writes in her poem "Little Things" about a tiny pool of maple syrup on the dinner table and, "My son's sunburn peels like insect wings, where I peeled his back." She says she remembers little things to love about her father, "Because of all the big things/ I could not love, no one could, it would be wrong to."

And these last lines:

"I am doing something I learned early to do, I am
paying attention to small beauties,
whatever I have "as if it were our duty to
find things to love, to bind ourselves to this world."

I coach myself to go after little things too, but not to bind myself to this world. I want to leave this world of rebirth and sorrow and pain. By attending to little things I find a connection to Krishna and devotion moment to moment.

Little things: waking up after a twenty-minute nap each morning after breakfast, the room still dark. I reach over from the bed and jerk the curtain aside and the first light of morning enters the room.

The key in the brass lock that opens the shed door. Copper-colored trees, the sound of rain on the shed roof, droplets melting on the window.

* * *

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead exchanges transcendental love in His original form of Krishna." (Bg. 11.55, purport) Go to Krishna for that, not vague concepts of God or specific lumps of attraction or pleasures flickering in this world. Krishna in His original form and our transcendental relationship with Him "by His mercy and the mercy of His pure devotees.

We want to go to Krishnaloka. "He has full knowledge of that planet, and therefore he's not interested in any other." (Bg. 11.55, purport)

"He does not want to be transferred even to the highest planet, Goloka Vrndavana. His only objective is to serve Krishna wherever he may be." (Bg. 11.55, purport)

Stay near these descriptions of Krishna's form as essential and supreme. *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* will give them to you. Carry that book wherever you go and read it.

Read it.

Then when you hit a wall you can turn to the *Gita* phrases "or near phrases "already alive in your mind, such as, My devotee will never perish; he comes to Me; you are My dear friend, so I'm telling this most confidential knowledge; think of Me; become My devotee. Come to Me when you leave your body by thinking of Me. Engage in My devotional service.

Mean it and feel it.

* * *

And now it's done. Krishna has stopped showing Arjuna (and the demigods and demons) the Visvarupa and has returned to revealing His original two-handed form. The next chapter addresses the topic of devotional service. Finally He says, work for Me, worship Me and then the chapter is over. I decide that's enough for me now, until the next time.

It has become warmer and the sky lighter. I'm not feeling so young that I could draw a picture of radha-Krishna, and not so adventuresome either. Instead, I scribble lines and stay longer in the chaos before I "resolve" it with form "usually a squat cartoony man walking, and in the poverty of my imagination, carrying the same beadbag (worn mistakenly on his left hand) and branded with yellow *tilaka*. His *Sikha* is messy and untied, like mine.

2:55 p.m.

I just began "Conversations With Srila Prabhupada," a series of spoken prayers. I'm spring boarding from St. Teresa's method of personal prayer as taught in a book, *Conversation With Christ*. It's interesting how prayer seeks to control the mind's wanderings while writing *allows* it. When I'm writing, the words take a trip of their own, but when speaking to Prabhupada, I'm in the confessional, contrite, eyes shut, aspiring for the holy contact. He said it would depend on my purity whether I would be able to contact the spiritual master in the heart.

Today I introduced myself to Prabhupada and mentioned my failings, but I also acknowledged that he is my link to Krishna. I quoted the last two *Slokas* of *Gurvastakam*. I made no petitions; I mainly wanted to make contact. I want to develop the habit of being able to pray to him always. It's quite simple.

* * *

Next to last day of November. Still awaiting word from Madhu on his hernia operation. Tomorrow I'll speak to disciples by having Syamananda read from *Wild Garden*. Then I'll comment. Chant a round with them too.

O Lord, it ain't easy?

O Lord, ain't it hard?

The rain came down even through the sunshine and I saw a rainbow. Then it rained some more. Little Jayananda had to stay indoors, but as soon as it cleared he ran

outdoors and shot his twig arrows high in the sky. He said, "There's an invisible demon up there. No one can see him but me."

* * *

4:30 p.m.

Manu gets back late tonight. His car looks like it's falling apart. He too is wearing thin at the edges from hard work. A good man. And Syamananda dasa will come over. He's got a kind young heart and good intelligence to understand his spiritual master's books. Sees more in them than I do sometimes. Oh yeah, that's right, I'm not a goof-off, I'm a guru. Hey, what about the limp and rash and quirk and tremor on your left side when you read something? It happens.

A *mataji* opens the outer door and then I know they've put the *prasadam* on the trunk out there. I told you how it's done. Today there was one tiny piece of cookie on Srila Prabhupada's plate and I got none. What was that about?

The heavens have opened and it's pouring rain. I assume that I'll be there in the morning to write again on the prayer project, and that I'll be able to go to India in 1997 and then the millennia will come. I assume I'll get plenty of warning and things will go along as Clinton promised. That is, that America will keep winning while he's the president. I hope so. They bombed Iraq again and the Iraqis would sure like to bomb New York City or Washington, D.C., but they can't. They don't have that much power in the skies. That's why they have to do things like plant bombs on airplanes. There are mastermind terrorists over there and the FBI is constantly tracking them down. Yusef Ahald, the brain of Pakistan's back alleys, is researching how to make a bomb that can fit into a cigarette pack and not be detected, and the other side is researching how to brain them back, or smear them into the dust as any good, red-neck American would like to see done with the whole Middle East. None of the above is ultimately possible without Krishna's sanction. That we know. And the karma will rebound. We know that too. The scientists will call the reaction "black spring" or "winter fallout." But blow back on us all it will.

Meanwhile, North Ireland is peaceful "at least this part of it. I have to give credit to the young men loading up their trucks with Prabhupada's books. That's what this world needs.

Graham crackers, slim crackers, people want peace. What if you've been recently diagnosed with a bad disease? If it's benign, okay. Live with it. If it's malignant? read the chapter and see how Betty B. coped with it and went on skiing. Someone else wrote penpals later and sat by the pool jazzing, and still had sex despite broken legs and asthma. I said, "Geez, how can these people teach me anything?" You'll get misled. Be careful.

Midnight

Good news, Madhu's hernia operation was successful. He spoke with Syamananda on the phone and said that he didn't even take any pain killers after the operation. "I'm a man," Madhu boasted. So that's happiness in the material world "your friend's hernia operation is a success!

* * *

Dear Srila Prabhupada, I'm grateful to have received from you and the Supersoul the starting idea to pray and converse with you. I did the first "session" yesterday. I shouldn't analyse it to death, but just gratefully receive the gift and then turn to you and speak.

* * *

Yesterday it seemed auspicious to me when I desired to return to prayer. One reason is that it allows me to be entirely focused on Krishna conscious means of expression. In conversing with Srila Prabhupada, I'm not going to need to read modern poets, or for that matter, writers on Christian prayer.

It also made me face the challenge of why I look at modern poets. It seems like such a big *anartha*, exposed once again. Today I'm trying to look at it positively. My studies in modern writing by nondevotees still have a place in my service. I want to write in the very best way. I may have to learn how to do that from those who are dedicated to writing even though they are not devotees.

I want to be devoted to writing in Krishna's service, and I could say that Krishna will teach me everything I need through my heart, and that's true, but it's a stark truth that I can't work with now. I suppose I should just admit that I have some attachment to these nondevotee writers and their expression even though neither the attachment nor the writers are pure. I'm dovetailing.

Aside from that, however, I see my reading in poetry as part of the risks inherent in my service. Book distributors regularly risk contact with the unholy materialists when they go out on the streets to distribute books. Sometimes they fall on the battlefield because their attachments are reawakened. It's a risk that our spiritual master asked us to take for the greater good of distributing books. There is nothing to compare with it, and I certainly don't dare to compare myself to those brave soldiers. Nevertheless, the principle is that for service, we want to make the very best contribution for Krishna. My daydream is to write works which will last and be appreciated in the future even by nondevotees or those even a little inclined to devotional life. It would be helpful for me to know about prosody, and I don't mean from an academic point of view. I should have it float through my blood and be as expert as they are, to know how to write a good sentence and to be well practiced at it every day.

* * *

3:50 a.m.

I don't really need to read *lectio divina* "St. Teresa or St. John of the Cross or modern persons in that line "to learn how to speak in a prayerful way to Srila Prabhupada. My reading of those works is more for general knowledge about prayer, not from a need to learn direct application. Prayer comes from the heart naturally. I know what to do when I speak and I have faith that the communication is valid because Prabhupada is hearing me. It depends on my purity how deep this awareness is, so I'm trying to pray honestly and purely, openly confessing and praising.

In Cc. Lord Caitanya says that in Goloka Vrndavana, the Vrajavasis don't think of Krishna as God. They don't care for His opulence, but adore His sweetness. This made me wonder about *myaisvarya* prayers to Prabhupada and Krishna. Of course,

Prabhupada encourages us to think of Krishna as the all-great and inconceivable Lord. At the same time, he tells us to think of Krishna as a bluish cowherd boy holding a flute, the lover of Radha. I'm trying to follow what he teaches in terms of praying to Krishna.

In talking to Prabhupada himself, however, I have been thinking more mystically that I'm not actually making an attempt to talk to him in order to receive an answer. I am trying to contact what I call my inner Prabhupada.

* * *

Feeling happy on waking at midnight (actually, eight minutes before). I made up the bed, tucked in the sheets and covers, washed my mouth and face with cold water, scraped my tongue, put on a sweater and sweatshirt, and gave Srila Prabhupada his dictaphone. I then sat to work. I answered the mail that arrived last night before I took rest, then read "not much, but I was amazed at Lord Caitanya's wonderful teachings. He says that Laksmi-devi cannot enter the *rasa* dance, but the Personified *Upanisads* can. Lord Caitanya asked Vyenkata Bhatta if he knew why this was so. Vyenkata said, "I am just a tiny mortal, but You are the Supreme Person, so You can tell me everything." Lord Caitanya told him that we need to follow the *gopis'* path if we hope to enter *rasa-lila*. Laksmi-devi was unable to do that. There's no teaching like this in Christianity. Follow the path of Laksmi-Narayana, Radha-Krishna. It is inconceivably sweet beyond all *aisvarya*.

* * *

Vivaldi please. One music piece, a religious one. The one he composed in honor of Radharani in Vraja or the aria he wrote about the cowherd boys "the one he learned in *parampara*. You don't have it? He's just a mundane Italian from long ago? Then how was he able to capture the mind so? Oh, that's *maya*. But isn't it Krishna too? Could you imagine it being played while devotees take *prasadam*?

No, we can only play rock 'n' roll. It's the music to which we perform our duties "thump, thump, rocky and hoarse "but at least we chant Hare Krishna and become transformed.

* * *

Oh ho, I wrote a snappy letter to a woman in America who wants to talk about issues. She thinks there is such a thing as soul mates, husbands and wives who meet in the spiritual world. What's your opinion on that, SDG? We regard you as an ecclesiastical authority, so please speak into the mike.

"Okay, I'll talk, but only on certain conditions. I don't want to be quoted or dragged into heated debates. I don't want to be introduced to your friends who support the schisms, and I definitely don't want to be reminded about the misdeeds we have seen in ISKCON. Those memories are just too painful. I'd rather be alone and to pontificate humbly from my solitude via letters. If you want to hear from me, those are the rules, but if you don't like my restrictions, better you write to someone else. Anyway, it is hopeless

to try to change things, ma'am. Don't you know there *is* no reform except of the self? We don't have to take the part of big reformers and drive all the homosexuals out.

* * *

2:54 p.m.

I just spoke to you, Srila Prabhupada, and it felt good. You became present in the room. I awaken to you by vibrating my voice in this shed. The pen is silent, but the voice breaks through in a different way.

I am about to close out Volume 1 of this journal. I don't need anything but life, little life, life of *sastra*, the fact of my service relationship with the Supreme Lord and His Divine Grace, Srila Prabhupada.

I told the devotees today to be peaceful and yet berate their complacency. In that way, they will eventually find the balance. I said so many things, but who am I to speak? I don't know. I defend ISKCON and have faith that we are gradually becoming pure. I glorify Krishna. I don't need to analyze that or attempt to measure Krishna's mercy on me. I simply have to love Him and serve Him even when I'm dull or my head is in a vise.

The two swans on the lake remind me of the Supersoul and the individual soul. Krishna, You remain with us always. The lake is this world, or the world of our hearts.

O Krishna, please allow me to give out *Srimad-Bhagavatam* truths through the gut, through the grinder, in words. As kids we used to mock, "Truer words were never spoken through falser teeth." As if a toothless person were the epitome of the despicable, the object of laughter. Well, now I have no teeth and it hasn't budged me from my conviction to speak out in praise of guru and Krishna.

Prabhupada writes, "A pure devotee is constantly engaged. Sometimes he chants, sometimes he hears or reads books about Krishna, or sometimes he cooks *prasadam* or goes to the market place to purchase something for Krishna, or sometimes he washes the temple or the dishes "whatever he does, he does not let a single moment pass without devoting his activities to Krishna. Such action is in full *samadhi*." (Bg. 12.3 purport) He makes it sound so easy. Just live in the temple, be a full-time devotee, and by virtue of your assignment you'll always be able to serve Krishna. If you do it sincerely and mindfully, then you'll be in the "presence of God. Is it really "too simple"?"

Thank You, Lord Krishna, for giving us this easy process of *bhakti-yoga*. Maybe it doesn't always feel as easy as falling off a log, but it's certainly not as hard as the impersonal practice. "Often there is much penance involved before one fully surrenders to Him." Please let me do the needful.

Appendix

Repertoire

These are some of the modes of expression that I used in this volume of *Every Day, Just Write* and which I hope to use in Volume Two. This is only a partial list.

Little life

Don't be ashamed to give the data, names, places, events. Don't fear repetition. Confess.

Writing while reading

Reading one of Prabhupada's books is essential to my daily routine. Write on it simply and straightforwardly and use it to springboard. Come back to it frequently as if answering the question, "What did I just read? What struck me?"

Free-writing

While all my writing may use this method, I will also take time for "pure" exercises of "keep the hand moving," etc.

Poems

At least once a day write a poem with typewriter or pen. Read a poetry book, then break into one from your free-writing prose. Just force your way into the first lines even if they make no logical sense. After the triggering lines, you'll usually find a theme.

Dreams

Capture them and do something with them.

Prayer

This is the newly begun "Conversation with Srila Prabhupada." I hope to continue it twice a day in the shed. It's a separate project from writing, but I can also write prayers in *Every Day, Just Write*.

Drawings

With colors and Tombos, let hand move in chaos until you find a form (or forms) you want to express.

No failure here. Some will express themes and scenes in the writing or just immediate feelings. Try to give it some Krishna conscious identification. The drawings are welcome!